

Jean Paul Gaultier's Take on the Future in Fall 1995

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Fashion Designer Jean Paul Gaultier is known for putting on extravagant runway shows since his debut in 1972. The Ready-to-Wear fall show of 1995 was no different and is even considered by some fashion critics to be one of his most memorable shows because of the themes of futurism and angrogony. Gaultier showcased his futuristic designs in an industrial building in Paris to fully capture the punk aesthetic of his clothing. Over 100 various looks walked down the runway ranging from dark leather outerwear and armored suits to brightly patterned catsuits (see Figure 4) and feathered shawls (see Figure 4). Gaultier was sure to cover all aspects of fashion including women's and men's day and evening wear as well as accessories such as gloves (see Figures 1 and 6) and surgical-inspired face masks (see Figure 2) to compliment all of the outfits. Fashion trends of the future will typically have some aspects of the past revived in them. This was seen in this show through incorporating Renaissance velvets into the futurism of his other garments. This paper will further explain the fashion decisions made by analyzing various looks.

Jean Paul Gaultier is a French fashion designer who is well known for his distinct designs, patterns, and motifs throughout his established career. He began as an apprentice for Parisian designer Pierre Cardin and worked for several other designers before establishing himself in the fashion industry. He has since been named “L'enfant terrible” which translates to “terrifying child” in French meaning his designs are “unconventional or controversial” and tend to “shock, embarrass, or annoy others” (Dictionary) just as a child would embarrass an adult. Gaultier has worked for celebrities and on movie costume designs over the years. One of his most notable clients was Madonna who personally requested he create designs for her 1990 Blond Ambition tour. Years later in an interview with the New York Times Gaultier said “...Madonna likes my clothes because they combine the masculine and the feminine” (Borrelli-Persson, 2020). In the 1990’s Madonna was open to and even seemed to have a deeper

understanding and appreciation for his androgynous looks which in turn made America more open-minded as well.

Over the years Gaultier has been influenced by various regions and takes inspiration from an “Amazonian woman” for this fall collection. The typical Amazonian woman can be pictured as a rebellious warrior which can be attributed to Greek mythology. Gualiter himself stated he created this Ready-to-Wear line for a woman who is “courageous, confident, and very much in control of her life” (Bateman, 2019) which is directly related to the powerful, feminine yet also masculine energy an Amazonian woman radiates. There was also inspiration pulled from the *Mad Max* (1979) films and other dystopian and action-packed cinematic pieces. The industrial-style venue, which was filled with smoke and models riding motorcycles, emphasizes the Mad Max theme as that smokey, factory-type environment was typical for the films. While Gaultier was designing for this show, he was also busy designing costumes for movies such as *The Fifth Element* (1997). His colorful and iconic designs for this movie heavily influenced his work for this season. Gaultiers influences and inspirations directly relate to themes of androgyny and futurism seen in his designs.

The show opens with two female models riding into the smoke-filled room dressed in full black leather outfits similar to the long black leather dress in Figure 5. Gaultier states he wanted to show the classic “dyke on a bike” (Borrelli-Persson, 2020) and emphasized the punk, grunge aesthetic he was going for. In true Gualiter style there there was a mixing of materials used as well as color and pattern schemes. The show progressively gets more colorful as it ends with brightly colored monochromatic evening gowns which when seen together create a prismatic effect. Another use of color theory seen in this collection is the combination of primary colors. The opened double-breasted yellow suit with matching trousers was paired with a lavender

sweater underneath (see Figure 6). The layering of colors creates visual interest while updating the classic double-breasted suit style that has been worn for decades. Additionally, this outfit features teal gloves and peach winklepicker boots which also nods to styles that used to be more widely worn. Gaultier had a way of seamlessly bringing together the old and the new creating bold, modern looks. This idea is consistently seen and is apparent again in the outfit shown in Figure 7 which pairs a blue, almost violet silk jumpsuit with an orange-boned corset. Again complimentary colors are layered which creates more visual interest to the already show-stopping ensembles.

Silhouettes vary from dramatically emphasizing this collection is curated for someone who is not afraid to experiment with fashion. Within the women's evening wear various ball gowns are seen with mermaids (see Figure 7), a line, and high-low silhouettes (see Figure 1) but are all made of the same padded material to keep the dresses looking cohesive. Aside from the different silhouettes, each of the dresses in the collection exhibits a different neckline. For example, the dress in figure one has a neckline that isn't typically seen. It is a variation of a strapless horseshoe neckline but instead of a plunging neckline, it comes up high in the front, similar to the high-low skirt of the dress. Feminized dresses were seen more again in the nineties along with the casual grunge style. Gaultier captures these two popular styles of the nineties and amps them up with funky accessories. The addition of out-of-the-box hair and makeup such as feathers coming out of a ponytail, graphic eyeshadow, and a matching choker (see Figure 1) and gloves brings the blue dress to life. There are some other silhouettes that are more classic like the double-breasted suit with some modern alterations such as extending the length of the jacket and adding black stripes down the front for more visual interest (see Figure 3). Another evening gown is seen with a more traditional bodice (see Figure 8) that features a sweetheart neckline

The added slit is an example of Gaultier adding modern ideas onto styles that have been worn throughout the history of fashion. Showing this much skin while wearing an evening gown would have been considered controversial proving Gaultier stayed true to his nickname “L'enfant terrible”. This outfit has pushed the box even further by adding a hair dryer bonnet. This could also be considered camp which refers to a style or mode of personal or creative expression that is absurdly exaggerated and often fuses elements of high and popular culture (Dictionary). The hair dryer bonnet became popular in the 1950s because it brought “...that salon-level socializing and the community it inspired wouldn't be lost if women did their own grooming at home” (Hart, 2018). Gaultier was taking inspiration from the past to project

Futurism is a common theme in this show as the designer was playing off of the technological advances made in the past century. As the century was coming to a close during the time this collection was first seen, there was an exciting opportunity to reflect on fashion that once was and fashion that will be. The skin-tight catsuit (see Figure 4) that walked down the runway features a mesmerizing polka dot design that paired with the open polo coat has a similar feeling to the iconic open jacket worn by Neo in *The Matrix*. Furthermore, that movie premiered in 1999 which was five years after this collection was shown. Gaultier could very well have been a costume inspiration for another dystopian, action-packed film. Vogue reflected on the collection years later and said what made this such a memorable show was that “It was a collection filled with Instagrammable moments—15 years before digital technology existed to capture them” (Borrelli-Persson, 2020). The cyber looks would've been widely shared through technology if this show were held in the future meaning Gaultier captured the essence of the future through his clothing.

Another theme seen throughout the curated looks is androgyny. Although some of the models are sporting highly feminine (See Figures 1 and 7) or masculine (Figure 6) outfits, others like Figures 2 and 5 play on androgyny by creating outfits that are unisex. These two looks are very different from each other based on color and fabric usage however, they are similar in the androgynous energy they give off. Gaultier was experienced with creating styles like these that pushed boundaries like with his 'Man Skirt' shown in the early eighties. However, during this decade there was a greater appreciation for androgynous style through pieces that were typically worn by the opposite gender rather than fully dressing as the opposite gender. The nineties are also known as the 'supermodel' decade full of glamour and conventional beauty on the runway. Gaultier challenges this standard of beauty with his cyberspace-inspired designs, androgynous themes, and even the incorporation of pregnant models. This was his way of predicting the future of fashion will see more unisex looks and even more non-binary people.

Overall Jean Paul Gaultier wonderfully executed his ideas of what futuristic fashion would look like through the use of androgynous outfits and creative accessories. The Fall 1995 collection explores mixing colors and fabrics but keeps cohesive themes and inspirations like the popular films *Mad Max* (1979) and *The Fifth Element* (1997). Despite how out of the box some of the outfits look when broken down there are silhouettes, styles, and fabrics that have been worn time after time. These staples such as corsets, double-breasted suits, and sweetheart necklines are not new however Gaultier has updated the match the current, or rather future, era with the use of bright colors, bold accessories, and modern ideas throughout the collection.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 4 →

← Figure 3





Figure 5, Figure 6



←Figure 7
Figure 8 →

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