



A model wearing a creation of French fashion designer Charles de Vilmorin poses in Paris. — AFP photos



A Chinese ice swimmer pushes the ice as he swims in a frozen river on a cold winter day in Beijing.

## New kid on Paris fashion block sparks YSL comparisons

Just 24-years-old, Charles de Vilmorin pulled no punches as he launched himself into the rarefied world of haute couture on Wednesday. There was nothing understated about the young star's inaugural appearance at Paris Fashion, as he presented a wildly colorful collection full of hand-painted butterflies and rainbows alongside extravagant kimonos and slightly sinister clowns. "The guiding line of this collection is the notion of liberty. I created it in an instinctive manner. I wanted a result that was raw, that got straight to the point," he told AFP.

Dressed for the interview in a black roll-

neck, De Vilmorin is already picking up comparisons to Yves Saint Laurent—which, unsurprisingly, "doesn't bother me at all", he says. Given the bold, almost anarchic designs on display, it is also perhaps unsurprising to hear that he owes his inclusion in fashion week to Jean Paul Gaultier. "I didn't necessarily correspond (to their criteria) in terms of seniority and all that, but it's Jean Paul Gaultier who decided to sponsor me," he said. "It's proof that haute couture is in a process of evolution, pushing forwards, and reviewing its characteristics. That can only be positive."

Gaultier himself hung up his scissors a

year ago after half a century of catwalk bombast. It was a few months later that De Vilmorin launched his own label with a line of colorful bomber jackets, just as France was deep in its first lockdown. Less than a year later, he has made it into the strictly regimented haute couture calendar with the pandemic still raging. That has led to the catwalk being cordoned off and replaced with online short films—a first for the young designer, but not far beyond the comfort zone for someone who has built much of his brand through Instagram. "I don't really know what normal times are like," he told AFP. He said the different circumstances dictated the designs. "It's not the same to film a piece of clothing than to have it presented a meter away from real people," he said.

### Bold and dramatic

Born to an art teacher mother and fashion-obsessed financier father, De Vilmorin hand paints most of his designs with acrylic paints and Chinese dyes. Bold, primary colors and large brushstrokes define his style. His friend and muse 22-year-old Anaelle Postollec wears an emblematic piece in the short film—all exaggerated shoulders, balloon busts, thigh-high boots and stiletto heels. "Charles dares to throw himself in at the deep end," said Postollec.

"It resonates with the moment, it carries a message of something new and better that is on the way. "I love the drama, the big shapes," she told AFP. "It's almost theatre, something quite strange, a dream that's turned into a nightmare." — AFP

