

Balmain collection robbed ahead of Paris fashion show



French fashion designer Olivier Rousteing greets spectators after presenting Balmain Womenswear Fall-Winter 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris.—AFP

Thieves have made off with more than 50 items from the French luxury fashion brand Balmain's new collection just 10 days before its Paris Fashion Week show, the company's creative director, Olivier Rousteing, said on his Instagram account. "Our driver called us to say that he had been attacked by a group of people. More than 50 items were stolen," said the 38-year-old designer in a post late Saturday.

The driver, who was "safe and sound", was transporting the merchandise in a truck that was headed from the airport to the Balmain headquarters when the theft occurred, he said, adding he was at the Balmain site Saturday morning when the driver called. "My team and I have worked very hard. We will work even harder, day and night, just like our suppliers, but this is

so disrespectful. I wanted to share this with you as a reminder to never take anything for granted," Rousteing said, who has been the creative director of Balmain since 2011.

Mixing hip-hop and embracing diversity, Rousteing has shaken up the industry, "democratizing" the world of luxury fashion and making it more relatable to young people. He is known for pushing the brand into new territory, working with celebrities like Kim Kardashian, and frequenting red carpets including the Cannes Film Festival. The show by Balmain, bought in 2016 by Qatari investment fund Mayhoola, is scheduled for the women's ready-to-wear fashion week in the French capital on September 27.—AFP



A model presents a creation from Balmain Womenswear Fall-Winter 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris.

A major retrospective opens in London this weekend into "Coco" Chanel, exploring her 60-year career that transformed women's wardrobes, and with new revelations about her troubled wartime past. Chanel—full name Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel—died in 1971 aged 87, leaving an indelible mark on fashion with her trademark tweed suits and quilted bags.

"She's such a pillar of Western fashion, a fascinating woman," said Oriole Cullen, modern textiles and fashion curator at the V&A where the exhibition opens on Saturday. "Her name is still so present in contemporary fashion." The showcase—"Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion manifesto", created by the Palais Galliera, a museum of fashion and fashion history in Paris—traces the designer throughout her life.



A trio set of perfumes from 1936 (from left) "Chanel Cuir de Russie", "Chanel Gadenia" and "Chanel number 5" are displayed during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".

From 1910, when she first opened a milliners in the French capital, to her last collection in 1971, the exhibition features some 200 outfits. Chanel transformed women's fashion, introducing comfortable, elegant yet simple clothes in which women could move with ease.

One of the earliest garments on display is a sailor blouse from 1916, made from fine silk jersey which had until then been used to make underwear and stockings. The collar was inspired by fishermen's clothes. In the decade that followed, Chanel established herself as the world's foremost couturier, with her little black dress still a timeless classic.

In 1926, American Vogue magazine described it as "the frock that all the world will wear". Fans of her Chanel No.5 perfume, launched in 1921, included screen siren Marilyn Monroe and the late Queen Elizabeth II, who received a bottle as a birthday gift in 1955. It remains one of the best-selling fragrances in the world today.



LONDON'S V&A HOSTS NEW CHANEL EXHIBITION



A member of staff looks at the different dresses and outfits displayed.

Resistance?

Chanel, who was born into poverty and grew up in a convent, rubbed shoulders with the British aristocracy. In the 1920s and '30s she was photographed alongside Winston Churchill, Britain's future wartime leader, and at the famous Ascot horse races. World War II saw her shut her shop on the rue Cambon in central Paris, a stone's throw from the Ritz hotel where she lived.

At the age of 57, she fell in love with a German embassy attache, Hans Gunther von Dincklage, which the exhibition also touches upon. In July 1941, the Nazi authorities reg-

istered Chanel as a "trusted source", although it is unclear whether she was aware of the fact.

She was given the code name "Westminster" and an ID number "F7124". In December 1943, the Nazis wanted to use her connections in England to get in touch with Churchill. Her links with the enemy are well known but the V&A exhibition includes two new documents which claim that in January 1943 she joined the French Resistance.

A document dated and signed from Paris in 1948 features her name as an "occasional agent" while another, a certificate, shows her membership of the resistance forces from January 1, 1943

to April 1944. Chanel left for Switzerland after the war, making a spectacular comeback in 1954 at the age of 71 with her tweed suit that Vogue called "the world's prettiest uniform".

The V&A exhibition includes 54 of them, in shades of beige, grey and pink. The beige version was worn by Chanel herself in 1958. Other highlights include Chanel evening dresses in lame and a reproduction of the staircase at 31 rue Cambon, where she is said to have secretly observed her customers from behind mirrors.—AFP



A Chanel number 5 perfume bottle from 1921 is displayed during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".



A member of staff arranges a dress during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".



Members of staff arrange a dress during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".



A silk blouse is on display.