

Tom Mora Named Cole Haan Creative Director, Women's and Licensed Goods

The former J. Crew senior vice president for women's design joins Cole Haan. By **Misty White Sidell** on August 31, 2016



Tom Mora photographed in 2014. X Prutting/BFA/REX/Shutterstock

From one preppy American brand to the next. Former J. Crew senior vice president for women's design Tom Mora has been appointed creative director for women's and licensed product at Cole Haan.

Mora's new role is effective immediately. It is understood he will work to up Cole Haan's women's fashion quotient.

Jack Boys, chief executive officer of Cole Haan, said of the appointment: "We are delighted Tom Mora has joined Cole Haan in this new leadership role. His unique understanding of how iconic American brands integrate with the world of fashion in a genuine way will bring a level of seasoned expertise that will help continue the spectacular growth of Cole Haan in the marketplace."

Mora, who was unavailable for comment, in a statement described Cole Haan as "one of the strongest American brands in the marketplace that is bridging technology and innovation with classic style. It is an exciting opportunity to be able to bring my women's fashion design experience to the Cole Haan product line while expanding the core of their DNA."

Mora has ample experience with the tasseled loafer-type merchandise for which Cole Haan is known. The designer ended a 14-year run with J. Crew in June 2015, as part of a corporate restructuring to help abate that brand's declining sales and profits. At the time, Madewell head of design Somsack Sikhounmuong was installed in his place.

Prior to J. Crew, Mora worked with Coach Inc. and Ralph Lauren Corp. in various design roles. He is a graduate of the Parsons School of Design.

Cole Haan was acquired by Apax Partners in 2012 from Nike Inc. in a \$570 million deal. In 2013, the firm appointed Boys as ceo. Prior, Boys had served as the ceo of Converse Inc. for 10 years, from 2001 through 2010.

In 2014, Apax told WWD that the firm hoped to boost Cole Haan's global momentum and scale its international business — particularly in Asia. Since the purchase, Apax has focused on developing store concepts for the brand, as well as developing new product — which has notably included its ZeroGrand lightweight range designed in partnership with dancers from the New York City Ballet.

Kent & Curwen Makes Debut Under Beckham, Kearns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

has a business partnership with the Trinity Group-owned Kent & Curwen.

Although the campaign has yet to be shot, the collection will make its debut in November exclusively on the Mr Porter web site. Later that month, it will be sold on the Kent & Curwen site, with a full wholesale rollout set for early next year.

The British brand was founded in 1926 and has its roots in the manufacture of sports uniforms for clubs, colleges and universities. Kent & Curwen pioneered the cricket sweater and its archives are packed with regatta jackets, old Eton caps, V-neck knits and sturdy topcoats.

The brand has evolved into a traditional men's sportswear collection with a \$100 million business based mostly in the Far East. With new investment from Trinity Group — and Beckham's support and inspiration — it's aiming to put a younger, laid-back spin on the archive's sporty classics and speak to a wider audience.

The latest, seasonless collection has been designed by new creative director Daniel Kearns — a veteran of Louis Vuitton, Alexander McQueen and Façonnable — with the company's sporty DNA as well as Beckham's style and aesthetic in mind.

It's packed with laid-back styles that feel like heirlooms from one very cool older brother or father — someone who rowed at Cambridge, batted for Eton or stalked deer with his pals.

Kearns has done some clever distressing and staining of garments, giving them a vintage feel and an appealing, unpolished preppiness. During an interview alongside Beckham, Kearns said his aim was to embrace Kent & Curwen's British sporting heritage and spin it into a collection for today — lighter, slimmer, softer and easier.

"We want to answer to an e-commerce, global, social media generation that blends brands and price points, not someone

who's looking for the latest fashion fix," said Kearns.

"This should be affordable, aspirational clothing. I think the idea of a new generation lifestyle brand is important — a British one that the new generation can feel akin to. That's really something we want to re-embrace because so much of the heritage going into this makes sense in terms of the idea of lifestyle, from sportswear to tailoring."

The collection includes outerwear, such as a military greatcoat done either in wool or unlined cotton; a heavy cotton lumberjack jacket with a shearling collar, and piles of blazers in wool or cotton, some with a subtle regatta stripe sewn on the inside of the lapels.

Rugby shirts with skinny stripes and the brand's triple-lion logo have faded, slightly yellowed collars — as if they have been in constant use since, maybe, the Sixties — while white T-shirts, including the one Beckham is wearing during the interview, are slightly distressed around the neck, as if they'd gone through many a washing cycle.

The effect is charming, not cheap. Prices range from 95 pounds, or \$125, for a long-sleeve Henley shirt to 1,200 pounds, or \$1,585, for the most expensive outerwear.

Beckham said some of his favorite pieces include the rugby shirts and the sweaters with the English rose logo — it's discreet and often appears around the bottom hem of tops — and pointed to an off-white rugby shirt hanging in a showroom Savile Row.

"That underneath a tailored overcoat would look so cool. It works," he said, adding that he is adamant the collection should not be about age.

"It's the casual elegance which is important for the brand and the line. This could be for a young generation — I took some pieces home the other day and Brooklyn [his son] saw them and said, 'Where are these from? I want to wear them!'"

"He's 17 years old. I'm 41. There's no age group we're trying to hit. Any younger or older guy who wants to feel elegant is our target. The inspiration as well has come

Daniel Kearns and David Beckham



from my taste, but also from the people I'm around. I have a lot of friends, and I think a lot of the influence comes from my biker friends, my sporting friends, my older generation of friends who maybe go to the country to go shooting," said Beckham.

Asked whether the family's dinner conversation now revolves around clothing, what with his wife Victoria Beckham's fashion collections and his collaborations — past and present — with Adidas, Belstaff, Hennes & Mauritz (his latest advertising campaign with Kevin Hart was teased Thursday) and Giorgio Armani, the global sports icon said not too much.

"Victoria talks me through her collection and I talk her through what we're doing as well, but the lucky thing is that I've been able to learn from Victoria with her work ethic," said Beckham.

"Obviously this is a totally different script to what she does because we have an established brand and Victoria started from scratch. My history in the fashion business has been very different as well. I've been very lucky over the years to have

worked with Adidas, with Belstaff and H&M. I've also worked with Mr. Armani with underwear too. Seeing the way the fashion world works, I have a lot of ideas and I know where I want to take a business and that's what I hope to achieve."

Kent & Curwen is Beckham's only apparel line. He and his longtime friend and business associate Simon Fuller are 50-50 partners in Seven Global, a venture with Global Brands Group Holding Ltd., a sister company of Trinity. Last year, Seven Global signed a five-year licensing agreement with Kent & Curwen.

He said his goal for the brand is to build, build, build and even expand more in Asia, where Kent & Curwen already has more than 100 stores, and he has a solid fan base. Although it's still early days, Beckham said a flagship store is on the cards.

"It's a huge business in Asia, and we want to continue to keep that and raise it to another level. We want to keep what we have in Asia strong, but also establish the roots here where Kent & Curwen first started. That's important for us," said Beckham.