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# Galliano enjoys solemn rehabilitation with first show for Maison Margiela

Disgraced designer follows months of industry speculation with a solid start in his comeback show in London

[Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

The Guardian, Monday 12 January 2015 21.08 GMT

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Galliano's comeback show was the climax of white-hot anticipation in the fashion industry. Photograph: Digital Catwalk/Photoshot

Four years on from the most spectacular fall from grace the fashion industry has seen, the rehabilitation of John Galliano can be time-stamped to the second after his comeback catwalk show ended. Following the last model's disappearance backstage, Galliano appeared briefly in front of the audience and bobbed a blink-and-you-missed-it bow, dressed in the white lab coat that is the uniform of the Maison Margiela label

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for whom he now designs.

During his 15 years at Christian Dior, Galliano turned the post-show bow into a performance in its own right, having his ateliers run up themed costumes – a matador, a pirate, a prince – in which he would stroll the catwalk, soaking up applause. This humble bow was the most convincing evidence yet that Galliano has left behind his previous doomed persona.

His London comeback show was the climax of white-hot anticipation in the fashion industry. The designer whose talent helped put London fashion week on the world stage in the early 1990s was an industry hero until February 2011, when an antisemitic rant at a bar in Paris led to his dismissal from Christian Dior; Galliano was subsequently found guilty of “public insults based on origin, religious affiliation, race or ethnicity” and fined €6,000. By a coincidence of timing, his return to public life was made all the more dramatic by happening now, when antisemitism and religious hatred in Paris are once again the burning topic of the day.

But in stark contrast to the general hysteria that preceded show day – the hashtag #MargielaMonday was adopted by fashion fans who counted down the days – the mood as the audience gathered for the show was almost eerily calm. Staged on the fourth floor of an office block in Victoria, the steel floor tiles shiny as new pins, the stark, clinical set was true to the avant-garde, deconstructed aesthetic of the house founded by Belgian designer Martin Margiela. With soft classical music playing in the background, and the audience ushered to elegant curved white chairs, the atmosphere was solemn, almost ceremonial.

But then, it is not the average fashion show that can boast Kate Moss and Rabbi Barry Marcus of London’s Central synagogue in attendance. The 180 chairs were in two long rows, so everyone had a front row seat. (In this respect, Galliano was clearly determined not to offend anyone.) The guest list reflected the respect he still commands in the industry. Anna Wintour flew in, while the French fashion establishment’s goodwill was represented by Emmanuelle Alt, editor of French Vogue. Designers Christopher Bailey of Burberry and Alber Elbaz of Lanvin were there.

There was plenty of time to assess the lineup, because – some things never change in fashion, after all – the show was delayed 15 minutes for the late arrival of Moss.

Maison Martin Margiela Artisanal is usually shown

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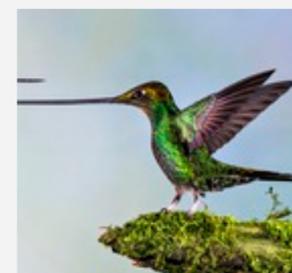
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during the haute couture shows, which take place in Paris in a fortnight. Galliano's choice to show the collection in London during the menswear schedule was explained by the company as a nod to the designer's "formative years and beginnings in the industry". This was widely interpreted as a nervous bid for a friendly home crowd. Galliano, four times British designer of the year, retains a huge London fanbase which has welcomed the opportunity to give him a second chance.

The first outfit on to the catwalk was a beige, safari-styled jacket with raw, unfinished seams, teamed with tights split between black on the outside and nude on the inside of the leg, the colours continuing to divide a pair of sculptural high heels. So far, so very Margiela. But the *pièce de résistance* was the trim on the jacket, which was made up of 20 or 30 matchbox-sized toy cars, reappropriated as shiny black embroidery. It was an idea that fitted nicely with the ethos of the Martin Margiela Artisanal collection, which is rooted in making fashion out of found objects. But in its sense of fun, its irreverence and imagination, the toy car was also a very Galliano touch, and a reminder of the winning exuberance and eccentricity Galliano brought to fashion in the days before that personality became a horrible parody.

The question on the minds of many in the audience before this show was how – or rather if – the very different fashion philosophies of Galliano (showmanship, extravagance, lusciously curved bias cuts, 12 pairs of false eyelashes on every model) and Margiela (anonymity, subtlety, androgyny, evening dresses made out of old trouser lining) could work together. Here, Galliano did rather well, by employing a humour and sense of fun that brought a welcome frivolity and fun to the Margiela aesthetic, which can sometimes feel dragged down by theory. Faces were made out of shells on the front of jackets and the back of dresses, so that the clothes came to life as they walked the catwalk, giant plastic eyelashes fluttering above conch-shell pupils.

But the challenge facing Galliano is not simply to convince the fashion industry of his talent, which is still evident. Fashion moves fast, and four years is a long time in the wilderness. If Galliano is to please Renzo Rosso, the owner of Maison Margiela, he will have to show he can make the Margiela brand relevant, and reach a new audience among a generation for whom his inspirational early work is not even a memory. The show was greeted with hearty applause, but no standing ovation. This was right and proper: it was a good show, but not a masterpiece. Galliano still has

his work cut out.



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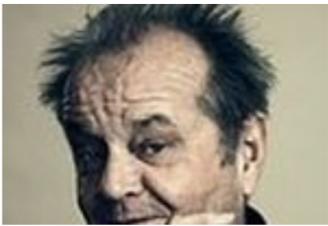


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**priceus**

12 January 2015 11:44pm

Je Suis... Galliano?

Oh wait he recanted didn't he.

2



**3genders**

13 January 2015 12:12am

18

 Well let's face it anti-Semitism is back in fashion.

---

 **scousexile** 10  
13 January 2015 12:23am  
Galliano? Have Oldham signed him? Oh, wait, that's different...

---

 **Talesontime** 2  
13 January 2015 12:23am  
Clumsy article (when was Martin Margiela a shrinking violet?!) followed by some so far all over the place comments. Oh, the humanity!

---

 **yianni** 1  
13 January 2015 1:17am  
So, after atonement, the same ugly outfits. Not much has changed for JG.

---

 **ID7565616** 2  
13 January 2015 3:18am  
There was no atonement. The clothes still suck. Galliano is a spent force an irrelevance. Their are better designers going to waste in dole queues who could actually fulfil the brief. This is Galliano pouring his sickness onto the runway and isnt remotely pleasant. Take his scissors off him, lock him in a padded cell and forget. The gall of him to wear a white coat ala Balenciaga shows he has more front than Brighton. Clearly without Bill Gayten he simply cannot cut it. Margiela would be best advised to pop his p45 in the post and hire some real designers.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

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 **Maredsous** 3  
13 January 2015 3:56am  
Played on the safe side but loved the show, welcome back John..!

---

 **Ploughman9** 2 [▶ Maredsous](#)  
13 January 2015 7:38am  
Personally I'm surprised he didn't describe his work as the Zyklon B collection

---

 **MorphaToo** 8  
13 January 2015 5:49am  
I find it puzzling that none of the other 7 billion people on the planet can cut a decent frock.

---

 **Tobone** 3  
13 January 2015 7:00am  
Well like he's bounced back like a mink stole around Naomi Campbell's diamonds encrusted neck.

---

 **Ploughman9** 4  
13 January 2015 7:36am  
So, Sonderkommando chic then?

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS

---

 **Spacely** 3  
13 January 2015 7:40am

Fuck this guy. I hope he crashes, burns and dies in a gutter.



**SchmuckOnWheels** ▶ Spacely

13 January 2015 8:00am

Fuck this guy. I hope he crashes, burns and dies in a gutter.

And then someone posses on him.

After eating loads of asparagus.



**Lentille**

13 January 2015 7:44am

An article full of fancy words. I sometimes have to remind myself that this is clothes we're talking about.

3



**johnmrson**

13 January 2015 7:49am

So by atonement he puts on another fashion show? That doesn't cut it. If he'd have volunteered to be a guide at Auschwitz for a couple of years I'd be a lot more interested.

2



**Ploughman9**

13 January 2015 7:50am

Here, Galliano did rather well, by employing a humour and sense of fun that brought a welcome frivolity and fun to the Margiela aesthetic, which can sometimes feel dragged down by theory.

How did this get past the sub-editor?

1



**Batcow**

13 January 2015 7:55am

The fascion industry is alive and well.

2



**hortensia1**

13 January 2015 7:59am

Is this really important? Who the hell cares anyway - only the fashionistas and the tiny, tiny group of people who can afford this rubbish. Cant see primark stocking his stuff any time soon.

1



**SchmuckOnWheels**

13 January 2015 7:59am

If the Guardian had any integrity at all you would treat him as a pariah.

But we all know the posh girls in the fashion team want their nice day out with the A listers.

2

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