

BALMAIN

PARIS

BALMAIN KIDS FALL WINTER 2023

Balmain's Return To Egypt

For Balmain's most recent men's and women's collections, Olivier Rousteing returned to Egypt. Although he's never actually visited that far-away land, Balmain's creative director explained to the press that ever since his youth, he has spent a great deal of time in that part of the world. As someone who was born *né sous X*—an adopted child with no knowledge of his birth parents—Olivier Rousteing often fantasized that perhaps his origins could somehow be traced back to the pharaohs' glorious universe. Those dreams afforded him some needed support during his most difficult childhood moments, when he felt most set apart from his classmates, due to his skin color. To construct his imaginary regal lineage, Rousteing constantly sought out every piece of information available about that fascinating ancient civilization. And today, after recently discovering that both of his birth parents were originally from the Horn of Africa, the designer finds himself once again filled with a strong yearning to learn more about the art, history and beauty of Africa, reigniting his past passions for Egypt. Unique Egyptian signatures were reinterpreted by Rousteing for the house's latest Paris presentation, with rich pharaonic silhouettes, colors and embellishments blending perfectly with Balmain's distinctive codes and Parisian *savoir-faire*. The designer and his team were determined to have their Balmain Kids designs build upon that distinctive inspiration.

Institutional

For the Balmain Kids Fall 2023 collection, Olivier Rousteing and his design team have deftly created multiple fresh new spins on the most familiar of house signatures. Balmain's famed golden-buttons—known for shining in a six-button configuration atop the house's iconic blazers—have migrated to an array of other perfectly tailored house silhouettes, including crop tops, coats, catsuits and pants. And those same golden embellishments—greatly blown up in size, to emphasize the power of the house's historic coat of arms—are placed atop the collection's sweat tops and bottoms. Additionally, house logos and the instantly recognizable Balmain monogram decorate several “mini-me” takes on designs that Rousteing initially sent down Paris runways—including intense Egyptian-blue, iridescent and gilded offerings that make clear the designer's passion for the land of the pharaohs. Bold black-and-white designs—an essential ingredient of every Balmain collection for over 75 years—adopt couture ruffles, and give modern twists to both the house's *marinière* and Rousteing's beloved houndstooth, making it clear once again that while Balmain may be celebrated for its love for monochromatic options—its designs could never be monotone.

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Casual

The Casual Collection for Balmain Kids makes evident Olivier Rousteing's impressive mastery in melding together historic Parisian *savoir-faire* with a distinctly 21st-Century sporty vibe. This range's silver buttons gleam atop an abundance of the highest-quality knit, fleece and reflective materials, while eye-catching bold house logos are cleverly placed and artfully deconstructed—but what makes this offering a truly Balmain collection is the abundance of unexpected and clever additional luxe touches, directly adapted from the house's many fashion-week successes. Expert French tailoring allows for the innovative construction behind unique *trompe l'oeil* combinations, padded silhouettes echo Rousteing's recent runway theme of protection, expertly finished hems unexpectedly zip open and even the designs intended for the very youngest Balmain Army members adopt the type of stylings and embellishments long associated with the finest in Parisian couture.

Rustic

Balmain Kids' Rustic Collection builds upon Olivier Rousteing's life-long obsession with Egypt, with a distinct focus on the nomadic colors, spirit and traditions of desert landscapes. Balmain signatures—from pleated skirts to the house's iconic double-breasted blazer—adopt the white, khaki and beige tones of open, arid lands, perfectly complemented by the dusty rose and coral of brilliant sunsets. Balmain gold and rich Egyptian blues lend touches of luxury; patterns rely on endlessly repeated house logos, as well as an array of replications of animal prints—a favorite motif of the house ever since Pierre Balmain's earliest post-war collections. Dedicated Balmain Army members may note Balmain Kids' clever reappropriation of Baroque iconography—the exact symbols that Rousteing himself relied upon during his most recent Paris Fashion Week presentation, underlining the designer's belief in the need for a modern-age Renaissance, which would be marked by open minds, new discoveries and fundamental changes in direction.

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