LVMH Prize 2018 shortlist: the London-based designers

By Chenu Alexis - 4 June 2018

Who will succeed French designer Marine Serre? The winner of the 2018 LVMH Prize for emerging fashion designers will be revealed on Wednesday 6 June, by a jury which includes some of the French luxury group’s household names, among them Karl Lagerfeld, Marc Jacobs and Clare Waight Keller. The shortlist features nine designers hailing from the four corners of the world, each of them unique in their own way. The winner will receive a cash prize of €300,000 and will be mentored for a year by the LVMH group. Ahead of the winner’s proclamation, FashionNetwork.com will tell the nine designers’ stories, the first of our three articles focusing on this year’s strong posse of London-based candidates: Samuel Ross, Charles Jeffrey and Rok Hwang. London is also home to designer duo Léa Dickely & Hung La, respectively of French and American-Vietnamese origin, and their Kwaidan Editions label. We will tell their story in our second article, which focuses on designers working in tandem.
Samuel Ross, with his A-Cold-Wall label, defies categorisation. A graphic design and illustration graduate of the De Montfort University in Leicester, Ross is a designer, stylist and musician. He launched a first streetwear label called 2wnt4, and was then hired by Virgil Abloh to work at the creative agency set up by Kanye West, Donda.

Ross worked with the future creator of Off-White for three years, busy on a range of creative projects, from concept stores to set designs and art films for the fashion and music industry. In 2015, he changed tack again, launching his own label A-Cold-Wall.

Referencing the urban environment in which Ross grew up, A-Cold-Wall is a hymn to London street culture, inspired by the British metropolitan middle and working classes, their mood and wardrobe quirks. It reflects a social landscape interpreted by Ross to produce a men’s and women’s style which blends an haute couture vibe with streetwear.

A-Cold-Wall works with tech materials and a minimalistic palette of patterns and colours, showing a penchant for symmetric cuts and the occasional sheer effect. The label quickly won over about twenty retailers worldwide, from Barneys in New York to H.Lorenzo in Los Angeles, Restir in Tokyo, Selfridges in London and l’Eclaireur in Paris.

Samuel Ross is a multi-talented designer who, in parallel with his catwalk shows, loves to produce artistic performances, installations and collaborations, such as the Concrete Objects furniture and design collection, the Air Force One/A-Cold-Wall sneaker model dropped with Nike at the end of 2017, and the store installations he designed for Barneys, Off-White and Harvey Nichols.

Samuel Ross shows his menswear in London, where he set up his creative studio in 2017.
Charles Jeffrey was born in Glasgow, Scotland. Aged 18, he moved to London, where he studied at the Central Saint Martins School. Inspired by the Club Kids culture and the vibrant East London night-life, he surrounded himself with an entourage of creatives, musicians, artists and drag queens with whom he partied in hipster hangouts.

After a three-month internship at Christian Dior’s ateliers in Paris, Jeffrey returned to London where he staged his ‘Loverboy’ club nights at cult East London venue VF (Vogue Fabrics) Dalston. These club nights gave birth to a brand, Loverboy, and a style heavily influenced by club culture.

Jeffrey caught the eye of Lulu Kennedy, founder of Fashion East (a support platform for young fashion design talent, also involved in the creation of London Top Design Talent), and he showcased his collections as part of the MAN project by Topman and Fashion East for three seasons from Spring/Summer 2016.

At his first solo collection’s event, for Spring/Summer 2018, Charles Jeffrey unveiled a world of fantastic creatures showing his men’s and women’s looks in a joy-filled atmosphere, blending uber-graphic items and collage prints, references to Matisse, William Hogarth and his Scottish roots, and spawning an uninhibited style in which tailoring rhymes with punk.

Charles Jeffrey won the British Emerging Talent Award for menswear at the 2017 British Fashion Awards, and has signed several collaborations, including a womenswear capsule collection for Matchesfashion.com. He also organised ‘The Come Up’, an exhibition at the NOW Gallery in London at the end of 2017 - ahead of his Autumn/Winter 2018 show - featuring glass and PVC sculptures borrowed from his sketchbooks alongside some of his fashion creations, a genuine plunge into the Scottish designer’s wacky, sensitive world.

The first Loverboy collection has already caught the attention of a few international concept stores, from Dover Street Market in London, New York and Tokyo, to Joyce in Hong Kong and Boon the Shop in Seoul.
The third member of the LVMH Prize shortlist’s London posse is Rok Hwang. He was born in South Korea and grew up in Austin, Texas. He left the USA aged 18, heading for the Central Saint Martins School in London, where he specialised in womenswear. After three years as a stylist at Céline, during the Phoebe Philo era, and stints at Louis Vuitton and Chloé, the yearning to go solo took over and he launched womenswear label Rokh.

Rokh exudes a timeless, destructured feel, steeped in nostalgia but with a contemporary twist, each garment conceived to last for multiple seasons. Rokh’s collections are a personal take on classic items, with radical silhouettes and a neutral colour palette. The concept is that of a raw yet highly wearable style.

Rokh is available at some 100 retailers worldwide, from Lane Crawford in Hong Kong to L’Eclaireur in Paris and KM20 in Moscow.

The label is based in London and, while it hasn’t shown officially yet, preferring a presentation format, it hopes to feature on the Paris show calendar soon.

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