

RETAIL

# Holt Renfrew welcomes International Women's Day

March 8, 2024



*The department store has uplifted four women so far. Image credit: Holt Renfrew*

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By ZACH JAMES

Canadian department store chain Holt Renfrew is uplifting the women in its workforce.

The Celebrating Ourselves campaign highlights the retailer's internal female talent. Rolling out gradually on various social media platforms throughout the week of International Women's Day on March 8, the initiative spotlights the importance of diverse voices in the luxury landscape across sourcing, management and more.

"Few luxury brands and retailers have launched a marketing campaign specific to International Women's Day this year," said Rebecca Miller, founder and CEO of [ARTful Communication](#), New York.

"While this campaign may be effective in social media this week, for Holt Renfrew, its real power is that it aligns with the brand's values," Ms. Miller said. "Its authenticity is part of an ongoing initiative of empowering self-expression to ignite positive change rather than attempting an ineffectual flavor-of-the-day campaign."

"Holt Renfrew's commitment to its female workforce is commendable and reinforced in its customers' eyes through this annual acknowledgment of their contributions."

Ms. Miller is not affiliated with Holt Renfrew, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

## **Holiday embrace**

Four women have been spotlighted so far, with three of them working for Holt Renfrew.

Each film is a minute-and-a-half in length and provides a platform for employees who are usually left out of the public eye, especially in advertising. Vivian Ting, director of buying for menswear at Holt Renfrew was first up.

### *Ms. Ting speaks on her experiences*

In her segment, the professional denotes the importance of young girls having diverse and successful role models to look up to, a luxury she lacked as a child.

She also speaks on the societal pressures put on women to stay quiet and confine themselves to the lives pushed upon them. Ms. Ting preaches the importance of pushing boundaries, as she sees it as one of the only ways to progress in a male-dominated

industry.

Providing a different perspective, Mabel Sin, special events manager at Holt Renfrew's Bloor Street location in Toronto, delves into her nearly 50 years working for the company. Coming from a traditional Chinese upbringing, Ms. Sin had to adapt to Canadian life and start a new full-time job while raising two children when she began her now 47-year tenure at the department store.

*Ms. Sin harps on self-evolution over time*

Over the course of her time with the company, she has seen the formation of a local community of like-minded, trailblazing women pushing everyone forward.

"I was brought up also believing that when a door closes, there's always a window somewhere," says Ms. Sin, in the video "Go and look for it, don't give up," she says. "Girls, go for it."

While Canada offers a plethora of advancement opportunities, Natalia Chryssoulis, the buyer for H Project, Holt Renfrew's charitable arm, said many of the communities she interacts with are not as fortunate.

*Ms. Chryssoulis never expected to work in the fashion sector*

She tells of the countries outside of Canada that she works with, many of which lack women's and financial rights. These factors are especially prevalent in the luxury fashion industry, as forced labor and social justice remain large issues in material sourcing and other aspects of production ([see story](#)).

As of publication, the latest edition of Celebrating Ourselves features Erin Kleinberg, founder of SIDIA, a Toronto-based wellness brand.

In her vignette, the entrepreneur speaks on the importance of confidence in progressing in life as a woman in the modern world. Ms. Kleinberg attributes this headstrong attitude to her upbringing, surrounded by the like-minded and ambitious women in her family.

*Confidence is key for career ambitions to translate into reality*

"It appears that Holt Renfrew's business objective for this campaign is to create awareness concerning their dedication to diversity and inclusion," Ms. Miller said.

"By providing this platform each woman is invited to share her background, influences during her formative years, and the effect it has had on their career," she said. "Further, it showcases how each woman could focus internally on themselves and bring that focus forward on their work and life."

### **Feminist frequencies**

While Celebrating Ourselves is a new initiative, the practice it is upholding is not.

Holt Renfrew has been uplifting women in the fashion industry, as well as its internal talent, on an annual basis for International Women's Day going back to the start of the new decade.

"You have to carve your own space because it takes a lot of practice to make some space for yourself and your voice." Vivian Ting, Director of Buying, Menswear. Click to watch! <https://t.co/4tNDChuF1pic.twitter.com/wZW69e4NAS>

Holt Renfrew (@HoltRenfrew) [March 4, 2024](#)

Last year, others in the luxury landscape joined in, with German fashion house Hugo Boss ([see story](#)) and Milanese jeweler Pomellato ([see story](#)) among the headliners.

In 2024, however, the activations have been few and far between.

Despite this, maisons such as Stella McCartney ([see story](#)) and Dior ([see story](#)) have been opting to center their spring

marketing campaigns around feminism, granting an entire season to celebrate women rather than a single holiday.

Regardless of framing, brands that are engaged in social causes and calls for diversity are connecting more with their consumers and seeing better bottom lines ([see story](#)), a line of reasoning all within the luxury space can get behind.

"The campaign demonstrates Holt Renfrew's ethos by acknowledging the brand's attributes it declares and promotes throughout the company and its ongoing marketing efforts," Ms. Miller said.

"It is another way to digitally validate respect for their female employees and business partners from all cultures and ages globally," she said. "It serves to qualify their brand's declarations and position."

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