

IMAGE, STYLE, DESIGN

Capsule Collection Reboot

A Twist to Target's old capsule collection model turns up new partnership possibilities



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blog, too, where the boutique owners offer up advice on styling tips, tricks, and key pieces available in their Target collections.

Over the past six years, Target has become widely known for its capsule collections created by high-end designers. Many brands have fostered similar partnerships, but Target was the first to really offer high design in a big box store.

Their 2011 Missoni for Target collection drew quite a bit of attention, and thanks to its success, what was previously an exclusive Italian fashion house suddenly received mass-market awareness. It offered the consumer something great: the chance to own a piece by a high-end label they may not otherwise be able to afford. Missoni gained exposure to a vast consumer base with less individual means but strong mass purchasing power. And Target of course gained from this partnership, just like it has with its previous high-design collaborations.

When collections are as successful as the Missoni line, it's a win-win-win situation. The challenge comes with market saturation. Many other mass market retailers have joined the designer partnership bandwagon, and these onetime partnerships have begun to look a little too familiar. To keep these collaborations fresh, the retail partner and designer have to very carefully manage the process. And unsurprisingly, Target is attempting to keep discount capsule collections exciting.

Last May, they launched The Shops at Target program. It's essentially a pop-up shop model, but it takes boutique shops into the big box store. San Francisco's The Candy Store, Aspen's bath and body store Cos Bar, Boston's Polka Dog Bakery, Connecticut's Privet House, and Miami's The Webster were the first to offer their goods through the chain. The Shops comes with its own online

But The Shops' featured boutiques aren't big brand names. Which brings into question: is it possible to pull off the boutique model in a big box store? Boutiques are special precisely because they're regionally known—people shop them because their founders' tastes are trusted within their local communities. The Shops' products are nice, but the boutique names just don't carry the brand recognition that comes with being a luxury heavyweight like Missoni. Will these shops' offerings pull the same high demand outside of their local communities? It's an important question to ask when considering what the boutiques gain by partnering with Target. Only time—and sales—will tell. —STEVEN FISCHER

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Illustration by Alli Berry. Missoni pattern not an official Missoni textile print.