

**RAD HOURANI
SEAMLESS**

01.11 - 30.11.2013

FIVE YEARS OF UNISEX

4-5

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by Phoebe Greenberg

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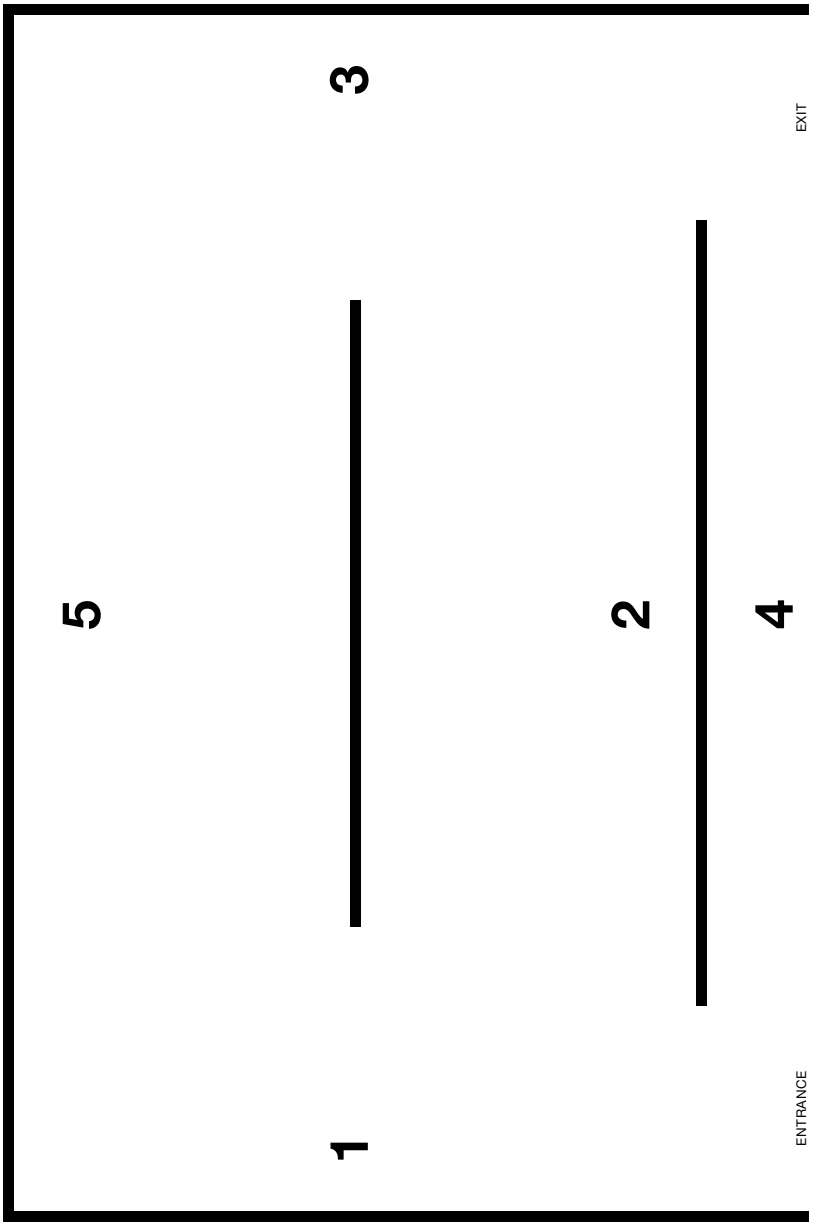
The world of Rad Hourani is multidimensional. He is not only a visionary in design, but also a deeply sensitive artist, using photography, film, and graphic elements to express his unique voice.

As one of the most visible figures in the international design world, Rad remains deeply committed to his methodology. He has outwardly questioned perceptions of how one should live in a garment and developed a deep conviction in his signature style. Boundaries between male and female, young and old, race, and religion all collapse under his gaze. Through his search for neutrality in the human condition, he allows our spiritual selves to emerge. In his own vision, he is sketching a new, freer way to live.

The uniformity of his collection creates a distinctive language that eludes fashion conventions. He applies principles of architecture in designing his patterns and works from the visceral premise of how the clothing will move and be worn. Rad is dedicated to making people feel comfortable, powerful, and beyond time. It is fitting that Rad simply numbers his gender-neutral collections, freeing them from trends and seasons to ensure that they are timeless. His attention to detail and form and the quality of his materials embrace our bodies. We feel protected and valued as one of a multitude, equal yet responsible for being true to ourselves. The notion of transformation emerges from the desire to allow people to redefine their experience while wearing the same garment.

As a photographer, sculptor and designer, Rad's examination of the human body is keenly observant, fearlessly revealing our neutrality as a defining trait. Portraits are stark, movement is examined, and landscapes are undistinguishable. Unity is a clear source of inspiration.

*The Phi Centre is pleased to present the **Rad Hourani Seamless** exhibition, a five-year of unisex retrospective that reveals the social content of the Rad Hourani multidisciplinary vision through photography, design, and video. A unique event to underline the work of this important creator.*



This exhibition, a retrospective of Rad Hourani's 5 years of genderless creation, showcases his entire artistic process: gender-neutral patterns, anatomy, unisex couture, neutral portraits, and runway. translated through his videos, photographs, sculptural works, and curation of artistic collaborations.

During the month of November, Rad Hourani will give a conference to the general public where, in addition to his approach, he will talk about what influenced the trajectory of his invention.

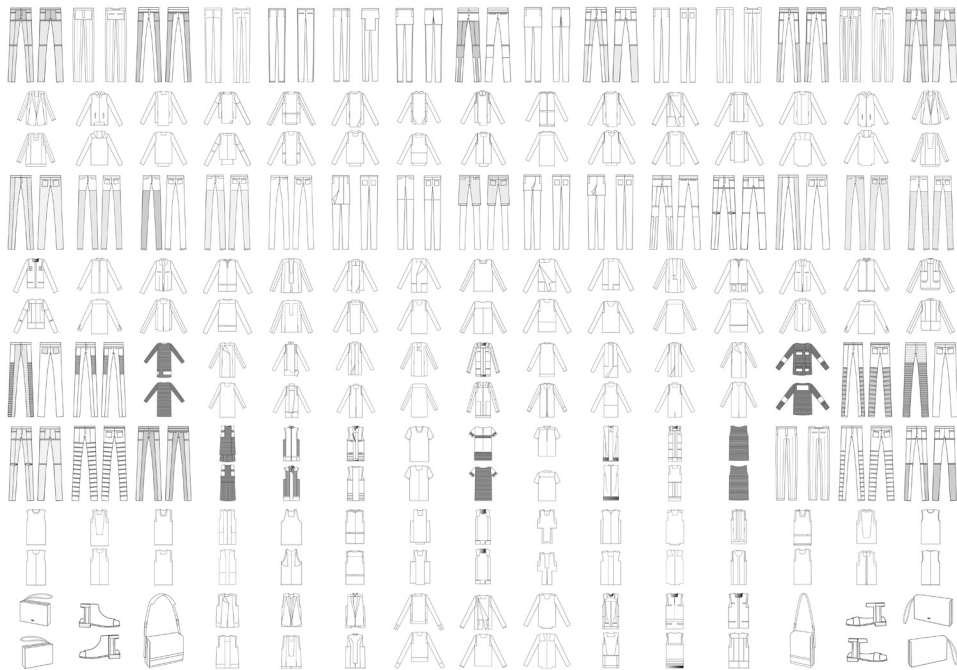
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GENDER-NEUTRAL PATTERNS - 2005-2007

THE MEDIUM OF COSTUME

Rad Hourani is perpetually aware of the power of aesthetics at large, and how a person's ensemble of outer garments has the capability of evoking nuanced characteristics. Using his own reflections, he examines the restrictive narrative around gender normative tropes of clothing. These have an impact on our daily lives through heteronormativity, gender privilege, homophobia, cissexism, and other forms of prejudice.

The pre-determined societal declaration of gender enacts expectations to dress according to certain gender-specific codes. Society often neglects the inequalities caused by the containment of human expression through the body. Rad Hourani asks the question of how consumerism and art must become self-reflective in areas of codifying masculinity or femininity through cuts, colors, shades, motifs, and textiles.

By using the medium of costume to comment on this bone of contention, Rad Hourani explores ways of breaking down conceptual divisions. Through his art practice, he challenges the media and mass society, that uphold limitations through aesthetic conformity. His perspective aims to use this discipline to support the embodiment of liberation through the wearer.

RESEARCH

In pioneering a non-binary dressing narrative within consumer industries and artistic platforms, Rad Hourani's process involves challenging the validity of conditioned

standards for male and female clothing. He reflects on the first garments, which originated with the sole purpose of clothing the body without the interference of gender association. Initially, clothing served the practical function of protecting the body from the natural elements. In time, attachments to wealth, nobility, patriotism, and religious identity were asserted, and conceptions of gendered codes of dressing were adopted, remaining to this day.

His vision of an entire gender-neutral wardrobe diverges from the typical association of cross-dressing, where flamboyant clothing and theatrical motifs still carry boundaries of gendered connotations. Specifically with the application of a flared outline, tailored cuts, and accessories. His methodology differs from the role and functions of uniforms or androgyny, as these terms still cater to classified concepts. Before this time, although "one size fits all" or unisex pieces like t-shirts and hats had existed, there was never an entirely ready-to-wear collection with a sizing system specific to all.

CONCEPTION

In order to create a complete genderless wardrobe with a chart of sizes generated from his iterations of non-gendered patterns, Rad Hourani studied the varying human anatomy for two years. He dissects the body with precision to understand human morphology and uses the medium of architecture and geometry as a tool to construct alternative garments. The collections, conceived of transformable silhouettes, articulate flexibility in the expression of one's identity, which allows the wearer to express their own multiplicities. His innovative concept challenges the strict duality of gendered patterns that are the basis of clothing construction, from the manufacturing industries to formulaic design schools.

INVENTION

In 2007, Rad Hourani created the first entirely Gender-Neutral Ready-To-Wear collection in the history of fashion, by inventing patterns with a specific non-gendered sizing system. In this way, the agency of costume envisions an existence free from limitations and conditioning.

The result is groundbreaking in the context of counter-culture or historical trends in costume. The creation was exhibited at Dominique Fiat Gallery in Paris via an installation of a runway performance. The ensembles depict a composition of ageless forms through neutral lines, timeless textures, and a dichromatic color palette of black and white. The minimalist schemes establish the neutrality of the artworks and initiate a dialogue of new possibilities by using symbolic vocabulary and propagating the meaning of dressing.

This revelation eradicates binary conditions and objects to the coercion of dressing according to society's superimposed idiosyncrasies. Upholding a baseline of equality, the unisex work paved the way for boundary-pushing creations of the future, applying non-binary terms such as: genderless, agender, genderfluid, non-gendered, all genders, ungendered, human and others.



ANATOMY - 2011

In Genesis, women and men were separated into genders. A piece of male anatomy was taken to create his female counterpart. It is in the separation and function of genders that we continue to endure this test of time in society. Rad Hourani's photographic and digital dissection of the human anatomy juxtaposes genders to question the separation and illusion of social constructs that divide genders and races. In using flawless filiform and athletic bodies for their anatomical resemblance, Rad raises the question: Before gender-specific garments, is there a body?

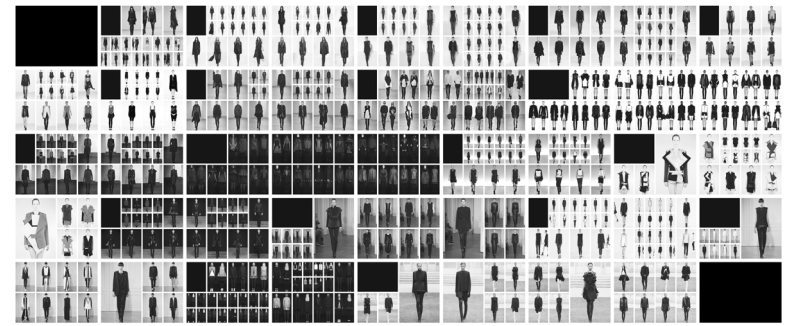
"ANATOMY" digitally dissects the human body with precision in order to create genderless compositions. After taking him over a year to understand human morphology, he was then able to reconstruct garments that transcend gender, age, and tradition. This is the essence of Rad's search for neutrality, as he pushed the study of anatomy while inventing the first gender-neutral patterns, in addition to a new sizing system specific to a complete unisex wardrobe. Translated into the pictorial dissection of the body that is now "anatomy" photography, Rad's nudes are graphically positioned to lose sight of the concept of gender and give way to the landscape by which we are immersed when looking at them. We see a body language in which light, shadows, movements, and torsos become neutral.

Each series conveys a different approach in search of the balance of a harmonious language. He further makes incisions to separate the faces and bodies that articulate the repetition of all parts of the canvas to become unified, while the deconstructed sinuous forms create a new type of harmony in order to evoke a strong sense of singularity. It is in this artful combination between individuality and universality that this new paradigm functions as a unifying force, treating the body as a language.

The dynamism of a physical body gives way to tableaux, in which some anatomical elements are readable while others act as a "trompe l'oeil." so as to say that an arm may look like a leg or a letter. Rad's ability to represent anatomy in a geometrical manner creates multiple readings, which are recomposed. The transition from muscular bodies to more slender shapes speaks of the complexity of our understanding of beauty, as archetypes differ from generation to generation. "ANATOMY" is part illusion and statement that articulates a contemporary gaze and condition: a multiplicity of beliefs.

Rad Hourani's projects have been internationally featured, including in the New York Times, Interview Magazine, Surface, GQ, Vogue, Rolling Stone, Sleek, Harper's Bazaar, iD, WSJ, Elle, Dazed, Aesthetica, Time, Montecristo, National Geographic, The Cut, Vanity Fair, V, Nowness, Forbes, and various other publications.

© RAD HOURANI



UNISEX COUTURE - 2012-2013

Rad Hourani invented the first gender-neutral patterns in 2007, in addition to a new sizing system specific to a complete unisex wardrobe. In conceiving his revolutionary concept of ready-to-wear collections, the works of art aim to initiate a dialogue on non-binarity through the medium of costume.

The creations were exhibited through the discipline of runway performances in Paris in 2007 at the Dominique Fiat Gallery and later in New York from 2008 to 2012 at the Yvon Lambert Gallery and others. In 2011, Rad Hourani was selected as one of the world's top 5 talents by Franca Sozzani and Anna Wintour at the Palazzo Morando Museum in Milan.

His dedication to worldwide communications, with an ongoing presence in the media and press interviews, acts as a form of activism. The critique via his art practice reminds the audience that the limiting preconceptions in the present ethos and rules of costume history are deeply intertwined with human inequality.

In 2012, Rad Hourani was approached by the "Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture" in Paris to become an "invited member," with the endorsement of Sidney Toledano at "Christian Dior Couture."

Embodying an innovative spirit, Rad Hourani then became the first to both create and introduce a gender-neutral collection in the history of "Haute Couture" in January of 2013. This moment confirms the necessity of genderless status within a historical institute. (Rad Hourani was also the first Canadian to ever hold the statue of an "invited member" by the "Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture" in Paris)

Rad Hourani's "Unisex Couture" live performances make use of the medium of runway installations at the Centre Culturel Canadien in Paris as continuous manifestations of his vision to break the stereotypical narrative found in the dressing codes of society.

The reveal goes beyond typical androgyny or any countercultural movement and becomes an elevated craftsmanship of the arts, proposing an urgency for the acknowledgement of gender neutral presence in institutionalized spaces.

The work has been exhibited at various institutions, including the Tate Modern, FIT Museum, Centre Pompidou, and others. His one-of-a-kind ensembles are preserved by private collectors and museums around the world.



RUNWAY - 2007-2013

SOCIAL IMPACT

Rad Hourani attracted a global audience with the use of costume as a medium to introduce a new sizing system specific to entirely genderless wardrobes, generated from his invention of gender neutral patterns. The unprecedented unisex concept of his ready-to-wear and couture collections gives voice to issues of gender identity and inequality and highlights their ties to mainstream codes of dressing.

Since 2007, Rad Hourani has used the discipline of runway as a manifestation for breaking through the divisions that occur in mainstream consumerism. Using this practice as a method of expression served as a zone of activism for emerging dialogues and public shifts.

In this manner, he collaborated with other creatives such as Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Larry Clark, Jared Leto, Lenny Kravitz, and many more. He involved live musicians (Michelle Gurevich, Chris Garneau and others) during his biannual installations in New York and Paris and was hosted internationally by various cities, politicians, and institutions.

PERFORMANCE ART

Rad Hourani applies principles of architecture to the visceral premise of how each garment will move with the wearer. Therefore, the works were crafted with movement in mind and attended to these dynamics. His runway performances incorporated movement of the body, parading with gestures to conjure symbolic meaning. The articulation of the body contextually projects confidence and self-celebration as an aesthetic disruption of social barriers. Persisting in challenging stereotypical narratives of labels, he questions the strict separations of men's and women's wear collections that are the basis of the fashion industry.

As the conventional catwalk is historically conceived to showcase the latest trends, it is designed to perpetuate a form of consumer anticipation through the release of seasonal collections, made available in stores six months later. Rad Hourani rethinks a sustainable anti-trend strategy and is geared towards producing timeless pieces,

which are simultaneously available online to order as they are being shown. Repeatedly, he states "genderless, raceless, ageless, nationless, limitless" for changing the systematic conventions of the catwalk when interviewed by the media about the theme of each season.

His walking art shows are presented at ground level, unlike the typical raised runways at the time, and the format of his catwalk was situated between the rows of seating with no separations between the guests and the models. To add to the sense of an equitable environment in his settings, he added elements of live music and specific lighting, tuning an inclusive ambience of belonging.

The ensembles were revealed through choreographed performances, where the forms evolved in motion. This allows for expression to manifest in the performer with the given instructions; to walk slowly to the beat, sharply turn, march forward without stopping, and others. Their attitudes carry out a metaphorical understanding of certain traits, like determination and perseverance. Further yet, they suggest a symbolism of pureness through their delivery as living sculptures. As the choreography progresses, we begin to notice the models coming all together at the end, a metaphor of human union.

ACTIVISM

Rad Hourani's years of diligence between world-wide institutions were dotted with frequent international press events, exhibitions, lectures, conferences, and livestreams. His creations were carried by 250 locations in 30 countries and presented at several events around the globe, despite the 2008 economic crisis and the absence of present-day social media. His vision evokes radical change throughout the world and revolutionizes our reality. His work is often credited as a major influence and inspiration for contemporary artists, architects, designers, and musicians.

Rad Hourani forges a space for niche discussion around societal and institutional biases by way of evolutionary activism concerning the impact of fundamental normative codes. Through his art practice, he demonstrated the impact of physical expression, from the runways to the streets, on wearers' ability to upend societal conformity. The transformative nature of his geometrically neutral proportions demonstrates an unlimited language of silhouettes, rejecting the binaries of costume. The work is groundbreaking in the context of historical trends like the garconne look of the 1920s and the peacock revolution of the 1960s. The depiction, which appears on the runway, proposes non-gendered definitions of cuts and forms and causes deliberation to empower individual narratives.

From an early age, Rad Hourani observes the meaning behind how the world is constructed into fragmentation. As a child, he analyzed the various forms of oppression perpetrated by the labeling of identity, be it through gender or class. His childhood memories of noticing these supremacies later led to his familiarity with pushing the boundaries of societal binaries. Rad constantly dealt with the question “Where are you really from?” being born in 1982 in the Levant region to a Syrian Orthodox Christian mother and a Jordanian-Canadian Catholic father, who studied agricultural engineering at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, where Rad spent his teen years. As an adult, he continued to feel a sense of non-belonging as he lived in several cities, such as Paris and New York, which shaped his observations based on a global perspective.

Growing up, the one place in which Rad excelled was art class, where he focused on sculpting. At the age of 12, he captured, in a certain way, the universal and symbolic link of beauty through the medium of photography. He also noticed the artistic expression that manifests through the medium of costume by observing his mother’s weekly fittings at her dressmakers in Jordan. At 18, Rad completed high school studies but never pursued any formal degree in the arts or other fields. His recollections of his early years in school were characterized by struggles; his memories of his experiences with educational systems are of humiliation and hierarchy. After his high school graduation, he began working as an art director in Canada.

At 23, Rad moved to Paris, where he further explored the mediums of sculpture, video, and costume. Honing his talents in artistic direction and cultivating his understanding of aesthetics, and with only determination, precision, and a lot of audacity as his only tools at the beginning, he invents gender-neutral patterns in addition to a new sizing system specific to a complete unisex wardrobe without making an academic detour at just 25. He introduced the very first entirely gender-neutral ready-to-wear collection in fashion history via the medium of the runway in October 2007 in Paris. Like all truly great visionaries, Rad not only depicts fashion; he defines it and gives it cultural resonance by creating a wardrobe that is free from all restrictions.

At 30, as the first Canadian “invited member,” Rad Hourani entered the highly prized circle of the “Chambre syndicale de la Haute Couture” in Paris and created and presented the very first unisex couture collection in the history of “haute couture.” Self-taught and driven by a passion for evolution, Rad’s seamless practice of 5 years built an innovative space and created a vision with an international presence. Rad is not just a sculptor, a photographer, a filmmaker, or an artist. He is all of these at once.

Rad’s hybrid artistic approach is guided by the questioning of established hierarchies, assuming a decompartmentalization between disciplines. His art practice revolves around the theme of challenging the normative methods of human conformity conditioned by the contexts of social, geopolitical, religious, sexual, and economic systems. He sees the tangible limitations caused by categorizations, which influence the trajectory of his theory of neutralization, expressed through his unrestricted works of art. His anthropological studies involve lengthy research throughout his processes to inspire reflection, advocating for the revival of crucial debates and open dialogues on issues of inclusion and inequality.

LIST OF WORKS

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Inkjet print on vinyl, Variable dimensions, Edition of 1

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Inkjet print on vinyl, Variable dimensions, Edition of 1

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Series of videos, Variable time, Edition of 1

EXHIBITION

RAD HOURANI

SEAMLESS

FIVE YEARS OF UNISEX

November 1st to 30th 2013

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