Golden Goose fetes 20th anniversary with floating skateboard platform in Venice lagoon

By Godfrey Deeny - 8 September 2021

Golden Goose feted its 20th anniversary with a dynamic performance by an Olympic skate boarding champion in a skate bowl that floated over the city’s famed lagoon on Monday night.

Talk of caballerials, backsides and air-riding filled the air as American skating sensation Cory Juneau executed a series of gravity defying stunts as the sunset turned the backdrop, the Palladian masterpiece San Giorgio Maggiore church, into a dusty gold.

Very much the center of attention, Juneau arrived in a motor launch, feted like a rock-star or prophet. Prior to his display, a series of handsome skateboard-fan models dashed about the wooden skate bowl, built back in 2008 for 500,000 euros and installed for a decade inside a former Milan cinema before being lifted by a giant crane into the Venetian barge.

The whoops and cheers that greeted each anchor grind, burley and air-walk as Juneau and his gang soared above the Venetian skyline felt like a comment on the remarkable growth of Golden Goose.

Founded in 2000 by Alessandro Gallo and Francesca Rinaldo, a sneaker fan and skating couple, the brand’s ascent has been truly dramatic, fueled by not one but two giant league investment firms – Carlyle and Permira.

Last July, Permira completed the acquisition of a majority stake in the Italian luxury sneaker brand. Carlyle, which acquired the brand in 2017, maintained its minority stake. Market sources estimated the deal as a 1.28 billion euro operation.

Asked to define the Golden Goose DNA, Gallo told FashionNetwork.com: “It's whatever Francesca and I did with our days and wherever we travelled and what we learned and brought back each time.”

Begun on a trial and error basis by the duo – who never received formal fashion teaching - using local tailors the brand gained traction with its easy take on Italian savoir faire and craftsmanship. In the past decade, as Golden
Goose revenues grew rapidly, the brand changed ownership three times in a decade – prior to Carlyle, the group was controlled by Ergon Capital. As each new owner invested capital the brand rapidly grew internationally, passing to over 100 direct stores in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and America. Though what really ignited global interest was its half-star logo sneakers which grew to achieve cult status, becoming the downtime footwear of choice of superstars like Taylor Swift and Selena Gomez, and posh uptown influencers like Olivia Palermo.

Designed deliberately to look lived-in, with scuff marks along the welt, the sneakers were also ideal for skateboarding, as seen in the performance of Cory Juneau. Golden Goose have just partnered with the US Olympian, who won a bronze medal in Tokyo 2020, and who hails from Southern California.
Hence the event’s title, 'From Venice to Venice,’ staged as the world’s most beautiful city celebrates 1600 years since its origin, and two weeks of shows by major league fashion brands, such as Valentino, Dolce & Gabbana and Alberta Ferretti.

Juneau also donned a new exclusive 10F1 sneaker for the occasion, as he skated exuberantly before the setting sun, and guests imbibed Aperol spritzes and DJ Brina Knauss worked the consoles. A small flotilla of curious boats and Rivas gathered around the event, and Diane von Furstenberg’s three-masted yacht Eos, in town for the Venice Film Festival, sailed by.

“I wanted to celebrate the capacity of Venice to merge cultures through water. When you close your eyes and think about Venice, California you definitely think about sun, palm trees, surfers and skaters, but above all about the sea and water. Same thing here in Venice, the first element you think of is water. And there is nothing more dynamic and inspiring than water. So the idea of taking this great symbol of Venice Beach, a skate bowl, and placing it on the water in Venice was just an incredible way to celebrating skating. Which is much more than just a sport. It is a culture, and Golden Goose is not about style, it is much more about culture, an enabling culture,” explained CEO Silvio Campara, when asked about the evening’s goal.

Golden Goose has also followed a rapid, growth path under the management of the experienced Campara, who worked for Alexander McQueen and Giorgio Armani before specializing in buyout operations and joining Golden Goose as commercial director in 2013.
Asked what attracted him to the brand, Campara responded: “The buzz and energy along with the extreme and huge potential of the brand. Back in 2013 when I joined the brand it did 18 million euros a year with 17 employees and now it is 300 million euros and 800 employees, with more than 150 stores all over the world. And what’s also incredible is that the brand seems very relevant for so many people.”

Post-show, guests were ferried along the Grand Canal to discover Gallo’s latest venture, an avant-garde hotel entitled Venice Venice. Even if still in the midst of construction, Gallo’s vision was striking: from the marble statues of suffering Christs in the entrance to the beautiful contemporary floor-to-ceiling tapestries.

The Veneto has long been a center of excellence for Italian footwear, so not so surprising that Golden Goose should be born in the region, where the likes of Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton produce their topline shoes. What makes Golden Goose stand out is the how the brand handcrafts its sneakers, footwear and ready-to-wear imparting a vintage finish that is its signature style. That and its bright star logo. Though sporty, and boasting some of Italy’s best leather rocker Perfecto jackets, Golden Goose likes its taglines - Delicately Feminine and Audaciously Masculine.
Golden Goose is not the only Italian brand tightly linked to skate culture; Palm Angels in Milan began after a creative marketer at Diesel, Francesco Ragazzi, shot a photo essay book on Southern Cal skaters. Though the heavier financing means that Golden Goose is a far bigger player.

Permira also brought on some heavy-hitter management talent, notably appointing Maureen Chiquet as non-executive chairman. Chiquet, who worked her way up via stints at L’Oréal and The Gap to become CEO of Chanel for a decade and a half until 2016, certainly adds clout and vast experience to the board.

“What I love about Golden Goose is that every product imparts a sense of adventure,” enthused Chiquet.

Permira also has a proven track record in fashion, buying Valentino and, after a difficult transition as that house’s designer retired, selling it very profitably to the Qatari royal family; and floating Dr. Martens, the iconic British footwear brand, for a high valuation.
Under Campara, Golden Goose has also self confidently opened stores in unlikely yet prestigious locations – like its Paris flagship located practically on the banks of the Seine.

“That was my first store ever,” recalls Campara. “And it changed the history of the brand. Because Paris is Paris, whether you like it or not, Paris is the window of the world. And when you chose a store for a brand that is really based on word of mouth you have to think very hard about the location, because it says so much. And the fact is that our store is in among art galleries, and just in front of the Louvre. And that says to our public: 'I am Golden Goose, I am a piece of art and I am here for you. Come and enjoy.' That was the decision and it really paid off!”

By Godfrey Deeny

Copyright © 2021 FashionNetwork.com All rights reserved.