

WOORYOUNGMI

PARIS

Fall-Winter 2024

In 1870, the Scottish missionary Alexander Williams published an account of Korea retrospectively titled *Knowing About Korea Without Ever Going There*. Until the late 19th century, the nation was largely closed to visitors – a ban that added to its mystery in a time of exploration – and Williams only ever made it to the border. Through a contemporary lens expanded by the globalisation of K-Culture, his binocular description of Korea and its capital are not so different to present-day Western fables created around Seoul. Fuelled by a digital audience, the city is, to many, an idea: a faraway metropole like no other; a place many know about without ever going there.

For Fall-Winter 2024, Wooyoungmi writes its own account of Seoul. Informed by local as well as foreign ideas of her hometown's city life, Madame Woo paints a portrait of the characters that inhabit it. As a Far-Eastern urban culture in constant conversation with those of the West, the dress codes of Seoul inherently cross-pollinate South Korean and European wardrobe traditions. The synthesis is reflected in a season proposal that freely blends the country's cultural signifiers with a sense of international urban style, but fuses them in an instinctive, distinctive Seoulite way: a look many know about without ever going there.

The collection imagines the passers-by on an everyday stroll through the streets of Seoul. It salutes the businessman in his elongated coats and relaxed suits in traditional menswear cloths, the bourgeois lady in her bouclé skirt-suit, blouse and lunchtime hat, and schoolboys and scouts in their preppy gear and sportswear. The utilitarian uniforms of Seoulite road workers morph with the codes of the city's youth culture. Bojagi, the Korean art of tying knots, is explored in hoodies, shirts and caps, while the coats of arms of South Korean families appear as surface decorations. Worn-in leather bags in relaxed constructions are echoed in the sensibilities of aged loafers, classic runners and Mary-Janes.

Like Seoul itself, the palette is canvased in the greys of buildings and the sky, warmed by the natural navy, dark green and brown of the cityscape. The autumnal nuances are lit up by a chaotic city print collaged from elements of Seoul – in jackets, blouses and scarves – and scatters of glitter on sportswear and denim. Hardware and jewellery sculpted like ears honour Buddhist philosophy close to the heart of Madame Woo: a symbol of wisdom and compassion, and the ability to hear the sounds of the city and the world. As a nod to the busking of the streets of Seoul, the soundtrack stages a soulful meeting between jazz and traditional South Korean gugak drums.

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Marco Van den Hove

CASTING
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HAIR
Gary Gill at Streeters

MAKEUP
Lynsey Alexander at Jolly Collective

MUSIC
Frédéric Sanchez at Intrepid London

PRODUCTION
Eyesight Production

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VIDEO PRODUCTION
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