

# High FASHION

Philip Manghisi is bringing  
uncomplicated luxury and hard-to-find  
brands to Scottsdale

BY **TERESA K. TRAVERSE** / PHOTOS BY **CLAUDIA JOHNSTONE**



**With the opening** of his boutique Wunderkind in January of 2022, fashion veteran Philip Manghisi is offering a unique retail experience in Scottsdale. He has over a decade of experience and will be bringing his luxury connections to the Valley. Brands that you can find at Wunderkind that you likely won't be able to find anywhere else in Arizona include Alaïa, Zeynep Arcay, Alanui and Judith Leiber, among others. The store strives to be a one-stop shop. Find purses, women's clothing, women's shoes, fine jewelry, eyewear and home accents in his 3,600-square-foot shop.

**"You should visit** my store if you're looking for a place to shop that has a pulse," he says.

He wants to fill a retail niche in the Valley and bring what he calls uncomplicated luxury to Arizona. Here's what means to him:

"I'm not buying anything that when you come in the store, I need to explain it," he says. "I'm only buying what I think are beautiful clothes that I think are easy to wear, that are luxurious."

Why open a new brick-and-mortar retail space when online shopping is so prevalent? Because of the undeniable tactile appeal of clothing.

"If I'm going to spend a lot of money on something, I want to touch it. I want to feel it. I want to put it on my body. I want to walk out with a shopping bag, and I want the world to see that I just spent some money," he says. "I like the romance of fashion. Both the actual product and also the buying experience of fashion."

He's hoping Scottsdale shoppers will feel the same way. Why open a shop in Scottsdale? He remembers loving the city when he was just 6. He recalls visiting Taliesin West in Scottsdale and Rawhide in Chandler. Flash forward about 20 years later, and he was back in town visiting a friend. He says he fell in love all over again and was wondering why an independent luxury retailer wasn't already here.

"Since I am a dyed in the wool specialty retail guy, I couldn't understand why there wasn't a store like the ones that I was



working for," he says.

When Barneys New York at Scottsdale Fashion Square closed in 2016, he was waiting to see if anyone would open an independent retail shop in the Valley. When no one did, he decided he would be the person for the job. He left Los Angeles and moved to Scottsdale in August of 2021 to open Wunderkind.

"I felt like if there's anybody who's going to open a store here that's going to

do well, it's going to be me because I've been here before. I'm not just plopping an outpost of some other store that's based somewhere else here. I moved here. I'm going to live here. I'm going to be part of the community. So I can make it work, and I'll make it work," he says.

### Career Beginnings

Manghisi has an impressive resume. He was a buyer—meaning he would decide

what designer goods were on store racks—for both Jeffrey in New York City and Elyse Walker in Los Angeles. He started working at Jeffrey as a cashier at 19 when he was a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology. He worked his way up to the sales floor and started buying for Jeffrey when he was just 20—a true rarity. Jeffrey boutique founder Jeffrey Kalinsky even gave Manghisi the nickname "wunderkind" (in German, it means "child prodigy") as a nod to Manghisi's stellar buying skills. The boutique's name serves as an homage to Kalinsky, who started Manghisi's career. As a buyer, he meets with designers about six months in advance to decide what to sell. For him, buying is often based on emotions.

"The luxury clothing industry is definitely one that's built on emotion. So if you love it, you just have to bet on the fact that your customers are also going to love it," he says.

One of his best job perks? He gets to attend fashion week. Yes, those glamorous affairs you see in fashion magazines. "I've seen many a celebrity at a fashion show," he says. "It's the real theater. You get to really see how the designer envisioned the clothing being worn."

During pre-pandemic times, he'd often travel to shows in cities like Los Angeles, New York, Milan and Paris. A few days after the show, he'll visit a showroom where he gets to see the clothes in person. Each season, he'll typically buy six to eight different styles of clothing from a designer and have several sizes in each style. The pandemic has made trips to Europe difficult.

"Luckily, since I have what I think is a good reputation in the industry and because I've worked for and with two of the smartest independent retailers in the US and/or the world, I have this relationship so I can buy most of what I want to buy," says Manghisi. "The hard thing to buying now is new things."

### Bringing His Fashion Expertise to Scottsdale

He was being interviewed for a podcast in March of 2021 when he was asked about his next career move. He answered that he'd like to open his own store. "I didn't want to open a store where there was a ton of competition because I'm a small guy. I'm





not trying to really compete, and there are places that don't need another store," he says. He decided on Scottsdale, a city he first fell for as a child.

When he started looking for a retail space, he wanted a location near Paradise Valley. He eventually found it. The location on Scottsdale Road is ideal. It's nearby Scottsdale Fashion Square and a stone's throw from Pucci Salon, James Elliot jewelry store and Roka Akor.

After he found his dream location, it was time to dream of the interior. He designed the entire store himself and selected everything from the light fixtures to the furniture.

"I wanted the store to feel light. And I want it to feel pretty, but not too girly. I want it to feel luxurious, but not too fancy because I don't like walking into a store and feeling like it's a museum. I wanted people to feel like this was the place that they can hang," he says.

The shoe section of his light-filled shop features two big sectionals. Chandeliers add a touch of glamour. One highlight is a rack of vintage evening gowns. When we spoke in late January, he had six gowns including vintage Bill Blass, Mugler and Scaasi.

"I've always loved gowns. I love things that are special and have already lived a life," says Manghisi. "I like having that in the store because I feel like a lot of these women go to the same events as everybody else, and they want to wear something that nobody else will be wearing."

Inventory at Wunderkind is always changing and has been carefully curated by a man who is dedicated to fashion.

"I picked every single thing in the store. So I really do love everything that's in here," says Manghisi. "The store feels alive. And I think that it feels like a place where you come and you want to buy something because it has a good vibe. It doesn't feel stale. It feels upbeat. It's a place where you know that what's in the store was bought by somebody who's been doing this for a long time, who lives here and who bought it for you. I didn't buy this because I think somebody who lives in Macau is going to buy it; I bought it for the people of Arizona." Visit [www.wunderkind-az.com](http://www.wunderkind-az.com) for more information.