

YOHJI YAMAMOTO: A GUIDE TO SEXLESS POWER

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The playful androgyny of Yamamoto's work creates new modalities of gender identity, rewriting notions of beauty in fashion. Displayed on mannequins among the V&A's collections of treasures, paintings, tapestry and ceramics, this exhibition has all the right to be one of the most important in London today, abandoning figure-hugging forms and introducing a more abstract relationship to the body...



One of the world's most significant fashion designers, Yohji Yamamoto was born in 1943 in Tokyo, graduated from Keio University with a Law Degree, and then studied fashion at Bunka Fashion College, establishing his own fashion company called Y's Incorporated, in 1972. From the start of his career Yamamoto's work has been recognized for challenging the conventions of fashion with asymmetric cuts, seemingly unflattering curves and his renowned edges, occasionally unfinished, which contradicted to the close-fitted styles of the catwalk and represented the refuse of traditional norms of fashion ever since. Yohji's clothes certainly embody elements of Japanese aesthetics, such as the adherence to perfection. His textiles are created under requirement, often employing traditional

Japanese dyeing and embroidery techniques as a craftspeople support in and around Kyoto, giving the possibility to Yamamoto's design practice to be trademark of his work.



In the last part of the '80s, Yohji worked like a sculptor, following the logic of the fabric and shaping it around a body rather than drawing it out first, like a craftsmanship portrait that is inimitable and instinctive. He has always been obsessed with black, a colour which for him stands for a father colour that perpetually adorned Yohji's widowed mother when he was growing up. He lost his father because of the war and for this reason he always used black colour the same way a typical Japanese would, along with a state of limitless potential. He feels that colours can distract from the nature of the material: the texture, the hang, the way it sways to one's walk. Always connected to Asian mentality, Yamamoto has always eschewed overt sexuality and what he calls "doll-like" femininity, seeking to dissolve gender distinctions, dressing women in trousers, suits or military-style fatigues, and men in elegant kaftan-like skirts. He knows that real sexual allure resides on the face, concentrating all attention of his androgynous styling in it.



London had been in the midst of celebrating the country's creativity, opening at the Victoria & Albert Museum a retrospective of Yamamoto's visionary designs, exhibited on mannequins placed in hidden corners of the Museum, founding items on the British Galleries Landing, in the Norfolk House Music Room and looking out onto the John Madejski Garden from an alcove in the Hintze Sculpture Galleries. Amongst the museum's Ceramics collections and within the Tapestry Gallery are located other pieces, in dialogue with the Paintings Gallery. The breadth of some of Yamamoto's key collaborations achieved through his career is remarked thanks to partnerships with fashion photographers, graphic designers, art directors, choreographers, filmmakers and, first of all, long-time collaborator, scenographer and lighting designer Masao Nihei. It will be represented by a mixed-media timeline in the main exhibition space, demonstrating an important, creative dialogue, which flows through his work. It's absolutely a rare designer who can achieve that quality, provoking and inspiring the fashion world. Displayed on mannequins among the V&A's collections of treasures, paintings, tapestry and ceramics, this exhibition has all the right to be one of the most important in London today, abandoning figure-hugging forms and introducing a more abstract relationship to the body.

curated by eleonora galasso
From March 12th to July 10th,
2011 Yohji Yamamoto at the V&A;

AV&A South Kensington, Cromwell
Road, London SW7 2RLOpening Hours:
10 a.m. to 5,45 p.m. everyday, opened until
10 p.m. on fridaysEntrance: FreeInfo:
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