

Maybe Don't Use Homeless People as Design Inspiration

Yahoo, by Sara Murphy, February 1, 2017



N.Hoolywood stirs up controversy with its new line. (Photo: IMAX Tree)

The first full day of New York Fashion Week: Men's involved lots of pinstripes and plaid, an astronaut cameo, and a presentation from N.Hoolywood that took inspiration from an unexpected — and inadvisable — source: homeless people.

The Japanese brand modeled its tone-deaf fall 2017 collection on the aesthetic that founder and creative lead Daisuke Obana referred to as “street people,” reports Fashionista.

“As our designer traveled the cities of America,” the show notes read, “he witnessed the various ways in which people there lived on the streets and the knowledge they have acquired while doing so. His observations of these so-called homeless or street people revealed that them [sic] to be full of clever ideas for covering the necessities of life.”



The designer of N.Hoolywood's new line says he was inspired by "street people." (Photo: IMAX Tree)

How do they do that, exactly? "Space blankets can be fashioned into coats for cold days, and plastic bags can double as waterproof boots when it rains," the show notes explained, before closing with praise for homeless people's "unconventional layering or senses of color, along with experimental sizing."

If you've seen *Zoolander*, this seems like parody come to life, *Dereclite* made real, minus Ben Stiller and Will Ferrell to lighten the mood. N.Hoolywood's models took to the runway in layered winter coats, hoodies, and scarves, some carrying faux trash bags and others clad in mismatched socks and trousers with hem lengths that varied by pant leg.



Photo: IMAX Tree

The clothing itself was nothing if not luxurious, however. Made from expensive fabrics, it is likely to retail at a price point that is out of reach for many average consumers, not to mention the homeless individuals from whom the designer claims to have taken his inspiration. For example a pair of basic fingerless gloves from the brand's 2016 line retailed for the low price of \$150.

The irony doesn't end there. There are over half a million homeless people in the United States, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and they are using blankets to stay warm, not to experiment with "unconventional layering." They are putting plastic bags on their feet to keep their feet dry, not to be fashion-forward.

Unfortunately, this isn't the first time that fashion has gone too far in its attempts to make homelessness "chic." The aforementioned *Derelict* campaign from *Zoolander* was itself a parody of John Galliano's spring/summer 2000 show for Dior, in which he used outfits improvised by homeless people in Paris to protect themselves from harsh weather as inspiration for couture. More recently, *Vogue* editor Elisabeth von Thurn und Taxis was called out for posting an offensive Instagram picture showing a bedraggled looking woman reading the fashion magazine on the streets of Paris.

Homeless people are real people, and according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a quarter of them suffer from mental illness. When it comes to finding inspiration, designers might want to look elsewhere.