

BUSINESS / RETAIL

Independents' Day: The Place London Plants a Third Flag, in Mayfair

Simon Burstein's boutique concept store has opened an outpost at 59 Brook Street across from Claridge's in London.

By [Samantha Conti](#) on March 28, 2018



📷 A view of the new store The Place London in Mayfair
Courtesy Photo

LONDON — Traditions die hard with the Burstein family, London retailers who are unable to resist the siren call of young talent.

Joan Burstein, known in the industry as Mrs. B., built [Browns](#), the London store that's now a division of [Farfetch](#), by taking risks on names like John Galiano, Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan when they were students and by introducing once-emerging labels such as Missoni and Ralph Lauren to the U.K.

Her son [Simon Burstein](#), who founded [Browns](#) in 1970 with his parents, has been doing the same with his growing clutch of boutique concept stores called The Place London. After opening men's and women's shops in Connaught Village, not far from Marble Arch, he's now moved into Mayfair with his biggest store yet.

The Place London number three is located in the former Vera Wang and Browns Bride boutique across from Claridge's on Brook Street, which Simon's sister Caroline Burstein ran until recently. (Browns Bride was not part of the [Farfetch](#) deal in 2015, and the specialist retailer, still run by Caroline, now has one location in Marylebone.)

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Spanning 2,000 square feet over two floors, The Place London carries mostly small British and international names including Sofie D’Hoore, a Belgian designer known for her mix of elegant and humble materials; Diana Broussard accessories; Ana Heart luxury activewear; Mes Demoiselles; Kilometre Paris; Katya Dobryakova; Connock London fragrance and beauty range, and Centrale Formentera fragrances.

There are some bigger names, too, including luxury fur and leather brand Yves Salomon, whose butter-soft jacket is on display in the window; Italian outerwear expert Herno, and The Perfumer’s Story fragrances by Azzi Glasser. Alice Archer, a label that [Simon Burstein](#) has backed almost since its inception and which is known for its print, embroidery and trompe l’oeil designs, is in the mix as well.

During a walk-through, Burstein is bursting with enthusiasm about all the new labels he’s stocking, including a London one called Influencers by M.C., which splices vintage denim and lace into new garments, and Iaonna Solaio, a handbag designer whose leather, velvet, resin and cotton bags he discovered at a trade show.

He’s also a cheerleader for Eastern European talent, stocking a Ukrainian label called Poustovit that does silk dresses, and a Russian one called Razgulyaev Blagonravova, which does brightly colored velvet mules. “They’ve got things to say, and they have the hands,” said Burstein of Eastern Europe’s designers, noting that London’s clothing workshops are fueled by artisans from the region.

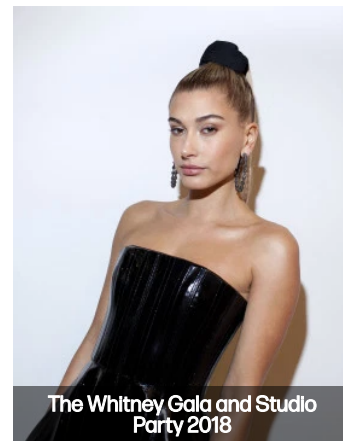
For fall, he’ll be taking on Romanian designer Alexandra Long, whose family has a tailoring company. He said he loves Long’s stylish silhouettes — she specializes in fluid, loose-fitting tailored suits, slogan T-shirts and skinny dresses — and her contemporary price points.

Burstein takes a similar approach with all three The Place London stores. He believes small and niche is beautiful — when it was sold to Farfetch, Browns had two units and was turning more than 14 million pounds a year — and that the buy has to be authentic. “It’s got to be about the things you like and about designers and brands that have something to say,” Burstein said.


He’s proud to say that all three London stores offer handpicked products from a limited number of designers. “I also want us to stock products that tell a story and share similar values.” He describes his clients as “discerning customers who are looking for product that can’t be found in every big city and who seek the rarity.”

He added that it’s important to him that price points not be sky-high, so there are pieces by Ana Heart that are under 100 pounds; dresses costing 600 pounds from Poustovit, and an Alice Archer crepe de chine dress for 850 pounds.


His merchandise also has to be tactile and practical. Burstein points to washable leather trousers and skirts by the French leather brand Stouls and the elegant leather cross-body bags




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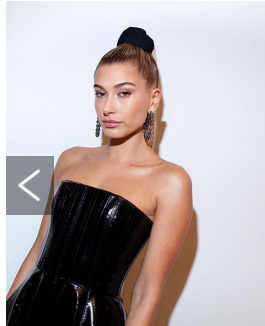
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and shoppers by Celine Lefebure that cost 350 pounds.

Among the emerging labels he is championing is his own, a men's wear and accessories collection called Leathersmith, which dominates the 1,000 square feet of the lower ground floor.

Leathersmith was a leather and stationery brand that started life at the Charfleet Book Bindery on Canvey Island in Essex. In 2015, Burstein bought the brand — and the bindery — and has always had ambitions to turn it into a lifestyle label focused on craftsmanship.

"I'm not deluding myself. I know it's going to be a long journey, but I think consumers are always inspired by authenticity. I'm attached to this brand and have worked hard to preserve it," Burstein told WWD in 2016, adding he discovered Leathersmith more than 15 years ago at Fortnum & Mason.

The leather hand-bound diaries and notebooks and small leather goods are all downstairs, and Burstein has expanded the collection to include featherweight suede jackets, cotton, linen and jersey shirts and a cashmere coat for 1,200 pounds. He said the idea is to keep building the collection and eventually wholesale it, too.

Other brands on offer include Sealup outerwear, Brady handmade bags, Nilmance sportswear and the RVR Lardini line of reversible jackets and coats. The merchandise is also for sale at The Place London website, which duplicates everything going on in-store and delivers internationally.

The store itself mirrors Burstein's personal taste. Interiors were done in collaboration with design consultant Zachary Pulman, who worked on The Place London stores in Connaught Village; the Sonia Rykiel library-inspired London shop, and Puma's stores in east London and at Westfield.

There is a limited-edition glass lens table by McCollin Bryan from Themes and Variations on Westbourne Grove and some Sixties pieces from B and T Antiques in Notting Hill, while Italian Sixties velvet chairs in bold colors were upholstered by Susan Osbourne Interiors.

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rew up in New York but I hadn't really
nced the city in any type of touristy way...
was probably the first museum I really
lored and took the time to see," said
eybaldwin of the @whitneymuseum. On
ay night, Baldwin was joined by Jemima
nd more at the annual Whitney Museum
and Studio Party, which honored Lorna
on, Joanne Leonhardt Cassullo and Beth
eWoody. See more photos on WWD.com.
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