



DECONSTRUCTING SAINT LAURENT

HE REMOVED THE YVES FROM SAINT LAURENT, INTRODUCED A REBELLIOUS NEW MUSE AND SUPERCHARGED THE LABEL'S SALES. FOUR YEARS ON, ENFANT TERRIBLE HEDI SLIMANE UNVEILS HIS LAST COLLECTION FOR THE ICONIC FRENCH HOUSE – AND THIS SEASON, THERE ARE MORE SEQUINS, SHOULDER PADS AND ATTITUDE THAN EVER

WORDS: NATALIE HUGHES



You could have heard a pin drop in the Left Bank townhouse that was the location for Saint Laurent's A/W16 show – and not least because this season, Hedi Slimane eschewed his signature rock 'n' roll soundtrack for a narrator (a nod to how the presentations were originally shown). This was to be Slimane's last collection for the house, and the reverent silence seemed to acknowledge that.

The clothes, on the other hand, were anything but subdued. A *Le Smoking* suit was topped with the frothy ruff of a see-through chiffon blouse. Shoulders of jackets and dresses were pronounced to gravity-defying proportions. Gold accoutrements – from coiled, serpentine necklaces to metallic cummerbund belts – play-fought for attention against spray-on silver sequins.

Slimane's Saint Laurent girl has grown up, throwing off her plaid shirts in favour of all things high-shine and super-tight. But once a rebel, always a rebel. She wears translucent tights with exclamation-point pumps and tops off her party dress with a paint-splattered biker jacket. It's this defiant attitude that's Slimane's winning card; in four years, he's transformed the Kering-owned maison from underdog to hero, swapping starched couture for ripped denim. No one likes a goodie-goodie, after all.

Power shoulders, ra-ra skirts, asymmetry... 1980s nostalgics may rejoice, but they ought not to unearth their crimpers and blue eyeshadow just yet. Saint Laurent's retro-redux dictates we look to Helmut Newton's 1970s dominatrices for beauty inspiration; read slicked-back 'dos, heavily-kohl'd eyes and sulky scarlet pouts.

Besides, this is hardly the stuff that polyester thrift store nightmares are made of. It may look effortless, but each piece is constructed with couture precision. A densely-beaded dress, a buttery, crystal-laden leather jacket and a coat of painted ostrich feathers suggest painstaking handiwork in the Saint Laurent atelier.

These aren't simply *objets d'art* – they're collectors' items, given Slimane's recent exit. His final love letter to the skinny-jean-wearing tribe? A scarlet-red cape, dramatically sculpted to resemble a heart. Wearable? Not unless you're Lady Gaga or Daphne Guinness. Luckily, the shape also comes in the form of a gold, cross-body bag. Slimane's love affair with Saint Laurent may be over, but there are no broken hearts – on the runway, at least.

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WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR HIP. SAINT LAURENT'S COOL-GIRLS CARRY THIS GOLD LOVE-HEART CROSS-BODY ACROSS TULLE AND LEATHER, LEAVING HANDS FREE FOR DANCING.

HOT PICK



THIS SEASON, SLIMANE SWAPPED OUT HIS USUAL LINE-UP OF INDIE KIDS FOR AN INDUSTRY-ONLY FRONT ROW, INCLUDING VOGUE ITALIA'S EDITRICE FRANCA SOZZANI.



THE LOOK



BRICK-RED LIPSTICK AND KOHL-SET EYES CALL TO MIND HELMUT NEWTON'S ICONIC YVES SAINT LAURENT CAMPAIGNS.

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