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STYLE *on Wednesday*

DELUSIONS *of* GRANDEUR

Jefferson Hack on the changing face of quality goods - and the nine lifestyle essentials that a man about town must have in 2008



Breathing new life into luxury

What does luxury really mean these days? Is it as simple as having more time to yourself or is it an ideology about retaining a sense of freedom and purpose in a world of surface values and stricter social controls?

Certainly publishing my own fashion and culture magazines gives me a rare freedom, which is a luxury in a world of corporately run and owned media. So what does luxury mean for many of the senior executives and designers at the top end of the fashion industry? For the likes of Tom Ford, Silvia Fendi, creative director of the Italian house, Yves Carcelle, chief executive of Louis Vuitton, and Bernard Arnaud, billionaire boss of luxury goods group LVMH, luxury is about quality, innovation, service and creativity. For some, such as Dana Thomas, the author of *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Lustre* and a critic of consumerism, it's about "hawking low-cost, high-profit items wrapped in logos".

For many, the explosion of the luxury goods market is a parallel to economic prosperity and confidence. As house prices rose over recent years, so did the number of designer and luxury stores in the world's capital cities. As we hurtle towards the end of the decade with greater uncertainty, new concepts such as ethical and ecological manufacture are starting to take hold. Ultimately, if we are going to pay over-the-top prices for designer and artisan-produced goods, they need to be like my selection (see panel, right) made to the highest possible standards, and to have a uniquely creative design point of view that also allows for personalisation or customisation.

According to Silvia Fendi, luxury is about "having the best... not just for the trend of the moment, but to have something for life that has been made to the highest quality". Tom Ford believes it's about breaking away from the logo; instead, he says, "you can have everything monogrammed so it becomes your own". Ford, who was

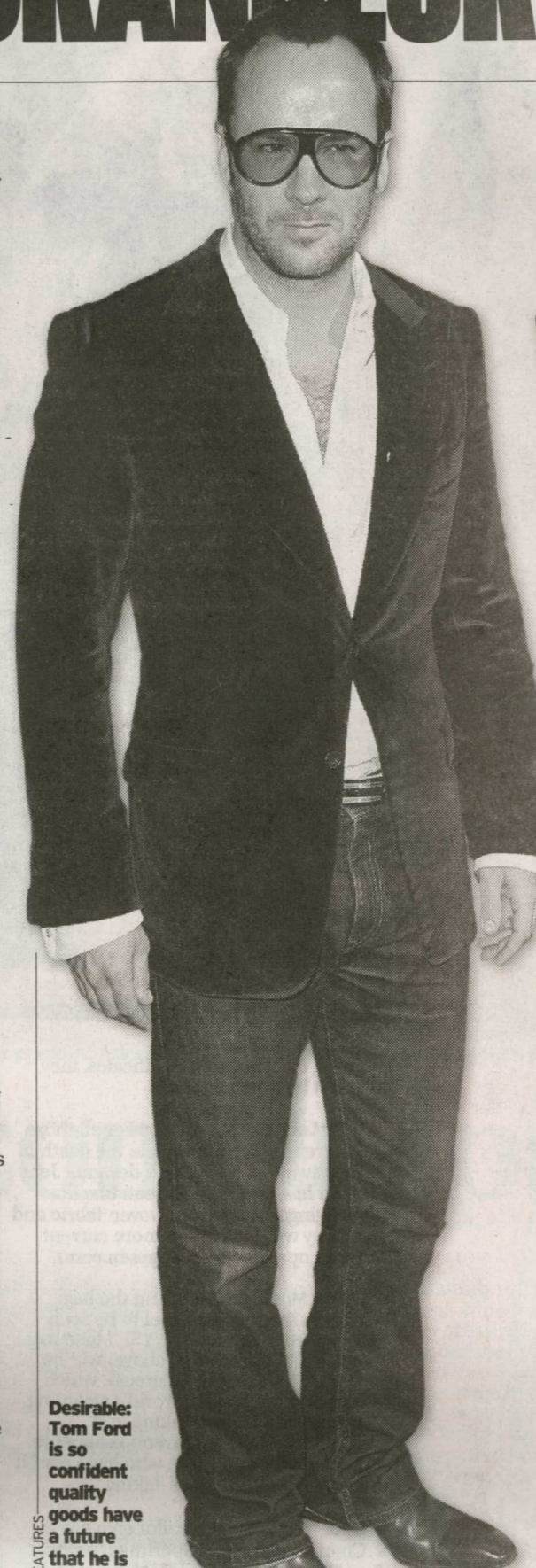
one-stop store for the man who has little time to browse but who wants the highest quality and best service that money can buy. He plans to open four shops worldwide over the next five years, in London, LA, Milan and Hawaii.

At the end of last year, I attended the *International Herald Tribune's* Luxury Conference in Moscow. Standing out among a sea of suits in my skinny jeans and a new Bolshevik-inspired "protest" cap known as an Enfield - the kind worn by John Lennon - the Ritz-Carlton's security guards eyed me suspiciously as a possible impostor in this world of elite, manicured, "supreme" luxury.

While there, I met up with Ford, who explained his global view of where luxury goods will be heading, this year and beyond. "Luxury is not going out of style," he said, "it just needs to change its style. We need to replace hollow with deep."

The bubble may have burst in the property market (just as I am about to buy my first house) but there seems to be no slowing down at the high end of the luxury market - just a readjusting of image and message. Despite the credit crunch, the consumer spending slowdown and analysts advising us to "save, save, save", there is a planned surge in retail openings. Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Tom Ford, Prada - even brands such as Martin Margiela, which doesn't advertise, promoting an anti-conspicuous, almost grunge approach to luxury instead - are gearing up for new store wars, their confidence in the market seemingly bullet-proof.

If luxury is about the best of the best, and if we need to look for meaning in fashion, then what are the most relevant, stylish must-haves for the new year? I have hand-picked these treats for readers who want to splurge on themselves: a January pick-me-up to fortify one's ambitions for the year ahead, a head-to-toe, first-class guide to the best ludicrously expensive and mostly unnecessary accessories that



Desirable: Tom Ford is so confident quality goods have a future that he is

JEFFERSON'S (MOSTLY UNNECESSARY!) ACCESSORIES THAT ARE THE ESSENCE OF INDIVIDUALITY AND COOL

Smythson's Desk Diary
Start the year with the ultimate desk diary. The pale-blue, watermarked paper, the gilt-edged leaves and the stamping of your initials on the leather cover are all super-stylish details. The digital world may keep you connected but this diary will never go out of fashion (from £245; smythson.com).

Vintage '50s Rolex
The 1950s Rolex Oyster is a chic alternative to flashy watch fetishism. The black face with a soft black leather strap is the ultimate in day and night-time cool (from £1,000; vintagewatchcompany.com).

Maison Martin Margiela patchwork leather jacket
This jacket is a symbol of my individuality and my belief in personal freedom. Nicolas Cage said something to that effect wearing a similar jacket in *Wild at Heart*. Now it can be yours with this replica copy (maisonmartinmargiela.com).

Tom Ford Sunglasses
The classic aviator shape is pimped with 24-carat gold rims and ebony arms. It's a design that looks good on young and old men alike and, with its tiny logo, offers an almost anonymous antidote to more obvious brands (from £295; tomford.com).

Yves Saint Laurent Winter Coat
Ultra-volume meets ultra-casual sophistication. This is the overcoat to hunch your shoulders in and look nonchalant, à la James Dean (from £1,000; ysl.com).

Berluti Shoes
The most beautiful and desirable shoemaker for men. Berluti has been producing handmade and bespoke footwear since 1895, yet the shoes, with burnished finishes, feel completely modern and original. Olga Berluti has also introduced scarring, stitching and patchwork techniques usually reserved for clothing to bring subtle and smart twists to very elegant footwear (from £500; www.berluti.com).

Dunhill Exotic Holdall
Supremely decadent and surprisingly practical, this crocodile skin weekend bag is both ultra-lightweight and super soft to touch. It comes in blue teal or tan and has pockets for a BlackBerry and phone as well as pen pouches and zips for travel documents

Flower Pins by Louis Vuitton
Go on the style offensive with these Art Nouveau-inspired pins, which come with five miniature flower heads or one larger one. Use them for ties, lapels or to add new life to a

Cartier Diablo Rock 'n' Roll Pen
It's playful and silly, but I love it. Clip it in the inside pocket of your jacket and the guitar hangs like a secretive brooch. If you've got the January blues, this rock-inspired piece should perk you up (from