

Spring FLASHES

The start of the season brings a covetable crop of new lines and fresh talents



JOE RICHARDS'S
S/S '14
SCRAPBOOK

THE WEST COUNTRY WUNDERKIND

Not since the impeccably dressed pillars of Georgian society congregated in Bath's Assembly Rooms has the city been viewed as a fashion hub – until now, perhaps. Designing out of a terraced studio in the eighteenth-century Circus, 27-year-old Joe Richards is already garnering attention with his second ready-to-wear collection. “Menswear is my focus, specifically shirting. I like the concise nature of a man's wardrobe; there's nowhere to hide,” shrugs the slight, sandy-haired designer.

His starting point is a man's shirt but the result is anything but basic. Imbued with androgynous ease, the stretch poplin eradicates creasing, invisible seams enhance comfort, and collars are cut to display a “sensual flash of clavicle” – all subtle innovations, but guaranteed to elevate a classic. “I want the ordinary to become the extraordinary,” he explains, a sentiment he extends to his cotton utility skirts and roomy trousers.

With no formal training, Richards attributes his design process to “instinct” and a “life-changing” trip, aged 20, to a Chanel couture show as a guest of illustrator Marko Matysik. Impulsively staying on in Paris, he honed his talents at internships,

first at Dior (“Imagine Raquel Zimmermann arriving for a fitting looking like Kurt Cobain, and John Galliano magically transforming her, spinning acres of almond tulle and adding corsets,” he recalls) and then with Alber Elbaz at Lanvin, before accepting a position as a design assistant with Phoebe Philo at Céline.

Research is pivotal to his work process, culminating in impressive scrapbooks that fold out to create friezes of references, from Greta Garbo to Françoise Hardy and a “younger, heroic” Salvador Dalí. The common thread? “I am attracted to elegant characters, full of contradictions.” These visually rich tomes may bear the foundations of his s/s '14 collection, but he's been collating images since his schooldays, when he also designed clothes and staged fashion shows: “We hosted exchanges with a Japanese school, and I'd wait for the influx of these cool, fascinating kids and then try to recreate their style.”

Who does he see wearing his clothes? “Present-day Lee Millers or Tina Chows, anyone that epitomises the most natural interpretation of elegance.” Whoever she is, a Joe Richards shirt and one of his Man Ray-inspired Fortuny-pleated skirts are destined to take her anywhere. *EE-B*

Joe
Richards



JOE RICHARDS
METALLIC JERSEY TOP,
£340. COTTON AND SILK
SKIRT, £820. BOTH AT
MATCHESFASHION.COM



MANSUR GAVRIEL
LEATHER BUCKET
BAG, FROM £290, AT
STEVENALAN.COM

THE BAG BUZZ

Mansur Gavriel is the upshot of a chance meeting between American Rachel Mansur and Berlin-born Floriana Gavriel, a former designer at Lanvin. Their new line of handbags consists of clean-line carryalls, shoppers and bucket bags in classic black, camel and chilli red, with each piece handcrafted at a tannery in Tuscany that has been operating since 1946. All for a price tag that hovers around £385 – what's not to love? *Ellen Burney*