

A NEW LUXURY

AFTER SPENDING THREE DAYS AT THE WORLD OF KIEHL'S CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK, **DANIEL SCHEFFLER** REPORTS BACK ON WHAT LUXURY IS ALL ABOUT IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY



The luxury market as we know it has changed – and very much for the better. Bling and over-indulgence have once again given way to timeless style and excellent craftsmanship.

Luxury has re-emerged just as Andrew Goodman predicted in 1960. Goodman, then at the helm of New York's Bergdorf Goodman department store, believed that luxury would eventually reinvent itself. And he was right. These days, luxury entails a combination of fine craftsmanship, heritage, superlative service and transformative opulence.



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Now that it's redefined, luxury involves space, freedom and time. One brand that emphasises this in their philosophy is Kiehl's, a non-assuming cosmetics brand that started in the East Village of New York City 162 years ago and still has its flagship store there. Kiehl's has taken these new principles of luxury to heart in various innovative ways, from its product range all the way to its customer service.

According to Cammie Cannella, Global Vice President of Development and Education at Kiehl's, "Many of our customers around the world have remarked on the luxurious experiences they have enjoyed at Kiehl's stores and the personalised attention we give them."

But the brand's mission is much more comprehensive than that. "Kiehl's are experts in creating formulas that

solve specific skincare issues. We intentionally use simple packaging, which goes against all luxury standards."

As a brand that does not advertise (another luxury trademark

of Kiehl's), the science, knowledge and expertise they put into making their highly efficacious formulas makes them more of a necessity than just a luxury. The range of products, which include a deep penetrating Facial Fuel, Anti-Wrinkle Moisturiser for Men and the "Skin Rescuer" with Rosa Gallica Botanical Extract, has been designed to offer luxury every day.

The company was originally started by John Kiehl, and offered homeopathic pharmaceutical products. Then in 1921, his Russian-Jewish émigré pharmacist apprentice,

Irving Morse bought the business from his mentor, and kept true to the founding values unique marketing approach that included a 'try before you

buy' concept that they use to this day.

In the 1960s, Irving's son Aaron took over the business and started marketing Kiehl's products more commercially, moving away from the purely pharmaceutical side. His adventurous spirit brought many of the quirky elements Kiehl's patrons have come to love about the Kiehl's stores and products – e.g. Harley Davidson's are found in all Kiehl's stores, Mr. Bones, the beloved replica human skeleton found in all stores, as a tribute to Kiehl's medical roots.

The beauty industry has always been full of disputes regarding natural and chemical ingredients as well as animals being used to test products' efficacy. But what makes a beauty brand remarkable is not its honest communication of what exactly goes into its products. These days, consumers want to trust in a brand's veracity. And that is what Kiehl's offers its customers – full disclosure on what goes into its products as well as the opportunity to sample a product to see whether it works for them.

Aaron Morse's daughter, Jami Morse Heidegger, who was instrumental in the expansion of Kiehl's to an international audience, and who ran the business along with her Olympic-skier husband,



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Klaus, until the late Nineties, was a true believer in word of mouth instead of traditional advertising. The successful 'try before you buy', which she formalized, makes customers feel completely at ease knowing that they don't have to

rush into a purchase – Jami's way of offering clients more than they expected. And this forms part of the new luxury, a brand that allows the customer the space and time to develop a highly personal relationship with a product and a brand.

This is evidenced with Kiehl's signature 'Midnight Recovery Concentrate' where one can see visible results overnight. This essentially oil-based concentrate that works with the skin's natural nocturnal activity has a cult following.

And that is intrinsically what the new type of luxury is all about when it comes to beauty products - an experience where customers are offered something that money cannot buy: the time and freedom to appraise a product at leisure and to develop a relationship with on their own terms. The entire experience, whether online or in-store, is combined with a connection to a brand with a true heritage that offers products that are excellently crafted. That's luxury and value all in one modern, innovative package. 🍷

