

VIKTOR & ROLF FASHION ARTISTS

ARTWORK LABELS

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Viktor&Rolf: Fashion Artists

Dutch fashion artists Viktor Horsting (born 1969) and Rolf Snoeren (born 1969) met as first-year fashion students at the Arnhem Academy of Arts and Design in 1988. On their graduation in 1992, Viktor & Rolf realised they shared a vision and approach to fashion, and began their collaboration.

Viktor & Rolf's unconventional approach to clothes brought them critical acclaim but little support from buyers and magazines in their first years. Many of their earliest collections were presented as installations within art museums, where their avant-garde vision was welcomed for the way it blurred boundaries between art and fashion. Then, in 1998, Viktor & Rolf presented the first of five successive haute couture collections in Paris. These attracted increasing critical acclaim from the fashion world as well as opportunities to collaborate commercially on ready-to-wear collections.

From 2000 to 2013 Viktor & Rolf focused on ready-to-wear, frequently defying conventions with their creations. In recent years they have focused exclusively on haute couture, resulting in some of their most spectacular collections to date. Viktor & Rolf continue to explore fashion's outer limits, reinventing the ways in which fashion can be understood as a medium of creative expression.

Flying Dutchmen

tapestry, 2016
cotton, viscose

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

This gallery presents some of Viktor & Rolf's landmark haute couture collections, including the highlight ensemble of the 1993 collection that first won them international critical attention after winning a competition in Hyères, France. Also on display is the entire *Russian Doll* collection, which was originally presented on a single model, dressed in layer after layer by the designers on stage.

Viktor & Rolf have been based in Amsterdam since 1995, and the city's relative isolation from the 'fashion world' helps them to create and experiment according to their own vision. Their ambivalent attitude to the fashion industry is seen here in a work from their 2008 *NO* collection, produced at a time when Viktor & Rolf felt constrained by the demands of designing ready-to-wear. 'We love fashion,' they said, 'but it's going so fast. We wanted to say "No" this season'.

In 2013 Viktor & Rolf announced a renewed focus on haute couture with their *Zen Garden* collection. Featuring twenty ensembles, one for each year of their career at that point, the collection was a meditation on the fashion industry's incessant pursuit of 'the now' and 'the new'. In the same year, Viktor & Rolf became corresponding members of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*, the Parisian body that controls the designation of haute couture.

Russian Doll

Considered one of the most irreverent and original haute couture shows ever presented in Paris, *Russian Doll* brought Viktor & Rolf international recognition. At the runway showing of their autumn–winter 1999–2000 collection, in front of 125 guests, American model Maggie Rizer walked from backstage to a turntable on which a pair of shoes waited for her. Already wearing the first work, a simple bias-cut short-sleeved dress made from loosely woven jute – a highly unusual fabric in the context of couture – Rizer stepped into the shoes and began to revolve on the platform like a ballerina in a music box. She was then joined onstage by the two designers, who proceeded to dress her in the eight successive ‘preparations’ that made up the collection.

By the end of the performance, Rizer was enveloped in more than seventy kilograms of couture. As a finale, the designers placed a six-metre garland of white flowers at her feet – as if making an offering to a goddess. The audience gasped throughout the presentation, applauding as each new layer was added, and provided a standing ovation at the show’s conclusion. Video footage of the performance is presented in the last gallery of this exhibition.

Russian Doll (First preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000
jute, silk (satin)

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Second preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000

jute, cotton (lace), crystals, sequins

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Third preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000
jute, crystals

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Fourth and Fifth preparations)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000
jute, crystals

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Sixth preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000
jute, warp printed silk taffeta, crystals

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Seventh preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000
jute, lace, crystal beads, other materials

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Eighth preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000

jute, crystals

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Russian Doll (Ninth preparation)

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000

jute

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Zen Garden

Twenty years after their first collection, and following a twelve-year hiatus from haute couture, Viktor & Rolf returned to their roots to present their *Zen Garden* couture collection. In the years since their fifth haute couture collection in 2001, the designers had presented numerous ready-to-wear collections for men and women, opened stores and launched perfumes. To mark their return to couture Viktor & Rolf presented a monastic collection 'about mindfulness and being in the moment'. The stage setting evoked the garden of Kyoto's Ryoanji temple, one of Japan's finest rock gardens.

Zen Garden's twenty austere, all-black works were the product of a rigorous exercise in pattern-making, volume and structure, silhouettes and minimalism. Combining sculptural and voluminous gatherings of a heavy black technical fabric that looked like neoprene, the pieces featured smooth panels that recalled the surface of rain-misted rock, with selected garments edged in lavish embroideries, mimicking the effect of moss, which took hundreds of hours to create. Guided by Viktor & Rolf, each model walked into the 'garden' wearing a garment designed specifically for a posture that she assumed, either seated, kneeling, lying or standing, forming five sculptural groups – each one like a mass of rock – in a starkly beautiful tableau.

Zen Garden

haute couture, autumn–winter 2013–14
polyamide, polyester

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Hyères

Founded in 1986 by Jean-Pierre Blanc, the Salon Européen des Jeunes Stylistes (now named the Festival International des Arts de la Mode d'Hyères) in Hyères, in the South of France, is known as a launching pad for emerging talents in fashion and photography. The annual festival is hosted at the Villa Noailles, which was an important site of activity for the modernist avant-garde during the 1920s and 1930s and, most notably, was the setting for Man Ray's 1929 Surrealist film *Les Mystères du Château du Dé* (*The Mysteries of the Chateau of Dice*).

In 1993, when they were both twenty-four years old, Viktor & Rolf collaborated for the first time to create a dozen works for the festival. The designers described their collection as 'fragments of clothes'. They presented a breathtaking, distorted ball gown of grey wool with torn and ripped embroidery with silver sequins. The festival jury, composed of the renowned fashion designers Jean Colonna, Martine Sitbon and Ann Demeulemeester, unanimously awarded the Dutch designers all three major prizes on offer, and Horsting and Snoeren became Viktor & Rolf.

Hyères

1993

wool jersey, polyester, sequins, tulle

Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 2000

Purple prose

tapestry, 2016
cotton, viscose

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Caroline

Silver

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2006–07
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, sterling silver-plated cotton, sterling silver-plated metal, sterling silver-plated silk, silk (ribbon), patent leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Performance of Sculptures

Viktor & Rolf's exploration of the limits of 'wearable art', which flourished in their spring–summer 2015 collection *Van Gogh Girls*, found further expression in their spring–summer 2016 haute couture collection *Performance of Sculptures*, in which the boundaries between garment and sculpture were blurred in order to question the relationship between wearer and clothing. In the more extreme pieces, the garment consumed the body of the model, obscuring her head with dresses voluminous in height and width.

The archetypical white polo shirt met Cubism in a series of form studies in which clothing and sculptural elements interacted with increasing complexity. The polo shirt, with its strict schema of short sleeves, buttoned closure and open collar, was juxtaposed with a selection of surreal-cubist portraits – themselves often burlesque assemblages of organically shaped fragments. Three-dimensional facial features, such as eyes, noses and lips, emerged from the garments and suggested various perspectives.

While the collection's graphic and geometric volumes suggested a sculptor's hand working a three-dimensional material, such as stone or plaster, in a rapid, improvised manner, all of the garments were expertly executed in fabric – a pristine cotton piqué, with a waffle or honeycomb structure – with every seemingly random cut, blotch or chip meticulously hand-finished.

Performance of Sculptures

haute couture, spring–summer 2016
polyester, nylon, other materials

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Performance of Sculptures

haute couture, spring–summer 2016
polyester, nylon, other materials

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Performance of Sculptures

haute couture, spring–summer 2016
polyester, nylon, other materials

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Simone

One Woman Show

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2003–04

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, wool, cotton, silk,
leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

NO

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2008–09
wool, gilt brass

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Devon

Black Hole

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2001–02

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, wool, lurex, silk
satin shoes

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Magdalena

NO

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2008–09
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, wool, gilt brass,
polyester boots

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Appearance of the Void

L'Apparence du Vide

1995, partial reconstruction 2016

vinyl, digital audio file, 5 min 9 sec (looped)

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

In October 1995 Viktor & Rolf exhibited their spring–summer 1996 collection *L'Apparence du Vide* (*Appearance of the Void*) at a Paris gallery. It contained ten outfits, five made from gold polyester suspended from the ceiling, and five in black silk organza laid flat on the floor beneath the gold ensembles to appear as their shadows. The exhibition also included the sound and text work exhibited here, featuring the names of 1990s 'supermodels' Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington, et al. The voices of Dutch school children (recorded by Viktor's mother, a school teacher), can be heard reciting these names as if learning by rote.

Perfume

Le Parfum

1996

composition board, glass, colour offset lithograph, lightbox, water

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

First shown at avant-garde Amsterdam gallery Torch in 1996, the installation *Launch* not only symbolised Viktor & Rolf's dreams and ambitions as fashion designers but also their frustration at not having sufficient finances to achieve them. The installation took the form of a dream world realised in miniature, featuring a design studio, photo shoot, runway show with a doll, boutique with rack of clothes and a fictitious fragrance named *Le Parfum*. Made in a limited edition of 250 bottles, *Le Parfum* was a life-sized perfume bottle, although without real perfume inside, permanently sealed with a wax cap.

On Strike

1996

offset lithograph, thumb tacks

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

During Paris Fashion Week in March 1996, Viktor & Rolf fly-posted the city walls with this poster, which constituted their autumn–winter 1996–97 collection. Their decision to go ‘on strike’ was a response to the lack of interest their work had received from the fashion industry, press and buyers. Although they had received international media attention in the past from what they refer to as the ‘fashion elite’, the designers felt their efforts were not being sufficiently recognised. When asked how the press reacted to their posters, they recall that ‘there was just no reaction ... that was even worse’.

Early in their careers, Viktor & Rolf had ambiguous professional identities: were they artists working in the fashion medium, or were they fashion designers? *L'Hiver de l'Amour (Winter of Love)*, shown in a museum exhibition in 1994, positioned their work in the context of contemporary artists, including Carsten Höller, Mat Collishaw and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and at this time the duo felt like fashion outsiders.

In 1998 Viktor & Rolf committed themselves to working within the fashion industry; however, despite designing haute couture and ready-to-wear collections, presented at Paris Fashion Week, ever since, they have managed to maintain a position that straddles art and fashion. With collections such as *The Fashion Show*, *Red Carpet Dressing* and *Wearable Art*, Viktor & Rolf challenge the limits of wearability with their witty and cerebral approach.

In 2008, on the occasion of their solo exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery in London, Viktor & Rolf commissioned a Belgian doll maker to create a series of dolls dressed in intricately made miniature versions of their key works. They have continued to produce a doll for each of their collections since, and many are on display here.

The wallpaper in this gallery is digitally composed from hundreds of Viktor & Rolf's hand-drawn sketches. This and the jacquard-woven tapestries reproducing important press coverage and Viktor & Rolf imagery, have been created especially for this exhibition.

Winter of Love

L'Hiver de l'Amour

1994

mannequins, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), steel

Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 1998

Marina

Performance of Sculptures

haute couture, spring–summer 2016

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, polyester, nylon,
rubber boots

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Red Carpet Dressing

Exploring society's obsession with celebrity, Viktor & Rolf's autumn–winter 2014–15 haute couture collection *Red Carpet Dressing* was a surrealist commentary on the fashion industry's practice of paying stars to wear designers' garments at red carpet events. Viktor & Rolf made red carpet literally wearable in the collection's twenty-two looks, with all works made from a heavy-duty nylon carpet by Dutch carpet manufacturer Desso. The designers explain: 'This was something new. It was a new challenge on a technical level, and had not been done before. We wanted the collection to look spontaneous, as if it was just naturally wrapped around the body, but made with couture techniques'.

The asymmetric, wrapped and knotted designs alluded to primitive clothing construction as well as classic couture references. The collection's unconventional ballooning coat dresses cut above the knees, cocooning capes, strapless dresses knotted at the front and off-the-shoulder coats with matching red carpet-covered shoes were spectacular pieces of unexpected elegance. Pieces featured leopard, zebra and giraffe-skin patterns hand-cut, applied and shaved on the carpet fabric's base. Some of the looks took the Viktor & Rolf atelier up to 300 hours to complete.

Red Carpet Dressing

haute couture, autumn–winter 2014–15
carpet (polyester, nylon)

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Red Carpet Dressing

haute couture, autumn–winter 2014–15
carpet (polyester)

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Purchase with support of Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge

Shalom

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2009
silk plissé, cotton, crystals

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Karolina

Long Live the Immaterial! (Bluescreen)

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2002–03

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, cotton, leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Alek

Stars and Stripes

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2000–01
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, screenprinted
cotton, leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Caroline

Ballroom

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2007

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, elastane net,
cotton (poplin), wool polyester, silk, crystals, leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Cutting Edge Couture

For their spring–summer 2010 ready-to-wear collection, Viktor & Rolf presented what they referred to as ‘credit crunch couture’. The *Cutting Edge Couture* collection featured silk satin jackets and pyjamas with embroidery and lace insets, a mix of masculine tuxedo jackets fused with feminine pleated tulle bodices in pastel colours, as well as drastically slashed cocktail dresses. A series of voluminous jackets and ball gowns with sculptural, architectural shapes and missing parts stole the show. These included a pistachio-green ball gown seemingly sawn in half, with its voluminous lower section floating; a baby-blue ball gown cut sideways; and a spectacular strawberry dress with a hole punched through its multi-layered tulle skirt.

Viktor & Rolf reveal their thoughts behind these spectacular, gravity-defying pieces: ‘There is always something very graphic and very Baroque in our collections, exaggerated with exuberant details. There was the economic crisis, but we saw no reason to stop creating beautiful and extreme things: it was not an anti-commercial statement. We felt we needed something radical. At that time, it was all about slashing budgets and cutting corners. Like crushing a dream, we played with destroying perfection and the sweetness of these dreamy dresses’.

Cutting Edge Couture

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2010
cotton, polyester tulle

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Cutting Edge Couture

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2010
cotton, polyester tulle

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Loan from the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge Foundation

Anja

Cutting Edge Couture

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2010

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, polyester (tulle),
cotton (moiré), sequins, leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Cutting Edge Couture

tapestry, 2016
cotton, viscose

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Van Gogh Girls

haute couture, spring–summer 2015

cotton, silk (organza, satin), copper wire, straw (hat),
other materials

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Purchased with the support of the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge Foundation

Atomic Bomb

Viktor & Rolf's autumn–winter 1998–99 collection of 'nuclear couture' introduced the top-heavy, tapering silhouette that would become their signature. This surreal, theatrical show was inspired by the designers' questioning of what the new millennium would bring, amidst anxiety about the Y2K bug and apocalyptic destruction of planet Earth.

The collection presented clothes with exaggerated, overblown collars and silk 'balloons', containing pillows, around the neckline to evoke the shape of a mushroom cloud. The garments were presented on the runway for a second time in what Viktor & Rolf referred to as the presentation's 'anti-climax'. This time, the elements creating the voluminous silhouettes were removed so that the cloth draped gracefully around the body, proposing two ways of wearing the pieces.

Presented at the close of the twentieth century, *Atomic Bomb* was also an homage to the great couturiers of the 1900s. Viktor & Rolf used vintage fabrics in designs such as the *Harlequin* ensemble, on view here, made from a pieced *cuir de cotton* fabric first used by Cristobal Balenciaga in 1967; another ensemble featured a jersey fabric designed by Emilio Pucci in 1968. Other couture garments struck a festive note with tinsel, silk balloons, confetti and pompoms.

Atomic Bomb

haute couture, autumn–winter 1998–99
cotton, rayon

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 1999

Atomic Bomb

haute couture, autumn–winter 1998–99
wool (crêpe), silk (crêpe)

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 1999

Balloons

Atomic Bomb

haute couture, autumn–winter 1998–99
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (organza),
silk (satin) (ribbon)

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Blacklight

The *Blacklight* haute couture collection, spring–summer 1999, followed Viktor & Rolf's *Atomic Bomb* collection and continued the designers' tendency to create collections that are autobiographical, reflecting their personal feelings towards creativity. Presented in an eighteenth-century Parisian warehouse, each garment in the *Blacklight* collection was made of black and white heavy silk organza. The collection was first presented under ultraviolet or 'black' light, revealing only the garments' white details, and then shown a second time under normal lighting conditions.

When the models first emerged in the darkened space they looked like disembodied ghosts. Only the white elements glowed, revealing a variety of shapes, from feminine ruffles to tailored masculine suits. In the second half of the show, with the normal lights on, the collection's thirty-four looks revealed *trompe l'oeil* effects: patterns and forms created by a white ruffled mantilla worn on a black floor-length dress; a black tuxedo suit with a single white sleeve roughly cut with unfinished edges; and a black bell-shaped 'maid's outfit' with a white bib and apron.

Blacklight

haute couture, spring–summer 1999
silk (gazar)

Groninger Museum, Groningen

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 1999

Friend

Blacklight

haute couture, spring–summer 1999
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (gazar), leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Silvia

Blacklight

haute couture, spring–summer 1999
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (gazar), leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Bedtime Story

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2005–06
silk (satin, chiffon, lace), other materials

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Loan from the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge Foundation

Hana

Bedtime Story

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2005–06
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (satin, lace),
patent leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Tiiu

Bedtime Story

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2005–06
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (tulle, chiffon),
glass beads, sequins, leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Zuzana

White

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2002
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (organza),
patent leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Flowerbomb

Viktor & Rolf's *Flowerbomb* ready-to-wear collection, spring–summer 2005, was unveiled in an extravagant show that remains one of the most important moments in the designers' career. It opened with a heavy rock soundtrack and featured a parade of models wearing a range of entirely black clothes – from simple leather jackets and trench coats to a full-scale ribbon rosette engulfing its wearer – with each outfit completed by an opaque motorcycle helmet. Bows and ribbons were a central motif and increased in size from the first outfit to the last. The models arranged themselves into a *tableau vivant* that evoked Loomis Dean's famous 1957 photograph for *Life* magazine of models wearing Christian Dior's new collection.

After a countdown, a pyrotechnic display seemed to announce the show's finale; however, the stage then revolved 180 degrees to reveal a matching tableau, this time with models dressed in numerous shades of pink and gold. It was as if the 'explosion' had launched the models into Viktor & Rolf's concept of a 'flower-bombed' world of positivism, joy, beauty and happiness. The presentation marked the launch of Viktor & Rolf's first (real) perfume, also named Flowerbomb, presented in a jewel-like, grenade-shaped bottle and dubbed their 'weapon of mass seduction'.

Flowerbomb

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2005
silk

Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 2005

Flowerbomb

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2005
silk, wool, plastic (helmet)

Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation, 2005

Flowerbomb

tapestry, 2016
cotton, viscose

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Raquel

Flowerbomb

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2005

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (chiffon),
suede, silk braid

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Sena

Flowerbomb

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2005
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (chiffon),
plastic (helmet), leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Magdalena

Pierrot

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2008

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (organza, chiffon), crystals, patent leather

Viktor & Rolf, Amsterdam

The Fashion Show

Described by many journalists as Viktor & Rolf's most extreme presentation, *The Fashion Show* (autumn–winter 2007–08), was 'ready-to-wear' in name only. Walking tentatively down a darkened runway, each model wore an aluminium harness fitted with lighting and working speakers. This structure became an extension of the body, allowing the voluminous forms of the clothing to be variously suspended, draped and gathered. The harnesses evoked the traditional Dutch shoulder yokes used for carrying goods: some had four separate poles, creating a batwing effect on a number of the floral dresses and leather coats; another, with a more commercial look, featured only one pole.

The designers used richly textured fabrics and ribbons traditionally made, dyed and hand-painted with dots, checks and floral patterns in the northern Dutch town of Staphorst. The outfits were completed with specially designed, hand-painted high-heeled clogs, in traditional Delft blue and Staphorst colours.

The Fashion Show was a meditation on individuality within a world of conformity. Viktor & Rolf wanted each model to exist within 'her own universe, her own fashion show'. It was also a collection based, as the designers acknowledge, on 'an idea that in theory is great, in museums still is great, but as a runway show [was] very much ... a disaster'.

The Fashion Show

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2007–08
silk, aluminium harness, wooden clogs

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Loan from the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge Foundation

The Fashion Show

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2007–08
silk, cotton, aluminium harness, wooden clogs

Zuiderzee Museum, Enkhuizen

Purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation

Raquel

The Fashion Show

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2007–08
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, silk (georgette,
chiffon), silver, aluminium harness, wooden clogs

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Wearable Art

For their autumn–winter 2015–16 collection, Viktor & Rolf unveiled a collection of ‘wearable art’ that appeared to transform framed paintings into haute couture gowns. For each of the collection’s twenty looks, the models wore a base layer of denim – in most cases a long-sleeved tunic with rolled cuffs that emulated an artist’s smock – over which they ‘wore’ paintings: seemingly gilt-framed canvases decorated with still lifes or scenes from classical mythology. During the collection presentation performance, the designers appeared onstage to help five of the models partially disrobe, removing their ‘paintings’ and hanging them on the back wall of the stage. These five works – one of them a triptych – appeared as either a canvas ‘explosion’ or as a surreal melting canvas, flowing out of its frame.

What seemed to be painted canvases by Old Masters were, in fact, jacquard-woven fabrics laser-cut and bonded onto a fine white crêpe, itself bonded onto natural-coloured Belgian linen. Both the denim and the ‘canvases’ were seemingly splattered with paint, although the drips and splotches were really created with embroidery and appliqué. The ‘canvases’ were stapled to a lightweight stretcher, and the gilded frames have a timber laminate and foamboard construction, and are covered with gold cloth.

Wearable Art

haute couture, autumn–winter 2015–16

bonded cotton (crêpe), denim, linen, other materials

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Wearable Art

haute couture, autumn–winter 2015–16

cotton, linen, silk, polyester, polyamide, wool, elastane,
plastic, polypropylene

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Purchased with the support of the Han Nefkens Fashion on the Edge Foundation

Vagabonds

Using fabrics and garments from previous haute couture and ready-to-wear collections, Viktor & Rolf's most recent haute couture collection (autumn– winter 2016–17) employs recycling as a means of expression. The collection references not only Viktor & Rolf's past collections but also their signature motifs, such as ruffles and embroideries and voluminous silhouettes, to create highly unorthodox haute couture as a 'new beginning'. A selection of vintage trench coats morphs into bulging ball gowns, one of them created from fading blue tulle, denim and pieces of fabric and sequins used for their original Hyères Festival prize–winning dress.

Strips of tulle, cotton, wool and satin have been braided, torn, ripped, twisted, woven by hand and mixed up to create new shapes, and embroidered with Swarovski crystals and buttons also recycled from previous collections. Some works incorporate vintage military coats, trench coats and sweatshirts emblazoned with bejewelled Diet Coke and Adidas logos and paired with trousers from their past Monsieur menswear collections, embellished with embroidered and appliquéd patches and crumbling top hats made of wood and paper.

Vagabonds

haute couture, autumn–winter 2016–17

cotton, polyamide, silk, wool, polyester, sequins

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Vagabonds

haute couture, autumn–winter 2016–17

cotton, polyamide, silk, wool, polyester, sequins

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Vagabonds

haute couture, autumn–winter 2016–17

cotton, polyamide, silk, wool, polyester, metal

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Erin

Flowers

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2003
porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, cotton,
silk (organza), polyester, leather

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Fashion shows

Viktor & Rolf's collections begin with an idea, which is often abstract. The conceptual and technical development of a collection always includes consideration of its final presentation – the fashion show. This approach is quite unconventional within the fashion world, where many fashion shows are simply formulaic presentations on a straight runway. Viktor & Rolf conceptualise their fashion shows more as performances in which they act as storytellers, directors and often as participants.

Utilising sculpted fabric forms, distorted proportions and impeccable cuts, Viktor & Rolf fashion shows are spectacular presentations bringing art into fashion. From sending models down the runway harnessed to a lighting and sound system (*The Fashion Show*) to 'cloning' model Shalom Harlow for the first virtual fashion show (*Shalom*) and exploring society's obsession with celebrity in their *Red Carpet Dressing* collection (a surreal response to the fashion industry's practice of paying stars to wear designers' garments at red carpet events), no Viktor & Rolf fashion show is the same.

This gallery presents some of the key performances of Viktor & Rolf's career, from their *First Couture* collection to their most recent *Vagabonds* presentation, held in Paris in July 2016.

Wearable Art

haute couture, autumn–winter 2015–16

Paris, July 2015

Vagabonds

haute couture, autumn–winter 2016–17

Paris, July 2016

Performance of Sculptures

haute couture, spring–summer 2016

Paris, January 2016

Van Gogh Girls

haute couture, spring–summer 2015

Paris, January 2015

Bedtime Story

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2005–06

Paris, March 2005

First Couture

haute couture, spring–summer 1998

Paris, January 1998

Atomic Bomb

haute couture, autumn–winter 1998–99

Paris, July 1998

Blacklight

haute couture, spring–summer 1999

Paris, January 1999

Bells

haute couture, autumn–winter 2000–01

Paris, July 2000

Flowerbomb

ready to wear, spring–summer 2005

Paris, October 2004

The Fashion Show

ready-to-wear, autumn–winter 2007–08

Paris, February 2007

Shalom

ready-to-wear, spring–summer 2009

October 2008

Glamour Factory

ready-to-wear, autumn winter 2010

Paris, March 2010

Russian Doll

haute couture, autumn–winter 1999–2000

Paris, July 1999

Zen Garden

haute couture, autumn–winter 2013–14

Paris, July 2013

Bonbon

haute couture, spring–summer 2014
Paris, January 2014

Timepiece

Timepiece brings glamour to the art gallery, in the form of a miniaturised fashion show. Like a traditional carillon clock that draws crowds to the town square, this work generates a sense of expectation as an audience gathers and waits for the show to begin. A clock (bearing Viktor & Rolf's distinctive wax seal) marks the time and, every fifteen minutes, a doll appears on the runway, wearing an exquisite gown from Viktor & Rolf's latest couture show, *Vagabonds*.

Time seems to stand still as the doll makes her way down the runway. Her mechanical gestures are programmed to enable photographers to capture the best shots and fashion editors to admire the cut and texture of her couture gown. Then, in a matter of minutes, she returns backstage and the bombastic sound and light show is over. Anticipation grows again for the doll's next appearance.

Timepiece, which was specially commissioned for *Viktor&Rolf: Fashion Artists*, distils Viktor & Rolf's ambivalent attitude to the fashion business. Much of their work questions the industry's rigid timetable for presenting collections and the conformity of the runway show format. The art gallery provides an alternative space to make fashion that is timeless.

Timepiece performs every 15 minutes.

Timepiece

2016

porcelain (bisque), papier-mâché, hair, cotton, tulle, silk,
mixed media

Viktor&Rolf, Amsterdam

Wedding dress for HRH Princess Mabel van Oranje-Nassau

silk (satin, georgette, tulle, ribbon), crystals

Royal Collections, The Netherlands

Mabel Wisse Smit became a Dutch Princess when she married Prince Friso van Oranje-Nassau in 2004. She commissioned Viktor & Rolf to design her wedding dress because she wanted it to be 'extravagant' and unconventional. They worked together to design the dress, which took 600 hours to make.

The spectacular satin dress is decorated with 248 silk bows. Viktor & Rolf use ribbons and bows in many of their collections. In their 2005 *Flowerbomb* collection, the designers created several dresses that looked like elaborately wrapped gifts. Bows are particularly appropriate for a wedding dress, as the knot traditionally represents enduring love.