

Welcome to TimesPeople
Get Started

TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best c

Recommend

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

Log In Register Now

The New York Times

Fashion & Style

Search All NYTimes.com



WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

FASHION & STYLE DINING & WINE HOME & GARDEN WEDDINGS/CELEBRATIONS T MAGAZINE

Whose Bike Are You Wearing?



Elizabeth Lippman for The New York Times

BIKER GANG Renaud Dutreil of LVMH on his Gazelle. [More Photos >](#)

By ALEX WILLIAMS
Published: September 9, 2009

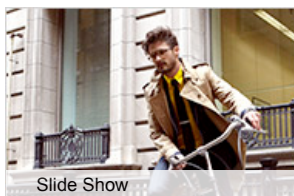
NEARLY every morning, Renaud Dutreil, the chairman of the North American unit of the luxury and fashion conglomerate LVMH rides to his Midtown office on a black Gazelle, a stylish Dutch commuter bicycle.

Multimedia



Interactive Feature

[Civilized Riding](#)



Slide Show

[Dress Codes: The Dutch Bicycle](#)



TECH-CHIC

From his desk — which sits beneath a 1952 Robert Randall photograph of a woman pedaling through the countryside in gray flannel Christian Dior — Mr. Dutreil oversees the business operations of LVMH Inc., which has several brands that have focused on bicycles of late.

Fendi, for example, recently introduced the Abici Amante Donna, a handmade \$5,900 bicycle with a front-mounted beauty case and saddlebags in Selleria leather (\$9,500 for the version with the optional fur saddlebags). At Louis Vuitton, the designer Paul Helbers riffed on Manhattan bike-messenger style at the Paris runway shows in June. Last spring another LVMH brand, DKNY, helped execute the Bike in Style Challenge, in which aspiring designers were asked to create fashionable bike apparel. And in June, Hublot, the luxury watchmaker, partnered with BMC, the Swiss bikemaker, to create a sleek black 11-speed, for about \$20,000.

Until recently, bikes were merely fashionable. Lately, it

[More Articles in Fashion & Style >](#)

Books Update E-Mail



Sign up for the latest book reviews, sent every Friday.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Sign Up

RALPH LAUREN
Collection

SPRING 2010
RUNWAY
SHOW

TAKE A FRONT ROW SEAT
SEPTEMBER 18

REPLAY

AT RALPHLAUREN.COM

- SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND
- TWITTER
- COMMENTS (17)
- SIGN IN TO E-MAIL
- PRINT
- REPRINTS
- SHARE

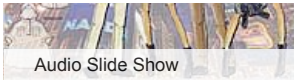
ARTICLE TOOLS
SPONSORED BY



MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

1. [Mary Travers of Peter, Paul and Mary Dies at 72](#)
2. [In Portland's Restaurants, a Down East Banquet](#)
3. [Thomas L. Friedman: Have a Nice Day](#)
4. [Mind: When a Parent's 'I Love You' Means 'Do as I Say'](#)
5. [Magazine Preview: The Holy Grail of the Unconscious](#)
6. [Following Trash and Recyclables on Their Journey](#)
7. [Gail Collins: Someday, a Bill Will Pass](#)
8. [Rosh Hashana, Circa 1919](#)
9. [Books: One Injury, 10 Countries: A Journey in Health Care](#)



Audio Slide Show

[Riding in Style](#)

Related

[How City Bikers Look Sharp](#) (April 16, 2009)

[Dress Codes: Riding the It Factor](#) (April 16, 2009)

Times Topics: [Bicycles and Cycling](#)

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Greg Clark

Urban Outfitters custom bikes. [More Photos](#) >

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Thomas Concordia/WireImage - Getty Images
Cynthia Rowley on one of her beach cruisers during her spring 2008 show in New York. [More Photos](#) >

[Enlarge This Image](#)



The Fendi Abici Amante Donna. [More Photos](#) >

Readers' Comments

Readers shared their thoughts on this article. [Read All Comments \(17\)](#) »

duel with cars.

“LVMH wouldn’t make a \$9,000 bike if you couldn’t actually ride down Eighth Avenue in your Zegna suit or Chanel dress and make it to work in one piece,” Philippe von

seems, they are fashion — and they don’t have to be ultraexpensive novelty items to qualify. As fashion companies start marketing bicycles and bike gear, Mr. Dutreil, a supporter of bicycle-advocacy programs in New York, said he wants to see more cyclists pedaling around in high style, just like that woman in the Randall photograph.

“An elegant lady or man,” he said, “on a bike that is elegant, that’s really the new art of living.”

But some purists worry that their beloved bikes are being turned into a showy status symbol.

“There is definitely a downside to biking when bikes become a fashion fad,” Wendy Booher, 39, a cycling journalist in Somerville, Mass., wrote in an e-mail message. “If you unleash a herd of teetering, wobbly fashionistas into city streets without any real knowledge of how to ride a bike in traffic, accidents can (and likely will) happen.”

Birgitte Philippides, a makeup artist who has been a bike commuter in New York for 20 years, said she finds amusing the idea of riding a shiny “It” bike in a city where you need to chain down your beater Murray three-speed with two Kryptonite locks. “The fancy-schmancy bikes, the ones you see in the Paul Smith windows, you couldn’t leave that out on the street for two minutes,” she said.

In fact, bikes have become de rigueur in many boutique windows. Other companies — including Freemans Sporting Club and Paul Frank — are marketing fashion-forward bicycles decorated with head-turning paint schemes and accessories. Urban Outfitters recently opened an online custom bike shop, where customers can choose among hundreds of component and color combinations. And in June, Topshop, the British clothing retailer, which recently opened a New York store, used a bike-lending promotion to try to raise its profile on these shores.

It is no coincidence that fashion is having a bike moment at the same time that New York City, the capital of American fashion, has gone bicycle crazy. The number of daily cyclists in the city has jumped to an estimated 185,000, from 107,000 in 2005, according to Transportation Alternatives, a bicycle-advocacy organization. Indeed, some New York designers are bike commuters themselves, like Steven Alan, who commutes to work on a foldable Strida, which looks like a bicycle as reimagined by Duchamp.

In addition, the city has installed more than 120 miles of bike lanes in the last two years, making it easier for new cyclists to take to the streets dressed to impress, not to

10. A French Cnet whose Appeal Doesn't Translate

[Go to Complete List](#) »

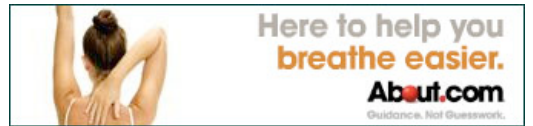


Hero Cops & bad Emmys

Also on NYTimes.com
[Killing wolves for fun](#)
[Is golf unethical?](#)

nytimes.com

ADVERTISEMENTS



Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Blackman Chucker Bicycles](#)

Chucker Bicycle Sellout Specials A Range Of Five Colours Be Quick
www.blackmanbicycles.com.au

[Custom Built Bike Shelter](#)

High-Quality Secure Bike Storage Custom Design, Competitive Price
www.Adshelinfrastructure.com.au

[Designer Glasses Sale](#)

Buy One Get One Free! Choose From Our Huge Selection Of Top Glasses.
www.clearlycontacts.com.au/glasses

Borries, a founder of Refinery29, the fashion Web site, wrote by e-mail.

Others note that designers have marketed environmentally sensitive clothing in recent years, so it makes sense that some of them would eventually adopt — or co-opt — the greenest form of transportation. “The luxury industry has to show a new way,” said Mr. Dutreil of LVMH. “It’s very logical to connect the art of living, and the elegance, to a new duty, which is to respect our environment.” Bikes can also be used to highlight an individual’s style, said Simon Collins, the dean of fashion at Parsons the [New School](#) for Design, who recalled riding a retro one-speed gentleman’s cruiser in British racing green when he lived in London, in part because it matched his couture suits. Single-speed fixed-gear track bicycles like the Bianchi Pista were popular with bike messengers, then were adopted by Williamsburg creative types, who posed with their bikes in street-style blogs like The Sartorialist.

Eventually, fashion companies closed the loop. Acne, for instance, now sells a stylized version of the \$749 Pista — available in pink for women — for \$2,300. [Cynthia Rowley](#) sells her beach cruisers (\$550) in limited editions of 25 per pattern and color. While the sales numbers are small, the marketing possibilities are considerable. Ms. Rowley introduced the bikes at her 2008 spring show in New York, where each model hopped on a colorful cruiser and wheeled back down the runway for a striking finale. Leighton Meester rode one on “[Gossip Girl](#).” “It helps tell the story of my company,” Ms. Rowley wrote in an e-mail message. “It’s chic and sporty, and unexpected.”

Fendi’s bike market is even more exclusive. So far, the Fendi bike has sold only to a few celebrity types, but it enhances the brand image — it was featured in the June issue of Vogue and countless fashion blogs — if not mass market sales. “It’s an item that harkens back to everything Fendi was at the beginning” — fur, leather and rich adornment, said Michael Burke, the chief executive of Fendi.

While some cyclists outside the fashion world expressed mixed feelings about seeing their trusty mode of transportation turned into the next gladiator sandal, others looked on the bright side. Even if new riders buy a bike only because they’re the cool new thing, they’re still buying a bike, wrote Matt Simonds, a cyclist who works at a nonprofit agency, in an e-mail message. In such cases, he wrote, “it’s kind of strange what happens when they got on a bike after a long period away from one — they remember how awesome it is to ride one.”

[Sign in to Recommend](#)

A version of this article appeared in print on September 10, 2009, on page E8 of the New York edition.

[More Articles in Fashion & Style »](#)

COMMENTS (17)

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

REPRINTS

Times Reader 2.0: Daily delivery of The Times - straight to your computer. Subscribe for just \$3.45 a week.

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Ship US to Australia](#)

Save On Shipping Your New Designer Goods to Australia. Safe & Quick!
[www.MyUS.com](#)

[eLation eLectric Bicycle](#)

The world's NUMBER ONE chain drive Conquer the hills, Cruise the flats
[www.elationebikes.com.au](#)

[Designer Glasses Sale](#)

Buy Designer Glasses & Get Another Pair Of Designer Glasses For Free!
[www.clearlycontacts.com.au/glasses](#)