



BALMAIN

Balmain Kids Autumn – Winter 2023-24 Capsule Collection

In 2009, during an interview for his very first position at Balmain, a then 23-year-old Olivier Rousteing was told by his soon-to-be future colleagues that the *maison* was a 'sleeping beauty' - a historic house that possessed a vast wealth that few were aware of. It wasn't until Olivier Rousteing began working at the fashion house that he truly realised what his colleagues had been referring to. "Thirteen years ago, when I first entered the house archives, I was blown away by the staggering richness of that vast collection of past sketches, clippings, videos and creations", explained Rousteing. "And I still am today. This *maison* has been blessed with never having to re-locate from our founder's original address at 44 rue François Premier - so, very little has been lost of the impressive 75+ years of work of the Balmain design teams".

It is this astonishing richness that drives Olivier Rousteing's most recent offerings. For both his latest Paris Fashion Week presentations and his Autumn 2023 capsule collection for Balmain Kids, Rousteing delves deeply into the archives, with a focus on Monsieur Balmain's strongest collections from the '60s and '70s. That was, of course, an exceptional era for Parisian fashion. Thanks in part to Pierre Balmain's audacious designs, Paris had re-gained its reputation as the undisputed capital of world fashion. Not content to simply rest on the brand's laurels, Balmain - alongside other leading French couturiers - continued to push forward in bold directions, winning over a new generation as they embraced the societal revolutions taking place around them and making the most of the abundance of opportunities, inspirations and techniques that a booming mid-century economy made possible.

As always, this Balmain Kids collection places the spotlight on the *maison's* renowned stylistic codes, including compelling plays on blacks and whites, rigorous Parisian tailoring and luxe embellishments incorporating Balmain's signature fondness of golden touches. Rousteing also riffs on Monsieur Balmain's passion for sport and the many distinctive graphic treatments that Pierre Balmain experimented with.

As made clear by this Balmain Kids collection, today's Balmain could never be described as a 'sleeping beauty'. Olivier Rousteing has undoubtedly succeeded in transforming the priceless legacy left behind by Pierre Balmain, perfectly adapting the treasures discovered inside the abundant archives for an entirely new generation.

Evening Ceremony

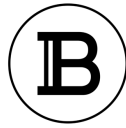
Balmain Kids always takes its strongest looks directly from the *Maison's* Parisian runways, with this offering being particularly plentiful in the latest Fashion-Week favourites, with an emphasis placed on evening elegance. Balmain's iconic golden buttons shine atop sleek all-black and graphic monochromatic designs, often complemented by eye-catching takes on the house's bold logo. The atelier's acclaimed Parisian tailoring is exceptionally evident here, with the Balmain Kids proposals relying on the same sharp cuts, strong shoulders and precise pleating, which is so often spotlighted in Balmain-focused fashion editorials. For those in need of a silver-toned take on Balmain's famed *savoir-faire*, the evening offering plays with glittering adornments added to Olivier Rousteing's most recognisable silhouettes. In addition, striking all-white and golden-hued ensembles channel the house's recent Egyptian-themed runways, while mesmerising graphics play with Rousteing's distinctive take on Renaissance artworks.

KCD Paris

13 rue du Mail | 75002 Paris | PH: +33 1 49 96 20 70 | gastine@kcdworldwide.fr

Pil communication

Via Carlo Botta 8 | 20135 Milano | PH +39 02 92885858 | j.fuschillo@pilcommunication.com



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With many of his latest proposals relying on modern spins bestowed upon Pierre Balmain's strongest mid-century classics, it is perhaps not surprising to hear that Rousteing was motivated, above all, to create a collection that will stand the test of time. As he confided recently to the French press, he echoes the house founder's example, consistently aiming for timelessness, hoping that his latest designs will inspire future generations, perhaps as much as Pierre Balmain's designs inspire him today.

B-Ball '70

Olivier Rousteing has, once again, hit it out of the park. The designer's passion for classic American athletic styles could not be clearer in this mini-capsule offering of baseball-inspired designs. Traditional jerseys are given the expected raglan-sleeve treatment, while '70s-inspired sweatpants perfectly complement the collection's contrasting-trimmed warm-up jackets and oversized hoodies. Throughout, Olivier Rousteing's mastery of graphics is plain to see, with bold, retro-flavoured interpretations given to the house logo and monogram. Accessories and newborn styles further expand the tradition-obsessed spirit of the collection.

Active Collection

Pierre Balmain grew up far from the French capital, in the small Alpine village of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, which is situated high up amidst the beautiful peaks of France's Savoy region. He was raised solely by his mother, Françoise, who was never going to let others tell her what she could and couldn't do. She made it very clear that she intended to enjoy life, even if that left her conservative neighbours somewhat perturbed - individuals who still believed that it was simply unacceptable for a young woman to participate in mountain sports. The rebellious Françoise would simply conceal her trousers below her tweed skirts as she marched out of Saint-Jean, determined to escape for a few hours of skiing down the incredible slopes that towered above her home.

Françoise Balmain taught her only son to appreciate the beauty and possibilities of the awe-inspiring mountains that surrounded his childhood abode. Just like his rebellious mother, Pierre Balmain spent his summers hiking and biking up steep summits, and his winters skiing down the same routes. Pierre Balmain's lifelong passion for the active lifestyle of his native region was often reflected in his *maison's* most successful collections, since the sleek silhouettes of both ski and après-ski wear were often directly incorporated into his signature 'New French Style'. Moreover, the designer created capsule collections based on ski styles, including uniforms for the 1968 Winter Olympic games in Grenoble, France. Over the past decade, Olivier Rousteing has often emphasised the house's distinctive Alpine roots, and for this black, fuchsia and neon-infused Balmain Kids ski capsule collection, he once again perfectly channels the rebellious skiing style of Françoise Balmain. For nobody is going to keep a Balmain off the slopes!

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