



Haute Couture Goes Unisex

by Silvia Bombardini

"I transformed myself in the zero of form and emerged from nothing to creation, [...] – to non-objective creation."

Kazimir Malevich, From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting (1916).

Less trendy and more patient, prestigious and reliable than prêt-à-porter, haute couture has seemed, at times, somehow quiescent in its adorned obstinacy - courteous and self-referential, and rather out of place in our modern world and dreams.

Now though, it looks as if a new, more open policy could be adopted. And if we are on the verge of a new, young era for haute couture, Rad Hourani could be the pioneer.

On July 4th, Hourani presented history's first ever Unisex Haute Couture collection in Paris. "I was very honored and very challenged at the same time," he says, recalling the moment.

Didier Grumbach, president of the Fédération Française de La Couture, first proposed the idea. "It's a completely different way of working than ready-to-wear. For me, it was like building an architectural form with the most noble fabrics that I manipulated to a graphic shape. It looks minimal but it's extremely complex to make. Each piece took at least a week. It's all about *le savoir faire*."

The result was a lustrous and tailored lineup, tinged in austere hues, crafted in the finest cashmere, leather, silk and crepe, overlapped and ordered in composite patterns.

Hourani's acclaimed architectural sensibility reached its monumental peak; the timelessness he longed for never looked so close. Haute couture suddenly seemed the only future for him.

"I only design what I feel like wearing, which helps me focus on a signature style that belongs to me," says Hourani. "I used to shop a lot before, and I was looking for something that I couldn't find - something genderless, seasonless, timeless and ageless. And that is how I started my brand, by designing what I needed."

Since 2007, Hourani's unique philosophy, perseverance and talent have brought unisex to the high-end fashion world. His five-year success was recently celebrated with an exemplary, limited collection for Joyce Hong Kong. "Before starting my line, I spent a full year six years ago on creating a perfect unisex canvas that has been studied on male and female bodies," he explains. "And then I started to delete all codes that can give us a male or female reference and from there I started to sketch graphic forms."

Not in Rad Hourani's work will you find references to vintage decades, ethnic vibes, or any subculture. His inspiration comes from the inside, a supermatist matter of feeling and soul, the manifesto of a gentle, asexual revolution. "My work is not just about clothes or fashion, it's about a way of being and living," Hourani asserts. With a film script in the making, and a gallery of his own that just opened in Paris, it's pretty clear he means it.

www.radhourani.com