On Monday, French fashion retail group Vivarte (owner of Caroll and La Halle) announced the appointment of Stéphane Roche as general manager, working alongside new president Patrick Puy, who led the group’s comprehensive organisational overhaul. Puy indicated he wanted to hire a retail expert to start a new phase for Vivarte.

Stéphane Roche is a graduate of ESCP Europe, and started his business career at Procter & Gamble in 1986, before moving to beverage group Ricard in 1990. In 2001, he joined Decathlon as marketing director France and international (2001-2002), and then took charge of Decathlon Création (2002-2005), the sport retailer’s product development unit. In 2005-2006, Roche was the general manager of La Redoute Belgik, then of Decathlon UK.
Roche was the general manager of La Redoute Benelux, then of Redcats UK (2006-2009) and Cyrillus (2009-2011).

Finally, from 2011 to 2018, he was the general manager of French menswear retailer Brice (of the HappyChic group) before becoming the retail and development director of Fashion 3, a group of companies operating a host of apparel labels, all part of the Mulliez family's business empire.

"[Roche's] ability to define and deploy marketing and digital strategies and to drive international expansion will be a crucial asset to successfully address the sustainable growth challenges facing La Halle in suburban areas and Caroll in city-centre locations," stated Vivarte in a press release.

After a three-year restructuring phase, during which Vivarte sold the majority of its fashion chains, last December the French group announced it had cut its losses from €305 million to €122 million at the end of the 2017-2018 financial year, closed on August 31, and said it was hoping to be profitable again in 2019.

In like-for-like terms, in other words excluding the chains Naf Naf, Merkal [a Spanish subsidiary], André and Chevignon, which have either been sold or are about to, Vivarte generated a revenue of €1.4 billion in the same financial year.

Puy also indicated he intends to sell footwear brands Minelli, San Marina and Cosmoparis by May or June 2019, to focus exclusively on La Halle and Caroll, which account for about 80% of the group's total sales.

Translated by Nicola Mira

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