



BALMAIN

BALMAIN KIDS FALL WINTER 2021-22 PRECOLLECTION

Olivier Rousteing's recent Balmain Men's and Women's runway was filled with surprises. Since so many friends could not fly to Paris attend, Rousteing included them digitally, filling his front rows with large screens that brought familiar faces—including Ana Wintour, Claudia Schieffer, Cara Delevingne, Jennifer Lopez and Cindy Crawford—out of lockdown and back to Paris Fashion Week, at least for one show. Just before Rousteing and his models took to the stage for their final bow, the house sent out two mini-models, dressed in scaled-down versions of two of the evening's key looks. It was one of the most memorable moments of the night, captured by the many photographers, as the Balmain Kids duo strolled down the long runway to sustained applause, using their remote controls to turn off the multiple screens, helping make clear Rousteing's fervent desire that soon we'll all return to safe IRL socializing and audiences.

Of course, Olivier Rousteing made sure to include those two show-stopping outfits in his latest Balmain Kids collections. They join a host of other designs that draw directly from his successful show. The fundamental theme of that runway, presented under the stars on a special stage constructed in the center of Paris' 400-year-old Jardin des Plantes, was heritage. As Olivier Rousteing often stresses, his offerings always build upon the incredible legacy left behind by Pierre Balmain, who founded his eponymous house 75 years ago this year. And that heritage was very present in Rousteing's latest show, which included several looks that incorporated a revamped Pierre Balmain monogram that the house founder had originally introduced 50 years ago. Rousteing has been sure to include many versions of that striking PB monogram in his Balmain Kids collection.

Building On Pierre Balmain's Legacy: A New 21st-Century Tailoring For How We Live Now

Rousteing's visions for next season—for both his runway and Balmain Kids collections—stress an indispensable element of Pierre Balmain's legacy: impeccable tailoring. As you'd expect, there are multiple references to the classic house signature: the 6-Button blazer and coat. Balmain's 6-Button styling is relied on for a wide variety of offerings—including, of course, DB blazers, as well as shorts, sweaters and sweats. Pierre Balmain and Olivier Rousteing's shared love for master draping is another crucial runway theme that is replicated for Balmain Kids. Many of the strongest girls' looks rely on distinctive pleating and ruching, building directly upon emblematic designs first shown in Pierre Balmain's legendary post-war salon presentations—styles that have, of course, inspired many Rousteing runways.

Balmain's renowned mastery of tailoring was very evident in the striking pagoda shoulders, elongated jackets and long, lean flares that were sent down Rousteing's runway. And the designer also relied on his atelier's craftsmen to perfect his remarkable-yet-rational new tailored silhouette, which ingeniously reflects how we actually live today. After all, now that we've all spent so many months working from home, seated at our kitchen tables during conference calls, it no longer seems out of the question to consider a pairing a tailored DB jacket with biker's shorts, does it? As one would expect, all of the catwalk's essential tailoring innovations, including Rousteing's clever vision of a new 21st-Century silhouette, form key elements of the latest Balmain Kids collection.

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Balmain Navies, Fluorescents and Shades of Grey

On the runway, many of Rousteing's heritage-based designs relied on the sleekest of greys, ranging in tone from silver to slate. Those greys allowed Rousteing's tailoring and pleating expertise to truly shine, while providing the perfect backdrop for surprising and eye-catching pops of fluorescents. Balmain Kids replicates that distinctive color pairing, while adding other hues from Rousteing's latest collection, as well—in particular, rich navy blues and the type of worn denim shades that bring to mind classic '80s jean treatments.

The deep navy, as one would expect, is paired with several Balmain signatures—including preppy-meets-rebel DB blazers and France's iconic mariniera (including one design that was deftly updated with the house's new distinctive pagoda shoulders). As always, Rousteing and Pierre Balmain's favorite color—black—is given great importance in the collection, with dresses, tops and jackets often relying on bold versions of the house's logo or monograms in embroidered or embossed treatments.

Balmain's Singular DNA Includes A Strong Dose of Daring Optimism

Forced to create most of his recent offerings from his home during lockdown, Olivier Rousteing found himself steered towards new inspirations and distinctive design directions. With so many of his evenings spent binge-watching childhood favorites, it's no surprise that the non-stop streaming helped to re-open his eyes to the power of the bright tones, sharp tailoring and incredible graphic patterns that defined the look of so many popular series of the '80s and '90s. Inspired by those "Fresh Prince" and "Miami Vice" signature styles, Rousteing has given a bright and optimistic spin to many of his most recent designs.

Bold, bright and upbeat tones and patterns, riffing on the look of vintage logos, old-school graffiti and Memphis-style patterns are splashed across Balmain Kids tees, dresses and sweats. Striking sherbet tones seen on fleece offerings channel a fresh take on the pastel spirit of "Miami Vice." Rousteing explained to the press that the unexpected choice of positive tones during a troubled moment was actually a true reflection of the house's unique DNA. "This house has optimism and audacity built into its DNA," Rousteing noted. "We never forget that 75 years ago, Pierre Balmain was willing to take a daring bet—after years of war, occupation and suffering, he set out to found his own house during an unstable time of shortages, outages and worries, immediately after France's liberation. He was young, daring and convinced that better days were ahead. And all that energy, audaciousness and optimism helped ensure that this house was one of the forces that helped restore Paris to its position as the fashion world's capital. Of course, we know that today's troubles pale in comparison to those faced by Pierre Balmain's generation. We also know—all too well—that health dangers and worries still remain with us today. But just like our founder, we remain optimistic in the power of all of us to believe in and create better worlds."

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