

LdS

Ludovic de Saint Sernin
Autumn Winter 2023

PRIVATE SHOW

As ever with Ludovic de Saint Sernin, the brand's AW23 collection is decidedly autobiographical. It is a contemplation of its namesake designer's five-year rise from fresh face to fully-fledged creative director – not just of his own label, but of seminal Belgian house Ann Demeulemeester, too. Fittingly, it sees a return to the menswear calendar, the place where Ludovic's journey first started, to offer an intimate celebration of a dream come true; a private show of everything that LdSS has come to embody and represent.

To toast the journey travelled thus far, Ludovic began by casting his mind back to where it all began – as an early teen in the mid-2000s, sat square-eyed before a television set watching FashionTV. It was there and then that he first quietly manifested a future where he would one day be a contemporary of the industry mavericks that flickered on the screen.

His appetite for televised fashion competitions – think Project Runway – served as a key impetus for the collection, with the frenzy of working between his eponymous house and his new Antwerp-based role, inspiring him to charge his team to design a series of thematised capsules – as if each were the week's challenge in such a show.

An opening suite of slim, tailored black silk taffeta looks – a high-collared sleeveless shirt; an amply cut trouser; a floor-skimming skirt – establishes common ground between the seething sensuality of LdSS and the brooding severity of the Belgian house he now sits at the helm of. The former tone is further developed in a trio of nightshade stretch leather ensembles that include the debut of a flounced miniskirt and the Cleavage dress – a dramatically abbreviated A-line silhouette featuring a signature laced front. Its bust motif is echoed on the Cleavage clutch, an evening-ready riff on last season's popular shoulder bag.

This sombre passage of the collection is rounded out by graphite denim shirting and the return of the front-box pleated Mirage skirt, as well as a figure-skimming overcoat trimmed with denim 'fur'. A testament to the experimental flair of LdSS's well-seasoned atelier, the shaggy fabric treatment – the result of a painstaking process of teasing out the fabric's individual threads – reappears as a full pair of wide-legged Yeti pants that required a total of three weeks of handwork to create.

Frayed bandeaux and undulating skirts in ribbed pumice knit – repurposed from surplus stock – demonstrate a similar attention to artisanal craft, as do this season's Swarovski mesh pieces – swishy, figure skaters' miniskirts that glimmer in rose, clear crystal and ice blue. Elsewhere transparent mesh tops – and a halterneck gown that puddles at the hem – are spangled with crystal iterations of the LdSS monogram, which also finds itself laser-etched onto an array of denim pieces: squarish jackets and lace-fly jeans, eyelet briefs and bikinis.

A homage to the fervent logomania of the era when Ludovic first fell for fashion, and a proud reminder of the brand's established status, it signifies an expansion of the brand's remit – a fact that's expressly felt in the arrival of coats and cropped jackets in real, deep-pile shearling, a first for the brand.

Rather than a meditation on a particular theme or topic, Private Show is perhaps best viewed as an acknowledgement of the vast array of facets and people that have culminated in LdSS as we know it today. Stylist Jacob K; hair artist Guido Palau, casting directors Samuel Ellis and Piergiorgio del Moro; makeup artist Karin Westerleund and the team at Byredo – this season's kind makeup sponsor; the impeccably skilled members of the LdSS atelier: ultimately, the clothes animated here on the runway are ciphers for the efforts of an entire ecosystem. It's a fact you'll be well aware of if, like Ludovic, you've spent time poring over backstage clips from the shows that used to run on FashionTV.