Casey Cadwallader reinterprets the sensuality of corsetry with a futuristic twist at Mugler

By Triana Alonso  28 October 2021

Casey Cadwallader continues to define his contemporary vision of the Mugler aesthetic. Creative director of the L’Oréal-owned brand since the end of 2017, the American designer has once again opted for a spectacular demonstration of evocative elegance in order to show his collection for Fall/Winter 2021-22. Presented in digital form, his eight-minute fashion film, directed by Torso Solutions, is a kind of cinematic satire, in which models seem to pose for a photo shoot, giving repeated fourth-wall-breaking looks-to-camera, before stepping into a dynamic runway strut, all in front of a pure white background.
Supermodels Amber Valletta and Bella Hadid, as well as Madonna's headline-generating daughter, Lourdes Leon, were among those tasked with incarnating Mugler's celebration of femininity this season. This vampiric-looking cast strides in different directions in front of the lens, which constantly swivels, changes perspective and zooms in and out, contributing to the pervadingly dystopic and futuristic atmosphere, in which a series of figures dressed in white full-coverage onesies that blend into the background accompany the models at every turn, caressing them or holding them up.

The aesthetic is recognizable and easily identifiable. Pieces this characteristically sensual could only be from Mugler, but Cadwallader has also managed to create a collection that exudes freshness and modernity. His designs flitter back and forth between second-skin effects and experimentation with fabrics that are contorted into new, sculpted shapes and splashed with color and sparkle. The predominantly dark palette of oil-slick black, midnight blue, dusty pink and reflective silver incorporates coquettish flashes of striking blue-greens, neon yellow, orange and indigo, featured in overlapping tops, shirts and ripped dresses, as well as in bodysuits and skirts with side openings.

This attention-grabbing mix adapts Mugler's curvaceous aesthetic for a new generation, bringing in a few, somewhat more relaxed, touches of athleisure, while still staying true to the DNA of the brand, which is famous for its corsets. Here, these pieces abandon their rigidity in search of a new sensuality more appropriate for Instagram, the stage or the dancefloor. Reinterpreted via ultrasonic cutting, they are much lighter and more adapted to movement.

Other highlights include the fitted trousers creating the impression that the model is practically nude, the interplay of denim with black transparencies, the tight, corsetry-inspired jackets, and the keyhole shaped details on bodices, a clear allusion to the Mugler archives. And that's without mentioning the final stretch of the video, where serpentine golden chains cover the collection's last pieces, as well as the Jimmy Choo boots and sandals chosen to elevate the designs. For those wishing to continue their journey into the sensual world of Mugler, Paris' Musée des Arts Décoratifs is hosting the retrospective, "Thierry Mugler, Couturissime," until January 16, 2022.

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