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Backstage with MAC



Richard Nicoll AW07 backstage

# London Calling

NC finds bagels, Tuxedos and zero debate at London Fashion Week

It's ironic that the Natural History Museum is the setting for London Fashion Week. Not because the fashion industry are supposed to be avoiding associations with the skeletal at the moment, but because in one area you're enlightened about the past and in another you're dragged a year ahead into fashion's future, to see what we'll be wearing in Autumn/Winter 2007.

I was seeing the collection of hot ticket Jens Laugesen, a Danish designer. I was ushered through to the backstage area to see Sally Branka and the Mac Pro Team at work, where everything was surprisingly serene. Not what you'd expect from an industry supposedly filled with champagne, Bolivian marching powder and anorexic divas. The flamingo-like models were guzzling bagels and the only white powder was sugar being piled into tea. The consumption of carbs certainly didn't fit in with the media buzz over the size zero debate, a hot potato to rival the anti-fur row. I was interested to

see if the casting of the show would be affected, but considering the return of fur to the catwalk in the face of years of protest, I shouldn't have been so naive. The girls, though eating, are still thin, the sample sizes are small and I don't imagine that will change in the near future. That said I didn't see anyone I thought looked ill. The legs were slender, the arms lean and the waists neat, but I also saw peachy bottoms, full breasts and delicate, not skeletal shoulders.

The backstage crew agreed that the models did look 'healthier' this year, but the whole debacle is problematic. "Eating disorders do happen here, but mostly it's in their constitution to be thin. It does set them apart from the rest of the world and that's partly why they're here. Some people are born with nimble fingers and become seamstresses, others are born with long legs and become models." But what about their dangerous position as role models to younger girls? "There are always going to be thin girls in the public eye, but

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models aren't really selling themselves as role models in the way actresses and presenters are. If anything they're selling the work of the designers, not themselves. The real role models in fashion should be the designers, artists, writers or photographers. They're of varying shapes and sizes and this doesn't figure in their careers."

The clothes, after all, were the reason I was there. Initially there was so much black that the photographers broke the chilly atmosphere with a cheer when a flash of white finally came. But the simple palette allowed us to concentrate on the textures and shapes. From the high waists, tuxedo cuts and starched

shirts of the sharply tailored suits to the ruched silk tulle, puffball hems, Balenciaga-esque bell shapes and ethereal netting of the eveningwear, every look was a visual delight. Laugesen's collection bewitched us and reminded me what is truly important at LFW: imaginative and stunning fashion design. **NC**



Jens Laugesen AW07