

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Balmain embraces pharaonic symbolism, hieroglyphs in edgy midseason effort

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Creative director Olivier Rousteing harnesses the power of Egyptian iconography for Balmain's 2023 resort collection. Image credit: Balmain

By AMIRAH KEATON

For its latest effort, French fashion house Balmain is harnessing the power of iconography.

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The brand's seasoned creative director Olivier Rousteing is shining a light on symbolism by way of a strategic and culturally-sentient collaboration. Egyptian fine jeweler Amina Ghali and her handcrafted expressive ethos beget a gold-plated bustier and other rare accessories items, many of which are featured at the forefront of Balmain's 2023 resort campaign.

"For Balmain's latest collection, I returned to one of my favorite inspirations: Egypt and its extraordinary history," said Mr. Rousteing, in a statement.

"Those who share our passion will be able to quickly recognize the many icons of ancient Egypt," Mr. Rousteing said. "And I especially love how this special creation helps to make very clear that those same age-old symbols possess an incomparable power of forever appearing incredibly modern even futuristic."

Redefining resort wear

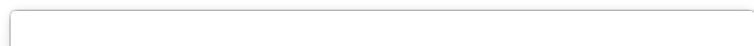
Ahead of an official spring/summer round, Mr. Rousteing and his creative partner are presenting a remixed collection, one that appears to be attempting a redefinition of resortwear.

At its core is a cultural appreciation of sorts, per brand messaging and assets.

A base-heavy soundtrack frames one of Balmain's campaign videos. In a clip posted to the brand's Instagram page, a model reclines on a vehicle amid a sandy, dystopian set, decked out in branded gear.

On display are fresh renditions of the Balmain Unicorn. This time, a raw-edged take on the contemporary sneaker style of much promotion ([see story](#)) reigns supreme, matching the model's full complimentary fit.

Ms. Ghali, on the other hand, stars in a separate behind-the-scenes snippet. Therein, the designer talks about pushing design boundaries and channeling new realms of creativity with Balmain.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Azza Fahmy Jewellery (@azzafahmy)

The highlighted piece, a handcrafted gold-plated bustier with an Egyptian Eye of Horus at its center according to its designer, the symbol central to the piece is synonymous with the ancient empire, evoking references from the treasure of Tutankhamen and Ptolemaic plaques serves as a tribute to her team's Egyptian ancestry.

All in all, the integration of Azza Fahmy Jewelry's Eye of Horus bustier adds an authentic element of heritage in design to the collection's back story, making for a solid campaign component.

"We've always enjoyed working on collaborations, they are ever so inspiring," said Amina Ghali, head designer at [Azza Fahmy Jewelry](#), Cairo, in a statement released via social media.



Behind-the-scenes of the bustier's production at the Azza Fahmy workshop. Image credit: Azza Fahmy/Flare PR

"They allow us to step outside our comfort zone and be challenged in many ways, which always has an impact on our designs to come," Ms. Ghali said. "We've always admired Olivier Rousteing and of course Balmain, and to create a piece that is inspired by Ancient Egypt made this experience all the more special.

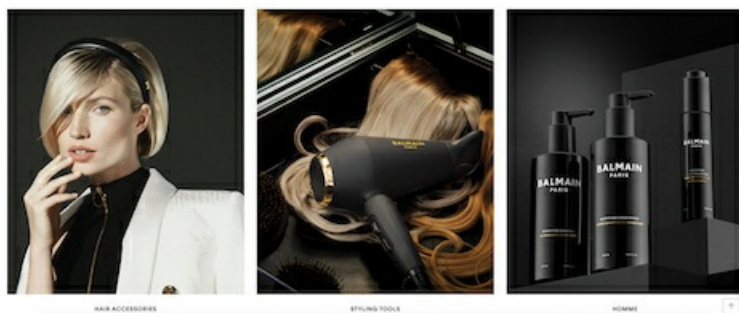
"[It is] pretty incredible how a culture that is more than 7000 years old still continues to inspire the world today [it is] always beautiful to pay tribute to our heritage."

Balmain for life

Interestingly, the brand's personal care line Balmain Hair Couture makes an appearance in the brand's novel round of campaign imagery.

Part of an ever-expanding personal care universe, the line's product range houses everything from texturizing salt

spray and perfume for tresses, to styling tools such as professional-grade blow-dryers, curling wands and cordless straighteners.



Balmain Hair Couture makes an appearance in the brand's current campaign imagery. Image credit: Balmain

A licensed beauty line is also currently in development, in partnership with U.S. beauty group Este Lauder, and is slated for a 2024 launch ([see story](#)).

A true testament to the brand's growth, with the introduction of multiple entities across the luxury lifestyle category, the line reaches new heights alongside Balmain's midseason collection.

Balmain's own fine jewelry brand is not too far behind, having been launched officially as a sustainable venture this past summer season ([see story](#)).

Balmain Fine Jewelry was deployed in July 2022

As Mr. Rousteing works to get the maison's latest offshoots off the ground, the brand often expertly leans into opportunities to cross-promote all lines. Sister brands are credited in the footnotes of campaign content across Balmain's social media pages.

Licensing does run the risk of brand dilution, an aspect that remains top of mind for luxury marketers. However, each supplementary Balmain project appears to have a clear and personal point of view.

Mr. Rousteing reveals in a promotional film, for instance, that he had previously been the victim of injuries from a severe home fireplace explosion, thus his pivot toward the beauty industry is informed by the experience.

The authenticity could work in favor of long-term resonance, outreaching even the tenure of an ambitious creative director who these days employs a bold blueprint, taking his chance at actively establishing the house's trajectory for years to come.