

ULLA JOHNSON

Fall/Winter 2021

Ulla Johnson's Fall 2021 collection seeks an internal sense of freedom. Taking a soulful and intuitive journey, Johnson summons a transcendental means of exploration – anticipating a collective moment of togetherness; a defining, pivotal time of wild abandon and reconnection. Optimism and ebullience shines through, unfettered by the current environment.

Johnson's longing for a return to nature and travel manifests in an alluring scene of mystical flora and fauna, signaling renewal. Lavish with fantasy and escapism, psychedelic cosmic motifs and animals, real and imagined, in hyper-saturated pigments slink throughout this abundant collection that celebrates luxurious materiality and embraces elaborate silhouettes.

Unbuttoning existing female archetypes, Johnson sets out to subvert established representations of ladylike tropes. This exploration uncovers a louche, newfound sultry sexuality paired with a utilitarian cool; she is feminine, self-possessed, and yet moves through the world with great ease. Shapes are closely hewn to the body or exaggerated and voluminous: Seventies Parisian flou meets the sculptural tailoring and power shoulders of Eighties Berlin. There is sensuality in the delicate corsetry and pencil skirts; an undone primness in the slinky pussy-bow blouses and crisp chambray; something of the pioneer in poplins and full skirts; a free-spirited traveler in the embroideries and nostalgic paisley prints. Oversized collars, once sweet and naive, become beguiling.

Johnson's trademark sense of strength through beauty is present in a comprehensive offering of full, flyaway dresses imagined with considered ruffles, tiered flounces and pleating. Her distinctive effortless and fluidity underpin this collection that evokes an empowering sense of liberty, movement and grace. Echoing and elevating the ethos of American sportswear; chambray, corduroy and denim are utilized with levity and modernity. Following a theme of duality, billowing paisley silk crepe de Chine blouses signal romance and polish while utility-inspired heavy poplin is crafted into new silhouettes including a barrel-leg pant and belted shirt dress. Luxurious dimensional Italian cloqué and metallic polka dot fil coupé on whispers of gazaar are a counterpoint to tumbled waxed leather and precise twill suiting.

A sense of ebullience is captured through the mellifluous pairing of prints in dynamic fabrications. Delicate body-skimming knits in shadowy tigerseye are layered under ruched and ruffled taffeta. Graphic paisley scarf print surfaces in both psychedelic Crepe de Chine and more subtly, on custom Fogal lace tights worn under much of the collection. This juxtaposition creates a fantasy which harmonizes an earthy world view and the urban sensibility of New York City.

The palette of soft, autumnal colors - umber, dusty rose, tapenade, cadet blue, sumac - is enlivened with pops of arresting zinnia pink, chartreuse and jade green, and burnished with accents of gilded bronze thread. Custom prints, all designed in-house, conjure Asia's rich and varied culture. Uzbek ikats; tigers-eye; batik poplin with cosmic motifs of winged trees and vines speak to the mystery and beauty of nature. Elsewhere, a captivating Peaceable Kingdom print on lightweight velvety pinwale corduroy depicts a tree of life under which birds, tigers and small animals coexist harmoniously.

Knitwear and outerwear become an armor of beauty to shield oneself from the complications of the world. Mongolian cashmere; Italian double-faced wool; lofty baby alpaca; technical jacquards and sculptural gold-foiled knits are spun into

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sumptuous sweaters and elegant, enveloping coats. A cropped bomber in chestnut shearling is a forever piece; a timeless overcoat in herringbone bouclé trimmed with corduroy offers generous protection against the elements.

The preservation of handcrafts is at the heart of Ulla's world. Weaving in the tradition and heritage of the global communities that she has nurtured long-standing partnerships with, these ethical and sustainable practices support female artisans through economic and social standing. Rich linen is hand embellished in India with an Ottoman-inspired embroidery of metallic chain stitching, delicate thread work, brass beads and sequins. Braided cable knits are accented with hand crochet made locally in Brooklyn, and vibrant space-dyed crochet is crafted by expert artisans in Uruguay, each piece truly unique.

Accessories, Footwear & Bags

Building on Ulla's existing partnership with Kenyan artisans, hand-hammered brass jewelry is inspired by ancient Rome and the natural beauty of dragonfly wings. Consciously crafting future heirlooms, each piece of jewelry is made by hand using found natural stones and recycled materials, along with semi-precious agate, rhyolite, jasper, tiger eye, and mica-flecked collaged glass. Through this partnership, traditional techniques are kept alive including hand-twisting and granulation to create chain necklaces, bracelets, buckles, hoops and oversized pins.

Italian-made moccasin-inspired boots are accented by hand-sewn whipstitching in contrast nappa; a pair of ballet slippers are delicately detailed with braided leather cording, silk grosgrain and soft ruching, while an elegant mannish tassel loafer in buffed leather is a smart, sartorial flat. A Brazilian-made high heeled riding boot in leather and suede will become a perennial favorite. Further challenging assumptions of typified femininity, a collaboration with Diemme - the Italian brand specializing in handmade performance boots - includes a concise collection of combat boots, including styles in printed pony and patchwork suede and leather.

Four new soft bag silhouettes are introduced for Fall '21: the Weekender tote; the everyday Carryall tote; and the Soft Clutch in two sizes. Designed with daily life in mind, the bags are crafted from suede and tapestry, and finished with hand-knotted leather and metal accents. Hand-loomed canvas and velvet jacquard - are supplied by Italian textile experts Dedar. Leather corset belts made in Italy are accented with brass embellishments developed originally by Kenyan artisans.

Paisley net tights, drawn from the printed crepes within the collection, are produced in collaboration with storied hosiery brand Fogal, celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

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The Setting

The Fall '21 show is staged in Manhattan's iconic David H.Koch theater, a lavish and storied home to the city's performing arts for many decades. Honoring the historic building designed by Philip Johnson and celebrating the creative disciplines that continue to inspire and bring optimism, a live musical performance by Juilliard School alumni playing the Viola de Gamba and the Theorbo creates a baroque score for the collection.



Two unique works - a large welded metal, mesh and concrete lamp and table - by Spanish artist Nacho Carbonell dress the stage. Globally recognized for his tactile, organically-shaped sculptures and inventive approach to using natural materials in his work, Carbonell captures a synergy with nature reflected in Ulla's ethos.

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