Between the brands that come and the brands that go, season by season Designers Apartment continues its meticulous and constant work of sifting through the latest in “Made in France” design talent. Launched in 2012, the programme was developed by the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode (federation for haute couture and fashion) and is supported by DÉFI. The programme supports emerging bands throughout the year through workshops and coaching sessions with the aim of having them participate in the showroom of the same name which runs during Paris women’s fashion week at the French capital’s Palais de Tokyo. Below is an overview of the showroom’s latest edition.

The 15th edition of Designers Apartment, held in October, featured 13 emerging designers with four of them new recruits: Alphonse Maitrepierre, Egon Lab, Mossi, and Gamut. The new additions replaced Proèmes de Paris and Mazarine, two brands which left the showroom to stand on their own two feet and Rouge Margaux and Le Studio Pierre which had joined the incubator showroom last season. Rouge Margaux left the showroom following the withdrawal of its investor and Le Studio Pierre, a women’s ready-to-wear brand with a fun and quirky spirit launched in 2015 by Tina Pierre and Thomas Bellego, was suspended following the separation of the pair of creative founders.

It is not easy to maintain momentum in fashion. Fashion brand GNDR (pronounced ‘gender’), which has been present at Designers Apartment since February 2018 knows this all too well. The brand was launched in 2017 by three music-loving childhood friends and ran stores in locations including Shanghai and Seoul but is now in the process of being restructured after the trio parted ways. GNDR is now run by Victor Russo, 29, who, as the soul of the project, owned the majority of shares and bought out his ex-partners. “The reality is that it’s harder to manage this kind of activity on your own,” said Russo. “I’m in a restructuring phase and looking for a partner.”
this kind of activity on your own,” said Russo. “I’m in a restructuring phase and looking for a partner.

The Italian-born, Paris-based designer first pursued music before studying fashion design at Istituto Marangoni. GNDR is an amalgamation of Russo’s interests which include music, videos, and publishing and is inspired by art, painting, graphics, and photography. The brand was created “without the concept of gender” and now focuses on men, with women to follow.

Young brands move up a gear

Other young brands have shifted their momentum up a gear such as Dawei which has shown collections on the runway during the past two seasons of Paris Women’s Fashion Week. The ready-to-wear brand was launched by Dawei Sun in 2016 and has won the hearts of around 20 boutiques thanks to its easy elegance, touch of fun, and quality clothing that is creative as it is wearable.

Kenta Matsushige, while brimming with talent, has had a harder time attracting attention and counts six stockists across the US, Japan, and China. Behind his minimalist Japanese aesthetic, the designer, who has just taken on the role of artistic director of the Japanese brand Hanae Mori, hides an incredible mastery and great refinement of garment construction of exceptional high quality.

Matsushige, who won the Festival de Hyères prize in 2014, once again presented a highly desirable collection for spring/summer 2020 and featured clothes made of incredibly delicate textiles. Notable items include a blue cotton-linen dress reminiscent of a trench coat and a front-split skirt made from hyper-light wool.

Savoar Fer selected by La Redoute to create a capsule collection

Another great discovery is the womenswear label Savoar Fer, founded by Eliane Heutschi in 2017. After four seasons as part of Fashion Designer, the Swiss designer has begun a more commercial journey with her spring/summer 2020 collection which presents a more accessible take on the experiments of her previous collections which have centred each time on a forgotten “savoir-faire” (know-how) reimagined through her contemporary creations.

So far, Heutschi has explored the themes of bobbin lace, pleating, covered buttons, and up-cycling and patchwork. The designer’s style and approach particularly impressed apparel brand La Redoute which, following collaborations with Kenta Matsushige and Dawei, selected Savoar Fer to produce a capsule collection for the label.
Designer Arthur Avellano’s offerings have also evolved and, no longer producing only his speciality latex designs, he has expanded into China where he currently has four stockists. The designer joined with Alter Showroom for spring/summer 2020, a commercial entity active in Asia and founded by Sonja Xiao Long, who also founded the Alter brand.

Avellano is a 2014 graduate of Toulouse’s École des Beaux-Arts and also attended Paris’ Atelier Chardon-Savard. The designer counts around 10 multi-brand stockists in Asia, France, and the US and worked with a German research laboratory to create a patent for a more resistant, hypoallergenic, and machine washable latex which he skilfully cuts to create sport-couture silhouettes with sizeable, flexible volumes.

Since launching the brand in 2016, Avellano has introduced new materials each season to expand his garment offerings. The designer mixed latex with fabric for the first time this season and has created pant suits and cotton...
offerings. The designer mixed latex with fabric for the first time this season and has created pant suits and cotton canvas trench coats with blue and white or red and white stripes with latex inserts.

Marianna Ladreyt is also continuing to see her eponymous brand gain momentum. The French designer of Cypriot origin on her mother’s side was a finalist at the 2017 Festival de Hyères. This season, Ladreyt has reinforced her handbag line, launched in 2018, as well as her ready-to-wear line which she introduced at the beginning of 2019 with toga shirts, crochet pieces, a plunging neoprene bodysuit, and colourful bucket-hats decorated with thick rope.

Ester Manas and her business partner Balthazar Delepierre continue to offer inclusive fashion with pieces designed in a unique fit that allows them to be accessible to all sizes made with an adaptable construction facilitated by a number of clever details. The brand’s latest collection is well-anchored in our time as it was produced in Brussels, Belgium, by workers from the Mulieris organisation which runs a socio-professional integration project. This season, the brand will also be stocked in the new boutique Hattori in Nice, France, and is also expected to launch on multi-brand retailer Printemps’ e-commerce store.

Boyarovskaya launches its first ever leather handbags

Women’s ready-to-wear brand Boyarovskaya, which has been part of Designers Apartment for the past year and counts around 10 stockists, launched its first ever line of leather handbags this season. The bags are made in Italy, come in geometric shapes, and are designed to be multi-functional. With its bio-degradable clothes that feature clean graphics and impeccable cuts, the brand plays with couture elements to create a classic, elegant style which shows character in its small details with metal eyelets or buttons on a trench coat, horizontal slits on pants, an unexpected drape on a jacket, and deconstructed silhouettes.

The brand was founded in 2016 in Paris by Belarusian stylist Maria Boyarovskaya, 29, and Ukrainian fashion photographer Artem Kononenko, 30. Boyarovskaya is an Istituto Marangoni graduate who has collaborated with Givenchy and John Galliano and Kononenko followed up studies in art school with a Masters in international economics. Active in photography since 2008, Kononenko has also worked as a freelance stylist and always wanted to create a brand that achieved “wearable fashion but with conceptual design”.

![Image of a model wearing a Boyarovskaya handbag](image-url)
Boyrovskaya “seeks to transform classic clothing into something more interesting through construction and details” such as a trench coat that can be worn normally or back-to-front, has detachable pockets, and can also be worn as a dress. Other examples include a jacket made from different pieces of leather and equipped with a shoulder strap and mesh garments which slide delicately over the body.

Sadaels, the story of a renaissance

Juan Hernandez Daels’ brand Sadaels joined Designers Apartment in February and its story is that of a renaissance. The forty-something designer was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to a Flemish mother from Antwerp and had an unusual journey. Hernandez Daels travelled to California and spent four years working as a cook in a restaurant in Mammoth Lakes, a small mountain town in the Sierra Nevada where his trying work schedule pushed him to resume his studies.

Hernandez Daels left everything behind to move to Belgium where he attended the Royal Academy of Antwerp. After graduation, he pursued his studies in London at Saint Martin’s before launching his eponymous womenswear brand in 2009. Success soon followed and he secured around 12 multi-brand stockists including Opening Ceremony and worked simultaneously for Stéphane Rolland.

In 2013, Hernandez Daels returned to Argentina where he opened his first shop. “During the financial crisis, it was very difficult to import or export,” said Hernandez Daels. “The currency crash hit me hard and I lost all of my customers.” The architects’ son decided to return to Europe and moved to Paris where he joined forces with more business-minded Josefina Roveta who had previously worked for him in Argentina. After training at IFM, Hernandez Daels and Roveta relaunched the brand in September 2018 under the new name Sadaels. The brand’s workshop is located in Paris and garments are manufactured in Belgium and Italy.

Sadaels’ pixelated-style horse logo is reminiscent of the brand’s “Gaucho” roots and celebrates its dual Flemish and Argentinian identities. “It’s both classic and modern, very sexy and masculine,” said the designer, who has reopened a boutique in Argentina in Ugarteche. This season, the brand has produced a small selection of leather goods and collaborated for a jewellery collection.