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FÉDÉRATION
DE LA HAUTE COUTURE
ET DE LA MODE

1. EDITO: PAGE 1

_ The Spirit of beauty by Laurence Benaïm

2. A FEEL FOR FASHION: PAGE 2-10

_ Catherine Baba
_ Daria Shapovalova & Natalia Modenova
_ Jordan Roth
_ Mike Obenson

3. FOCUS: PAGE 11-25

_ The Maturing of Charles De Vilmorin
_ West to Est, the Armani rose
_ Le défilé Haute Couture Automne-Hiver
2023/24 de Chanel
_ Thom Browne's Dream-Like Couture Premiere
_ Julie de Libran's Worldly Débutantes
_ Looking Back and Ahead with Sidaction

4. PARTNERS: PAGE 26-28

_ DS Automobiles X Metiers d'arts
_ « 1 better way », by Première Vision

5. A CONVERSATION WITH: PAGE 29-32

_ Charles de Vilmorin
_ Iris Van Herpen
_ Viktor & Rolf

6. MANIFESTO: PAGE 33-34

_ Considering the horizon of Haute Couture
by Laurence Benaïm



The spirit of Beauty

In Paris, the world could come to an end and seamstresses would still try to adjust a model by a few millimetres. This week, 32 haute couture shows are scheduled, with some of the most eagerly awaited including Julien Dossena, artistic director of Paco Rabanne, who has been invited by Jean Paul Gaultier to sign the winter 2023 style exercise, and Thom Browne, who launched his brand in New York in 2003 with five grey suits. “The idea of uniformity to me is interesting because I think it does show true individuality, and I think that it shows true confidence” says Charles de Vilmorin, who is showing his Haute Couture collection on the first day of the calendar.

What is individuality? This is undoubtedly the most burning question posed by haute couture, the ultimate luxury in the age of ChatGPT, XL “Wikipedia Editor” sweatshirts from Vêtements, or Kim Kardashian’s Skims bodysuit, which is a big hit on TikTok. Individuality is primarily about embracing the imaginary, enhancing it. “Movement sculpts the fabric. Fabric is linked to the breathing of a body. We build volumes that don’t have to weigh anything...” says Sofia Crociani of Aelis. When she talks about haute couture, it’s first and foremost to evoke this “unleashed geometry,” this alchemy that transforms discipline into freedom, the small stitch into a moment of grace. The Paris Opera’s flat tutus were thus recycled to create dresses. Her woven dandelions blossom on the theme of “Under the Ground.”

Then there’s Julie de Libran. “I’m delighted and proud to have this opportunity to be in Paris: I’m amazed by the passion and discipline of this profession, which still makes me dream,” she says. “I’m exploring new volumes and new materials, there’s a little ’80s feel to it, the glitter is always there, it’s a material that makes me smile. Haute couture means being able to build your dreams on a body, highlighting shapes and femininity that can’t be reduced to clichés.”

Iris Van Herpen, whose retrospective is scheduled for this Autumn at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, is undoubtedly living proof that the spirit of beauty has never been more essential. It is a form of resistance, of elevation. Her celestial-wave draperies, her way of combining art and science, 3D printing and fine craftsmanship, propel the profession into another dimension. What would haute couture be without such lessons in poetry, the kind that elevate it, freeing it from all forms of academicism and standardisation by the community of followers? Van Herpen expresses the swell and whirlwind of the clouds and the ocean in dresses, in much-needed dreams that propel us far beyond the digital and terrestrial mayhem. In the words of Ovid, “I endeavour to sing of the metamorphoses that have clothed bodies in new forms.”

Laurence Benaïm

Through *A Feel For Fashion*, Haute Couture Week 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.



Photo shot by François Goizé at the Devotion Gala, December 2022

There is an ineffable couture spirit to **Catherine Baba** – not just her singular style, which turns heads whether at parties or when spotted cycling through Paris. But also in how she remains a true original in a world of increasing sameness. Originally from Sydney, she has spent more than two decades in the fashion world. A creative director, stylist, and costumier she founded DEVOTION PARIS last year in order to develop creative collaborations for cancer research.

A celebration of life for life,” it is an ongoing initiative that is close to her art and will involve some forthcoming projects that reflect her deep connections and incomparable flair.

What creates an emotional response for you in fashion today?

More storytelling! Personal, global, inspirational, aspirational. Brilliant techniques, attention to detail & a heavenly global vision for future timelessness. Where all senses are seduced and sustainability is a reality and not an afterthought. Less copy and paste, social media, disposable sensationalism inferno!

What are you most curious to know about how designers work, how a collection comes together?

JADORE elevated research and a celebration of creativity, construction, thought process. New dynamics and aerodynamic execution with a concrete preservation footprint!

In what ways are you seeing progress in fashion mirroring progress in the wider world?

Fashion is lagging. More needs to be done with new technologies to sustain longevity in luxury and mainstream!

If you could change one aspect of how we experience fashion today, what would it be?

Consuming less. More quality than quantity!

What stands out as the most potentially disruptive influence on fashion in the near future?

Obviously AI. Especially in fast fashion. Ideally, producing less & more conscientiously. Educating consumers and elevating awareness!



Their visionary and pioneering mindset has led entrepreneurs **Daria Shapovalova** and **Natalia Modenova** to become a guiding light in the realm of digital fashion, still unfamiliar to many. Their successful DRESSX project is not just a «Metacloset» of digital-only clothes, NFT fashion items and AR looks; it is the world's largest digital fashion store targeting Gen Z and Millennials who demand new shopping solutions. Already, the two founders have been recognised with various awards from both the fashion industry and tech world.

In what ways are you seeing progress in fashion mirroring progress in the wider world?

Daria Shapovalova: Fashion and the wider world have always been intertwined, with fashion reflecting progress and embracing positive changes in the society. Technological advancements have brought a wave of innovation to the fashion industry. With augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and digitalisation, we're witnessing new possibilities – developing clothing production, enriching shopping experiences, and fueling creative exploration. Recently, sustainability and ethics have taken centre stage in fashion. People are becoming more aware of the environmental impact of their choices, and fashion is stepping up to the challenge.

From eco-friendly materials to fair labour practices and transparent supply chains, the industry is aligning with societal concerns, embracing a greener and more ethical future. Inclusivity and diversity are also gaining momentum. Fashion is celebrating the uniqueness of individuals and embracing diverse cultures, body types, and identities. There is a growing demand for fashion that caters to a wide range of consumer needs, which results in more inclusive sizing, adaptive clothing, digital fashion, and increased representation of underrepresented groups.

Natalia Modenova: The digital revolution has played a pivotal role in transforming the fashion landscape. E-commerce, social media, and influencer marketing have revolutionised how we discover, purchase, and engage with fashion. The transformation of traditional fashion into its Metaverse counterpart, which we call “metafashion,” happened and continues to happen very naturally, supporting the overall change in how we live and explore the world around us. Digital assets were in place in gaming for a while; but the game is actually changing and we already became “the avatars of ourselves” in the multiple social media channels, messaging and streaming services. The growth of people’s online presence and digital lives through social media and video calls created a demand for digitally native features, which naturally would also mean digital clothing. The pandemic has accelerated the growth of the digital fashion industry by highlighting the issues – of sustainability in fashion, overproduction, and overconsumption, as well as an increased online presence forced by the spread of covid and lockdowns.

Digital fashion was born as a solution for several main problems of the industry, with sustainability being at the very core of the concept. Ultimately, fashion has always been a powerful means of self-expression. It reflects and responds to societal shifts in attitudes, values, and cultural movements. Fashion trends are not just about clothing; they embody changing perceptions of beauty, challenge traditional gender roles, and encapsulate evolving social norms.

If you could change one aspect of how we experience fashion today, what would it be?

NM: Without a doubt, we would update the traditional industry processes with the recent technological advancements, to empower creativity and allow fashion to become more sustainable without losing its newness, excitement and fun. Imagine being able to play with digital outfits, mix and match styles effortlessly, and express yourself without relying on physical garments. By reducing our reliance on physical garments and embracing virtual outfits, we can significantly minimise waste, energy consumption, and pollution associated with traditional clothing production. Digital fashion allows us to create, experiment, and style without the need for physical production, transportation, or disposal of garments.

DS: We anticipate that, in the future, every fashion brand, regardless of their style or price point, will have a digital fashion line, just like how high-fashion luxury brands offer perfumes or accessories. Digital fashion offers a more accessible and eco-friendly way for customers to experience luxury fashion, while still providing a sense of exclusivity and excitement that comes with wearing designer pieces in a digital space. With digital fashion, we can create immersive virtual experiences and reduce the need for physical production and waste. Let’s reimagine fashion with creativity, fun, and a focus on the planet!



What stands out as the most potentially disruptive influence on fashion in the near future?

DS: In our opinion, in the future the most exciting and disruptive influence on fashion will come from the combination of innovation, digital revolution, augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI). Digital fashion is already changing the game by offering virtual clothes and accessories that can be worn and shared online. Now, with AR technology, customers are able to try on virtual outfits in real-time using their smartphone. We are basically bringing digital fashion into the physical world, transforming the way people experience fashion. Recently, AI has been making waves in fashion by personalising recommendations and fitting experiences. At DRESSX, we are integrating AI into our technology to enable digital fashion dressing to be performed as fast as possible, improving the digital fashion experience and taking it to a whole new level. This virtual fitting technology will not only enhance your shopping experience but also reduce the need for physical try-ons and returns, making fashion more convenient and sustainable.

NM: Although we believe that meta-fashion will shape the future of the fashion industry, we acknowledge that digital fashion cannot fully replace physical clothing in its current form. Physical clothing will still be necessary as long as physical life exists. However, at DRESSX, we aim to substitute a minimum of one percent of traditional physical clothing (150 billion pieces produced annually) with digital alternatives for instances when consumers purchase clothing for content creation or their online presence, such as video calls and online conferences.

This interview has been lightly edited.



On Monday morning, **Jordan Roth** was taking in the Schiaparelli show from the front row. By the afternoon, he was among the models in Thom Browne's first haute couture show, embodying a pigeon dressed in a fantastical ensemble of the designer's grey suiting. Roth bridges the worlds of theatre and fashion with incomparable aplomb. Based in New York, he is a seven-time Tony-Award winning producer who is recognised as a theatrical innovator, style influencer, and talented creator who exudes mild-mannered panache.

As President of Jujamcyn Theaters, he oversees five Broadway theatres, presenting some of the most influential and successful shows on Broadway including the recent revival of *Into the Woods*, as well as the Tony Award-winning *Hadestown*, *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*, *Springsteen on Broadway*, *Kinky Boots* and *The Book of Mormon*. And he brings a theatricality to his love of fashion as a model, muse and connoisseur. His red carpet appearances – particularly when attending the Met Gala in Haute Couture – are among the most intrepid yet always well-considered. He is a regular on best-dressed lists from *Vogue*, *V*, *WWD*, *GQ*, and more. Roth is also committed to supporting and uplifting the LB-TGQ community and was recognised, along with his husband, Richie Jackson, with a Trevor Project Hero Award in 2016.

What are you most curious to know about how a haute couture collection comes together, the creation process?

I'm always so fascinated by the layers and legacy of craftsmanship that go into these pieces of art. And I especially love when a material is impossibly made to look like another. When I first tried on the White Pigeon at the fitting for the Thom Browne show, I was so taken by the feathers that were so sensitively placed throughout, as though they had fallen there, not grown there. It tells such a powerful story so subtly. And their extraordinary detail that made them even more life-like than feathers – almost hyper-realistic because they were not actually feathers – so the artists who made them had to investigate deeply what a feather is. Just sewing a feather on the sleeve would not have required that kind of intimate exploration. Multiply that by every element on a couture piece and it's beyond fascinating to understand and learn about and celebrate.

What creates an emotional response for you in fashion today?

Clothes speak very loudly to my body and to my heart. Both their physical form and sensation as well as the ideas and meaning they carry. They tell me how to move in them by accessing and activating different parts of me. So when a designer creates a piece that has these layers I can connect to, it provokes an immediate emotional and physical response in me.

In what ways are you seeing progress in fashion mirroring progress in the wider world?

All the ways in which fashion has and can continue to being a mode of self-expression for all of us. Rather than telling us who we are and who we can be, [fashion is] giving us the tools to discover and express this for ourselves –especially around gender. Clothes are not inherently gendered, and the more fashion can reinforce that, the freer we will all be.

Haute Couture is rooted in craftsmanship; how do you see it also nudging fashion forward?

At its best, Haute Couture is the purest form of the art. The canvas on which these extraordinary artists can dream and create unencumbered, to show us everything that can be possible [through] materials, forms, ideas. And this can inspire so much more – both for their own work and the work of others.

If you could change one aspect of how we experience fashion today, what would it be?

I would love us all to get to savour fashion more; to have the time it takes to see the work; to understand it; to be in dialogue with it. That's hard to do as we scroll by. As Georgia O'Keefe said, "To see takes time, like to have a friend takes time."

This interview has been lightly edited.



In 2020, Mike Obenson took over the respected biannual System Magazine as the new owner and Chief Publications Officer. Since then, the accomplished media entrepreneur has played a pivotal role in transforming System Magazine into an even more influential media brand. Today, all of System's publications are interconnected and cater to an audience consisting not of mass consumers but of industry professionals and fashion enthusiasts.

With 10 years of experience in business development and image, Obenson's prior roles include collaborations with renowned architectural designer Ora Ito and the luxury brand La Reserve Hotels International Group. Recently, in 2023, System launched a third publication, System dot-com, a serious and passionate digital platform that primarily promotes insightful fashion documentaries through captivating videos.

What are you most curious to know about how designers work, how a collection comes together?

I am fascinated by the diverse approaches that designers take in bringing a collection to life. Each designer has their unique process, and I enjoy exploring the innovative methods that transform an initial inspiration or reference into a cohesive and compelling collection. Understanding these various perspectives not only deepens my appreciation for the artistry behind their creations, but also enables me to gain insights into the meticulous craft.

In what ways are you seeing progress in fashion mirroring progress in the wider world?

While significant progress might not be apparent in mirroring wider world advancements, the realm of fashion thrives on limitless creativity. Although commercial considerations often influence decisions, the essence of fashion lies in allowing creativity to take the lead. This openness to innovation is crucial and can reflect progress within the fashion industry.

What creates an emotional response for you in fashion today?

Having access to fashion archives and witnessing the revival of past designs always evokes a strong emotional response. The opportunity to bring back iconic pieces created by revered figures from the past is truly inspiring. Drawing inspiration from history holds great significance for me, as it allows me to connect with the rich heritage of fashion and appreciate the craftsmanship and artistry of bygone eras.

If you could change one aspect of how we experience fashion today, what would it be?

I believe that fostering a more conscious and mindful approach to fashion would greatly enhance our overall experience. In our consumer-driven society, the relentless pursuit of trends and constant accumulation often overshadows the true essence of fashion. Instead, I would advocate for prioritising quality over quantity, investing in timeless pieces, and valuing the craftsmanship and stories behind our garments. By shifting our focus from fast fashion to a more sustainable and mindful fashion culture, we can cultivate a deeper appreciation for the artistry and creativity that the industry has to offer.

What stands out as the most potentially disruptive influence on fashion in the near future?

The democratisation of fashion poses a potentially disruptive influence. The traditional exclusivity and elitism associated with the industry are being challenged. The barrier to entry is diminishing, and anyone with sales potential can now become a creative director. It will be intriguing to see the boundaries pushed by this departure from the industry's originally exclusive nature.

This interview has been lightly edited.

The creative process, the development of a collection. Focus gives a voice to the designers of Haute Couture Week.



THE MATURING OF CHARLES DE VILMORIN

Charles de Vilmorin found himself at a pivotal moment in his career. He had exited Rochas following a two-year stint as creative director. With his namesake label back on the Haute Couture calendar after a yearlong hiatus, the 26-year-old designer has reasserted himself with a declaration of maturity. For his first runway show, he has channeled his time at Rochas, where he learned about tailoring, fabrication, and production, into his most tightly edited collection to date.

The newfound sophistication is apparent from the opening looks: a passage of all-white to serve as a palette cleanser or, as de Vilmorin put it, “the blank page” that one is presented at the beginning of the creative process. Of course, his predilection for colour and volume has not slipped into the ether, even as he matures as a designer. His eye for colour, his signature painterly brushstrokes, and outsize proportions defined the middle portion of the collection. He tied this new tale of creation together with a procession of all-black looks that revealed his improving tailoring prowess.

“When you think of me, you can imagine big dresses and painted colours, but I wanted to show something very precise,” said de Vilmorin from his Paris apartment.



Can you tell us about the collection?

The collection is about the pressure of creation. It opens with some white looks like the blank pages at the start of creation when you're unsure about what direction you will head in. They're followed by some very colourful, voluminous looks—something a bit more crazy. The finale is full black, it's very couture!

What part of the creation process excites you most?

The freedom to create without limits in couture.

How has your process changed over the years?

This is a more mature collection from me. Of course, I need to show the more extravagant looks in the middle of the show but I wanted to show that I can do real clothes with perfect techniques. [The last two years at Rochas] helped me a lot in this collection because I know how to ask myself the right questions to understand the most important points and details that I need to put on different looks and to create the flow of the collection.

When developing the collection, how much are you thinking about its commerciality?

Not at all because it's couture. I wanted to show real clothes but it's not a commercial collection.

Paul McLauchlan

This interview has been lightly edited.

WEST
TO
EAST,
THE
ARMANI
ROSE



Giorgio Armani

« A journey from West to East through elongated silhouettes and an affinity for evocative and seductive decoration. The collection reinterprets the most iconic of all flowers, the rose, without any sense of artificiality. Three colours - red, black and gold - blend in endless combinations, in a vision at once ethereal and decisive.»

Giorgio Armani



LE
DÉFILÉ
HAUTE
COUTURE
AUTOMNE-HIVER
2023/24
DE
CHANEL

Faite de contrastes et d'équilibre, la collection Haute Couture Automne-Hiver 2023/24 imaginée par Virginie Viard brosse le portrait d'une parisienne sensible et audacieuse.

Ici, son charme singulier et souvent indéfinissable réside précisément dans son goût renversant les académismes et unissant ce que par commodité, l'on préfère séparer, classer, hiérarchiser.

« Jouer avec les oppositions et les contrastes, la nonchalance et l'élégance, c'est se tenir sur une ligne entre force et douceur, que, chez CHANEL, on appelle l'allure », précise-t-elle.

Ce que la parisienne porte, ce qu'elle lit ou pense, son attitude face à la vie, est inspecté, étudié de près. Aux quatre coins du monde, par opposition ou imitation, son modèle en nourrit d'autres. Traversée de cinéma, de littérature, de musique, son allure voyage collection après collection. Ici, l'assemblage des tweeds, mousselines de soie, organzas et dentelles incrustées, la composition des motifs floraux et graphiques, témoignent de l'effervescence d'un univers créatif riche et féminin. « Si nous sommes à Paris, ajoute-t-elle, nous sommes cette fois-ci dans Paris même, sur les quais. La rue et les pavés colorés appellent à la fois de la sophistication et de la simplicité. »

« Transmettre des émotions, réunir des éléments qui ne sont pas prévus pour être ensemble, faire à sa façon, rêver, tout simplement. »

Imaginer un défilé Haute Couture sur les berges de la Seine, avec Vanessa Paradis comme incarnation de l'allure parisienne, c'est cheminer à travers un monde d'images et d'émotions, de permanence et de beauté. Symbole de l'énergie créatrice qui parcourt la ville, le fleuve parisien, romantique et tumultueux, ouvert sur le monde, dessert en effet les hauts lieux de l'histoire de l'art. La corbeille de fruits, motif cher à l'art pictural, fait écho au panier d'osier fétiche de la parisienne des années 70, tandis que les fleurs délicates et les fruits sauvages, fraises des bois et mûres, jaillissent dans les broderies.

Longs pardessus d'inspiration masculine, blouses légères ceinturées sur des jupes en tweed doré à plis plats, débardeurs précieux, pantalons à rayures tennis et gilets d'homme, longue robe noire en mousseline d'une légèreté infinie, lunettes peintes et babyes bicolores : la collection joue avec les codes de CHANEL, la rigueur et l'asymétrie, les couleurs discrètes et les nuances éclatantes, l'assurance et la discrétion.



THOM BROWNE'S DREAM-LIKE COUTURE PREMIERE

With a runway show held at the Palais Garnier, American designer Thom Browne debuted his first haute couture collection under a barrage of the color grey (as is, notably, his preferred tone).

The quote-unquote 'audience' featured three-thousand cutout onlookers, possibly depicting the commuting everyman, dressed in grey. Browne's show notes would repeat the word "grey" multiple times, back to back, interspersed by his stylized use of ellipses. Attendees were asked to "wear their best grey." And, every single look in the collection featured the colour. You get the picture. Yet while grey is often associated with things-less-pleasing — grey days, grey areas — it becomes something galvanizing and twisted in Browne's fairytale-slash-nightmare-fueled mind.

The loose story for his couture outing was that there was a main character (played by model Alek Wek), seemingly forlorn, waiting in a train station. Her mood turns around upon seeing the personification of her fantasies walk in — the grimness of the scene brightened by the gaiety of the surreal. People as pigeons (one modeled by Jordan Roth), people wearing coats embroidered with lavish under-sea vignettes, people with headpieces that were either equine or snail-esque. Passersby wearing bell-shaped hats or bell-curved sleeves on their coats. A bride in super-skinny tailoring (there was excellent tailoring, throughout). All of it theatrical yet interpretable at will — you know how artists refer to blank canvases as starting points? Browne's canvas is a wall of grey smoke, through which beauties and beasts emerge, one after the other and each more extravagant than the next.



Browne famously doesn't over-narrate his work. His collections do tend to follow a storyline, but much of it is left up to the viewer to determine. And there's a distinct specialness in this — it makes said viewer feel a little bit more enthralled to see the blueprint of the anecdote but to then colour it (grey or otherwise) with his or her own imagination. It's cerebral entertainment, and Browne does it better than anyone. Bell-shaped hats off to him.

JULIE DE LIBRAN'S WORLDLY DÉBUTANTES



Julie de Libran's débutantes are not beginners. At her Fall-Winter 2023 haute couture show, in front of a selected audience of press, clients, and friends, daughters of the designer's friends coasted through the salubrious confines of her Paris home. 'Nepotism babies' they may be but de Libran wanted the next generation to impart her lightweight taffeta dresses and slick tuxedo jackets with a sense of their self-assurance and forthrightness in how they dress.

As they snaked around her verdant garden and into her well-appointed living quarters, the young women emerged in elegant evening wear and perfunctory daywear including poplin separates and a smattering of tailoring. De Libran took sartorial cues from the upcoming generation and their carefree and often restless approach to styling: a black and gold sequin dress with a scooped neckline reveals a bathing suit – a newly introduced category – enclosed with a jewel detail. Poplin shorts riff on men’s boxer shorts, affirming the dissolution of gender boundaries. Yoga leggings poke out underneath voluminous taffeta dresses. The collection is rounded out with some classic tailoring and sequined gowns, in de Libran’s signature navy, black and gold. Her desired impact is to show audiences how clothing, best observed as heirlooms, can transfer from generation to generation.

“Fashion is about understanding who women are today but also about pushing them to try different things and the kindness to let them explore who they are. [The women that I design for] are so busy but they love fashion so it’s very special for me to spend time with them,” said de Libran, the morning after her show.

How did you begin this collection?

The starting point is always about what’s going on in the world, what women are doing and how they’re dressing. It’s also about life which is what fashion is about. I work in a responsible way – we don’t like to have any waste – and I like to stay true to the savoir faire here in Paris and celebrate French craftsmanship. This collection has details of quiet luxury which is an interesting trend to me because it’s true to my values. I’m quite a discreet person and I don’t like my clothing to have logos; I prefer things that are quieter and more elegant.

The collection is shown on girls who have never walked before and some young models. I’m surrounded by these young girls who are getting their start in the world, mostly because I’m friends with their mothers. One of them is my niece who has just graduated from high school and is about to start university in Scotland. Two girls are daughters of an old friend from when I lived in California. It’s lovely to be around the new generation and listening to their inspirations and how they find ways to be included in fashion. For me, I wanted to show them Paris craftsmanship, the versatility of layering, and how clothing can be worn across generations, as well as passed down to younger generations.

How has your process evolved over the years?

I've been in the industry for many years and I've had the opportunity to be in many ateliers that are technical and disciplined. My brand turns four this month. We're a small, personal, family-owned business with a wonderful clientele who have followed me over the years and prompted me. Last year, we opened a boutique and atelier in St-Germain-des-Près which is by appointment. It allows me to interact with my clients, to understand what they like, and exchange ideas.

We've also been developing new categories like a yoga material that we used in pants under the dresses and bathing suits with a jewelled closure that we've styled with tuxedo jackets. We're continuing to expand our gloves made by Causse. With that, in particular, it's exciting to share that history of craft with the next generation.

When developing the collection, how much are you thinking about its commerciality?

I am attentive to commerciality. I was trained at the school of Prada for 10 years where we were making creative, beautiful clothes that were designed to be worn. [Commerciality] was a positive thing there. I don't think it becomes fashion until it's worn. I meet women all the time who work, who live active lives, and they need clothes that don't overwhelm them. They need something that brings them power, force, and makes them feel comfortable. More and more, women are sensitive to what they're buying; they want to know the provenance; they don't want waste. Commerciality, to me, means that they will come back happy and will want to build their wardrobe each season.



Where would you like to see change in fashion this season and beyond?

There is always so much change in fashion. The industry moves so quickly that we just have to adapt to it. I wanted to show the young girls in the show that it's not just about social media. It can be great but sometimes it can be a lot, especially for young women finding their way in the world. I wanted them to feel the craftsmanship of the clothing and see it as something that can last forever.

This interview has been lightly edited

LOOKING
BACK
AND
AHEAD
ABOUT
SIDACTION
WITH
FLORENCE
THUNE



Coinciding with the end of the Haute Couture calendar, Le Dîner de la Mode, the gala event jointly organised by the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode and Sidaction, takes place in July instead of the usual January. This year's edition is particularly special, as it marks the 20th anniversary of the fundraiser for the fight against AIDS. The dinner will gather the a fashion who's who along with Professor Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, President of Sidaction and winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize for Medicine; Line Renaud, Vice-President of Sidaction; Jean Paul Gaultier, Ambassador of Sidaction; and Bruno Pavlovsky, President of the French Federation of Haute Couture and Fashion. Three-starred Michelin chef, Yannick Alléno, conceived the menu while the visual identity has been conceived by über creatives Mathias Augustyniak et Michael Amzalag from M/M (Paris).

We had a conversation with Florence Thune, Executive Director at Sidaction, about the current state of the disease and future hopes, as well as her impressions regarding this 20th anniversary edition.

Since 2003, the Sidaction dinner allowed to raise more than 11 millions for the research which allowed to reach many goals, which are the next and most urgent?

I can say that the urgency is to try to end this epidemic. We are funding research projects but also committee-based organisations that are working in the field on prevention and taking care of people affected with HIV. Today the main challenge is to push people to get tested, because they are unintentionally the most contagious, as they are not aware of their positivity.

Wherever working, France or Africa for example, these organisations are the only ones that could reach the people who don't know about their HIV status and that are far or excluded from care or prevention, most of the times. It's a big effort as we know that today once you are diagnosed HIV positive, you can receive assisted treatments that keep you healthy for the rest of your life besides avoiding to transfer the virus. Moreover, on the research side, the priority is to find a once-in-a-lifetime treatment. The first step was everyday therapy, now you have injectable solutions every two months, but we are trying to find single solution. We don't think that HIV could be eradicated, but we could make lives better.

The situation is not like was in the '80s when HIV was discovered but remained unknown. But data suggests that, since 2021, the number of cases hasn't decreased. How is the situation at today?

We still don't have the statistics of 2022, which should be released by the end of July, but with the pandemic we didn't observe a decrease and even in the previous years the data were not good. United Nations was planning to have less than 500.000 infections in the world in 2020, but they were around 1.500.000 — three times more. It's true that we have made a lot of progress compared to the past, but we are aware that the last mile to succeed is the most difficult. There are many countries where people discover too late that they are HIV positive and this increases the mortality. But if you go testing and you find the disease at the very early stage and you could easily be saved and live a normal life. Many of the people that died of AIDS in France are the one that never tested and were diagnosed late. Comparing to the '80s, today's cures are way more effective and helpful, but it's also true that without testing even these could be useless.

Is some hopeful news regarding the research and some vaccines and/or cures for AIDS?

This virus is so complex that it's very difficult to find a vaccine; it's still a long way. People think that having found a successful Covid-19 vaccine in a such short time would let scientists to do the same for HIV, but they are completely different and it's not that simple. Of course there are many different trials around the world, but we are still far from finding one. I could say that we are a bit more optimistic to find a cure. At today if it is diagnosed in time, the quality of life is very good and we could reach the possibility to take one pill once in a lifetime. Also when you are being treated, you cannot spread the virus; so as more as people get diagnosed and undergo cures, the less spreading there will be.

How do you engage new generations as the feeling among them is that AIDS is kind a disease of the past even if this is not the case?

They are not engaged also because they don't see people with HIV anymore. So that's why it is very important to let AIDS be visible, to keep talking about it and show that the life of positive people will not end but can be normal. They also don't care; but this doesn't mean that HIV doesn't exist anymore. Also adults are careless. For example in France the most affected people are over 50 rather than under 25 years old. Maybe also because we are encouraging prevention and sensitisation in French schools because we realised that there was a lack of communication.

The good news is that when young people are well-informed they are good in engaging their communities, and this very important. We speak a lot with them as they are important actors in the prevention campaigns. But even if one of the objectives is to give as much as possible visibility to HIV and today's cures, there is still a lot of discrimination. They are not marginalised as it was in the '80s, but still they feel rejected from their environment or workplace. Coping this issue is another important challenge, it is also part of the misinformation. Also, when it comes to new generations, surveys suggest that 97% of young people believe that condoms are safe to prevent HIV, but when asked if they would have a sexual relationship with someone positive using a condom almost 20% of them refuse. This is contradictory as even if they know that it would be safe, the physical contact still worries them. It's a cultural thing, we need to fight also against this.

How can digital platforms help spread awareness about AIDS?

They are helpful to popularise correct messages as unfortunately you can read a lot of fake news that causes alarm and confusion. This really doesn't help us with generations who live constantly connected. Working with influencers and celebrities helps to properly inform, too. For us these means are useful as well to direct people to the correct source of information, to not be misled. But the best strategy is still to keep repeating these messages both online and in real life.

Let's talk about Le Dîner de la Mode, this is the 20th anniversary. What is the most remarkable moment from the past editions?

I can definitely say that the last one was incredible. After almost three years of pandemic, the feeling at the event was completely different. People felt more enthusiastic and joyful, and even if it was a charity dinner against one disease, the fashion world felt part of something bigger, the sense of community and hope were there. The performance of Drag Race France (imagined by Jean Paul Gaultier and hosted by Raphaël Cioffi and Daphné Bürki, ed.) boosted this mood. It was not anymore just the fight against AIDS but as well for inclusivity, respect and friendship.

What do you expect for this edition?

Last year was special, but this year will be even more engaging. People realise that we all must gather and walk this last and very difficult mile together.

This interview has been lightly edited.

P A R T N E R S

Every season the Fédération de la Haute Couture
et de la Mode highlights its partners.

DS
AUTOMOBILES
BUILDS
BRIDGES
BETWEEN
THE
FINEST
FRENCH
ARTISANS
AND
ITS
OWN
DESIGNS

DS Automobiles launched the DS x MÉTIERS D'ART call for creations in 2021, to further its ongoing support for arts and crafts and to highlight the value of craftsmanship. For its second edition, DS x MÉTIERS D'ART challenged artisans to explore the effects of light through materials, by applying their concept on the New DS 3 E-TENSE, a 100% electric model.

Working with leather and fabrics, stitching, unexpected materials such as feathers or straw marquetry, unique treatment of details and finishes using clous de Paris guilloché patterns... DS Automobiles has made a speciality of incorporating unprecedented expertise into its production models and concept-cars.



Dozens of projects were submitted for the second edition of DS x MÉTIERS D'ART. Nine projects were shortlisted and displayed during Révélation, the biennial showcase of creative arts and crafts at the Grand Palais Éphémère in Paris.

These artworks were designed by Michela Aragni and Ludivine Loursel, Morgane Baroghel Crucq, Noue Atelier Charlotte Winné and Ludovic Buron, Paulina Okurowska, Atelier Douarn Sandrine Ramona, Justine Durand, Line & Raphael, Lyse Drouaine Luxdawn_LD Création and Maison Pavane Anne Leroux.

The jury was composed of Hervé Lemoine, Chairman of the Mobilier national, Chairman of the DS x MÉTIERS D'ART 2 - DS LUMEN jury, Anne Lopez, Creator of artistic universes, winner of the first edition of DS x MÉTIERS D'ART, Cécile Feilchenfeldt, Textile designer specialising in knitwear and founder of Knitwearstudio Paris, Coperni, with co-founders Arnaud Vaillant & Sébastien Meyer, Julien Dumas, Michelin-starred chef at the Restaurant Bellefeuille in the Hôtel Saint James in Paris and DS Automobiles gastronomy ambassador, Béatrice Foucher, Managing Director of DS Automobiles, Thierry Metroz, DS Automobiles Style Director and Jean-Phillipe Vanhulle, Head of the DS Automobiles Upholstery Workshop, selected three finalists who were invited to showcase their creations on a New DS 3 E-TENSE model in three dimensions.

«A
BETTER
WAY»,
THE
SUSTAINABLE
PROGRAMME
FOR
MORE
TRANSPARENT
SOURCING
BY
PREMIÈRE
VISION

Faced with the major challenges of our time, the fashion industry is committed to reducing its environmental footprint thanks to manufacturing processes that integrate innovation, circularity, traceability, and sustainability. Season after season, the growing commitment of industry professionals enriches the eco-responsible offer of Première Vision exhibitors. A richness that today demands greater clarity and transparency.

To better understand this multi-faceted offer, Première Vision is launching 'a better way', a new sustainable programme based on 5 essential criteria. Social initiatives, impact of production sites, traceability, sustainability, products composition and end-of-life, this innovative system for analyzing the responsible initiatives of Première Vision exhibitors aims to facilitate the sourcing of visitors, starting with the next edition of Première Vision Paris.

To find out more about the 5 criteria of the 'a better way' programme, download the new Première Vision white paper, and meet the 290 exhibitors taking part in the programme at the forthcoming Première Vision Paris show, from July 4 to 6 at Paris Nord Villepinte.



a better way

The sustainable programme for more transparent sourcing

A CONVERSATION WITH

CLICK ON THE PAGE TO WATCH THE
CONVERSATION

In partnership with Kitten Production and Sheriff Projects, Haute Couture Week shows the ins and outs of Haute Couture Week through designer interviews.

WITH
CHARLES
DE
VILMORIN



« I wanted to talk about all these questions about creativity. For me, it's like you take a piece of fabric and you put it on the model. And this is the most beautiful gestures in creation »

WITH
IRIS
VAN
HERPEN



It really brings the couture craftsmanship



nature, on science and arts,
and I really believe that



Craftsmanship is such a beautiful process,

« There is a lot of challenges ahead of us but I try to focus on all of the projects and the people that are working on nature, on science and art. I really believe that those disciplines together are able to transform the world in a much more positive future. »

WITH
VIKTOR
HORSTING
&
ROLF
SNOEREN



« We always try to take something that exists, that people know and then turn it upside down or change it in a way that becomes new and fresh. »

Considering the horizon of Haute Couture



«Ethereal Symphony.» This is what Chat GPT replied when I asked it to design me a haute couture collection inspired by the juxtaposition of nature and music. The reply: «Ethereal Symphony embodies a harmonious blend of organic elements and musical motifs.»

The colour palette: «Soft pastels and vibrant jewel tones dominate the collection, with colours ranging from delicate rose quartz and pale lilac to deep emerald, sapphire blue, and amethyst.»

The silhouettes: «The collection showcases a variety of silhouettes, from voluminous ball gowns to sleek, structured designs. Each piece exhibits meticulous attention to detail and expert craftsmanship.»

I didn't have a clear idea of what the «Floral Symphony Dress» and this «Melody Jumpsuit» would look like, with the «celestial motifs» of the finale gown. I know that dreams don't come to life as you please. And that I'm fortunate enough not to have to design these dresses, but to appreciate what they convey – in all their depth and boundless diversity. To discover in Paris the essence of what makes the capital so unique. It's a place for all kinds of wonder, for all kinds of extremes. This week was a living illustration. What do Thom Browne's Bob Wilson-esque apparitions have in common with Imane Ayssi's polychrome Queens? The commonality between Daniel Roseberry's exuberance at Schiaparelli and the muslin caresses of Charles de Vilmorin, who sews feelings into space, giving black a sculptural presence? What do references to Schiaparelli's art have in common with Julien Dosséna's references to Jean Paul Gaultier, his sailors, his shell breasts, his apron dresses, this Parisian cartography embroidered with dreams?

Between lines and arabesques, night and day, tributes from some and quotations from others? We can measure the maturity of some designers, like Viktor and Rolf, who, for their 30th anniversary, were able to create a tremendous amount of effect with a minimum of fabric, taking fragments, giant knots, the «NO», from their body of work – and using these like a parody of the Miss Universe contest, with tuxedo-clad models clinging to them. Call it smoking attitude! This is the attitude we're talking about, whether in the regal silhouettes of Maria Grazia Chiuri at Dior, or in the silhouettes sculpted by the light of Sara Chraïbi, we find the quintessence, the purity of an unrestrained line – this writing of transcendence that breaks free from the material. And it is at this very moment that the craft reveals the most absolute expression of itself; when the hands, united to the eyes that direct them, reach for the sky, picking out its stars to adorn a cape of sapphire velvet. Despite everything. Here, perhaps against the mainstream of everything that crumbles, fragments, polarises and inflames this «age of anxiety» in the words of Cecil Beaton referring to the 1940s. Haute couture is a way of defending oneself, as Demna Gvasalia attests with this iron lady and her oversized silhouettes that magnify a message. "In today's world of couturiers, Balenciaga has a place apart, like some wrathful Elizabethan meditating on fashion, its weaknesses and excesses..." wrote the same Cecil Beaton decades ago.

Haute Couture is about staring at a silhouette and taking flight with it, like Iris Van Herpen's "floating cities," inspired by the aquatic architecture of starchitect Bjarke Ingels. Oceanix versus Netflix? Solar panels versus permanently lit screens, a bit of utopia to reinvent time instead of reconstructing or rewriting it?

Activism evolves into a poetic, absolute gesture, a singular experience that restores luxury to its primary dimension: individuality, personality and temperament. «Haute couture is an osmosis between the intelligence of the hand and the know-how of ateliers focused on innovation,» says Pascal Morand, Executive President of the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode.

At Valentino, Pierpaolo Piccioli affirms that Haute Couture is a tale of unconstrained constructions, where nothing disturbs the allure; where the body just seems naturally adorned, haloed by a woven presence. In this age of extremes, the luxury of Paris means celebrating a form of universality. Away from the fragments, where memory and the here-and-now become one – united by talent, a demand for beauty, and the writing of transcendence. This is something that is as irreducible to Chat GPT as it is to strategy; something that is fragile and unquantifiable by metrics. It's the exception that means a haute couture garment can't be measured by the number of times it's been washed (100 for a ready-to-wear garment), but by another, endless durability: that of emotion. It is also the soul of transmission. As Nicolas Boulami wrote for Romain Brau celebrating the 20th anniversary of Sidaction: "A memory is like a well-cut garment. It allows us to wear life better." Thank you and sorry, ChatGPT.