

LUCY McKenzie

JASPERWEAR

As usual, there is no one unifying theme in *Jasperwear*, which is how we like it. Rather, it is built on lessons learned from previous collections, our separate idiosyncratic research, and finally, what we can realistically manufacture as a small label, independent of the fashion system.

There are some subjects that we always return to, for instance neoclassicism, and here we use it to illustrate that appropriation is an unstoppable force. Our cameo necklaces use 3D printing technology to emulate the look and feel of Wedgwood Jasperware porcelain. They depict two Scottish neoclassical architects Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson and Robert Adam, and visual artist Barbara Conviser. Cameos have existed for thousands of years, tiny precious objects looted from every successive civilisation to be repurposed by the next, transforming as they accrue new meaning, right up to the present day.

We think about aspects of historic and non-Western dress, and how to channel their influence without become costume-like. The cashmere tracksuit bisects the torso on the diagonal in the same elegant way a saree or a toga does. The *Scutum* umbrella is quite literally an Amazon shield. Our thobe shirt and trousers are a silk replica of the ones found for sale in the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood of Molenbeek, Brussels.

Beca’s admiration for the work of Bonnie Cashin, and mine for that of Madeleine Vionnet, meets somewhere in the middle for *Jasperwear* in the figure of Gilbert Adrian. Like Cashin, he designed costume for films, and like Vionnet, he referenced classical themes in ways that still feel contemporary today. We are inspired by Cashin’s habit of layering sportswear, and Vionnet’s simple day-wear, so loved and worn to death by their owners they are rarely preserved in archives. Adrian’s Grecian gowns of the ‘40s give us plenty to fantasise about, but how does one relate to them today, when they have no place in real life? We take what is essential in the appeal of a neoclassical couture dress—the simplification of the figure with blocks of colour and motifs from antiquity—and apply it to something that people wear all the time: a tracksuit. Modernist principles dictate that the right material be used for the right purpose and that clothes be activated through movement—these apply here too. By making everyday garments we look to classicism’s democratic roots.

Equally democratic is the importance of offering several price points for our customers—t-shirts in organic cotton for those who can afford to be ethically engaged, Fruit of the Loom for whom it is a luxury. We hope that all our clothes are washed as infrequently as possible, cared for, repaired and lived in for years.

The other jewellery in the collection are all props, of a kind, for TV cops. The brooch made of shell and artificial flower is both alive and dead, set in a funereal setting, inspired by the silver vase worn on Hercule Poirot’s lapel. The *DCI Lanyard*, is also a nod to all those tough female cops on British telly. It is a hybrid object combining a factory-produced plastic lanyard and ID holder, with a tiny hand-painted piece of fake marble, signed and numbered on the back as a unique edition. It is high and low, real and artificial. It is an accessory guaranteed to ‘kill’ any outfit and is most often seen on workers vaping outside office buildings. If worn at a party, it infers you are part of the staff. One of Sarah Waters’ invisible servants who turns out to be the main protagonist all along...