

SomethingAbout **ALEXANDER LEWIS**

Womenswear designer

London-based designer Alexander Lewis chose a reverse approach to the established fashion system when he launched his eponymous label. He debuted with Resort 2013 and followed it with four pre-collections, before thoughtfully creating his first seasonal collection for AW14. It marked a new beginning with a clear directive.

"I wanted to work with a female artist to create the following season," says Lewis. "It would be an artist

intervention: I'd invite an artist to look at the pre-collection and she would intervene on my process, based on her reaction to the collection."

His first on-schedule presentation for SS16 London Fashion Week was a collaborative effort with the London based French-Lebanese artist Flavia Audi, known for her cosmic cloud-like glass sculptures. Fittingly, Lewis was already working with Audi when he was welcomed into the Swarovski Collective, a prestigious annual mentorship programme. Drawing parallels between Audi's iridescent masses and Swarovski crystal, the garments would explore concepts of light and refraction, and also reference the designer's Brazilian heritage. Audi's interpretations would challenge Lewis' design process and inform his womenswear.

Even as a teenager, Lewis knew he wanted to be a designer; it was just

a matter of experience and time. Born in Chicago and schooled in England – visiting his family's home in Brazil in between – he returned to America to study theatre in Los Angeles before actively pursuing fashion. An early highlight was working as the assistant to US *Vogue's* editor-at-large, André Talley Leon. However, it was after Lewis settled in London and worked as a personal shopper at Harrods that he discovered the strength of the pre-collection. He entered the world of tailoring at Norton & Sons and E Tautz on Savile Row before realising he was ready to launch his own label.

As Lewis moves forward, he will continue to work with artists season after season. "There is definitely an ongoing relationship with art beyond this artist intervention," says Lewis. "The relationship between my woman and art is always there. She's someone interested in art and the art world."

Something About PRE-COLLECTIONS...

"When I worked at Harrods, I noticed that my clients shopped in a really particular way. That was really not to do with seasons, but more to do with the situation. So I always wanted to design for a particular situation. Then I started to see brands that were launching and growing their pre-collections for both Resort and Pre-fall. I saw that the stores and the buyers were expanding on that side – they were getting, like, 70 to 80 per cent of their budget assigned to the pre-collection."

SomethingAboutTHEMES...

"I asked Flavia [Audi] to create four themes that were inspired by her reaction to the women's collection. One was the colour blue, so everything from white to black [as well as the] whole spectrum of blue. One was refraction and reflection of light, so that is where the Swarovski really came into it amazingly, but also the embroidery with the mirrored cubes. Another theme was fluidity and the idea of clouds, lightness and airiness. The fourth was nebulae, as in constellations."

SomethingAboutBLUE...

"Flavia went for the colour blue because she really related to the concept of water that I had used in that collection, and specifically the Goddess Of The Sea from a West African religion called Candomblé, which came to Brazil with the slave trade. The blueness of the water and its fluidity really comes across in the lines [on the dresses]. It feels like water trickling."

STORY BY JANINE LEAH BARTELS



Embellished Swarovski
dress by ALEXANDER LEWIS



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