





Dedece produced invitations using "wall tattoo" crystals



Nadja Swarovski

Crystals are made from melted quartz sand mixed with other ingredients such as potash, fired, then precision cut. Swarovski has kept its process a secret for more than a century and prides itself on quality. "Not a single crystal with a scratch leaves the factory ... and the guy who melts the sand is not allowed in the cutting room and vice versa," says Swarovski. "No other company has been able to imitate what we do...the smoother the surface the higher the brilliance," she smiles.



Biography Nadja Swarovski

Nadja is the daughter of Helmut Swarovski, president and chairman of the board of directors of D. Swarovski & Co.

Born in Germany, raised in Austria and schooled in Europe (Germany, France, Spain and Italy) and the United States, she is the fifth generation Swarovski, to work for the family business.

Nadja Swarovski graduated from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Foreign Languages and a Minor Degree in Latin American Studies. She continued on with a graduate course in Fine and Decorative Arts at Sotheby's in New York, followed by courses at the Gemological Institute of America in New York in Diamond Grading, Colorstone Grading and Gem Identification.

Throughout the years courses at Harvard University, INSEAD and Columbia University inspired and supported her Marketing Communications strategy and initiative for the family's firm.

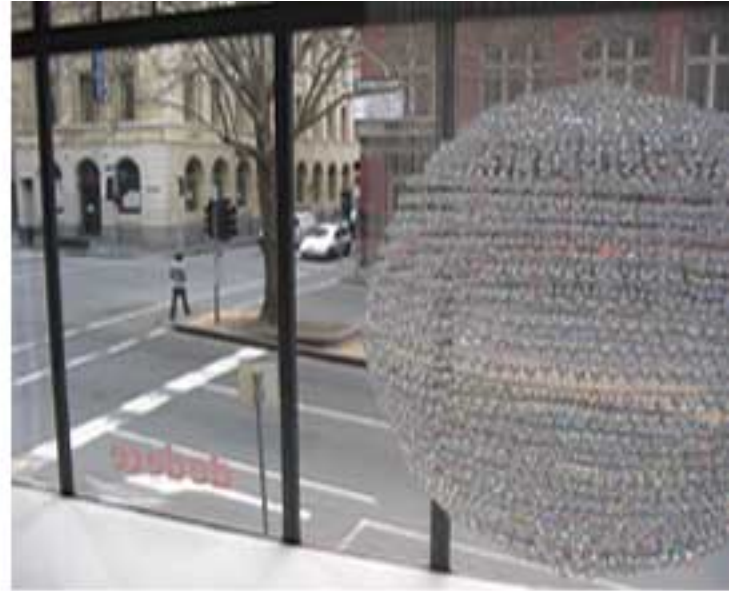
Before joining the family company, Nadja worked for Gagosian Gallery in New York, the largest US dealer in contemporary art. Thereafter she joined the public relations houses of Eleanor Lambert and Marilyn Evins, in New York, where she worked with clients in the European and American fashion and jewelry industries.

After Nadja started her career at Swarovski USA in New York in Marketing Communications and Public Relations in 1995, she worked for 16 mths with Swarovski Hong Kong, concentrating on activities in Hong Kong-, China- and South East Asia.

Returning to New York in 1997, she concentrated on publicity for the company's "components fashion" division and set up Swarovski's first international Creative Service Centre, redirecting the company into the fashion industry.

The newly forged relationships with the fashion and jewelry industries, teamed with a new marketing communications strategy for Swarovski crystals, brought the name to the fore front of fashion.

Nadja moved to London in Nov 2001. While continuing to rediscover and support talent in the fashion and jewelry industries, she initiated the revival of the chandelier, thus moving into the Home Décor/Lifestyle arena. The music and movie industries have also become areas of concentration, where Swarovski crystals allow the stars to shine even more brightly.





Daniel Swarovski
Queen Victoria's dress designers were Swarovski's first customers, buying bags of crystals to adorn her royal robes



Marilyn Monroe in her special "birthday song" dress



The company's extraordinary Crystal Worlds theme park in Wattens, which opened in 1995 and has art installations by Brian Eno and Keith Haring, is the second most popular tourist attraction in Austria

At 32, Nadja Swarovski is perhaps the only heiress-cum-fashion mogul in the world who would identify crystals -- glittery faux diamonds -- as a girl's best friend.

Crystals are not forever:

They're breakable and scratchable and usually don't cost anywhere near two months' salary. But in the past decade, under Nadja Swarovski's watch, her family's century-old crystal company has managed to become, quite improbably, a glamorous name in high-fashion.

The recent crystal craze is all the more remarkable when you consider that, not very long ago, Swarovski was best known for being the purveyor of those twee little figurines you see perched in jewellery store windows, often nestled between Royal Doulton porcelain clowns and ballerina music boxes.

Today, Swarovski crystals are affixed to everything from Victoria's Secret bra sets and Kawasaki motorcycles, to the clothing collections of such fashion heavies as Dolce & Gabbana and avant-garde vintage revisionists Imitation of Christ.

The story of Swarovski's metamorphosis is one of the most unlikely rebranding exercises in recent memory. And the about-face in the company's image was based on a deceptively simple premise: Invite enough cool kids to your parties, buy them free drinks, and eventually, you'll become cool by association.

The Swarovski saga began in Bohemia in 1892, when Daniel Swarovski, Nadja's great-great-great-grandfather, invented a revolutionary crystal-cutting machine that sped up and standardized the production process.

He set up his eponymous company soon after, in Wattens, Austria. The company cut stones for chandeliers and costume jewellery -- and it catered to the haute fashion world.

It was Swarovski that provided the glitter for Coco Chanel's popular crystal-embroidered dresses in the 1920s. In 1955, it co-designed Christian Dior's famed Aurora Borealis stone, a multi-coloured crystal. Others to use the crystal included Grace Kelly in *High Society*, Audrey Hepburn in *Sabrina* and Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz* (the ruby slippers were made of crystals).

In 1962, Marilyn Monroe dazzled the world in a dress affixed with 10,000 Swarovski crystals to sing her breathy rendition of *Happy Birthday to President John F. Kennedy*. (Christie's auctioned off the dress in 1999 for US\$1.26-million.)

But throughout that time, the Swarovski brand was known only within the manufacturing industry. When Tina Turner wore her famous crystal-mesh dress on her 1994 world tour, the name of the designer, Gianni Versace, was everywhere. Nobody knew (or cared) who had provided the crystal.

Legend has it that, sometime in the mid-1970s, a couple of Swarovski factory workers noticed that if you glued several crystal chandelier pieces together, you could make something that looked like a mouse.

By the 1980s, the twinkling swans, cats and squirrels were a booming business. They were so popular, mostly with buyers of china dolls, commemorative spoons and the like, that the company formed a collectors' society, which, even today, has 450,000 card-carrying members.

In 1995, it created a Swarovski Crystal World in Wattens -- a kind of Disney World for crystal kooks -- that draws over 600,000 people a year, making it one of the most popular tourist destinations in Austria. But as a market, this was not exactly a self-sustaining one. Swarovski figures appealed mostly to older, middle-class women; they simply didn't resonate with a younger crowd.

It was also not a brand pedigree that satisfied Nadja Swarovski. The stylish Swarovski has a voice that oozes money, and, to match, a penchant for the art of doing business.

A fifth-generation Swarovski -- she is the daughter of the company's current CEO, Helmut Swarovski -- she saw the potential of affixing the company name to something much more valuable than miniature crystal dolls. The infrastructure was already in place: All it needed was somebody to point it out.

"Nobody knew that Swarovski was actually the sparkling ingredient in fashion," says the young blond, in the perfect pitch of market-speak. The company had always supplied its wares to the likes of Armani and Oscar de la Renta. Nadja Swarovski was determined to expand on these connections.

Swarovski's rebranding seems to fit in with other resuscitative success stories in the fashion world over the past few years.



Daniel Swarovski's first production equipment used to make crystal glass in 1892



Nadja is one of seven family members to work in the company, which employs more than 13,000 people worldwide, and which posted turnover of €1.67 billion in 2002.



Swarovski sponsors major fashion events and art exhibitions and presents Oscar nominees with glittering handbags and shoes delivered in style on a crystal-studded BMW "ninja ZX-12R" motor bike

In the 1990s, numerous companies revitalized their images by zeroing in on a tiny, recognizable kernel of respectability within their existing pedigrees and tweaking it just enough to infuse it with new life.

Some of the stodgiest companies did it best. Hush Puppies loafers went from ultra-nerdy to the peak of cool in a span of six months, thanks to the help of some down-with-it trendspotters in Los Angeles and the power of viral marketing.

Gucci refashioned an image that had grown dusty, even grandmotherly, at the start of the 1990s, by bringing in a young American named Tom Ford. Ford, a designer who remembered the time when Gucci still meant "jet set," turned the company back into the global fashion powerhouse it had once been.

Or consider Burberry, the ultra-conservative London-based clothing retailer, which had become known as the maker of dowdy raincoats. In 2000, the company launched a famous advertising campaign that played on the very old-school "Britishness" some held responsible for its downfall in the first place. With the help of marketing maven Rose Marie Bravo, Burberry plaid was, in an ironic turn, refashioned into the thing every fashion victim, from Japan to New York, wanted brandished on a bikini or a clutch purse.

The difference between these success stories and Swarovski's is that Swarovski really had no public identity in fashion to draw on in the first place.

Its reputation as the manufacturer of schmaltzy figurines was too off-target to be culled for cool, even by the world's best branding agencies.

Instead, what Nadja Swarovski did was look to the company's underside, the history most consumers did not know about. She created a new public-relations strategy:

With the help of professional muse Isabella Blow, the doyenne of the British-fashion set, Swarovski called upon some of the fashion names the company had already been doing business with for years, as well as some new names, and made them offers they could not refuse.

Designers would be supplied with free crystal to be integrated into their work as they saw fit. All the designers had to do was say that these crystals were Swarovski crystals, and say it often.

Since joining the Swarovski empire in 1995 as vice-president of communications, she has made the company synonymous with glamour.

Virtually every catwalk show and Oscar appearance is embellished with the family jewels. Madonna wears them as if they were diamonds. Nicole Kidman tossed them into the air in the film *Moulin Rouge*. Last year crystal skin tattoos tapped into the ghetto fabulous look. Designers from Donatella Versace to Yves Saint Laurent queue up to be associated with the product.

'Nadja has brought Swarovski into the 21st century,' says Julien Macdonald, creative director of Givenchy. 'She has her finger on the pulse and knows what's going on with designers all over the world.' One of the first to jump on the crystal bandwagon, Macdonald's favourite of his own Swarovski-based designs is a silver asymmetric knitted number with an array of colour crystals, made for Kylie Minogue.

Today, designers from several creative realms (interior, jewellery, lighting, home and fashion) are brought in to meet with consultants and are provided with access to a range of Swarovski materials.

This is how the costume designer for *Moulin Rouge* came to decorate Nicole Kidman, head to toe, in Swarovski stones.

"We work with a lot of designers who would've never considered crystal," Swarovski says. "They might have certain stereotypes about Swarovski. But nonetheless, we still drag them into the showroom."

She says her "trick" is to give them a crystal to hold. People become so overwhelmed by the way it cuts light and the hardness of it, she says, they "fall in love with it."

Some radical designs have been born of this approach. Designer J. Maskrey created "Skin Jewellery," elaborate crystal body tattoos that Britney Spears flaunted on stage for her racy MTV Video Awards performance in 1998.

Kawasaki created its crystal-encrusted motorcycle, the Ninja ZX-12R, which features 50,000 crystals.

Adidas came up with "the world's most extravagant sneaker," the Adidas Crystal Superstar, a limited-edition shoe that sold for \$1400 AUD

Swarovski has adopted the same strategy to its chandelier division by aligning the design initiatives with cutting edge designers - where the hyped-designers are given centre stage ----- thereby ----- "REINVENTING THE CHANDELIER"

