LVMH Prize 2018 shortlist: the designer duos

By Chenu Alexis - 4 June 2018

After a focus on the designers who chose the creative melting pot that is London as home for their fashion brands, our second article dedicated to the new talents competing for the LVMH Prize 2018 focuses on designer duos, telling the tale of three creative couples and their labels. Botter, Kwaidan Editions and Eckhaus Latta are three of the nine highly original labels shortlisted for the prize, which will be awarded on 6 June.

On 30th April, the 33rd edition of the Hyères Fashion Festival awarded its Grand Prize to a young Dutch designer couple, Lisi Herrebrugh and Rushemy Botter, and their label Botter. Their ‘Fish or Fight’ collection with its quirky vibe strongly inspired by the couple’s Caribbean roots - he hails from Curaçao, her mother is from the Dominican...
The collection was strongly inspired by the couple’s Caribbean roots - he hails from Curaçao; her mother is from the Dominican Republic - and won universal praise from the Hyères jury.

Lisi Herrebrugh is a graduate of the Amsterdam Fashion Institute and trained in haute couture at the atelier of Viktor & Rolf. She met Rushemy Botter in Belgium, where he spent a few years at the Antwerp Royal Academy of Arts, under the aegis of Walter Van Beirendonck, and they eventually settled in Antwerp.

The ‘Fish or Fight’ collection won an array of awards: the Dries Van Noten prize; the Ann Demeulemeester prize; and the VFiles Runway prize in New York, a success which caught the fashion world’s attention, the duo then showing at the New York Fashion Week. Several celebrities - Naomi Campbell, Bella Hadid and Anna Wintour among them - are genuine fans of Botter.

The label’s arresting designs blend distinctive silhouettes and a colourful brand of street style, with an abundance of flowery prints. Botter’s mood is directly inspired by the style of young Caribbean immigrants in Europe, and by their native Caribbean culture. The collection is remarkable for its use of fluorescent fishing nets, and for the references to the environmental pollution threatening the islands. Oil company logos, plastic bags and inflatable animals worn as hats all have a part to play.

Botter is an eco-responsible label whose garments are manufactured with the help of local craftsmen, largely from recycled materials, and combines a tailored feel with sportswear to produce a unique kind of elegance. Its looks have already won over some ten fashion retailers worldwide, the likes of H.Lorenzo in Los Angeles, Smets in Brussels, Henrik Vibskov in Copenhagen and Vier in Antwerp.
Léa Dickely and Hung La form the creative couple behind Kwaidan Editions. Léa, a print and textile designer, comes from the Alsace region of France. Hung La, a Vietnamese-American from Washington D.C., was first educated as an engineer and then converted to fashion, studying at the Parsons and Marangoni Schools and at the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts, where he met Léa Dickely.

Both enjoyed stints at major fashion houses - Hung at Céline and Balenciaga under Nicolas Ghesquière, and Léa as a freelance designer at Rick Owens. Last year, they eventually got together and launched their own label, Kwaidan Editions.

The reference is to 1964 Japanese anthology horror film 'Kwaidan', directed by Masaki Kobayashi. Inspired by the film’s ghost stories, the label’s style is at once dark and cinematic. Kwaidan Editions’s third womenswear collection, presented in Paris this year, featured a twilight mood, a universe brimming with contrasts and duplicity with long faux-fur overcoats, imitation leather and python prints, steeped in dark monochrome alternating with a palette of blues, reds and pinks.

After only two collections, Kwaidan Editions has caught the eye of several forward-thinking multibrand retailers worldwide, from Dover Street Market in London and New York to The Broken Arm in Paris.
The third couple among the LVMH Prize candidates is that formed by Zoe Latta and Mike Eckhaus, with their label Eckhaus Latta. It all began in a classroom at the Rhode Island School of Design (USA), where Zoe studied textile design and Mike studied sculpture, before they both left to train at different fashion labels.

Mike designed accessories at Marc by Marc Jacobs, then joined the Three as Four collective, led by US artist Matthew Barney. Zoe set up her own textile business, manufacturing printed fabrics and knitwear for fashion labels like Proenza Schouler, Calvin Klein and Opening Ceremony. She also collaborated with the Antonio Ratti Textile Center at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, which has an extensive archive devoted to textile research.

Keen to break new ground in fashion, the couple created Eckhaus Latta, staging shows at once powerful for their clothes and highly diverse for their models. They also produced a plethora of artistic and audio-visual performances, in collaboration with brands like Nike and Camper, and major contemporary art institutions such as the New Museum, MOMA PS1, and the Venice Biennale.

Eckhaus Latta made an impression with its Spring/Summer 2017 campaign - featuring real people (not professional models) having real sex, the pixelated sections in the pictures hiding the raciest details - and its highly original clothes are available at nearly 25 retailers worldwide, from 10 Corso Como in Milan to the Galeries Lafayette department store in Paris, Dover Street Market in New York and London and Opening Ceremony in Tokyo and New York.

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