

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

'East meets West' in Kenzo's fall/winter 2023 campaign

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The newest push places 1960s Japan front and center as the brand's artistic director conjures up visions of the Osaka and Kyoto of his childhood. Image credit: Kenzo

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

French fashion label Kenzo is bridging the cultural divide.

For fall/winter 2023, the brand is out with "East Meets West," the campaign exploring the interactions between the United Kingdom, the United States and the streets of Japan. Specifically bringing to life the 1960s youth culture that swept up the Asian nation, artistic director Tomoaki Nagao better known as Nig Goldeneye is welcoming the Kenzo community to the Kyoto and Osaka of his childhood.

Traditional values

In a dialogue between heritage and future; tradition and evolution, the label's newest campaign portrays the Japan that defined its creative leader.

This universe unfolds via nostalgic shots by photographer Keiz Kitajima. Directed by Frank Lebon and Lina Kutsovskaya from BeGood Studios, midcentury-inspired scenes of Kyoto and Osaka make landfall.

Kenzo's fall/winter 2023 campaign puts Japan at its heart

Examining the exchanges made between city dwellers and their environment, the variety of street portraits and moving imagery works to untangle this relationship.

As the 1985 song "Dreamer" by Urban Dance plays, a slew of spaces around each respective city set the stage.

In Osaka, the culinary, gaming and commercial worlds in the locale are represented, the shooting sites including Jan Jan Yokochō, New Star Game Centre, Tai Yoshi Hyakuban, Universe Yokochō, Shinsekai, Amerikamura Mitsutera Kaikan, Kinryu Ramen and Namba Bears.



Capturing the state of Kyoto at the referenced time period, a model practices forest bathing or "shinrin-yoku," a term that emerged in Japan in the 1980s from an ancient ritual. Image credit: Kenzo

Kyoto's slot pours over its historic and ecological history, shot at the Bamboo Forest of Daikakuji, the Kamo River, the Observation Deck of Seiryuden and Shosei-en.

As models sport wardrobe pieces drawn from Japanese, British and American culture in this kaleidoscope of locations, the nations that have most affected Nig Goldeneye bring an impact to the collection.

Various style eras find their way onto the screen, including the Youthquake movement of Swinging Sixties, a term coined by *Vogue's* editor in 1965, Diana Vreeland. Honoring the diversity and mindset of the locations at hand, vibrant street culture, the underground music scene and the concept of a melting pot stew together.



Certain activities like gaming have remained popular since the 1970s, a permanence honored in the campaign. Image credit: Kenzo

"Fight the power" aesthetics and the cosmopolitan contrasts between various city neighborhoods each have their place in the Kenzo slot, nodding to the decade's social landscape and the sites that the man behind the collection at hand grew up seeing.

Since it was shot on location, the campaign also extends into present-day youth movements happening in Kyoto and Osaka, making space for the contemporary alongside the heritage codes.

This is further expressed through the fashion released with the visuals, as the collection marries traditional and modern constructs of dress.



Japan's urban identity is examined in the latest film, including the elements that link the cities' pasts and their modernity. Image credit: Kenzo

At one point in the film, Nig Goldeneye himself makes a cameo, playing a game of shogi in Kyoto's Shosei-en as he dons the collection's signature broken-stripe Dazzle motif inspired by Kenzo Takada's archival inclusions from the 1980s.

On the other hand, the newly appointed brand ambassador announced with this appearance and K-pop singer Hansol Vernon Chwe, better known as Vernon from the boy band Seventeen, wears the root of the look.

The pattern comes from an ancestral Japanese weaving technique called Sashiko or "rice-grain stitching," a process utilized by farmers and martial artists in clothing repairs that later became popular.



Vernon's appointment was announced with the fall/winter 2023 rollout. Image credit: Kenzo

Institutional fixtures of the luxury fashion world and the industry's faces of the future are sat side by side, part of the Kenzo fall/winter 2023 campaign's case for unity. Blending together the Japan Nig Goldeneye used to know with the Japan that is presently watching him rise in ranks, a suggestion seems eminent: perhaps they are one and the same.

Intercultural communication

The French label has often turned to Europe in advertising, and with the creative director at its helm, combined this influence with contributions from Japan.

Last year's fall/winter 2022 collection was one such meditation.

Though much more Eurocentric than the current push at hand, an intercultural theme also anchored the past campaign. Jungle prints, bomber jackets and French monuments all were given the stage, the film's caption reading, "You'll find Kenzo where Japan meets Paris" ([see story](#)).



British plaid is among the few Eurocentric adds in the fall/winter 2023 slot. Image credit: Kenzo

Nig Goldeneye drew upon the label's home continent again for spring/summer 2023, bringing out the nautical looks that the British monarchy and French navy made popular in the mainstream nearly 180 years ago ([see story](#)).

Despite its Western focus, the collection shared the grounding in childhood that fall/winter 2023 is built on.

As the artistic executive continues to resurface his past in the curating of Kenzo's offerings, it is yet to be seen how much more about himself he will reveal, writing a personal history through fashion.