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GOOD TIDINGS

A DECADE INTO
THEIR LATEST
SKINCARE ENDEAVOR,
THE FORMER
KIEHL'S DYNASTY
IS EMBRACING
EVOLUTION

the renaissance of retrowave



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I first interviewed Jami Morse Heidegger for a profile in the May/June Visionaries issue, a spread celebrating trailblazers and tastemakers at the vanguard of their industries. To crown this beauty doyenne as a visionary is an understatement: she's effective skincare *royalty* as the former heiress of Kiehl's Since 1851, and the clinical mind behind over 100 of its formulas. While scaling up the company alongside her husband (and former alpine skiing world champion) Klaus Heidegger, Jami engineered what are now industry standards, developing waterless solutions and infusing squalane into the brand's backbone. Her elixirs ushered in the original dewy glow that cosmetologists now lust after, reflecting the healthy sheen of cellular harmony.

Now, Jami and Klaus's legacy lives through Retrouvé, the Heidegger's ethically sourced, ultra-high-end collection that stands as a beacon of integrity to the likes of skincare professionals and celebrity makeup artists. Yet in our interview, Jami didn't self-aggrandize. Rather, she earnestly reflected on everything she's learned—and unlearned—in the last few formative years.

Long after our initial conversation, a certain quote of hers stuck with me. “The wonderful thing about life is you never get to an age where you can't still learn, can't still improve,” she said. “Otherwise, what's the point?”

While this year marks Retrouvé's 10th anniversary—a verifiable glow-up from its debut in a chic Parisian boutique—Jami insists she will *always* have much to learn. After all, Retrouvé means “to find again” in French: an evolution fueled by an insatiable curiosity and a pursuit of excellence.

When we speak again this September, Hannah Heidegger, Retrouvé Vice President and Jami and Klaus's daughter, joins us in conversation. And it becomes clear: in formulating a company that's all their own, the Heideggers are once again sculpting the skincare landscape with an ethos of authenticity.

For starters, consider their pace-setting equity and education efforts. As the beauty industry's exclusionary history came under scrutiny in recent years, the Heideggers took notice, championing change that echoed beyond their small-business boundaries. In June of 2020, Retrouvé became the first company to sign on to the Beverly Johnson rule, an eponymous standard ideated by the iconic model, Vogue's first Black cover star. Her standard mandates that beauty, fashion, and media companies interview at least two Black candidates for all open positions, starting at the C-suite, board of directors, and other executive roles.

As Hannah points out, this move joins her family's long record of pioneering with principle. Her parents sparked a philanthropic spirit within Kiehl's, which became the first cosmetic company to donate 100 percent of sales to charity. Underlying it all? A fundamental view of skincare, and self-care, as a revolutionary force for good.

“Skincare is something that touches almost everyone. It's such a beautiful space to spark change because it's deeply personal—literally being in our skin. It is such an individual process, but at the same time, is something that connects us all,” Hannah expresses.

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HANNAH, KLAUS, AND JAMI HEIDEGGER

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Jami chimes in: “In that, it’s so important to have self-acceptance first. If we’re feeling bitter about ourselves, it’s hard to be accepting of others. But when you start giving yourself grace and empathy and acceptance, it’s easier to expand that: to respect and care for people who are different in skin type, body type, age, and individual challenges, all things that come through skincare.”

Beyond Retrouvé’s complexion-enhancing salves and serums is a tradition of storytelling, which seeks to inspire more universal understanding. The brand’s Instagram Live series, “Every Skin Has A Story: Creatives of Color Take on Beauty,” amplifies leading voices at the intersection of social justice and skincare, touching topics such as meaningful representation, multicultural approaches to beauty, and motherhood.

“It can be hard to have empathy for someone who is completely outside of your scope of experience. So through the show and our efforts, we try to enable viewers to walk a mile—or 10 miles—in another person’s shoes by hearing their remarkable feats of perseverance,” Jami says. “We see it as a celebration of people’s accomplishments, measured in all metrics of how success, in their view, is defined.”

Another ongoing livestream, Jami’s “In Conversation With” series, hosts innovators in fields from medicine to mindfulness, who shed light on allowing oneself grace (and often, great skincare). Retrouvé’s product education programs—like its master classes hosted at retailers across the globe—are another effort to enlighten its audience, providing clarity around proper skincare routines in a convoluted, oversaturated market.

“It’s not just about our products or trying to sell something, it’s about trying to help people take the best possible care they can of themselves with a holistic approach,” Jami says. “We see it as our mandate and our honor and our pleasure to help share knowledge as best we can, to try to give the complete facts and not hyperbole. We hear so many things out there from different companies, often that are not completely possible, so we like to keep people’s expectations in the realm of what’s possible.”

On the subject of reality, it’d be remiss not to acknowledge that Jami’s premium elixirs are priced according to their unfathomable quality: a 30 ml cylinder of Revitalizing Eye Concrete Skin Hydrator runs a bill of \$415. Touted as “gold dust amongst those in the beauty-know” by Vogue Paris, Retrouvé’s product line occupies an exclusive coterie in the upper echelons of skincare, and has constant slots in ‘Best Of’ beauty lists to show for it. A quick scroll through the brand’s Instagram feed unveils its true star power: Demi Moore, Lucy Liu, Alessandra

Ambrosio, and even Tom Hiddleston radiate a brilliantly hydrated, porcelain foundation for red-carpet-ready glam.

Yet as Retrouvé’s slogan insists, “skincare is science, not celebrity.” The tightly curated line began as what Jami coins her “personal vanity project” catered to her own mature skin, expertly formulated in the shadows of the non-compete she signed after selling Kiehl’s to L’Oreal in 2000. “What’s going to help my skin as much as possible, at any cost, with no compromise?” she recalls asking herself. So, Retrouvé’s formulas boast the highest grade and concentration of active ingredients—concocted of, quite literally, the crème de la crème of her Kiehl’s days.

Hannah knows best that luxury and accessibility rarely go hand-in-hand, and through several of her products in the pipeline, she’s hoping to bridge that gap. She’s spearheading a collection of products for the youthful, blemish-prone visage (stemming from her own struggles with acne), and aiming to sell it at more introductory price points. “[My mom and I] always joke that these products she makes are her babies, and she spent years formulating and perfecting them. So that’s really instilled a desire in me to want to do the same, wanting to create products that treat your concerns, perhaps with acne now, and are doing so in a way that also promotes long term skin health and balance,” she says.

For those who can’t wait, Retrouvé’s existing Balancing Face Oil already offers equilibrium for younger clients with oilier skin types. Hannah’s more inclusive innovations are in the works with urgency, but without rush—there’s a reason, Jami says, that Retrouvé has only released 10 products in 10 years.

“We are never bringing things out just because it’s Christmas or for PR value: we only bring new products to market when we think we can make a difference with them, when they have something new to say, or can in some way improve upon what we see out there,” she expresses.

So goes the *raison d’être* of Retrouvé: making a statement with every move, whether that be in forward-facing education or performance-driven products. As Jami constantly learns (and hopes to teach), a more understanding, empathetic, loving world begins at the individual level: in the intentional synergy of self-improvement and skincare. “That’s another extension of the word Retrouvé: to refine your relationship with yourself. There are things we all have that we love about ourselves, so dote on those for a moment and reflect,” she shares. “In the long term, taking a few steps every day for self-care is going to make a difference.”*