this spread: (left) Pierre Frey (r) founded his luxury design house in Paris in 1935. His son Patrick (l) took over the company in 1972 and remains creative director today, while handing off key roles to the third generation; (right) the Frey family (l–r): Patrick, Vincent, Matthieu and Pierre

GENERATION LUXE

Even the most legendary figures at family-controlled style brands must eventually pass the reins. How does the next generation take on the heritage of the past while preparing for the future? **By Tanya Dukes**

IN THE PAST 15 YEARS, *heritage* has become the top buzzword for some of the biggest names in luxury style. An important part of what a luxury brand sells is the halo of an authentic and consistent creative vision, one that's been perfected over time. Even in our age of fashion conglomerates and "design teams," the notion of a single inspired genius lives on. That image may be easy to convey when a brand's founder is running the show, but the recent passing of Oscar de la Renta, and the maturing of some of fashion's biggest names (Lagerfeld and Armani are over 80), reminds us that for a brand to survive, new leaders must emerge.

The task of the younger generation is to ensure that the connection to the brand's heritage remains secure without turning a blind eye to the future. Given the fervent need to appeal to global audiences and to the millennial generation, luxury labels must walk a fine line in public perception between feeling established and just feeling old. "Understanding the aspirations of millennials for a luxury lifestyle is critical for luxury brands," Pam Danziger, president of Unity Marketing, has said. "They will need to innovate with new products, services, marketing strategies and branding concepts, as well as let go of old ideas that will prove ineffective, even counterproductive."

Family-owned or -controlled businesses have a built-in advantage when it comes to tackling this transition from past to future. Perhaps that's why eight of the world's top 10 luxury brands are owned or managed by a family. According to a study published by Milan's Bocconi University, "The unique bundle of resources family firms own [cited are continuity, community, connections and command] implies the potential to provide an advantage over non-family firms in luxury-related industries."

To capitalise on this edge in the market, forward-thinking brands are keeping their next generations close, giving young family members meaningful responsibility at an early age. Strategies vary, but, as is evident in these four examples, the goal is continued relevance for luxury consumers.

The Fabric of Family at Pierre Frey

It's a rare interiors company that can pivot from producing historically accurate restorations of 18th-century rooms at the Musée du Louvre to creating wallpaper patterns with a graffiti artist whose *nom de guerre* is Toxic. But that's the wide-ranging expertise and nimble imagination that makes Pierre Frey so sought-after. Best known for quintessentially Parisian fabrics and wallpaper designs—it also makes carpets, rugs and furniture—the house just marked its 80th anniversary. In that time, only two men have been at the helm: Pierre Frey and his son Patrick, who now serves as president and creative director. But in recent years, three of the founder's grandsons have joined the ranks, and each has acquired his own fiefdom within the company.

Eldest brother Pierre, 38, is a de facto brand ambassador who handles communications and publicity. Vincent, 36, is chief executive and manages the firm's business affairs, and Matthieu—the youngest of the three at 33—lives in Singapore and devotes his time to expanding the company's presence in Asia. Why did they all feel it was important to work with the brand? "No one else knows the colours, the products and the spirit behind the products and brand better," Pierre explains. "Since we were kids, every member of our family has trained our eyes and minds to understand the company."

Photography (previous spread and left) courtesy Pierre Frey

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> **Pierre Frey**, Director of International Relations, Pierre Frey

Photography (right and far right) courtesy Buccellati

this spread: (above) Pierre Frey fabric, wallpaper and rugs; (right) Lucrezia and Andrea Buccellati; (far right) a piece from Lucrezia's collections and her gold iPhone cover

While Patrick remains the driving creative force, the next generation helps him identify artists for collaborations, whether with up-and-coming talents like illustrator Louise Bourgoin or with French icons like model and fashion muse Inès de la Fressange, who's been tapped for a project later this year. Forging such connections is important for those moving into leadership positions, says Robert Burke, chairman and CEO of the New York–based fashion and retail consulting firm that bears his name. Citing examples like Nadja Swarovski, credited for Swarovski's involvement with the Council of Fashion Designers of America and British Fashion Council, and Delphine Arnault, who championed the well-publicised LVMH Young Designer Prize, Burke says "the next generation can offer new insight and bring attention to buying patterns, social media and designer collaborations."

Communicating the brand's story is Pierre's passion, and with good reason: In the current atmosphere of heritage marketing, this is one of the last remaining companies to print, weave and embroider its own fabrics in France. To explain this legacy to a wider audience, Pierre orchestrated a 240-page book that chronicles Pierre Frey's history. But when it comes to selling his youthful peers on the company's products, he confesses, "I don't have to do much. They love that it's made in France and that we've been using the same artisanal know-how for decades. The work speaks for itself."

The Golden Touch at Buccellati

Just over a year ago at the annual BaselWorld convention, a pre-eminent watch and jewellery exhibition, a pair of new items from elegant Milanese jewellery house Buccellati had attendees abuzz. The nearly century-old brand, respected for its Renaissance-inflected aesthetic and exceptional goldsmithing technique, introduced solid gold accessories emblazoned with diamonds—one an iPad cover, the other for an iPhone. Of all the news surrounding Buccellati after the release, this collection was the most talked about on social media, gathering 66 percent of tweets and 51 percent of all Instagram photos. The idea for the pieces, a departure from the brand's somewhat conservative reputation, came from 26-year-old Lucrezia Buccellati. She'd recently joined the company to work with her

father, creative director Andrea Buccellati, and she wanted the pieces to "mark the beginning of an evolution for the brand."

The first of the family's fourth generation to join the company, and also its first female designer, Lucrezia is a key part of the effort to update Buccellati's image. Her challenge is to get noticed by younger clients without alienating existing ones. For example, she worked with her father to create the Romanza collection of bridal and engagement rings to cultivate a fresh generation of young women who may become lifelong Buccellati customers. Her next project will be "unveiling a collection of one-of-a-kind pieces inspired by select masterpieces of art." To lend it the air of a cultural event, both "the jewellery and corresponding paintings will go on display at Buccellati's New York flagship," Lucrezia says.

A newlywed and new mother, she's now based in New York and uses Skype to communicate with her team in Italy, which she visits every three months. All the while, she continues to learn the ropes from her father. "I conduct a lot of research for new collections," Lucrezia says, "and when I go back to Milan, my father and I review it together."

Their challenge is to expand even further around the globe, and to continue growing the business, while maintaining the style and quality of Buccellati. "Ultimately, we will need to nurture the legacy of our family that my grandfather has left to us," Lucrezia has said. As for those solid gold tech accessories? Both one-of-a-kind pieces were sold within days.

Design of the Times at Sonia Rykiel

If there's a shortlist of archetypal French femmes, Sonia Rykiel is on it. Her bobbed, flaming red hair and smoky-eyed gaze make her instantly recognisable. Her fashion collection's signatures—"poor boy" sweaters, stripes and lanky knitwear—were standouts from the beginning of her business in 1968.

When Rykiel sold a majority stake in her company to Hong Kong–based First Heritage Brands in 2012, she paved the way for global expansion while keeping her family intimately connected to the company. Her daughter Nathalie is vice chairwoman of the board, and 28-year-old granddaughter Lola Rykiel directs public relations in the U.S. Whether she's penning a column for *Harper's Bazaar*, Instagramming behind the scenes from a fashion shoot, or coping with logistics for the next runway show, Lola has become a prominent face of the latest incarnation of Sonia Rykiel.

With the recent installation of artistic director Julie de Libran (a designer with experience at brands including Louis Vuitton), Sonia Rykiel's Left Bank femininity has captured the attention of women who hadn't been born when the label first appeared. Lola, one of those women herself, is thrilled with Libran: "She understands the codes created by my grandmother and plays with those elements in her own way." And Lola is ready to do her part to extend the brand's heritage by making it relevant for new generations.

To get her bearings, she has worked in every department from production to sales. "I have to be able to think strategically and know the process of how a design goes from a sketch to the store," Lola explains. Now based in New York, the Paris native sees her role as a natural fit. "Sonia Rykiel has always been a part of my identity," she says. "As a child, I would do my homework at the atelier while my mother and grandmother did fittings with models. This business is my home."

Photography (left) courtesy Sonia Rykiel

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> **Lola Rykiel**, U.S. Public Relations Director, Sonia Rykiel

INDEPENDENT SPIRITS

A few scions with ties to iconic luxury brands are branching out to do their own thing, while staying true to their creative roots.

Greg Lauren
The LA–based designer introduced his namesake fashion line four years ago. His father, Jerry, heads menswear for uncle Ralph Lauren's empire.

Delfina Delettrez
Delfina Delettrez Fendi's fine jewellery suggests that an affinity for accessories is in the genes: Her mother, Silvia Venturini Fendi, is the mastermind behind Fendi's accessories.

Aerin
Showing the same entrepreneurial energy as her grandmother Estée Lauder, Aerin Lauder Zinterhofer has her own lifestyle brand and serves as style director for Estée Lauder.

this spread: (above left) Sonia Rykiel Spring/Summer 2015 collection; (far left, l-r) Lola, Nathalie and Sonia Rykiel; (left, l-r) Shalini and Sanjay Kasliwal of The Gem Palace; (above) custom Gem Palace designs

Photography (Rykiel) Getty Images; (Kasliwal) Mick Furillo / BFAnyc.com

Heritage Polished at The Gem Palace

As jewellery emporiums go, The Gem Palace is a strikingly egalitarian one. From its constellation of boutiques throughout India, but especially at the Jaipur headquarters, the company outfits royals—of the domestic and international varieties—as well as tourists hunting for souvenirs. In the warren of showrooms, it's as easy to find a carved emerald bib with a price edging towards $1 million as it is to unearth gemstone rings at less than $300.

Among the members of the family who manage The Gem Palace, Sanjay Kasliwal heads operations and is the main designer for the sprawling enterprise. His son Samir, 30, and daughter Shalini, 27, help secure its family status into the eighth generation. A graduate of the Gemological Institute of America, Samir manages retail operations in India and lives in Jaipur. Even at a brand with a history as long as The Gem Palace's, Samir maintains that it's still possible—"and necessary"—to make a fresh mark, especially when it comes to expansion. There are now stores in Turkey, Japan and Italy, and more to come. Why do the pieces resonate across such a diverse range of locales and buyers? Making jewellery that bridges classic Indian design and more contemporary sensibilities is important to Samir, as it has been to his father. The ability to spot the strategies that will allow the company to evolve is key, says consultant Robert Burke: "Someone who's grown up surrounded by a brand has an inherent understanding of where it's been—and where it could grow."

A lawyer by training, Shalini first joined The Gem Palace by helping her father and brother with legal matters in Jaipur. In 2014, Sanjay started an independent store in New York under his own name, hoping to further cement the family's legacy. The Madison Avenue storefront allows him to display some of his favourite work, and allows Shalini to serve as CEO and enhance the family business in the U.S. She may also try her own hand at making jewellery. "My grandparents on both sides of the family were jewellers," she says, "so design is in my DNA." ■

New York–based writer **Tanya Dukes** *covers luxury fashion and fine jewellery for Robb Report.*