

Edda Gimnes
From Line to Design
29.04. – 04.06.2023

Design: Edda Gimnes in collaboration
with Manuel Vadillo
Pattern: Deborah Ann Smith
Seam: Jurgita Ziegyte
Production assistant, digital print etc:
Lucia Heffernan and Genevieve Pinette

Curator Rikke Komissar
Co-curator Tor Arne Samuelsen

Voluminous dresses, jagged outlines, extravagantly broad-brimmed hats, matching handbags and caricaturesque shoes. The look is explosively maximalist, with every element executed in a strikingly characteristic style perhaps most reminiscent of sketches and children's drawings.

Fashion designer Edda Gimnes (b. 1991) has developed a unique signature style. As early as 2016, the experimental creativity of her first collection caught the attention of the international fashion industry. Black line drawings, seemingly drawn directly onto the white fabric of her creations, gave the collection a graphic sensibility. Her line was clear, intuitive, and confident, and reflected links between design and art – everything starts on a drawing board.

For Edda Gimnes, the processual and conceptual are of central importance. While still a student, she developed a method of using drawings made with her non-dominant hand to produce a style that blended naïveness and authenticity. This approach has become a processual game, but also bears witness to a deliberate strategy of resisting perfectionism and streamlined designs. After her drawings have been scanned, Gimnes decides which will be printed onto the textiles that will then be used to shape her garments.

In an age when we are bombarded with an endless flood of visual impressions, it takes a lot to rouse us from our scrolling-induced lethargy, but Edda Gimnes's characteristic signature look rapidly captured international attention. When she was just 24, the New York Times described her as an emerging designer worth watching, and in 2018 she became the first Norwegian fashion designer to be nominated for the prestigious LVMH Prize, which involved a presentation to the fashion elite as part of Paris Fashion Week. The following year Gimnes had an outfit included in Camp: Notes on Fashion at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, alongside garments by fashion icons such as Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano.

Often the fashion industry operates according to its own logic, with sales figures and volumes apparently overshadowing all other considerations. It is still possible to find a narrower niche within the sector, however – a niche that accommodates handsewing, one-offs and haute couture, and at this intersection parallels between art and fashion can be seen. This is where a designer can explore her ideas and thus expand our understanding of what clothes can be. And it is here that Edda Gimnes comes into her own.

Many of Gimnes's designs can be worn as conventional garments. Others are two-dimensional and results of a more conceptual approach in which the idea reigns supreme, putting Gimnes at the point of intersection between visual art and fashion design. Gimnes herself describes her creations as 'walking art'.

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From line to design is Edda Gimnes's first major solo exhibition and includes older work as well as new creations. Garments on display include key designs from her debut collection Spring/Summer SS16, as well as several eye-catching creations from Spring/Summer SS18. In the exhibition, we can also see an Edda Gimnes design worn by Lady Gaga and on loan from the National Museum's collection especially for this exhibition.

The exhibition draws parallels between drawing and design, between inspiration and finished garments. Sketchbooks and the designer's photographs give insight into her process and the inspiration behind her creations. As well as old photographs, vintage teacups, and an elegantly patterned wallpaper from her paternal grandmother's summer cottage, these sources of inspiration include the designer's great-aunt Jossi, now 103, and her late grandmother Gudrun.

In her most recent collection, Edda Gimnes draws both on the glamorous silhouettes of the 1950s and on the Baroque, with layers upon layers of draped fabrics giving the garments highly contrasting forms. A technique known as layering gives the printed fabrics a 3D effect, while bright colours and intricate details invite us into the unique and rich universe that is EDDA.

Edda Gimnes (b. 1991) studied at the London College of Fashion and Central Saint Martins in London. She has participated in a number of exhibitions at art institutions and museums, including the Museum für Gewerbe Und Design Hamburg (2021), the Museum of Applied Art Frankfurt (2020), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (2019), and the National Museum in Oslo (2022).

Examples of Gimnes's work have been purchased by collections including the National Museum, the Nordenfjeldske Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, and the Museum of Art and Design Hamburg. Collections by Edda Gimnes have been shown at venues including South Africa Fashion Week (2018), Fashion Scout (London, 2016), and Uncontaminated Art & Fashion Festival (Oslo, 2015).

Gimnes was nominated for the 2018 LVMH Prize and was winner of the Costume Award at the 2018 Norwegian Designer of the Year. Other awards include the Merit Award (London, 2017), Designer for Tomorrow (Berlin, 2016), the BFTA Award (London, 2015) and Ones to Watch (London, 2015). Gimnes has collaborated with companies including the Max Mara group, H&M, Copenhagen Fur and Disney.

The exhibition has been produced by Nitja Centre for Contemporary Art with the support of the Bergesen Foundation and Oslo Design Fair. We are grateful to the National Museum for the loan of works to the exhibition. We wish to thank Henie Onstad Kunstsenter for the loan of display equipment and Oslo Produksjon & Tjenester for the exhibition design.

Exhibition technicians:

Tor Arne Samuelsen, Martin White, Bjørnar Pedersen, Åsmund Solberg and Ane Kvåle.

LOCAL COOPERATION

As a result of a collaborative project run in connection with the exhibition, drawings made by 80 students at Volla School have been used to make a print on an enormous cape. Over a four-month period, students at the school took inspiration from their meeting with Gimnes and were challenged to design their own collections.

This unique garment will be displayed in a separate exhibition in Nitja's project room from 11 May until 4 June, along with some other examples of student work created as a result of the collaboration. The project with Volla School was run with the support of the Sparebankstiftelsen DNB [Savings Bank Foundation DNB].