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Brad Goreski Named Creative Director of C. Wonder

By Vicki M. Young



Celebrity stylist Brad Goreski has joined XcelBrands Inc. as creative director for C. Wonder.

In his new role, Goreski will also serve as the on-air personality for the brand at QVC, where the new offerings will begin showing exclusively in spring 2016. Once the former exclusive brand stylist for Kate Spade, Goreski was also named the new cohost of “Fashion Police” earlier this year.

Xcel Brands last month acquired the C. Wonder brand for \$12.5 million from Burch Acquisition LLC.

The transaction, which closed on Friday, includes the C. Wonder and C. Wonder Limited trademarks. It also includes other related designs and intellectual property rights connected with the brand. The \$12.5 million payment consisted of cash and Xcel stock.

Robert D’Loren, Xcel’s founder, chairman and chief executive officer, said C. Wonder met the company’s acquisition criteria. “This acquisition is strategic, synergistic with our design platform and accretive for our shareholders,” he said.

Xcel has 50 full-time designers and 60 freelancers, all of whom have been working on merchandise for the firms’ other brands, which have one common denominator with C. Wonder — they all target female customers from Millennials to Baby Boomers. “Our expertise over the last four years has been developed to serve this customer [base]. We continue to look for brands to leverage the expertise of the team,” D’Loren said.

In addition, the brand “further positions us as a dominant player in interactive television,” he said. That’s in part because the company’s brands also engage heavily with its customer base via social media. Isaac Mizrahi has the designer as the brand’s personality, as does Judith Ripka with her namesake line. For H Halston, the company brought on Cameron Silver as its fashion director, and now it has Goreski for C. Wonder.

As for the apparel aesthetics of the brands, Mizrahi offers a classic look, H Halston has minimalist appeal, and C. Wonder represents preppy and whimsical.

For Goreski — who turns 38 on Aug. 15 — the new gig was a birthday present to himself. “I was a big fan of C. Wonder before.... This was something I wanted to do for a while.”

Although he and D’Loren have had a few conversations about the direction of the brand and what the line might look like, those ideas are still early-stage concepts. Known for his bright suits, expect color to continue to play a role in the look of the line. “I want to make people feel excited and wonderful. I want them to feel that they are ready to have the best day of their life,” he said.

Price points for the spring 2016 line at QVC for apparel, accessories, footwear and jewelry are expected to range between \$29 and \$34 for knit tops and \$248 for leather handbags. Other categories such as housewares, home decor and gifts are planned for later on. Further, D’Loren said the company would also be developing product under a different, but connected, C. Wonder label that will become available at better department stores down the road.

Christopher Burch, founder and ceo of Burch Creative Capital, said, “The brand is in the best hands with Xcel and we know they will be incredible stewards of our commitment to delight and surprise our customers at every turn.”

There is one C. Wonder store still in operation under license in the Middle East. While Xcel does not plan to open stores in the U.S., it likely would consider a global licensing business for stores after the wholesale business infrastructure is in place.

C. Wonder was founded four years ago by Christopher Burch. Burch became embroiled in a lawsuit with ex-wife Tory Burch, with him first claiming interference from her and her employees and she countersuing with the claim that the brand was aesthetically too similar to her own. The two settled their differences and Burch subsequently found an investor in Boston-based investment giant Fidelity, which took a 10 percent stake, or roughly \$35 million, in the company in February 2013. In January, Burch shuttered the operation.