

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Balmain's new collection makes truthfulness fashionable

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A scene from the Balmain Fall-Winter 2022 campaign. Image credit: Balmain

By AMIAH TAYLOR

French fashion label Balmain is transforming intangible concepts like honesty and clarity into a new tactile ready-to-wear collection.

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Through the use of lace, leather and patchwork detailing, Balmain's creative director Olivier Rousteing used style as a vehicle for narrative. The brand's fall/winter 2022 collection and campaign serve as a commentary on judgment and transparency.

"Transparency and honesty are inextricably linked," said David Friedman, cofounder of [WealthQuotient](#), New York.

"However, true transparency and honesty will challenge some brands to actually reveal some of their flaws which most of them have traditionally shunned as antithetical to the intrinsic nature of luxury as aspirational," he said. "To truly be honest and transparent they will need to go beyond the aspirational and reveal their darker side to truly achieve honesty and transparency."

Desert futurism

The Balmain fall/winter 2022 campaign film, by Mert and Marcus, sets a contemplative tone in an austere desert environment.

A model towers above a set of green rectangular stairs in leather platform boots. Another model laying with her legs outstretched, clad in an all-leather outfit, sunbathes.

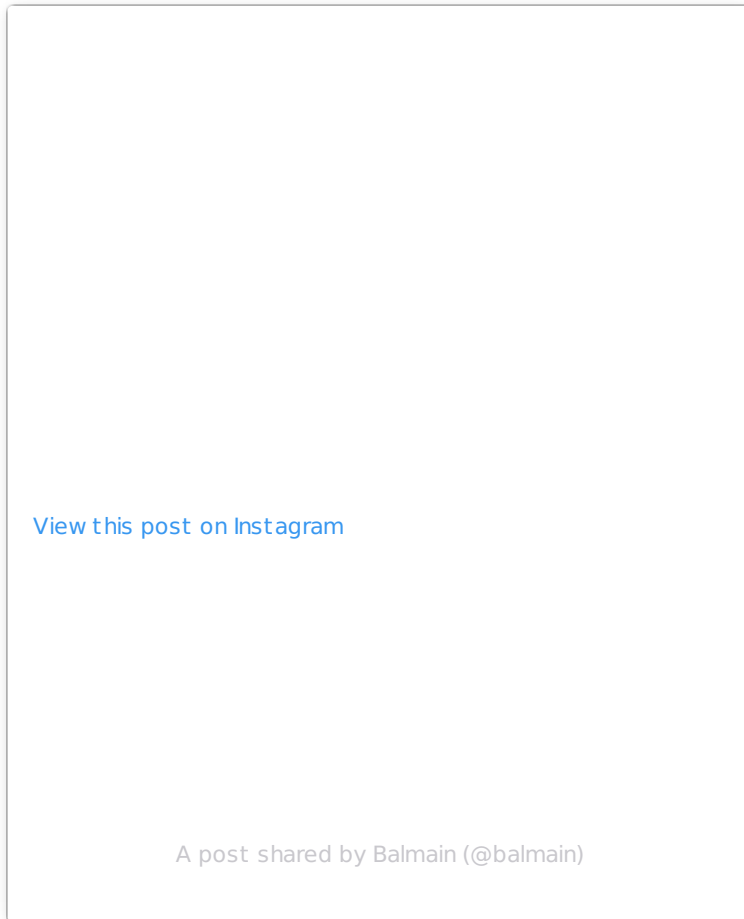
The Balmain fall-winter 2022 campaign film

Serene music plays as the desert is shown from a 365-degree angle. Taking in the view of the sand and the blue skies, a male model squints at the horizon.

He takes small measured steps in his sturdy thick-soled boots. A pair of female models donned in contrasting black and white dresses march forward in the desert sun.

Then, a futuristic trio of female models with slick hairstyles and armor-like outfits emerges. Donned in

monochromatic white ensembles, the pale trio of women look angelic.



A model wearing a ready-to-wear blazer from the Balmain fall-winter 2022 collection

The severity of their expressions contrasts with their light and ethereal clothing as they shield their faces from the sun, adorned in glinting gold accessories. The music becomes distorted.

A woman in a futuristic bralette with cut-outs appears. The film ends as the male model donned in black leather continues to trek the desert alone.

Corporate transparency

The Balmain fall/winter 2022 collection is characterized by unlikely combinations of fabrics like lace, metal and neoprene. While the material choices are rather avant-garde and cutting edge, the French fashion label may be behind the curve on the very theme of its new line: transparency.

Balmain has not transparently stated that it pays supply chain workers a living wage, per [Good On You](#), a resource for rating the sustainability and ethicality of fashion brands. The French fashion house also has not clearly announced that it has a policy in place to minimize the suffering of animals.

While some Parisian luxury brands, like Hermes, have opted to swap animal materials for a cruelty-free approach ([see story](#)), Balmain is staunchly continuing its use of animal leather.

Gucci specifically has begun innovating by using plant-based leather ([see story](#)). On the same page, Stella McCartney recently released a vegan handbag made of mushroom-based materials ([see story](#)).

It remains to be seen whether Balmain will transition its new focus on transparency from an artistic statement to a lived reality.

"In a sea of curated socially constructed images across social media that represents a schism between the visual self and an individual's true authentic self, the high net worth consumer is desperately seeking authentic voices that show their warts' and not just an air-brushed meticulously curated image," Mr. Friedman said.