

Can Fashion Save The World?

THE WORLD OF LUXURY IS SYNONYMOUS WITH EXCESS AND SELF-INDULGENCE. AMID VISIONS OF GLAMOUR AND HEDONISM, SOME OF THESE PURVEYORS OF TOP-END APPAREL, ACCESSORIES, WATCHES AND JEWELLERY ARE MAKING A DIFFERENT SALES PITCH: STOPPING EXPLOITATION, GOING GREEN, DOING RIGHT BY OTHERS. JOANNAH ZHONG LOOKS AT SOME OF THEIR CSR EFFORTS

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, IT WOULD be almost unthinkable for any successful company to not engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR). And in the world of luxury fashion, giving back is one of the biggest trends.

Companies are now banking on “conscious capitalism”, where they adopt more beneficial social or environmental practices to achieve better returns, and luxury fashion companies are no exception, says professor Srinivas K Reddy, associate dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Business and director of the Centre for Marketing Excellence, Singapore Management University.

Often, a company’s top motivation for CSR practices is a combination of image building and societal expectations and, in the case of listed companies, adhering to regulations.

However, luxury brands’ CSR campaigns “invite scrutiny and set high standards, which can boomerang if they fall short”, admits associate professor Audrey Chia, co-director of National University of Singapore Business School’s Asia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy. Such companies face criticisms that their CSR actions are motivated by self-interest such as boosting sales and polishing their images, or they’re just superficial show, she

adds. But SMU’s Reddy points out that studies have also shown that customers do support well-designed, “from-the-heart” programmes. These firms – whether manufacturers or retailers of apparel, accessories, timepieces or jewellery – have the advantage of strong brand equity and the support of notable personalities who endorse the causes and campaigns these fashion companies choose to back, says Anthea Kiu, corporate engagement manager, World Wide Fund for Nature Singapore (WWF Singapore). “They are in a unique position to inspire and demonstrate their commitment towards environmental sustainability.”

She cites the concept of “sustainable luxury” introduced by Chopard, which launched its first Green Carpet Collection in Cannes this year. The jewels were made entirely of ethically sourced gold and diamonds. “Mining is essential to the luxury jeweller, but has huge impacts on the environment. Chopard has made a long-term commitment to a comprehensive transformation of its business supply chain, from using FairMined-certified gold that benefits mining communities and responsibly sourced diamonds, to working with suppliers who are serious about responsible business.”

Ultimately, the question remains: can fashion save the world? It is a big responsibility, but we can be optimistic. “The luxury fashion industry consumes so much of the earth’s resources – diamonds, precious metals, exotic leathers, etc – that any effort, even a small one, can help enhance the world we live in. I am confident of it,” Reddy says.

Saving Fragile Waters

In the face of the vastness of nature and its great beauty, it’s easy to be overwhelmed by feelings of being small and insignificant. Ironically, while 71 per cent of the earth is covered by oceans and human beings occupy what scientists say is a mere 1.3 per cent of the remaining land area, we’ve inflicted such immeasurable damage to the oceans that 40 per cent is “strongly impacted” by human activity and just 4 per cent is undamaged.

Recognising how easy it is to feel apathetic towards an unknown cause, Blancpain has made it its mission to give us a glimpse of the little-known underwater universe and its mysterious creatures. The Swiss watchmaking brand’s commitment to deep waters began with the launch of its first diving watch, the Fifty Fathoms, in 1953. Today, it supports scientific expeditions and underwater photography exhibitions and books, hoping to inspire the greater public to respect and protect the oceanic world.

National Geographic’s Pristine Seas Expeditions with Blancpain is an ongoing exploration, research and conservation project that aims to find and help protect the last untouched wild places in the oceans of the world. A year ago, Marc Hayek, president and CEO of Blancpain and a passionate diver himself, also committed the brand’s support to Laurent Ballesta’s Projet Gombessa.

This culminated in a 40-day deep-sea diving mission in South Africa in April this year to discover, view, study and film the elusive coelacanth, or gombessa, as it is known to the natives.

Ballesta, a world-renowned diver and marine biologist, along with a team of divers and researchers, made daily dives to study this rare prehistoric fish that dwells in caverns at depths of 100m-120m. (Yes, Ballesta sported the Fifty Fathoms watch during the mission.) Scientific data they gathered is now being studied, and videos from the expedition were part of the *Oceans* underwater photography exhibition that Blancpain held at the United Nations in New York for World Oceans Day.



GO DEEP
 Laurent Ballesta discovers the prehistoric gombessa fish



Fashion Conscience

Proving that fashion has a heart and conscience, fashion designer Stella McCartney has, from the start, firmly positioned her eponymous label as a sustainable company. Wherever possible, her company uses renewable energy, and its stores, offices and studios around the UK are powered by wind energy, while recycling systems are available at all its locations.

Animal by-products are conspicuously missing from the label's offerings as a result of McCartney's proactive stand against the culling of animals for their hides. The label also uses organic cotton and synthetic materials as much as possible in its ready-to-wear collections. Since the introduction of shoes with biodegradable soles in its autumn 2010 collection, accessories and apparel made with eco resources have been staples. Most recently, a new faux nappa leather was introduced in the autumn 2013 ready-to-wear collection. With coating made from over 50 per cent vegetable oil, a renewable natural resource, the eco nappa reflects the brand's ongoing commitment to using more sustainable synthetics.

Stella McCartney also premiered the Noemi series of handmade, recycled canvas tote bags in collaboration with the United Nations' International Trade Centre for its Ethical Fashion Initiative. This project, which aims to create job opportunities for disadvantaged communities in Kenya, has taught the women new skills and helped them better feed their families and send their children to school, while raising their awareness about sustainable issues.

ON A MISSION
 FROM TOP Stella McCartney, and the Beckett bag and bio sole shoe from the brand's winter 2013 collection; children at the "Learning About Forests" programme, funded by Audemars Piguet Foundation

Time to Go Green

The Audemars Piguet Foundation (APF) was initiated in 1992 by Jasmine Audemars, great-granddaughter of the brand's co-founder Jules Louis Audemars. Partnering the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on environment issues, it manages 75 projects in 35 countries. The Swiss watch manufacturer's location in the scenic Vallée de Joux inspired its mission of forest conservation, says Jasmine: "As locals, we understood the vital role of forests in an ecosystem, and the importance of educating younger generations on that."

Part of the proceeds from the sale of each Audemars Piguet watch goes to APF, to aid its mission of preserving forests around the world by restoring biodiversity destroyed by natural disasters and climate changes. The foundation also finances conservation-awareness programmes for urban-dwelling children. For instance, it has partnered WWF China for the "Learning About Forests" programme, where thousands of students learnt about the role of forests in the ecological cycle through field trips to nature reserves in their city. In 2003, the foundation also funded the clearing of forests in Tapada Natural Reserve, Portugal, that had been destroyed by fire, and subsequently its reforestation.

In Switzerland, Audemars Piguet's Manufacture des Forges in Le Brassus also lays claim to being the first and only industrial building in the country to be conferred the Minergie-Eco label. In addition to being a Forest Stewardship Council-certified company thanks to its use of wood and paper from sustainably managed forests, Audemars Piguet also introduced cars with electric engines in January 2012, for employees to make trips between different company sites.



Have A heart

Partnering international non-profit organisation Happy Hearts Fund (HHF) for the first time, Chopard launched the Happy Diamonds bracelet in July this year. Designed by Caroline Scheufele, co-president and artistic director of Chopard, the 18-karat rose gold bracelet retails at €1,200, with €200 from each sale going towards the rebuilding of schools in countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia. Since 2006, HHF has built over 72 schools and kindergartens in seven countries, benefitting over 44,000 children. The bracelet will be available in Singapore during the later part of 2013.

New Heights in Medicare

The Bolivian Altiplano, or high plains, is one of the world's most isolated yet highly inhabited regions. It is also where Piaget found inspiration for its iconic watch collection Altiplano, known for its ultra-thin cases and movements. Given its location, quality healthcare is inaccessible there. To address this problem, Piaget launched the Altiplano Project in 2011 in collaboration with the University Hospitals Geneva and Artères Foundation. By linking up five health centres with internet and equipping them with ultrasound equipment, Piaget has helped provide locals with access

to medical expertise in larger, better equipped hospitals in other parts of the world. Piaget went on to sponsor ultrasound and electrocardiogram equipment in four new health centres last year. Since then, the brand has financed the equipment of 16 healthcare centres, offering patients access to nine medical specialities including cardiology, obstetrics and dermatology. Piaget also sponsored South America's first telemedicine congress in Bolivia in 2012, and the second congress in Potosi, June 2013.

Retail Benefits

Retail powerhouse Club 21 and its parent company Como Group are no strangers to philanthropy. Various programmes ranging from gender equality, health and education to sustaining livelihoods have benefitted from Club 21 Cares, the company's platform for encouraging philanthropy and volunteerism among staff, customers and partners. The Club 21 Scholarship, for instance, supports undergraduates who wish to pursue careers in fashion and retail. Customers would also be familiar with the fashion donation drive, Style It Forward. The retailer has partnered with UN Women's Singapore Committee since 2008 to collect pre-loved designer-label apparel at Club 21 stores. The last collection drive, which ended this June, saw a total of 74 boxes of apparel collected for the Buy To Save charity sale, and raised \$80,000. Another initiative is its partnership with MasterCard, which has pledged to donate US\$10 for every MasterCard transaction charged at participating Club 21 stores to programmes focusing on empowering young women, such as Singapore's Beautiful People, under the Purchase with Purpose ongoing campaign until September 30 in seven countries, including Singapore.

FASHION CARES
 CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The remote Altiplano plains; a Piaget-sponsored delegation on a visit to Bolivia; pre-loved fashion items at the Buy To Save charity sale; Chopard's Happy Diamonds bracelet



A Boost to Social Enterprise

The Rolex Awards for Enterprise has recognised 125 pioneering individuals since its inception in 1976, acknowledging and supporting groundbreaking work across the fields of applied technology, environment, science and health, exploration and culture.

Five Laureates and five Young Laureates are awarded every two years, selected for their project's originality, potential for impact and feasibility, as well as the candidate's spirit of enterprise. In addition to receiving a grant of CHF100,000 from Rolex, awardees are also connected by the watchmaking giant to its network of more than 100 past Laureates.

One of the Laureates in 2012 was Australian biomedical engineer Mark Kendall, who developed a nanopatch that will replace needles in vaccination. Rolex has funded his project in Papua New Guinea greatly, paving the way for affordable healthcare in impoverished nations.

Last year, Young Laureate Arun Krishnamurthy from India was also recognised for his work in environmental conservation. In particular, the award recognised his restoration of Lake Kilkattalai, a stretch of polluted water in the outskirts of Chennai, southern India. Krishnamurthy is also the founder of non-government organisation Environmentalist Foundation of India in 2011, which has since restored 12 lakes affected by pollution across the country.

FIGHT FOR HEALTH

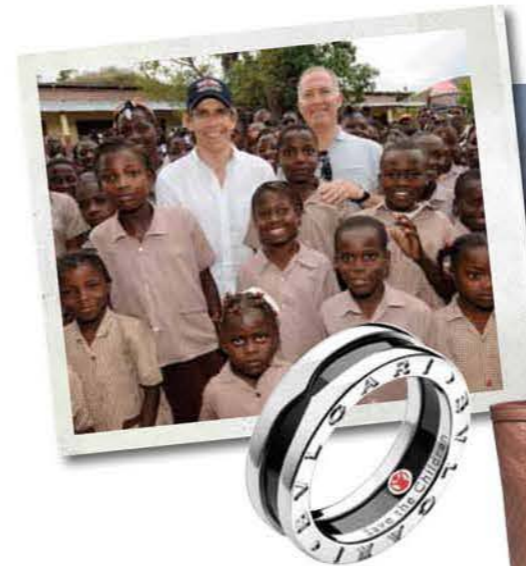
FROM TOP
 Medical students applying the nanopatch at a hospital in Papua New Guinea; Ralph Lauren's Pink Pony apparel is fashionable and for a good cause

Field Day against Cancer

The Polo Ralph Lauren Foundation encompasses initiatives that include cancer care, community service and education grants. One cause the brand closely identifies with is the fight against cancer. Taking action after losing his close friend Nina Hyde, former fashion editor of *The Washington Post*, to breast cancer,

designer Ralph Lauren partnered the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center to start the Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention.

The only outpatient facility of its kind in Harlem, New York City, the centre has cared for approximately 100,000 patients. It provides them with access to psychotherapy and pain management services, and conducts prevention and health education. Supporting the centre is the Pink Pony Fund for Cancer Care and Prevention, a worldwide initiative that addresses breast cancer care and prevention in disadvantaged communities. In the US, 10 per cent of each Pink Pony product's retail price supports the Ralph Lauren Foundation's cancer programmes. Internationally, a network of local charities also benefits from the sales of Pink Pony products.



Ring It Up for the Kids

Bulgari's partnership with Save The Children (STC) began in 2009, when it launched an all-silver version of its iconic B.Zero1 ring. Explaining the Italian jeweller's collaboration with STC, Francesco Trapani, president of LVMH Watch & Jewellery, says, "Being part of history and contributing to it by giving less privileged children the possibility of a better future was the best way to celebrate Bulgari's 125th anniversary in 2009."

From the sale of each ring, €90 is donated to STC, an international group that helps children-at-risk, including those affected by war, human trafficking and disease. A silver and black ceramic version was subsequently introduced in 2010. As of end 2012, a total of US\$20m was raised from the sales of the rings, and Bulgari has pledged to raise another €2.5m in 2013.

Knowledge Growth

A loyal supporter of traditional craft skills, the Fondation d'Enterprise Hermès has also been championing environmental causes since its inception in 2008. In the same year, the Fondation collaborated with the Intercultural Network for Development and Peace (INDP), an NGO promoting self-sufficiency through traditional skills and environmental protection.

INDP's ongoing project in Tamil Nadu trains local farmers in the Erode and Kanchipuram districts to be financially independent, and also teaches them farming techniques to maintain the biodiversity of organic medicinal plants, fruits and vegetables that were gradually disappearing due to monoculture. This has allowed these farmers to pay off debts incurred by purchasing agricultural supplies. Besides developing a medicinal garden and herb nursery, the farmers also received training in the use of organic fertilisers and pesticides. The fruit of their labour is sold at local markets, thereby addressing poverty and livelihood issues.



Ticket for Change

In June 2013, London's Twickenham Stadium was the stomping ground for some of the world's greatest pop icons – Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez and Mary J. Blige gave stirring performances for The Sound of Change Live, organised by Gucci's Chime for Change (CFC) campaign. The 50,000-odd concertgoers could choose to donate the full value of their ticket price to a charitable project of their choice, and raised a total of US\$3.9m.

Launched in February 2013 by Gucci, CFC funds 80 non-profit organisations in over 70 countries, advocating the empowerment of females across three areas: education, health and justice. It is co-chaired by Gucci's creative director Frida Giannini, actress Salma Hayek Pinault and singer Beyoncé. The fundraiser works by encouraging the public to learn about various causes through short films that depict real-life stories. Each contribution made to any project can be traced through CFC's website, and donors can see the impact of their sponsorship.

Gucci has also partnered UNICEF since 2008, creating a Gucci for UNICEF shopper bag each year with 25 per cent of the sale price going towards education programmes. This year's special edition will be available until the end of May 2014.

EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE

FROM TOP LEFT
 Ben Stiller and LVMH's Francesco Trapani in Haiti with Save the Children beneficiaries; the Bulgari B.Zero1 ring; The Sound of Change Live concert; Gucci for UNICEF shopper bag; organic chillies grown in a medicinal garden supported by Fondation d'Enterprise Hermès and INDP





At the Heart of Horology

Recognised as the world's first charity watch auction, the fifth edition of Only Watch takes place in the principality of Monaco on September 28, 2013. This year will see 33 unique timepieces from the world's top watch manufacturers go under the hammer. Proceeds go to the Monegasque Association Against Muscular Dystrophy, which funds research on Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a rare degenerative neuromuscular disease that affects one in 3,500 boys. Here are some of the unique pieces up for bid.



- 1** For the elegant lady, **BLANCPAIN** introduces a classic creation comprising a dove motif in mother-of-pearl marquetry, 12 diamond hour-markers set on the dial and a white alligator leather strap.
- 2** **BREGUET'S** Classic Chronograph openworked 5284 in yellow gold is animated by the calibre 533.2 SQ movement, which also uses the iconic column-wheel chronograph movement design of the 1940s.
- 3** The Première Flying Tourbillon channels the enigmatic allure of **CHANEL** with its black alligator strap and ceramic bezel. Sporting a camellia

- motif on the flying tourbillon, a total of 169 brilliant-cut diamonds adorn this delicate complication.
- 4** **CHOPARD'S** L.U.C. Tourbillon engages the Fleurisanne engraving technique unique to its manufacture. As a nod to the event venue and cause, DNA molecules and Monaco's coat of arms are engraved on the dial.
- 5** **CORUM** pays tribute to the medical research work done by the association with its TI-Bridge, which features engravings depicting the Greek god of medicine, Asclepius, and his serpent-entwined staff on the side of its red and gold case.

- 6** **GIRARD-PERREGAUX** presents the Chrono Hawk Only Watch, embodying the sporty look and functions of its Hawk Collection with a dial inspired by the brand's iconic Girard-Perregaux Bridge, with a hardy palladium bezel, water resistance of up to 100m and a black alligator strap.
- 7** **HARRY WINSTON** dedicates the Midnight Big Date, an exclusive model from its refined Midnight collection, to Only Watch. It has a 72-hour power reserve, and a pink diamond is perched above the large date, exuding discreet sophistication.

- 8** Reflecting the ingenuity of the **HUBLOT** manufacture, the Red 'n' Black Skeleton Tourbillon flaunts a flamboyant red ceramic bezel – the pioneering result of tireless research. Fitted on a 45mm Classic Fusion case, it features a five-day power reserve and a skeleton-worked tourbillon movement.
- 9** The Loving Butterfly by **JAQUET DROZ** draws inspiration from nature, Italian Renaissance and the Baroque with its cherub and butterfly motifs. The name of the event is engraved at the back of the yellow gold case to commemorate the charitable cause.

- 10** For the fourth time, **LOUIS VUITTON** collaborates with Paul Pettavino, a Duchenne muscular dystrophy patient himself, on the design of the Tambour Spin Time Regatta. The unique timepiece comes in a mini Damier canvas trunk, together with a personal message from Pettavino.
- 11** Encased in stainless steel with a glossy diamond-like carbon finish, the **MONTBLANC** Nicolas Ruessec Rising Hours for Monaco sports hour numerals that change colour depending on the time of the day or night, thanks to the new manufacture calibre MB R220.

- 12** The first and only version of **PATEK PHILIPPE'S** Grand Complications collection made in titanium, the Reference 5004T's calibre CHR 27-70 Q is based on a Nouvelle Lémania movement that comprises 407 parts, carefully finished by hand.
- 13** Holding two world records – the world's thinnest automatic skeleton movement at 2.40mm, and thinnest case at 5.34mm – **PIAGET'S** Altiplano Automatic Skeleton also displays a sleek sunburst satin-finished plate and bridges, as well as meticulously handcrafted bevelling, bridges and plate.
- 14** Worn by Jamaican sprinter Yohan Blake during the 2012

- London Olympic Games, the case of **RICHARD MILLE'S** Yohan Blake Tourbillon Prototype is made with magnesium WE 54, an extremely light and sturdy alloy that withstands high temperatures and extreme conditions.
- 15** The La Monégasque by **ROGER DUBUIS** features a tourbillon carriage in the shape of a Celtic cross and the exclusive self-winding RD520 movement that is built on 30 jewels and a rhodium-coated plate.
- 16** The **ULYSSE NARDIN** Marine Chronometer Manufacture Only Watch features a handcrafted enamel dial by world-renowned enamel

- specialist Donzé Cadran, while its UN-118 calibre is housed within an 18-karat rose gold case.
- 17** **VACHERON CONSTANTIN'S** Traditionnelle Patrimony is driven by a new in-house movement, the Calibre 2460 WT, and indicates 37 time zones, with Monaco in red.
- 18** The Lady Arpels Une Journée à Monaco watch by **VAN CLEEF & ARPELS** reflects the French Riviera's coastal charm with its rotating disk in white gold and lapis lazuli, while its turquoise dial is covered in whimsical illustrations of Côte d'Azur and the Rock of Monaco. 