

[THE THREE M'S]

TO THE
LETTER

Global

Preface

Montréal, Melbourne and Madrid are – in their own distinct ways – each blazing a trail when it comes to establishing (or reviving) themselves among fashion’s most sought-after cities.

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Montréal
Cool customers

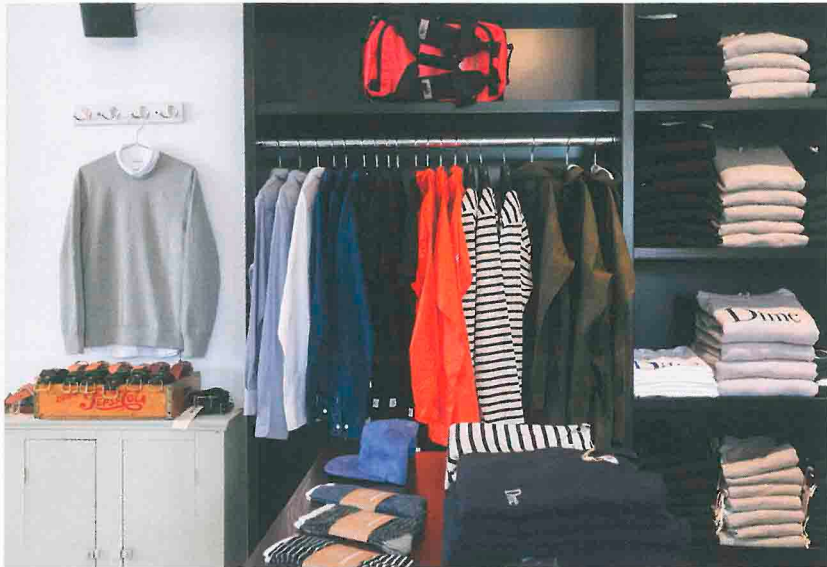
In his office on the top floor of a building in downtown Montréal, Alan Herscovici, executive vice-president of the Fur Council of Canada, is spreading the word: fur should be worn again. “People must use natural resources and fur is part of it,” he says.

As you’d probably expect for such a chilly clime, the fashion industry in Montréal was long dominated by the fur industry. A huge Jewish population from Eastern Europe settled in the city before the First World War, bringing with them skills for making fur garments and helping define the bustling manufacturing industry. However anti-fur activists and intense Chinese production slowly ruined the business. And Montréalers’ lifestyles have changed: they bought cars and now spend less time in the cold. When they do, they wear technical outerwear jackets made more often than not in Asia. However, in Chabanel, the small fur industry’s home, some are working hard to reinvent what their forefathers built and a bunch of great creative young entrepreneurs are revisiting the fashion business – with a conscience.

Fur has had to find another life. In small touches and accessories, on hoods, gloves and shoes, fur is still tolerated. Brands such as Canadian Hat, ABC Fur Hats Manufacturing and Luna Furs are proof that fur is still flourishing in Montréal. Many designers here, including Harricana and Rachel F, have decided to use only recycled fur in their collections. “We recuperate fur coats that are



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- 01 Inside the Fur Council of Canada
- 02 Fur District on the corner of Rue Mayor and Rue St-Alexandre
- 03 Savoie Fils store
- 04 Frank & Oak’s barber Simon Chercuitte
- 05 Sophie Desbiens (left) and colleague at Frank & Oak

Designers to watch

1 Want Apothecary
This lifestyle shop was inspired by the atmosphere of a 19th-century pharmacy. Byron and Dexter Peart, designers of the leather-goods brand Want Les Essentiels de la Vie, are in charge. It's also set to double in size. wantapothecary.com

2 Lowell
A boutique in Mile End run by couple Rachel Fortin and Mathieu Mudie. Crafted pieces, clothing, accessories and homeware have been selected to match Rachel F's fur accessories and collections. lowellmit.ca

3 Savoie Fils
A general store on the corner of St-Viateur and Jeanne-Mance. Owner Matt Savoie has made a pick of stylish men's items and also serves delicious coffee at Café Myriade in the front of the shop. savoiefils.com

4 Rad Hourani
Rad Hourani is one of those rare Canadian designers to have international fame. Well known for his unisex high-end brand launched in 2007, he's also a photographer, film-maker and artist. radhourani.com

Frank & Oak

Following the huge success of its men's online fashion company started in 2012, Ethan Song and Hicham Ratnani wanted a physical presence in Montréal so opened their store-cum-café-cum barber shop in Mile End. frankandoak.com



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- 01 Byron (left) and Dexter Peart, Want Les Essentiels de la Vie
- 02 Colour-curved displays at Want Apothecary
- 03 Accessories at Want Apothecary
- 04 Footwear at Want Apothecary
- 05 Staff at Want Apothecary
- 06 Inside Frank & Oak
- 07 Rad Hourani boutique
- 08 Display at Tate + Yoko
- 09 Tate + Yoko's interior
- 10 Sonni (left) and Brandon Svarc, Naked & Famous
- 11 Fur at Lowell
- 12 Hat and mittens at Lowell
- 13 Rooney boutique
- 14 Frank & Oak's offices
- 15 Ethan Song, CEO of Frank & Oak

no longer being worn and dissect them in order to reincarnate them as a variety of accessories," says Rachel Fortin in her workshop at Hochelaga-Maisonneuve.

But it's not just fur. Also in Chabanel, on the ground floor of his family's garment and wholesale company, Brandon Svarc runs Tate + Yoko. He is one of many young dedicated designers committed to reviving the broader manufacturing business in Montréal. "In the 1980s and 1990s, 95 per cent of the products sold in Canada were manufactured in Canada," says Svarc. Now it's the opposite: 5 per cent is made in Canada and 95 per cent is imported."

"I had this amazing base, I had the knowledge, the space, the manufacturing, we kept the building, I had to do something really crazy, really creative." And that's what he did with his denim brand Naked & Famous, made with Japanese fabric but sewn in Montréal. "I'll close the brand down before we move our production, that's the promise. That is the rule."



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City opportunities

Montréal has a unique opportunity to build on its garment-manufacturing heritage and start making things in many of the derelict or abandoned factories that dot the city. At the same time, low rents and good architecture provide ample opportunity for Montréal to market itself as a home for retail start-ups.



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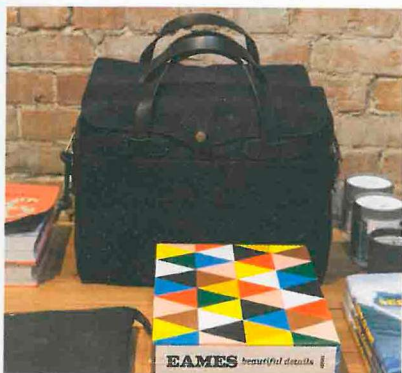
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Simons, Québec

In a country that too often falls short on retail innovation, Canadians should be welcoming news that Québec-based clothing chain Simons is expanding. The 175-year-old company founded by Scottish-born Peter Simons has perfected a model that mixes low-priced fast-fashion pieces and high-end designer labels. It beefs up the offering with a range of own-brand staples.

The retail landscape in Canada is smarting from Target's disastrous foray north, the US powerhouse being forced to close its 133 shops after less than two years. Simons will be adding to its eight locations in Québec – and one recently opened in Edmonton with stores in Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary and Ottawa over the next two years.

"I see us being one of the last remaining Canadian companies and one of the only private companies in the race," says current CEO Peter Simons. "We believe we can use this to create a unique proposition surrounding the shopping experience that other stores won't be able to even consider." This view will certainly figure in US-based Nordstrom's Canadian expansion. — [CF](http://CFsimons.ca)

Brandon's father Sonni – who is now helping his son with the business's finances and distribution – is confident: "Although it will never be like in the 1970s again, there will be a renaissance in the 'Made in Canada' promotion. There are few other entrepreneurs like Brandon who have great ideas."

Despite the efforts of Montréal City, which injected CA\$17m (€12m) to transform the Chabanel area into the city's very own Meatpacking District, the dream never came true, although other little neighbourhoods have become fashion hotspots. The rich, residential West Mount has become the place to be thanks to Byron and Dexter Peart, twin brothers and co-founders of Want Les Essentiels de la Vie, a cult high-end accessories label. Mile End, originally known for its concentration of Italian, Greek and Jewish communities, has become a mini Brooklyn. Many hipsters have opened small shops selling well-made clothes and serving good coffee. They'll even trim your beard if you ask nicely. "Merci thank you," as they say in Québec. — D4Z