

VICTORIA BECKHAM

Autumn Winter 2023

Playing dress-up is an instinct that never fades. From children's costume parties to the rebellious customisation of teenagers and what we come to define as styling, the impulse to transform ourselves through clothes is forever thrilling. For the Autumn Winter 2023 Collection, Victoria Beckham investigates this construction of character through an eclectic and eccentric proposition. Inspired by the unconventional women that form her evolving community, the designer's second show in Paris is an homage to an experimental and unafraid approach to style: the infectious passion for the art of dressing that ignited her own love of fashion and continues to drive her work.

For the show's invitation, Victoria Beckham invites Drew Barrymore to revisit the character of Edith Bouvier Beale played by the actress in *Grey Gardens* from 2009. Based on the 1975 documentary of the same name – a familiar source of inspiration for the designer – her performance celebrates Little Edie's entrancing relationship with the power of clothes. The unpredictable glamour characteristic of Little Edie's approach to dressing up informs a collection founded in eclecticism observed through the sophisticated lens of modernity. It establishes the premise for an idiosyncratic proposal expressed in deconstruction, customisation and subversion.

Dresses erratically composed from raw patchworks of plissé set an eccentric tone for the season silhouette. They are adorned with large feathers that serve as underpinnings in looks throughout, and enter into trippy plume prints on day and evening dresses. An optical illusion, the prints feed into a focus on texture central to the collection. From shadow plays on transparency to tactile surfaces and things that aren't what they seem, the effects imbue garments and accessories with a magnetic sense of oddness. Informed by the work of the Brazilian artist Solange Pessoa – who spent decades gathering human hair for her formidable installations – crochet knitwear and bibs are woven from hair extensions, pumps are crafted in the same material, and locks of faux hair slither from hem and necklines.

Circular cuts – which twists and rotates with movement – span the constructions of the collection: the single circular leg holes of long dresses allow skirts to fall dramatically behind the wearer; the circular side panels of knitted tops and skirts hold the silhouette of the garments; and evening gowns structured through circular crinoline that twist around the body breathe life into the collection's eccentric physicality. It's an exuberant approach to dressing and construction embodied in a long black dress customised from long strips of mesh fabric transformed into ruffles, or the perverted presence of croc-embossed waist-high leather boots and a matching caban.

A figurative expression of the brand's artisanal evolution, tailoring explores its own creative process: raw and hacked-up, the inside construction, hand-tagging and stitching of the tailor's workshop are revealed in strong-shouldered blazers with inverted lapels. Voluminous coats draw on the grammar of the military wardrobe. Deconstructed denim skirts and trousers coated in resin are imbued with gestural, exaggerated pleats, likewise featured in knitwear.

The pointed toe of sky-high platform shoes in glazed, patent or croc-embossed leather indicates a V, mirrored in a heel that forms the same letter. The collection introduces a new maxi take on the Victoria Beckham Bucket bag in croc-embossed leather. It is presented alongside the Chain Pouch in grained or croc-embossed leather, which manifests in its original size, as a jumbo, a mini, and as a new nano size.