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LVMH Celebrates Experts in Craft at IME Apprenticeship Ceremony

French labor minister Elisabeth Borne, actresses Nathalie Baye and Lyna Khoudri were among the guests celebrating confirmed craftspeople and talents-in-training.

By **LILY TEMPLETON**

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French minister for work, employment and insertion Elisabeth Borne; LVMH chief executive

officer Bernard Arnault; Chantal Gaemperle, group executive vice president, human resources and synergies; and director of development of the métiers d'excellence LVMH Alexandre Boquel, surrounded by the craftspeople of the Institut des Métiers d'Excellence LVMH at the 2021 event.

BOBY


PARIS — “We pretended to have the know-how but it was all make-believe. But what I try to teach her is that you need a craft, not a job,” said French actress Nathalie Baye, standing on the stage of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées surrounded by emerging and confirmed talents of the Institut des Métiers d'Excellence, the training program put in place by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton in 2014.

The actress was speaking at the end of the “Show Me” event, where an extract of her latest film, “Haute Couture,” was shown. In it, she plays a chief seamstress at Dior — which supported the film by providing dresses and access to its archives — on the cusp of retirement who is moved to teach her craft to a young pickpocket, played by French-Algerian actress Lyna Khoudri.

Students from partnering middle schools in the IME's “Excellent!” program will have previews of the film, ahead of its Nov. 10 release in cinemas.

“The spirit of the film summarizes what moves us at the [IME],” said Chantal Gaemperle, LVMH's group executive vice president, human resources and synergies, introducing the two-act event with the reminder that luxury, beyond its glittering facade, was supported by know-how that needs to be preserved.

“We are in a theater... it's these women and men who are the main actors of this ceremony,” she said, describing the program as a “live, oral magazine” on the skills in the group, as told by the artisans, designers and executives who took turns on stage to explain their paths.

Among them were Gaemperle herself, who nodded to her homeland of Switzerland where apprenticeship is successful and strongly encouraged as a path; fourth-year watchmaking apprentice Antoine Metral, who works at Bulgari and his tutor Eric Cart-Lamy, who is in charge of the training center for Hublot, and Bertrand Tefra, the chief operating officer of Parfums Christian Dior, who spoke about an ailing  y bought by the perfume house and which has since been turned around.

Alexandre Boquel, the group's director of development of the métiers d'excellence, delighted the room by recounting how he got his start in the group as an intern selling ties at Le Bon Marché, where he realized the chain of crafts involved in the strip of fabric in his hands – and was put off wearing them for good.

Nicolas Ghesquière, in a conversation with Louis Vuitton's head of atelier Mario Lefranc, characterized his seven-year tenure at the creative helm of the brand's women's collections as an experience of learning, where “creative vision is only beautiful when it is shared.”

“The success of this group which I founded in the 1990s relies on the success of our products... which rest upon your desire to make them ever better,” said LVMH's chief executive officer Bernard Arnault, adding that success was founded on desire itself and that long-term desirability was the essential motor which “counted more than results.”

Insisting on the role of artisanal excellence in the image of France, he thanked the artisans and those who had worked toward the group's success, although “in the offices... we do a lot of paper and not a lot of product,” he quipped.

“I love going into ateliers and stores, rather than watching through a screen. Working over Zoom, you lose the contact of the product. In our [fields], reality and being on the ground is important,” he concluded.

France's labor minister Elisabeth Borne addressed the craftspeople in the room as “the country's pride,” telling them they illustrated the “cultural shift that we defend with [French President Emmanuel Macron], where we wanted to give apprenticeship its nobility through reforms [of educational tracks],” aiming at combating unemployment, particularly among youths.

Beyond kicking off the eighth year of IME and its 339 new apprentices, the occasion served to distinguish the “Virtuoses LVMH,” a worldwide group of 66 craftspeople considered virtuoso in their field. Thirty-eight of them were present at the event and were presented with an “IME” pin specially created by Bulgari.

After thunderous applause for the IME students and their predecessors, the event
l out into the concourses of the theater, where booths highlighted the

professions taught at the institute.

“I didn’t even know my job existed until I practiced it. I can’t wait to share it with as many as possible,” said Sophie Estève, a stylist specialized in prints working alongside Guillaume Henry at Patou, standing between an eyewear specialist and a vineyard worker demonstrating how she pruned a grapevine.

Other initiatives highlighted the outreach programs and partnerships LVMH is involved in.

The Prix des Artisanes, created in collaboration with French Elle’s fashion, food and decoration editions, supported by France’s National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts and the Chamber of Trades and Crafts, will focus on the contribution of female craftspeople to the preservation of French patrimony.

La Fabrique Nomade, which helps migrant and refugee artisans continue their careers in France, showcased its first collaboration, between female artisans and artist Jérémy Gobé on the topic of coral preservation. It will be exhibited at the FIAC art fair that opens on Thursday in Paris.

“If there is something beyond career perspectives and hope, it’s that [all this] is about humans. The company wouldn’t be what it is without the women and the men – not just creative directors and CEOs – but throughout the whole hierarchy,” said Gaemperle, adding that giving the incoming class “a glimpse of what their predecessors have achieved and of the community will join is the best message we can give them.”

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