

FASHION

Dolev Elron Takes Top Fashion Prize At Hyères

● The Stockholm-based Israeli designer's distorted menswear staples wowed the fashion jury led by Nicolas Di Felice.

BY LILY TEMPLETON

HYÈRES, France – Israeli designer Dolev Elron won the top prize at the 39th edition of the International Festival of Fashion, Photography and Accessories – Hyères on Sunday.

He impressed the jury headed by Courrèges artistic director Nicolas Di Felice with a collection of distorted menswear staples titled "Casual Turbulence."

Based in Stockholm and trained at the Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art, Elron is a junior designer in menswear at Acne Studios.

"It's about distorting archetypes of hyper masculinity and basic items that we all have in our closet – recognizable and familiar," he said at a showroom presentation. "This familiarity brings comfort and the comfort that it brings allows a space for disruption."

To warp jeans, plaid shirts or a bomber jacket, he drew inspiration from the "unusual and unexpected effects on the most expected garments" that he first distorted using digital software like Photoshop. The patterns he then developed from those new images hinged on each garment's salient details like zippers, jean pockets or stripes for their twisting structures.

Among the standouts were the opening look with a shirt whose classic blue stripe warped subtly, culminating in a sculptural but discrete cuff; belted trousers that seemed to melt around the hip, and faux-denim shorts, with a twill-meets-jacquard textile developed with Lesage to fuse the swirling motifs into the weave.

Lauding the creative breadth of the 2024 fashion finalists, Di Felice said he'd been touched by the rawness of the works, which were a reminder that "from start to finish, our professions imply so much passion, so much heart," he told WWD. "We are in a period of transition in fashion so it's refreshing and important to see this."

"There are no rules to succeed in fashion [anymore] and the past few years have shown us that you could become artistic director even when you're a singer," he continued, clearly alluding to Pharrell Williams, artistic director of men's collections at Louis Vuitton.

Highlighting that there was a much greater variety in design approaches and techniques today – that "should be approached without judgment," he noted – he still pointed out the importance of craft and knowhow.

"There are so many professions that stem from making a garment that if [something] boils down to an Instagram gimmick, I ask myself whether this is truly fashion," he said. "This brings real questions on what our [industry] is today."

The Courrèges artistic director hoped finalists would walk away having taken jury conversations and encouragements to heart. "Whatever our discipline, the fact that we are doing is resisting, is living. And it's already wonderful because they're right in the middle of it," he said.

Paris-based Belgian designer Romain

Bichot, a graduate of La Cambre who recently joined Balenciaga as junior designer, scooped up both the Le19M Métiers d'Arts Prize in partnership with

Chanel and the L'Atelier des Matières Prize.

Inspired by a late-night cityscape filled with trash bags, construction sites and traffic cones, his collection titled "Call Me If You Get Lost" recast these objects into surreal looks, such as a dress with traffic cone-protrusions or clutches shaped like the protective wrapping of scaffolding.

A luxuriously embroidered and feathered look he'd worked on with feathers specialist Lemarié mimicked a mattress. It was inspired by a murder series that kicks off with a body rolled up in a mattress, the Belgian designer said.

Bichot took home a 20,000-euro purse for a project to be exhibited at next year's festival and a further 10,000 euros worth of materials from the upcycling specialist's stock of materials.

Thanks to a biker jacket fusing tailoring canvas from bespoke jackets and pieces from his father's racing suits, American designer Logan Monroe Goff scooped up the Mercedes-Benz Sustainability Prize, which recognizes the designer who best applied eco-conception practices in their work.

Currently pursuing a masters degree in fashion design at Parsons, the Paris, Tex.-born Monroe Goff cut his teeth at Egonlab and Isabel Marant. He is keen to continue to gain experience but said his endgame is to have his own label, which "may happen in five years – or 20 years."

His biggest takeaway of the Hyères experience – even before looking at prizes and purses – was being able to show what he had in mind in an unfettered way. "This opportunity is my biggest takeaway and that's super cool."

For his saccharine-sweet "Sugar Rush" collection inspired by instant gratification – complete with the Instagram-famous cake-slice shoe – Tel Aviv-based Israeli designer Tal Maslavi was awarded a special jury mention.

Berlin-based Gaëlle Lang Halloo's soccer-inspired sportswear, nodding to France's 1998 World Cup win, won the public's heart and votes. ►

The accessories grand prize went to London-based Chinese designer Chiyang Duan and his "Distorted Objects" collection playing on upgrades to extend the lifecycle of eyewear and bags, turning them into organic-looking creatures.

Meanwhile, Brussels-based La Cambre graduate Clara Besnard rose to the challenge of creating a belt or leather jewelry to win the Hermès prize with a clutch of belts that looked like they'd been casually slung around the neck like a scarf.

The public prize went to Mexican designer Maria Nava and her robotic creations that react to the ambiance.

A special accessories mention was

awarded to Swiss designer Camille Combremont, who drew inspiration from her family's camping holidays for a lineup of multi-function accessories that went from a basket with a detachable lining to a handsome cape that doubles up as a tent. She will get a residency in Achilles Ion Gabriel's Majorca headquarters.

"It's really raw expression from young people, what they think design should look like, really unfiltered," said accessories jury member Imruh Asha, a stylist and creative consultant who cofounded fashion label Zomer. "Now we're going to give them feedback and they're going to be biased forever but this is what they think, unfiltered still."

In photography, Arhant Shrestha, a Bard College graduate now based in Kathmandu, Nepal, walked away with the 7L Photography Grand Prize for his exploration of an imaginary nocturnal version of his home city, to "capture the nostalgia of my past imagination before the reality of Kathmandu today could wash it away."

Paris-based Basile Pelletier took home the American Vintage prize with a series of analog photographs with a touch of strangeness to them, while the Public Prize went to Clément Boudet.

British lensman Thomas Duffield was handed a special mention for chronicling the eight-year process of rebuilding a relationship strained by addiction.

While the juries were hotly debating the finalists' entries, the idea of transition emerged from exhibitions and conversations at the Villa Noailles, which celebrated its centenary last year.

Photography exhibitions were by last year's photography winner Thaddée Comar, on how information is filtered through the lenses and microphones before reaching the audience, and photography jury president Coco Capitan, on the impermanence of life. An exhibit on Courrèges put in conversation Di Felice's work with pieces by house founder André Courrèges.

As the Chanel-owned embroiderer Lesage celebrates its 100th anniversary, its artistic director Hubert Barrère was keen to remind that its long lifespan came from being "always alongside contemporary creation of its time...without that, it would no longer exist."

Working with the fashion finalists had been an experience that "brought [Lesage teams] out of their comfort zone, which is highly important in our profession," he added. One of the most striking creations was a look by 2023 fashion winner Igor

Dieryck, a richly embroidered upcycled sweater with a profusion of golden-yellow figuring a glass of beer – a nod to his Belgian roots.

He remarked that today's social media-led rhythm had robbed people of the habit of desiring and waiting.

"Desirability is absolutely fundamental – even more than acquiring an item – and that's a very important subject for us, for the future of our professions," said the

Lesage creative director.

In a masterclass with Barrère, Laura Arguelles, director of the textile department of Maison Lesage, also said that handcraft was an essential part of developing solutions, one more effective and agile than any industrial solution.

For all the festival's zany, youthful energy, the fact that it now has a four-decade-long track record of talents – Viktor & Rolf, Saint Laurent artistic director Anthony Vaccarello, and Paco Rabanne's Julien Dossena, to name but a few – was top of mind.

Founder Jean-Pierre Blanc was looking beyond the upcoming 2025 milestone, which he always jokingly referred to as his grand finale. His 60th birthday celebration was among the highlights of the weekend for the creative crowd, as was an after-party thrown by Courrèges in a striking former physical rehabilitation center.

Blanc also teased that the festival could go to China, but no specifics were unveiled.

With the festival's possible designation of Hyères as the national center for fashion and design, its position as a lynchpin in the region's revitalization came in focus – as did its future.

"We like celebrations in our country so for the 40th anniversary, it would feel legitimate," said Blanc. "There are the Centre National de la Danse in Paris, the National School of Photography of Arles and the ERACM acting school in Cannes – each one is near existing festivals."

Blanc said a national center for fashion in Hyères would also fit within "France 2030," an ambitious 54-million-euro investment plan unveiled by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2021 to develop the country's industrial competitiveness, technological excellence and ecological transition.

Part of this includes opening a pole of excellence in fashion and design in each region of France, according to the festival founder. "Given the work we have done in design and interior architecture – in Hyères but also in Toulon for 20 years – it felt logical to offer a project with a

larger scale," he said.

It would be the best way to cement the four decades worth of investments put in first by the city of Hyères alone and now by five layers of institutions, from local to national, as well as private partners.

Such a project has gained political support at both the local and regional levels.

For Jean-Pierre Giran, Hyères' mayor who also serves as the president of the wider Métropole Toulon Provence Méditerranée metropolitan area, it's no less than "the future of Hyères and the Métropole hinges on this."

He deemed a potential designation as center for fashion and design a gamechanger for the area, contributing to restoring it to its position as a major hub for culture since antiquity.

"We have the stakeholders, the infrastructures, a strong political intention because we see further than fashion and design, although they remain at the heart of the project," said the official.

Giran added that the city had purchased over 50 ground floor retail spaces, with the aim of leasing them upon application in a bid to revitalize the historic city center.

This is already bearing fruit.



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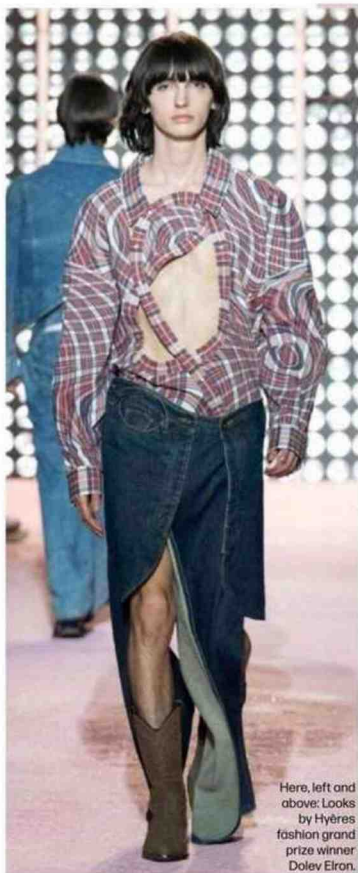
Exhibit A: a new store called Banane d'Or, or "Golden Banana." Behind an elegant but unassuming facade is a 1,000-square-foot space with raw walls that lead into a patio with a summer kitchen. This new address named after the area of the Mediterranean coast that stretches from Catalonia to the Ligurian Sea is the brainchild of former New Yorker and designer Kai Kühne, who was a regular visitor to the region during childhood holidays and has now settled nearby. Alongside pieces by Telfar, Palomo Spain, New York City-based label Electric Feathers and jewelry from Patricia Von Musulin are vintage pieces such as swimwear by Gernreich and futuristic Yves Saint Laurent eyewear from the 1970s. "Hyères is not just the southernmost Provence city, a place where you come on holiday or to see the tribe we have built," said Giran. "It's a territory with an incredible story, from [ancient] Greeks to the Noailles [couple] and the Carmignac foundation. Becoming national center for fashion and design would be an additional milestone and the culmination of this story [of the festival]." ■



Eyewear by Chiyang Duan.



A look by Logan Monroe Goff.



Here, left and above: Looks by Hyères fashion grand prize winner Dolev Elron.



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Romain Bichot working in the Lesage ateliers and his Atelier des Matières submission to the Hyères fashion competition.

