

The Style and Aesthetics of the Founding Avant-garde Japanese Fashion Designers

Sarah E. Braddock Clarke

Abstract

The founding avant-garde Japanese fashion designers, frequently grouped by fashion media assert an international outlook, while also acknowledging their national heritage. The press, to date, have brought out certain characteristics they communicate that raise questions concerning aesthetics, beauty, taste, identity, culture and society. Beginning in the 1970s the pioneering work of Issey Miyake paved the way for alternative aesthetics where one-piece cutting and innovative textiles were key - evident in his collections throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Issey Miyake, SS 99). Paris, in 1981 saw the designers Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto challenging the fashion world with their dominant use of the colour black in cuts and constructions that demonstrate asymmetry, deconstruction, imperfection, oversize cutting, and layering that became their signatures (Comme des Garçons, SS 91 and AW 92), (Yohji Yamamoto, AW 91 and AW 96). The innovative forms of these three designers reference the *kimono* and articulate space between the body and its clothing, giving rise to new ways of dressing. Radical, revolutionary and highly inventive, their uncompromising work from the last three decades of the 20th century has left a lasting legacy by significantly impacting on, and influencing designers worldwide.

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