

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Balmain, Beyonc codesign collection marked by haute couture 'first'

March 28, 2023



*The latest couture collection from Balmain is shaped by the seventh solo album from the artist, drawing on the collective desire to dance through the pandemic and beyond. Image credit: Balmain*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

French fashion label Balmain is out with the first-ever couture collection to be created in conjunction with an African-American woman.

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In this case, that muse is world-renowned singer and perhaps among the most famous people on earth, Beyonc. The couture **collection** is a result of the singer and Balmain creative director Olivier Rousteing teaming up, creating pieces responding to the songs on Beyonc's *Renaissance* album.

### Sewing songs

With the album's accompanying tour only a month away, the drop is being called a "wearable album," as Balmain explores new fashion concepts.

While the line is not available for purchase, the looks explore the interplays of music and fashion a story told from a diverse perspective in a historic moment, as Beyonc is officially the first Black woman to oversee a Parisian heritage brand's couture.

"Olivier is a dream collaborator. All that he has done as a Black designer in breaking down and opening doors has been inspiring. I always knew one day I would work with him on a collection. I am so proud of what we created together." [@Beyonce #RENAISSANCECOUTURE pic.twitter.com/BaqMKqswf6](https://twitter.com/BaqMKqswf6)

Balmain (@Balmain) **March 24, 2023**

Mr. Rousteing is also the first Black man to hold his position of leading collections at a Parisian heritage brand, showing how this drop is not only expanding the ways in which fashion can operate as an art form, but is making

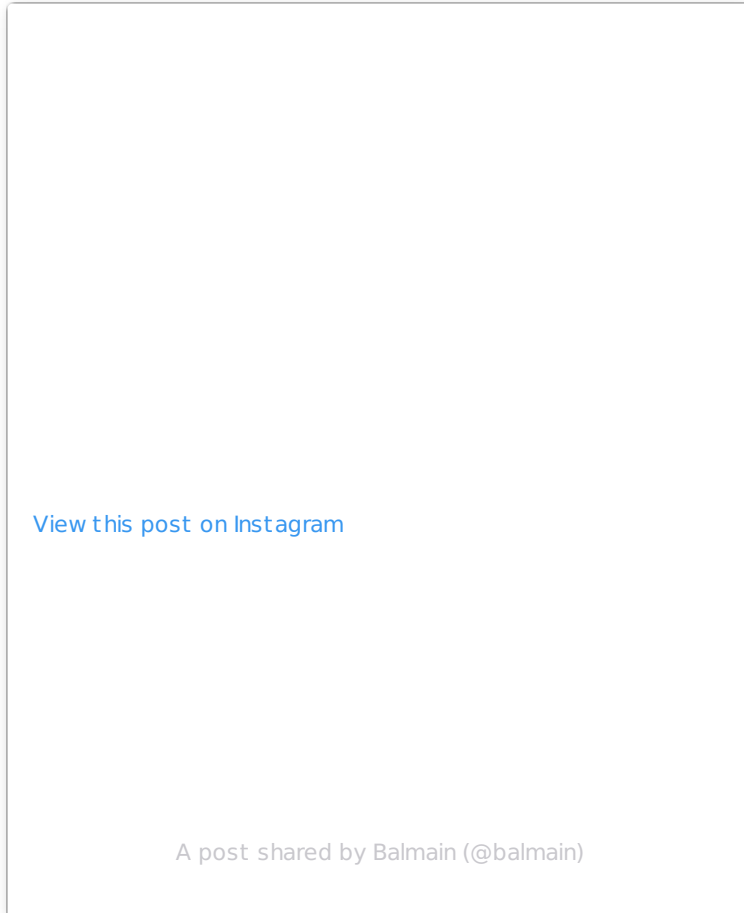
huge moves towards racial equity within the luxury fashion industry. The designer has prioritized empowering young people throughout his career, having recently led education efforts for Parisian fashion students ([see story](#)).

### *Presenting Renaissance' Couture by Beyonc x Balmain*

"*Renaissance* appeared at the moment when we needed it most," Mr. Rousteing said in a statement.

"After three long years of a pandemic, well, weren't we all more than a little bit ready to rejoin the real world?" he said. "It's clear that Beyonc clearly understood just how hungry we all were to start dancing again.

"Beyond that, Bey's spirit, tunes, commitments and messages pushed both of us, as we worked closely together as true partners, co-designing our new Renaissance' couture collection."



In the stylized campaign featuring the 16 looks, models act as artistic installations, donning the intricate pieces. The team prioritized diversity, giving the 16 slots to People of Color.

The models sway and dance meditatively to the song *Move* by Beyonc, wearing breastplates, neon feathers, golden orbs and even a crystal chandelier, each piece embodying the song they were inspired by. For example, the opening piece made up of a metal bustier shaped like a sun is based on *I'm That Girl* lyrics that say "From the top of the morning, I shine (ah-ooh) / Right through the blinds (ah-ooh) / Touching everything in my plain view / And everything next to me gets lit up, too."

The attention to detail is quite apparent, nods to the feel, imagery and even colors mentioned in the songs on the album.



*The disco-ball inspired final outfit draws on the joyful, last dance. Image credit: Balmain*

The final look embraces the final track *Summer Renaissance's* disco feel and celebratory tempo, being a head-to-toe tinsel piece, glittering like confetti on the dance floor.

Put all together, and it is a visual representation of Beyonc's audible achievements and of the achievements of those who have been historically left out of creative decision-making in luxury. In essence, it is a success story told in couture.

### Star gazing

Beyonc is not the first popular singer to front a Balmain drop, with the brand turning to other legendary singers recently in various collaborations as well, further deepening its bond to music.

In November of 2022, Cher led the creation of the futuristic Blaze bag, being the face of the accompanying campaign ([see story](#)).

The video had a science-fiction feel, with lightning bolts and dystopian-esque outfits being heavily featured alongside the calf-skin bag, bringing a level of relevance to the campaign centered around the longtime celebrity.

Appealing even more to millennials, the brand tapped Colombian singer Juan Luis Londoó Arias, known professionally as Maluma, in the creation of a 90s-inspired fashion line in 2021 ([see story](#)).



*This latest collaboration stands out amidst other celebrity-studded campaigns with the focus on justice and musical embodiment. Image credit: Balmain*

That said, this latest partnership with Beyonc is arguably the most important collaboration of Balmain's to date thanks to the dedication to diversity, innovative take on music-meets-fashion, historic firsts in equity and involvement on the part of the artist. The ethics and hands-on approach is sure to make a noteworthy impact on the industry, creating a new blueprint for the way brands work with celebrities and uplift the minds and voices of People of Color going forward.