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FASHION

#SuzyPFW: Comme des Garçons' Silent Tribute To A 50-Year Achievement

'Gathering of Shadows' is Rei Kawakubo's definition of her half-century of design

by SUZY MENKES

2 days ago



The Comme des Garçons Autumn/Winter 2019 show closed with all the models standing in a circle with their heads lifted to the lights moving above them.

CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

The Gathering of Shadows'. Just those few words from Rei Kawakubo sent a shiver across the room – even before the music at Comme des Garçons veered from kids singing the hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful to sounds of war and disruption. And then there was the weird, wild music of London performance DJ Parma Ham.



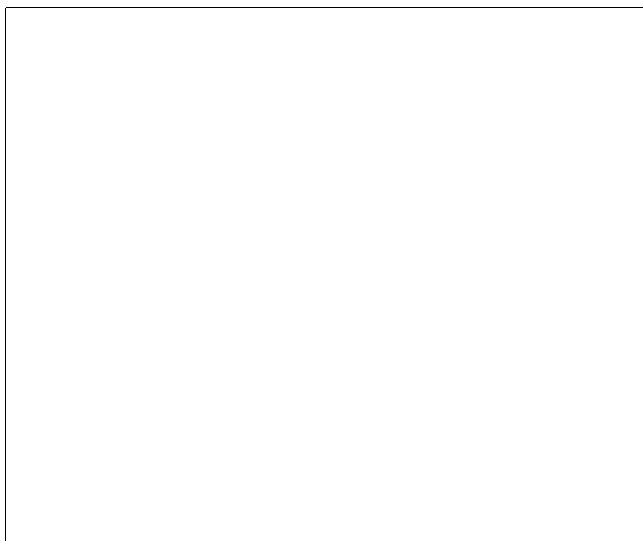


Comme des Garçons Autumn/Winter 2019

CREDIT: GORUNWAY

The message relayed to the audience continued like this: “Many small shadows come together to make one powerful thing”.

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By the time that 'thing' appeared, it was a blown-up, shiny plastic protuberance – or maybe a short black dress with a circular ball as a skirt.

This show was part of Kawakubo's return after a series of shows that were crazily incomprehensible. The unwearable objects created were noble and impressive, but still beyond comprehension as something to wear.





Comme des Garçons Autumn/Winter 2019

CREDIT: GORUNWAY

That period has now been over for a year. But a typical Comme dress from this new Autumn/Winter 2019 season could still look fierce and frightening, as in a quilted top with sleeves elongated way beyond the wrist and a net skirt shaped as if to underpin a crinoline.

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Comme des Garçons Autumn/Winter 2019

CREDIT: GORUNWAY

But Kawakubo thrives on this awkward beauty. Dresses that followed were negotiable as reality clothing: a black dress with a big bow and tufts of beads; or another in leather with the arms an illusion of a basket weave. The clothes were worn with mesh hose and, on the shoes, the names of George Cox, the inventor of the original creeper shoe, and Canadian shoe designer John Fluevog, best known for his cult styles during the grunge era.





John Fluevog written on the foot of a sock boot in the Comme des Garçons Autumn/Winter 2019 show

CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

With these beautiful – even elegant – clothes, where was the sense of the ‘shadow’ mentioned in the title of the collection?





Comme des Garçons Autumn/Winter 2019

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A purple velvet dress, in its Comme oddity, was bold and beautiful. Maybe the ‘many small shadows’ were just a faint cry for respite after producing so much extraordinary fashion for so very many years.

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Backstage, Rei Kawakubo stood with her partner Adrian Joffe, surrounded by the show clothes with their touches of Comme memories, such as punk plaid with a scribble of graffiti and a rakish frill at the top. Congratulations for the first 50 years.



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