



## Why fashion loves to revive heritage brands

The trademarks for Poiret fashion house are up for auction this month, which suggests the heritage brand might see a revival. From Carven to Schiaparelli, **Lauren Cochrane** reports on why labels love to relaunch



Evening dress by Paul Poiret from 1928. Photograph: Lipnitzki/Roger Viollet/Getty Images

Credited with pioneering designer perfume, doing away with the corset and throwing some great parties, Paul Poiret was a giant of Parisian fashion in the 1910s. If his name has been consigned to history – and many a designer's moodboard – in the 100 years since, there are signs it could be about to gain new life. The trademarks for his house have been put up for auction this month, suggesting a revival.



French fashion designer and decorator Paul Poiret, 1922. Photograph: Lipnitzki/Roger Viollet/Getty Images

Poiret 2.0 is part of a wider trend. A glut of fashion houses from the first half of the 20th century have relaunched with great success in the past 10 years, often getting a completely new spin in the process: see Balmain, Carven and Schiaparelli. The heritage that comes with an established name – even if the customer is only vaguely aware of it – bolsters these labels, even if that said heritage isn't in the least plundered. Pierre Balmain, known for buttoned-up elegance and dresses worn by royalty in the 50s, is a long way from Balmain's current preoccupation with sex and social media. Martin Raymond, the co-founder of trends forecasting consultancy The Future Laboratory, believes it's this combination of new and old that appeals to potential investors. "The whole business model is both about heritage fashion and a relatively blank canvas to write new codes," he says. The perfumes that Poiret made are an added bonus – to relaunch these along with a catwalk collection would draw in a consumer who loves the associations but can't afford the clothes.



A model at the Schiaparelli show at Paris Fashion Week. Photograph: Victor Virgile/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images

Poiret is currently owned by Arnaud de Lummen, of Levanis SA. De Lummen was behind the relaunch of Vionnet – another example of how heritage works now. The house, set up by Madeleine Vionnet in 1912 and famous for draping, was dormant for nearly 75 years but is now a very modern kind of fashion success: on the Paris schedule, owned and designed by Kazakh businesswoman Goga Ashkenazi and worn by well-heeled women around the world. “Ashkenazi is very aware of what women want and how to make them feel elegant,” says Sasha Sarokin, the buying manager at Net-a-Porter. “The Vionnet customer wants to wear something special without any fuss.”



Carven, another heritage brand that was revived in the 1990s. Photograph: Victor Virgile/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images

Arguably, this latest cluster of houses are cult references of 20th-century fashion rather than household names such as Chanel or Christian Dior, which means designs have the freedom to reflect something more modern. “Investment companies are looking for a vehicle to potentially create new luxury brands,” says Raymond. “It’s a name that’s in museums, in fashion history books – which shows they’re targeting a fashion-literate consumer.” Said consumer is likely to be shopping on sites such as Net-a-Porter, so a new Poiret is on Sarokin’s radar. “It’s always very exciting for us to see new brands emerging and heritage brands being rejuvenated,” she says. “Poiret was famous for his feminine and wearable looks, so we’re incredibly excited to see what happens with the brand now.”

Raymond believes the key to the success is down to the talent taking over the design reins. With John Galliano now in place at Maison Martin Margiela, the obvious choice is taken. “Galliano exemplifies the lushness of colour and the journey of a brand like that,” he says. “Roland Mouret could work or Christian Lacroix, perhaps.” Paul Poiret 100 years ago was a label familiar to, and loved by, the high-fashion consumer. If the pieces fall into place this month, It’s only a matter of time before it is once again.