

He never wanted to be a designer, but somehow he's leading the menswear revolution. Craig Green talks to Grace Cain

Ever Green



Clockwise from left: Londoner Craig Green takes inspiration from utility wear; a look from his AW19 collection; CRAIG GREEN jacket £895 and sweater £545

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There's that word again: community. It repeatedly bobs its head above the surface of this conversation. Sometimes it indicates how Green sees his place within the industry – always as a member of a hands-on team, never just a figurehead. Other times, it relates to his aesthetic calling card: uniforms, particularly the traditional worker's jacket. “I've always loved communal ways of dressing groups of people,” he explains. “People see a uniform as something negative that restricts your individuality, but I have quite a romantic idea of it. I always thought it was a bit sad on non-uniform days at school, because people would suddenly judge each other by how rich their parents were or who had the coolest trainers.”

Commonality and high fashion: the two concepts don't often go hand in hand. But Green is good at melding the incongruous – a classic silhouette reworked in an innovative fabric, for example, or an ambitious concept humbly executed. His approach has resonated emotionally, as well as commercially; there are plenty of testimonies by people who have been moved to tears at a Craig Green show. *Vogue* lauded his 2014 debut as being so beautiful it did just that, while *Business of Fashion's* Tim Blanks this year labelled him “the most interesting menswear designer in the world”.

Are these the reactions the designer hopes for? “It's never like ‘This season I want to make everyone cry,’” he chuckles. “But when you're asking people to go out of their way to come and see something you've made, it's important to make them feel something – even if they hate it.”

In a world where people are challenging long-established ideas of masculinity, Craig Green's tendency towards romanticism feels pertinent. Although his brand is relatively young (he held his first solo show in 2014), it's been years since the designer left behind the ‘emerging’ tag and began to be particularly recognised as one of the most important voices in contemporary fashion. Widely credited for redefining the codes of menswear in a way that never feels niche or inaccessible, Green has been praised for his ability to balance creative vision with commercial viability. Not bad for someone who never had any interest in fashion...

“Maybe that sounds negative,” he laughs. “But I never wanted to be a designer. I liked making things and I was good at artistic subjects at school, so my original ambition was to be a painter or sculptor.” That all changed during his foundation course at Central Saint Martins, where new friends persuaded him to focus on fashion because “it's just dressing each other up and taking pictures”.

“Perhaps I was easily influenced,” Green laughs again (he laughs an awful lot, in a laid-back, genial sort of way). “I liked the fact that everyone on the fashion course was part of a community. I liked the energy. And I liked that it was multidisciplinary; it could be prints, illustration, physically making something. That's an element I've always loved about fashion, and it's especially true when you have your own label.”

Green comes across as someone whose mind is scattered around a few different places at once. His sentences amble into one another, sometimes changing direction midway, at other times punctuated by that good-natured chuckle. “Fashion is problem-solving,” he says, apropos of nothing. “So many things can go wrong in the process of turning an idea into reality. It's a constant juggle, but I love having the opportunity to collaborate with so many different people. You can really create your own community.”

SIX OF THE BEST



▣ Dries Van Noten

Dries Van Noten's distinctive style feels well-suited to the sophistication of the current menswear climate. Combining dynamic tailoring, bold prints and thoughtful inspirations, the designer pushes at the aesthetic boundaries of the classic suit.

Coat £1,515 and trousers £385



▣ Jil Sander

Since 2017, bastion of minimalism Jil Sander has been in the capable hands of Luke and Lucie Meier. This season, expect long, languid silhouettes and chic tailoring as the original message of fashionable functionality is reinvented for a contemporary clientele.

Sweater £875



▣ Maison Margiela

This season, John Galiano takes the classic codes of tailoring and filters them through his imagination. Splicing suiting elements with military-inspired details, his intelligently constructed outerwear neatly combines the traditional with the cutting-edge.

Coat £2,515



▣ Rochas

After a two-year hiatus, menswear at Rochas is back, now with Federico Curradi at the helm. For his debut, Curradi imagined a bohemian artist in Paris. The result? Ultra-refined creative expressionism packaged in chic layers, luxe textures and elegant silhouettes.

Sweater £585



▣ JW Anderson

Jonathan Anderson's collection – darkly romantic, with mismatched details and earthy textures evoking a sort of dystopian medieval paganism – encapsulates menswear's current taste for all things elegant and artisanal. Who knew gingham could feel so urbane?

Jacket £2,490



▣ Lanvin

After a tumultuous few years, things are looking up for Lanvin. Bruno Sialelli's debut menswear collection (shown alongside the women's offering) feels like a palate-cleanser for the brand; think on-trend prints, sleek separates and trend-transcendent outerwear.

Coat £3,310

Men's International Designer, Second Floor; and harrods.com