The 34th international fashion and photography festival at Hyères, France, will be held from Thursday April 25 to Sunday 29. The Villa Noailles venue will host what promises to be an exciting edition filled with events and novelties, notably focusing on women. Starting from this year's guest of honour, Natacha Ramsay-Levy, creative director of Chloé, who will chair the jury of the festival's emerging designer competition. Alongside her, another woman, jewellery designer Charlotte Chesnais, who will award the fashion accessories prize.

The photography competition's jury will be presided by Craig McDean. The New York-based Mancunian portraitist is renowned for his sophisticated style and has worked for several leading fashion names, lensing advertising campaigns for, among others, Jil Sander and Calvin Klein. He is a regular contributor to Harper's Bazaar and Vogue, and collaborates with luxury labels like Gucci, Giorgio Armani, Yves Saint Laurent and Louis Vuitton. At Villa Noailles, McDean will exhibit 39 vintage pictures from the end of the 1990s, selected from his photoshoots for various fashion magazines and for Jil Sander.

Ten finalists from around the world will compete in each of the categories at the Hyères Festival. In previous editions, the event spotlighted the likes of Julien Dossena; Anthony Vaccarello; Viktor & Rolf; and the new creative directors of Nina Ricci, Rushemy Botter and Lisi Herrebrugh, winners of the fashion prize at last year's edition.

French designers are present in force at the festival's 2019 edition. Among them, Lucille Thievre, one of the 10 names shortlisted for the emerging fashion designer prize, hailing from 10 different countries and split evenly between women's and men's ready-to-wear. Of the 10 names competing for the third edition of the festival’s fashion accessories prize, no less than three are French: Dorian Cayol and Quentin Barralon, Martial Charasse, and Mathilde Le Gagneur. The other competitors come chiefly from Europe and Asia.

Besides the two main prizes, for fashion and fashion accessories design, the festival's partners have endowed several other awards: the Chloé prize, for which competitors in the ready-to-wear category are invited to devise a look consistent with the label's values and spirit: the Galeries Lafayette group and childrenswear label Petit Bateau.
look consistent with the label’s values and spirit; the Galeries Lafayette group and childrenswear label Petit Bateau also endowed prizes and, for the first time, Chanel has sponsored the Métiers d’art Prize, awarded to the best collaboration between the 10 designers on the fashion prize shortlist and 10 of the label’s specialist craft ateliers.

The festival’s four days will be enlivened by an array of special events. Maison Michel, a milliner owned by the Chanel group, will stage a design workshop and an exhibition. One of Maison Michel’s hat-makers will instruct workshop participants in the sewn-straw technique, helping them create straw hats using an ancient machine. American Vintage, another festival sponsor, devised a section dedicated to plant-based dyes, in collaboration with French manufacturer Whole. At the festival’s ‘The Former’ section, it will be possible to view the collections of former festival finalists. The festival was first set up in 1986 by Jean-Pierre Blanc, who runs it together with President Pascale Mussard.

The 2019 Hyères Festival’s programme also includes some 17 exhibitions, among them the three dedicated to this year’s jury presidents. Natacha Ramsay-Levi will take the opportunity to explore the world of Chloé in three chapters, showcasing her first collections for the Parisian label within an immersive setting, plotted like a sort of aerial labyrinth and enhanced by video clips.
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Also notable is the photography exhibition by Alain Noguès, featuring a unique, hitherto unpublished reportage about the filming of the 1965 movie ‘Pierrot le Fou’ by legendary French director Jean-Luc Godard, which was shot at Hyères and the nearby island of Porquerolles. Noguès, now 82, was then a rookie photographer who had followed his girlfriend, at the time the assistant of the film's chief editor, on location. Noguès, who notably founded the Sygma photo agency in 1973, will attend this year’s Hyères Festival.

Another festival highlight will be the ‘Rencontres internationales de la mode’ (International fashion meetings) organised by the French Fashion Federation with the support of French public body DEFI and the collaboration of the French Fashion Institute. On the agenda, a series of conferences, debates and masterclasses.

The programme will begin on Friday April 28 with a talk by journalist Sophie Fontanel on ‘How to talk about yourself without being ridiculous’, and with a masterclass by Natacha Ramsay-Levi.

The following day, Saturday April 27, the programme features a conference entitled ‘The economic models of emerging labels’. Among the participants, up-and-coming designers Rokh Hwang (of label Rok); Victoria Feldman and Tomas Berzins (of Victoria/Tomas); Stéphanie Coudert; and industry talent-spotters Stefano Martinetto of the Tomorrow London agency and David Kang of Handsome Paris, a major retail player in South Korea.

Saturday will also be the day to discuss the come-back of artisanal craftsmanship, with the round-table debate ‘Back to craft’, featuring among others button and buckle craftsman Aymeric Le Deun, social historian Hugues Jacquet, Alexia Tronel of responsible label Atelier Bartavelle, and the creative director of Maison Michel, Priscilla Royer. Another debate will focus on ‘night fashion’ with designer Ludovic de Saint Sernin; journalist Alice Pfeiffer; Parisian squatter and freeganist Aladdin Charni; and Frédéric Hocquard, deputy mayor of Paris in charge of night life and cultural sector diversity.

Photographer Craig McDean will hold his masterclass at the end of the day on Saturday, while Sunday will be the day for a legal affairs workshop and a workshop for young designers.

By Dominique Murct
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