

EVENTS/CAUSES

Kering builds bridge for young talent with Parsons student competition

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Brioni spring/summer 2014 collection image; a former winner was placed into an internship at Brioni

By SARAH JONES

French luxury conglomerate Kering is co-hosting the third annual “Empowering Imagination” competition for students with Parsons The New School of Design.

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Luxury Daily

Students from Parsons will vie for an internship at one of Kering’s 22 luxury or lifestyle brands. With many luxury brands finding it difficult to discover top talent to fill roles at their companies, this competition offers Kering a pipeline to find its next employees.

"The Kering-Parsons ‘Empowering Imagination’ contest is a win-win relationship for both the students, who receive mentorship while they put into practice the theory they’ve learned at Parsons, and also for the brands, which get to learn from a new crop of talented designers," said Laurent Claquin, head of [Kering Americas](#), New York.

"We are excited to be partnering with Parsons and Style.com this year, as this partnership is a fruitful one that exposes us and our brands to the fresh perspective new designers bring," he said. "The exposure to this esteemed panel of judges as well as to the audience on Style.com is an incredible opportunity for Parsons students and one we’re glad to help support."

"Kering's partnership with Parsons helps ensure a robust pipeline of talent by shaping the careers of young designers while they're studying and laying the foundation of their career. This competition also helps Kering match the skills and expertise of these students with our brands' needs.

"This hands-on opportunity for students to learn what companies are looking for day-to-day makes them better suited for design roles in the future."

Placement program

The competition is open to top 2014 graduates from the BFA fashion design program at Parsons in New York. Students are chosen to participate in the contest based on the strength of their thesis project both technically and conceptually and their ability to verbalize their point of view presented in the collection.



Parsons thesis project image from Laura Li

Within the BFA program, students can specialize in women's wear, menswear, children's wear and accessories, or choose to focus on sustainability, or a market segment such as activewear or luxury.

On June 2, a panel that includes Bottega Veneta creative director Tomas Maier, Style.com editor-in-chief Dirk Standen, head of Kering Americas Laurent Claquin and Saks Fifth Avenue senior fashion director Colleen Sherin will judge the 14 finalists and pick two winners.

Last year, the winners were placed in internships at Bottega Veneta and Brioni. The first year of the competition, the two students were placed at McQ by Alexander McQueen and Gucci.



Gucci advertisement

When placing potential interns, Kering takes into account the students' specialties. For instance, Yunxiang Zhou, who was placed at Brioni, showed a talent and interest in menswear.

Style.com is again involved in the competition, giving the 14 finalists exposure on its Web site from May 20 to June 3.

"This strategy is beneficial for Kering as it becomes seamless to obtain press especially considering that Style.com is a major partner of the competition," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York. "It's also an opportunity for them to acquire fresh talent and nurture them in house at their many brands.

"They are able to curate their selection of emerging talent and creativity according to their internal needs at their assortment of luxury and lifestyle brands," she said.

"The competition also provides the participating designers a voice not only for the competition, but also to explain the POV and where their creativity stems from. Through the press that they will be receiving, and their profiles on Style.com, this opens up doors that they may never have had access to.

"It's more intrinsic than a regular job interview, these designers could obtain additional opportunities even if they aren't selected within this competition."

Talent search

Luxury brands struggle to find and recruit the top talent for positions across their companies, according to a new study from Boston Consulting Group.

Having the right employees can have a measured impact on a brand's profits and economic growth, especially in executive and leading creative roles. Because of this

luxury brands may need to rethink their existing recruiting strategy to locate the personnel necessary ([see story](#)).

LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton has introduced a new annual international design competition to uncover new talent and assist them in starting their fashion careers, proving the conglomerate's influential position in the fashion industry.

The prize consists of a grant and a mentorship from an LVMH team for a year to develop the winner's company. By creating this contest, LVMH is able to show on a global scale that it is foremost in discovering and nurturing creative minds, as well as point to the creativity of its own designers ([see story](#)).

For Kering, this is an important part of developing design talent.

"At Kering, our motto is 'Empowering Imagination,' and this is just one example of the ways in which we foster the development of the next generation of innovative designers," Mr. Claquin said. "Kering is globally supporting this new wave with the 'Tsinghua and Kering Art Education Fund' at Tsinghua University and the 'Empower Talents' internship program with Vogue Italia.

"Designers are central to our business. To remain competitive, we understand the power of having the brightest, creative minds behind our brands," he said. "We believe in the formative role Parsons plays in fostering this talent and find this partnership an essential one for supporting this important cultivation of the next generation of style makers."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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