## Beige Is the Color of Money

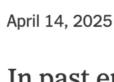
Neutral hues have overtaken St. Moritz and other moneyed enclaves. "The ultrawealthy don't want to show off," says one luxury designer.

Listen to this article · 6:31 min Learn more





By Guy Trebay



latest collection. Zegna

In past eras, the wealthy tended to attire themselves in the richest

lives part-time.

of colors: indigo, crimson, the purple of nobilities and kings. We are no longer in that era. These days, the hue preferred by the richest people on earth is that most bland and mousy of non-colors beige. For Lindsey Woodcock, a luxury travel consultant, the beige onslaught first revealed itself on the terraces and streets of St.

"It becomes something you can't not see, said Ms. Woodcock, who also has residences in London and Sun Valley, Idaho. "There are flocks of people cruising around entirely in cream or beige or offwhite."

Against the backdrop of an anti-elitist mood in the United States

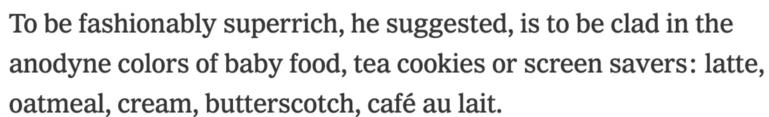
and Europe, the privileged world of St. Moritz has become a place

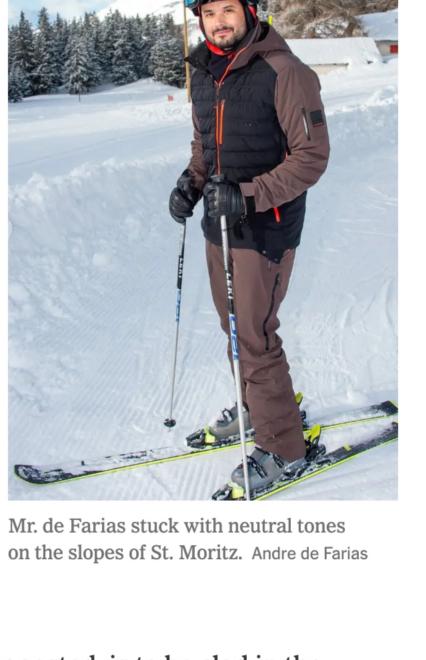
Moritz, Switzerland, the exclusive Alpine resort town where she

of soothing neutrals. You see it at shops like the cashmere purveyor Lamm, in the lobby of Badrutt's Palace Hotel and on the terrace of the Paradiso restaurant, with its views of the Engadine Valley. Why is this? The question was put to Alessandro Sartori, the artistic director of Ermenegildo Zegna, the Italian luxury goods

label known for outfitting corporate titans and tech moguls. "The ultrawealthy don't want to show off, and beige colors are good in that sense," Mr. Sartori said by phone from Milan. "This class of people is super discreet and doesn't want to be seen."







"It is all within a limited tonality — stylish, but not too much out of the perimeter of being noticeable," Mr. Sartori said. For André de Farias, a Brazilian entrepreneur who spends winter

at the Swiss resort town, the reassuring tones — restful, luxe, uncontroversial — are consistent with the overall tastes of the ultrarich. "It's a crowd that values quality over quantity, and

authenticity over showiness," Mr. de Farias said by email. "It's a

mature kind of luxury that doesn't seek external validation." If bold hues once were a tell for wealth, now a preference for quiet colors has evolved into a "statement of luxury and power," according to Filippo Ricci, the creative director of Stefano Ricci, a superluxury men's wear purveyor in Florence, Italy.

provide it," Mr. Ricci said. Yet, even among the crocodile-throne set, he has noticed a shift. "My feeling is that color will eventually come back," he said. "But right now, everybody likes beige." Certain members of the rarefied classes have adopted the related

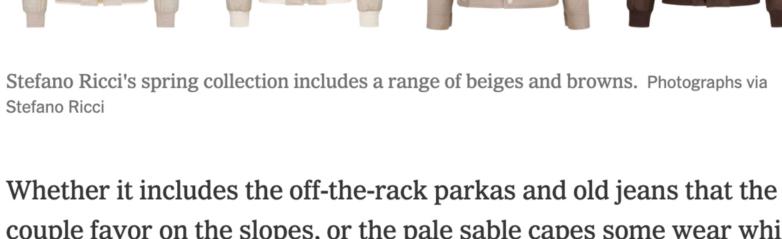
fashion strategy of dressing down. In particular, two social fixtures

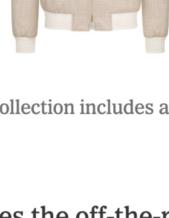
and the proprietor of the exclusive Dracula Club, and his longtime

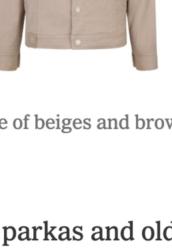
of St. Moritz — Rolf Sachs, an heir to several industrial fortunes

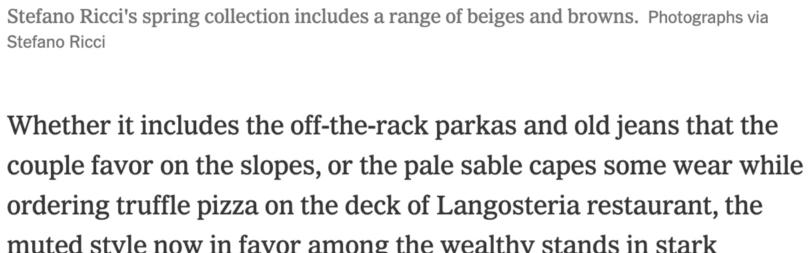
"If you want a chair in crocodile that is like a throne, we can

companion, the German fashion designer and princess Mafalda of Hesse — favor what might be termed the zillionaire ragamuffin look.









muted style now in favor among the wealthy stands in stark contrast to historical preference.

During the Spanish colonial era, for instance, a carmine hue devised by the Aztec and Mayan people (and derived from an insect that feeds on prickly pear cactus) became a global commodity, as hotly traded as silver. Cochineal was the secret behind the saturated crimson of princely capes and cardinals' robes. Color itself signaled wealth. Hoi polloi wore clothes in the

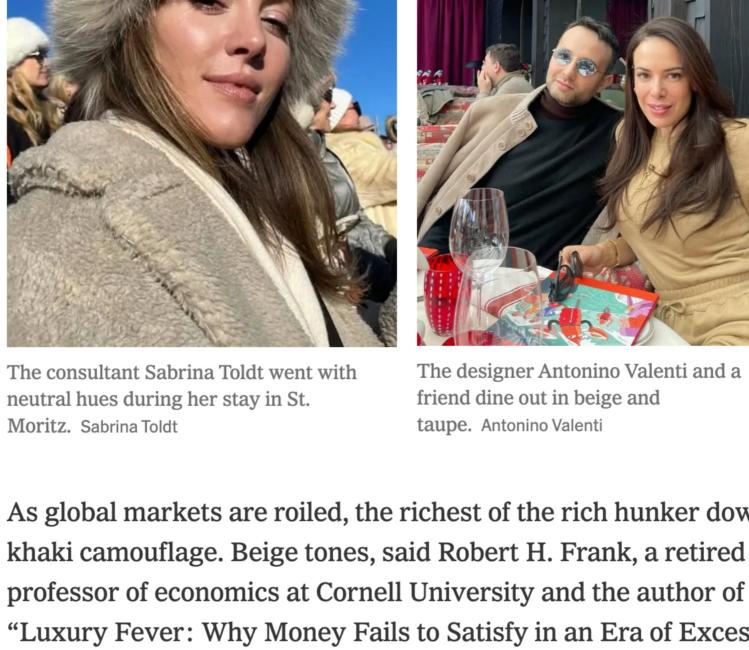
according to Caroline Rennolds Milbank, a fashion historian. "In the early 20th and 19th centuries, very rich people wouldn't have wanted to wear something that was that practical," Ms. Milbank said. "Beige was associated with work wear and the most pedestrian of utilitarian clothes." In keeping with the shift away from bright hues among the wealthy, the Pantone Color Institute has named "mocha mousse"

its 2025 Color of the Year. In selecting this shade, the Pantone

hues of the vegetation or the animals they were made from.

The shift away from lush color as status marker is fairly recent,

committee was inspired by the feelings it evoked of "comfort, indulgence and subtle elegance," said Leatrice Eiseman, the institute's executive director. "When we do color/word association, the creams, the taupes, the camels signify that something has longevity, lineage, is long lasting and secure," she added.





aplenty in reserve. You don't need to make a big noise." Ask that longtime proponent of the notice-nothing look, the billionaire Italian fashion magnate Brunello Cucinelli. "Last week, I went skiing with my family, and all our ski gear was beige, brown, Panama," Mr. Cucinelli said from his home in Solomeo, Italy. "I do not want to sound bigheaded, but when I first came out with these colors — a Panama corduroy suit, ecru jackets

colors!" "I'm a little shy to say it," he continued, "but I'm convinced that I

for winter — people thought, 'Only the pope can wear these

took a little bit of a part in this change of colors." And if more and more wealthy people have suddenly decided to adopt those shades as an intrinsic part of their uniform, so much the wiser.

**Guy Trebay** is a reporter for the Style section of The Times, writing about the intersections of style, culture, art and fashion. A version of this article appears in print on April 20, 2025, Section ST, Page 4 of the New York edition with the

"Basically," Mr. Cucinelli said, "that displays how smart they are."

headline: Neutral Signs of Wealth. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe See more on: Brunello Cucinelli

Share full article

LIFESTYLE

Health

## The New Hork Times **NEWS** Home Page

U.S.

Obituaries

Headway

Visual Investigations

The Magazine

World **Politics** New York Education Sports Business Tech Science Weather The Great Read

Dance Movies Music Pop Culture Television Theater Visual Arts

Best Sellers Book List

**ARTS** 

**Book Review** 

Well Food **Restaurant Reviews** Love Travel Style Fashion Real Estate T Magazine

Columnists Editorials **Guest Essays** Op-Docs Letters **Sunday Opinion** Opinion Video Opinion Audio

OPINION

Today's Opinion

Audio Games Cooking Wirecutter The Athletic Jobs Video Graphics Trending Live Events Corrections Reader Center TimesMachine

The Learning Network

**MORE** 

Manage My Account Home Delivery € Gift Subscriptions **Group Subscriptions** Gift Articles **Email Newsletters** NYT Licensing Replica Edition Times Store

Go to Home Page »

**ACCOUNT** 

€ Subscribe

Manage Privacy Preferences