Japanese group Onward cedes luxe subsidiary Onward Luxury Group to management

By Dominique Muret · 22 December 2020

Acquisition activity in fashion is not stopping as 2020, a year that has been profoundly influenced by the pandemic, is drawing to a close. Japanese fashion group Onward has reorganised its corporate structure, parting ways with its luxury European subsidiary Onward Luxury Group (OLG), which produces and distributes high-end apparel and footwear collections for several premium labels. OLG has been bought out, for a sum that hasn't been disclosed, by its senior management team: President Fabio Ducci, CFO Antonello Orunesu Preiata, and the company's former boss Franco Pené, via the Nemo srl holding company.
“We have acquired all of OLG’s industrial assets, including its footwear, leather goods and apparel factories, as well as the three showrooms in Milan, Paris and New York. All the licensing contracts are still in operation, and our clients have been notified of the acquisition. We are currently preparing to relaunch the company, a plan we hope to be able to unveil in January,” Ducci told FashionNetwork.com. The manager will keep his role as president in the new company, called High Italian Manufacturing Co. (HIM).

Ducci underlined that a reorganisation was necessary “after 10 months of Covid,” and the management team took advantage of the opportunity afforded by Onward, which is no longer prioritising the luxury sector and Italian labels.

The new company's revenue potential is of approximately €85 million. Specifically, HIM owns two footwear manufacturers from Italy's Veneto and Puglia regions, an apparel factory near Bergamo in Lombardy, and majority stakes in Tuscan leather goods and handbag specialist Frassineti and in Veneto-based knitwear producer Maglificio Erika.

HIM also owns a handful of small labels like footwear brands F_wd, Carlotta Ray and Maria Luca, by designer Carlotta De Luca. Licensing-wise, HIM produces the footwear collections by Rochas, Mulberry, See by Chloé, Proenza Schouler, JW Anderson, Francesco Russo and Elie Saab. In terms of apparel collections, HIM manages the licenses for Rochas, Michael Kors, Brock Collection and Elie Saab’s ready-to-wear.

In 2019, OLG instead ceased to operate the Jil Sander license, which was absorbed by Onward Italy, the Japanese group’s Italian subsidiary. Recent rumours suggest that the Onward group, which underwent a management reshuffle last year, is looking for a buyer for the German luxury label.

OLG was bought by Onward in 1989, when it was called Gibò. Originally a long-established Florentine handbag producer, Gibò switched to women’s ready-to-wear with Giorgio Armani, who used to design its collections, and gained impetus in the 1980s thanks to Jean Paul Gaultier, whose business it looked after in Italy since its inception. In 1993, Onward entrusted the company to Franco Pené, who turned it into Italy’s go-to name for high-end fashion production (for labels like Marras, Jacobs, Galliano and Cavalli), and for the launch of countless designers.

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