

“A JOURNEY IN BURBERRY”

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Protection, exploration and inspiration were the core values of Burberry's autumn/winter season. In the cockpit the label's Chief Creative Officer Christopher Bailey, who initiated gasps and tweets from his audience at the start of this journey in the 1,000-seat tent situated in the grounds of the Chelsea College of Art where the catwalk show last February launched the now well travelled (across online and print fashion pages) reworked shearling flying jacket, in a digital adventure beaming live in 3D to five global cities and streamed to the rest of the world via 73 websites, including Vogue, Grazia and CNN, which all picked up the video feed in a global simulcast. "Protect, explore, inspire was the mantra this season. I saw this movie about the first nonstop transatlantic flight in 1919 and the guy that did it was wearing Burberry," Bailey had told WGSN.

With a rich heritage and history of providing kit for explorers such as Scott and Shackleton, an Amelia Earhart sense of adventure was accommodated for with brass-buttoned military coats (in black, khaki, petrol blue and grey), parkas, utility overcoats, cropped military jackets, aviator jackets and trousers tucked into durable boots. Yet again, Bailey has worked with original outerwear from the Burberry archive, to provide a protective, functional and relevant design for the modern man.

We live in a buying climate where the focus is on slow fashion, key pieces that will result in timeless classics to be worn from season to season. If we cast our eye over the silhouettes of A/W10, the trench coat, parade jacket, pea coat, blanket coat, double breasted topcoat, dress coat, double breasted chesterfield, parka, utility overcoat, cropped military jacket, funnel neck coat and aviator jacket form the basis of the brand's arsenal and as we've recently seen, for Vogue's most influential cover of the year, Kate Moss donned a Burberry coat without much else - a statement of the brand's relevance and staying power.

Part of the reason why Burberry has cemented its place as one of the world's most enduring labels with a 27% sales increase in the first half of 2010 is of course its 154 year old heritage. Buyers are most eager to spend on these classic pieces and not surprisingly, coats were cited as the brand's top performing segment, the A/W10 season seeing functionality and utility reflected in fabric choices such as pressed military wool and coated cotton canvas. Little wonder then that there lies enough confidence - in an unpredictable retail cycle - to invest £70m to buy back the company's stores in China, which is not only the world's fastest growing luxury goods market, but a pretty chilly place too.

Now for this latest S/S11 season, Burberry has gone all rock 'n' roll. A heritage label known better for catering to long weekends in the rainy English countryside, has done it again by introducing to the Aviator and the Trench, a new younger sibling - the Perfecto. Bailey has invited us in from the wholesome great outdoors, with black leather trousers, white and black string vests under over sized macs, studded leather gilets and black studded belts - all more at home worn at a basement gig on the fresh faced musicians invited by Bailey to join him on his latest PR heavy push, Burberry Acoustic.

Certainly the Burberry Acoustic project isn't one so blatantly dedicated to the celebration of a well loved outerwear style as social media project the Art of Trench, but if you think Kurt Cobain, Sid Vicious and recall a little teen angst then we can see how Bailey met an inner rebellious streak with a nod to a punkier, grungier counter culture, dressing the second half of the S/S 11 show with the bands in mind. The diagonal zips, leather strapping and press stud epaulettes accents on the collection's knits, gabardine jackets and even the trench itself all leaned on the historic cornerstone of design that is found in motorcycle heaven - the Perfecto.

Burberry has gone all cool on us. We know now the brand's formidable power for seamless marketing integration, the luxury sector has been notably slower to move online but Burberry has forged its own multimedia adventure and been hailed as today's leading digital luxury brand. If we bring it back to the clothes however, the reworking and subsequent frenzy induced by the flight jacket, as well as sure to be with the heritage biker this season, Bailey deftly shows us how to make good of old and how to make old, well, new.



ALL PIECES - BURBERRY PRORSUM, FROM A SELECTION AT SELFRIDGES, LONDON.