

MULTICHANNEL

Kering bolsters revived corporate culture through student competition

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By TRICIA CARR

Gucci owner Kering, formerly PPR, is reinforcing its corporate values during the second annual student competition in partnership with Parsons The New School for Design.

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The "Empowering Imagination" competition gives students at Parsons who are earning their Bachelor of Fine Arts in fashion design the chance to intern with one of Kering's 19 luxury or sport brands. This effort could drive home the conglomerate's new name and corporate culture shift.

"Kering's motto of Empowering Imagination truly embodies the vision and strategy behind this design competition with Parsons," said Laurent Claquin, head of **Kering** Americas, New York. "By building bridges with businesses, universities and digital communities, we provide the students an opportunity to experience and connect with the business side of fashion.

"In turn, the students offer us a glimpse of the future of fashion through their creativity, which is both valuable and inspiring," he said. "This competition is a pure example of Kering's attitude towards its brands, people, customers, stakeholders and the environment.

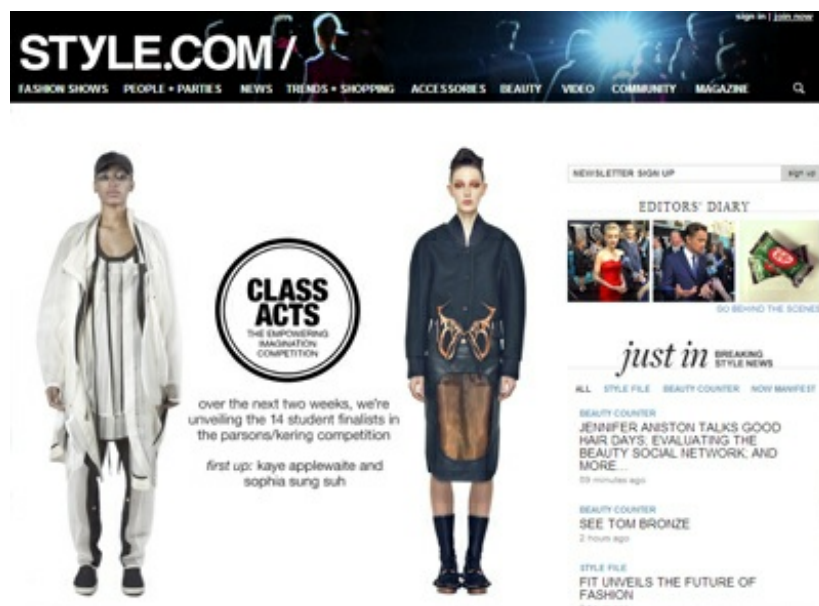
"It's an example of how we nurture and grow emerging talent. Our mission is to enable our customers, and these students, to express their personality, fulfill their dreams and to flourish."

Competition is on

Parsons The New School for Design selected 14 finalists for the second-annual competition based on the "quality and conceptual vision" and the "ability to communicate the point of view" of their thesis collection, which is the capstone product of the school's fashion design program.

Two students will be awarded internships with a Kering brand.

New this year, Kering and Parsons are collaborating with Fairchild Fashion Media's Style.com, which gets more than 2 million global unique visitors per month. The fashion and lifestyle site will profile each student finalist May 2-15 and host a meeting to mentor the contenders.



Style.com homepage featuring works by the finalists

Then, a group of fashion experts will judge the competition and choose two winners based on the students' work.

Judges include Livia Firth, creative director of Eco-Age.com; Dirk Standen, editor in chief of Style.com; Dennis Freedman, creative director and executive vice president at Barneys New York; Laurent Claquin, head of Kering Americas; Mickey Boardman, editorial director of Paper Magazine; and Simon Collins, dean of fashion at Parsons The New School for Design.

Also, Barneys will feature works from the thesis collections of each finalist in its New York flagship store as it did for last year's competition.

In 2012, Kering, then PPR, launched the competition in partnership with Parsons and The Fancy, a social media platform where consumers could help to select the winners.



Work by Melanie Seligman

The winners of the first competition were Jin Kay, who interned with Gucci, and Melanie Seligman, who interned at McQ Alexander McQueen. The winners were also showcased during New York Fashion Week at Barneys ([see story](#)).



Work by Jin Kay

“If this program were a one-time effort, it probably wouldn't be worth management's time and expense,” said Al Ries, founder and chairman of [Ries & Ries](#), a Roswell, GA-based

marketing strategy consultancy. “What makes the program cost efficient is the fact that it is an annual event.

“The best, most efficient public relations activities are those that can be endlessly repeated,” he said. “Consider the vast amounts of publicity generated by annual events like the Academy Awards, the Super Bowl, the World Series, etc.”

“What might not be worthwhile doing one time, might be worthwhile doing every year.”

Second helping

Kering will likely underpin its corporate motto, for which the student competition is named, as well as the new culture that accompanied its name change through this effort.

The conglomerate will officially change its name June 18 following approval at the annual general meeting.

The group chose a new name to solidify an internal transition that it began in 2005 from a focus on European distribution, to apparel and accessories in the luxury and sport sectors.

The new identity also signals a shift in its corporate culture.

The name is meant to have meaning in the way it is pronounced in English as “caring.” The group is looking to show that it cares for its brands, employees, stakeholders and the environment.

Kering is also adopting a new logo of an owl that suggests wisdom and nurturing ([see story](#)).

Through the student competition, the company is looking to nurture the next generation of talent, per Kering.

Additionally, Kering is in the midst of another campaign driven by digital storytelling to support its transition from PPR.

In the new video series, fashion blogger Garance Doré interviews the people behind Kering’s brands in an effort to show the public how the conglomerate works with them to achieve its mission of Empowering Imagination.

Ms. Doré talks with key players at Gucci, Volcom and Christopher Kane in the first installment that focuses on the concept of a family of brands ([see story](#)).

The student competition will help Kering, a holding company with 19 brands, generate public awareness for the company and its partners, per Mr. Ries.

“Aside from the publicity, every company needs an influx of talented younger people if the company itself wants to have a future,” Mr. Ries said.

“A company's future depends on the talents of its newest employees,” he said. “Recruiting the best, most talented people can assure a company of future success.”

Final Take

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