

BALMAIN

PARIS

BALMAIN KIDS SPRING SUMMER 2023 PRECOLLECTION

On a large backdrop, set behind the dozens of models confidently marching down Olivier Rousteing's most recent Paris Fashion Week runway, were enormous letters spelling out a quote from the author of 'Le Petit Prince,' Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: "Il est bien plus difficile de se juger soi-même que de juger autrui. Si tu réussis à bien te juger, c'est que tu es un véritable sage" (It is much more difficult to judge yourself than to judge others. If you succeed in judging yourself correctly, then you are truly a wise person).

That line perfectly summed up Rousteing's compelling message, as the Balmain Creative Director wove his own very personal history into the house's latest collection. As one of fashion's earliest adaptors of the tools of social-media, Rousteing had learned early on that the power of instant digital communication is often paired with the price of suffering from the poison of anonymous posters' scornful judgements. Facing on-line harassment has taught Rousteing that only possible response to bullying is to directly confront it—to confidently celebrate oneself, while drawing courage from the support and love of others, in order to honestly push back against hate and aggression. There is, as Balmain's uplifting runway made very clear, an incredibly liberating and affirmative strength that results from that mixture of solidarity, truth and transparency. Olivier Rousteing and his team have worked to channel that same powerfully inspiring message—relying on many of the cuts, colors and embellishments first seen on the Balmain runway—into the Balmain Kids Resort 2023 Collection.

INSTITUTIONAL

As its name makes clear, Balmain Kids' Institutional Collection riffs on some of Olivier Rousteing most easily identifiable signatures. Bold black-and-white graphics, which have consistently played a key role the last ten years of Balmain runways, are perfectly adapted for the Balmain Kids customer, with Rousteing's favorite oversized pied-de-poule (houndstooth) motif offered alongside eye-catching horizontal stripes and can't-be-missed house logos. Mini-me tweed and denim designs channel the same distinctive spirit and strong silhouettes that set apart today's modern Balmain. And, just as you'd expect, those offerings are often finished off with golden ornaments—the Balmain monogram or its famed shining buttons. Of course, six of those same Balmain golden buttons adorn the collection's take on Balmain's iconic blazers. Whether sharply tailored, chicly oversized or adopting a runway-inspired asymmetrical treatment—the house's instantly recognizable jackets have been perfectly adapted for the Balmain Kids customer. And, for the very youngest house followers, Olivier Rousteing has decided to introduce a unexpected spin on the familiar Balmain lion's head. The new, playful lion cub symbol, regally adorned with a jauntily placed house crown, makes very clear that the youngest recruits into the Balmain Army are well prepared to grow up into future fierce members of the unique confederation.

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ELASTIC LYRIC

The uniquely uplifting theme of Olivier Rousteing's latest runway was perfectly summed up by a series of designs that relied on a boldly graphic treatment of a very poetic call to arms. The designer's hand-written message—which called for open hearts, love, joy and a new strength rooted in empathy and kindness—completely covered skirts, dresses, jackets and tops. And, for Rousteing, it was very important that the same lyrical proclamation be adapted for this season's Balmain Kids offerings. Working closing with his team, he ensured that his inspiring manifesto—scrawled in eye-catching black-on-white or white-on-black sentences—covered a wide range of designs for this season. And those empowering offerings perfectly complement another of this season's key theme: the awesome power of honesty and recovery. After being badly burned in a home fire in 2020, Rousteing decided to channel his pain and the long rehabilitation process into a beautiful message of healing. The cascading bandages that adorned his fashion-week runway have been adapted for Balmain Kids. Emblazoned with bold house logos, the eye-catching bands dangle from pockets, finish off cuffs and seams and wrap around hems and hoodies. This season's poetry and bands, modifying signature Balmain silhouettes, help to make clear Rousteing's optimistic belief in the possibilities of progress and change.

MULTICOLOR

Pale tones dominated Balmain's most recent Fashion-Week presentation—with house designs relying on a wide array of whites, creams, light pastels and soft denims. But, as Olivier Rousteing explained to the press, in Balmain's unique universe, these are not seen as colors of sweetness and vulnerability. Instead, the tints and shades serve to remind us that there is a special type of affirmative clout that results from truth, optimism and transparency—with Balmain's light and delicate touches channeling the incredible strength received when we rely on individual honesty, collective empathy and a shared hopes for progress.

Adapting his latest runway themes for his Balmain Kids customer, Rousteing has paired those soft and colorful options with familiar house signatures, covering relaxed silhouettes with attention-demanding takes on the Balmain Blazon (the house's coat of arms), as well as logos that are either impressively maximized or endlessly multiplied.

TECHNIC

During Paris' most recent fashion week, the Balmain runway featured a series of striking silhouettes that stood out as much for their ground-breaking technical innovations as for their distinctive riffs on safety, as Olivier Rousteing played with powerfully protective wraps, shields and gilets—defly combining his collection's light tones and delicate touches with graphic, eye-catching superhero symbols of security and strength. These powerful offerings fit neatly into Rousteing's overall message: we need never be defenseless in the face of toxic pile-ons from bullies, if we find strength in honesty while relying on each other for understanding and support.

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For the Balmain Kids Technic collection, Rousteing and his team have expanded on that spirit of futuristic protective armor, updating the ever-popular Balmain take on motocross padding and ribbing for jeans and sweats and emphasizing attention-grabbing, graphic black-and-white contrasts—while echoing those same lines with surprising and sharp incisions cut into perfectly tailored tops and dresses. Gold, as is so often the case with Balmain, is very important for these designs, with Rousteing offering several new spins on his latest runway's emphasis on bold and prominent golden zippers and studs. For the very youngest Balmain Kids customers, there are new spins on the historic Balmain Labyrinth pattern—but with the motif blown up to a maxi option.

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