

ADVERTISING

Alexander Wang to bring anticipation, youthful spin to Balenciaga

December 3, 2012



By TRICIA CARR

A luxury brand's heritage will likely carry it through creative role changes within a company. However, the appointment of a widely-known designer such as that of Alexander Wang to creative director at Balenciaga can stir up a brand's reputation in the fashion industry.

[Sign up now](#)

[Luxury Daily](#)

From a marketing perspective, the hiring of Mr. Wang at the PPR-owned brand could mean a refreshed public image as he is known by his design personality in addition to his skills. Fifteen-year Balenciaga creative director Nicolas Ghesquière propelled the label when he began his role and the same will likely follow as Mr. Wang brings his own youthful aesthetic to the label.

"Mr. Wang's appointment at Balenciaga is likely to be regarded as a defining moment in the brand's history," said Elizabeth DeMaso, managing partner of [Brenes Co.](#), New York. "Balenciaga has undergone a rather extensive reinvention over the last ten years and has great momentum from which to build.

"Given his wonder-kid reputation, bringing in Mr. Wang will attract even more attention to the brand," she said. "Given that Mr. Wang is known as much for his entrepreneurial spirit as for his street-smart style, he seems to be the right choice.

“It does not hurt that he is adored within the industry and among an international clientele.”

Moving on

Mr. Ghesquière was set to leave his position at the French label Nov. 30, according to a [report from WWD](#).

Various reports that day alluded to the commercial appeal of Mr. Wang’s designs and the dissimilarities between his grunge-inspired pieces with the Balenciaga aesthetic.

However, an [article in The New York Times](#) nodded to the similar origin of Mr. Ghesquière and Mr. Wang’s design inspiration.

“Although Nicolas Ghesquière, the previous designer of the house, was known for his more experimental collections, especially with clothes that used new materials or construction methods, he was first and foremost a street designer,” the story states.

Mr. Wang's new position at Balenciaga will likely be a jumping off point for him to further explore the world of couture.

“Mr. Wang is a revered designer among U.S. consumers who appreciate his downtown aesthetic,” said Molly Leis, principal of [MRL Communications](#), New York. “His entrepreneurial DNA has helped catapult the brand to rapid ascension with tremendous brand awareness among the affluent.”

In addition, Mr. Ghesquière is said to have left Balenciaga due to disagreements with parent company PPR.

“Ghesquière has remained coy about his reasons for leaving. But speculation is rife that he disagreed with PPR bosses who wanted to emphasize the commercial aspects of the business, presumably at the expense of his creative freedom,” states an [article in Time](#).



Model Vanessa Traina and Mr. Wang at the 2012 CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund Awards

Youth at heart

Mr. Wang established his self-named label in 2007. At 28 years old, he is named the creative director of Balenciaga.

Mr. Ghesquière is in his 40s.

The new creative direction for Balenciaga could help it appeal to younger consumers.

"If you want to build a brand for the future, it is a good idea to focus on younger, rather than older consumers," said Al Ries, chairman of marketing strategy consultancy [Ries & Ries](#), Roswell, GA.

"Overall, I think it is the reception that the brand receives in the media that determines both the reputation of the brand and the reputation of the creative director," he said. "A good creative director will focus on building a team of talented individuals who can create products that receive favorable media receptions."

Mr. Wang's public persona could also influence consumers' views on Balenciaga going

forward.

While the creative director is not responsible for the entirety of a brand's image and public perception, it certainly starts with their vision, per Brenes Co.'s Ms. DeMaso.

"The anticipation of what inspiration a new creative director will bring is an exciting moment for the fashion industry," Ms. DeMaso said.



Alexander Wang fall/winter 2012

Affluent views

Furthermore, experts agree that the creative direction behind a brand can never be greater than the brand itself.

For example, as the creative direction behind Chanel, ringmaster of his own fashion label and one to take on multiple side projects, Karl Lagerfeld has a consistent presence in the luxury industry with all eyes on his every move, word and endeavor.

But, if he were to step down from either of his fashion forays, each brand would likely survive on its core DNA alone ([see story](#)).

The role change at Balenciaga runs along the same lines. The heritage that holds up the brand outweighs the creative direction behind the brand in terms of the public's perception.

"Most fashion brands, with a few exceptions like Ralph Lauren, are far more famous than the creative directors of those brands," Mr. Ries said.

"If you are the creative director of a famous luxury brand, consumers automatically think you are a creative genius," he said.

On another note, affluent consumers' perception of a brand probably alters when a new creative director comes onboard, per MRL's Ms. Leis.

Affluent consumers' views are often based on the reputation, history and success of a brand's appointed creative director.

The heritage of storied fashion houses seems to be intertwined with the persona of their creative director.

“Alexander Wang has a fabulous track record in achieving mass appeal through his own style and collections,” Ms. Leis said.

“Ultimately, the fashion industry is defined by change,” she said. “This new beginning for Balenciaga is an exciting evolution of the brand and for the public to watch unfold.”

Final Take

Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.