

# INTERNATIONAL Herald Tribune

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For an Estonian island,  
change is docking

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A small step toward  
a supersonic commercial jet

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Vuitton's temple of luxury

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Farooq Naeem/Agence France-Presse  
Rescuers plucking a youngster out of the rubble Monday in Balakot, Pakistan.

## Rescuers strive to find life in quake's ruins

By Somini Sengupta

### MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan

Kashmiris have now added a 7.6 magnitude earthquake to their tragic history.

Their families divided for more than a half-century, two pitiless wars fought in their name by archrivals Pakistan and India, Kashmiris on Monday began to cope with the stench from the bodies of victims.

It was Day 3 after massive tremors, measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale, rumbled under the disputed Line of Control.

Search and rescue teams sought survivors under the rubble. But it was the dead who began to make

here in the once-picturesque town hardest hit by the quake Saturday.

To walk along the city's thoroughly destroyed commercial thoroughfare, it was necessary to cover one's nose.

The death toll was no more precise than it was the day before, hovering somewhere around 20,000 in Pakistan, the vast majority believed to be here in and around the capital of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir.

Across the disputed frontier, the death toll climbed sharply over the last day to nearly 900, according to the Indian government.

In the cross-border misery came a sliver of a political breakthrough.

Pakistan on Monday accepted an

## MERKEL PREVAILS

### She'll lead as Schröder yields chancellorship



But her rivals  
will get eight  
of 14 ministries

By Richard Bernstein

**BERLIN:** Angela Merkel, the leader of Germany's main conservative party, announced Monday that she had reached agreement with her rivals to end Germany's three-week-old political stalemate by forming a grand coalition government in which she would serve as chancellor.

"We have achieved something big," Merkel, the head of the Christian Democratic Union, said at a press conference Monday afternoon, announcing the result of several days of talks she had held with the Social Democratic incumbent, Gerhard Schröder. "We have the basis for coalition talks."

"The CDU will occupy the chancellorship," she said.

Merkel's announcement appeared to bring to an end what the German press had come to call the Chancellor War, in which, following an inconclusive election in September, both Merkel and Schröder claimed to have a mandate to govern and both insisted on being chancellor in any coalition government.

But Schröder has now agreed to step

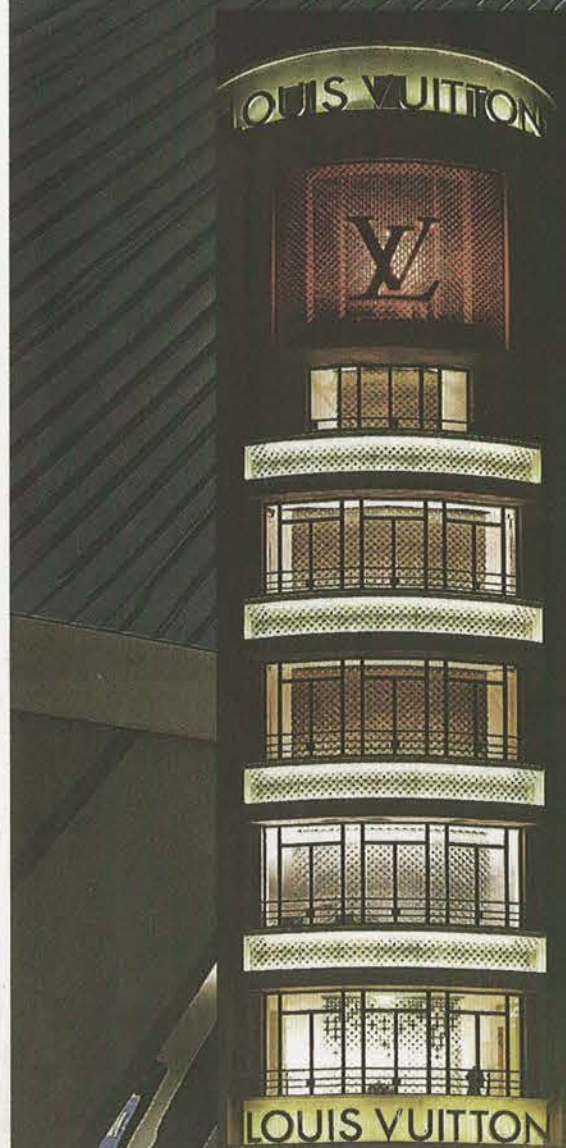


## Louis Vuitton has landed

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LOUIS VUITTON



Against a backdrop of the new steel atrium at the Louis Vuitton store on the Champs-Élysées, the façade of the store, at left; in center, cutting the ribbon, from left, Hélène and Bernard Arnault, the chairman of LVMH; the actress Sharon Stone; Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, the French minister of culture; Serge Brunschwig of Louis Vuitton, and Yves Carcelle, Vuitton's president. Right, a color-block outfit by Marc Jacobs. Celebrities, below left, Pharrell Williams and Uma Thurman; and below right, Peter Marino and the rapper Eve.

By Suzy Menkes

**C**himes ping gently as if stirred by the wind. In this cathedral of a space, the walls shiver with mirrored reflections of steel rods, soaring upwards to the blue sky apex of the atrium.

All paths through the Louis Vuitton store on the Champs-Élysées, which opens on Wednesday, lead to this temple of luxury and its holy grail: the travel goods that made the LV name and fortune. You can reach it via the bold entrance, where scarlet trunks stand sentinel at the door and more historic pieces fill the upper walls. To the right are steps, where projections of sunflowers might lure you upwards to the men's department, hence reaching the heartbeat of the vast 1,800 square meter store a different way.

But the most obvious route is via three descending terraces, wide as a ski piste, with the leather goods from the classic brown and gold monogram bags to minuscule renditions for collectors or indulged children. Kids could be entertained by looking at the playthings

— miniature figurines that belonged to the Vuitton family.

Each area is broken by the metallic monogram grills which let daylight stream through their metal curlicues, although they might be punctuated with leather circles (for the accessories area), wood for menswear or ruby red glass to offset the jewelry and watches.

Some clients might linger at the handbag bar, inspired by the store in Tokyo's Roppongi Hills. But others will take the long ski lift of an escalator, flanked by videos from the American artist Tim White-Sobieski, before arriving three floors up to gaze at the cathedral center piece.

The store envisaged by Bernard Arnault, chairman of LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton), and by Yves Carcelle, Vuitton's president since 1990, is linked to its surroundings. The paving stones of the Champs-Élysées are replicated inside and the wide avenue is in focus through the plate glass windows. If you take the black plush velvet elevator to the exhibition space

at the top of the building, the view sweeps down to the Place de la Concorde and across to the white domes of the Sacré Coeur.

"I feel very proud because we worked so hard to create it — and proud for France because everything is made here," said Arnault,

after cutting the ribbon with Sharon Stone, who received a loud cheer, and Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, the French culture minister.

Carcelle's mission over the last 15 years has been to nurture the heritage of Vuitton while expanding the brand. Looking round, the sheer weight of product is over-

whelming: the shoe department, including parent-and-offspring logo sneakers; the men's sport and formalwear; the lush luxury of the women's clothes, designed by Marc Jacobs; the Tambour watch with its visible inner workings; the different signature leathers from monogram to ridged Damier; the denim clothes and bags. There is even a library area, dominated by travel books and the new tome on the house

of Vuitton by Paul-Gérard Pasols (Harry N. Abrams).

That oeuvre includes photographs of the advertising images from 1988 by the photographer Jean Larivière of the LV logo drawn in the desert sand with camels lined up on the horizon. That is displayed in the store, warmed with the sunshine gold colors chosen by the architect Peter Marino, the maestro of luxury design interiors.

"We wanted to reach down to our roots and put them at the heart of the building," said Carcelle. "The whole shop is designed to offer different sensations. Sometimes the architecture of a building comes from its constraints. It brought this concept of continuity, the idea of a promenade, punctuated with short cuts."

Carcelle was referring to the design by the architect Eric Carlson, who created the spiral circulation in the store to make the four-level space accessible within its historically listed façade.

This monument to modern luxury fills the corner where the Champs-Élysées meets Avenue George V — near the site of the 1914 Vuitton store. Carcelle boasts of "bringing back luxury to the Champs" and a new hotel and an upcoming Hermès store suggests a challenge to the shopping supremacy of Avenue Montaigne.

But to appreciate Vuitton's palatial creation and the brand's emotional

foundations, you need to travel out to the Paris suburbs to find the 1905 house that the Vuitton family built. It stands in Asnières, in a garden where Patrick Louis Vuitton, a pipe-smoking member of the dynasty, remembers playing ball as a child and where his redoubtable great-grandmother, Josephine, who died in 1974, aged 104, would visit the adjacent factory before breakfast every morning to greet the workers.

**T**he Art Nouveau house, modernist for its time, has stained glass windows

with flowery arabesques, a vibrant turquoise chimney piece and a noble dining room with busts of the founding father Louis Vuitton and his sons.

"I still say today that I am going home — it will always be a family place to me," says Vuitton. "It was part of a long French tradition of Citroën or Guerlain having a factory with the boss living beside it. One of the reasons for our success is that we were a family business."

The reality, since Arnault won a bitter takeover battle in 1989, is of corporate ownership by the world's most powerful luxury group. The Asnières house has therefore become a repository of history and memory. Its museum on the upper floors shows the trajectory of 19th and 20th century travel, from the hefty trunks with baroque patterns worked in studs, collected by Louis Vuitton himself, through stained pigskin hat boxes, an elegant traveling tea set for the Maharajah of Baroda and

a luxurious vanity case with ivory brushes created for the 1931 International Colonial exhibition. The museum includes carpet bags and lacquer objects that have inspired Jacobs.

The state of the art Asnières factory, originally opened in 1859 and modernized this year, has carpenters hammering the wooden

base of the trunks like the anvil chorus from "La Traviata"; seamstresses working on threading strips of

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Coverage of Paris fashion week, including slide shows and an e-mail newsletter.





LOUIS VUITTON



LANVIN



ELIE SAAB



GUY LAROCHE

## At Guy Laroche, cutting to the chase

By Jessica Michault

PARIS

At Guy Laroche the designer Hervé Leroux once again demonstrated his talent for creating clothing cut with a scalpel. Moving away from the wrapped bandage look he has become famous for, Leroux showed a collection that allowed for a bit more movement and a slightly more forgiving silhouette than in the past two seasons.

There was a focus on the oversized belt (a trend this season), coming in the form of large, high-waisted pants or shorts topped off with belts in a weight-lifting style. There were belts growing out of the sides of a sleeveless jacket built from a single piece of fabric, or a thick, black leather version with a silver buckle to toughen up a silk muslin gown. As for color, the choices were mostly of a black-and-white variety with a burgundy trench coat or butter-scotch yellow shell thrown into the mix. This was a collection of clean-line clothing — no spangles, no embroidery — which kept things interesting through the use of smocking across the midriff of a dress, gentle draping from strapless gowns and stiff sculptural bodices that stood away from the body.

After 10 years in the business mula? So once again the Australian designer Collette Dinnigan sent out a collection designed for women like herself who are always in need of another sparkly frock. This season the short beaded creations were given a worn elegance with frayed edges on a hem or wrinkled ribbon details at the waist, which made the clothing look like it had

been discovered lovingly tucked away in an attic trunk to age gracefully over the years.

While there was the staple nude dress with a black lace overlay for Dinnigan fans, there was also just a touch of masculine allure in the tattered cummerbund and short suit vests worn over a spaghetti-strap flower print chiffon top. Colors were muted shades of dove gray, sand, café au lait and black. While the daywear was well done and the metallic silver linen pieces looked like they would be top sellers, the evening gowns looked a bit subdued for a Dinnigan collection and there was no mistaking the aroma of Lanvin swirling in the air around them.

For his Paris debut, the designer Antonio Berardi seemed to be searching for an identity. The collection started out strong



COLLETTE DINNIGAN

with a Victorian-inspired outfit that looked like it would be easier to wear than something from Rochas. But as the show unrolled on a catwalk strewn with white illuminated balls, it became a scattershot collection of bustier tops with tight skirts that hobbled the knees, quilted obis holding tight around shear dresses, and renaissance gowns weighted down by mother of pearl. And as if to make sure his looks could easily be identified later, the designer placed his scrolling capital "B" logo in the hair of his models.

But getting past the presentation, the quality of the workmanship in the generally gray-and-white collection was visible in strong and well cut suit jackets matched with lacy white tops, the frothy broderie anglais skirts and a pair of perforated shorts. What a pity that what looked like a very strong finale, with all of the models dressed in identical tuxedo jackets matched with city shorts, didn't make it down the

is Vuitton's core business — were subtle updates on the monogram logo peppered with perforation; or the Takashi Murakami pattern was glimpsed through colorful fringed cords. The clothes were short, snappy and graphic. But the whole effect of the show was an hallucinatory overdose.

"Happy, happy fashion — there is not much more to it than that," said Jacobs whose "Vuitton takes a trip" collection was in such contrast to his dark, lush romanticism of the winter season that it seemed a cynical turn-around.

Eli Saab's first ready-to-wear collection on the Paris runway was a literal translation from his couture — but with fewer red carpet gowns and more clothes, albeit dressy, for daytime. That meant 'wow-them-at-lunch' pant outfits with a scarf here and a pink rose there — especially the roses, which appeared plunked at the plunge-to-the-bosom bodices on many outfits. Saab is following the Versace/Cavalli route, with no sense of irony and a lot of chiffon, taffeta and tucked satin, all flowing from bustier tops. At night, the roses were still blooming on perky dresses that constitute a starlet's idea of dressing up.

Suzy Menkes is the fashion editor of the International Herald Tribune.



## Lanvin goes geisha; Vuitton flashes the '80s

The Collections | Paris | Suzy Menkes

The power woman was supposed to have gone the way of out-there shoulder pads and androgynous dressing. But after the spring/summer 2006 season closed with Lanvin's neckties and cinching belts and Louis Vuitton's manic Versace-esque clothes and bags, it seems that brash is back.

Not that the vision of Alber Elbaz for Lanvin could be seen as a 1980s flashback. It was not even flashy, with its preponderance of black clothes decorated with an obi sash and a Japanese hair ornament. Yet there was something hard-edged about Lanvin that was a move away from the gentle, user-friendly, womanly clothes. Shoulders were sharper and neckties gave a manish slant.

And why the geisha spirit in the obis and the ornamentation of cherry blossoms in sequins for cocktail dresses?

"Perfection!" said Elbaz backstage. "Geishas are perfect."

Yet this is a designer who has built his Lanvin career on imperfection — not just the edges of fabric left deliberately unfinished or a dress with the soft volume of a cloud settling on the body. But also the complicity between creator and client in the context of clothes to embrace, not to live up to.

The deep belts that cinched so many

outfits told a different story. So did the hard-edged sexiness of a zipper deliberately undone half way up the back of a slim skirt. That was offset by the more graceful open back of a dress. The collection seemed a throwback to the brief period when Elbaz designed for Yves Saint Laurent, although there were still many Lanvin touches in dresses where the geishas seemed to be relaxing their midriff muscles, or when a kimono dress, delicately wrapped, caught the spirit of both designer and his lacquered muse. The models all wore the same demanding shoes: a thick platform sole up-tilted by a high, curving arc of a heel. They seemed symbolic of a collection where Lanvin was more rigorous, but less charming.

Since Louis Vuitton was in celebration mode, with the Champs-Élysées store opening, the show was a riot. Guests were greeted by the Vuitton logo projected on the enormous façade of the Petit Palais, making it look like some decorative, chocolate-box vision of Versailles. In the celebrity line-up, Sharon Stone sat, all in black, under a mushroom cloud of a hat, her legs encased in fishnet hose that mysteriously

ended in socks.

The music mogul Pharrell Williams, who had not only designed the glasses for Vuitton but also produced the show's soundtrack, showed off his razzle dazzle of Bling: a pendant hanging off a chain "with more diamonds than I can count" and a matching belt that read "nerd." Uma Thurman charmed in a white coat, while Selma Hayek, the rapper Eve, breast tattoos to the fore, Winona Ryder and Catherine Deneuve joined the LVMH head honcho Bernard Arnault and Vuitton's president Yves Carcelle.

It might seem tough to outsparkle that celebrity line-up. But Marc Jacobs was fearless. Out came the most gaudy colors, the shortest skirts (curling up at the front to show a brighter lining), geometric blocks of color and the flashy bags last seen in the 1980s. In fact some of the brash-and-flash looked so like Versace on speed that it seemed as if Jacobs had trawled the vintage stores to find surviving remnants of the greed-is-good decade.

Bags apparently with gilded chains printed on shiny plastic were the most in-your-face. Other purses — and that

never move from her dining room.

"We can do a clarinet case or a folding bed or a travel bag for a geisha's kimonos — but we don't design furniture," says Vuitton. "We are in the business of movement and anything we make must be transportable."

Keeping the soul of the brand and feeding its myths is the centrifugal

sonal, family company is kept alive, along with the illusion that the Champs-Élysées store is a series of private enclaves, rather than a vast selling machine.

The daylight that floods the store and seems to bring it closer to the people walking or gawping outside is part of a user-friendly, inclusive, anti-

## The house that Vuitton built

Continued from Page 9

chinchilla into this season's limited edition of 600 haute luxury purses; others working frenziedly to keep up with the demand for denim logo bags, and specialists stretching the monogram canvas over a special order travel case with unfolding bed.