

Industry Insight: extended

Joshua Kane, menswear designer, London, full interview.

Joshua's interview appears in abridged form in Chapter 6, page 201.

How did you start out as a fashion designer?

I left university, did some time at Brookes Brothers in New York where the brand has 126 years of history. Their archive was amazing. I was always a very realistic designer. Then got a job at Jaeger when Harold Tilman owned the business and we did London Fashion Week.

Can you tell me about your experiences of fashion shows?

My experience at Burberry was amazing, it was a privilege to spend just under three years there. I was involved in the shows in Milan. It was an amazing logistical experience: designing it in London, developing it in Italy, getting it made in Italy, styling it in London, casting half in London half in Milan, flying the collection out to Milan, doing fittings in another country...

At Paul Smith as Senior Designer, I did London Collections Men. I worked on the Paris show and the London show. The Paris show was traditional catwalk, all the look and the theatrics, very much what I was doing at Burberry. But in London, we did an installation in an art gallery on Savile Row, all based on English traditionalism; it was a show but without models. Now with my own business we do an installation about every eight weeks. We did an installation at Tramshed Restaurant in Shoreditch: summer and winter collections, suspended from the ceiling at two different levels.

For me the show is becoming more about performance, it's a theatre, it's a film. The last show was inspired by a gig so we had a rock band playing and it was live and the next show we are working on is very cinematic, very film inspired. We premiered the sunglasses on the catwalk, then we had a static installation, then we had a moving installation, and we've got a video launch so that's another platform, then we've got the product shops on the e-commerce website, we have Facebook animations so that's another ... With Facebook and Instagram and Snapchat advertising progressing at such a rate, if you haven't done it, you're behind.

The show is part of the evolution of the collection. Before the last show, I made the finale coat. We looked at the show as a team and it needed more drama, so it was born from another garment in the collection and we made a more extreme version of it. That ability never to let it go ... the collection is never finished ... the runway is never ready. Even after the show we continued to design the collection. We showed one winter collection in London and then we re-showed it in Switzerland. Mercedes sponsored a show in a stadium of 10,000 people. We added the camel coat and other pieces, the knitwear scarves and they were so well received we added the bobble hat and the sweater. It is really the same project that has just never ended.

For me, the show is pure self-expression, it is not about selling. They are like theatrical performances. It is about creating something. We have a strange business model. Our best-

selling suit is our most expensive but it means that when it comes to a show, the crazier the design, the better it will sell. The show pieces become the best sellers but we still create a plain suit in case someone wants one. The shows mean I am a lot poorer. I call in favours. The models are friends, some of them play in really famous bands, they are cool people with a lot of attitude. They've followed what I've done for years and they'll do shoots and shows for me. The fashion industry works on who you know, but it is not one-way. A lot of my friends get what I am about and they tell me they feel privileged to be involved and I think vice versa.