



## A DROP LIKE NO OTHER



Artist and designer Paula Crown teams up AspenX & Prada to create a stunning ski collection.

PAULA CROWN

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**Q: What is your vision for Aspen X?**

**PC:** AspenX is about possibilities...the X is a multiplier. What can Aspen be, as a place and an idea expounded? How might 75 years of leadership and experience be parlayed into innovation in the ski, hospitality and retail arenas?

Aspen ski company is a privately-held family business. As such, we are focused on a long-term investment horizon, our communities, and a sustainable environment.

ASPENX as a vision embraces our legacy and operating philosophy. It is an extension of our brand, which is our promise. ASPENX looks forward...addressing accelerating change in technology, climate and business. We are a customer centric business, and anticipating needs of our guests is of primary importance.

ASPENX is a concept brand where we imagine alchemic combinations in bespoke experiences, collaborations, and performance product. ASPENX brings a research and development sensibility to materials and products. ASPENX prioritizes athletic performance and design, but will work as cool streetwear as well. We are excited about our new ASPENX Prada line of limited edition mountain wear. It functions beautifully on and off slopeside.

In response to customer demand for unique experiences, ASPENX will deliver your dream itinerary. Whether your "bucket list" items include extreme powder skiing, wine tastings in a chic mountain hut or a special celebration, ASPENX will deliver the extraordinary.

ASPENX formalizes many things that we have been doing for seven decades. Our customers are our priority and we listen closely to their interests and needs. Presently, our radar is tuned to managing a global pandemic and addressing climate change. AspenX is continually adapting and pivoting to find creative solutions for our industry, and most importantly for our visitors.

**Q: Can you talk about sustainability and how it relates to AspenX?**

**PC:** Aspen brings people and nature together. Sustainability and environmental stewardship are part of our DNA. We lead the industry in sustainable practices and have always done so, even before sustainability became socially pertinent.

How could we not do so? This place and its natural inhabitants require attention, respect and preservation for future generations. AspenX extends this philosophy into broader applications in product and experiences. We have a number of potential co-ventures underway for the next year, so stay tuned for more exciting drops.

**Q: How did the Paula Crown/AspenX /Prada collaboration begin?**

**PC:** I considered the natural brand extension of resort operations and hospitality. Any new product, had to be of exceptional design and performance. Our "value add" to any venture would be our ski/sport and hospitality expertise. We met with potential partners that shared our goals, values and had an innovative POV.

Aspen's ski and outdoor professionals have extensive functional knowledge. They know the terrain, understand changing weather and safety protocols. Our guests want growth experiences and to develop proficiencies. Many of our Aspen pros are world class athletes, (including Olympians). They have the skills and are well suited to guide, explore and the expand a visitor's comfort zone.

Working with a talented team of business multi-hyphenates (all women, mothers and athletes) we developed a business thesis and an execution strategy. Our daughter *Torie Crown* brought her consulting and marketing insights. *Erin Sprague*, Aspen's brand and marketing executive provided expertise on fit and messaging. My studio practice and investment experience informed the final decision to proceed with **ASPENX**.

With respect to **Prada** specifically, I reviewed past Aspen ski uniform designs. My attention was drawn to a decades-old **Prada** pro-posal. (We did not proceed with the proposal at that time due to quantity and delivery issues). **Prada's** material was waterproof, while being notably lighter and softer than traditional waterproof fabrics.

I wanted to learn more. Besides Prada's exceptional design and reuse of sustainable nylon, they designed competitive gear for the World Cup sailing team. I expect that those sailors, like our pros, have the highest performance standards, and that **Prada** delivered.

*Craig Robins* of Miami's Design District, introduced me to *Lorenzo Bertelli*, who runs Prada's marketing, digital strategy and sustainability efforts. Across thousands of miles, multiple languages and a global pandemic we hatched the idea of a co-branded skiwear product. I believe in imagination as a force to connect ideas and people. Lorenzo and I aligned on many goals and agreed to proceed.

In development discussions, Team Aspen led with its legacy brand and "sport" orientation while Team **Prada** brought exceptional design and "body" sensibility. Last spring, **Prada** sent us possible ski wear prototypes to test in the (snow) field. Our pros stress-tested them and detailed feedback was relayed to Italy. This experiential data was incorporated into our **AS-PENX Prada** inaugural drop in December 2021.

The iterative creative process of design mirrored my studio art practice. It was a privilege to observe so many talented players in the mix. Our teams discussed each product feature including the design of waterproof zippers, proper closures and powder skirts. Prada's materials, durability and feel won over our most skeptical pros. The prototypes were not restrictive and enabled temperature regulation.

Aspen has a long-established commitment to the creative culture. Each year, an artist(s) is featured on the ski pass along with on mountain installations and programs. Now in its 16th year, this program named ArtUP brings art to unexpected places. Fine art and design are proven competitive advantages to our brand.

Artwork from my Fractal series was printed on the fabric of our initial designs. Seeing the artwork proportioned and executed on the apparel was a dream come true. I expect that our collaborative work will meet the needs of our most demanding customers and will reset standards of luxury and performance.

**Q: Tell me how you think AspenX will be positioned in a market that is driven largely by e-commerce?**

**PC:** The last two years have been destabilizing as we all have had to reckon with the uncertainty of a global pandemic. A shift away from brick and mortar retail has been underway for a while. The pandemic delivered a disruptive blow to traditional models of commerce and in-person work models. In Aspen, we chose to adapt and pivot rapidly in our operations. This was simultaneously intimidating and liberating. It remains so. Change is the only constant and we need to move forward despite the uncertainty.

I am not sure that **ASPENX** would have taken form so quickly without the pandemic. It was like a new space opened to new ideas like global collaborations. A favorite Japanese epigram reminds us that "a reverse side has a reverse side". It is important to imagine what is possible in both the light and the dark.

Presently, **ASPENX** is delivering exceptional food and wine, and hospitality experiences, as well as new lines of performance gear. We foresee further investments in technology and product development that will enhance performance and safety.

**Q: What are your thoughts on Aspen and how it plays into the collaboration?**

**PC:** I think about moments in life that are transformative, when you are standing in the same place, yet suddenly everything feels different. When I land in Aspen, I literally come back to my senses. I take a deeper breath, look more closely and pay attention to my environment. Aspen provides a gift that is healing and "sense-sational".

This month we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the *Aspen Ski Company*. We remain grateful to be in this community and in this place. It is a profound responsibility to preserve it for our collective future. Come experience Aspen. Return transformed.

To learn more about Paula Crown follow her @paulacrown\_art @aspenx

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