Haculla thrills Pitti Uomo with its “horror picture show”

By Dominique Muret - 14 January 2019

For the show, the space was covered with large painted murals in bloody hues and small coffin-shaped boxes were placed on top of all of the chairs which immediately set the tone. Haculla appeared to be about to plunge its audience into a sort of Rocky Horror Picture Show. This was success guaranteed in Florence, where the New York luxury co-ed streetwear brand debuted on January 9.

The atmosphere was buzzing with a punk and gothic rock flavour. “Doctor-models” wearing masks and white blouses smeared with paint crisscrossed each other on the runway as if they had escaped from an asylum. Suddenly, the models stopped to pull back the black curtains which, in the centre of the room, hid giant sculptures in pop colours made by Harif Guzman, the American street artist of Venezuelan origin whose work is what launched Haculla.

Guzman’s drawings and graffiti, easily recognisable for their bold colours and surrealist touch, were scattered throughout the collection as a kind of retrospective of 20 years of the artist’s work in New York’s Downtown district, south of Manhattan. Guzman’s art was displayed on rather simple casual wear such as sweaters, denim, check-shirts, jackets, and parkas, among other garments. Appliqués, embroidery, and prints were joyful and extravagant but had a dark side too, seen through images of skeletons, knives, and dripping eyes among others.

“We want to celebrate the dark side hidden in all of us which, in general, is the side the least represented in the fashion world,” said the brand’s creative director, Jon Koon, ambitious to turn Haculla “into a global brand”.

“The label is strongly rooted in the street art of New York and Harif, now a contemporary painter, is certainly the one who expresses this reality the best,” continued Koon.

It was with Harif Guzman that the entrepreneur-designer Koon joined forces with in 2015 to launch the brand. Growing steadily ever since its launch at a rate of between 30 and 40 percent a year, the brand is now valued at $6-7 million. The brand now retails in over 40 countries through around 100 multi-brand outlets including Harvey Nichols, Selfridges, Lane Crawford, Neiman Marcus, and Antonioli to name but a few.

The concept is at once simple and effective: to offer luxury punk streetwear with added artistic value. At $300-400 for a hoodie and $700-1000 for a jacket, the clothing straddles the division between garment and work of art.

For Jon Koon, whose real name is Jonathan Koon, 36, this business is not his first project. The son of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong became a millionaire at the tender age of 16 with the first company he founded, Extreme Performance Motosport. The business specialises in importing car accessories to the US from Asia. Koon’s business experienced success when it was made the official partner for the MTV series Pimp My Ride which was dedicated to customising cars.
Koon is a graduate of International Business at Georgetown University. After completing his studies, Koon returned to the world of business and joined forces with rappers and the hip-hop world for their clothing brands. Koon specialises in menswear and opened the concept store and brand Private Stock in 2013.

During this time, Koon also founded Tykoon Brand Holdings, a company that manages luxury streetwear brands as a distributor and creative consultant. The brands include Haculla and Private Stock as well as Mostly Heard Rarely, Seen 8-Bit, and God's Masterful Children, and Koon also collaborates with the brands Mauna Kea, Daniel Patrick, and Domrebel Montreal on a creative basis. These brands will be on show in Paris at the Tycoon Brand Holdings showroom during the upcoming Men's Fashion Week.

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