Le Printemps department store deploys new social and environmental approach

By Olivier Guyot - September 1, 2021

From September 2, every shop window at Le Printemps department stores across France will feature the slogan 'Unis vers le beau responsable' (Together for positive engagement). For the French department store group, it will be the opportunity to showcase a selection of products and brands characterised by their ethical approach to society and the environment.

Until the end of October, Le Printemps’s window displays will promote the new initiative, showcasing sculptures by Atelier Laps, two artists working with materials like wood, paper and fabrics. In Paris, the Atrium section within Le Printemps’s Haussmann branch will be exclusively focused on Chloé. A strong signal, since the French label too, under new Creative Director Gabriela Hearst, is committed to evolving its business model in the direction of circularity. To mark this transformation, the Haussmann branch’s Atrium will become “an open space whose façades will be clad in soft clay. [It will be furnished] with vintage items and other bespoke furniture made by local artisans carefully chosen by [Chloé]. The Fall/Winter 2021 collection has been inspired by daring new concepts, more socially sensitive and environmentally friendly.”

Le Printemps stores will also host conferences on sustainability and circularity, as well as workshops on themes like product maintenance and repairs. The department store group is cooperating with homeless charity Emmaüs to collect used clothes and accessories, and has decided to set up a donation scheme with mini cash gifts in favour of Yann Arthus Bertrand’s The GoodPlanet foundation.
But ‘Unis vers le beau responsable’ is much more than a marketing initiative for Le Printemps, now treading ground that the group’s rival Galeries Lafayette has been exploring for several seasons. The slogan also identifies a new certification label, that will be featured in all sections and all product categories across Le Printemps stores and the group’s e-shop. To identify which products will qualify for the new certification, Le Printemps has developed, working with the Imagin/able agency, a reference grid for evaluating the social and environmental strategies of fashion, interior decoration, beauty and food brands.

These brands will be assessed on 22 elements in 9 key areas (solidarity-based fair trade, social engagement, community engagement and promotion of craftsmanship and innovation, bio and natural products, health and environmental care, biodiversity and animal well-being, circularity, inclusivity, sustainable manufacturing and logistics) and will need to score at least 30 out of 100 to achieve certification.

Currently, nearly 400 of the brands sold in Le Printemps’s various departments qualify for this certification. A label that is here to stay, and obtaining it will become a goal for the majority of the brands available at the department store. On September 22, to mark the new direction, Le Printemps will unveil a new section dedicated to circular products. It will be located on the top floor of the department store’s Haussmann branch in Paris, home to women's products.

Le Printemps claims it has been a forward-looking group with regards to social issues in the past, and with this new strategy it intends to make its voice heard in unique fashion on social and environmental issues.

By Olivier Guyot
Translated by Nicola Mira

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