

Accessory Mavens Mull Successful Strategies in Lead-Up to ACE Awards

Designers including Joseph Altuzarra and Kendra Scott opine on what works, ahead of tonight's annual ACE Awards presentation.



Joseph Altuzarra and Evan Rachel Wood | Lexie Moreland/WWD

The [Accessories](#) Council will mark its 21st annual ACE Awards this evening, with a roster of celebrities and designers set to attend.

Winners include: Betsey Johnson, Style Icon Award, presented by Victoria Justice; Kendra Scott, Breakthrough Award, presented by Ken Downing of Neiman Marcus; Loeffler Randall, Brand of the Year, presented by Garance Doré; Monica Rich Kosann, Trailblazer Award, presented by Danielle and Laura Kosann of The New Potato; Polaroid Eyewear, Legacy Award, accepted by Henri Blomqvist of Safilo Group and presented by Elliott Sailors; PVH Corp., Sustainability Award, accepted by chairman and chief executive officer Emanuel “Manny” Chirico and presented by Brooke Shields; Shopbop, Retailer of the Year, accepted by Darcy Penick; Joseph Altuzarra, Designer of the Year, presented by Marina Larroudé, fashion director of Barneys New York; Jason Rabin of Global Brands Group, Business Visionary Award, presented by Artie Rabin; **The NPD Group, Business Leadership Award, accepted by Karyn Schoenbart and presented by Diane Sullivan of Caleres;** Eva Longoria, Style Ambassador, presented by Robert Verdi; “The Get Down” costume designer Jeriana San Juan and Grandmaster Flash, Style Influencers, presented by Shameik Moore, and Jenn Rogien, Excellence in Costume Design, presented by “Orange Is the New Black” actress Alysia Reiner.

“I’m really excited about the assortment of honorees,” said [Accessories](#) Council president Karen Giberson. “We can’t wait to have everyone together.”

Designers will accept their midsummer awards amid turmoil in the retail and fashion sectors. With many U.S. consumers now shopping their closets and shying from new purchases, how do accessories designers drum up excitement for their products?

Longoria, an avid accessories consumer, feels at home in everyday, luxe essentials. “I like a daily pair of diamond studs, something to wear everyday. My Birkin bag was my go-to for a while and now I’m into backpacks and cross-body bags. It was getting so heavy to carry the Birkin and I like to be hands free,” the actress said.

Randall feels that her brand’s family-run panache adds a charm for consumers. “People want things that feel very special. They are looking for things that stand out and are really high quality. There is so much available now with fast fashion. I think what we do is be very intentional about the products we design and offer — we like to be thoughtful about our assortment and source materials and offer details that you can’t get elsewhere,” she said.

Scott, whose brand revenue was estimated at \$160 million for the 2016 fiscal years, said modern shoppers are won over by a careful balance of price, quality and ingenuity. “I think accessories play an important role in women’s lives. We try to create products women want to wear, pull out of their jewelry box and feel proud. We are aiming to offer quality and beauty and make it attainable, so my goal is: ‘How can I create earrings in custom cuts for under \$100?’ It’s not inexpensive, but it’s something a woman would be proud to wear and that sets our brand apart.” Blomqvist, Safilo North America’s ceo, asserted that the eyewear category lends itself to diversity and change, which has helped buoy sales in difficult times. “If you think about accessories overall, eyewear at the end of the day is interesting because every single face shape is diverse and unique, so sun and eyewear consumers want a wide selection — if you have that, it makes all the difference,” he noted.

Altuzarra, who recently expanded his brand’s bag offering to include the new Shadow top-handle style, says that focus and function are important to him when designing new accessories. “I don’t think that women have the time or inclination anymore to have a bag for day and then go out and have to change to an evening bag. Bags now span different functions, and the reoccurring thing women want is a bag that looks unique and feels unique. Function is a given, but I also think they want a bag that feels special so it’s a lot to think about when you are designing a bag. It’s very challenging.” The designer added that brands with consistent messaging are faring the best today: “I think brands are building on past languages in a much more consistent way and not abandoning what they have done in the past. You see that across the board with the brands that perform really well like Gucci and Balenciaga. There is a consistent messaging and that’s something we’ve really done as well in the last few years is really concentrate on building a very consistent narrative.”