

BOLD UPCYCLING

VIKTOR AND ROLF X ZALANDO



Surprise is always in store with Viktor & Rolf: a clear sign of the prowess of a creative duo that has carved out a unique place in the fashion world for the past twenty-five years. This time, the Haute Couture house has signed a stunning collaboration with Zalando. Set for launch in 2018, the new capsule collection is made entirely from unsold items from the e-commerce giant, as it shifts its image – and function – from that of a typical retailer to serve more as a trendsetter, while venturing into the world of “sustainable” fashion: this is the very first recycled collection released by Zalando. In its turn, the Haute Couture brand brilliantly saturated this eco-conscious message with its trademark sense of proportion and disproportion: of course, we expect nothing less from the Dutch designers who dare to take all kinds of risks. In fact, it was the designers who contacted the online fashion retailer for this capsule collaboration.

Viktor Hosting himself announced the news in his public “Talk” last September during Bread & Butter, “the Festival of Style and Culture” conceived by Zalando. In line with the event’s stated theme of “Bold,” the “Talk” took place after Viktor & Rolf’s public Haute Couture show, one of the festival’s highly anticipated main events. Extraordinary by any measure and completely liberated from gender codes, the fashion show/happening brought out all of the boldness typical of the creative duo – as well as Zalando during the second edition of its festival – and conveyed exactly what Haute Couture means to Viktor & Rolf: a “laboratory for experimentation” that celebrates all the top artisanal know-how employed by a borderless vision of Haute Couture that embodies a new form of creation, one that is more in line with the cultural, social, and environmental trends that challenge today’s fashion system.

Pulled from Viktor & Rolf’s three latest Haute Couture collections, the pieces selected for this unique show delivered a few hints about the spirit of the upcoming recycled collection: a “sustainable” or “eco-responsible” fashion arising from a creative and artistic process that elevates materials by reinventing them as surrealist silhouettes marked by flamboyant volumes and layering. In the words of Viktor Hosting: “With our latest Haute Couture collections, we explored new recycling methods: new artistic ways to reuse past elements to create something new. For example, we combined and stitched together several twenty-year-old fabrics from our archives to achieve new materials and volumes. Snippets of 20th century cocktail outfits were assembled in surrealist fashion to create unexpected forms.” He concludes: “Through the upcoming collaboration with Zalando, we are excited to continue working in the spirit of eco-responsible fashion and breathe new life into forgotten garments in a bold yet accessible way.” For his part, Jolanda Smit, Director of Global Brand Communications at Zalando, comments: “It’s incredible to watch Viktor & Rolf transform old clothes into something new and sublime. That extends the fashion cycle.”

Regardless of their production scale, such attempts to steer contemporary design towards a path of greater transparency and responsibility take many forms within the domain of so-called “ethical” fashion. French poet Paul Reverdy wrote that, “Ethics is the aesthetics of the inside.” Will today’s fashion world give rise to a literal “aesthetics of the inside”?

Viktor & Rolf x Zalando collection, available in early 2018 on www.zalando.fr

TEXT: STÉPHANIE BUI

Viktor and Rolf x Zalando,
Photos Tomek Dersu Aaron

Viktor and Rolf,
Fashion Show : Bread and Butter,
Photo Getty Images

