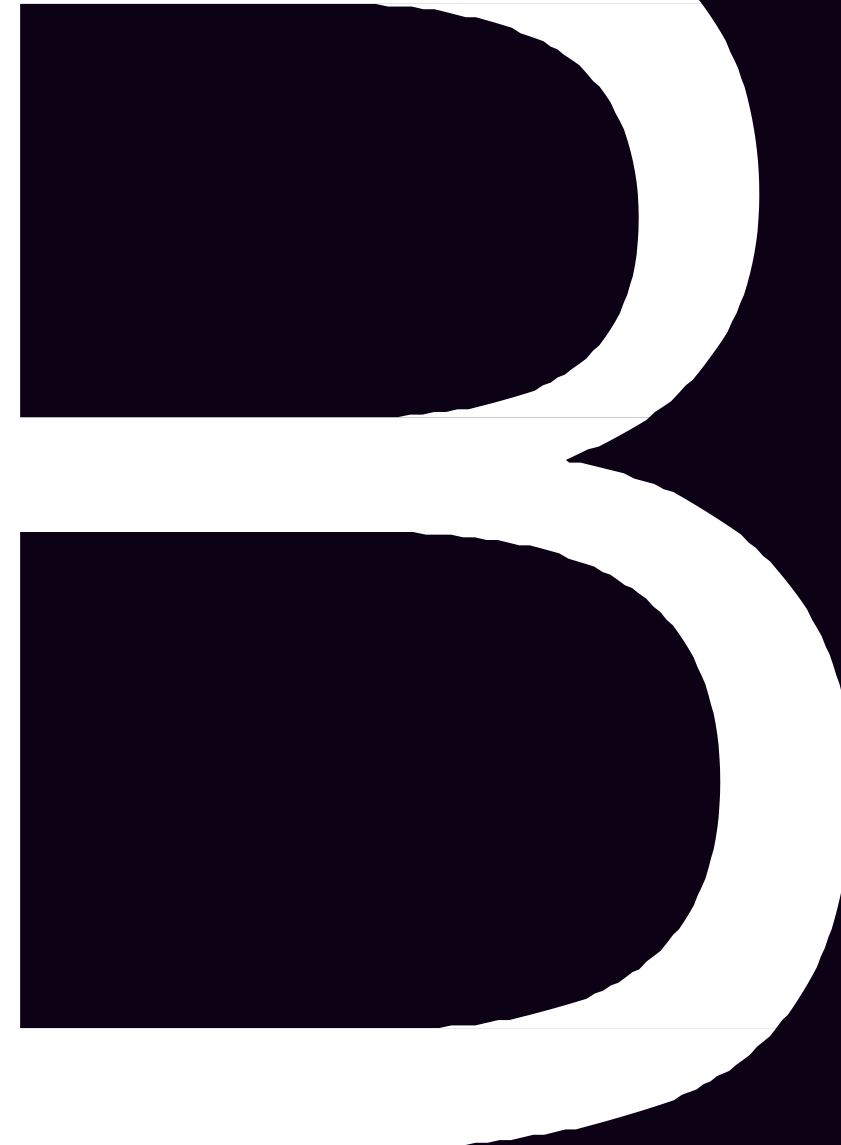


Conversation with Valentina Saluzzi and Carolina Dotti, Head of Events and Brand Experiences of Balich Wonder Studio, an agency specialising in large events.

BALICH WONDER STUDIO



Balich Wonder Studio is a creative company that operates all over the world and that in its ten years of history has specialised in live entertainment, with the design and implementation of events for brands, major ceremonies and immersive and cultural experiences. With operational offices in Milan and the Middle East, it has recently opened an office in Paris and acquired a French company. In Milan, we met Valentina Saluzzi and Carolina Dotti, the partners of the agency, both dedicated to the world of brands with a specific focus on the world of luxury, fashion and lifestyle. With them, we spoke about luxury and creativity, what it means to organise a live experience at a time when brands are trying to capture the attention of an increasingly less loyal clientele that increasingly need to be 'courted', and where the physical manifestations of a brand are of central importance.



Let's start with what's new. In September, you announced the acquisition of a Parisian events company. What can you tell us about it, and why Paris?

Valentina Saluzzi: The opening of Balich Wonder Studio in France and the acquisition of the events company black lemon, based in Paris, represent the first step of a broader strategy to enter the French market, a natural step towards a country that plays a crucial role in the world of creativity as it applies to the codes of the luxury sector. We want to bring our emotional approach to this world, helping to define the future of large events made up increasingly of immersive experiences. Agence black lemon is a young, dynamic company with a rebellious streak. Together with their team, we want to stimulate a natural "creative crossing" between the two countries and experiment with new formats to translate the brand's identity into memorable events.

So how do you build a memorable event in the luxury sector, and what characteristics must it have in order to be an optimal experience?

Carolina Dotti: I would start by saying that you don't always have to talk about luxury and exclusivity when it comes to events in the fashion industry. Increasingly, brands want to speak through their own codes and communicate the values they feel they can represent. Of course the event must be an excellent product, but it is not a given that it must be at all costs "the luxury event", as everyone expects. In recent years, there has been a desire to innovate, to do different things that go beyond traditional formats such as the fashion show or product presentation. Nowadays, working for a brand means dedicating oneself with meticulous care and dedication to the story of the brand's identity, in harmony with the creative direction. That is, it is necessary to understand the right way to convey its uniqueness in a live context. There are companies that prefer to place the emphasis on their heritage, others on the ability to innovate. A successful event, then, is only successful if it arouses people's desire to participate in it. You need to know how to create expectations with targeted communication and, of course, be able to meet these expectations in the live setting.

Valentina Saluzzi: As Carolina mentioned, there are also differences in the type of events. If we are talking about a show, it is about conveying the creative idea of the collection, whereas if we are talking about events that celebrate the brand's heritage, it is necessary to create a story that represents the company in its wholeness and all of its complexity. They are different worlds. Events of this type require a deep understanding of the brand's values, creative talent and a great production capacity. You also need responsiveness, especially in fashion. As an agency, you need to be flexible and know how to listen.

Carolina spoke a short time ago about the opening of the fashion world in recent years. How have the needs for fashion storytelling changed, according to your experience, and consequently how have events changed?



Valentina Saluzzi: In recent years, particularly in the post-Covid period, there has been an important change in the interaction with the final consumer, whose attention has become increasingly difficult to capture and maintain. Unlike before, today it is brands that want to offer their customers a community and a space for value sharing. A fashion show, if we think about it, is a passive event, in which the guest enjoys a show. In this new type of event, on the other hand, the guest becomes the protagonist in some way: the content must be designed to facilitate interaction, the involvement of the customer or potential customer in the community. Attempts are still tentative, because many brands are used to communicating their aesthetics, but things are changing quickly.

Carolina Dotti: Even if the event has a limited duration over time, it can have an important echo, and the brand tends to use it to involve the community. The emotions of those who participated, the audio-visual materials created during the event itself, the contributions of the audience: everything contributes to building the story we were talking about before. Today, brands are increasingly moving towards performance and the physical manifestation of their identity in areas that go beyond the traditional fashion show, which is why today we see a sort of "boom" of exhibition spaces, museums and sponsored exhibitions in general. These are opportunities that offer the public the possibility to participate, to dialogue, and to experience content for a longer period.

As we have said, brands nowadays have the dual need to tell their stories, especially on social media, to a wider audience that does not correspond to the final consumer and, at the same time, to intercept and pamper real consumers. How do you reconcile these two needs, in your experience?

Carolina Dotti: I believe that the fundamental element is to keep the brand's stylistic elements intact and in general the content that it intends to communicate. The exhibitions often have an exclusive preview, as well as, during many events, the possibility for top clients to buy the new collections or products that arise from special collaborations. Then there are the travelling exhibitions, which are on the other hand open to the general public, or immersive experiences, which are widely used in the world of fine jewellery, for example, or during events such as the Salone del Mobile. Today, fashion brands believe a lot in fusions with art, music and culture, and it is based on this interweaving that they build their own story.

Valentina Saluzzi: When it is not the aesthetics or the product that are central, initiatives must be developed in which the brand's values become the protagonists of the story not only for customers, but also for a much wider community. Brands have the possibility to become vehicles of universal values, such as culture or sport. In this sense, I found Vogue World's experiment in Paris this summer interesting: a live show that put fashion in contact with sport, broadcast on social media. It seems to me a good example of how it is possible to create a bridge with the values of adjacent worlds that appear increasingly connected.



Can you tell us about some events that represent your approach well?

Carolina Dotti: As Valentina said, there are some contexts in which we are given great creative freedom, and others in which we are called to translate the client's thinking. In general, however, our creativity stems from the desire to excite the viewer and from the cross-pollination between different artistic and cultural events. For Buccellati, we created and produced a large retrospective exhibition in Venice dedicated to its history and legacy and to the house's ability to draw together the dimensions of time in timeless masterpieces. The video art project we created for the anniversary of a well-known Bolognese company is another example of how the use of contemporary language applies perfectly to classic beauty. It was an open-air show that transformed some of the most beautiful places in the city into theatrical scenes, through the projection of the masterpieces held in the city. Or we could mention the wonderful trip to Italy that we have been making for years with Dolce & Gabbana for the presentations of the High Fashion collections: from Puglia to Sicily, we have created unforgettable experiences together. •