

*INNS*

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BY THE  
FÉDÉRATION DE LA  
HAUTE COUTURE  
ET DE LA MODE

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# Paris Still Holds The Dream

With 23 nationalities represented on the Calendar, Paris Fashion Week® manages to sustain its power of attraction. From major established houses to experimental, avant-garde designers, a wide range of cultures and aesthetics come together in the capital, painting an eclectic scene. Is this a reflection of the times?

CFCL's minimalist knitwear aesthetic has been presented in Paris for several years, and this season, the show will take place on the opening day of Fashion Week. Founded in 2020 by Yusuke Takahashi, who previously worked for Issey Miyake, the brand makes its runway debut with pop-colored knitwear resulting from computer-developed 3D technology using certified, sustainable polyester yarns. A few hours before CFCL, Vaquera hit the catwalk. With its subversive creations combining rave and grunge culture, the New York-based label made the move to Paris Fashion Week® two years ago and is now a fixture on the calendar.

From one aesthetic to another, from one idea of fashion to another, the Paris calendar manages to bring together increasingly eclectic visions, as though refuting the notion of fashion as an example of standardisation. The possibilities are endless, and this is also due to the diversity of cultures. This includes the return of Belgian duo, Ester Manas, known for their body-positive creations, and Swiss label VETEMENTS, which shook up the fashion world in 2015 with its post-Soviet aesthetic.

Fashion Weeks modelled on those held in Paris, Milan, London and New York have been springing up in capitals around the world for several years. Yet Paris remains an essential crossroads. This is the city where the profession of couturier was invented in 1848, and which opened up internationally from 1973 onwards by welcoming Kenzo and Issey Miyake, then six talented designers from Antwerp (Raf Simons and Ann Demeulemeester among others), and the enfants terribles (John Galliano and Alexander McQueen) from London who participated in the revival of the fashion houses bought by LVMH in the 1990s. Today, some of the biggest names on the international scene choose Paris: the Olsen sisters and The Row's subdued luxury, or MiuMiu by Miuccia Prada, named Lyst Index Brand of the Year 2023.

In the collective work «19 regards sur la mode» (Institut Français de la Mode), management science professor David Zajtman explains that few other capitals manage to maintain their status because «few cities are regularly visited by fashion industry professionals.» Whether it's major buyers, key media or influential personalities, this ecosystem reassures many young designers.

## Innovation and craftsmanship

Rogge adds that the promotion of craftsmanship is an attractive feature specific to the capital, which is developing several projects to safeguard and promote this work, notably via the 19M. For Canovas Del Vas, craftsmanship is an essential way of thinking about sustainable fashion: «The higher the quality of the garment, the more people will like it and want to wear it for a long time. To develop my shoes, I need 8 craftspeople. It's a lot of time and work, but it's essential. My priorities are quality and comfort. I dedicate a lot of my energy to this,» she explains.

Indeed, the Parisian scene is abuzz with artisanal proposals, whether it's the long opaline dresses meticulously handcrafted by Róisín Pierce in her studio in Ireland, or the knitwear adorned with traditional embroidery by Maxhosa By Laduma, founded by Laduma Ngxokolo from South Africa.

## Cultural emulation

But Paris is also a global myth, nurtured by a palimpsest of representations – from the writings of Baudelaire to the films of the New Wave – and most recently the Emily In Paris series. This, in turn, feeds the imagination. «I have a deep love for this city, which has been my dream destination since I was very young. I love French films, like those by Gaspar Noé, and I'm fascinated by Paris's rich history, associated with romance, poetry, art, music and, of course, fashion. Presenting my work in Paris is therefore of considerable importance to me,» explains Chinese designer Di Di, who founded her eponymous brand in 2018 in China before moving to Paris, where she feels «surrounded by talented people.» Paula Canovas Del Vas also enjoys meeting artists from diverse artistic and craft worlds, like her friend the cook Zelikha Dinga, who leads the highly creative catering company Caro Diario, often present during Paris Fashion Week® dinners and events.

An economic and cultural crossroads, Paris always manages to seduce. It remains to be seen what inspirations the ecosystem will arouse this season.

Manon Renault

## Supporting young designers

This is notably the case for Spanish designer, Paula Canovas Del Vas, who launched her eponymous brand in 2018 after studying at Central Saint Martins: «I spent 12 years in London, where I studied and founded my brand. This enabled me to develop a strong visual identity, but at a certain point it wasn't enough. I also had to sell. And I've always had showrooms in Paris. I quickly realised that it was by integrating this scene that I would be able to develop and perpetuate the brand» she emphasises. In addition to the support structures for young brands, the designer notes the presence of numerous prizes: ANDAM, the LVMH prize and the D'Hyères festival, all of which provide opportunities for meetings, exchanges and business and creative partnerships for start-up brands.

Having founded her brand in 2020, Meryll Rogge is based in Belgium and presents in Paris every season. «Even if life [costs] in Paris remains high, it's still possible, unlike in other major capitals. This is an important factor for young people to be able to launch their brands, and I find that many manage to emerge in Paris. And this young dynamic infuses the whole system.»

Through A Feel For Fashion, Paris Fashion Week<sup>®</sup> invites you to see and read the analyses, observations and comments of experts in the sector and the fashion ecosystem. Give us the opportunity to see and think about the issues, challenges and horizons of fashion.



©Thibaut Voisin

**Elsa Janssen** is the Director of the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris and head curator of the current exhibition, *Sheer*: The diaphanous creations of Yves Saint Laurent that continues through August 25, 2024. From the finest sheath of black chiffon to soft cascades of tulle, the multitude of silhouettes on view capture the couturier's avant-garde vision of revealing and concealing the feminine form. Before arriving to the museum in 2022, she was the director of cultural events at the Galeries Lafayette, where she realised exhibitions in collaboration with Hans-Peter Feldmann, Maurizio Cattelan and Xavier Veilhan. Along with Anne Dressen as artistic advisor and Pauline Marchetti overseeing the exhibition design, Janssen has conceived an eye-opening fashion focus that is often in juxtaposition with artists such as Man Ray and Francis Picabia. As the fashion shows get underway, this is must-see exhibition where the designs stand the test of time.

«Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? Less is more.»

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

I am amazed by the fact that young designers keep on dreaming and developing their own singular universe – no matter the context. They keep pursuing ideals of beauty and manage to create moments of grace. I have been particularly touched by what we see happening on the catwalk, such as the latest show by Jacquemus at the Fondation Maeght.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

In today's world, I observe a generation of emerging designers eager to reinvent fashion and its old processes. Being very conscious of the collateral effects of the textile industry or the over-production of some fashion brands, they look for recycled, recyclable material as much as upcycling older garments. Somehow, I see a parallel with Yves Saint Laurent working with the best textile manufacturers of this time to give life to his creations.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

I think it opens many possibilities I am not entirely aware of. I imagine it can help develop creative designs beyond the human's mind and vision. Technologies are a tool that can prove incredible, I think of what Iris van Herpen did to imitate the world of nature. Her exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs really highlights a way to use all means available to develop avant-garde clothes.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Many of Saint Laurent's creations are as relevant today as ever. How does some fashion transcend time?**

Saint Laurent has been active during an extraordinary period of change from a social point of view, and consequently from a fashion aspect. He was the key player in this revolution of fashion designs aiming to serve, magnify and empower the woman of the 20th century. This means highlighting her figure, as much as giving her freedom in her moves according to a new contemporary lifestyle. Among the iconic looks that illustrate these strong ideas are the tuxedo, see-through pieces, jumpsuits or the saharienne. Yves Saint Laurent proves genius in creating timeless pieces. Just like works of art, of music or of architecture, his designs transcend their context of creation and remain relevant through time. We observe that they have also been disseminated and reinterpreted across all levels of the fashion industry. Since their very first appearance, the silhouettes fancied by Yves Saint Laurent have symbolised the perfect balance between elegance and originality.



**Xavier Romatet** spent his early career in marketing, advertising and communication followed by a pivot to Condé Nast, where he eventually became vice chairman of Condé Nast International. These credentials made him well-suited to become dean of Institut Français de la Mode in 2019. Carrying on the legacy of founding president, Pierre Bergé, he has tripled the number of students, from 400 to 1300 transforming IFM into one of the most important French fashion schools and one of the most respected worldwide. Students of IFM's Masters of Arts present their Graduate Show on the opening day of Paris Fashion Week.



## Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «Never give up.»

### **What excites you in fashion right now?**

Fashion itself! The way fashion is constantly renewing its creativity and exploring new territories. At IFM, I'm impressed by the passion our young designers demonstrate towards this profession and their ability to bring it to ever-renewed dimensions year after year.

### **What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward, especially concerning young people?**

We've been receiving 30 percent more applications every year for the past three years for our fashion design courses at IFM, with profiles from all over the world coming from incredible backgrounds. Careers in design and management continue to attract and inspire the young generation, who wish to make a difference. This new generation uses design as a means of expressing their own sensibility, attracting ever larger communities of young people. I'm fascinated by fashion's ability to adapt to the times and embrace society as it is, amidst its transformations and crises.

### **Considering AI, do you think this might benefit fashion? What is the perception among young generations?**

AI will definitely have an impact on fashion. At IFM, we encourage our students, including designers, to use AI to familiarise themselves with its uses. For the past two years, we've been asking our Masters students to use AI to create one look they feel is most representative of the latest Paris Fashion Week. The results are amazing, showing them both how difficult it is to use the prompt properly, and the strengths and weaknesses of AI as a generator of creative ideas. AI can facilitate and support many creative uses, but it will never replace the human hand, which is essential and at the heart of the creative process in fashion. I've noticed that young people at IFM are aware of this balance that needs to be found.

This interview has been lightly edited.

### **Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

Of course, more needs to be done on sustainability, which is much talked about but not acted upon quickly enough because the issue is so complex. But creativity will always serve as the guiding force behind fashion, perpetuating its appeal and igniting desire.

### **What impact might you hope to have on fashion through your work?**

At IFM, we train 1,300 students in craftsmanship, design and management. I'm fascinated by the shared passion that drives all these students, who come from 70 different countries, cultures and backgrounds. This creates a wealth of knowledge and an appetite for progress. Education has an incredible impact, and I'm well aware of our responsibility to train the young people who tomorrow will be running this industry, making a decisive contribution to its development.



**Lyna Valérie Ahanda** possesses the kind of soft power that involves mega celebrities and luxury fashion houses. Based between Paris and LA, the Cameroonian journalist and consultant has been working with international talents for more than two decades, brokering deals that range from global campaigns to magazine covers and brand collaborations. Occasionally, her Instagram will hint at a project with Justin Bieber or Rihanna; but Ahanda is primarily a paragon of discretion. As a journalist, she founded her own publication, LURVE magazine, which has featured the likes of Naomi Campbell, Ciara, Solange Knowles and Laetitia Casta on its covers.

In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion? «I have no idea. I like to live in the real world.»

### **What excites you in fashion right now?**

To see more body types on the runway, on magazines covers. More brands dressing all bodies on red carpet. More inclusivity in general. There was this big shift after George Floyd's death. Every brand decided to take a stand, but it actually took a few years for that to materialise on the runway and in campaign. I feel like the conversation is finally taking a significant turn. It is certainly not perfect and some brands still don't get it, but the majority of them try. You can see that shift with more brands working with artists or athletes. And also, the funny association between fashion and the music industry. That is the power of street culture: customers and sales play a huge part in a brand's success, but over the past few years the public opinion or what we call «hype» has become way more important.

### **What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

The world is changing, slowly but surely. The idea that fashion will stay the same is impossible.

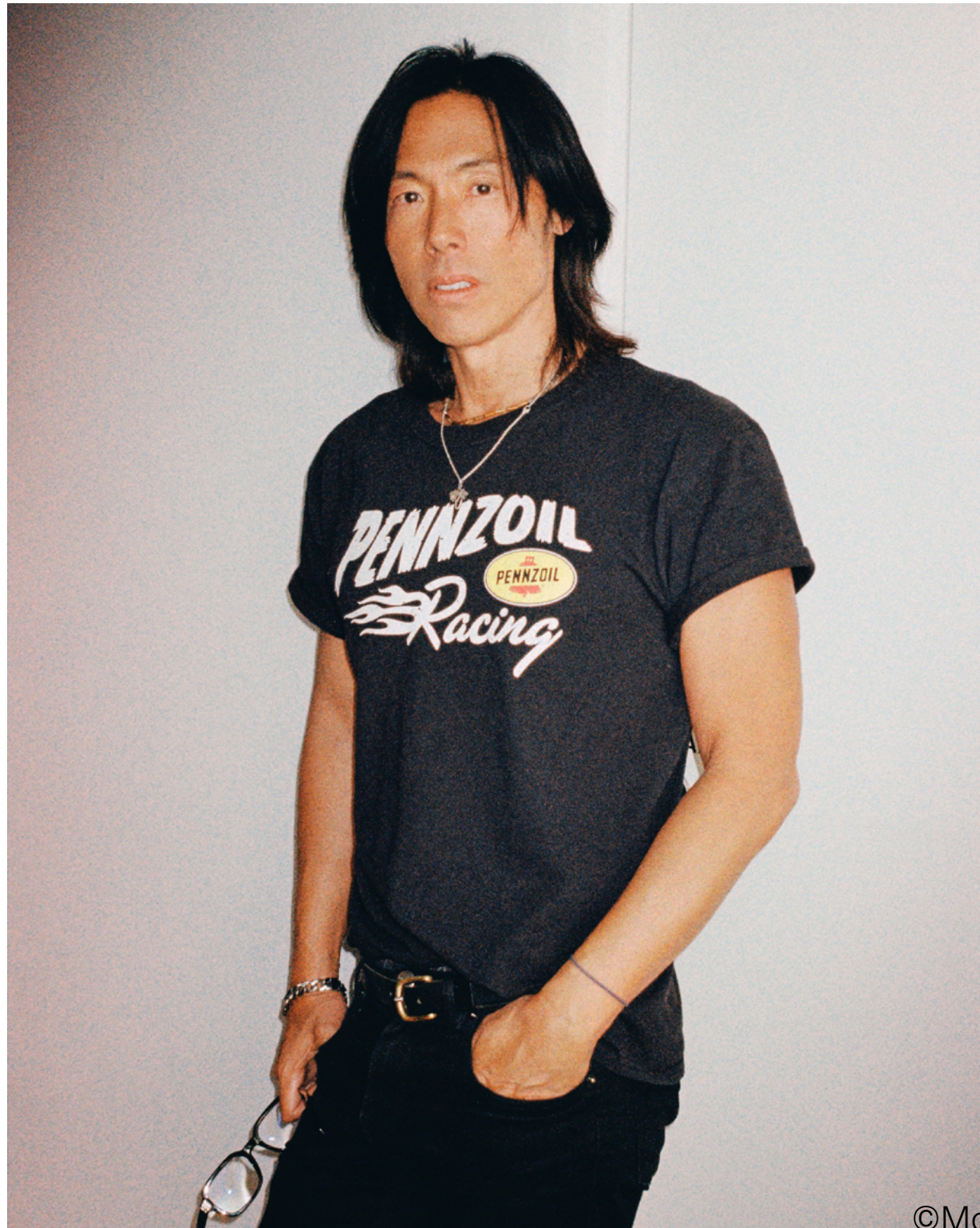
Designers are less political nowadays, but I think that trends are making a bigger impact. So what we see on the runway translates to meaningful moments in the streets. People are bolder, more creative.

### **Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

Martine Rose. She is everything I love about fashion. She is the present and the future.

### **Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24?**

I think more than ever before, it's «Be whoever you want to be. Fashion allows us to fantasise the idea that we have of ourselves. To put on a costume for the day or forever. To break rules. To dream about being someone else even if it is just for a second.



©Mok Jungwook

Among the most respected creatives in the industry, **Stephen Gan** arrived in New York in the early '80s and pursued a degree in photography at Parsons New School of Design. In 1991, he founded the collectable and must-have publication, *Visionaire*, along with model Cecilia Dean and make-up artist James Kaliardos. The issues were highly conceptual, available only in limited edition and impossible to get. The magazine was also a playground for boundless expression through images and collaborations with brands and artists, well ahead of others. In 1999, Gan launched *V*, the bimonthly and more affordable spin-off, where he is still editor-in-chief despite departing from *Visionaire* in 2014. Gan is also the creative director of *Elle US* since 2018.

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

Anything that showcases FANTASY. People want to dream again.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

That there are new visionaries being born every day. Maybe a future Richard Avedon or Christian Dior is graduating from school right now.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

In dreaming up fantastical creations before they are made. Think of AI as a sketchbook.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

I do not know exactly, but definitely someone is needed to come along and show us new ways of looking at things.

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion through your work?**

In my field, it would be to leave magazine issues that younger generations will pick up one day, enjoy and learn from.



©Hayato Takahashi

**Keishan** was born in the countryside near Nagano, Japan in 1997. She is a transgender female model who is actively engaged in changing Japanese society that has generally been closed to the LGBTQIA+ community for too long. She was scouted while working at an apparel shop in Tokyo and started appearing as a TV personality in 2017. Traveling to New York for the first time in 2019 to build her modelling career, she experienced an openness that motivated her to return to Japan and fight for equality. She is the first transgender female model in a UNIQLO advertising campaign and was also featured in the Loewe advertisement in Japan tied to its 50th anniversary. In 2023 she made Forbes Japan's 30 under 30 in the category of Art, Style & Social.

Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «Fashion trends move too quickly; the same old fashions will eventually return. So I would like to express myself through fashion and I believe that a new era awaits me beyond my expression.»

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

I get very excited when a designer shows me new values or conveys a fashion moment that changes a stereotype.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

I feel we are looking forward to seeing certain old rules change. Human rights issues could even start changing through the clothes [people wear].

This interview has been lightly edited.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

With artificial intelligence, we can quickly see what is trending, so I think we can drop some pointless topics and dedicate our time to more valuable things.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

Hunter Schafer. She broadened my transgender horizons. I am very honoured to know her.

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion through your work?**

I don't know what you think about the current fashion situation, but I didn't see it as having the right approach to a diverse society. As a transgender person, I aim to change all these stereotypes.



©Paola Kudack

Named editor-in-chief of Marie Claire (US) in June last year, **Nikki Ogunnaike** is among a new wave of women driving fresh relevance across fashion titles (The Washington Post saluted her and her peers in a recent collective profile). Previously at Harper's Bazaar in the role of senior digital director, she has a strong following through social channels and an all-around style that resonates with younger readers. In this new chapter for the reliable women's magazine, Ogunnaike's direction signals broader representation of faces and voices through fashion, beauty and news coverage, while appearing sharper and more accessible than ever.



Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «Slow down, think critically.»

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

There seems to be a new guard of fashion designers, editors, and stylists entering positions of influence and power in this industry. As someone who is a part of that change, this obviously excites me. But generally speaking, I also just love seeing new perspectives.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

Change is hard, but change can be exciting and good! Seeing creative directors at storied Houses like Alaïa, Ferragamo, Bally, and Gucci continue to play with new ideas and codes of the House makes fashion fun.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

AI is only as good as the people who create it. I hope when inherent biases come to light, the industry will work to remedy them by diversifying who they hire and the kind of content that is made and in turn scraped for AI's benefit. One thing I hope does not continue is using AI to replace key collaborators like models of colour or plus size.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

Changes in AI and social media platforms will drive the greatest change in fashion. In America, we're entering into an election year. That will certainly affect the fashion industry in one way or another—there's no way around that.

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion this year?**

Anytime you interact with Marie Claire, it should feel like you're in a group chat of your most ambitious friends. I hope to widen the scope of who is a part of that group chat—from the people who are represented on our site and in the pages of our magazine to the kinds of stories we tell.



©Acielle/Style du Monde

If you read the collection reviews on *Vogue Runway*, you have surely come across the writing of **Tiziana Cardini**. Reporting from her home city of Milan with dispatches from Paris, she is a critic for the indispensable fashion platform and a contributor to *Vogue.com* more generally. Cardini's insightful observations bring us closer to the designers and their creations, while her previous collaboration with *Vogue Italia* under Franca Sozzani attests to her vast understanding of the industry, past and present.

«Fashion is a resilient, elastic creature. It adapts and evolves. It will always offer imagination and comfort to even the harshest reality.»

**What excites me in fashion now?**

This isn't a moment for 'exciting fashion.' There's too much turmoil in the world for fashion not taking notice. Designers are looking to the everyday, making the ordinary extraordinary, working on wearability and pragmatism –all while keeping the magic. It's a difficult exercise that puts their creativity to the test.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about fashion going forward?**

Fashion is a resilient, elastic creature. It adapts and evolves. It will always offer imagination and comfort to even the harshest reality. It has also become a place of convergence for other creative media: art, music, entertainment. Fashion is innately vital.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

AI is a great tool to experiment with. Fashion has always been able to absorb innovation, so it will play with AI as long as it serves its purposes of refreshing creativity. Fashion is fickle and fast — and technology, too. In the future, they'll both move to the next level in some different form.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

Luckily, I don't have a crystal ball so I cannot make predictions that most of the time happen to be inaccurate or proven entirely wrong. There are no fixed trajectories in fashion, as fashion is determined by so many external factors that cannot be pinned down in one clairvoyant sentence. Yet the state of today's world will surely be a driver for change – both in creativity and consumption.



Based in Paris, **Venya Brykalin** has been the editor-in-chief of *Vogue Ukraine* since 2023 once the magazine returned to print after the outbreak of the war. Beyond developing a trenchant editorial vision (he previously worked as a stylist and journalist for *Elle*, *L'Officiel* and *L'Officiel Hommes*), he has shown how fashion can function as an act of resistance and coordinated Tripolar, a series of Paris pop-ups in support of Ukrainian art and fashion. On Sunday, Brykalin and *Vogue Ukraine* will present *Ukraine Today*, a raw and impactful photo essay by Brett Lloyd.

Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «Less is forever more.»

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

Humanity. People telling personal stories and engaging with their audiences in a sensible and intelligent way.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

We see some great examples of designers and talent in general who have the courage and the capacity to stay true to who they are and what they believe in.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

I would love to see how it can be applied to tech and functional and sportswear design practices where science and engineering solutions can push the realms of design further.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

The Algorithm. Social media has totally transformed the mechanics of how we consume information and how and what sells in this way. Thus it's transforming what is designed and how it's done. This is incredibly interesting to watch.

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion this year?**

[Vogue Ukraine] is a speck of dust in the vast cosmos. But I'm hoping we make a great magazine that inspires people and creates room for optimism.



Based in Berlin, **Alec Leach** is an author whose cogent book, *The World is on Fire But We're Still Buying Shoes* (Casimir Books, 2022) delivers an eye- and mind-opening manifesto that addresses consumerism and online culture as they ultimately impact the planet. The former style editor for *High Snobiety* pens a Substack newsletter exploring sustainability and ways to bring about lasting change in fashion, and contributes op-eds to publications such as the *Business of Fashion*.

Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «We're in this together.»

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

Menswear is in such a great place right now; it feels like no matter your tastes, someone is making some really great clothes to cater for them. I'm a huge fan of the kind of things brands like Our Legacy, Mfpen and Stussy are making, but it feels like wherever you look there's something interesting going on, whether you're into prep or goth or streetwear.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

So many of the industry's institutions are falling apart in front of our eyes — legacy media, independent brands, multi-brand retailers — but the one hope I'm clinging to at the moment is the fact that people are starting to really work together to figure all this out. The Condé Nast Union, the Black in Fashion Council, the Fashion Act (which I'm a part of) — these are all great examples of people coming together to fight for a better future, and that's something that gives me hope. Working with people is also awesome! This whole ivory tower, «you can't sit with us» mentality is so ridiculous, and it makes people miserable — even the people who benefit from it.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

People!



**Alissa Aulbekova** and **Paula Sello** are a passionate, out-of-the-box fashion duo based in London. Innovators to the bone, the two creative directors founded [auroboros.co.uk](https://auroboros.co.uk) in 2018, a digital platform that aim to push the boundaries of dressing by merging haute couture, technology, sustainability and science — all through a strong female-led vision. Aulbekova studied Fashion Communication & Promotion at Central Saint Martins and has lectured at Harvard Business School while Sello graduated from both Goldsmiths University and the Fashion Technology Academy. They appeared on Forbes 30 under 30 in 2022 under Art & Culture.



Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «Our fashion mantra for 2024 is Nature-Tech.»

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

As a creative director duo, we are deeply inspired by the rapid advancements in AI and the development of new materials. The pace at which technology is integrating into our daily lives, becoming more ambient, excites us. It's the potential for technology to harmonise with nature, transforming our ecological relationships, that fuels our creativity. We are committed to leveraging these innovations to foster a more optimistic view of the future, one where humanity coexists with nature and technology in a sustainable and enriching way.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

Our optimism stems from our ongoing efforts to pioneer a new wave of sustainable fashion. We're energised by the shifting attitudes among Generation Z towards more sustainable fashion choices, be this through vintage shopping, a resurgence of DIY, or digital fashion. This gradual change signals a promising future for fashion, one that we're eager to influence. With AI's transformative power, we're at the brink of a new era. It's a thrilling time to be part of the fashion industry, as we stand on the cusp of a consciousness shift that impacts everything around us.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

AI revolutionises the creation of fashion imagery, making what was once a costly and labour-intensive process accessible to many. While some may view this as a threat to traditional jobs, we see it as an exciting evolution. Embracing AI allows for unprecedented creativity in garment design, with unexpected and fresh results akin to collaborating with an alien mind. It's a journey into the unknown, and we invite everyone to embrace this future positively, as we collectively teach and shape this burgeoning AI consciousness.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

We hope to be the catalysts for the greatest change in fashion this year!

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion through your work?**

Through our work, we aspire to transform the way people envision and engage with fashion. We want to inspire dreams of a future filled with beauty, hope, and joy, irrespective of the challenges our world may face. Our legacy aims to be one of enduring beauty, inspiring individuals not just on Earth but potentially in other solar systems or planets. We dream of a day when our designs, embodying the essence of «Nature-Tech» are worn across the universe, making those who wear them feel beautiful and strong.

This interview has been lightly edited.

*IN THE EYES OF*

In the eyes of, personal testimonies from key figures in the ecosystem who think and make fashion.

IN  
THE  
EYES  
OF  
SPHERE  
PFW®  
SHOWROOM  
FALL-WINTER  
2024/2025

Their names are Charles de Vilmorin, Di Du, Florentina Leitner, Lucille Thièvre, Alphonse Maitrepierre, Paolina Russo and Lucile Guilmard. Among them, winners of the Zalando Visionary Award 2023 and finalists of the Woolmark Prize and the LVMH Prize. Their names are a cosmopolitan rallying cry, the conquest of difference over uniformity, and the proof through creativity that an artisanal and responsible approach today is an asset for the future.

Supported by DEFI and L'Oréal Paris, Sphère Paris Fashion Week® is a creative hub, an open book of possibilities whose pages will be on display at the Palais de Tokyo from February 28 to March 5. «Be yourself» is Di Du's motto for this season, suggesting that individuality expresses itself without constraint.

Colours dance on the white page: with these emerging brands, the line becomes reality, the imagination materialises under the sun of eco-responsibility. Charles de Vilmorin is introducing his ready-to-wear collection, exactly four years after his dreamlike figures set Instagram alight. DIDU, a brand founded in 2019 that is expanding in Paris as well as Shanghai, is inspired by the very artistic side of things: «This Fall-Winter '24 collection is a fusion of inspirations borrowed from the artistic worlds of Mark Rothko and the poetic allure of Edgar Allan Poe. I want to take the public into a dark and romantic world, adopting a slightly gothic aesthetic that builds on the elegance of the previous season.»



Charles de Vilmorin



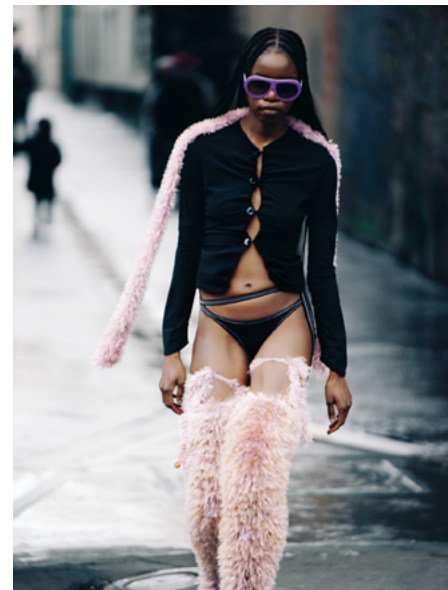
Didu



Florentina Leitner

In September 2022, Florentina Leitner, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Antwerp and a former collaborator of Dries Van Noten, won the Emerging Talent prize at the Belgian Fashion Awards. Two years later, her colourful style burst forth in a winter dedicated to Marie Antoinette, «one of the most emblematic Austrian women in history» she says. «The collection embodies the spirit of a modern Marie Antoinette: a chic, confident woman who loves dogs, bows and a touch of glitter. Pastel colours – light pink, blue – mixed with brown tones and darker colours.»

SPHERE means new beginnings, new projects and new dreams in the making. «The SPHERE showroom is a great opportunity for me, as a brand, to meet international buyers and journalists, who are sometimes difficult to reach on their own. I'm really pleased to be able to be part of the showroom and to be featured alongside so many other emerging brands. The team is fantastic and really helps to put brands in touch with fashion journalists and buyers» Leitner says. Her fashion motto for 2025? «A girl in a dress embroidered with sequins dashing around with girly rococo sneakers on her feet.» Biker jackets and baroque velvets collide in an inspiring mix and match, blending historical references and modern flair. Without doubt, the promise of the moment, of a neo-baroque and narrative aesthetic.



Lucille Thièvre



Maitrepierre



Paolina Russo

From the ethical drapes of Lucille Thièvre, who previously worked for Hermès and Givenchy, to the floral motifs of Alphonse Maitrepierre, who sublimates recycled fabrics like a magician, craftsmanship frees itself from the picturesque to enter a world that is both familiar and unfamiliar, full of surprises and feelings.

«Luxury is a sensation, a touch. You feel it when you see the effort that goes into the pieces, so in a way, it's the love and time that goes into making things. It's also a lifestyle, which isn't just about being expensive, but also about being selective in what you consume, in what you identify with. It's a timeless style, not just a fashion statement» concludes Di Du. «Presenting my work in Paris is of great importance to me. First of all, it's the most prestigious fashion week in the world, which allows me to present my creations to a wide audience. Secondly, being in Paris continually reignites my passion for what I do. And finally, I'm surrounded by talented people and artists, which always keeps me motivated and inspired for good.»

The creative process, the development of a collection, the stylism... Focus gives a voice to the designers and key creative individuals of Paris Fashion Week®.

# ROBERT MERCIER - CREATIVE FREE SPIRIT



The act of creation encompasses work, motivation, and liberation. This is exemplified by Robert Mercier, an independent artisan who has collaborated with Jean Paul Gaultier, Maison Margiela, Balmain, Schiaparelli, Mugler, Jeanne Friot, and crafted some of the most viral pieces in recent years.

«Our story begins within the intricacies of the French educational system. From adolescence onward, young students must choose between the general high school and the technical high school, between the 'intellectuals' and the 'manual workers'. The issue lies not so much in this inherently academic distinction, but in the social disdain it generates. 'We were called the fleabags,' recounts Robert Mercier with a wry smile, redirected towards this technical track because he was seen as non-academic and too much of a dreamer. Among the options offered by his school - Accounting, Auto Repair, Leatherworking - «the choice was quickly made.» He chose leatherworking, out of resignation. Freshly graduated, he heads towards the Louis Vuitton workshops to become a trunk maker. But reality sets in, as it was the last year when military service was mandatory in France. He was then asked to join the saddle-harness department of the Republican Guard in Paris.

The Republican Guard, then Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Celine: Robert honed his skills among the most rigorous. In 2015, he founded his own venture, Gienah, named after a star in the Raven constellation, at the tip of the wing. 'It's always been my animal, since forever,' he says. An ode to discretion, to this bird of the shadows, like this passionate craftsman for whom external recognition is only a consequence of his work, never a goal in itself. Perhaps that's the key to success, never aiming for glory but letting one's work do the talking.

«I mould fantasised bodies. I can do cosmetic surgery without pain.»

«I truly have a dialogue with the material, it is not poetry.»

His career in fashion began with Jean Paul Gaultier, who asked him to create a woman's body moulded in leather. «I had a week to make it in my studio. I'd never done that before.» This first challenge launched a series of fruitful collaborations. Balmain (Olivier Rousteing), Schiaparelli (Daniel Roseberry), Ann Demeulemeester (Ludovic de Saint Sernin), Mugler (Casey Cadwallader), the collaborations follow one another. Each time, a three-way conversation begins, between the Artistic Director, the artisan and the material. «I explain to them that it's the material that will lead to a technique. I truly have a dialogue with the material, it is not poetry.»

«There are two ways of recreating a body. Either I'm given the measurements and I sculpt, or I plaster the body and recreate from that mould» explains the man who never wants to do the same thing again. «I need something new, I don't want to do it again. It's this drive for novelty that drives him to constantly reinvent himself. I get bored very quickly» says the man for whom design remains nonetheless the best antidote against boredom. Pregnant women's bodies for the Jean Paul Gaultier Haute Couture collection by Olivier Rousteing, muscular torsos for Schiaparelli, a feather as a statement top for Ann Demeulemeester by Ludovic de Saint Sernin: Robert Mercier carves and rethinks the body.

«I'm happy to take part in fashion moments.» Clothes truly exist when they are worn and embodied. In 2021, during the presentation of Denis Villeneuve's film *Dune* at the Venice Film Festival, Zendaya appeared in a draped leather dress. At first glance, it feels like a wet fabric, billowing against the skin. The dress is by Balmain, designed by Olivier Rousteing. When Robert Mercier shared his prototypes on Instagram, Zendaya reached out to him, and social media went wild. Highlighting the intelligence of the hand is what turns a garment from a practical object into a work of art, a conceptual object. It humanises the piece, making you realise the work that went into it. That's what builds the myth of a garment. Add a touch of glamour (Zendaya, Beyoncé, Björk - he has worked with all three) and you have a stone added to the road traced by the history of fashion, of a fashion house. «I'm happy to be part of fashion moments» he confides.

One day, Casey Cadwallader, Mugler's Artistic Director since January 2018, follows him on Instagram. Without thinking, I sent him a message: «When are we working together?» no hello, straight to the point. The answer was even more straight forward: «Now.» The next thing he knew, Robert was in their offices, and he was asked to dress Beyoncé for her 2023 world tour. Although the singer made her tour a permanent fashion show, switching designer looks every night, one look recurred regularly: the bee, signed by Mugler, conceived by Cadwallader and crafted by Mercier. When she wasn't wearing it, it was being repaired, because she was rocking it on stage. It was painted by a friend of mine, a panel beater. The nicest compliment I ever received was when someone said to me, 'It looks like a piece from the Mugler archives.'

This interview has been lightly edited.



«When I'm working, I'm hyper-concentrated, it's like being in a trance.»



During Haute Couture Week in January 2024, Maison Margiela Artisanal staged a masterly show. Remember the porcelain and leather collars? «To catch an Artistic Director, you have to impress him.» To achieve the porcelain effect with leather, Mercier began by making plates. He sends the teams a parcel full of porcelain plates, which fold up magically. «It's a secret, I'm keeping the technique to myself.»

Mercier works alone in his atelier, a stone's throw from Paris, and his productivity defies all odds. «It takes 19 hours to make a Kelly. When I worked at Hermès, it took me 9.50 hours.» He produces pieces at breakneck speed. «When I was making the draped dresses, I draped in my sleep. I enter deep into the technique. And I'm the first one to be impressed by what comes out.»

«People can copy me, I don't mind.»

On social media, he attracts younger people who want to follow in his footsteps. «I tell them that I didn't start by dressing Zendaya, I started by working.» Ideas, even revolutionary, are nothing without perfect execution. «Today, the technique comes to me spontaneously, but I've crafted a lot of Hermès bags!» he exclaims. Because once you've mastered the game, the rules are no longer the same. Try talking to Mercier about transmission and he'll just shrug and smile. «When I explain to students how I work, they reproduce what I do. That's not the point, you must not get stuck in that.» Of course, there's no need to fear plagiarism; this creative artist, always on the lookout for something new, will already have had new ideas before a copy is even produced. What Mercier appreciates most about his work is his freedom. I love my job and that's why I protect it. And in the end, I could focus on other arts, or other material. «People can copy me, I don't mind.»

The distinction between artist and artisan has not always existed. The separation occurred when an intellectual, referential, and conceptual dimension elevated the role of the artist at the expense of the craftsman, who was then relegated to the realm of practicality and concreteness. Some, like Robert Mercier, restore the noble reputation of craftsmanship, allowing younger talents to begin their formation as soon as they wish, without fear of being mocked.

This interview has been lightly edited.

# VICTOR WEINSANTO - TURNING GRIEF INTO BEAUTY



© Matthieu Delbreuve

«Transformer le chagrin en beauté»

This interview has been lightly edited.

**How did you envision this collection? Its materials? Its colours?**

Initially, it arose as a tribute to Daphne Guinness, one of the first people to support me, when I started in September 2020. She's an icon whose image keeps gracing my moodboards. And then, to be honest, in October, I experienced the loss of someone very dear to me, Romain Eugène, a painter, photographer and founder of 35 37. This is a way for me to mourn. This collection is a bit special; it's not overly cheerful, but it's like a passage, an acceptance, a cycle. So I used a lot of lace, which echoed a black widow, with touches of bright colour, like glimmers of hope and optimism. I wanted to honour emotions that may lie in the realm of sadness. Let's say it's a meeting between Daphne Guinness and Cindy Lauper.

**The key look?**

A draped, sculpted wedding dress themed on witchcraft and Medusa.

### **How do you define WEINSANTO DNA?**

There's always drama, whether it's funny or sad. I like that theatrical side. I like the irony. I like to play with humour. Weinsanto is cabaret, but also the construction, the contrast between the characters, from the ultra-sexy to the ultra-opulent. No fear of exaggerations, volumes, taking up space. I like the very visual, graphic side. There's something architectural about the proportions. Multiply the big swings, between the corset and the extra-large, combining the two.

### **And Weinsanto woman?**

That's the name of my dog, a Cavalier King Charles (the dog from Beauty and the Tramp), who I've just adopted.

This interview has been lightly edited.

### **You created your brand in 2020. How far have you come? What have you learnt?**

I've learned that I'm tenacious. Like Jeanne Friot, Alphonse Maitrepierre, Kevin Germanier or Charles Vilmorin, we were lucky to have received help and support. I feel very grateful and very lucky. We've also realised that we still have a long way to go. I'm lucky enough to be able to play and carry on creating.

### **What about the eco-responsibility aspect of this particular collection?**

We're always very pleased to work with Nona Source. Seventy percent of the collection is made from deadstock fabrics. Sophie Hallette gave us second-hand lace, which means we have some beautiful pieces in the collection.



© Matthieu Delbreuve

### How did you conceive the show?

I didn't know where I was going. I wanted to pay tribute to Romain, to transform his grief into beauty. I wanted people to be moved.

### What are you fighting against?

We're bringing a fairly common message when we talk about acceptance. We'd like people's attitudes to change. I'm fighting for the freedom to be yourself, without feeling constrained by intolerance. Minorities are taking up more space and feeling heard. We still haven't achieved true gender diversity on the catwalks. Drag queens are booked as «talents» but not often as runway girls.

This interview has been lightly edited.

### What's your favourite weapon?

I don't necessarily have one. But I do have shields: my dog, my husband, my pillars.

### Your dream for 2024?

For the brand to grow. To keep my business going while feeling creatively free, while remaining a child.

### Weinsanto signifie Vin Sacré. Qu'est-ce qui vous fait pétiller?

L'humour . Le sourire des gens, avant même qu'ils m'aient dit bonjour.

MATTER  
AND  
SHAPE:  
THE  
NEW  
DESIGN  
SALON  
BOWING  
IN  
PARIS

An innovative design salon is set to unfold in Paris' Jardin des Tuileries from March 1-4, alongside Paris Fashion Week®. Dan Thawley, eminent author-editor-curator, has been appointed creative director of this initiative powered by WSN, spotlighting the expansive nature of design.





The very word design is an open treasure chest, as it encompasses fashion, architecture, technology, and creation in general. It's the art of conceiving, combining savoir-faire and creativity. This blend embodies Thawley's personal and sensitive approach to creation, which took root in his native Australia, where he closely monitored industry evolutions. «I was adopted by the internet» he quips. He then flew to Europe, where he entered the fashion industry «at a very young age, by modeling and styling.» Antwerp, London, Paris – he built his vision across these European fashion hubs. In 2010, when he took the reins of A Magazine Curated By, founded in 2001 by Walter Van Beirendonck, he discovered «a multidisciplinary approach with the magazine.»

He observed a vibrant convergence of some of the most creative minds, such as Francesco Risso, Delfina Delettrez, Simone Rocha, Thom Browne, Grace Wales Bonner, Lucie and Luke Meier, Iris Van Herpen among others. These were «people with strong opinions and a high taste level» that fascinated him and allowed him to witness the «wide hybridity in fashion, the way industry has developed.» That array of experiences naturally led him to pilot the creative direction of an innovative and unprecedented design salon.

«We only selected thirty-three designers.»

Matter and Shape presents the work of thirty-three carefully selected designers. The curated lineup features renowned names like Rick Owens, the ongoing collaboration between Sacai and Astier de Villatte, Flos and Charlotte Chesnais, alongside emerging talents from all around the world – France, Japan, Italy, Colombia, South Korea, Spain, and beyond. «It was important to keep it international; I'm an expat» says Thawley, citing «the flourishing French art market» as a driving force. Having dedicated his career to meeting creatives, Thawley initially compiled a list of participants. «I made my shortlist of key players – companies I came into contact with.» In the meantime, an open call was initiated. The result was this assembly of designers who «fit aesthetically together but never met and have never had the conversation, so it is interesting.»

Fashion designer Rick Owens will unveil an exhibition by the French-American artist Scarlett Rouge, alongside a selection of bronze and crystal objects from the Rick Owens Object Collection. Additionally, RDAI, the historic architects of the house of Hermès, will present an exhibition of their B2B service Material Curator, showcasing their cutting-edge material research facility available to decorators, architects, and designers.

Matter and Shape introduces a new concept to the design fair landscape by emphasizing immediate and short-lead deliveries for showcased products. The idea was not to solely bring together creations «with a 5-figure price tag» but to attract and gather the aesthetes attending Paris Fashion Week®, «the modern consumers who want to buy a handbag but also have a beautiful interior» asserts Thawley. It was important to us that this happened during Paris Fashion Week® because the press, buyers, creatives, designers are all gathered in Paris at that time. There is a confluence of design enthusiasts, people interested in beautiful things. Whether you're an established designer, a gallery owner, a decorator, or a student, this venue, which is free to access if you register online before visiting via their website, is open to enthusiasts of artistic flair.

«It is a place to meet people, to make it happen.»



The venue was conceived as an agora, a place «where designers, creatives can meet and for students too» explains Thawley, recalling: «I didn't know anyone when I started out in fashion.» For the salon's first edition, the design of the space was entrusted to LA-based architect and designer Willo Perron of Perron Roettinger Studio. Yes, the same one who, last year, designed the staging for Rihanna's performance at the Super Bowl or Jay-Z's concert at the Fondation Louis Vuitton. However, visitors will be welcomed in a much more intimate setting. «My idea was to have a cocooning place» explains Thawley. «I felt like this place should be quite neutral, no logos, no corporate texts, and light coming from the outside.» With a central space to gather and attend conferences, a restaurant by We Are Ona («already sold out!»), and a boutique, Thawley aimed for «a feeling of lightness, and for people to feel comfortable being there.»

CREATIVE  
EMOTIONS  
EMERGE  
AT  
MOSSI

For Fall-Winter 2024, Mossi Traoré mused on what it means to channel one's emotions into a fashion collection by looking to the worlds of art and Haute Couture. While he kept his cards close to his chest, one gets the sense that the designer wanted to explore the multiplicity of man and how clothing can be used as a tool to communicate our sense of self. In his complexly layered collection, a couture-informed spirit underpins craft and construction with nods to the quotidian throughout.

As rich and complex as the human condition, his colour palette journey spans bottle-green, carmine, and grey to classic black and white. The designer has explored a variety of fabrics and techniques within the collection, from elemental items like Japanese denim to Korean cotton and hand-woven Indian cotton. Alongside familiar tropes, he has introduced innovative textiles made from discarded mattresses and recycled milk proteins. Elsewhere, he pushes the needle forward with his advanced drapery skills by using a wrinkle-resistant triacetate. The swishy drapes of an Indian sari are given a Haute Couture makeover, while he looked to installations by Korean artist Lee Bul, who uses mixed media to produce sculptures with a socio-political context, to inspire a passage of asymmetric and architectural silhouettes. Moreover, he conjures Madame Grès, a recurring motif in his collections, in the pleats and folds that give everything a sophisticated touch. Somehow, he ties together disparate ideas with aplomb.





**What will the presentation format entail?**

We'll be opening the presentation with a fashion show, followed by a more intimate showroom format to present and explain the collection to the press and buyers. It will be more of an intimate insight into the collection which will give people time to understand our silhouettes, construction, and Haute Couture details.

**What learnings did you take from your first show in Paris through to this season?**

It's important to be yourself and to be authentic. The show must tell our story: who we are, what we do and, above all, guide our guests through a journey.

**What was the point of departure for this season?**

Emotion was the point of departure for my collection. I wanted myself to be guided by everyday emotions, my creative emotions, and be able to share these with people through my designs.

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

I'm excited by being in the studio with my team. We work to challenge each other and the people we collaborate with. We challenge ourselves to come up with ideas and how we channel them into our clothes. It's about the experience of experimentation and setting goals for ourselves. Those things keep us happy and motivate us. With the Haute Couture school we've set up, we enable young people to join Haute Couture workshops and our work in fashion, which is bringing nobility back to the suburbs. The excellence of couture inspires our ready-to-wear and the bridges we build between art and fashion. The positive social impact of our brand, which promotes diversity and integration in fashion and our working relationship with artisans, is also very important to me.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

Collective awareness, even though there's still a lot of work to be done. But young people seem to be taking things in hand and that brings optimism. Industries including fashion are looking to reinvent themselves and prepare for the future, so that's a positive sign. Passing on and preserving savoir-faire is at the heart of my priorities. For my part, I would conclude by saying that we might need to think about earning differently, but living better.

# ALESSANDRO VIGILANTE

Alessandro Vigilante's first love is dance. Born in Puglia, he was a professional dancer until the age of 23, when he got injured and had to stop his career. Fashion was his other passion so, after graduating from IED (Istituto Europeo di Design) in Milano, he started to work for brands like Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci alongside Alessandro Michele, Philosophy by Lorenzo Serafini and The Attico. Now his role is to carry on Marcel Rochas's heritage. Unsurprisingly, given his dance background, the body is at the centre of his creative process and he expresses it sensually through the clothes. At Rochas, he will add French sophistication and the celebration of womanhood bringing modernity, charisma, sophistication and timeless beauty.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

I think a fashion brand today has to keep its feet on the ground and take one step at a time. The Rochas brand is restarting from the archives of its founder, Marcel Rochas, to rebuild solid foundations based on the brand's precious heritage re-read through my eyes.

Never before has the Rochas brand been as close as it is today to women and their feminine and sophisticated feeling—never exaggerated but confident and above all personal and free.

The collections being released are consistent in order to offer quality and uniqueness on different occasions of use, keeping the brand's DNA and the characteristics of the Rochas woman very clear.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

I believe that no artificial intelligence can replace or achieve the intensity of the many nuances that a real body in motion can express, as it carries with it all the experiences made, recorded and transferred outside through the senses.

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion?**

The biggest goal for me would be to have the sensitivity to anticipate or, at least, feel the desires of women in a gentle way and with respect. A dress has no meaning until a woman wears it, giving it life and personality.

### How do you see the evolution of women's wardrobe?

The next women's wardrobe, by now overflowing with comfortable garments inspired by street style and leisure time, is ready to devote a space for newness: well-made clothes, quality garments starting from the choice of raw material, passing through the study of the shape, up to the attention to tailoring, details and uniqueness. These characteristics all work together to create a wardrobe that makes you feel free to move comfortably, but not unkempt or fake unkempt. I believe that the wardrobe should not only contain flashy garments but also pieces that allow you to go unnoticed if you want to, while remaining sophisticated.

In an unstable world like the one we are living in, I believe that fashion should be able to help us feel closer to our inner, everyday feelings. Sometimes we want to feel powerful, but I believe we should not be afraid to show ourselves as fragile with delicacy. No woman today wants to follow a trend or to dress up like a model during a fashion show; she seeks her own expression, selecting garments in line with her own sensibility and taste; combining pieces freely without following the looks seen on the catwalk. Those who choose to be themselves stand out from others by being unique and consistent.



This interview has been lightly edited.

### Are there any other fields you would like to explore apart from fashion?

I would like to collaborate with contemporary dance and theater. I believe in the mixing of artistic languages to create something new. Many before me have inaugurated this kind of collaboration: from Gianni Versace for Bejart to Dior for Sharon Eyal. Marcel Rochas himself designed some costumes for the Ballets Russes in the late 1920s. The difference with me lies in the fact that, having studied dance, from the Cunningham technique to Pina Bausch's dance theatre and Ohad Naharin's Gaga technique, I understand the body in movement and its needs. And this is inevitably at the centre of my work.

### Can you suggest a fashion mantra for 2024?

I will suggest four: Play with clothes, following your personal taste. Find your expression playing with clothes. Express yourself freely. Unlock your possibilities (my favorite).

# GABRIELE COLANGELO

Self-taught Italian designer **Gabriele Colangelo** is a theorist of purity, minimalism and excellent fabrics channeled through timeless yet innovative silhouettes. He launched his brand in 2008 after winning the Who's On Next Award from Vogue Italia and in 2014, he was the only Italian among the finalists of the LVMH Prize. In 2015, he was also appointed creative director at Giada, a Chinese brand owned by Redstone Group which also became a partner of Colangelo's eponymous brand. With them, he develops retail strategy in the Chinese market with the goal to develop the brand worldwide.



©Ritratto Gc

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

I think optimism can only reside in the dream that fashion is capable of creating — the imagery it evokes — as a unique and wonderful expression of art applied to people's real lives.

**In what ways do you think AI might benefit fashion?**

AI has the potential to help the fashion industry by making it more efficient, personalised, and sustainable, optimising the processes to reduce waste and environmental impact and to minimise overproduction.

**Who or what will drive the greatest change in fashion this year?**

I think that the change can be driven by the need to slow down, to create garments that have a longer life and durability and therefore also a higher intrinsic value, but perhaps mine is more of a wish that it will happen.

**Can you suggest a fashion mantra for 2024?**

Definitely 'less is more'.

In terms of style, this motto represents my fashion concept, where subtraction suggests a reflection that does not take away, but rather adds value to the dress. In terms of sustainability, it expresses the hope to produce less, but qualitatively better. Ultimately this should be the objective we should all aim for.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**What impact might you hope to have on fashion?**

I have always thought of my work as a form of art. The creation of clothes is expressed in the high quality of the materials, in the preciousness of the craftsmanship with great attention to details (even the smallest ones). This is what makes the design. Perhaps more than an impact, it is the message of a fashion designed, cared for and loved.

**How do you see the evolution of women's wardrobe?**

I believe there is a dichotomy between what you see on social media, where fashion is flashy and exhibited to the limit of costume, and real life in which women are looking for something that represents them without being overwhelming, making them most confident. A wardrobe is made of timeless pieces, which they wear on every occasion and maybe at different ages of their life.

**Are there any other fields you would like to explore apart from fashion?**

Lately I've been rather attracted to pottery, the tactile experience it represents and its multiple creative expressions.

## SARAH ANDELMAN READS THE MOMENT

If Sarah Andelman needs no introduction, her latest project adds a new chapter to her professional story arc. On February 24, Le Bon Marché unveiled *Mise en Page*, an exciting store-wide programme where the department store is celebrating the widening culture of books and our eternal love of reading. Andelman, as tapped into the zeitgeists as anyone, has overseen the artistic direction and curation; think merchandise from bookshops around the world; unique items from stationery brands and lifestyle brands; collaborations with fashion and beauty brands – and much, much more.



©Amelie Ambroise

There is also a café and retail space with long-time Colette artist Jean Julien, who has captured Andelman for the publicity as an idiosyncratic illustration, her head in a book. Andelman, who is also now in the business of editing books through her *Just An Idea Books* series, offers a glimpse of *Mise en Page* (which runs through April 21) while underscoring how fashion's embrace of bibliophilia is more than a trend.



©Amelie Ambroise

**Books always had a strong presence at Colette. Then you launched your own series of books and now you are a curator of an ambitious project dedicated to the world of books. What is it about books that speaks to you so strongly?**

They're like the best friends ever! Always there when you need them, always inspiring, always reassuring that some things never change in this crazy world. A classic will always be a classic; and each time you read it, you'll get it in a different way. I like the contact with paper, the fact someone picked a font for a reason, etc.

**Books aren't ever in or out of fashion, but it does seem as though we are in a wave of bibliophilia. Why do you think so?**

Absolutely! I am seeing books everywhere recently – and in association with some fashion brands. Again, I think the fact they remain the most authentic «accessory» can help to carry some messages for the brands who can show their support with something so timeless. Books give such value instantaneously!

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Similarly, people have always used books to project their tastes and interests. Now with social media, we see this in a more public-facing way (the new notion of 'bookshelf wealth' for instance). What are your thoughts?**

It can be strange to see people posting themselves reading on Instagram. But at the end of the day, what counts for me is that people actually read! The more books the better: on shelves, backstage or in the front-row of a show – just read!

**Tell us some ways that Mise en Page stands out beyond what people would ordinarily find at a bookstore or in other retail environments.**

Mise en Page is a tribute to the world of books, without books! We bring together iconic bookshops, merch, publishers, exclusive collabs, beauty, jewellery, and even chocolates related to literary worlds.

There will be Jean Julien's Paper People with an amazing story from the windows to his space on the second floor. And «Just an Idea Books & Friends» on the first floor for more surprises.

What differentiates a book that is purchased to read from one that is collected?  
«Both are inspiring! Books around you make you a better person.»

©Amelie Ambroise

**Why do you think more and more fashion brands are expanding into library spaces and bookstores? How does this contribute to the retail experience?**

I'm so happy for Babylone by YSL, Rare Books with Alaïa, Courrèges with Dizonord; it's just happening and that's for the best. Like I said earlier, the more books the better. I also invite you to visit Pascal Monfort's pop-up, Ephemera.



**Can you recommend a book or two for people once Paris Fashion Week® is over?**

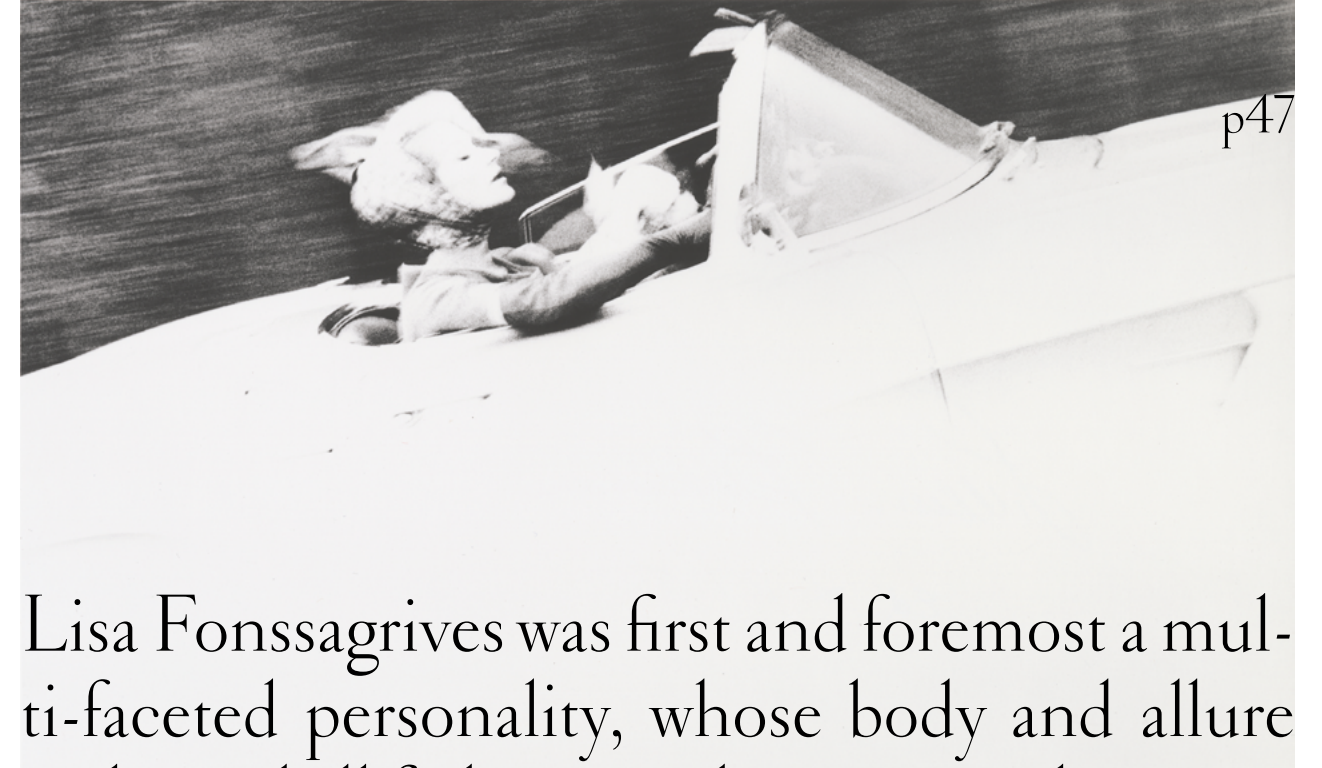
Obviously for all the PFW® lovers, the Stylenotcom Fashion in 2023 is a must; otherwise if you want to escape, cry and laugh, a classic like Everything On It by Shel Silverstein.



LISA  
FONSSAGRIVES  
- FASHION  
ICON  
AT  
LA  
MAISON  
EUROPEENNE  
DE  
LA  
PHOTOGRAPHIE

On the third floor of the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, her personality is magnified through an extraordinary collection of photos taken by the greatest photographers, Horst. P Horst, Irving Penn, Louise Dahl-Wolfe and Erwin Blumenfeld – all between 1935 and 1958. «My beloved mother» as Tom Penn, her only son, likes to say. He suggested this project to the Museum and donated some of the images.

©Lillian Bassman\_LFP



Lisa Fonssagrives was first and foremost a multi-faceted personality, whose body and allure embraced all fashions without ever submitting to them. In a swimsuit on the beach, or hidden behind a mask, in a neo-classical draped dress by Madame Grès or a surrealist ensemble by Elsa Schiaparelli, she is unique, inimitable. So what is there in common between the Lisa Fonssagrives dancing in a field photographed by André Steiner in 1936, and the divine woman with her hieratic face veiled in chiffon, so majestic in a Balenciaga «Cocoa dress» immortalised by Irving Penn? The answer undoubtedly lies in the meaning she gave to the body, which became her instrument, the source of an extraordinary expression, that of a true artist.

«My whole experience is linked to dance. I started out dancing, and I fully devoted myself to it. As a model, I considered my poses as frozen dance movements» she asserted. Born Lisa Anderson in 1911 in Uddelva, Sweden, she began her career by discovering museums and teaching art, before opening a dance school in Stockholm. In 1936, in Paris, she met Willy Maywald in a lift and posed for a series of hats published in Vogue. She became the first supermodel in history, posing for over 200 covers (Vogue, Harper's Bazaar) for 20 years. This is an extraordinary exhibition to see again and again, as the woman who married Irving Penn in 1947 is still held in cult status. In 1949, she was even featured on the cover of Time magazine. More than just a muse, she established herself as a figure of the 21st century, moving from the status of model to that of fashion designer, artist and, to complete her flight, pilot. She was known as Million Dollar Baby. A lover of life and beauty, her name will shine forever.



©Lisa Fonssagrives

Lisa Fonssagrives-Penn «Fashion Icon» from 28 February to 26 May.  
<https://www.mep-fr.org>

SATOSHI  
KONDO  
- ISSEY  
MIYAKE

From Touareg blues to polar whites, Satoshi Kondo explores the entire palette of humanity in this collection, where earth and sky, water and desert overlap, as in the layering and curling that stretch and enhance the silhouette reflecting infinity. Unshackled, the body ebbs and flows with pleats and flaps, liquid mesh and controlled shifts, from toga to trench coat, from antiquity to science fiction. Bengal roses emerge among tachist prints; geometric volumes open up to undulation; line recomposes itself in the movement that restores a timeless dignity to every presence. Sovereign Issey Miyake.

«It is not created afresh or from out of the blue.

It has existed since ancient times,

Within the act of clothing the human body,  
In the motion of a piece of cloth.

It is found within reach, and also somewhere far beyond, In the past, in this very moment, as well as in the future.

Unbound by time and space and across history and cultures, Exists a sense of beauty and strength (and of joy and hope).

There, we explore, feel, and grasp,

What has always been, nothing more and nothing less.»

Satochi Kondo

# NIKITA VLASSENKO - FIGURE OF STYLE

Shaved and tattooed head, smoked glasses, draped in black from head to toe, and a grin. Nikita Vlassenko, an independent stylist, cultivates his own uniform and those of others, and advocates fashion as a tool for smashing the norms of representation.



©Tsuvasa Saikusa

A stylist composes and implements a creative vision. It is a shadowy profession, which suits Nikita Vlassenko just fine, dressed all in black, yet never blending in with the crowd. Born in Ukraine, Nikita grew up in Germany before settling in Paris at the age of 18. «I knew I had to come to Paris» enthuses this fashion fanatic since his early childhood. He took the Beaux-Arts and ESSEC Business School entrance exams at the same time, reflecting the high degree of unclassifiability of this creative mind. «I chose ESSEC. I needed a framework. I learned how to present myself and sell a project.» At BETC, VTMNTS then Ritual Projects, Nikita explored the various professions in the sector: «I learnt a lot about what I liked and what I didn't want to do.» He then joined the Institut Français de la Mode while working at Antidote Magazine. «That's when I realised that I wanted to become a stylist.»

## «We have to learn how to trust what we don't know.»

The path opened up. He even co-founded a concept store, «L'Insane.» Wandering between pieces signed by Mugler, Helmut Lang and Palomo Spain, little strokes began to spark. In November 2021, the turning point arrived: Nikita went freelance. «I'd already met a lot of people and had a lot of support» he admits. His first steps on his own were outstanding: «In three months, I styled an editorial for Têtu Magazine that caused quite a stir with two men in Miu Miu sets; I dressed Léna Situations for the Met Gala; and I started my first project with Bilal Hassani.»

When Nikita and Bilal met at the beginning of 2022, the stylist knew straight away what he wanted to build: «He's a polarising figure in France with a whole fashion universe to create.» The singer, who represented France at Eurovision in May 2019, was then dusting off the standards of representation in the French media sphere but had not yet acquired the status of fashion icon that he now holds. To introduce «the new Bilal, the fashion character» it was therefore essential to start with a blank canvas – a raw linen canvas to be precise. The reference for Nikita was obvious: Martin Margiela's Spring-Summer 1997 collection.

This interview has been lightly edited.

In May 2022, Bilal Hassani appeared at the Cannes Film Festival in a hollowed-out Stockman mannequin bust. A Couture support, where imaginations can summon up the infinity of textile creation, like an echo of the intelligence of the hand, of ancestral know-how and its transmission. In short, the history of Couture packed into one piece – and one that was particularly difficult for a stylist to unearth. But Nikita was determined: «I knew I absolutely had to have this piece.»

From then on, the stylist handpicked pieces from both prestigious and emerging fashion Houses, constantly reinventing Bilal Hassani's fashion universe. From Issey Miyake's first Pleats Please to Jean Paul Gaultier, Alain Paul, Alaïa, Avelano, Comme des Garçons, Valentino Couture, Nikita shaped the singer's image with meticulously chosen, rare and powerful pieces. «Bilal Hassani is the most professional person I know. The only time he ever showed me a grudge was when I made him wear a bald cap with an Iris Van Herpen dress» he recalls with a smile. And the fashion moments flowed, «Looking at all the looks, I think I worked without realising it.» This is the very essence of a vocation, when work becomes playful, exploratory, and instinctive. In October 2023, Bilal Hassani joined the Hyères Festival fashion jury, chaired this year by Charles de Vilmorin. Nikita prepared 18 outfits for three days. Chanel, Julien Dossena, Romain Kremer, Marine Serre, Sébastien Meunier... Nikita and Bilal «pay tribute to those who have left their mark on this competition and its history.»

«A stylist's fashion culture has to be encyclopaedic.»

Fashion is much more than just layering clothes; it's a central pillar of our identity. It's a powerful way of self-expression, of presenting oneself to the world, and of asserting who one is. «If you want to fight something, you go all out, and it becomes a norm,» insists Nikita, referring to Mary Quant and her revolutionary miniskirt circa 1960. Together with Bilal, they create new fashion images that enrich our imaginations and push back the boundaries of representational norms. In his handbag, black of course, lies Dana Thomas's bestseller, a fashion bible of sorts, *Gods and Kings* (2015), dedicated to the titans Alexander McQueen and John Galliano. «I've already read it several times, but it's incredible. A stylist's fashion culture has to be encyclopaedic. I need to have the looks running through my head to work.»

Nikita also works with singer-songwriter Eddy de Pretto, with a different approach. «Eddy expresses himself through his songs.» The fashion work must therefore «effectively combine his own identity with his universe. With Bilal, it's about creating a universe» he suggests. Instead of fitting artists into a system of trends, it's a matter of thinking about their characters in the long term: «I avoid following everything that's going on too much, otherwise you get lost in it. What interests me is the virality of certain pieces.»

«I know how to step aside at the right moment.»

One summer, at the age of 13, Nikita met Karl Lagerfeld in Saint Tropez, where he was on holiday with his family. «We spoke a few words, a few minutes, and it changed my life.» At this age, it's quite difficult to be accepted by your peers when you're a bit different; the sometimes bumpy school paths of young, effervescent creatives. But when the Kaiser grants you his time, if he gives you value, then there's no longer the slightest reason to let hatred win. Nikita is humbly inspired by this idea of a uniform and has built himself an instantly recognisable visual identity. «It's all calculated», he says as he raises his smoked glasses, covered in black from head to toe. Today, the fans of those he dresses recognise him, but Nikita points out: «I know how to step aside at the right moment. I don't want to be visible, just to be recognised. I just want my work to be acknowledged by people I respect.»

This interview has been lightly edited.

Whether at fashion shows and presentations, at events alongside Paris Fashion Week, or at the Villa Noailles, Nikita Vlassenko is always surrounded by his close friends. As if those who share the same passion always end up reuniting and re-forming a group of friends in the playground - that of fashion from now on.



©Mélanie Rey

## THE MYSTICAL GENIUS OF NOIR KEI NINOMIYA

The mystical genius of Noir Kei Ninomiya transports us to universes seldom explored. Never one to be bound by the confines of a specific inspiration to spell the mood of the season, the Japanese designer started with the loose concept of 'Iridescence' for Fall-Winter 2024. Through an ongoing exploration of silhouette, colour, and texture, the Japanese designer zeroed in on the reflection of light to push the needle forward in his collection.

Shimmering blossoms were carefully constructed to resemble a polychromatic sheath of armour; iridescent flowers encase models' frames; and gem-like cubes are draped over a quilted olive green coat like a harness.

While technically marvellous and mature with plenty of protective layers, there is nonetheless a lighthearted whimsy to his work. It's best seen in the childlike wonder that he applies to his playful use of colour. A swirl of wires bounces with every strut. Synthetic fur jackets are stiffened with resin. A bolero thick with black blooms is overlaid against an ultra-feminine skirt bursting with layers of pink tulle and satin. All of this is juxtaposed against a rebellious streak: plaid coats and jackets styled with shrunken waistcoats as well as leather ties. Meanwhile, a green velvet jacket inset with a tulle bustle suggests something grander. Ditto the painstaking macramé construction punctuated throughout the collection that attests to the excellent craftsmanship.

Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24?



©Mélanie Rey

«I wish for people to be able to wear what makes them happy.»

**Do you seek inspiration from the physical world or do you feel more connected to philosophical concepts?**

My inspiration doesn't come specifically from the physical world, nor from philosophical concepts. It comes from my will to create something new, that people have never experienced before. In order to achieve this, I try to create using different techniques other than the traditional sewing techniques. These new techniques give shape to my creations.

**What colours, fabrics, and silhouettes are you exploring?**

This season is very colourful. You will find some khaki, white, yellow, orange, and many other colours in addition to black, which remains the DNA of the brand. We worked with different textures and techniques such as macrame, tulle, iridescent materials, fake fur and resin.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**Hair, makeup, and accessories are always crucial to your shows. Can you explain the direction this season?**

The hair was made by Ryoji Imaizumi and the accessories by the ceramic artist, Takuro Kuwata. The makeup is by Kakuyasu Uchiide. I gave them some key words regarding my direction, and they created from there. It is the result of the collaboration between these three creative artists.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

Recently, we're seeing more and more diversity; some limits that existed in creation and in what people can wear are disappearing, and I think that this is very positive.



SHIATZY  
CHEN  
FALL-WINTER  
2024/2025:  
A  
FUSION  
OF  
EASTERN  
HERITAGE  
AND  
WESTERN  
INFLUENCES

«Chinese culture is the essential DNA of the brand» explains Wang Chen Tsai-Hsia, also known as Madame Wang. In 1978, the designer founded Shiatzy Chen in Taipei and has been driving the house to ever-increasing success ever since.

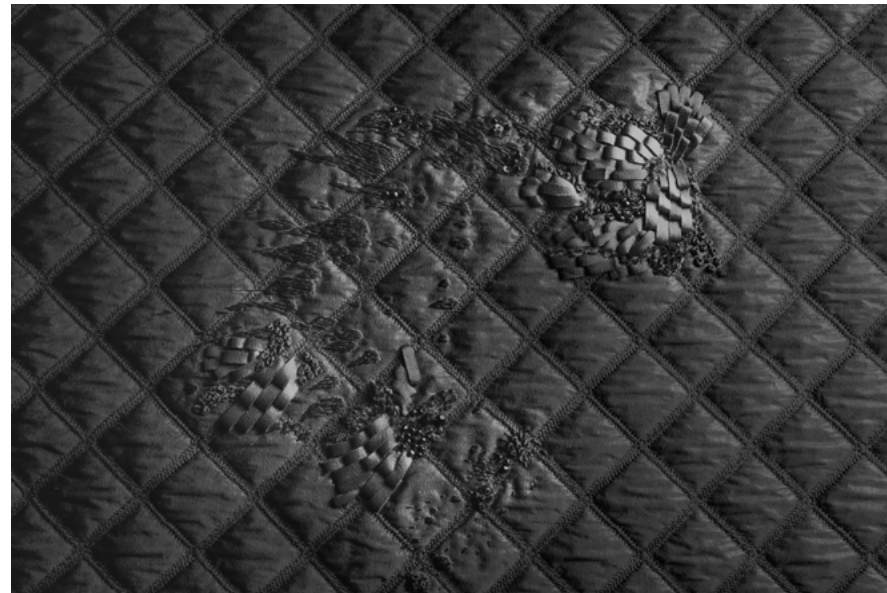
A pioneer in blending traditional Chinese craftsmanship and design with Western influences, Shiatzy Chen's deeply rooted heritage runs through every aspect of the brand's Fall-Winter 2024 collection.

As Madame Wang tells it, «The theme of the new collection is 'Scene of Ink'. We wanted to recreate the ink flowing, spreading on the Xuan paper» elaborating on motifs such as ink stamps, highlighting the in-depth study of «ink phenomena.» In Traditional Chinese culture, there's the notion of 'The four treasures of the study,' comprising brush, paper, ink and ink stone. «Those elements have become the four treasures because of their ability to integrate Chinese painting, calligraphy, artistic sculpture and cultural decoration.» she explains.

Shiatzy Chen has earned worldwide recognition for its exceptional expertise in embroidery and weaving techniques. To recreate «the spreading of ink on paper» the creative team used different patterns, metallic jacquard and a layering process to recreate «the energy of ink» and its movements. The collection is also inspired by the artistic and cultural heritage of the Song dynasty, renowned for its advanced art, culture, and technology. The brand integrates its silhouettes and cutting techniques into its creations, creating a fusion of Eastern elegance and Western sophistication. That's why this collection «is also inspired by the Western-style costume of the 1960s» she says.

«It's the consistency that is passed down to different generations.»

Madame Wang emphasises the brand's commitment to creating long-lasting designs that transcend fleeting trends, insisting on the importance of spirit and consistency in each season's creations. «We hope our classics can reach the younger generations» she adds when discussing how these elements contribute to the distinctiveness of Shiatzy Chen's collections. Shiatzy Chen's mission is epitomised by the term «neo-Chinese chic» which Madame Wang describes as the brand's commitment to honouring tradition with a contemporary edge. She reflects on how «consistency has been passed down through different generations» noting the brand's ongoing efforts to create designs that honour its Asian heritage. At Shiatzy Chen, style maintains substance over time, undiminished.



«Debuting menswear at Paris Fashion Week<sup>®</sup> marked a new chapter.»

While the company added a menswear line in 1987, it only showcased the collection during Paris Fashion Week in March 2023, marking a new chapter in the brand's evolution. «After Covid, we thought it was time for a new departure. When discussing the adaptation of ancestral techniques and the fusion of Eastern and Western influences into menswear» Madame Wang says, «Menswear is more complementary than womenswear with Eastern codes. It has the same concept, the same spirit as in Eastern [dressing].» Shiatzy Chen collaborated with Brazilian artist Daniela Busarello for the Spring-Summer 2024 show and is open to future collaborations that celebrate Chinese culture and creativity. «The last collaboration left a great impression, and it seems like there was a common language between the artist and Shiatzy Chen.»

Shiatzy Chen debuted at Paris Fashion Week in October 2008, a significant milestone in the brand's global presence and recognition. By November 2009, the company became a member of the Fédération (known at that time as the Chambre syndicale du prêt-à-porter des couturiers et des créateurs de mode), which solidified its position within the fashion industry. This new collection is a testament to the brand's ongoing commitment to honouring traditional Chinese craftsmanship, while embracing the spirit of innovation and creativity.

THE  
ROW'S  
PROTECTIVE  
- ARTISANAL  
VERVE

After days of cold rain and sheet-metal clouds—the kind that hang low yet light over Paris, like a veil—the sun broke through. At this hour, about noon, the fashion crowd was standing in the courtyard of 19 rue des Capucines, where The Row, the label run by Ashley and Mary Kate Olsen, has its French headquarters. They were waiting to see the twins' latest collection (Winter 2024), and they were chatting about an email that had been sent out from the label's PR earlier: there were to be no phones and no content creating (more on this shortly). The palest warmth filled the square as the flock shuffled inward, boding well for what was to come.

A great collection, though, is standard for the Olsens. Their course of excellently made, understated-chic and sometimes craft-forward wardrobing is highly consistent (and, in turn, consistently acclaimed).

Yet stood out in Winter 2024 – making it an especially great lineup – was something of a gently protective, artisanal verve. See, for example, a huge coat in white shag, belted with a knot and accented with tassels dipped in red ink. Or an oversized, ultra-round-shouldered almost A-line khaki jacket-dress. Or a lush bronze-hued ensemble of what looked to be fine cashmere, as if the model had fallen into a perfectly cut blanket. This element of super-sized swaddling departed from their Fall 2024 offering, in which silhouettes skewed tighter.



© Jamie Hawkesworth

There's been a lot of media attention around The Row's phone ban (I did see some attendees sneaking finale videos, but most followed the request). News outlets have called it the ultimate «quiet luxury» flex – I don't know if the Olsens would agree. They have long been known for guarding their privacy and for their understated aesthetics – in fact, they kind of paved the way for it in modern American fashion. When you think of discreet and chic in the U.S., you think of The Row. Keeping the phones down was another way to emphasize this – and perhaps it was prescient, too, as so many talk about social media fatigue. It made for a heightened viewing experience, and the wait for the lookbook images, released days after the show, all the sweeter.

# COMME DES GARÇONS FALL-WINTER 2024/2025



She could be a Herero queen whose Victorian attire bespeaks the outbursts of an enraged tribe. Or perhaps the African goddaughter of a Marie Antoinette or a Countess de Castiglione stranded amidst a stormy ocean. The skirts are rising waves, these black torrents pouring out on either side of the shoulders, giving the silhouettes that advance, retreat, stamp their feet, the monumental air of swelling anger. Their names are Yuliya, Athiens, Charlotte, and in front of an audience of stunned guests, caught up in these apparitions, they stand out in the half-light like divinities whose movement is amplified by jagged spirals and black polyester craters.

You don't know where these dresses begin and end, they're almost sonorous finery, and what springs forth through them is the stroke of the chisel, the one that transforms these Age of Enlightenment baskets into survivalist ready-makes and gives these neo-punk meninas the trappings of a high-voltage couture apocalypse.

Here and there, hundreds of upturned cones and balloons seem to deflate and inflate as they walk, giving them an unreal presence yet so materially anchored in a history whose secrets the Comme des Garçons designer has mastered. Impressive. A story of volumes, deconstruction, of surpassing oneself in matter. The hair eccentricities of the 18th century are enhanced by Takeo Arai's black and fiery red wigs. Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata resonates with the torments of passion. When the music stops, everything falls silent; backstage; everything is almost wrapped up; everything disappears. You think you've been dreaming with your eyes open. And Rei Kawakubo's message appears on a screen, like a rebus: «This collection is about my present state of mind. I have anger against everything in the world, especially against myself.»

CHANEL  
FALL-WINTER  
2024/25  
READY-TO-WEAR  
COLLECTION



«Deauville is where everything started for the House. 1912, the creation of her hat shop and then very quickly the first clothes with their visionary, radical style. It's where it all began for Gabrielle Chanel. This story is very close to my heart» confides Virginie Viard. On the racecourse, on the seaside, at the gaming table, in restaurants and palaces, on the «Planches» boardwalk: everything is about elegance and self-staging.

«For this collection, we recreated the Deauville boardwalk, she adds. Giant screens on which long, romantic silhouettes stroll in the light from dawn to dusk.» Shrouded in mystery, the models walk along the beach. The 1920s and 70s cross paths and intertwine.

Androgynous and cinematic, the CHANEL Fall-Winter 2024/25 Ready-to-Wear collection imagined by Virginie Viard draws its femininity from Gabrielle Chanel's own wardrobe and its masculinity from the subtle elegance of winter sojourns by the sea. Broad-shouldered pea-coats and long dressing-gown-style belted coats are worn over tweed suits – box-pleated skirts, culottes or cropped trousers –, drop-front trousers or trousers with tabs at the back.

Chunky sailor sweaters and knits featuring the landscapes of Deauville alternate with silk blouses with middy collars, herringbone prints, low-cut tops with flounces, jumpsuits and negligees whose delicacy evokes gentle waves breaking and a soft wind blowing.

«It's a very warm collection, with layers of materials, colours and volumes. It pays tribute to Deauville, the legendary place where Gabrielle Chanel's destiny changed forever.»

The palette takes its vibrant or pastel shades of pink, mauve, orange and pale blue from the ever changing colours of the Deauville sky, along with brown and gold lamé. 35mm film and cinema tickets: prints refer to the town's connection with the 7th art, its American Film Festival and Claude Lelouch's *A Man and a Woman*, to which Inez and Vinoodh's film opening the runway show pays tribute.

«The silhouette of David Bowie, the magnetism of film stars walking on the sand, like Anouk Aimée, a great friend of Gabrielle Chanel... this collection pays homage to these familiar figures.»



The iconic bags are omnipresent, as are the pastel-hued wide-brimmed hats, colourful silk scarves, heeled knee-high boots and thigh-high boots in sheepskin, a direct nod to Anouk Aimée's coat in *A Man and a Woman*.

# BASIC COLOUR INSTINCT WITH ZOMER

Relying on instinct over inspiration, designer Daniel Aitouganov and stylist Imruh Asha underscored Zomer's values and beliefs at the brand's official debut show in Paris. For Fall-Winter 2024, the duo started with the radical slashes of Lucio Fontana, the Argentinian artist famed for his Spatialist paintings and languid sculptures. From there, without being beholden to the inspiration, the studio embarked on their own artistic odyssey with painting sessions. The prints were scanned and superimposed on fabrics. The impactful works of Fontana fed into a rich textile story which saw wool, leather (a sponsorship from ECCO Leather), and silk accentuate depth of field within each look.

The contrast between Aitouganov's love for drapery and Asha's sculptural touch manifests itself in silhouettes. The former plays with volume and proportion while the latter's touches can be seen in slits in dresses and the expert styling. Embedded in the world of high fashion, the two bring a sophisticated touch to an otherwise theatrical and playful oeuvre. Every look bursts with colour and texture, an honest and pointed refusal of the quiet luxury trend. What's more exciting than that? «This is a continuation from our first season. We looked at what worked and felt closest to our shared DNA. It's a mix of all these elements» said Asha, sharing the call with Aitouganov.

By Paul McLauchlan



### **What was the initial starting point for this collection?**

Daniel Aitouganov: Our starting point this season was the artist [Lucio Fontana]. We like to have references to art in our collections and Fontana is very dear to us so we dove into his work.

Imruh Asha: [His work] plays into the overarching move in the collection. It kind of reflects the time that we live in poetically. We don't want to portray any negative emotions but it's like a little cut in the world. However, we've done it in a very positive way in the show. We also work with more instinctive shapes; it's not always a straight reference through other eyes.

### **What has been a takeaway from your debut collection last season?**

DA: We had quite some time with the first collection because we were laying the foundations for the brand and everything ran quite smoothly. Of course, this season, you have to deal with production, which takes a big chunk of your time, meaning you have less time for the collection. We're learning even more this season so we'll take those learnings into the third season.

IA: Both of us have been working in the industry for quite some time and developed a certain skill set. The first season was way smoother than we expected. We had a network, we had people who wanted to collaborate with us; we understood the logistics of hosting a show. We stepped into things on a higher level than if we had started when we first met eight years ago.

### **What excites you about fashion today?**

DA: Everyone is talking about the Margiela moment and how [John Galliano] is bringing back the theatrical spectacle of the 1990s. It's a nice example of something exciting. [It's a similar idea] to why we wanted to start the brand because we felt something was missing in fashion. We wanted to bring a certain playfulness and sense of humour into our visuals.

IA: I love being surprised by a fashion show. It happens at every show and the surprise for me is being able to see new things as soon as the model walks out. It's the newest thing that you can see every hour. I like to see new things, innovation, the modernity of brands, and certain brands pushing their designs.

### **What's something you're optimistic about in the industry?**

IA: When I go to shows, I want to see artistic expression, and a lot of brands are placing the clothing that you will see in the shop on the models. We love to dream more about a narrative or the story of a brand rather than just looking at the clothing that is going to be in the shop. To us, it's an artistic expression. It's always optimistic. It's made to spark people's imaginations in a positive way. That's something I'm optimistic about.



**What's a fashion mantra you would like to suggest?**

DA: Wear more colour! People feel safe in black and beige and it's so mass market.

IA: I agree. In Western culture, people wear more black, navy, beige because of the environments they live in – cities like Paris, New York, London or Milan. When you travel to places like South America, Southeast Asia, or Africa, [you feel] the environment, nature, food, animals, and people adapt to their environment in the way that they dress. We should try to bring this global colour palette back.

# CECILIE BAHNSEN'S DARK EVOLUTION

Given the ethereal quality of Cecilie Bahnsen's oeuvre, leather might not be something you'd expect to see on her runways. For Fall-Winter 2024, the designer subverted our expectations with the introduction of the material, a tough counterpoint to the frothy creations that we have come to expect. There were examples of workwear, too, in chocolate brown shades. Chunky knits were sported over Victorian-inspired nightgowns. One might have anticipated that Bahnsen was preparing to switch gears: in recent seasons, she's worked with Japanese denim to ground those signature diaphanous dresses. That was here again. While the whimsy of her organza layers and jacquard jackets provide a visual treat, a realistic application makes her work all the more appetizing.

This interview has been lightly edited.



The designer explained that she wanted to explore «a darker side of romance.» She deployed the motif of the apple, which she connoted to desire, love, and strength. Of course, the biblical representation of the apple is associated with temptation and that undercurrent of darkness was pervasive in the opening passage of 13 all-black looks, many in high gloss leather. What ensued were myriad takes on nightgowns. It was, she said, about «leaving the innocence behind a little.» The Danish designer also alluded to the ordinariness of the apple which explains the grounding elements of the collection including oversized jackets by way of a collaboration with Technical jackets and oversized coats in collaboration with Mackintosh are hand-embroidered with laser-cut flowers. Her footwear partnership with ASICS (trainers given the quintessential CB treatment) continued while newly-introduced footwear comes from Diemme.

Can you suggest a fashion mantra for '24? «Take your time, create with passion.»



**From your first season in Paris to where you are now, how would you describe your growth as a designer?**

With each passing season my confidence grows. Showing at Paris Fashion Week now feels natural, not just like a dream as it once did.

This interview has been lightly edited.

**What is one reason to be optimistic about the state of fashion going forward?**

Right now, fashion feels more collaborative than ever. We need to come together creatively and think outside of the box if we want to be more sustainable and create for the future.

**What excites you in fashion right now?**

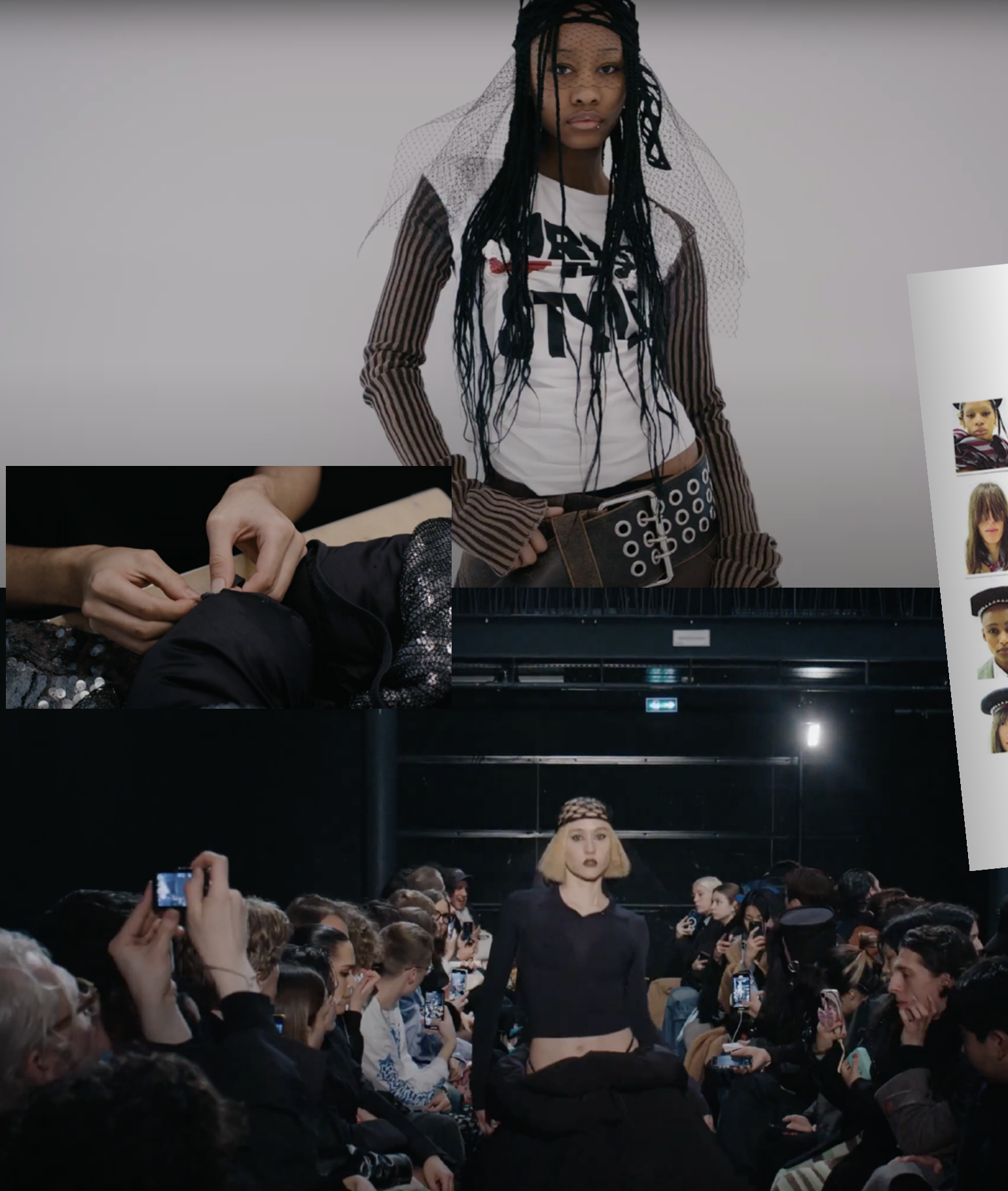
I'm very excited about female led brands.

# *A CONVERSATION WITH*

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CONVERSATION*

In partnership with Bureau Future, Paris Fashion Week® shows the ins and outs through designer interviews.

BRYN  
TAUBENSEE  
AND  
PATRIC  
DICAPRIO  
(VAQUERA)



«We're always trying to kind of figure out how to define ourselves, i think it's pretty hard to define brand, but we were saying that we still feel like fashion and fanfiction is kind of the most relevant phrase to describe us.» An exclusive conversation with Bryn Taubensee and Patric DiCaprio, co-founders of Vaquera, for Paris Fashion Week®.

ESTER  
MANAS  
AND  
BALTHAZAR  
DELEPIERRE  
(ESTER MANAS)



«For the first time, we can propose a complete vision of Ester Manas, not the DNA, not the image but the complete vestiaire.» An exclusive conversation with Ester Manas and Balthazar Delepierre, co-founders of Ester Manas, for Paris Fashion Week®.

DURAN  
LANTINK  
(DURAN LANTINK)



«The whole idea of putting volume in and ping into towards the closing pieces is really coming from the sort of obsession again goign back to classics.» An exclusive conversation with Duran Lantink for Paris Fashion Week®.



DANIAL  
AITOUGANOV  
AND  
IMRUH ASHA  
(ZOMER)



«This season we sort of gathered a lot of work from Fontana and then we sort of collaged it together, created an overall mood to see what kind of colors does he use, what kind of textures. Then we started the research for our own fabrics and silhouettes.» An exclusive conversation with Danial Aitouganov & Imruh Asha for Paris Fashion Week®.



# OFFICIAL PARTNERS

