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FROM ALBER ELBAZ'S LEGACY TO A NEW GENERATION OF CREATIVES: RICHEMONT UNVEILS "A BUNCH OF DESIGNERS"

Richemont today announces the launch of "**A Bunch of Designers**", a new collective initiative that supports six emerging designers from the first cohort of AZ Academy: Business for Designers, as they translate their educational experience into business reality. Following their graduation from the 12-month programme, "A Bunch of Designers" now prepares the designers to develop and produce their first commercial capsule collections. Through the collective initiative, the talents will have a unique opportunity to present their curated collections with a first authentic market activation in late September, in line with Paris Fashion Week.

Marking the next chapter of Alber Elbaz's legacy as well as the evolution of AZ Factory and AZ Academy: Business for Designers, "A Bunch of Designers" continues Elbaz's vision of supporting and sharing independent creativity. The initiative is designed to transform the programme experience into tangible entrepreneurial and market reality, while ensuring the designers remain fully at the centre of their own projects.

The six designers, **Brais Albor, Caterina Moro, Liwen Liang, Manon Marcelot, Merle Breuker, and Sandra Jao** were selected following the final presentation of AZ Academy's inaugural cohort to a Richemont leadership committee in December 2025. Their concepts stood out for the strength of their creative vision and the clarity of their positioning, as well as their commercial potential. Representing distinct yet complementary universes across womenswear, menswear and leather goods, the designers embody the heart of this collective initiative: unlimited creativity, extraordinary savoir-faire and bold entrepreneurship.

Albor, whose designs are characterised by his unique approach to menswear and catering to the "bear community", combines tailoring and undergarments to design oversized and precise silhouettes. Guided by what he calls the "Love Revolution", he uses clothing as a tool to give space to the body rather than restrict it.

Meanwhile, Moro's style and approach are deeply rooted in her philosophy of "EARTH - Earth as Art", redefining nature as the new luxury. She sees nature as a compass, translating its forms, patterns, and intelligence into a distinctive design language crafted through refined Made in Italy garments.

Combining Chinese ceramic heritage with contemporary fashion, Liang designs wearable sculptures that blur the boundaries between object and body. He creates a dialogue between tradition, craftsmanship and material experimentation, influencing the conventional perceptions of ceramics and textiles.

Another designer, Marcelot, bridges urban life and rural heritage to define a unique vision of "agricultural sophistication" through sharp, highly crafted and playful leather goods and accessories. Embracing unexpected combinations, her work draws inspiration from agricultural machinery, landscapes, and everyday tools.

Embodied in her modular collection "The Lasting", Breuker features design classics with convertible and flexible elements. Garments made from leftover stock are crafted to adapt to the wearer's body, promoting longevity, reparability, and versatility through mix-and-match pieces.

Finally, Jao explores clothing as a form of transformation and emotional expression, bridging Japanese technical innovation with Italian craftsmanship. Influenced by her background in fine arts and extensive training in Japan, her approach prioritises form, structure, materials, and construction over mere styling.

By accompanying emerging designers beyond education and into the next stage of their development, “A Bunch of Designers” reflects Richemont’s long-term commitment to nurturing creative talents. Richemont and AZ Academy: Business for Designers will provide operational support, coaching and strategic guidance, with celebrated designer Lutz Huelle joining as ambassador to impart the spirit of transmission. As a former AZ Factory “Amigo” and member of the AZ Academy admission jury, Huelle’s involvement is particularly meaningful.

Philippe Fortunato, CEO of Fashion & Accessories Maisons at Richemont commented: “At Richemont, we believe creativity flourishes when promising talent is given the right environment, expertise and time to develop. ‘A Bunch of Designers’ reflects that commitment by extending support beyond education, helping these six emerging designers take the next step in their development. We are pleased to support them as they begin this important next chapter.”

Graziella Valtorta, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Creative Academy commented: “AZ Academy: Business for Designers was created to help independent designers combine creative ambition with the practical knowledge needed to build a brand today. With ‘A Bunch of Designers’, these six promising designers have the opportunity to put that learning into practice, supported by a framework that respects the individuality of each designer and the legacy from which the programme was born.”

About AZ Academy: Business for Designers

AZ Academy: Business for Designers is a unique 12-month executive programme based in Milan for independent designers in luxury and fashion, developed by Richemont and Creative Academy in partnership with Accademia Costume & Moda. Born from the legacy of Alber Elbaz and the evolution of AZ Factory, the programme offers a 360-degree understanding of what it takes to build and scale a brand today. Students are trained across key disciplines including finance, merchandising, pricing, distribution, production, communication and brand definition.