

# ASHI FW26/27 COUTURE COLLECTION A DIFFERENT SKIN

GETTING DRESSED HAS ALWAYS BEEN A KIND OF ROLEPLAY. PUT ON THE RIGHT GARMENT AND YOU BORROW SOMEONE ELSE'S POSTURE, SOMEONE ELSE'S TIME; A NEW SET OF PERMISSIONS YOUR OWN CLOTHES DON'T AFFORD. ASHI HAS BEEN CIRCLING THIS IDEA FOR A WHILE. LAST SEASON LIVED INSIDE A SINGLE VICTORIAN INTERIOR - ITS RESTRAINT, ITS LAYERED ORNAMENT, ITS APPETITE FOR CONCEALMENT. THIS SEASON OPENS THE DOOR WIDER. THE VICTORIAN SENSIBILITY IS STILL THERE, BUT NOW IT'S ONE FACE IN A LARGER CROWD: THE NAPOLEONIC OFFICER, REDUCED TO THE GHOST OF A SILHOUETTE. THE COURT AMBASSADOR. THE BROKEN DOLL. THE FIGURE WHO HAS SPENT SO LONG IN THE FOREST, OR THE BALLROOM, THAT THEY'VE STARTED TO BECOME ONE WITH IT. EACH LOOK IS ITS OWN ROLE. TOGETHER, THEY READ LIKE A COURT WHERE TIME AND IDENTITY HAVE QUIETLY STOPPED BEHAVING.

"A MASK LETS YOU LIVE IN A DIFFERENT SKIN," SAYS CREATIVE DIRECTOR ASHI. "I WAS THINKING ABOUT A WARPED KIND OF HISTORICISM - HOW YOU BORROW FROM ANOTHER CENTURY WITHOUT BEING BOUND BY IT. THE BALL, FOR ME, IS WHERE THAT BECOMES POSSIBLE."

THAT BALL IS STAGED IN THE SURREALIST SPIRIT OF A LEGENDARY DALÍ GATHERING, WHERE DECADENCE WASN'T EXCESS - IT WAS A WAY OF BENDING REALITY. HERE, PEOPLE AND PLACE START TRADING QUALITIES. LEATHER IS WORKED UNTIL IT READS LIKE CERAMIC. A BEADED SILHOUETTE SPARKLES WITH THE GLEAM OF A GLASS CARAFE. OPALINE SURFACES ARE LACED WITH METALWORK, AS IF THE GILDING WERE NATIVE TO THE MATERIAL FROM THE START. JAPANESE PAPER, PAINTED TO LOOK LIKE FALLEN LEAVES, DRIFT AT THE HEM. REAL INSECTS, INDIVIDUALLY HAND-PAINTED, ARE CAUGHT MID-LANDING IN THE FOLDS OF FABRIC. THE CRAFT IS PATIENT, EXACT, AND MOSTLY HIDDEN: HAND-SCULPTED BUTTONS, HAND-PAINTED CRUSTACEANS TUCKED INSIDE LININGS, GILDED POMEGRANATES, FRAYED LACE, BELLS THAT MOVE WITH THE BODY. LINGERIE SURFACES BENEATH TAILORING. A VENETIAN MIRROR IS SET INTO THE BACK OF ONE LOOK, FACING OUT. THE DETAILS COLLECT THE WAY THEY DO IN A ROOM SOMEONE'S LIVED IN FOR YEARS - PRESENT, BUT NEVER ASKING TO BE NOTICED. TRYING ON A CHARACTER ISN'T LOSING YOURSELF. IF ANYTHING, IT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE TRULY MADE OF.