



# The Reviews

## Maison Margiela Artisanal

"To do a show after John [Galliano] is not easy, we are all working very hard," Renzo Rosso said before Glenn Martens' debut at Maison Margiela on Wednesday night.

This Artisanal show came roughly 18 months after Galliano's triumphant swan song and tilted the Paris house in a dark, daring and DIY direction, with some of the clothes looking like they had been buried for some time, the antique wallpaper florals faded, soiled and cracked.

Face coverings were an invention of founder Martin Margiela, a conceptual designer with Greta Garbo-like ways who covered models' faces partly to keep attention focused on the clothes.

Here they were often distracting and sometimes disquieting, especially the suffocating plastic masks that opened the display, and the metal ones nearly encasing some heads.

Martens brought the fashion flock way, way out to the Le Centquatre, a hangar-sized cultural space in the 19th arrondissement where Martin Margiela, unknown to all but Rosso and his inner circle that night in March 2009, staged his last show, a hail of gold confetti during the finale ostensibly to celebrate his 20th anniversary, but also silently signaling the end of an era.

Using the subterranean space of this vast venue felt very Margiela, the walls flyposted with photocopied elements of interior architecture, the floors a papier-mâché of checkerboard patterns, upon which mismatched wooden chairs were set.

To Martens' credit, his coed couture looks like nothing else paraded in Paris this week with its weathered patinas and its use of offbeat materials like transparent plastic for trenchcoats, or oil paint applied to men's jeans, freezing a loose belt in a dangle. ►

The show notes clarified that repurposed materials included lining fabrics, vintage leather jackets and discarded costume jewelry, the latter looped together to create a shift dress that felt part flapper, part Missoni. It was kinda cool.

The Bruges-born designer referenced the medieval architecture and atmosphere of Flanders and the Netherlands, his prints of flowers and game based on 17th-century still-life paintings, and then given a 3D aspect by overlaying illusion tulle over details like the wings of the hunted birds.

One dress in mother-of-pearl duchess satin recalled the eerie statue on the cover of the 1987 Dead Can Dance album "Within the Realm of a Dying Sun," the head of the wearer draped in mourning. Others employing even more voluminous draping in metallic duchess were simply otherworldly – or you might say very Cardi B, who has been out-couture-ing everyone in Paris this week.

Also to Martens' credit, this debut effort duly honors the house's legacy of provocative, avant-garde fashions while also sticking an unwashed thumb in the eye of the numbing quiet luxury juggernaut.

The eye will take time to adjust to these sometimes messy, sometimes spooky clothes, but the shock of the new is what drives fashion forward.

Here's something else new at Maison Margiela. Gaetano Sciuto, chief executive of the house, told WWD before the show that the Artisanal collection, principally an image vehicle and R&D center for the house since its creation in 1989, will be offered for sale, and prospective clients were present at the show. – Miles Socha















