

# FUTURE OF LUXURY

REPORT 25'

backslash

The  
Disruption  
Company

180 Luxe

Backslash,  
180 Luxe  
& Cult



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Welcome to "Future of Luxury,"  
a report from Backslash, 180 Luxe  
and TBWA\CULT that unpacks  
what will—and more importantly what should—  
come next in the world of luxury.

# LUXURY X CULTURE

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Luxury is a familiar concept that's grown nearly impossible to define. Once marked by tangible qualities like price, craftsmanship, or scarcity, the essence of luxury is becoming more and more about the intangible feelings it conjures up. Increasingly, what we find truly exceptional is that which defies practicality and exceeds our reach.

Traditionalists will tell you luxury stands still. That it doesn't evolve or change. But how can that be true if what we find special—and are therefore willing to pay a premium for—is evolving daily alongside changing consumer perceptions, world circumstances, and the cultural context that luxury goods and experiences exist inside of?

Yes, there are products, pillars and places that will always be synonymous with luxury. But once you understand that luxury really is in the eye of the beholder, you can then see how an eye toward changing desires can unlock a clearer view of luxury's future.

Given the current state of luxury, this clarity is needed more than ever. At the macroeconomic level, the industry must reckon with geopolitical uncertainty, restrained GDP growth, and shrinking disposable income—none of which are going away anytime soon. At the same time, a fast-changing luxury landscape is forcing businesses to abandon their reliance on tradition and start getting comfortable with experimentation. Social media has made brands that once seemed exclusive feel commonplace; the explosion of rental and resale platforms is challenging old business models; and millennials and younger generations, who will make up **80%** of luxury spending by 2030<sup>2</sup>, are pushing tensions around sustainability and social responsibility to the forefront.

These sharper headwinds are driving what we see as necessary rectification of luxury—an opportunity to pull it back in places where it has lost its way, and bravely forge ahead in the areas that have become stale.

This report brings those very opportunities to life, unpacking the often messy relationship between tech and tradition, heritage and novelty, ethics and pleasure. These themes play out across three chapters:

# \01

\ Chapter one, **Contemporary Craftsmanship**, looks at how rigid ideas of craftsmanship are evolving in the age of blockchain, AI, and open innovation.

# \02

Chapter two, **Fantasy Machines**, highlights how immersive and unconventional brand storytelling is igniting desire for new audiences.

# \03

\ Chapter three, **Limitless Luxury**, explores luxury's foray into new extremes—from immortality to ultra-obscure travel.

All of the ideas you'll encounter are the result of an international collaboration between strategists, trend spotters, and luxury specialists of various ages and nationalities—painting a comprehensive picture of what's to come. Whether you're working on an established upscale brand or are looking to demand a price premium for the first time, we hope it offers inspiration for how to build a future of luxury that both meets the desires of today and accounts for the many challenges of tomorrow.

“Luxury both fascinates and scandalizes for insulting poverty. But without it, without its splendour, would we have shared many of the achievements that drive us to the museums, the castles, the pyramids of Egypt? Before being a market, luxury is therefore the fruit of a culture of which it is the apogee, the most accomplished and refined part.”

# LUXURY AROUND THE WORLD

## MEXICO

**[Luxury is]...becoming more and more about localism. This new wave of “local luxury” is not defined by a price tag or exclusivity, but rather by a deep appreciation for the distinctive qualities that make Mexican products and destinations unique.**

“There are two forces shaping how luxury is viewed in Mexico. On one side, there’s the traditional way of perceiving luxury, in which elements such as high-quality materials, high prices, logos, overseas manufacturing, and status are key. This type of luxury is only accessible to a select few.

On the other hand, a renewed love of localism is expanding our region’s perception of luxury. ‘Corridos tumbados’ (a genre of regional music that was once considered for the lower class) is now mainstream amongst the upper class; Mexican singer Peso Pluma was one of Spotify’s Top 5 Global Artists and GQ LATAM’s Man of the Year; and Michelin brought its lauded restaurant guide to Mexico for the first time this year. These triggers signal a growing appreciation for Mexican culture, giving Mexico newfound credibility as both a luxury destination and a legitimate maker of luxury goods.”

— *Yellowwood*

## SOUTH AFRICA

**[Luxury is]...about having a unique and honest perspective to share with the world.**

“A growing number of local heritage brands are transitioning into the luxury space and challenging the conventional look of luxury. Think Thebe Magugu, Maxhosa, Rich Mnisi—all of which are rooted in clear beliefs, ideas, and personal perspectives. But as these homegrown luxury brands make waves globally, the key will be keeping their presence rooted in South Africa rather than transferring to larger international markets.

At the same time, honesty is only becoming more important as the less glamorous sides of luxury are exposed. Whether through the lens of sustainability, conservation, or classist divisions, inequities are increasingly being called out by locals.”

— *Yellowwood*

## SINGAPORE

**[Luxury is]...a blend of traditional values with modern aspirations. Beyond the exclusivity of owning high-end products, it is also about holistic health, a reflection of success, and meaningful experiences.**

“As the market matures, more Southeast Asians are just now starting to prefer experiences over possessions, quiet luxury over ostentatious designs, and craftsmanship over mass-produced goods.”

— *TBWA\Singapore*

## UNITED STATES

**[Luxury is]...becoming less about materialism and more about the ability to defy limits.**

“Material luxuries like fashion and cars will always be in demand. But for the ultra-rich, luxury is being shaped by new extremes around wellness, privacy, nature access, and knowledge sharing that the masses aren’t even aware of. The central theme here is beating the odds. It’s the ability to cheat death, conquest new worlds, know what no one else knows, and be shielded from crisis. These desires will open up new markets, but they’ll also heighten debates around privilege and inequality.”

— *TBWA\Chiat\Day LA*

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**[Luxury is]...a lifestyle characterized by an extravagant display of wealth and opulence, where high-end products and services are chosen not only for their exclusivity and superior quality, but also for their deep cultural significance.**

“When it comes to luxury, this definition is specific to the GCC region and Qatar as the other countries are going through political conflict and dire times. For us, the name-brands are secondary. What comes first is high-quality offerings that blend modernity with respected traditions.”

— *TBWA\RAAD*

## ITALY

**[Luxury is]...both an attitude and a precious artifact.**

“On a tangible level, Italian luxury is synonymous with the highest level of craftsmanship. But on an emotional level, true luxury is about a deeper recognition of beauty and heritage that money alone cannot buy.”

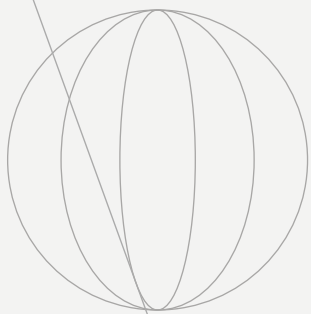
— *TBWA\Italy*

## FRANCE

**[Luxury is]...the mashup of history and cultural nowness, of long-lasting savoir-faire and modern avant-garde. This blend aims to create the most astonishing products, made possible by a long-term vision and accompanied by exceptional client services.**

“French luxury is an attitude that aspires to invent the never-been-done-before while cherishing the inherited or transmitted knowledge. It requires a strong investment in education to create a luxury piece, to understand its subtleties, and to involve the new craftspeople, leveraging the French heritage, diaspora and diversity at every step. It’s also a quest for a certain definition of beauty. One that has a French prism but can resonate around the world, and that can hold or even increase its value over time, whether through the preloved market or within a single family.”

— *180 Luxe, Paris*



# THE NEW FACES OF LUXURY

## A look at the offensive and defensive players challenging fashion as we know it.

Luxury would be nothing without the people who lead it, endorse it, and even criticize it. While the fashion industry has traditionally recruited from within its own walls and listened exclusively to its most affluent clients, a more democratized media landscape is now breaking down the silos and making room for diverse voices to be heard.

On an external level, new digital vigilantes and educators are exposing sides of luxury that were once kept private. And on an internal level, brands are playing defense by appointing new visionaries and creative councils to develop a strong point of view on the world.

These new faces of luxury coincide with continued warnings of deteriorating demand. Based on estimates, analysts say 2024 marks the **sixth worst year** for the luxury sector in the past 20-year period.<sup>2</sup> In this sluggish landscape, even the appointment of a new designer for a renowned fashion house no longer generates the excitement it once did. Rather, it often leads to fatigue and a period of uncertainty—further underscoring the need for fresh perspectives.



# THE INNER CIRCLE

## The Visionaries

This renewed focus on perspective starts with embracing new visionaries.

While some brands are responding to the market instability by playing it safe, others are inducting original leaders who have a bold vision and a refreshingly unorthodox ethos. Enter Pharrell Williams. His philosophy, [“life is a collaboration,”](#) embodies the shift toward a more integrative approach to luxury that blends art, entertainment and fashion. This "Système D," as the French might say, appears to be paying off. LVMH's sales [grew 9%](#) in the last quarter of 2023, down from 17% in the previous quarter.<sup>3</sup> And while the conglomerate doesn't reveal figures for specific brands, it's thought that LV accounts for about half of the sales.

Pharrell's approach draws inspiration from hip-hop culture, which has always been about pushing boundaries, following creative instincts, and finding disruptive ways to express individuality. This was evident during the recent [Louis Vuitton men's show](#) at the UNESCO headquarters—"an homage to human beings" where the models walked down in order of their skin tone while the cinematic Pharrell-composed soundtrack "Triumphus Cosmos" played proudly. For those looking on, it was a clear sign that the Maison is entering an ambitious new era.

Another visionary to watch is Nicola Formichetti. If you don't know Nicola from his time at Mugler, Diesel, or Uniqlo, you may know him as the man behind Lady Gaga's infamous "meat dress" from 2010. He was recently appointed as artistic director for

emerging Web 3 fashion platform [SYKY](#), where he will spearhead future luxury projects. His latest [curation](#) for Hong Kong designer KWK and digital artist Taskin Goec at London Fashion Week offers an intriguing glimpse of what's to come.

## The Councils

In addition to tapping new visionaries, luxury brands are also investing in platforms to rejuvenate their internal talents. At the executive level, we're seeing the creation of new councils or committees that exist to challenge convention. Cartier's [“Luminary Thinkers”](#) are a prime example. It's an exclusive group of entrepreneurs, sustainability leaders, consultants, artists, authors and tastemakers who are all handpicked by the CEO to help dream up the future of the company—representing a more diverse and resourceful approach to innovation.

An equally important but seemingly less "official" example is the hardcore communities on Discord. Unlike the biggest algorithm-centered platforms like Instagram, which are geared toward entertaining the masses, Discord offers brands a way to directly engage with their most enthusiastic fans. Louis Vuitton and Bonnegueule have made it a point to show up here, whether it's to [launch creative challenges](#) or to showcase the [making of a collection](#). The chatroom conversations that follow allow brands to gather constructive feedback, serving as an unfiltered digital focus group.

As luxury contends with a noticeable shortage of skilled talent, these new councils can help fill the gap and force brands to look outside of their own lane.

# THE OUTSIDE FORCES

## The Vigilantes

Who brands have questioning them is just as—if not more—important than who they have in their corner. When you think of whistleblowers you likely think of early pioneers like [Diet Prada](#), but the list is quickly expanding as more vigilantes look to challenge luxury's power and call out fraudulent behaviors. Young influencers like [14-year-old watch enthusiast Amandine](#) are redefining how people understand luxury by offering joyfully candid perspectives; passionate voices like [Data, but make it fashion](#) are acting as brutally honest trend analysts; and playful accounts like [I deserve Couture](#) and [Brodinkee](#) are sharing their hot takes through memes. It's not all fun and games, though, as seen with platforms like [1 Granary](#) that don't hesitate to share the harsher realities of the fashion industry.

Secondhand platforms like Vestiaire Collective and Watchfinder also come into play here, serving as a space for people to engage in in-depth debates about the value of luxury items. This "nerdiness" surrounding luxury goods has scaled up, creating hundreds of thousands of conversations that

emphasize the importance of indisputable quality and artisanal craftsmanship. [May Berthelot](#) regularly shares her views on counterfeiting, while archivists like [prada.archive](#), [Diorinthe2000s](#) and [mcqueen.vault](#) are providing audiences with a curated window into luxury's past.

## The Educators

As trends accelerate and brands become ever more plentiful, new educators are entering the scene to help people keep up. Substack authors in particular have quickly become an alternative source of legitimacy for many brands. [Magasin](#), [The Cakewalk](#), and [Back Row](#)—just to name a few—represent this avant-garde.

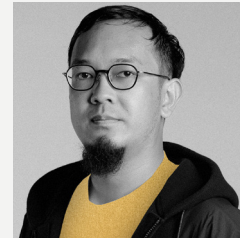
[Reddit](#) is another one to watch. According to Rob Gaige, head of global insights at Reddit, "Reddit has a higher percentage of high-income folks—\$200,000 to \$500,000 in salary—than any other social media platform,"<sup>4</sup> making it a go-to destination for luxury connoisseurs and a must-watch platform for brands looking to gain rich insight.

With many claiming that luxury fashion is in need of a shake-up, these new faces will be the ones to make things interesting again.

# Q: Who are the luxury disruptors you're most excited to watch?

"Maybe one shared feature of the emerging trailblazers from Southeast Asia is their polymathic ability to create across mediums and across borders. A filmmaker like **Apitchatpong Weerasethakul** is now pushing boundaries in experimental video installations. A contemporary artist and plastician like **Le Hien Minh** brings her Vietnamese identity and body of work to American art academia, and I hear she has a book project in the works.

The most exciting profiles are nonstop contributors like **Lam Dao Dao**, a filmmaker who jumps from an all-Vietnamese commercial for Apple to an arthouse Cannes-winning production, while finding time to play sharp, nerdy DJ sets at underground festivals across Asia. A quick peek at his feeds also reveals a strong sense of art direction even for his homemaking: his condo, featured in design magazines, borrows postmodernist traits reminiscent of Kubrickian visuals. You don't know his name yet, of course, but that's something for your side of the world to correct."



— VU QUAN NGUYEN MASSE

*Co-founder of V2X, a digital platform for authentic Vietnamese content focusing on emerging cultures; Head of Ecosystems at NewCampus.*

"Luxury is in a stasis. Look at big fashion: there's a huge Mercator going on, yet no clear direction in terms of style or zeitgeist. No newness, just rearrangement. Digital has erupted in fashion (I like designers using it like **Alphonse Maitrepierre**), but has not disrupted it. Meanwhile, trends have fragmented into zillions of « cores ». I believe the biggest disruption actually comes from outside the luxury arena, namely **SHEIN** and its followers. There's a strong ripple effect: Zara moves up, threatening affordable luxury and destroying Gucci. One last point: the strong financial effect of great creative designers. Loewe was nonexistent before **JW Anderson, Zac Posen** is rejuvenating dead Gap, etc. They might still be the real disruptors."



— THOMAS BUCAILLE

*Director of Lisaa Mode Paris; Formerly at L'Oréal, Christian Dior Couture, Condé Nast International & Ralph Lauren*



“For me, the most interesting ones are those who understand that beauty is not about product, experience, or lifestyle, but about culture. Just as fashion was once conceived. Within this field, I find that facialist [Jeanne Casimir](#) is carving out her path in a very interesting way: a fatalist who claims to read the face. She partners with artists each season for her display at Le Bon Marché and has an incredibly precise knowledge of skin. In essence, visiting her is almost like going to a museum.

I also find [Isamaya Ffrench's](#) approach relevant. Not only is she an incredibly talented makeup artist (MUA), she has a very personal aesthetic, sometimes leaning towards gore, horror, or fantasy, yet remaining glamorous. Beyond her talent, she has managed to build an identity and expertise more compelling than any brand. She launched a [makeup line](#), and while I don't have a firm opinion on it, I pay close attention to what she does because she tests everything (including

cosmetic treatments) without any commercial intent behind it. In other words, beyond just a brand, it's a kind of knowledge hub capable of discussing various subjects with a lot of freedom. Since her commercial income comes from multiple sources, she remains a person, not just a “spokesperson for her brand.” It's what Gwyneth Paltrow tried to do but she became too big for it to work.

I'm closely following what [Haeckels](#) is doing too, a brand based in the UK that produces on a very small scale using local seaweed. This allows them to offer made-to-order products as well as very innovative ones, like biodegradable seaweed-based masks, whereas most brands don't think about creating a new object but rather about addressing a skin concern. They also engage their customers as Citizens, involving them in their decision-making process and giving them early access to new products.

“For me, the most relevant interlocutor in a major luxury brand is, above all, the sourcing and purchasing director. That's what I see as the luxury of the future—how I selected, manufactured, or had my ingredients made.”

Finally, I believe that those who value their networks are more trustworthy and more interesting than the rest. The luxury of the future consists of brands that can engage in conversations with and alongside other people. For me, the most relevant interlocutor in a major luxury brand is, of course, the scientific director, but above all, the sourcing and purchasing director. That's what I see as the luxury of the future—how I selected, manufactured, or had my ingredients made.”

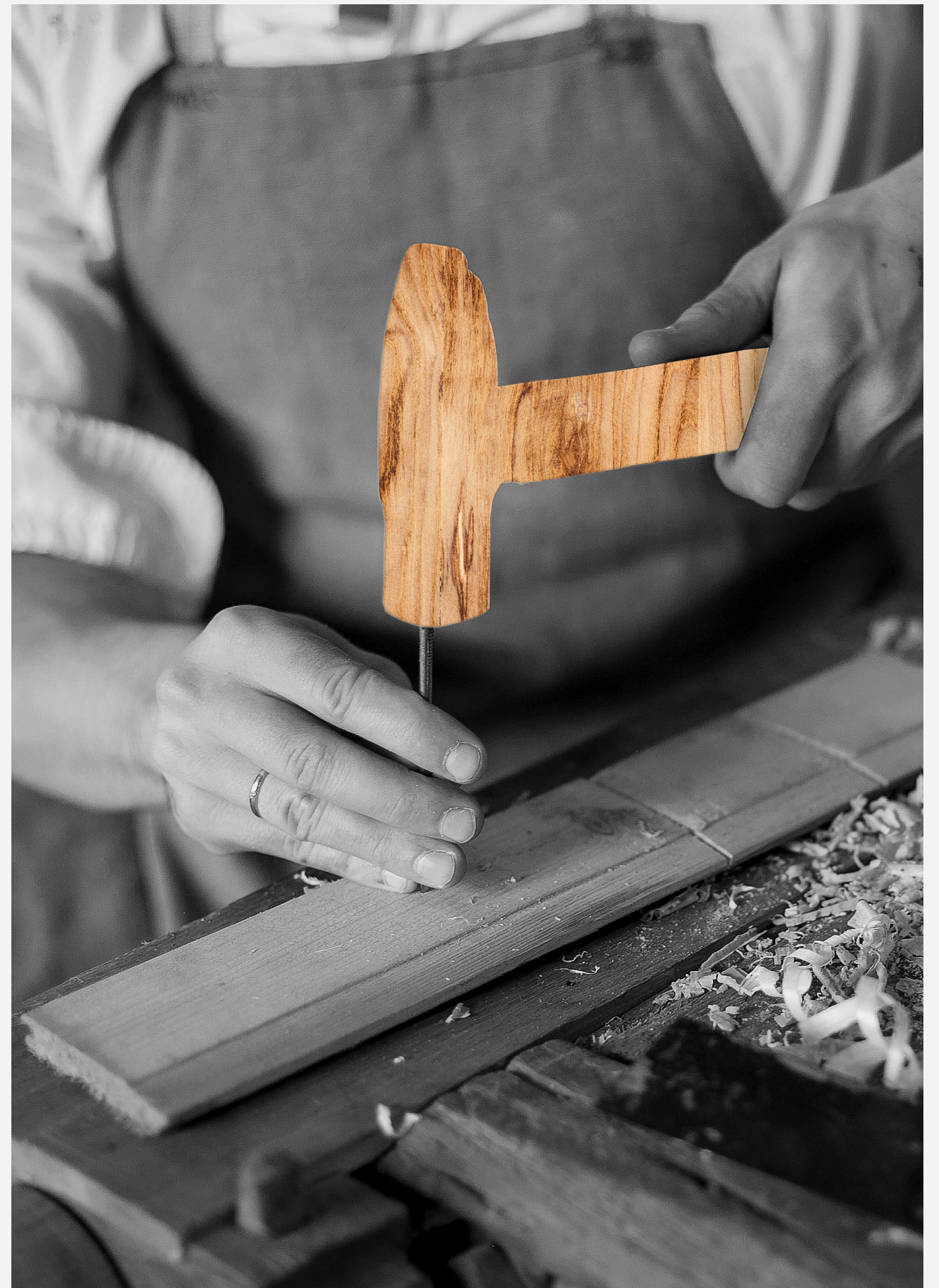


— VALENTINE PETRY  
*Author of [MAKE UP](#), freelance senior beauty writer  
at Harper's Bazaar France & ELLE France*

# CONTEMPORARY CRAFTSMANSHIP

## CHAPTER 1

**T**he old rules of craftsmanship are being rewritten. Once seen as a threat to traditional techniques, technology is now elevating the status of handcrafted goods through traceability, deeper storytelling, and open innovation. Looking ahead, these digital upgrades will ensure that human craft endures for the long haul.



Whizy Kim  
Vox

“IN AN AGE  
OF MASS-  
PRODUCED  
GOODS,  
NOTHING  
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AND BESPOKE.”

# DRIVING THE SHIFT

The modernization of craftsmanship will see the traditional blend with the totally unfamiliar.

A refreshed approach is needed to attract the next generation of craftspeople.

› The luxury industry will need 276 thousand people by **2028**.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, LVMH **predicts** a deficit of 22,000 workers by the end of 2025, one-third of whom are artisans and designers.<sup>6</sup>

Technology is being recognized as an ally of craftsmanship, not an enemy of it.

› According to a global study by Vogue Business and Google, **50%** of luxury fashion consumers think AI improves a brand's craftsmanship when used within the design process, as long as a human touch is present.<sup>7</sup>

A market slump is driving an urgent need for open innovation.

› Bain **reports** the luxury goods market declined from 1%-3% in Q1 2024 and advises that it's time for brands to "rethink" the value equation.<sup>8</sup>

# A CONVERSATION WITH ANTONIO CASU

CEO of [Italdesign](#).



If you haven't heard of **Italdesign**, you've certainly heard of Bugatti, Ferrari, Aston Martin, Audi, BMW, and Alfa Romeo—just a few of the luxury automotive brands that Italdesign has partnered with. Since 1968, Italdesign has provided design, engineering and production services for the transportation industry, making its mark on some of the most iconic cars out there.

To learn more about how notions of craftsmanship are evolving in the automotive sector and beyond, we sat down with Italdesign's CEO Antonio Casu, who first joined the company back in 1998.

**Q: In the age of automation and mass production, true craftsmanship is becoming increasingly rare. What is the secret to preserving it in an industry like yours?**

Craftsmanship skills, once lost, are lost forever. The ability to create and to create well has always defined Italian small and medium enterprises, our artisanship in all its forms. Even in the age of artificial intelligence, these skills will remain irreplaceable and will continue to be in demand for niche applications. At Italdesign, we believe that large-volume projects, which provide higher margins, are a lever for preserving these distinctive Italian craftsmanship skills. Preserving them is a cultural and historical responsibility. But we aim to pass down these traditional skills, not simply to celebrate the past but to keep them alive for future needs. Indeed, we're seeing that many of our luxury clients value traditional techniques, such as metal bodywork, because of their timeless appeal.

**Q: Technology and craftsmanship have long been positioned as opposing forces. How is Italdesign merging the two?**

The secret lies in adding technology to an object that retains the flavor, the smell, and the feeling of something handmade and crafted with care, while also having a touch of modernity that projects it into the future. Take the steering wheel, for instance. Tomorrow's cars may not even have a steering wheel, but if I have to touch something, a surface of glass or metal feels cold, whereas hand-stitched leather has immense tactile, emotional, and evocative value. It's this kind of craftsmanship paired with customization for which clients are willing to pay, and pay well. However, we shouldn't fall back on nostalgia or retro styles, as they don't push us forward. The challenge lies in staying up to date and understanding how to combine new technologies with traditional trades, possibly experimenting with unexpected pairings that could open doors to new services and niche markets. It's a difficult path to plan because we are exploring uncharted territory, but it's the path worth taking.

**Q: Reports show that luxury as a whole is facing serious worker deficits in its production sectors. What is your advice for luxury brands looking to recruit the next generation of craftspeople?**

It's often a cultural issue. Manual work is undervalued in comparison to intellectual work, with university seen as the only viable way to succeed professionally, often due to family pressures. Yet, for some, a career in manual work can bring as much or even greater fulfillment. We need to increase the attractiveness of these trades by valuing them economically and improving their social perception.

**Q: How is the push towards sustainability reshaping notions of luxury in the automotive sector?**

The concept of luxury follows two seemingly contrasting directions: on one hand, luxury's inherent exclusivity conflicts with sustainability, as it often relies on rare and precious resources. On the other hand, there's a growing effort among high-end brands to avoid being seen as polluting or exploiting resources. In the automotive sector, for instance, technical solutions can be found that retain combustion engines while reducing environmental impact, or materials like carbon fiber can be replaced with more "natural" options such as cotton fibers. However, it's essential to avoid greenwashing. This is why many luxury car manufacturers focus on tangible innovations, such as adopting more energy-efficient production processes and using renewable energy sources, for instance, through photovoltaic systems. These choices not only improve environmental impact but also represent sound financial strategies by reducing dependency on volatile fossil fuel costs and enhancing resilience against potential market shocks. Finally, it's important to remember that genuine sustainability is inseparable from financial sustainability. For any "green" initiative to be long-lasting, it must be both environmentally and economically viable.

**Q: Give us your boldest predictions for how the luxury car market will evolve in the next five to ten years. What are you most excited about?**

The luxury car market will continue to grow in search of even greater exclusivity; it will evolve, expand, and luxury brands will work to satisfy this demand with existing luxury products for a broader clientele. They'll position themselves even higher to meet the expectations of traditional clients, who will want to differentiate themselves even more from the newer customer base. We're already seeing this trend with the rise in demand for one-off, hyper-personalized and exclusive cars. This brings us back to the theme of craftsmanship—the unique object—which requires companies with our skills: combining design with engineering and having the economic strength to create one-of-a-kind items on demand, without relying solely on these projects for survival.

**Q: Fill in the blank. What separates a true luxury brand from a pretender is \_\_\_\_\_.**

Culture. And I'm not talking about heritage, which is part of culture, because here we're not discussing history. By culture, I mean the ability to have studied and to have understood where to position oneself with a credible story to tell. Doing this requires culture, knowledge, passion, and conviction.

“The luxury car market will continue to grow in search of even greater exclusivity. We're already seeing this with the rise in demand for one-off, hyper-personalized cars.”



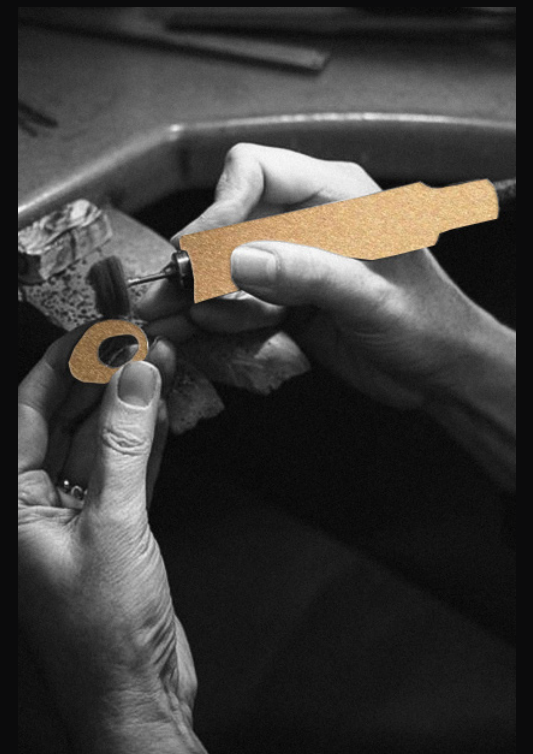


# RENAISSANCE OF CRAFT



## WAY *in* 1

Luxury is nearing a recruitment crisis. With a significant portion of today's craftspeople preparing for retirement, the industry must urgently attract a new generation of artisans in order to keep its heritage alive. It's time to make skilled trades aspirational again



**SELLING THE DREAM TO A NEW GENERATION**

Craftsmanship has a recruitment problem. According to a 2022 survey by the Comité Colbert, 85% of luxury houses are dealing with serious worker deficits in their production sectors.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Altagamma **estimates** that luxury goods companies will need to employ 346,000 professionals in top-level trades over the next five years, including more than 40,000 in fashion and leather goods.<sup>10</sup>

Without new people coming in, there's a big risk that today's craftspeople will retire without having passed on their know-how. Part of the problem is that trades aren't necessarily top of mind for a generation that grew up enamored by flashy startups and flexible work schedules. One of the most challenging tasks for brands, then, will be to present craftsmanship in a new light—making it attractive, aspirational and meaningful for young people who tend to dismiss manual jobs due to a perceived lack of status and social recognition from their peers.

The way to achieve this is to create a new narrative where doing is valued at the same level as thinking. Let's take MasterChef as an example. The success of this show stems from its ability to sell the dream of becoming a star chef starting from scratch, relying on one's hands and creativity in something as common as cooking. This is the same dream that fuels TikTokers, influencers in general, and participants in shows like X-Factor. In a sense, we can say that YNAP and The King's Foundation, with their **Modern Artisan** program, are moving in this direction. The objective is to

accelerate the careers of the next generation of artisans, giving them an opportunity to design, manufacture and launch a more responsible luxury capsule collection on NET-A-PORTER.

Another strategy being employed is the creation of bespoke brand academies. Last year, Bottega Veneta launched **Accademia Labor** et Ingenium, a comprehensive artisan training program for 50 students who will be guaranteed job placement upon course completion. Other houses in the Kering Group have taken the same path, such as Gucci, with its School of Love in Tuscany, and Alta sartoria Brioni, which trains the label's tailors. By the end of 2025, LVMH is also set to open a center for craftsmanship in Paris that will host vocational trainings as well as hands-on workshops for the public. For young workers who **crave stability** but still want the social cred that comes with working for a prestigious brand, these academies promise the best of both worlds.

Companies would also do well to appeal to the sense of cultural pride that comes with keeping timeless traditions alive. A notable example comes from China, where Chinese woodworking skills are being **revived** by luxury artisans like Wu Wei. Through his brand Suyuan, Wu Wei creates playful reinterpretations of ancient Ming furniture. "We have only one clear concept, which is to explore the spiritual essence of traditional Chinese culture through furniture making," he says. Similarly, Italian manufacturing hub Gruppo Florence is aiming to promote and preserve the iconic "Made in Italy" brand with its **Accademia** hub that offers intensive training courses and reskilling opportunities.

# 47% of top C-suite executives across Europe consider the shortage of skilled labor to be one of the biggest stressors within the supply chain.<sup>11</sup>

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FTI CONSULTING, 2023.

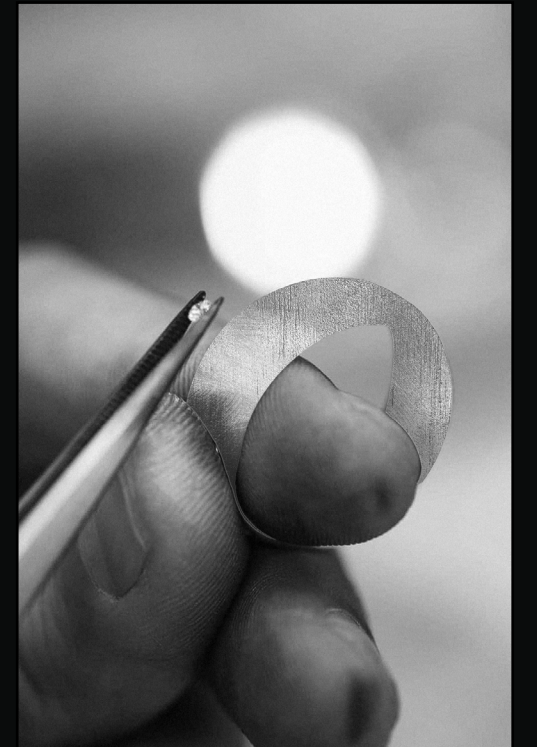


Although Gen Z's reputation may suggest otherwise, there is tangible proof that this generation romanticizes slowness and appreciates the value of working with your hands—something unfamiliar and therefore intriguing to a group that was raised in the age of automation. This is reflected in their affinity for slow crafts like embroidery and their ongoing obsession with "how it's made" videos on TikTok. At the same time, a major reversal is underway where trade jobs are now perceived as more stable due to AI taking desk jobs. Luxury brands would be wise to capitalize on this shift, reframing manual work as a more creative, fulfilling, and future-proof pursuit.

#### INTER-GENERATIONAL SKILL EXCHANGE

We are often exclusively focused on upcoming generations, but if we just opened our eyes we would realize that there are also plenty of older people looking for purpose and community in their later years. This is especially true in nations like Japan, Germany, and South Korea, where a massive aging population presents an opportunity to address luxury's labor shortage. According to a 2023 [survey](#), more than 50% of people aged 60 to 74 in Japan remained unemployed despite wanting to work.<sup>12</sup> Meeting this desire represents a win-win situation.

One of the main advantages of having multiple generations in the workforce is the possibility of reciprocal knowledge transfer. Reverse mentoring programs are an effective way to bridge the gap between different perspectives and promote skill-sharing between older and younger employees. So older artisans might pass on their know-how to younger employees, for instance, in exchange for lessons on tech and AI-enhanced creativity. In a world where seniors are too often squeezed out and pushed to the side, such initiatives would provide a crucial sense of meaning and belonging.



#### WHAT IF...

→ Luxury brands met younger generations where they are? Partnering with social media creators to provide a behind-the-scenes look at the day in the life of a skilled artisan.

→ New TV shows glamorized craftsmanship and manufacturing in the same way that we've glamorized careers in fashion design?

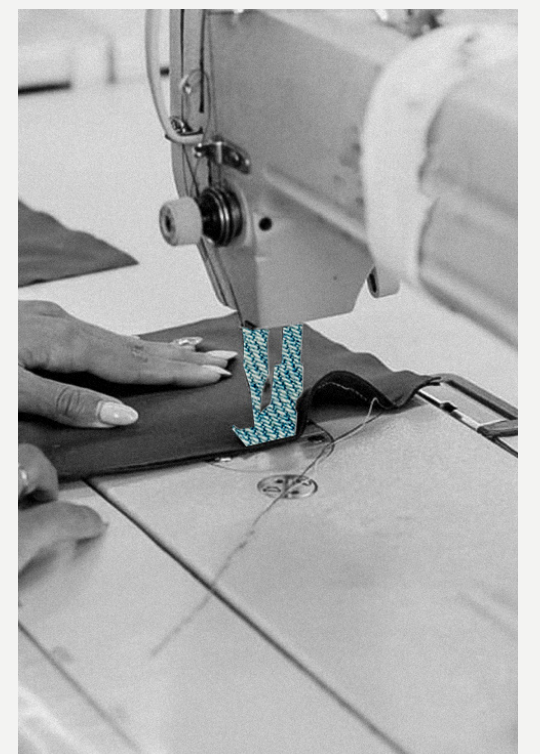
→ Luxury brands paired older artisans with younger students through an inter-generational skill exchange program?

# MADE TRACEABLE



## WAY *in 2*

While craftsmanship and technology have long been positioned as opposing forces, rising demand for transparency is now bringing the two worlds together. From fashion to food, the growth of traceable tech will prove a product's authenticity, unlock deeper storytelling, and expose unethical practices once and for all.



**COMBATING COUNTERFEITS**

The most urgent problem driving the need for traceable tech is counterfeits. It's estimated that counterfeit goods represent **2.5%** of global trade, amounting to \$464 billion annually<sup>23</sup> and doing serious damage to both profit and reputation. In turn, blockchain is becoming an increasingly popular way for brands to fight back.

One of the most notable examples is the Aura Blockchain Consortium. Established by LVMH, Prada, and Cartier back in 2021, the nonprofit platform creates a "digital twin" for designer products so that customers can make sure their purchase is the real deal. As of May 2024, Aura has recorded over 50 million luxury goods on its private blockchain,<sup>24</sup> which includes products from more than 40 different brands. A comparable but even more recent example is **Vaultik**, the first Web3 luxury fintech solution to combine an EU regulation-compliant digital ID with on-chain ownership and insurance certificates. This is especially useful for products prone to theft, like high-end watches.

This isn't just happening in fashion—even our food is now being verified by tech as well. Just look at how producers of Italy's renowned parmigiano reggiano, one of the most counterfeited cheeses in the world, have started adding **scannable microchips** to the cheese rinds so that customers can trace and authenticate its origins. Such practices are set to become the norm across the board, marking a future where the only counterfeits out there are those being purchased on purpose.

“Not sharing information on suppliers will eventually be like not having an Instagram account, because consumers are going to be demanding that level of transparency.”

—

WILLIAM LASRY,  
CREATOR OF GLASS FACTORY

**A HIGHER STANDARD FOR RADICAL TRANSPARENCY**

Beyond just the very practical need to stop fakes, the reality is that this level of traceability and transparency is becoming the expectation. Today's conscious buyers are demanding full insight into where and how a product was made, pushing brands to spare no details around everything from materials used to working conditions.

For evidence, look no further than TikTok, where **popular creators** like Glass Factory are taking viewers into the manufacturing facilities of major brands like Supreme and Ralph Lauren.

Glass Factory videos have amassed over 100 million views and attracted over 1.1 million followers across **TikTok**, **Instagram**, and **YouTube**, proving the demand for BTS transparency. Brands have started taking notice, too. Earlier this year, for example, Puma launched a series of **films** featuring its factories in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Turkey, made by Gen Z creators.

If brands don't provide this kind of transparency themselves, people and publications will do it for them—and the consequences can be severe. Take **Bloomberg's investigation** of Loro Piana as an example. The recent exposé revealed that the LVMH company that sells a \$9,000 sweater made from the world's finest Vicuna wool pays a whole Peruvian village the equivalent of \$280 for the fiber to make it, raising serious ethical concerns and eroding consumer trust.

Soon, this type of information will no longer need to be hunted down as brands will be legally required to enable full traceability. Per the EU's **Digital Product Passport** (DPP) law, every textile product will need to have a virtual label in place by 2030. It will most likely take the form of a scannable QR code or some other tag, and will provide information about the product's origins, material composition, supply chain, sustainability, recyclability and more—making it much easier for consumers to shop mindfully and much harder for companies to get away with greenwashing.

By embracing these technologies proactively, brands can get ahead of regulatory requirements while also setting a higher standard for the industry—proving that true luxury is not just about the price tag but about the rich, verifiable quality and history behind each product. Brands should also challenge themselves to go beyond the minimum requirements and take an even more radical approach. Imagine being able to shop for products and see a full visual breakdown of where materials were sourced, who handcrafted it, how much time they spent, how much they were paid for each hour of their time, and precisely how the materials will break down or be recycled over the course of their lifetime. The more details, the greater the trust.

**GIVING LUXURY A NEW LEASE ON LIFE**

Another key use case for traceable tech is legitimizing the repair process. With blockchain and RFID tags, for instance, customers can trace the origin of each spare part to confirm its authenticity and uniqueness. It's also possible to document each repair intervention, creating a complete and immutable history of the maintenance carried out on a specific item. This is useful for both customers and technicians as it can help facilitate the diagnosis and resolution of future problems.

The same can be said for enabling the sale of pre-loved luxury items, a growing market that accounted for **\$49.3 billion** (€45 billion) in worldwide sales in 2023, or about 12% of the value of the market for brand new luxury goods.<sup>45</sup> While it's true that blockchain can confirm whether a secondhand item is authentic, what's even more interesting is the opportunities this creates for richer storytelling. Through digitization, brands can share the unique history of each product—detailing who previously owned it, which

parts of the world it has traveled to, how many repairs it has undergone, and what kind of personal memories are tied to it. Just as we romanticize the stories behind one-of-a-kind vintage items, these narratives would give products an air of priceless appeal while also serving as proof of their enduring quality.

Swiss watchmaker Vacheron Constantin has done this well with the launch of a pilot project for its **Les Collectionneurs** collection. The company's heritage division tracks down vintage Vacheron Constantin watches on the secondhand market, then authenticates and, if necessary, refurbishes them before putting them back up for sale. Using their archives, the brand adds stories and information about these watches to their digital certificates through blockchain, making it possible for buyers to purchase not just the product itself, but also its entire history.

In a future where every product detail is traced and documented, this kind of rich storytelling will separate the true luxury players from the rest.



## WHAT IF...

→ Traceable tech unlocked a detailed log of every repair and maintenance service?

→ Clicking into an online product listing unlocked a visual, timestamped history of how it was made?

→ Luxury brands opened a museum of pre-loved goods, complete with a detailed storybook of each item's past lives?

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# COLLECTIVE INNOVATION



*WAY in 3*

Luxury brands, typically reluctant to veer into unfamiliar territory, are embracing a more open and experimental approach to innovation. As inclusive values take over, we'll see unexpected collabs make way for a more diverse and less predictable future of luxury.



**THE SCIENCE-FICATION OF LUXURY**

For much of luxury's history, brands have been hesitant to invite others in—a deliberate strategy designed to maintain a certain air of mystery and exclusivity. But as the rest of the business world moves toward an open-source model, it seems luxury is finally warming up to the idea as well. One key way this is coming to life is through partnerships with science and technology companies. Take Coperni's recent collab with NASA as an example. Together, the two entities created something truly astonishing: a transparent bag made of 99% air and 1% glass. [The Air Swipe Bag](#) is the largest object to ever be made from NASA's nanomaterial silica aerogel, the lightest solid in the world, demonstrating how fashion and science can harmonize to break the limits of convention.

Another major factor behind the rise of open innovation is sustainability. Gucci's launch of the [first circular](#) luxury hub in Italy is demonstrating what's possible, serving as a platform for the design and manufacturing of circular luxury products of the future. Located in Tuscany, the Circular Hub will first involve Kering's manufacturers and suppliers before eventually becoming

open to the entire sector. Similarly, in the automotive space, Jaguar Land Rover recently launched its first [Sustainability Innovation Challenge](#) to engage innovators, startups and other organizations in the development of green solutions for the luxury mobility sector.

**AI AS A CREATIVE PARTNER**

Looking forward, perhaps the most popular creative partner in the world of luxury will be artificial intelligence—the benefits of which range from developing unique designs, to offering personalized recommendations, to [anticipating upcoming trends](#).

When it comes to the design process, consumers are happy for advanced technologies and human ingenuity to intersect. In fact, 53% of luxury fashion buyers globally believe that AI makes designers more forward-thinking? One example of how these two forces can coexist comes from the site [Senstile](#), where users can consult AI to efficiently design, develop, source, and supply high-quality and sustainable fashion. Senstile does this by digitizing physical textiles, capturing details like how they feel to the touch, how they hang, their color, and even what chemicals they contain.

All of this is visualized as a Textile Universe that users can explore in order to find the perfect material for their exact needs. A similar approach could very well be replicated for other industries moving forward. Imagine AI-powered databases that unlock scalable solutions around next-gen materials for luxury furniture, ingredients for high-end fragrances, and more. When it comes to AI's capabilities, the limit does not exist.

**TAKING THE "GLOCAL" PATH**

Open sourcing isn't just about cutting-edge innovation, it can also involve collaboration between large multinational corporations and local communities. In this context, the sharing of "forgotten" techniques, materials and traditions can enrich and expand the vision of brands themselves.

This is exactly what Ralph Lauren has done with its Artist in Residence program, launching a [collection](#) with Indigenous designer Naomi Glasses that honors Navajo heritage and incorporates centuries-old weaving traditions. This demonstrates how historic brands are finally engaging with the communities they have long taken inspiration from, marking an era of more authentic and mutually beneficial collaboration.

What's most notable is that a portion of profits from Naomi's collection will benefit the [Creative Futures Collective](#), an opportunity ecosystem for creative talents who have traditionally been overlooked.

Another important example is the [Ethical Fashion Initiative](#) (EFI). Through the [Accelerator](#), one of EFI's most successful recent ventures, emerging fashion brands across Africa and Asia are given the support needed to become investment-ready and launch their business globally—contributing to a less homogenous and more diverse future of luxury.

**EXPANDING LUXURY'S HORIZONS**

Today's businesses are constantly competing to surprise their audiences and push into new frontiers. The world of luxury is not exempt from this race, even if it is not at the forefront. In the years and decades to come, continued R&D with the help of outside experts, emerging technologies, and local cultures will help luxury shake off its stale reputation and become taken seriously as an innovator. Above all, it will give luxury brands a chance to be part of something bigger than themselves—an increasingly attractive proposition amid a slowdown in spending.

## WHAT IF...

→ Luxury brands formed coalitions of diverse outside experts to solve their biggest innovation challenges?

→ Luxury brands partnered with artisans around the world to revive ancient techniques?

# FANTASY MACHINES

## CHAPTER 2

**T**he products that luxury companies sell are only half the story. The true magic and much of the priceless appeal comes from the lore surrounding those products, inspiring the creation of entire worlds and fantasies that transport us beyond reality. With today's high-net-worth clients craving escapism, brands that provide portals into both the ancient past and far future will be worth the highest premium.



Ana Andjelic,  
[The Sociology of Business.](#)

“THERE ARE FEW INDUSTRIES MORE POWERED BY DREAMS, IMAGINATION, FABLES AND HERITAGE THAN LUXURY. LUXURY GROWTH DIDN'T COME FROM PRODUCTS, BUT FROM THE INTANGIBLE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IT CREATED.”



# DRIVING THE SHIFT

In an age of endless choice and content overload, fantastical worldbuilding is becoming essential brand building.

**The end of mainstream culture is breaking the typical marketing mold and requiring a more niche approach.**

› **91%** of 18–25-year-olds believe that mainstream pop culture is no longer a thing.<sup>17</sup>

**A content-congested landscape means only truly remarkable storytelling will break through.**

› In 2024, Facebook users share about **4.75 billion** items per day<sup>18</sup> and Instagram users share about **1.3 billion** images per day.<sup>19</sup>

**Generative interfaces are allowing websites and apps to adapt to user curiosities in real-time.**

› By 2026, more than **80%** of enterprises will have used GenAI APIs and/or deployed GenAI-enabled apps, up from less than 5% in 2023.<sup>20</sup>

## A CONVERSATION WITH PAUL MOUGINOT

Artist, founder of [aurèce vettier](#), and co-founder of [bem.builders](#) and [stabler.tech](#).



Paul is an engineer and artist who has successfully merged his passions for visual art, data, digital culture, and fashion. In 2019, Paul founded [aurèce vettier](#), an art project that explores meaningful interactions between algorithms and human creativity. Paul's expertise in data extraction and processing has also led him to co-found [stabler.tech](#), an industrial web scraping tool, and [bem.builders](#), a metaverse experience factory.

Paul's unique vision has afforded him the opportunity to collaborate with luxury giants like Gucci, using algorithms to create an imaginary fragrance for the brand's centennial anniversary. He is also a Scientific Advisor for Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode (FHCM), which organizes Paris Fashion Week. We had the pleasure of interviewing Paul to get his take on how AI will fuel luxury fantasies in the future.

**Q: We're fascinated by the idea of luxury brands as cultivators of extraordinary fantasy worlds. Do you think there's a new premium on this kind of escapism in 2024? If so, why?**

It seems to me that the evolution of luxury is following, a few decades behind, what happened in the history of art. After Marcel Duchamp, the importance of the object in art diminished in favor of the experience of it, and this is also true of luxury goods. In addition to objects, many houses now offer experiences, meditative activities, tailor-made spas and all kinds of experiences that are particularly attractive to the younger generation. I think these new generations are partial to houses that experiment and take risks, even if it means making mistakes.

**Q: What role will AI play in bringing these fantasies to life?**

Above all, I think AI informs us about what comes after the simple experience of the object. The power of generative AI tools means that we can create all kinds of forms, and this perhaps imposes on the artist to go beyond this experience, to propose something new, to connect differently with oneself, with collectors, with the public or with the world. In my studio, [aurèce vettier](#), I call these "adventures." I believe it's a pleasure that should perhaps be rediscovered in luxury: the pleasure of being recognized as an individual, of embarking on a story, a long-term multi-sensory narrative that goes beyond a simple loyalty program.

“It seems to me that the evolution of luxury is following, a few decades behind, what happened in the history of art. After Marcel Duchamp, the importance of the object in art diminished in favor of the experience of it, and this is also true of luxury goods.”

**Q: With generative AI tools becoming widely accessible, how can luxury brands deliver something extra special that still feels exclusive?**

At the moment, to the best of my knowledge, luxury brands still don't seem very interested in the idea of creating bespoke generative AI models, for example from their archives. There are potentially many reasons for this: there's a lot of work involved in collecting, digitizing, labeling and sorting a large number of images or videos from archives, there are still a number of technical barriers, and there's also a kind of fear or even rejection of generative and algorithmic tools in an industry that cultivates a form of scarcity.

However, for me, training generative tools on the basis of in-house archives is the best way to create exclusive proposals, more respectful of the creative ecosystem than pre-trained, "off-the-shelf" tools. Furthermore, I believe that the appeal of generative AI for luxury houses lies not in the content creation aspect, but rather in the ability of AIs to "digest" large volumes of data, and arrive at a form of quintessence, compatible with the quest for exclusivity.

**Q: What can we do as artists that tech and machines can't?**

That requires us to know what to ask of AI, and therefore to be constantly learning as human beings. We need to build bridges between distant sectors, which creates creative entropy. Finally, we need to take an interest in everything that cannot be digitized, and therefore cannot be taken into account in these AI models.

**Q: What would you say to the AI skeptics who insist that human creativity is best left untouched by tech?**

I wouldn't try to convince them otherwise, because it's true. In the future, there might be a premium given to brands or artistic projects that will remain fully manual end-to-end and will not resort to algorithms. However, what is "tech"? There was a time when printing was a technology that revolutionized the spread of knowledge. AI will profoundly transform the role of the artist and the way stories are told. Personally, I find that these kinds of tools—when you really try to push them to their limits—tend to increase the expectations you have of an artist.

**Q: What is your dream project or brand collaboration within the luxury space?**

For me, luxury means waking up in the silence of my old castle, stepping out into the forest and finding myself surrounded by yellow butterflies, birds and foxes running in the distance. It's that with the sale of my works, I'm able to help restore primary forests or create refuges for hedgehogs. While deploying an ecosystem of works made with cutting-edge algorithms and fine craftsmanship, I'd love to collaborate with nature and animals.

Deep down, I think this is my dream project: I'd like to leave this world knowing that, at least for a few years, the proceeds from the sale of my works will have, silently, made a corner of our world more liveable.

**Q: Fill in the blank. What separates a true luxury brand from a pretender is \_\_\_\_\_ ?**

Desire.

“In the future, there might be a premium given to brands or artistic projects that will remain fully manual end-to-end and will not resort to algorithms.”





# PORTALS TO THE PAST



## WAY *in* 1

**H**eritage is more than just remnants of the past—it is the bedrock upon which brand equity is built and maintained.

By romanticizing their connection to history and using new technologies to tell old stories, luxury brands can revive thousands of archival elements while simultaneously building their future legacy.



**PRICELESS CONNECTIONS TO THE PAST**

Luxury brands have always been synonymous with timelessness and heritage. But in today's world, where trends change weekly and digital experiences are often ephemeral, brands with deep roots in history are only becoming more remarkable. It is this increasingly rare sense of permanence that resonates so deeply with consumers who are tired of transient fads.

When done right, the lore built around these aged products creates priceless appeal. Just look to how The Macallan, one of the world's most prestigious single-malt Scotch whisky brands, is selling limited releases of "liquid history" for \$190,000. The two-bottle [Time : Space Collection](#) honors the brand's 200th anniversary and includes a rounded, doughnut-shape bottle of an 84-year-old whisky, the oldest and rarest from the distillery. Then in the center of that bottle fits a 375ml flask of a five-year-old single malt, distilled in 2018 when the whisky maker opened its new campus—a notable first release from the facility. It is not the whisky itself, but rather its everlasting connection to history that justifies such an extravagant price tag.

Beyond physical products, brands are also preserving their heritage through collaborations with established institutions. Cartier has done this well by partnering with world-class business schools HEC and ESCP to create a chair called [#TurningPoints](#), which explores significant moments in the brand's history and celebrates their connection to the present. Imagine similar relationships forged with museums, cultural foundations, and historic galleries, creating canvases for brands to proudly share the stories of how they shaped the past.

“If the thing that justifies the desirability and price of the product is the culture, then you invest in the narrative.”

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PETER HOWARTH, CEO OF SHOW MEDIA

**DIGITIZING HISTORY: A NEW FRONTIER**

Another critical tool in making these rich brand histories accessible to a curious and increasingly global audience is digitization. Take the [Watch Library](#) as an example, an initiative launched in 2023 that offers access to over 450,000 watchmaking archives. This initiative aligns with UNESCO's recognition of mechanical watchmaking and art mechanics as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, underscoring the importance of preserving these traditions in the digital age.

Beyond archives, brands are also getting far more creative in how they narrate their histories online. A notable example is Brunello Cucinelli's new AI-powered website launched in beta in July 2024. The site—[BrunelloCucinelli.ai](#)—features a series of handmade drawings that transport you through different backdrops as you scroll. Scrolling even further begins to reveal vignettes about the brand's legacy, including background on Cucinelli's life and "letters to the future sentinels of humanity." Users can also ask ethical and philosophical questions about the brand, with answers generated by a bespoke tool called Solomei AI. For instance, you might ask: "What is humanistic capitalism?" Or, "Explain the core values that the brand was built on." In addition to

providing a written response, the AI will return related information that takes you even deeper. The project, positioned as "human artificial intelligence," represents a new generation of websites that feed a visitor's curiosity in real time. It enables an interaction between the real and imagined world, an osmosis between humanism and technology.

Another recent and even more immersive example comes from Vacheron Constantin. As part of Harrods' 175th anniversary celebration, the Swiss watchmaker unveiled its Pioneers of the Exceptional exhibition in London. The exhibition took guests on a 10-minute multisensory VR journey that explored Harrods' history through the lens of watchmakers, enhanced by 4D storytelling technology that included scent, sound, wind and temperature. This was all powered by [Xydrobe](#), a circular multi-person VR cinema aiming to elevate the future of brand experiences.

For brands, this poses an interesting question: what does your brand's legacy look, sound, smell, and feel like? How do you take history off a 2D page and bring it into an entirely new dimension—creating a kind of sensorial connection that supersedes logic?

**WHERE HERITAGE MEETS INNOVATION**

Looking ahead, luxury brands are likely to explore even more innovative approaches to heritage preservation. One possibility is the creation of digital safes that store important documents related to luxury goods, such as certificates and manuals, to ensure that these records are easily accessible for upcoming generations. Brands might also partner with solicitors and notaries to create contracts and wills for the transmission of personal stories and iconic products, preserving their legacy for public exhibitions in the future.

Another possibility is to leverage AI to record and preserve personal stories associated with premium products. This is especially

important for cherished heirlooms. Imagine a luxury timepiece that comes with the digital confessions of its previous owner, enhancing its value and offering a unique introduction for the next wearer. Brands might also launch digital museums that showcase their archives, including past campaigns and platforms that have evolved over the years.

As brands navigate the challenges of the digital age, their ability to preserve and innovate around the past will be crucial to creating modern appeal. By anchoring themselves in a rich historical narrative, luxury brands not only craft a sense of authority, but also create a deliberate distance from more commonplace brands that will be here today and gone tomorrow.



## WHAT IF...

→ Brands leveraged AI to record and preserve personal stories associated with premium products? Creating a rich legacy that's passed down through generations of owners.

→ A special edition of luxury products contained coded secrets about a brand's past? Creating an exclusive treasure hunt where buyers are tasked with putting the pieces together.

→ Luxury brands launched digital museums of their archives, including everything from past products to old-school ad campaigns?



# LIVING INTERFACES

INTIMATE  
AI

## WAY *in 2*

Digital interactions are due for a dynamic redesign. As static interfaces go out of style, we'll see luxury brands become owners of exclusive and highly personalized virtual universes where needs are met proactively and curiosity is rewarded.



### ENCOURAGING EXPLORATION WITH GENERATIVE INTERFACES

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, the lines between online and offline interactions are increasingly blurred. This is especially true in the luxury sector, where traditional storefronts and sales advisors are converging with virtual worlds and apps to create a more seamless customer experience. The Louis Vuitton App exemplifies this trend, combining e-commerce, exclusive editorial content, and elements of social networking all in one place.

Looking ahead, these apps and websites are set to become even more bespoke thanks to generative interfaces—a new class of digital experiences where the layout, functionality, and content are dynamically generated in real-time. Unlike the static interfaces we use today, which are predesigned and unchanging, generative interfaces use advanced AI to adapt and evolve based on user interactions.

For luxury brands, this presents a huge opportunity to reimagine rigid online experiences as fluid interactions that feel more like a two-way conversation. And besides just enabling personalized shopping, they'll allow luxury players to create more

niche platforms designed for specific kinds of lifestyle enthusiasts. For instance, imagine if a luxury outdoor clothing brand created an app specifically for mountaineers. Someone could start by asking the app to curate a trip itinerary based on their skill level and scenery preferences, take a virtual tour of their selected route, curate daily meal plans, and ask it to come up with a packing list separated by the items they have vs. what they'll need to buy. These apps would go beyond providing digital utility; they would offer extraordinary, bespoke experiences that reflect the brand's core values and expertise.

“Our interfaces should be playgrounds for the imagination, spaces where serendipity and exploration are not just allowed but encouraged.”

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RUNWAY TEAM

The challenge here will be maintaining a sense of exclusivity. As we approach a world where everyone has on-demand access to their own free personal shoppers, virtual assistants, and travel concierges in the form of generative AI chatbots, luxury brands will need to deliver something truly exceptional. For instance, maybe luxury fashion brands offer proprietary AI styling assistants that are specially trained by the brands' very own renowned creative directors and designers—creating a clear distinction from the mainstream bots flooding the App Store. Better yet, what if you had to spend a certain amount of money with the brand in order to access these tools?

Similarly, luxury brands might even explore the creation of exclusive digital universes or “dark webs” that are accessible only to the top 10% of customers. These spaces could unlock the most precious digital experiences and provide direct access to brand execs, reinforcing value for the ultra-affluent.

As these online worlds become an even bigger part of luxury brands' identity, we could eventually see digital experience designers be regarded with the same status as creative directors or CEOs. How a brand's vision is brought to life through physical

products and spaces will soon be just as critical as how the vision is executed virtually.

### AI HARDWARE MEETS LUXURY FASHION

In the years ahead, we can also expect to see these AI capabilities baked into new forms of luxury hardware—marking a shift from luxury as an accessory to luxury as an everyday experience. The Ray-Ban Meta Glasses, which have helped eyewear company EssilorLuxottica's market cap climb to more than **100 billion euros**, offer an exciting glimpse of what's to come. “We have the opportunity to turn glasses into the next major technology platform, and make it fashionable in the process,” said Mark Zuckerberg.

As the category grows and AI continues to advance, we may see luxury brands push the boundaries even further. Imagine a diamond-encrusted AI necklace that acts as your 24/7 assistant, a designer shoe that vibrates to help you navigate the city by foot, or even a stylish neurotech hat that tracks brain waves to improve sleep or focus. Whether by making daily life easier or improving mental health, these futuristic accessories could give luxury brands a role that transcends aesthetics, turning them into indispensable life partners.



**PARASOCIAL BRAND RELATIONSHIPS**

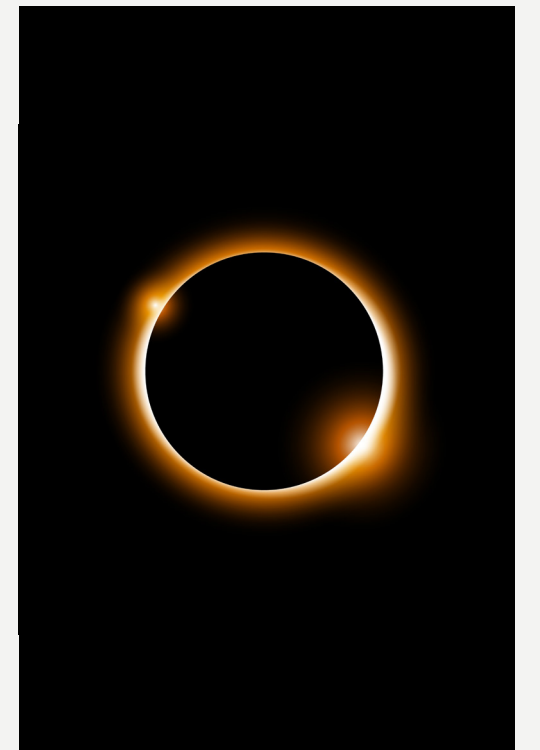
The rise in parasocial relationships—where consumers form strong, emotional connections with fictional characters or public figures—presents another unique opportunity for luxury brands. As these relationships become more influential, luxury brands can leverage them to enrich their online presence and connect with highly invested communities. **Gucci's Vault project**, for instance, has explored this concept through its Discord server, creating a space for fans to engage with the brand more intimately and access exclusive behind-the-scenes content.

Looking forward, luxury brands might even create 3D digital avatars that interact with customers across various platforms, serving

as brand ambassadors or community leaders. This approach not only makes the brand more talkable on social networks, but also deepens the emotional connection by bringing the brand's personality to life.

**PERSONALIZED DISCOVERY PORTALS**

The interfaces of tomorrow won't just execute commands. They'll inspire, spark a sense of wonder, encourage exploration, and take users down joyfully unexpected paths. There will still be a place for straightforward, utilitarian apps and websites that help you find exactly what you're looking for, of course. But by dreaming bigger and reimagining digital platforms as personalized discovery portals, luxury brands can bridge the gap between what users need and what they haven't yet realized they could benefit from.



## WHAT IF...

→ Digital experience designers were regarded with the same status as luxury creative directors or CEOs?

→ The top 10% of customers were given the key to a "dark web" that unlocked direct access to brand executives and exclusive digital services?

→ Luxury AI-powered accessories bridged the gap between high fashion and next-gen tech?

→ Luxury apps provided personalized journeys fitted to someone's real-time mood, location, and interests?

WAY *in 3*

Luxury brands are pushing boldly into new categories, offering the opportunity to buy into a lifestyle and a belief system rather than just a product. As the scope and ambition of these crossovers grow, so too will our ideas of what a luxury brand can be.



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# LUXURY WORLD- BUILDERS



**BRANDED REAL ESTATE BOOM**

Luxury brands are increasingly focusing on creating a 360° lifestyle experience for their clients. This approach goes beyond offering high-end products; it aims to envelop customers in a thoughtfully designed world that reflects the brand's values and aesthetics.

A prime example is the rise of luxury-branded real estate. In Miami-Dade County, ultra high-end residences such as the Porsche Design Tower, Residences by Armani Casa, and the upcoming Bentley Residences are not just homes—they are large-scale embodiments of the brands themselves. Just look at how the recently opened Aston Martin Residences, where units start at \$6.5 million and go all the way up to \$59 million, calls itself “A car made into a skyscraper.” The selling point is clear: when owning an Aston Martin isn't enough, why not live in one?

The movement is much bigger than Miami. Bulgari is developing a 27-story luxury residence overlooking the Arabian Gulf;

Lamborghini is planning developments in Egypt, Brazil, China and Spain; Lebanese fashion designer Elie Saab has put his stamp on residences in London and Dubai, and the house of Karl Lagerfeld is building five villas on Marbella's Golden Mile.

Whether as places to live in permanently or to visit on vacation, we can expect these branded buildings to become even bigger business in the years ahead. But why stop at hotels or apartments? Imagine concepts like branded campuses in cities or wellness centers in the countryside. Or perhaps a luxury enclave that serves as a modern-day Courchevel, where residents not only live in branded homes but also engage in a fully elevated way of life, complete with curated experiences and bespoke services that reflect the brand's identity.

The market for name-brand luxury condominium units is projected to grow 12% each year between now and 2026.<sup>22</sup>

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KNIGHT FRANK  
[GLOBAL BRANDED RESIDENCES REPORT](#)  
 2023

**BECOMING PART OF THE HISTORY BOOKS**

What's even more impressive than making your mark on cities is making your mark in history—something luxury brands are investing in like never before. This was especially evident at the 2024 Paris Olympics, which will go down as the most fashionable Games to date. Brands like Armani, Berluti and Ralph Lauren outfitted the athletes; Louis Vuitton designed the case for the Olympic torch and dressed the medal bearers; Chaumet designed the medals; and Omega released a limited edition collection of watches in the Olympic colors. LVMH alone spent around **\$160 million** on the event,<sup>23</sup> proving that for luxury brands, being part of something that transcends your own legacy is the ultimate win.

A similar motive is what inspired Prada to design NASA's new **spacesuits** for the Artemis III lunar mission. For Prada, a brand that has already proven its expertise in elegance, this presents an opportunity to flex their mastery in a different area—experimenting with composite fabrics and technical design in order to secure their permanent spot in space history.

On a more regional level, LVMH's recent **acquisition** of iconic Parisian restaurant Chez L'Ami Louis illustrates how luxury players are establishing their connection to local culture. Since opening in 1924, the restaurant has been a symbol of tradition and conviviality for Parisians, making it an attractive pursuit for a prestigious and proudly French group like LVMH.

**LUXURY MEDIA HOUSES**

A third way in which luxury brands are extending their reach is through entertainment, with fashion houses increasingly doubling as media houses. This isn't just about creating branded content, it's about influencing pop culture at large. Just last year, for instance, Saint Laurent launched its production company and released its first two short films: Pedro Almodóvar's "Strange Way of Life" and a posthumous Jean-Luc Godard release, "Trailer of the Film That Will Never Exist: Phony Wars." Similarly, Francois-Henri Pinault, CEO of Kering, now owns a majority stake in big-time Los Angeles talent agency Creative Artists Agency.

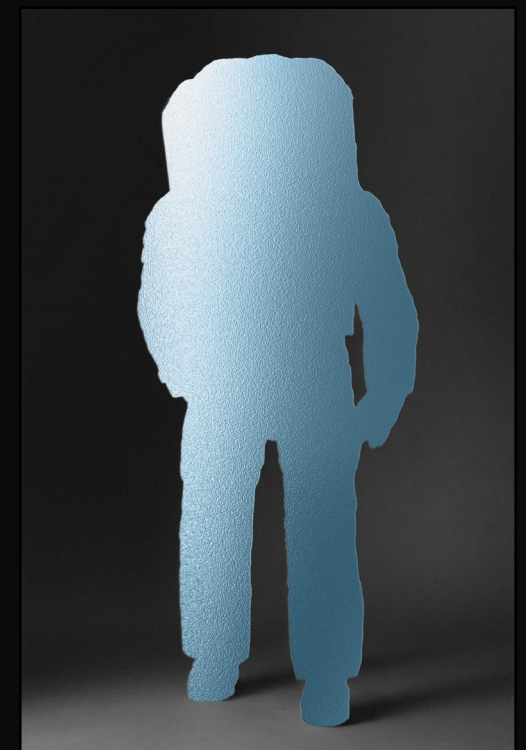
This kind of media ownership isn't entirely new, but it is growing. An even more recent example is LVMH's new venture called 22 Montaigne Entertainment, a platform to develop film, TV and audio format productions for its portfolio of 75+ brands. This move isn't entirely surprising considering media placements have proven successful in boosting brand sales—as evidenced by the

"House of Gucci" film driving a **257% increase** in demand for Gucci bags.<sup>24</sup>

We can expect entertainment and commerce to become even further entwined in the near future. Imagine shoppable movies that allow viewers to join the waitlist for upcoming products, or brand-produced video games that reward virtual actions with exclusive, real-life perks.

**KNOWING WHEN TO SAY "NO"**

This push into new frontiers represents a strategic evolution for luxury brands, allowing them to deepen their connection with customers by offering a community and a way of life. At the same time, though, it's important for brands to know when to say "no." Stretching too far will only end up feeling disingenuous and diluting their brand image. As a general rule of thumb, brands should only cross into new categories when it elevates perceptions of their core products and allows them to be part of something bigger than themselves. True luxury, after all, is about scaling back as much as it's about expanding.



## WHAT IF...

→ Branded campuses allowed more people to experience life in a luxury utopia—even if just for an hour?

→ Movies revealed a sneak peek at unreleased luxury products? Creating shoppable easter eggs for discerning audiences?

→ A luxury brand went the opposite direction, committing to doing fewer things even better?

# LIMITLESS LUXURY

## CHAPTER 3

**F**uture luxuries will be about igniting the impossible. From protections against crises to the promise of a longer, healthier life, a growing crop of businesses are helping affluent clients attain the unattainable—proving that for those with enough money, nothing is out of reach. But as luxury pushes into these new frontiers, we ask: how far is too far?



Matteo Atti  
Chief Marketing Officer at VistaJet

“WHEN YOU  
CAN AFFORD  
TO BUY  
ANYTHING ON  
THE PLANET,  
NEXT COMES  
THE DESIRE FOR  
SOMETHING  
THAT ISN'T  
AVAILABLE  
ON THE MASS  
MARKET.”

# DRIVING THE SHIFT

Future luxuries  
will fulfill  
people's deepest  
unconscious  
desires.

**A growing billionaire class is driving demand for highly exclusive services.**

› There are a record-high **2,781** **billionaires** worldwide, which is 141 more than in 2023 and 26 more than the previous record in 2021.<sup>25</sup>

**Many brands today are wealthier and more trusted than governments, making them well-positioned to drive change.**

› More than **two-thirds** of the richest 100 entities on the planet are corporations, not governments.<sup>26</sup> People in almost every country also **say** that business is more competent and more ethical than government and media.<sup>27</sup>

**People are craving control in uncertain times.**

› In 2024, **43%** of adults say they feel more anxious than they did the previous year, up from 37% in 2023 and 32% in 2022. They're particularly worried about the economy (77%), keeping themselves or their families safe (68%), keeping their identity safe (63%), their health (63%) and climate change (57%).<sup>28</sup>

TRANS-  
FORMATIVE  
TRAVEL



*WAY in 1*

The elite are the new-age explorers of our time. Unimpressed by predictable travel itineraries, ultra-affluent clients are seeking one-of-a-kind adventures in places few have gone before. As limits are shattered, new debates around privilege and ethical responsibility will come into play.





**PREMIUM OFFBEAT ADVENTURES**

When most people think of luxury travel destinations, they probably think of places like Paris, New York, Milan or Bora Bora. The ultra-wealthy, on the other hand, think of places that few other tourists have ever heard of, let alone visited. In a time when flights are getting progressively cheaper and the same predictable copy-and-paste travel itineraries are flooding Instagram, luxury travelers are looking for something that the masses can't touch. The more obscure, the more brag-worthy.

This desire for out-there experiences is being fulfilled by a growing number of luxury travel agencies. Leading companies like [Black Tomato](#) and [Pelorus](#), for example, work directly with clients to craft an itinerary around their specific emotional desires and appetite for adventure, whether that be tracking polar bears across the Svalbard archipelago or meeting tribal communities in Papua New Guinea. Pelorus has even pulled off faux kidnappings involving hired actors in super remote locations, as well as [treasure-hunting yacht adventures](#) "that dig deep into the location's history, landscape and culture."

For those who prefer something even more whimsical, a competing player called [Based on a True Story](#) offers quests and expeditions that come with their own characters, unique twists, and entire fantasy worlds. Those who travel with Based On A True Story essentially

become the star in their own hero's journey. On one honeymoon, for example, they created a marque where the couple's initials formed keys, and those keys opened up doorways into other worlds long the way—from a secret portal back to Renaissance Italy in Rome 200 years ago, to a fiesta at Hemingway's house in Key West where they had to trackdown Ernest himself.

In many cases, these excursions defy the stereotypical "luxury vacation" that sparks images of people sitting back and sipping champagne on a yacht. For the truly affluent, indulgence isn't necessarily about relaxing. It's about immersing yourself in a once-in-a-lifetime adventure—even if it means getting down and dirty or encountering struggle. Just look at the rise in [desert island tourism](#), where companies like Docastaway and Desert Island Survival are leaving high-paying clients to fend for themselves on an uninhabited island.

It's also important to point out that many of these excursions come with a high degree of risk. The catastrophic implosion of the [Titan submersible](#) last year and the more recent sinking of the luxury Bayesian yacht are clear evidence of this, not to mention the fact that private planes are [32 times](#) more likely to crash than commercial airliners.<sup>30</sup> Though some [argue](#) that the risk is what makes it a legitimate adventure, these tragedies underscore just how important safety regulations and oversight will be going forward.

81% of travelers making over half a million dollars a year say they are very likely to seek out thrilling and adventurous activities in their luxury travel experiences.<sup>29</sup>

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[SKIFT RESEARCH, 2024](#)

**PRIVILEGED PURSUITS OR RIGHTS OF PASSAGE?**

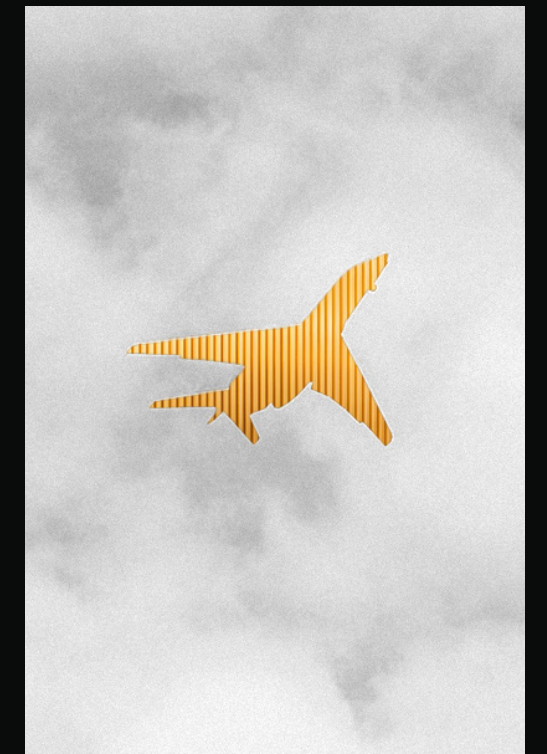
While there's certainly big money to be gained from sending affluent travelers to the ends of the Earth, there's also a great deal of controversy to navigate. One of the biggest debates has to do with the rise of space tourism, with onlookers questioning whether the billionaire space race is a self-indulgent pursuit or something that can actually solve some very real problems here on Earth. When our home planet is crumbling under the immediate effects of poverty and climate change, critics argue, why spend such significant resources visiting outer space simply for amusement—especially when there's a high environmental cost to be paid?

A similar argument is being raised around **last-chance tourism**, the practice of traveling to places that are at risk of disappearing altogether due to climate change. While space travel is all about being the first to visit a destination, this is a race to be the last. And though not an entirely new phenomenon, last-chance tourism is gaining traction as the consequences of global warming become increasingly apparent. To put things into perspective, one **study** published in the journal *Science* found that around half of the world's glaciers are expected to melt by the end of this century, even if nations stick to the goals outlined in the Paris Climate Agreement.<sup>31</sup>

Last-chance tourism sits on a double-edged sword. On one hand, people argue that visiting a fragile site can inspire the adoption of more sustainable behaviors. But on the other end, the harsh reality is that the very presence of tourists only accelerates a destination's demise.

It's no coincidence that these vulnerable sites, from the French Alps to Antarctica, are especially popular among the wealthy. And as regulators look to set up protections, we could see fees and reservation systems be implemented as a way to reduce the crowds, which would mean that less privileged travelers would be even less likely to visit. This raises interesting ethical dilemmas for the future of travel. Rather than simply being able to buy your way to these at-risk places, will visitors be required to prove their sustainable credentials or offset their environmental impact? Will climate change education become a mandatory part of these tours? And the biggest question of all: will the world's natural wonders eventually be closed to tourists altogether—even the richest ones?

With luxury travelers in a unique position to make a difference, the businesses that cater to them will increasingly be expected to put philanthropy at the forefront of their offerings.



## WHAT IF...

- Tourists became lead characters in a build-your-own-adventure vacation?
- Travel options were categorized by key emotional desires rather than by destination?
- Sustainability credentials were required in order to visit a vulnerable destination?

# A CONVERSATION WITH TOM MARCHANT

Co-founder of Black Tomato



As owner and co-founder of [Black Tomato](#), Tom Marchant knows a thing or two about luxury travel. But not just any kind of luxury travel. His company specializes in extraordinary, one-of-a-kind expeditions designed to spark a sense of wonder. Some of the most notable include “Blink,” which offers pop-up luxury accommodations in the world’s most remote areas; “Get Lost,” a program challenging travelers to go phone-free and find their way out of unknown destinations; and “Take Me on a Story,” a collection of immersive itineraries inspired by legendary children’s books.

Almost 20 years since its inception, Black Tomato is continuing to push the limits of travel and up the ante for premium adventures. We connected with Tom to get his expert take on what we can expect to see next.

**Q: Walk us through the Black Tomato trip planning process, from the initial client meeting to the execution.**

When people first reach out to inquire about a trip, our Global Travel Advisors will have an initial conversation with them to learn about where they’re interested in traveling, what they’re looking for, and any budget to keep in mind. At times, people don’t necessarily know where they want to go but know how they want to feel, whether it’s escapism or adventure, so our team will delve deeper into what they truly want out of the trip.

Once agreeing on the destination, travelers will then get connected with our Travel Experts who have a deep understanding of specific regions, further sharing in-depth insights about the place while learning more about their desires, interests, and travel preferences. From there, we design a tailor-made itinerary from scratch that includes luxurious accommodations, transfers, and curated activities from private specialist tours to guided experiences, many of which offer exclusive access. Once the plan has been approved and finalized, we load it to our mobile app which enables customers to easily access the itinerary on their phones without having to search in their emails. Should there be any issues, we offer a 24/7 emergency line that travelers can contact during the trip to ensure everything runs smoothly. Once the trip is complete, the traveler gets assigned to a relationship manager to hear their feedback so we can incorporate into our future planning and provide inspiration for their next getaway.

**Q: What is the most remarkable trip you’ve ever planned?**

So many, but one that stays long in the memory is when we built a bespoke camp in the depths of Argentine Patagonia. With its low light pollution, this remote location’s “G-eclipse point” (the path of totality) was the best place in the world to observe the December 2020 solar eclipse.

The adventure for VIP clients included helicopter transfers to the private viewing site, luxury glamping in geodesic dome tents, white water rafting, and the guidance of an astronomer—a two-and-a-half-week trip built around an unforgettable, three-minute moment that no one else has ever experienced. This epic journey also included a chef and sommelier who paired Argentine wines with Michelin-level food, and even a “cauldron” hot tub that was set up and powered by firewood. It was such a remarkable way for clients to get immersed in the rare beauty and connect with our planet on a deeper level.

**Q: Who is the typical Black Tomato client? What do they come looking for?**

A typical Black Tomato client is a high net worth and time-poor individual who wants to make the most of their time while away. Our clientele spans many industries, including creative luminaries and visionaries, entrepreneurs, media titans, financiers, and tech executives, all linked together through an inherent curiosity for adventure that goes beyond the ordinary. They are often seeking transformative experiences that allow them to connect deeply with the destination and immerse in its culture, landscapes and stories. We’ve also seen growing interest in regenerative travel experiences, especially post-pandemic, as clients increasingly seek meaningful ways to use travel as a force for good and leave a positive impact on the environment and the local communities. Our clients look to us for remarkable, personalized journeys that are crafted with care and purpose, leaving them with epic memories that last a lifetime.

**Q: Why are these extreme, unexpected adventures particularly appealing to ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWI)?**

For our ultra-high-net-worth clients, luxury isn't simply about indulgence—it's about seeking out the rare and the remarkable. They crave experiences that challenge them and offer a true sense of discovery for the world and themselves, looking for these elevated, meaningful adventures that they can personally grow from, which in turn become a key part of their travels each year.

Whether it's sailing through the glaciers of Greenland or hiking up Casablanca Volcano in Chile, it's about the thrill of the unknown, the exclusive access, and the luxury of immersion into a world that feels entirely different, an antidote to their everyday.

**Q: Which destinations do you anticipate being most in demand five years from now?**

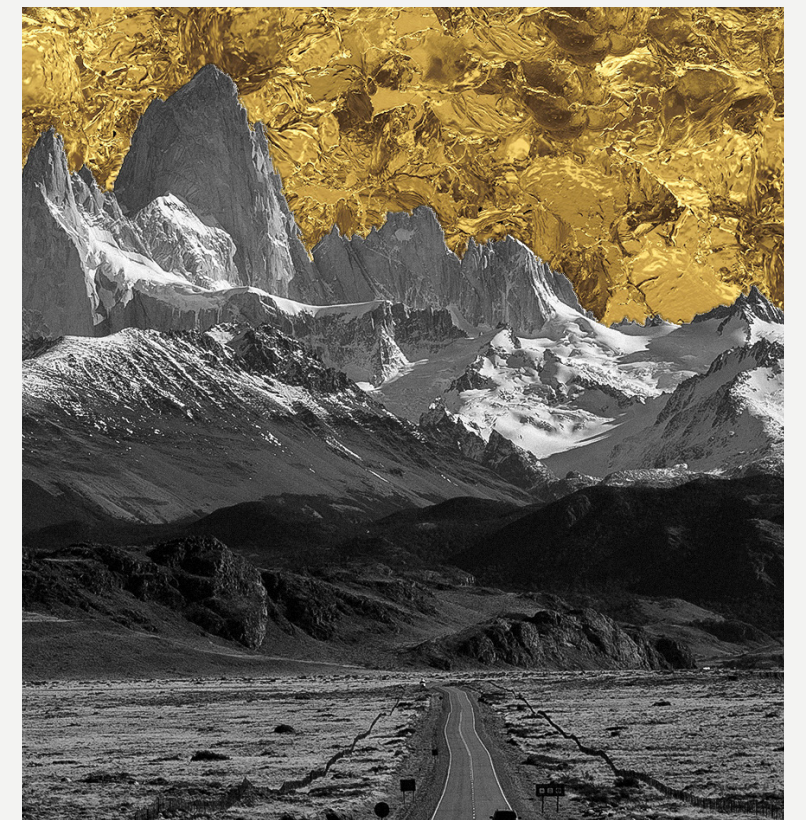
We anticipate that our best-selling destination, Japan, will continue to be a popular vacation spot, but we see travelers becoming more interested in its lesser-known regions beyond Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, especially for the non-first timers to delve deeper into the country's rich traditions, rural landscapes and regional cuisine.

We also believe that untouched destinations offering a combination of pristine nature and cultural depth will be in high demand in five years. Places like Greenland, Bhutan and Mongolia are likely to attract discerning travelers who seek unspoiled landscapes and culturally immersive experiences. We further foresee growing fascination in regions offering incredible biodiversity as conservation becomes more prioritized, with places like the Galápagos, the Philippines, and Indonesia emerging as new destinations for their delicate ecosystems and wildlife. Chile and Chilean Argentina will similarly resonate for their diverse terrains—from icy fjords to stark deserts to dramatic mountains, with uniquely immersive experiences rooted in natural beauty and cultural depth.

**Q: Fill in the blank. What separates a true luxury brand from a pretender is \_\_\_\_.**

Honesty. True luxury brands are rooted in integrity, staying committed and being open with their core values and ethos. For us, it's about crafting remarkable experiences that are thoughtfully tailored to each client. We approach every journey with genuine care and purpose to reflect the traveler's spirit, leaving a lifetime impact. We live and breathe our core purpose of inspiring people through remarkable travel experiences.

“For our ultra-high-net-worth clients, luxury isn't simply about indulgence – it's about seeking out the rare and the remarkable.”



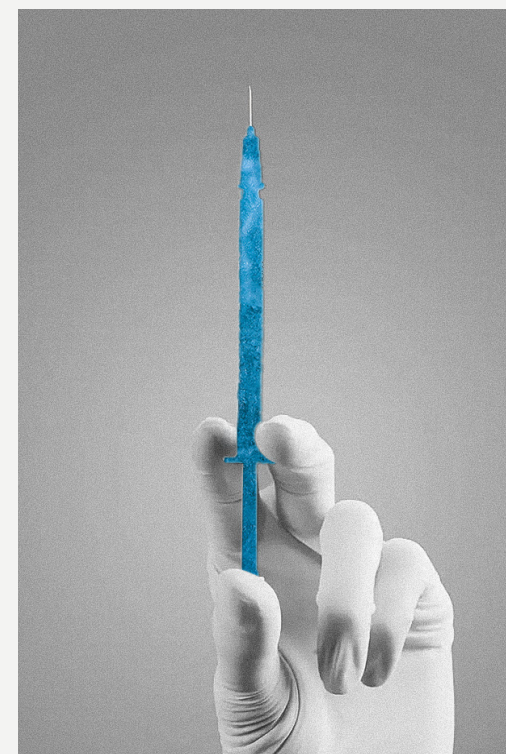
# IMMORTALITY FOR SALE

OPTIMIZED  
ANATOMY

DEATH  
UNDONE

## WAY *in 2*

The pursuit of immortality is no longer entirely out of reach. In addition to physical life extension treatments, emerging technologies are pointing to a future where our AI clones can live on forever—and the wealthy will be first in line.



**INVESTING IN LIFE EXTENSION**

The search for the Fountain of Youth is a quest as old as time. In the last decade, however, efforts to extend the human lifespan have made a turn from the philosophical to the scientific, giving new hope to those determined to live as long as possible. The big caveat, of course, is that these experimental treatments don't come cheap or without risk. But the mega-rich don't seem to mind. More than **\$5.2 billion** was invested in the global longevity economy in 2022,<sup>32</sup> and over half of high-income Americans say they're willing to participate in clinical trials aimed at extending life span.<sup>33</sup>

In many ways, these longevity treatments have become a new status symbol. We see this clearly in how celebs like **Kim Kardashian** and Zac Posen are proudly posting about their \$2,499 full-body M.R.I. scans on Instagram. Despite the American College of Radiology **declaring** that there is "no documented evidence that total body screening is cost-efficient or effective in prolonging life," the peace of mind it offers is priceless for those who can afford it.

Major businesses are cashing in on the demand for longevity too, marking a shift from the days when life-extension was a niche underground pursuit. One of the biggest signs is luxury gym Equinox's latest offering called "**Optimize by Equinox.**" For \$40,000 a year, members will be tested for over 100 biomarkers, from kidney health to cancer genes, and then will be given a detailed health plan based on their

data. They'll also get access to one-on-one sessions with personal trainers, nutritionists, sleep coaches, and massage therapists—amounting to a total of 16 hours of coaching a month.

Similar longevity offerings are sure to make their way into every kind of luxury industry going forward. Longevity retreats are already on the rise for premium travelers; high-priced personalized meal plans are promising to help people live longer; and high-end homes are being redesigned as full-blown wellness centers. Though experts say it's unclear how much of an edge these white-glove wellness services will actually give you, we know with certainty that some people are willing to pay big bucks to find out for themselves. From **gene therapies** to **exercise pills**, there appears to be no limit to what people will try.

At the same time, the fact that these longevity pursuits are concentrated among the wealthy raises fascinating questions for our future. Will luxury brands outside of the health space start investing in longevity research to get ahead? Will we see new certifications that separate the false promises from the credible claims? And most importantly, what are the implications of a world where only the richest individuals live past 100 years old? For instance, will there be a rise in luxury wheelchairs, caretaking services, and nursery homes that cater to the wealthiest seniors? Will there be an even bigger financial gap between the old and young as beneficiaries inherit money later in life? With the speed at which science is advancing, the time to start asking these questions is now.

41% of higher-income Americans say they would download their brain onto a computer to live forever compared to 19% of lower-income Americans.<sup>34</sup>

—  
A/B CONSULTING AND MAVERON  
'CONSUMER SENTIMENT SURVEY', JUNE 2023

**DIGITAL IMMORTALITY**

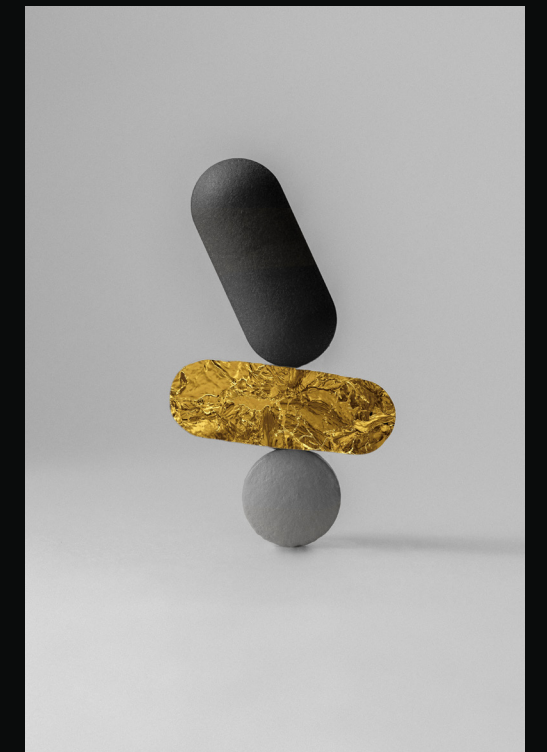
Despite the impressive medical progress being made, it's still safe to assume that we will all die at some point—physically, at least. A digital version of us, on the other hand, could very well live on forever. These AI clones could take the form of chatbots or hyper-realistic avatars that look like us, sound like us and even think like us. We're not talking about "mind uploading"—a speculative sci-fi concept that involves creating an exact digital replica of our brain. We're talking about very real technologies that exist today. When you think about it, we already have deepfake technology, AI voice cloning systems, and generative AI systems that can be trained to take on a specific personality or way of thinking. Put all of that together, and it's not hard to see how you could create an immortal and hyper-realistic digital double.

This concept has a few different use cases. For one, it could allow your loved ones to interact with you posthumously in the form of a virtual avatar, 3D hologram, or chatbot that mimics your personality and knows your most intimate memories. This is the focus of a growing number of companies, including Replika, HereAfter AI, StoryFile, and Seance AI.

The second major use case has to do with carrying on your legacy—something sure to be especially appealing to affluent clientele. Whether you're a high-powered executive

or a well-known artist, the idea of being able to have an influence on the world long after your death is an intriguing proposition. So much so, that some people are already doing it. One pioneer here is famed fashion designer [Norma Kamali](#). At 79 years old, Kamali is thinking about how the company she built from scratch will carry on when she passes. The solution she has come up with is to teach AI to replicate her style—or, as she puts it, "downloading my brain"—so that her creative legacy can live on forever. For months, she's been working with Maison Meta to feed thousands of images from the brand's archive into a custom AI model that can generate new designs based on her creative DNA. The intent isn't to replace human designers altogether, but rather to allow her team to draw on her style and maintain a consistent look long after she's gone.

While Kamali may be one of the first to embrace AI clones, she certainly won't be the last. Imagine CEOs using similar technology to influence key business decisions after their death, or authors training a personal AI so they can continue releasing books in perpetuity. With these advancements are sure to come major ethical questions around data ownership, creative diversity, and job loss. But as we've seen with almost every other major advancement, the wealthiest people are likely to be the first ones clearing the path.



## WHAT IF...

→ Luxury brands helped fund longevity research? Making the space more credible before capitalizing on demand.

→ AI clones allowed people's creative legacies to live on forever?

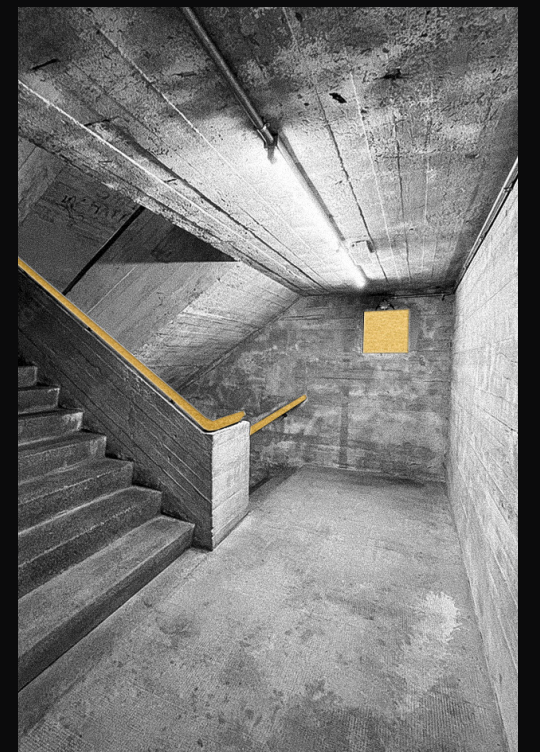


# PRESTIGE PROTECTIONS



## WAY in 3

In a world that feels like its crumbling, peace of mind is emerging as the ultimate luxury. From survival gear to cybersecurity concierges, the world's richest people are sparing no expense to save themselves from dangers both real and imagined.





From an outside perspective, it's easy to assume that the elite are living in their mansions worry-free with a martini in hand. But that's not entirely the case. Therapists [say](#) that the super-rich are more prone to feelings of paranoia than the average person, and one U.S. study showed that the affluent are highly concerned about the potential for escalating global conflict and war (52%), political unrest leading to civil unrest (51%), and data privacy or cybersecurity threats (45%).<sup>35</sup> More money may, in fact, mean more problems and more to lose.

#### APOCALYPSE PREP

On one end of the spectrum, the rich are going to extremes to prep for the worst case scenario: the end of the world. Billionaires buying bunkers isn't entirely new news, but it is becoming more widespread. Ever since it was revealed last year that Mark Zuckerberg is constructing a 5,000-square-foot bunker under his ranch on the island of Kauai, the business of fortified shelters has been booming. "It seems like the phone hasn't stopped ringing; World War III feels like it's coming," says Ron Hubbard, CEO of Texas-based [Atlas Survival Shelters](#), which is currently constructing a \$7.5 million bunker for an anonymous client. The prices for these survival shelters range from \$40,000 all the way up to \$10 million, with features including filtration systems, medical rooms, decontamination booths, and even recreational amenities like water cannons.

For those who aren't quite hardcore enough to buy a full-blown bunker, other premium home security measures are also on the rise. Companies like [Creative Home Engineering](#) are receiving more requests to build armored pocket doors, security vaults, and secret passageways, while others like [Ultimate Bunker](#) are finding a niche in safe rooms that start around \$50,000 for an 8-foot by 8-foot space.

Outside of home improvements, the rich are also investing in "tactical, bulletproof urban vehicles" from [Rezvani Motors](#) that start at \$275,000, and investing in \$150,000 trained [protection dogs](#). Military-grade protection, it seems, is now as much for the rich as it is for the special forces.

With every war, pandemic, national election and extreme weather event to come, demand for these prestige protections will only continue to grow alongside the paranoia. Pop culture plays a significant role, too, as seen through hit global shows like [Fallout](#) that depict the divide between the haves and the have-nots in a post-apocalyptic world. It's no coincidence that real-life billionaires are also becoming [increasingly worried](#) about how to survive power grid failures, which is precisely the plot of Netflix's thriller [Leave the World Behind](#).

"For the ultra-rich, the future of technology is about one thing: escaping from the rest of us."

—  
DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF, AUTHOR *of*  
SURVIVAL OF THE RICHEST

#### OFF THE GRID AND OUT OF THE MESS

Another key way that the 1% are protecting themselves is by simply escaping the mess altogether and going off the grid. Perhaps the ultimate example is the world's first [submersible superyacht](#) being built by Austrian company Migaloo. This "private fortress" promises to provide "beyond military grade protection," and is capable of descending 250 meters underwater and staying there for up to four weeks. There's no specific project price tag just yet, but the widely reported estimate for the Migaloo M5 is about \$2 billion—a pretty penny to pay for full seclusion.

This desire for premium privacy is also part of what's [fueling interest](#) in self-sufficient luxury housing communities. The Three Rivers Recreation Area in Oregon is one example. With about 80 permanent residents and more than 4,000 acres in total, the area includes a marina, private airstrip, desert golf course and hiking trails for those who prefer to avoid the chaos of the world altogether.

#### WHITE-GLOVE CYBERSECURITY

Another key way that the 1% are protecting themselves is by simply escaping the mess altogether and going off the grid. Perhaps the ultimate example is the world's first Spending on online security is ramping

up in a major way, too. UHNWIs are realizing that their wealth makes them an easy target for hackers, and they're looking to boutique concierge cybersecurity companies to cover all their bases.

In many cases, this journey to stealth mode starts with wiping your online presence completely. One specialist in the space, [Defuse](#), runs Digital Vulnerability Audits that examine what private information is publicly available about someone online and what an adversary might want to know. "Our searches are completed by former members of British Intelligence and Counter Terrorism policing, and include the open, deep and dark web and paid-for forums," says Philip Grindell, Defuse's founder. "If we can't find it, no one can." This desire for online anonymity comes at a time when anti-rich sentiment is on the rise and new wealth taxes are under review, making a lack of exposure and attention especially appealing to the highest earners.

Looking ahead, as life continues to migrate online and the wealthy purchase even more connected devices across multiple estates, these services will only intensify. Expect to see a rise in premium cyber insurance for the rich, private banks offering 360° cybersecurity services for their highest net-worth clients, and even heads of IT security being appointed for individual families.

### SURVIVAL OF THE RICHEST

With all of this comes a difficult question: should protection really be a privilege—especially when it could be a matter of life or death? A growing wealth gap means this is something that players in this space should be prepared to address head-on. Today, the top 1% of the world's population owns about **46%** of global wealth. By 2040, this share could rise to 50% or higher.<sup>36</sup> In a future where the wealthy are the most likely to survive a crisis and money gives people the power to play god, there will be a responsibility to democratize safeguards wherever possible.

In a future where the wealthy are the most likely to survive a crisis and money gives people the power to play god, there will be a responsibility to democratize safeguards wherever possible.



WHAT IF...

→ Prestigious credit cards unlocked access to the world's most secluded spaces?

→ White-glove security concierges curated the most private online and offline life possible?

→ New services specialized in wiping the digital footprints of the rich when they die?

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# EDGES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LUXURY



At the intersection of sustainability, scarcity, and hype culture lies a booming aftermarket economy. Old products are being recycled, repaired, and resold, while new products are being created with end-of-life options built in. From modular tech to food waste fashion, the shift to circularity is unlocking ample opportunities for post-sale profits.



An economy built on “me,” “more,” and “now” is turning a new page. As consumers wake up to the fact that one-click commands come at a cost, they’ll think twice before sacrificing sustainability for speed, or workers’ rights for savings. The convenience economy is growing a conscience.



The push to die better is forcing an antiquated end-of-life industry to change its tune. Unsatisfied with current limitations, society is breaking the stigma and ushering in a more proactive, personalized, and experimental approach. The reexamination of death is just beginning.



Is humanity doomed? Projections for a bleak future are leading a growing group of people to say “yes.” As end-of-times thinking takes root, a feeling of collective indifference will threaten the path to progress. To reignite a sense of individual responsibility, we’ll need to convert nihilists into optimists.



With today’s cities clearly not serving us or the planet, urban planners are dreaming up a wildly different future. These ambitious experiments will bring a mix of old and new ideas, and a fresh appreciation for greener, more resilient designs. Expect future-proof cities to redefine aspirational living.



AI is getting personal. While we’ve come to accept that AI has the potential to solve humanity’s biggest challenges, the next step is normalizing its role as a sidekick in our daily lives. Whether treated as a companion, teacher, or administrative assistant, new AI tools will free people from time-intensive tasks and elevate habitual actions into special moments.



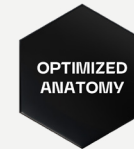
It’s the end of reality as we know it. From synthetic media to the rise of virtual everything, immersive technologies are ushering in a heightened era of on/off-line blur. As the limits of our physical world are shattered, new possibilities for self-expression and deeper engagement abound.



A renewed emphasis on collectivism is redistributing power at scale. Realizing that individualism can only get us so far, brands and organizations are relinquishing control and inviting participation in the form of decentralization, crowdsourcing, and co-creation. The future belongs to all of us.



A world exhausted by rationality is finding delight in the discomfort zone. With so few roads left untraveled and questions left unanswered, alternate realities and out-of-this-world adventures will feed our hunger for escapism. It’s time to revive our sense of wonder.



A desire for control has us taking biology into our own hands. From disease interventions to ultra high-tech tools, a growing category of treatments and products are helping people hack their way to a healthier, stronger, younger version of themselves. In the business of self-optimization, no upgrade is out of reach.



Globalization’s fall from grace is allowing us to rediscover our roots. While being worldly was once a point of pride, we’re now turning inward and getting in touch with our local and national heritage—gaining newfound appreciation for the people and traditions that came before us. To know who we are, we must first understand our history.



With disruptive forces making it harder to predict the jobs of tomorrow, stability is in high demand. Workers are chasing companies that will invest in their future, while employers are aiming to attract and retain talent with practical perks and upskilling opportunities. The new dream job is the one that’s future-proof.



A privacy renegotiation is underway. Fed up with inescapable surveillance, citizens are taking back their identities and demanding better protections both online and off. In the age of constant intrusion, Stealth Mode is peace of mind and anonymity is the ambition.



The days of limitless travel are coming to a close. Between overcrowded destinations and careless tourist behavior, a clear need for boundaries is giving rise to tighter regulations and more mindful business models. The shift from high-volume to high-value travel will forever change how we define a brag-worthy trip.

# METHODOLOGY

This report was born from months of in-depth qualitative and quantitative research between Backslash, 180 LUXE, and TBW\ACULT. Together, the team offers an international perspective spanning from Paris, to Milan, to the United States. Our contributors bring expertise from their work on some of the world's biggest luxury brands—including Riva Yachts, Prada, BMW, Hennessy, Kering, Fendi, and more.

This is an independent research report. Special thanks to our interviewees, Antonio Casu, Paul Mougnot, Tom Marchant, Vu Quan Nguyen Masse, Thomas Bucaille, and Valentine Petry for sharing their perspective. None of the other entities or individuals referenced herein has endorsed or otherwise participated in this report.

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