

THE NEW FACES OF LUXURY

The needs of the elite are changing—and these retailers are finding ways to meet them **BY DEANNA TING**



Kristen Radakovich of Linus Lounge in Dallas says comfort is a key component of successful luxury brands.



KRISTEN RADAKOVICH

Owner and Managing Director, Linus Lounge
Dallas

COMFORT IS QUEEN. What exudes luxury, says Kristen Radakovich, is "good design and quality of product and comfort." While she carries some "screaming high stilettos, wedges and platforms," she believes "women are not going to sacrifice as much as people used to in the past. People need to be comfortable. They're not going to sacrifice comfort as much as they used to, because they don't have to."

MAKE YOUR CUSTOMERS FEEL AT HOME.

Returning home to the United States after a 5-year stay in England made Radakovich, whose store carries product from a cavalcade of brands, including Franziska Hubener, Linda Pritcher, DAVIS by Ruthie Davis, Banfi Zambrelli, Rupert Sanderson and Gigi Favela, longs for the variety of brands she saw across the pond. "My



Banfi
Zambrelli

whole focus was to bring something else to the marketplace. There are all the great brands—Prada, Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent—but there are so many talents out there that we, as Americans, aren't exposed to. Not everyone wants to be wearing the same thing. I looked for interesting brands that weren't in my marketplace."

DON'T BE AFRAID TO EDUCATE. "People who aren't into fashion are much more inclined to think status comes from a brand or a label," Radakovich notes. For customers who need a little fashion know-how, Radakovich is quick to help. "I work with a number of personal shoppers. I've been known to post pictures out of *Vogue* or different magazines to help them figure out that look. I'll say things like, 'The male influence is definitely around for fall' or 'These look great with jeans or a ball gown.' Those are conversations I love to have."

RECOGNIZE GOOD TALENT. "I would like to see more mainstream recognition of the boutique designers," says Radakovich. "There is so much talent out there that doesn't necessarily have the PR machine that a lot of the larger folks do. People don't always know it. It's a bit of a cart and horse syndrome, but it depends on [the brand's] philosophy, too." ■

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