

**T**HE ARTIST Alex Israel's cotton candy-colored luggage collection will be easy to find among the sea of anonymous black bags on the airport carousel. The Rimowa x Alex Israel line—a TK#-edition \$TK collaboration with the German company known for its sturdy, ridged-aluminum suitcases—is based on the artist's *Sky* paintings, a series of skyscapes airbrushed by a Hollywood studio crew that does backdrops for film.



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—ALEX ISRAEL

In fact, the gradient motif in pinks, purples and blues is a common theme across Israel's oeuvre, representative of his deep affinity for Los Angeles.

“It definitely comes from the sunset, from the sky, from looking up at the end of the day and taking a deep breath and appreciating that I get to live in this amazing city,” says Israel, 36. “Gradient has become part of the vernacular culture of L.A.—custom cars or airbrushed surfboards,” Israel continues.

The Alex Israel line is Rimowa's latest move toward upping the brand's cool factor. In 2016, LVMH

Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton acquired an 80 percent stake in the 101-year-old company for \$716 million, and Rimowa's profile has since greatly expanded. There have been campaigns starring Roger Federer, Virgil Abloh and the model Adwoa Aboah and collaborations with Supreme, Anti-Social Club and LVMH's Fendi.

“The collaborations come about organically,” says Rimowa president and chief executive Alexandre Arnault, son of LVMH chairman and CEO Bernard Arnault. A fan of Israel's work, the younger Arnault, 26, introduced himself to the artist via Instagram. “I realized that he had been a Rimowa user for a long time,” Arnault says. “I love his *Sky* paintings. One day we were having breakfast in L.A. and I said, ‘Hey, would you like to reinterpret one of the suitcases?’”

“It's been great working with Alexandre,” Israel says. “There's a lot of respect for me being able to do what I want creatively.” In fact, Israel took a hands-on approach, visiting Rimowa's headquarters in Cologne, Germany, multiple times. “Translating this idea onto an aluminum surface proved to be complicated,” he says. “They had to work with specialists to develop this advanced anodizing process and a new printing technique.” The luggage launched February 14 with an event at the first Frieze Los Angeles.

“You see a lot of collaborations today and a lot of collaboration fatigue as well,” Arnault says. “I hear executives saying, ‘Oh, let's target millennials. What are the five brands that millennials love the most? Let's work with this brand, because then we'll have millennial customers.’ That's a big mistake, because being a millennial myself, we feel when things are fake.” He then points to the genuine love of Rimowa all of the collaborators have had. Supreme, in fact, had once approached the brand about a collaboration, only to be turned down.

Arnault, who had been a fan of Rimowa since he was a teenager, was responsible for the brand's addition to the LVMH portfolio. “It meets all the criteria that are shared by the LVMH brands: Its craftsmanship is unrivaled, it's a brand with a strong image, and in its category, [it's] the ultimate product,” Arnault explains. He moved to Cologne for three years to connect with the company. “The first big challenge was people inside the company who had done an amazing job bringing it to where it was, until we acquired it. They needed to better understand what an international brand was, and what an LVMH brand was.”

Before the acquisition, Rimowa was sold by over 2,000 outside retail vendors. Arnault has shrunk that to 250, a number he says will be further reduced. The brand also opened several boutiques, and Arnault occasionally moonlights as an undercover salesperson at the Paris store. “Sometimes, I leave my business card,” he says, “and I get nice emails saying, ‘Oh, my God, I didn't realize you were the CEO.’”

Israel, for his part, is planning to proudly wheel his bag. “As my work and life have become so completely intertwined, I no longer feel a need to make a distinction between art and the everyday objects that populate my daily routine like props,” he says. “At this point it's all pretty fluid.”



FACTS & STATS

## BAUHAUS 100

Starting this month, Germany celebrates the centennial of the Bauhaus, one of the last century's most influential art and design schools, with a year of exhibitions, lectures and tours. —Jay Cheshes

## 1933

Year Bauhaus faculty abandoned the school en masse rather than continue to operate under the Nazi regime.

BAUHAUS MUSEUMS are currently under construction, one in each Bauhaus home city. The first opens in Weimar in April. Museums in Dessau and in Berlin follow.

# 3

1,300 STUDENTS attended the Bauhaus during its short 14-year run.

## 215

SQUARE FEET

Dimensions of the 28 former Bauhaus student “studios” (whose occupants included Marcel Breuer), now available to rent for overnight stays in Dessau.

YEARS since then—Bauhaus director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe introduced his Barcelona chair, one of the most enduring furniture designs of the 20th century.

# 90

100 SITES across Germany were selected for a new Grand Tour of Modernism to mark the centenary.