

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

More Charm

The jewelry brand Pandora raised guidance for 2024 after revenues jumped 18 percent in the first quarter.

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Beckham Forever

Safilo has signed David Beckham to a perpetual eyewear license, a growing trend in the sector.

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Louboutin's New Legs

Christian Louboutin has linked with Pierre Yovanovitch on a chair collection with unique legs.

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Top of the World

Chanel stepped out of its comfort zone with its cruise show held on the rooftop of the Cité Radieuse in Marseille on an unseasonably stormy day. The luxury brand is targeting a new generation of consumers with events in unexpected destinations. “The result is a Chanel that’s the same, but different,” said Bruno Pavlovsky, president of fashion and president of Chanel SAS. *For more, see pages 4 and 5.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANCK MURA

HOME DESIGN

Christian Louboutin Collab Puts Shoes on a Different Kind of Leg

● The shoe designer is collaborating with his friend Pierre Yovanovitch on a line of chairs with their own bespoke stilettos.

BY MARISA GUTHRIE

Sarah Jessica Parker wore them to the Met Gala. (Her alter ego, Carrie Bradshaw, made them fashionista must-haves.) Beyoncé wore a custom pair during her Renaissance tour (knee-high, slathered in silver sparkles). They've adorned the feet of puppets (Miss Piggy) and poets (Maya Angelou). Nicole Kidman wore them to Princess Diana's funeral (suede, in black, naturally).

They are Christian Louboutin shoes. The iconic crimson-soled heels have been a staple of high fashion for decades.

Now they can be found on a very different kind of leg. The French shoe designer is collaborating with Pierre Yovanovitch on nine limited-edition chairs featuring "shoes" designed by Louboutin. Each chair is inspired by an allegorical or historical female muse, from Queen Nefertari and Josephine Baker to Louboutin's friend Dita Von Teese, the American vedette.

For the Dita, they created silver platform heels with a tassel heel evoking Von Teese's burlesque costumes. The Josefine is an homage to Baker's signature jungle costumes with mixed raffa, fringe and beads. Zenobi is inspired by the Palmyrene empress and features legs embellished with turquoise stones; they climb up the back legs and encircle the front legs like ankle bracelets. And Nefertari, the favorite of both Yovanovitch and Louboutin, has a laser-engraved lotus pattern seat back in blue, terracotta and bronze with bronze heels that evoke the sarcophagus crown. Radicailla, named for an expression Yovanovitch often uses to describe a rigid architectural approach, and Morpheia, an homage to the Greek god of sleep, feature upholstery hand-painted by French artist Christophe Martin.

Beginning Friday, the chairs will be on view at Yovanovitch's New York atelier in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. An open edition of "Simply Nude" chairs — an ode to Louboutin's Nudes collection — are also available in a variety of wood and upholstery options with shoes featuring the brand's red lacquered sole.

"We have very different tastes in many ways," Louboutin said. "But what we have in common is really an obsession with detail and craftsmanship."

The project is an evolution of Yovanovitch's Monsieur Oops (Gérard) and Madam Oops (Catherine) chairs, released in 2017, and featuring abstract male and female faces embroidered on the chair backs with a simple shoe at the leg base. "After that, I knew I wanted to do something more involved," he said. The collaboration took two years.

"I like complicated things," said Yovanovitch. "When it's too simple it makes me bored."

Through his mastery of proportion, light and color, dedication to craftsmanship and knack for fine details, Yovanovitch has created a distinctive style. His oeuvre features flights of whimsy: the Oops chairs; the Papa, Mama and Baby Bear armchairs inspired by the Goldilocks fairytale; chairs designed to conjure an owl. (In 2022, Mama Bear was added to the permanent

Pierre Yovanovitch, right, and Christian Louboutin have been working on a chair collaboration for two years.



collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.)

But the Louboutin project is in some ways a departure for Yovanovitch, who launched his furniture line in 2021 after two decades as an interior architect, and before that was a menswear designer for Pierre Cardin. Combining Yovanovitch's exacting standards with the sexiness of a Louboutin stiletto, the collaboration brings Yovanovitch's haute-couture aesthetic to its literal interpretation.

"For me the project was always smooth, it almost felt like a vacation," said Yovanovitch. "The chair is very serious, solid wood, very clean lines and the little shoe that Christian does on every foot of the chair, they are very joyful, funny. It's the same with us — I'm quite serious and he's always fun. I'm shy; he is very extroverted. And I think the opposite character makes something very interesting."

Yovanovitch and Louboutin have known each other for years. They first became friends after Yovanovitch contracted Louboutin's boyfriend, master landscape designer Louis Benech, to design the gardens at Yovanovitch and his partner Matthieu Cussac's 17th-century country château in Provence, which they purchased in 2009. Benech brought Louboutin for a weekend visit to the château. "We clicked right away," said Louboutin.

In 2015, Yovanovitch designed the interior of Louboutin's first beauty shop in the covered 19th-century arcades of the Galerie Véro-Dodat, near the Louvre. "It

was a tiny store, like a little jewel box," recalled Louboutin. "I saw immediately his talent with light, light is so important when you have a small space."

When Yovanovitch called Louboutin to ask him to collaborate on some chairs, Louboutin said "yes" immediately. "I said to Pierre, 'You know, my father was a carpenter. So everything which has to do with wood and carving, I'm quite into it. But I'm not going to do a little shoe at the end of a chair. The chair is like the human body, the foot of a chair has also legs. So let me work on the legs, not on the shoe.' And he agreed."

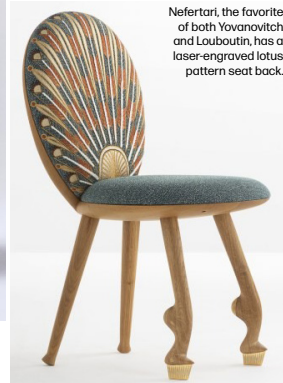
Yovanovitch initially thought of doing male and female chairs, reminiscent of Catherine and Gerard. But, he said, "for the men, the leg wasn't very sexy. The leg of the woman is nicer. With my carpenter, we created the shape of the legs. We did many, many, many shapes to finally choose the one we both like."

"The chairs are quite feminine," added Louboutin. "The shape, it's all about curves."

Fifteen different artisans — including embroiderers Maisons Vermont, Lesage Interieurs and Montox, furniture designers Atelier Joffre and Hugo Delavelle, leather specialist Audrey Ludwig and Martin, the painter — worked on each chair. Some of the chairs are quite simple and minimalist: Simply Nudes features a carved wooden foot with a painted red sole, Morpheia has painted gold feet that fade into the blond wood leg. Others, like Dita, are more theatrical; Metropolis, an homage to Fritz Lang's 1920s sci-fi epic "Metropolis,"



The Dita features a silver platform with a tassel heel, an homage to the burlesque costumes of Christian Louboutin's friend Dita Von Teese.



Nefertari, the favorite of both Yovanovitch and Louboutin, has a laser-engraved lotus pattern seat back.

features a silver leather bootie with a stiletto hovering above the floor. But all of them needed to be functional. "People are going to sit on it," said Yovanovitch. "It's a sculptural piece but I want it to also be a useful piece."

Yovanovitch decided to show the chairs in New York because the American market is more adventurous in its embrace of the avant garde. (The U.S. is Yovanovitch's largest retail market.)

"American people are more open for something fun like that, also I thought maybe there is some friend of Christian, in show business or a singer, who might like them. I don't have this kind of client, my clients are more classic," he said.

Several of the chairs have already been sold. (The muse chairs are \$28,000, while the Nudes are \$13,000.) They will need to create additional versions of these bespoke pieces. "But they will not be exactly the same," said Yovanovitch, "how could they be?"

As he surveyed the chairs, which have been displayed on a crimson-accented elevated runway ahead of an opening night reception, Yovanovitch noted the Martin's hand-painted upholstery will be different. And the lead time will probably be six months. Louboutin walked over wearing a black Dolly Parton T-shirt underneath a denim shirt. Scrolling through his phone, he said, "People are asking for a table to go with the chair. Can we do a table?"