



MILESTONE MOMENT

Joseph Altuzarra brings back “the ones that got away” in a project honoring his company’s 10th anniversary.

Altuzarra

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENNIFER LIVINGSTON



IT’S RARE to hear designer Joseph Altuzarra use the words “I” or “me,” even when reflecting on the 10 years worth of creative evolution and career-defining accolades for his eponymous label. Whether he’s talking about landing a Kering investment—the luxury conglomerate took a minority stake in the brand in 2013—or winning a CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund award, Altuzarra always manages to bring the conversation back to his team: “our archive,” “our mission,” “what we’ve achieved,” he says, emanating a natural spirit of camaraderie that makes this young, sweatshirt-clad designer even more likeable. It’s not surprising from the Parisian native, whose intention from the beginning has been to honor the true multiplicity of French identity while offering a more inclusive approach to seductive dressing.

“I felt like I had something to say, and I don’t think I would’ve started a company if I didn’t,” Altuzarra says of leaving his coveted position as first assistant to Givenchy’s Riccardo Tisci in 2008. “There was a real gap in the market at the time for women who had an evolving sense of who they were as they were aging.” Unconvinced that sexuality has an expiration date, Altuzarra has since filled that gap with thigh-high slits—a signature of the brand—impeccably tailored jackets, and

nip-waisted silhouettes. His brand caters to the elegantly self-assured woman whose age does not dictate her personal style: “She wants to seduce,” he explains, “but in an adult way.”

The brand’s discernable aesthetic derives from Altuzarra’s own story. Born in France to a Chinese-American mother and French-Basque father, he wanted the DNA of his designs to mirror the country’s diverse cultural makeup. He cites the European graphic novel series *Corto Maltese* as early inspiration for weaving together history, worldly curiosities, and imagination as a conduit to heritage-infused collections.

Ten years, countless awards, and a roster of A-list clients later, that ethos remains a strong guiding principle for the designer. A key to Altuzarra’s success is how recognizable the brand is, which is exactly how the team conceived of a project honoring the company’s 10th anniversary, “The One That Got Away.” The capsule is a retrospective presented through the lens of 10 archival pieces selected by what Altuzarra refers to as a “family of women” whom he believes, true to character, also deserve to be celebrated. Among them are his stylists, Vanessa Traina and Melanie Huynh, and model Shu Pei Qin, who has appeared in almost every Altuzarra show.

“We wanted to not just make it about me, but also about the women who have supported the brand and who have been with us since the beginning,” Altuzarra says. The prompt was simple: identify a favorite style that you still miss, or shouldn’t have let go. This resulted in a reissued set of “quintessentially” Altuzarra garments that the designer could not have curated better himself, a testament to just how well his clients know and connect with the brand. Traina’s choice of a blue gingham shirtdress, for example, is a piece that shifted Altuzarra’s understanding of the many ways sex appeal functions as a form of sartorial expression. The rebirth of his utilitarian green parka, selected by Huynh, reignited a career-long love affair with reworked outerwear. As the first luxury retailer to pick up Altuzarra’s collection, Barneys New York was the obvious home for the capsule. “It was like a dream come true,” he remembers of that first Barneys buy. “It was the best moment.”

As for the next 10 years, Altuzarra believes there are more milestones to come, including starting a family and continuing to grow his brand. “I really feel supremely lucky and blessed that I can do this, and so I just want to keep on doing it.”

BY AMANDA RANDONE

