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Looking for the next Hedi Slimane

Jan
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PA Posted by: [Jean Paul Cauvin](#) @ 9:15 am ^{pa} January 8 2008
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womenswear on the runways of the world's fashion capitals - particularly in Paris and Milan- the most creative designer in the field of menswear, who has defined a new silhouette and identity for men in the last decade is certainly **Hedi Slimane**, with his designs for Dior Homme.

Strangely enough, on the threshold of the second season when he has not been showing any more, who liked his style and who did not, seem to be equally missing his creations. Will he get to live another episode of fashion design soon, or does menswear need to move forward and find a new leading designer for menswear? This seems to be the question at the moment. Particularly at a time when Women's Wear Daily, in an article by Miles Socha, has revealed in mid-december, according to industry sources, that the star of menswear designers had "*renewed talks with LVMH chairman **Bernard Arnault** about the launch of a Hedi Slimane fashion house*" after leaving Dior in March last year.

This is where "looking for the next Hedi Slimane" could have

calendar of runway shows for menswear makes the coming fall-winter 2008/2009 season look denser than ever with a total of forty-five brands showing on four days only in the City of Lights. Although menswear has proven to be, since the turn of the century, much more innovative than

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several meanings. From looking for news about his second possible association with LVMH, to reported interest from Renzo Rosso (who is already backing Martin Margiela and Sophia Kokosalaki among others), to any type of news like the eventuality of seeing Hedi Slimane design the menswear for Yves Saint Laurent (PPR group), all fashion journalists and writers will keep the question throughout the menswear collections at the back of their heads.

The other thing we will do is try and detect where the next designer who will revolutionize menswear like Slimane did in the last 10 years could be found. With that perspective in mind, I guess everybody will look first more closely at **Kris Van Assche** of course, who, in his second season at the helm of **Dior Homme** -on top of his personal eponymous brand- has yet to make a stronger statement than he did for Spring 2008, which was more of a transition collection for the venerable house.

By the way, it's not only Kris Van Assche who is in his "sophomore" collection at a prestigious house. **Franck Boclet** also has to prove, after his departure two seasons ago from Smalto, that he has found the right DNA for the menswear at **Ungaro** for his second collection there; just like his heiress and former first assistant now at the helm of **Smalto**, **Youn Chong Bak**, who could be showing her new options for the classic brand where she has claimed that she would "*favour a man who accepts more clearly his feminine connotations*". But the surprise could come once more from two other Asian designers this season, **Juun. J**, a Korean native who has been developing his eponymous brand in his own country and who is also showing for the second time only in Paris, did unexpectedly marvel many a fashionista with his well-thought creations for last season. More fashion forward and minimalistic is **Kazuyuki Kumagai**, who founded ten years ago, his own brand called **Attachment**. The Japanese designer proposed last season very nice perspectives on leather coats that could probably prove more adapted to the fall-winter season.

Second chance collection, did you say? It could be the case also for **Eric Lebon**, a Hyères Festival 2007 discovery, who has yet to make a statement with his fall collection, when his first one in Paris for the spring hardly made an impression. **Bruno Pieters**, who did not show last season in the Paris Homme calendar and who is back for his second fall season with his own menswear line, seems to be more established, be it only for the consistency he has been showing in his designs for women over the last years.

I guess many writers will also look with the "next Slimane" question in mind in the direction of **Raf Simons**, who has been gaining much legitimacy and recognition in the past seasons and years for his menswear lines under his own name, particularly since he has become in 2005 the Creative Director for womenswear and menswear alike at the helm of Jil Sander. His runway shows always seem very tuned to the times we live, defining one after the other, serious aesthetics for the still fresh 21st century. The come-back of a much liked designer on the Paris runways after one season for his menswear collection in voluntary exile in Milan, will certainly bring more of the spotlight on **Dries Van Noten** also, particularly as his womenswear shown in march in Paris got much approval from the international press.

The other designers on this long list will bring us the usual "classic" menswear often crafted with taste and a resolutely "à la French" elegance, like **Véronique Nichanian** at **Hermès**, or slightly more edgy with **Lucas Ossendrijver** at **Lanvin Homme**. Both **Jean-Paul Gaultier** for his **Gaultier2** line and **John Galliano** for his menswear are expected by the fashion crowds to open up new directions as they seemed to revisit their classic past extravagances in the previous season. Innovations are also called for at Paul Smith who, on the other hand, has certainly proven very commercial these past years.

At a time when, after a costly come-back last season with a too much awaited Nicolas Andreas Taralis at its helm, the House of Cerruti is not showing, although

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it has named Jean-Paul Knot as its new creative Director last October, at a time when the house of Thierry Mugler is not showing, including for menswear, things seem to be changing quickly.

But the changes might well come from the unexpected when only one total newcomer is to be seen in the official calendar: **Shawn Collins**. Not much is known at the moment about this American designer now based in New York City (previously in Los Angeles) who is said to have collaborated with John Galliano and to have received support from Comme des Garçons and Junya Watanabe. Who knows? He could be THE surprise for this season, and this is what everybody seems to be craving for: unexpected new names, or unexpected news from designers who have made a name. This is what Fashion Weeks are for, putting the spotlight on revelations!

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