



TOP TRENDS
WHAT'S NEW IN EXOTICS,
THE BOOM IN MERGERS
AND ACQUISITIONS
AND MORE. SECTION II



RACHEL HOVNANIAN'S NEW EXHIBIT
LOOKS AT OUR TECH ADDICTION. PAGE 9

WWD

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Hello, Dalí...

Miró and Magritte, too. Surrealism is alive and chic for fall. For more accessories that might not be what they seem, see pages 4 and 5.



Diane von Furstenberg's leather, plastic and nylon face and clock bags; Delfina Delettrez's 18-karat gold, diamond, white marble, aventurine and madrepore stone earrings (on handle); Arfango's silk velvet pump with a nylon resin heel.

THE LUXURY CONSUMER

Mixing High and Low A New Retail Reality

By EVAN CLARK

MEET THE EXTREME CROSS-SHOPPER.

They shop luxe and they shop discount, fulfilling both practical and psychological needs along the way. Cross-shopping is nothing new in fashion. Wardrobes are works of art and function that are drawn from a variety of sources.

Even so, the inclusion of, say, both Nordstrom and Kohl's in a shopping diet seems drastic to many. But research from MasterCard suggests high-end shoppers have no problem delving into the discount channel. In fact, they appear to spend more at lower-priced chains than in what would seem to be their natural luxe habitat.

At the request of WWD, MasterCard Advisors looked at the aggregate spending habits of more than 100,000 anonymous cardholders who made at least one purchase at one of nine high-end retailers last year. The group made more than 25 million total MasterCard transactions last year and proved to be relatively channel-agnostic.

The luxe stores included in the sample captured about 2 percent of the group's total MasterCard spending, while discount department stores, a category that does not include wholesale clubs, garnered about twice that, or 4 percent.

When shoppers in the sample did spend at the high-end stores, their average ticket was about three times larger than when they shopped at discount department stores, but they shopped at the luxe stores only one time for every six visits to a discount department store.

Andrew Mantis, MasterCard Advisors' senior vice president of merchant information services, said these broad trends reinforced what the research wing of the credit card company finds when it looks at spending patterns for individual retailers — that luxury consumers are very comfortable shopping the other end of the price scale.

In part, this extreme cross-shopping flows from the daily needs of busy lives and the structure of

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Cucinelli Shares Soar

By ALESSANDRA TURRA

MILAN — Brunello Cucinelli SpA is fashion's latest stock market star.

Shares of the luxury brand soared 49.7 percent Friday on their first day of trading on the Milan Stock Exchange, closing at 11.60 euros, or \$15.37 at current exchange rate.

During the day, the company's shares were temporarily halted twice after they rose 48.4 percent from the opening price to 11.38 euros, or \$15.07, and then rose 47.23 percent from the opening price to 11.41 euros, or \$15.12. In addition, the title negotiation started about 20 minutes late on Friday because the buying orders' prices were so high they exceeded the set minimum limit of variation.

There were numerous indications the company was likely to do well, including the early closing of the road show. Cucinelli, which floated a 30 percent stake in the company (33 percent with the Greenshoe option) for a total of about 22.4 million shares, received applications from 8,459 investors and the offer was oversubscribed by more than 17 times.

"I'm moved, but this was the dream of my life," said chairman Brunello Cucinelli, during the opening ceremony at the Bourse, attended by the Cucinelli family and a large number of company employees.

Cucinelli, who called himself "guardian" of the company, explained his personal strategy of approaching the biggest investors, who were invited to spend some time in Solomeo, where the company is based, to see firsthand how the business works.

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TOP TRIO:
Siiri Raasakka, Tiia Siren and Elina Laitinen won the main prize at Hyères International Festival of Fashion and Photography. **PAGE 11**

Reality Check

NEW YORK — Rachel Lee Hovnanian's latest exhibition, "Mud Pie," touches on the fallibility of memory and how all that staring into screens might be bad for more than our eyes. It opens Thursday at Leila Heller Gallery in Chelsea. For more, see page 10.



PHOTO BY MARGARET GIBBONS

MEMO PAD

COMEDY AND MAGIC: Early Saturday afternoon at Beall-Washington House in Washington's Georgetown neighborhood, **Gerard Senehi** was putting on a show. A small crowd at **Tammy Haddad's** annual pre-White House Correspondents' Dinner brunch gathered around the professional magician who bills himself as "The Experimentalist," as Senehi used sleight of hand to levitate bar crackers and slide wedding bands off fingers to the astonishment of partygoers like Zynga founder **Mark Pincus**. To his right, **Gayle King** chatted with a fellow partygoer about Washington dress codes. "In New York it's different; in New York a black-tie dress can be short," King explained. "If you own it," the other woman agreed. "If you own your look."

Due to the threat of rain, most of the annual pregame party was held in a large tent instead of in the open air out back. **Lindsay Lohan** made a blink-and-you-missed-it appearance. A very relaxed **Woody Harrelson** braved the occasional raindrop

out back, posing for fans. **Kerry Washington**, who works for the **Obama** campaign, and her seatmate **Rosario Dawson** took pictures with fans. **David Axelrod** did his best to cut through the din with a hard-to-hear joke about there being "a little bit of narcissism in the room."

Up front, his show momentarily paused, Senehi considered his audience. "I just do things that people can't explain," the sport-coated magician said with a wry smile. "It makes being here kind of cool, otherwise I'd be like fish out of water...I like mystery and I like uncertainty and there's a lot of certainty in this room."

Later that night at the dinner at the Washington Hilton, **Kim Kardashian**, guest of Fox News' **Greta Van Susteren**, strode in off the escalator behind her mother, **Kris Jenner**.

"I have a cute story for you," Jenner said. "Kim was invited to this dinner a few years ago, last minute. She didn't have a dress, so I let her borrow a vintage Valentino gown I wore when I was married to her dad. I got to see her in a dress I wore 25 years earlier."

Kardashian, who wore a



George Clooney chats with Elizabeth Banks, in Antonio Berardi, at the Vanity Fair after party.

Johanna Johnson dress on this night, smiled, "Oh mom, that's so nice."

Between posing for pictures with fans, Kardashian said she hadn't made up her mind for the general election. Word of Kim Kardashian, Undecided Voter, apparently never made it to the President.

"Why am I telling knock-knock jokes to Kim Kardashian?" the President later said in a faux hot

mic moment before his remarks. "What is she famous for, anyway?"

Lohan, in vintage Galanos, appeared uncomfortable standing in the middle of the lobby. "I feel so exposed right now, please protect me," she whispered. "This is my first White House dinner...I just don't know where we're going, can we figure this out?"

Her group assured her everything would be fine. "I just

want to sit down, people are staring," she said.

Goldie Hawn didn't seem to mind all the attention, posing for pictures with her date for the evening, **Piers Morgan**. She stopped a throng of photographers.

"Wait! I need more lip gloss."

They patiently waited.

"OK, I'm ready, this is fun."

Hawn informed them she was wearing **Dolce & Gabbana**. Morgan wondered if anyone cared who he was wearing. "I'm in **Dolce & Gabbana**," he said.

"You are? Oh my gosh! I can't believe it," said a disbelieving Hawn. "You know, we didn't even discuss this beforehand."

After the dinner wrapped up, by 11:30, a full-on traffic jam, combined with rain and an intense security procedure caused a major bottleneck at Vanity Fair's after party at the residence of the French ambassador in the city's **Sheridan-Kalorama** neighborhood. Even **Graydon Carter** was forced to wait — for at least a little bit — with his companions for the night, **Rachel Feinstein**, **John Currin** and **Martin Short**.

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PHOTO BY DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/VF12/WIREIMAGE

Narcissus in an iPad

"Dinner for Two," 2012. Mixed media installation with video, 16 by 5 by 2.3 feet.

PHOTO BY ADAM RECH

NEW YORK — On an unseasonably warm day in Rachel Lee Hovnanian's bright and airy Chelsea studio, there is a barrage of electronic alerts going off.

The artist, here to walk through her latest exhibition "Mud Pie" (opening Thursday at Leila Heller Gallery) cuts a welcoming figure, posed between a series of elaborately set tables in slim cut black pants and a crisp white button down shirt. She doesn't react to the unseen beeping, ringing, trilling devices — she doesn't seem to notice the din. The scene is almost exactly a life-size replica of one of the tableaux from her last show, an exhibition of photographs and sculpture entitled "The Power & Burden of Beauty," where her beauty queen trophies in elaborate luxury settings turned to miniature bottles of vodka, painkillers and steak knives to combat the isolation of their devotion to the surface of things. Hovnanian's latest exhibition similarly probes the inauthentic, but this time in 3-D.

The largest dining table looks familiar, because it is. It is also where the noises are coming from. "It's [the photograph] 'Dining Table,' but I took it into 2012," Hovnanian explains. While in "Dining Table" two statues sit impossibly far apart, separated by an endless table (and, one imagines, significant marital distance) here in the gallery at "Dinner for Two" the table is long, but the diners are a pair of iPads attached to empty chairs at head-height. They play recordings of a man and woman separated only by their own distractions: both are lit in the blue-white glow of the screens of their respective (unseen) devices. The sounds of their digital amusements fill the space. Neither ever speaks, though periodically they make eye contact. Mostly they smile to themselves, fully absorbed.

"You know what that is, don't you?" Hovnanian raises an eyebrow at the sounds, "she's playing Words with Friends and he's playing Angry Birds.... I see people on dates doing this, families out to dinner all on their devices. That's a family dinner, today."

There exists a popular argument in today's culture (recently discussed at length by The New

York Times, Wall Street Journal, National Public Radio and Atlantic Monthly) that technological advances, which we have bought into en masse as a great connecting force, are slickly disingenuous: that the machinations of technology effectively pull people farther apart rather than bring them closer together. Essentially, that technology is preventing actual connections in lieu of digital ones. Hovnanian is worried that all the digital clamoring for our attention has drowned out the authentic reality of the temporal, that we're diluting our own experiences. "Mud Pie" has a multifaceted approach toward what the artist refers to as the "unreal, real, dream-like awake state" of things. Firstly, there's the concept of memory and it's essential fallibility. Then, there's narcissism and technology.

Entry into the gallery will be accessed through a cafe of

Hovnanian's creation, complete with aluminum counter and stools. Footage shot in the artist's home state, Texas, of a breezy, pastoral scene called "Outside Nacogdoches" plays on flat screen televisions behind the counter, mimicking windows. An actress wearing a tag blazoned "@CafeWaitress" (tweets to the address will be answered) will greet guests and offer them what's on the menu; coffee, lemonade or orange juice or "for eatin', we have bacon; we have tacos; we have barbecue pork and for dessert we have pecan and apple pie," Hovnanian recounts in a charming put-on Texan drawl. If you ask @CafeWaitress anything off-script, she'll ask Siri, the iPhone 4S application, and play you the response. "I remember these cafes," Hovnanian says, "and they're important to my understanding of who I am now.... But you can't remember whether that's what

they were really like, or whether your memory is fooling you. We constantly revise our memories, editing and reinterpreting."

The comestibles at the cafe are all made by the artist, and not particularly nutritional — working with a New Jersey based food scientist ("a flavorologist," Hovnanian notes), her creations taste exactly like what they are advertised as while having little, molecularly, to do with them. What she calls "Tex-Mex" is about the size of a thimble and the consistency of a wine gum past it's sell-by date. Though it has the multiple layers of a burrito bowl, the affect is not altogether pleasant.

"I've heard the Willy Wonka comparison," Hovnanian shrugs, "but it's just a good way to segue into what we're talking about. You can smell this," the artist proffers her "Mud Pie," a portrait of which festoons the show's press materials. It is hardened and chalky and made of dirt, though it sits in an elegant silver pie pan, "and it smells like apple pie. But it's not. It's this non-real real, and our world is so much of this: we don't even know it's happening to us. This is what 'real' life has become. Country Time lemonade's advertising says 'made with real lemons!' but, you know, it's powder. Kids don't even know what real lemons taste like anymore."

This is the basis of Hovnanian's show: the mud pie is the most real of anything in the gallery, being made of earth and water versus the powdered Country Time or Tang or milky hot chemical water that smells and tastes like airplane coffee, but it is not really a pie. Hovnanian adds, "I made these as a little girl to mimic my mother. It was real to me."

Everywhere in the studio there seem to be spectacular vases of flowers. Preternaturally huge white peonies, roses, lilies, freesia, a narcissus or two and a few white tulips burst triumphantly. They look perfect. Too perfect. "They're all fake," Hovnanian grins, "When you look closely you can see that they're not real.... Like anything, you have to look closely."

Hovnanian isn't condemning technology via "Mud Pie." "I'm just as guilty. I have Twitter, I have these things," she explains, "but

how much of technology do we use now just to look at ourselves, at these creations that we've made of ourselves? With 'The Power & Burden of Beauty,' I wasn't saying it's not good to look good, I was saying that it's just such a burden to have to go through that, to have to deal with it, to have to be a certain way. Technology is the same, it's become a burden that's oppressive: the e-mails come one after the other and you finish one and there's another on the way. We're fast, we're so fast now. That's why fast food! When I was growing up there were cafes, a lot of them, now they've been replaced by fast food."

On the far wall are a series of eight panels, metallic in tone and sheen and heavily textured. They catch the light and seem to undulate with it. They're made up of thousands of tiny narcissus flowers, cast in metal and painstakingly applied by hand to a metal backing. "I call these my motherboards; it's the idea that we get sucked into the screens," Hovnanian says. "They're sort of a warning. I find myself all the time walking around with my head down, sucked into my phone or my computer. The most organic thing is the flower; but I've made it in metal and so now it's not a flower anymore, because we're so inorganic."

"People don't even go up and say hello to each other anymore; they tweet, they e-mail, it's digital. Narcissus looked at himself in the screen, the mirror; the water, and he could never pull himself away, he died looking at himself. When we try to make a changing, natural object into something permanent, we're in denial. You can't possess it; that destroys it. And so this is like, 'OK, I've got to stop this, I've got to realize that it's wonderful to connect and it's such a great way to be able to work, but I have to be able to get myself away from this addiction.'"

For those looking to follow suit, Hovnanian includes a recipe for "Mud Pie" in her exhibition catalogue. "Some people have never made one, either you have or you haven't. It's a way of saying, 'Take a little break, reconnect to earth, make a mud pie, get your hands dirty,'" she shrugs.

Unplug.

— ALESSANDRA CODINHA



"Texas Mud Pie, Hands and Feet" (Self-Portrait), 2012. C-print, 14 by 18 inches.

