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■ LIFE ■

Ripping it up in Luxembourg

A traveling exhibition organized by Athens-based Atopos details the use of paper in fashion

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LUXEMBOURG — For something as ephemeral as fashion, the non-enduring, delicate quality of paper is an unusual yet suitable medium. This may explain why in the youth-inspired 1960s, the so-called paper dresses became a fad that emerged in the United States. This short-lived but widespread trend proposed dispensable, inexpensive paper dresses available in the supermarket just like any other mass-produced item.

Paper fashion from the 1960s is the basis of “RRRRIPP!! Paper Fashion” an exhibition that explores the use of paper in contemporary and modern fashion but also offers examples from earlier historical periods and non-Western civilizations.

The exhibition is organized by the Athens-based cultural organization Atopos (fashion curator Vassilis Zidianakis is its creative director and Stamos J. Fafalios its president) and is continuing for a few more days at the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM) in Luxembourg. The exhibition was realized at MUDAM thanks to the efforts of Marie-Claude Beaud, former director of the museum. It was originally presented at the Benaki Museum in Athens in 2007. MUDAM is its first stop in an international tour that includes the prestigious Modemuseum of Antwerp (MoMu) in late March and London's Design Museum this coming fall. Interestingly, each exhibi-



tion varies in content, focus and design.

In both versions presented thus far, it is a sophisticated exhibition that goes beyond the whims of fashion into more complex issues related not just to style but also to social, practical and economical factors behind the use of paper. Rare archival material is juxtaposed with contemporary fashions. An example is a paper “kamiko” (a waterproof cape) from 18th-century Japan. Surprisingly contemporary in style, it could easily be taken for an innovative example of current fashion.

The version of “RRRRIPP!! Paper Fashion” that Atopos prepared for MUDAM contain some items that were not shown in the original Benaki exhibition. One example is a bomber jacket designed by Suzanne Lee, a graduate of London's Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design. Grown from bacteria, the creation is part of an experimental “science-related” (Bio-Couture) project focusing on recyclable fashion (each bacteria-grown item can be recycled) and clothing grown almost like a plant from organic material. As in the case of paper, it represents re-

search into the use of alternative materials for fashion and touches on ecological issues which the use of paper also raises.

Shown for the first time internationally were pleated paper dresses by Issey Miyake (from his “Pleats Dresses, Paper Trial, Research Process” project). The renowned Japanese designer made nine dresses in all using an innovative technique that involves recycling pleat paper used for the “Pleats Please” series. He donated all nine to Atopos.

Other new additions to the exhibi-

An Issey Miyake creation from the exhibition at Luxembourg's MUDAM. One of the nine dresses from his 'Pleats Dresses, Paper Trial, Research Process' project (2008). From the Atopos collection. (Photo: Andres Lejona)

tion were “Homage to the Press,” a playful collage of newspapers shaped into a garment and designed by Jean-Charles de Castelbajac in the early 1980s. Fresh from the spring-summer 2009 men's collection was a Raf Simons creation made from 100 percent paper fiber.

A convertible dress-handbag made from Tyvek by Jean-Paul Lespagnard, a newcomer in the world of fashion and award winner at the 2008 Hyeres fashion festival, was also shown. It was made especially for the exhibition. Among the additions were also a projection of the “Pencil Girls” series, a number of drawings by Vassilis Zidianakis inspired by 1960s paper dresses.

Marcus Tomlinson (who has been commissioned for projects by Atopos in the past) showed a new video titled “Paper Disorder” and inspired by an outfit by Gareth Pugh. Also in the exhibition was an interactive catalog of the Atopos “RRRRIPP” project and the Atopos collection. Presented through a computer, the catalog which was designed by Matthew Halloway gives a glimpse of the idea behind the exhibition. It shows its concept as an ongoing, process-based project that evolves just as the Atopos collection does (Atopos owns the largest collection of 1960s dresses) and as new issues enter contemporary fashion.

“RRRRIPP!! Paper Fashion” is on display at MUDAM (www.mudam.lu) until February 2.