



● FIACHRA GIBBONS

**H**old onto your horses. French fashion is back to its swashbuckling best and the designer leading the charge is a young mixed-race man determined to give Paris a new swagger.

“I want to make all men feel like princes again,” Olivier Rousteing declared after his dashing, unashamedly masculine show for Balmain.

Not since the days of the Charge of the Light Brigade has there been such an onrush of braid, breeches and boots.

Rousteing’s models were not the pallid automatons of so many shows.

Instead, they were dashing hussars and Cossack officers you half expected would pull cavalry swords from their gorgeous scarlet and leather cummerbunds as they thundered through a Parisian mansion.

Half of them looked like they had come straight from the ball the night before Waterloo in their silk and velvet breeches, with big brass-buttoned greatcoats thrown on their shoulders, and fur and tassels flying.

‘BRING BACK THE DREAM’

“Paris is the City of Light and those lights should continue to shine,” the 30-year-old designer, a favourite of pop divas Beyonce and Rihanna, said. “I want to bring back the dream and beauty that is Paris... and make all men feel like princes again.

“I want to show the diversity and colours of France and to show that Paris has a past, a present and it will have a future,” he added.

Rousteing, who was adopted by his white parents when he was one year old, said his show was an ode to the racial and cultural diversity of the French capital.

A symphony orchestra, playing live to a hip-hop soundtrack, provided the musical tone.

“Mixing Kanye West and Rihanna with a symphony orchestra is my universe.

I am French in a French fashion house with a couture tradition which also has a very international influence.

That for me is Paris — it is that internationalism and the richness of the mixing of cultures.

“This singular eagerness to embrace a diversity of cultures and

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ideas... enrages intolerant minds both here and abroad,” he said.

An Internet darling, with 2.1 million Instagram followers, Rousteing has become a reference for stars as diverse as Jane Fonda and Nicki Minaj, who even rapped on the venerable couture brand’s name as sales have soared.

‘SELFIE-MADE MAN’

Rousteing’s high-cheekboned good looks, social media savvy and friendships with stars such as West and his wife Kim Kardashian has led to him being called a “selfie-made man” — a joke he appears to delight in.

Earlier in the day there was a similar defiance against giving in to fear after the November massacres from Dior’s Kris Van Assche.

Although much of his collection was in black, it was not the black of mourning, he insisted.

“The events mean that we have to be stronger to make people dream.

The darkness is so omnipresent that as a designer you have to go further.

You need more power and strength,” he said.

“In fact I like the idea of darkness pushing creativity,” he said, echoing the sombre luxuriance of Dries Van Noten stand-out line, and fellow Belgian creator Walter Van Beirendonck, whose show was simply

called “Woest”, which means furious in Flemish.

Paris-based label Etudes — whose studio is near the Bataclan concert hall where 90 people died in November’s attacks — seemed almost to be on a war footing in their Saturday show, with a collection largely comprised of military-inspired and camouflage outfits, fighter pilot fatigues and parachute suits.

There was a similar ready-for-anything air in newcomers OAMC, whose nifty high-end functional streetwear is also created only a few blocks away and is replete with the spirit of Parisian resistance.

But if you were looking for a sign that “Paris will always be Paris”, look no further than the Hermes show.

All the elements of ineffable casual French style were there, the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie personified.

Only that dried-blood red, a colour that crops up across the collections like a wound, would lead you to believe that anything untoward had happened. — AFP



Models present creations by Balmain, during the men’s Fashion Week 2016-2017 Fall/Winter collection in Paris on Saturday. – AFP



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This won’t hurt a little bit

A Chinese astrologer told me once that northwest is one of my unlucky Feng Shui directions but I never believed this until my molar tooth in northwest corner of my mouth started aching badly. I decided to bare my teeth to a dentist and hence visited a dental clinic.

After lying on a dental chair, the dentist requested me to open my mouth wider to start his examination. I heard the startled dentist saying: “You’ve got the biggest cavity that I’ve ever seen”... “You’ve got the biggest cavity that I’ve ever seen”.

I painfully asked him why he was saying that twice as I was already scared. The dentist shrugged and said: “I didn’t, that was the echo”.

He then prescribed some painkillers and asked me to wait for two days. To forget the pain, I started researching over how humanity has been fighting to tackle this menace.

Evidence of dentistry practices dates back to earlier civilisations including Sumerian and Indus Valley, where documents about dental treatment procedures were found. Egyptian papyrus writings also contain details on dentistry. Even 3000 years ago people in India and China wore false teeth — no doubt we find dentists from these countries all over the world. Although toothpaste has been in use since 2500 years — even before the invention of the toothbrush, modern toothpaste evolved with addition of soap by Peabody — a dentist, only in 1824. Colgate sold tooth powder in jars during 1873 and Washington Sheffield invented modern toothpaste in tubes. Toothbrushes were manufactured in US during 1885 and in 1924 DuPont introduced brushes with nylon bristles.

I tried to shift the focus from my terrible pain with the above information but the pain increased.

Although the human species is superiorly evolved and have been ruling this planet, the story behind our tooth seems to be so shaky. For sharks, teeth never gave any problem because they keep falling (weekly!) and growing in their entire life. Elephant’s molars that weigh 4.5 kg, fall out every 10 years with new ones grow in to replace — which means they have six new sets of teeth during a lifetime. Alligators too never mind tooth falling because they have 2000 to 3000 teeth and this must have inspired insurers to hesitate a dental coverage. After all snails, having tooth smaller than the head of a pin, have as many as 25,000 teeth in their tongue!

Oops... my tooth pain did not subside... I woke up at midnight after dreaming of a Dracula with a broken fang chasing me. I started running till I met my dentist the next morning pleading for an extraction. He carefully examined my tooth to check whether he could save it with a dental filling. When asked what kind of filling, he explained about amalgam or tooth-coloured fillings that could help. I tried telling him that chocolate filling was always my favourite, but unfortunately I could neither see him smiling nor could I get a glimpse of his tooth out of my curiosity as he was behind a surgeon’s mask.

When he was about to probe further with some sharp needles I was worried how would I tell him that I had pain when he struck a nerve... may be he will ask me to shed tears when there is pain? What if I scream like Mr Bean and send all other waiting patients out of the clinic? Will he charge me more? But none of this sort happened.

He took an X-ray to show me on his computer that there was some problem and couldn’t be fixed anyway other than an extraction. If X-rays could be fixed in Photoshop, he would have not recommended such painful procedure.

When he decided to remove that stupid tooth (OMG! what if it was my wisdom) I was worried. Would I be able to tolerate the pain? But he was kind enough to give me an injection to forget the pain. It was scary to think of an injection inside my mouth. The worry of tolerating another pain was alleviated when he applied a local anaesthetic cream before an injection.

Those were not such good old days where ‘blow to the head’ and ‘strangulation’ were used as anaesthetics! Later, dentists used laughing gas (nitrous oxide) induced anaesthesia before extraction — but I could not imagine a kind of cry with laughter from the patients at that time.

I had to sadly bid farewell to the tooth which was with me for the past forty years and got removed in four minutes. I could have waited a few more days but I remembered what Ogden Nash once said:

‘Some tortures are physical  
And some are mental  
But the one that is both is dental’.

Type slowly to enhance your writing skills

The quality of your writing will surely get better if you start typing slowly on the computer, says a study. Researchers from the University of Waterloo asked participants to type essays using both hands or with only one.

Using text-analysis software, the team discovered that some aspects of essay writing, such as sophistication of vocabulary, improved when participants used only one hand to type.

“Typing can be too fluent or too fast and can actually impair the writing process,” said Srdan Medimorec, researcher in the faculty of arts at Waterloo and lead author of a paper appeared in the *British Journal of Psychology*.

The results led the researchers to speculate that slowing down participants’ typing by asking them to use only one hand, allowed more time for internal word search, resulting in a larger variety of words.

Fast typists may have simply written the first word that came to mind. “This is the first study to show that when you interfere with people’s typing, their writing can get better,” said professor Evan F Risko.

