

f t 90 Shares □ 2

A.P.C. Makes Big Moves in L.A.

*Alexis Brunswick**Industry October 24, 2014 | 08:41PM*

Head honcho Jean Touitou talks New York vibes, dressing celebs, and the complexity of minimalism.



Louis Wong, Jean Touitou, and Anthony Vaccarello at the A.P.C. Melrose Place opening party.

Photos Courtesy of A.P.C.

Jean Touitou is betting big on Los Angeles. Having successfully served the region with a small A.P.C. store in West Hollywood for years, Touitou has opened a new, much larger destination for the brand on designer-heavy Melrose Place. Taking cultural cues from the city, the 2,500-square-foot boutique's U-shaped design reflects Touitou's more elevated and refined sense of minimalism, playing in new ways with architecture and the region's vegetation. Specially commissioned ceramic brick floors pay homage to the city's Hispanic history, while a central garden plot is framed by large windows that make the natural light a focal point.

But the new Melrose Place location is just the beginning of the brand's strategic multi-store SoCal rollout. It's slated to open two more locations in Los Angeles by year's end. A new A.P.C. outpost is set to join the downtown revival alongside the likes of the Ace Hotel, Acne, and Aesop, while a Silver Lake location will serve the Eastside neighborhood—and a city somewhat unwilling to drive crosstown for a retail fix.

Touitou was in town to celebrate the Melrose Place opening and sat down exclusively with Style.com to discuss why L.A. matters so much, what drew him to the neighborhoods, and why the new store is the most advanced for the brand to date.



The interior of A.P.C. on Melrose Place.

Do you think Los Angeles is becoming more legitimate, from a fashion and design standpoint?

I believe that in design life, people are being rejected now by New York. You cannot survive there as an artist anymore. People are pushed further and further to leave because everything is so expensive. And the pressure of the big companies on designers is very big. Here in Los Angeles, it looks like things won't be easier, but people can live a better life and there are more and more artists here. The legitimacy of Los Angeles, from the creative point of view, is greater. As a matter of fact, every single time we come here, we ask ourselves, what are we doing in Paris, because France is a very conservative country, very conservative. From a fashion point of view, Paris fashion week is important to us, but the rest of the year, it's not stimulating for your energy or your creativity. It's a very uncomfortable place to live, Paris, from a creativity standpoint.

Things are getting worse and worse in France, and people do not acknowledge this because the beauty of the city is so intense, that once you get in Paris, you're on a bridge and you say, "That's so beautiful, so perfect." From a fashion and design standpoint, it's starting to become embarrassing to me. It's a country that has only a past and no future, of this I'm positive. I don't exaggerate. If you compare the energy you find here or in New York, you always find young people with creative energy much more than in the old Europe.

Why invest in Los Angeles expansion now?

It's a strategic decision I took with my people. In fashion, we make some statements, like "Black is the new black" or things like that. And one day, I came out and I said, "California is the new Japan." Because we have been expanding so much in Japan, we have 25 stores there now and we don't want to open more. I realized that here the capacity—it's so big and people are so aware of fashion more and more. I'm not saying it's going to be easy. There is a lot of intellectual and creative life in California.



Kanye West, Jean Touitou, Judith Touitou, and Jerry Lorenzo at the A.P.C. Melrose Place opening party.

What do you think of the revived retail scene in Los Angeles?

There is a buzz, but if you walk, there are also so many spaces for lease. There's a bit of a crisis, too. In the industry there are cycles. There is so much money in the industry coming from funds and finance people. There are a lot of people, and it's like when you cook pasta and throw it against the wall to see if it sticks. It seems like a lot of finance people have these projects, and if it doesn't work, it closes. Right now we are in this part of the cycle when there are too many places to lease, but on the other hand, on our part of Melrose there are a lot of very good stores. I do think what I thought 20 years ago when I first looked at Melrose—I think that it's probably one of the most beautiful streets for retail in the world, because the nature is pretty and it's not aggressive. Like, oh there's a Bottega Veneta, but it doesn't scream in your face. I like how it's subtle and very discreet. I'm not a shopper myself, but I don't mind going into those stores.

How did you decide on Melrose Place in West Hollywood?

This is not really very rational. For Melrose Place, the first time I came to L.A., frankly, what I thought is that this street has incredibly beautiful proportions. I didn't think of it as a strategist of fashion, but with the hills and the lights, I thought it was a beautiful street. And for a while, I thought, I'll never be able to afford it anyway, so let's forget about it. But I still kept it in mind, and then we found something on the side of it, on Croft Avenue [A.P.C.'s former space], which I'm very glad we did because it was a very nice architectural project at the time. And then we found the Melrose Place spot and it was for rent. So I took a plane to come see it, and when I landed, my guy comes and tells me, "Oh, I have a piece of news for you; it's not for rent anymore." After flying 12 hours. But he said, "But it's for sale." And I'm not a huge company, and it was a big piece of land to buy. But I loved it so much, it was an old antique shop. I loved the volume of it so much. We've been a bit creative and we managed to buy it. So that makes me a little more involved with California, and L.A. is on my mind definitely. On top of that, I do come from Tunisia, and here you plant a jasmine tree and it makes a jasmine tree. In Paris you plant a jasmine tree and it will only last three weeks. So it's pretty emotional for me to be here; it's the same light and air as in my home country, which I left when I was a kid. So all those factors make sense from an artistic and economical point of view.

What about downtown and Silver Lake?

Downtown L.A. is not a given, because it could appear strange. There are New York vibes in downtown. Los Angeles is not so much a place where you feel ghosts of the past. Downtown, you feel the past and the history. I went to the United Artists Theatre downtown and I was shocked because there you have all these old ghosts taking over you, saying, “Stay here.” And then people at the [Ace] hotel did something clever, like a real-estate agency, and they contacted everybody they knew. So they contacted Aesop and Acne, and they proposed fairly good deals on a street that could be very uncertain from a business point of view. But we played; we like to play. I liked the building that they proposed; the space was beautiful. It’s risk-taking but I love to do it.

And Silver Lake was the same thing. It felt natural to be there. I realized a lot of people who live there don’t necessarily want to use their car to get places. Here [in L.A.], why would you go to Venice to buy something if you live in Silver Lake? If you’re a professional who works or has a family, you cannot spend your days in your car, so those are the three good locations. We’re also looking at La Brea now for a surplus store. Our fashion doesn’t age badly, and it’s only math. The bigger you go, even if you’re successful, you have some left over. It’s the same exact thing when you cook. You might as well sell the leftovers to people who want them—we have that in New York and so that’s good.



The interior of A.P.C. on Melrose Place.

Do you find your Los Angeles customers different than your other customers in how they buy and engage with the brand?

It’s boring news and it’s good news, too: The world is becoming all the same. What’s different here is there are a lot of stylists for the movies, so we’re very selective with them. But that represents quite a bit of activity for us here. I am so not into celebrity, but we have our part to play. Again, I don’t want to offend the celebrity culture, it’s just we’re not in it at all.

Do you find A.P.C. moving away from the signature Parisian minimalist aesthetic?

I am still a minimalist, but minimalism is something very complex. This is going to sound very pretentious, what I'm about to say, but I think that mere beauty can take ornamentation, and when you're trying to do sublime things, you have to look for a certain category of simplicity, but that's very complex to achieve. If you look at our stores, I would not qualify them as maximalist; they are very minimalist but in a much more complex way of looking for beauty. It's very lazy to say, "I'm a minimalist and I do nothing," like metal bars and stuff. This is why it's been copied so much, this aesthetic. There are a lot of brands in [other] stores and in fashion that look like A.P.C. 10 years ago, so I had to move forward. So I'm still minimalist, but it takes much more work to be minimalist now. You know, you evolve. I was into non-architecture architecture and now I'm more into the art of architecture. As a matter of fact, our architect doesn't only work for us, but I consider him one of the 10 most important people in my company; he's almost as important as the designer of the company.

When you open shops in Los Angeles, is the aesthetic consistent with the rest of your stores or is it specific to L.A.?

It is specific; we always do a little wink to culture and history. Obviously the wink there on Melrose was the Spanish thing, which is kind of subtle. But the floor is made from Spanish bricks, painted bricks. It says something Spanish to me. There's always something related to where we are, but it's always a bit subtle.

Trends / Industry: A.P.C Los Angeles Store Opening Party - Jean Touitou Interview

 SHARE

 TWEET

 COMMENTS

MOST POPULAR



How Valentino Became an Unlikely Street-Style Phenomenon



Andreja Pejic Talks Contouring, Caitlyn Jenner, and Why all



That Girl: An Oral History of Betsey Johnson

LATEST ARTICLES



Tom Ford's New Routine, and More of Today's News



Gucci and Calvin Klein's Go-To Model Isn't Your!



3 Reasons to Get Excited About Nude Nail Polish

FROM OUR PARTNERS



Inside Jennifer Lopez's Amazing NYC Penthouse

People.com



13 Trends to Retire
in 2015

Allure.com



10 Street Style-
Approved Ways To
Make Jeans and
Heels Feel Fresh

Luckyshops.com

BE IN THE KNOW

Get the latest fashion news, trends, street-style snaps,
runway coverage, party reports, and more from Style.com.
straight to your inbox!

E-mail address

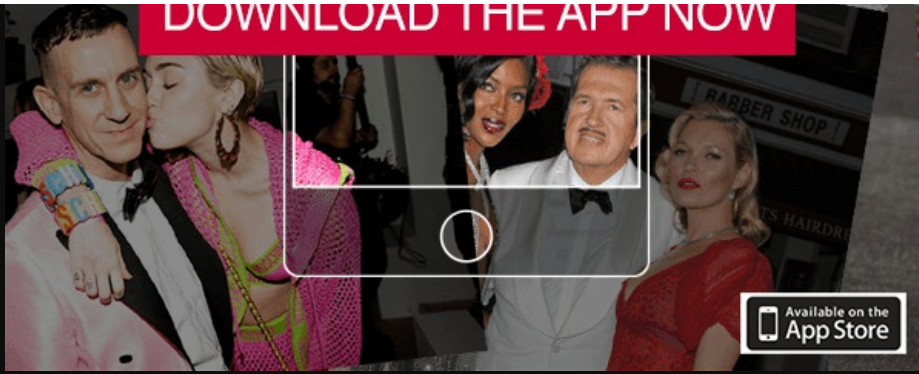
SIGN UP

STYLE.COM

See Fashion First

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW



[Contact Us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Press Center](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Reprints](#)

[Careers](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Google+](#)

[Pinterest](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Tumblr](#)

© 2014 Condé Nast. All rights reserved.

Site by AREA17

USE OF THIS SITE CONSTITUTES ACCEPTANCE OF OUR:

[USER AGREEMENT \(EFFECTIVE 1/2/2014\)](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY \(EFFECTIVE 1/2/2014\).](#)

YOUR CALIFORNIA PRIVACY RIGHTS. THE MATERIAL ON THIS SITE MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED, DISTRIBUTED, TRANSMITTED, CACHED OR OTHERWISE USED, EXCEPT WITH THE PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION OF CONDÉ NAST. AD CHOICES