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LEWIS HAMILTON

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Investments can be unpredictable, but not so with these six winners, which we have handpicked to provide you with sound and secure appreciation — aesthetically, spiritually and financially.

by **nick scott** and **tom chamberlin**



Ralph Lauren Purple Label Polo Bear sweater

I will labour under the assumption that you all had the good sense to watch the HBO documentary *Very Ralph*. If you haven't, do: you'll not only see Wei Koh, our most noble and sovereign founder, as one of the many distinguished talking heads, but become intimately acquainted with the genius of Ralph Lauren and his way of working. What you will see is a visual signature that subtly permeates every collection, every store, every advertisement.

There is no wrong answer as to what one might consider to be 'very Ralph'. To each his or her own, and God knows Ralph Lauren has covered a lot of ground. For yours truly, there is nothing that encapsulates the spirit and essence of Ralph Lauren more than the Polo Bear sweaters. Into these jumpers Lauren has poured sentiments of family, festivity, tradition, irreverence, elegance, exclusivity and community. The last two are not as contradictory as they sound: each design is produced in limited numbers, this is true, and people snap them up as quickly as possible, but one of the incentives for doing so is the concept of wearing a symbol, a symbol that inspires smiles and intrigue.

Her Majesty the Queen once told me never to name-

drop, so forgive me, but a perfect example of the goodwill these jumpers engender is when the wonderful Dame Emma Thompson approached me and, before learning my name, said, "You're wearing a bear on your jumper, I love you". Reactions like this — to me, at least — are very Ralph.

This particular cashmere version is from Purple Label, and is distinguished by the military notes. The naval blazer bears (forgive the pun) the rank of a Royal Navy lieutenant (which has a semi-repeat on the sleeve of the sweater itself, with 'civilian' affectations like espadrilles, neckerchief and pocket-handkerchief). The buttons to the blazer may not be working buttons, but they are real buttons, making it feel as though the bear might step out of the sweater at any time and join you for a sundowner on deck. As it is Purple Label, its upper-echelon treatment will not go unnoticed by the savvy collectors who snap these up, so move fast, as once they are gone they are gone.

If you've been seeking an item of clothing guaranteed to raise a smile, as well as your general mood, every time you wear it, this is it. And can one really put a price on that? *TC*

www.ralphlauren.com



Limited edition Vilebrequin men's swimwear embroidered with origami turtles

In the ancient narratives that form the basis of Hinduism — arguably one of the saner of the world's major religions — the world is believed to rest on the backs of four elephants who stand on the shell of a turtle. In equally ancient Native American symbolism, the turtle represents a sacred incarnate of Mother Earth. During the Mesopotamian era, this eminently dignified reptile was related to the ancient God Ea, while in Edo-era Japan it was a symbol of felicity and longevity.

And yet more than ever it is today — an era in which the ephemeral trumps the enduring, the banal trumps the extraordinary, and folly trumps wisdom — that we need these magnificent creatures, one of few species that co-existed with both dinosaurs and humans, as edifying cultural symbols.

Which is why we've selected these navy blue, turtle-embazoned swim shorts (available in a limited and numbered edition of 228 pieces) made from fast-dry polyamide fabric, from a brand founded in 1971 by the photographer and sports journalist Fred Prysquel, which is part of its Mistral range of embroidered swimsuits made in Italy and available in a wide array of prints. As well as the shorts' symbolically charged stylistic flair, they have an elasticated waist and a drawstring with engraved solid silver

tips, two side pockets and a back pocket with two eyelets and a custom press stud in the form of... yes, a turtle. "Initially the turtle appeared in the earlier collections a little bit by chance, but also because of what it represents: the oceans, 'slow life', and longevity," Vilebrequin's Chief Executive, Roland Herlory, tells *The Rake*. "We like to think it has brought us a lot of luck, and little by little the print has become part of Vilebrequin's heritage."

So much so, in fact, that Vilebrequin chose to repay the favour. Herlory says: "We've partnered with the non-profit organisation *Te Mana O Te Moana*, which protects the future of sea turtles, and with them launched the 'Mappemonde Dots' shorts for father and son, in order to support their amazing work."

Herlory has also remarked, in the past, that the brand is about "the freedom, humour and colours of the French Riviera — freshness, lightness, fantasy and elegance", and that the products are "light, humorous and joyful, packed with all the freshness of life". All those traits will surely be infused in the air this summer in Saint-Tropez, Antibes, Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, Monaco, and so on. And as the world tries to come out of lockdown, why not opt for swimwear that embodies those concepts — plus a little unintended but equally powerful symbolism, too. *NS*

www.vilebrequin.co.uk