

## Excerpt from the exhibition review “HUSSEIN CHALAYAN: FROM FASHION AND BACK”

[...]

*From Fashion and Back* generously flaunts Chalayan’s outwardly conceptual concerns in true form. The show reportedly drew much inspiration from issues which truly hit home within the contextual space of the contemporary milieu; ideas relating to genetic technological processes, displacement migration and cultural identity were readily dissected in between the multiplicity of layers, fastenings and diaphanous material that make up Chalayan’s intriguingly futuristic designs.

Upon entry, one is immediately accosted by the arresting display comprising three similarly posed mannequins outfitted in creations from the designer’s edgy new collection, *Inertia* wherein Chalayan crafted a range of printed dresses inspired by the critical moment of a car crash, albeit in suspended animation. Somewhat of a soft-core reference to the notoriously controversial *Crash* by the late novelist J.G Ballard, the results which saw the mannequins’ torsos draped in material alluding to a viscous substance in the process of simultaneously oozing and congealing, are nothing short of visually dynamic. Aside from present-day pieces, the exhibition also enables visitors a rare glimpse into Chalayan’s early years as a promising student at Central Saint Martins in the 1990s by showcasing a dress from his thesis show which had been scored with rust before being buried as a painstaking means for it to arrive at its beautiful, delicately distressed state. In many senses, the graduation piece – a curious interplay between an organic process and that of a technological one – can be perceived as a precursor to Chalayan’s current mode of rethinking in terms of how fashion is able to function on a whole.

Another highlight was a projection of Chalayan’s groundbreaking Spring/Summer 2007 collection, ‘One Hundred and Eleven’ where couture was subtly implanted with kinetic technology and thus, given a life of its own with the liberty to collapse, transform and jiggle at will to the delight of its bemused spectators; the final act of the show involved a dress which gradually ‘morphed’ into a wide-brimmed chapeau, seductively stripping the model and raining Swarovski crystal dust all over her skin in the process. In retrospect, it was arguably a dress from Chalayan’s ‘Airborne’ Collection that quietly stole the show. Decked out in a shower of dazzling crystals and 15,000 flickering LED lights, the dazzling garment was thoughtfully situated within the confines of a glass box that’d been deliberately darkened to dramatically proclaim its superpowers as well as that of its artful creator.

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