

In hero's clothing

By Brent Gregston



Greg Lauren talks about his eponymous label

Greg Lauren, nephew of Ralph, launched his own luxury clothing label last spring. An artist who likes to depict superheroes at their most vulnerable, Lauren is now exploring the intersection between fashion and art in clothes made of vintage military materials.

Q Your first collection was born from an art project, "Alteration," in which you sewed iconic suits and dresses out of paper. Now that you've done several collections, are you still doing the sewing yourself?

A Every piece is unique and made by me. I have a very small team of people helping me who are trained in my visual language, but no piece leaves the studio without my hands touching it, either working on it or embellishing it. I want the customer to know that. Just like a painting leaving an artist's studio. I won't let it leave without my final touch.

Q The item of clothing you focus on, more than anything else, is the jacket.

A The jacket is how we choose to face the world, the final piece of our daily uniform. You say, "okay, I'm going to put this jacket on" because you feel a certain way today, whether it's a suit jacket, whether it's a motorcycle jacket, whether it's a jean jacket. I started with jackets because that was the easiest way to convey a message. I wanted to redefine the jacket.



Q Are the clothes you're designing for heroes or anti-heroes?

A They're for heroes – but not the heroes from movies. My clothes both celebrate and question heroism. For example, I use vintage sailors' shirts to create a jacket that has a heroic silhouette. I had this idea of creating something wearable, referencing the classic tailored jacket, men's or women's, but using this very utilitarian military fabric like the duffel bag soldiers carry when they go off to war.

Q Is there anyone alive or dead whom you'd really liked to have dressed?

A Well, right now, I think Johnny Depp is pretty cool. I'd like him to see my stuff. I would like to go back in time and dress Cary Grant. Also Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and others from the New York '40s and '50s Abstract Expressionist movement.

Q Some of your clothes have ripped seams and torn threads – we don't see that on the catwalk very often.
A We're seeing more and more of it. The way I came to sewing was as a painter. So for me, it was about embracing the imperfections. Just as in painting, those imperfections are some of the most beautiful things to me.

Q What was it like growing up as a Lauren?

A My father, Jerry Lauren, is head of men's design so I grew up learning to dress like certain icons of style

– Cary Grant, Gary Cooper – but inside I felt more like Oliver Twist or Charlie Chaplin. I also wore faded Carhartt jackets, but I wasn't out chopping wood or loading up a truck. Clothes help you live out your dreams, and I believe that's something my uncle has given the world.

Q So are you taking your uncle's clothes apart – deconstructing them?

A As an artist, I'm always trying to peel back the layers of things and understand them. I realized after wearing those beautiful things for most of my life that I too explore my own relationship to clothing. My work is about the idea that image is powerful – and also paper thin. For me, I would rather clothing be about how we really feel on the inside.

Q What does your uncle Ralph think of your clothes?

A He's given me complete support. I wear all my own stuff. I've become like a farmer who only eats the food he grows himself. The greatest compliment I got was from Uncle Ralph himself who said: "It's very you and it's unique and it has its own point of view that is very Greg."