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Madrid
Resilient resplendence

The Spanish capital has long been a beacon of opportunity for the country's creatives. Following decades of immigration, the city has emerged as a pan-Iberian melting pot and, despite the economic challenges, this diversity and openness is underwriting a fresh wave of fortune in the fashion sector.

Along a tree-lined street of Madrid's Chamberí district, the red façade of Leyre Valiente's new showroom and concept store is a bright symbol of this change. After cutting her teeth working for Alexander McQueen in London, the 29-year-old designer was enticed back to her home city by local luxury giant Loewe but is now building up her own label.

Valiente represents a growing sense of optimism among the city's young designers, who are finding inventive ways to carve out their own niche despite the economic malaise. Encouraged by lower rents, she opened her combined retail/studio space a few months ago to showcase her couture creations.

"Small-scale tailors are increasingly willing to work with new designers, particularly as middle-sized brands have decreased production," she says. It's good news for the designer who keeps busy with side projects, such as designing the staff uniform for the city's iconic Callao cinema as well as preparing a new runway show following an invite from Warsaw fashion week.

Squeezed between Paris and New York on the fashion-week calendar, the local Madrid edition may struggle to attract international faces on the front row but organisers have concentrated their efforts on creating a platform for local labels instead. "We've strengthened corporate sponsorship deals in order to reduce cost pressures on local designers," says fashion week director Leonor Pérez-Pita. Designers are supplied with staples such as models and make-up professionals, reducing



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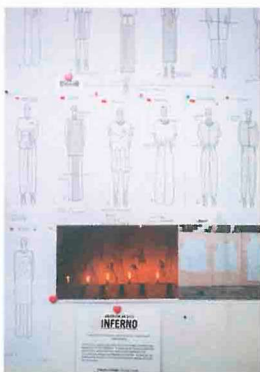
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City opportunities

Madrid's lower cost of living along with its lovely climate make it a great base for new fashion- and-accessories firms. A healthy garment and leather-goods industry and plenty of pattern-cutting, draping and sewing talent means Madrid has the elements to become a proper European fashion capital.

- 01 Madrid's Fuencarral shopping strip
- 02 Designer Leyre Valiente
- 03 Façade of Leyre Valiente's new shop
- 04 Accessories inside Leyre Valiente's concept store
- 05 Handcrafted jewellery
- 06 Window display at David Delfin's newly upgraded showroom
- 07 Designer David Delfin
- 08 Blueprints for Delfin's latest runway show at Madrid fashion week



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- 01 Loewe's flagship store on Gran Vía
- 02 Collection of tailored suits from Garcia Madrid
- 03 Jeweller inside the Andrés Gallardo workshop
- 04 Showroom at Andrés Gallardo
- 05 Andrés Gallardo's courtyard
- 06 Gallardo and Marina Casal de Miguel



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Designers to watch

1 David Delfin

The native Malagueño's brand has been making waves since 2001 but a drive to innovate has preserved its relevancy. The first Spanish label to open an online store, the label proves why Madrid is fertile ground for designers from around the country. The embrace of local motifs and Spanish eccentricities are to be commended. His latest collection displays a distinctly darker tone, taking cues from the world of cinema.

davidelfin.com

2 Delpozo

The Delpozo brand is part of local fashion heritage but was reinvigorated with the naming of Josep Font as new creative director. His first collection in 2013 was highly

acclaimed, injecting a fresh dose of colour and couture to the label. His latest collection recently debuted on the runways of New York, permeated by an array of textured fabrics and artistic detailing. The designer's revamp of the brand is off to a promising start.

delpozo.com

3 Andrés Gallardo

Initially a side project, Andrés Gallardo and Marina Casal de Miguel's handcrafted pieces of porcelain jewellery and leather accessories are now sold in shops such as London's Paul Smith and Liger in Hong Kong. The brand is a marriage of artisanal relics and modern design whose homegrown success has been fuelled by the enthusiasm of international customers.

andresgallardo.es



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the cost of a runway show to four figures rather than the six-figure sum often required for one of the major fashion capitals.

"It's definitely a big help," says David Delfin from his upgraded showroom in the Chueca district. "But the downturn has obliged Spanish designers to adapt even further to seek out creative new formulas." Delfin believes difficult times on the domestic front "have awakened the imagination". It's paving the way for a more collaborative spirit, with designers in the capital often best placed to take advantage of new opportunities.

Originally from Málaga, Delfin today divides his time between his collection, designing the costumes for an upcoming Spanish National Dance Company production of *Carmen*, the odd Pedro Almodóvar film and a range of bathroom wares for the Santander-based Bathco.

Loewe's opening of a new *marroquinería* (leather goods) school in 2013 is also attracting young skilled professionals to the capital. The luxury label aims to replenish the ranks of its ageing artisans, providing 60 per cent of

graduates with positions in production and creating 150 jobs in the process.

It bodes well for smaller players such as porcelain jewellery brand Andrés Gallardo, which sources artisans from Valencia and Portugal but is constantly on the hunt for talent closer to home. Starting as a two-person operation in 2011, they now oversee a team of five producing handcrafted pieces of which 80 per cent are sold abroad. "Cheap living costs in Madrid definitely helped us get on our feet," says co-founder Marina Casal de Miguel.

"There's a generational change occurring in the city," says designer Manuel García who, alongside David García, comprises menswear label Garcia Madrid. Their classic yet colourful label was one of the first to associate itself with Madrid and they recently inaugurated their third store in the city and another in Chile. "Everyone from fashion editors to designers and customers is looking to support positive local stories," says David. "This groundswell of support and change in local attitudes is fuelling newfound hope in the industry." — I.A