

## **AQUASCUTUM COLLECTION AUTUMN/WINTER 2007 WOMENSWEAR**

February 2007

For Autumn/Winter 2007, Aquascutum's Heads of Design, Michael Herz and Graeme Fidler, continue to discover Aquascutum's coat heritage while progressing themes and techniques explored in recent work. This collection fuses tradition with innovation; best seen in fabric development.

This season's inspiration was a performance of *The Nutcracker* at the Royal Opera House where Herz and Fidler also studied ballet costumes and arrived at the concept of a toy soldier. This character appears in the form of a medal, crafted from beads and strands of chains and backed in tulle.

This romantic vision of the armed forces – with models marching out like an army of toy soldiers – sees military coats bedecked with elaborately gold-fringed epaulettes, bronze braids and intricate frogging. With strong focus on coat construction, raincoats in Colman's Mustard yellow and Seventies brown are reworked in waterproof PU-coated fabrics but made cosy with collars and insets replaced in cashmere or wool. A moulded cape is accessorised with a rosette 'medal' while dramatic bracelet-sleeve 'cape-cut' jackets cut a voluminous, swingly silhouette. Super-soft tweed jackets are treated to a series of washes to achieve an aged, love-worn feel. Little regimented riding jackets made from padded heavyweight cotton or wool and bamboo with metal buttons collars adorned in silver metal thread filigree.

Innovative fabrics developed by the designers are pivotal; a unique wool and silk weave has the appearance of quilted leather and oozes nobility, but most extraordinary is a fabric (crafted from plastic polyester and cotton) that looks like black feathers as dark and glossy as a raven's. Cut upside down for extra texture, it is worked into mini debutante dresses with beautifully engineered fanned high waists that rise up to the bust-line, overlapping and framing a peeping-under section. In keeping with a womanly silhouette are high-waisted full skirts in double organza with wide 'cummerbund-style' waistbands, some masterfully pinch-pleated and twisted back. Dinner jackets have been given a modern overhaul in a new cropped shape with ultra-skinny sleeves; with Swiss cotton linings and folded ribbon piping, jacket insides are as considered as the out.

Due to this couture-like construction, one strapless dress is turned inside out. Key suits form a core element of this collection, underscored by Aquascutum's authentic tailoring heritage. Fashioned from panels of cream-coloured Swiss cotton, sections are pieced together with absolute precision. A boned high-waisted rigorously strict pencil skirt follows the same sharp line. Trousers are straight and narrowly cut. Other tailored pieces are inspired by a broken toy soldier – best seen in camisole tops that are made, taken apart and patched together from two different halves in a makeshift, ad-hoc fashion. This theme continues with handmade buttons that are not an identical match and braids that are purposefully set a little off-centre.

Winter 2007 also sees the introduction of knitwear in pure cashmere, and cashmere and alpaca mix, in a palette that runs from cream to dove, charcoal, through to black. The military story continues on chunky 'plaited' sweaters and gilets and short sleeve styles that have 'fringed epaulettes.' Continuing last summer's Scoubidou technique, the idea of craftwork and plaiting is moved forward into leather pieces with gladiator corsets woven entirely from plaited braids.

Block colours come together like two-toned flags – black and white, black and red, and mustard and brown. Other hues include timeless, earthy neutrals such as ecru and silvery greys.

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