

XANDER ZHOU

SS21 – “REAL VIRTUALITY” STABLE RELEASE

- **Product Name:** “REAL VIRTUALITY” Stable Release
- **Model/Specification:** Spring/Summer 2021 Collection
- **Registered Name:** XANDER ZHOU
- **Structure & Composition:** A coherent collection of 74 styled looks

ATTENTION:

XANDER ZHOU’s SS21 collection is both a reconstruction and an upgrade of the brand’s DNA. As a result of the pandemic, Xander Zhou was stranded in Europe for ten months. Seizing this opportunity for self-reflection, he conducted a comprehensive review of his past creative journey. As a result, this season’s collection will take the brand to a new level.

“REAL VIRTUALITY” is based on virtual “existence” in a real, physical sense. Due to travel restrictions, Xander Zhou could only remotely direct the design process by way of “imagining” what the collection should look like. When he first saw the “real” collection earlier this month, he found that it did look as it should. A result not only brought about by experience, but also by the experimental confirmation of a belief held by the designer that “subjective consciousness determines objective existence”.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INGREDIENTS:

The various “elements” that have been used in this collection include: Acupuncture points. Dragon totems. Frog fastenings (the traditional Chinese knotted-button-and-loop fastenings). Belly covers (a traditional Chinese undergarment originally worn by women). “Melon skullcaps” (a traditional Chinese accessory worn by men). “Human Skin” facemasks (originally used for traditional Chinese shapeshifting performances). Crystals (stones with curative properties according to Chinese traditions). Illusory “phantoms” (a description of those who excel in traditional Chinese martial arts).

Inspiration for the SS21 collection has come from integrating and deconstructing elements of XANDER ZHOU’s past seasons. Five years ago, in his SS16 collection, Xander Zhou faced his Chinese roots for the first time since he started showing his collections in London. The dragon totem first appeared in that collection. Now, this iconic decorative image derived from traditional Chinese culture reappears, yet in a different and new “mechanicalized” way. The collection also features “acupuncture points” as an element, making visible on the outside what usually lies hidden within – a “system” that interacts with the universe’s “energy”. An “energy” that forms a “field”. A “field” controlled by mysterious Oriental powers. Humanoid cyborgs act as “models” – as well as “models” of humanity.

INTRODUCTION AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED TO USE OF THIS PRODUCT:

XANDER ZHOU wanders on the boundary between cutting-edge science and Eastern philosophy. The designer believes that the human body's own system shares the same "energy" that permeates the universe. As the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said: "Man follows the laws of Earth. Earth follows the laws of Heaven. Heaven follows the laws of Tao. And Tao follows the laws of Nature." Man is equally Nature as are Heaven and Earth, and the Universe equals Nature.

However, Xander Zhou's mission is not to blindly follow teachings from ancient books. The "Chinese" elements are not his end point, but his starting point. In his designs, he explores these elements neither from a detached outsider's perspective, nor as someone who emotionally feels inextricably connected with them. He says about his SS21 collection: "At first glance, everything seems to make sense. But on closer inspection, nothing makes sense."

For example, the collection features multiple outdoor looks, but the dragon-shaped laser-cut hole patterns eliminate the fabric's inherent waterproof quality. In the same way, the frog fastenings that were originally used on traditional Chinese garments unexpectedly merge with sports fabrics, harmoniously exuding a highly modern Easternness. Traditional Chinese "melon skullcaps" make an appearance in new materials and colours echoing the type of caps that men wear nowadays, and infusing them with a distinctive blend of contemporariness. The saturated "yellows" and "reds" that were held in such high esteem at the Imperial Court are applied to outdoor garments, doing away with the original function of indicating one's rank when worn in silk. These are all examples of how Xander Zhou applies "surrealism" to "reality" – by using the present to "fabricate" the past, and thereby creating a path to a new future. That is yet another understanding of "REAL VIRTUALITY".

It is not just psychogeography that dissolves boundaries. Xander Zhou is a keen follower of the latest scientific breakthroughs, and he likes to incorporate his thoughts on these developments in his designs. The models in this show are styled after humanoid cyborgs, featuring masks, gloves, headpieces and decorative applications that imitate machine parts – all emanating a "non-human" vibe. An aesthetic, real-life instance of dissolving the boundary between man and man-made mechanical "biology". Art is always ahead of reality, fulfilling scientific predictions.

KEY STOCKIST LIST

MACHINE-A - LONDON
OPENING CEREMONY - NEW YORK
GR8 - JAPAN
HNW - JAPAN
CONTENA STORE - JAPAN
UNFOLLOW - JAPAN
BOON THE SHOP - SEOUL
SSENSE - ONLINE/MONTREAL
BOON THE SHOP - KOREA
ELEVASTOR - PARIS
L'INSANE - PARIS
OVERKILL - GERMANY

BIOGRAPHY

Ever since his Spring/Summer 2016 collection titled "Far East", Xander Zhou has been reconnecting with his Asian roots while exploring the ties between oriental mysticism and the futuristic modernity of Asia. With the coined term "techno-orientalism", the designer has been building his own vastly diverse universe by sketching a map of future humanity, merging the real and the ideal by creating a virtual dimension in which the characters from his collections coexist and interconnect - whether they are humans, androids or aliens.

In the XANDER ZHOU universe, new boundaries of diversity can be stretched far beyond ethnic, racial, cultural, sexual and gender identities. His vision of the acclaimed "Supernatural, Extraterrestrial & Co." continues to surprise and open up a Milky Way of imagination, absurdity and romanticism. The latest Autumn/Winter 2020 collection "Homo Multiversalis", a sequel to the journey through Creation (SS19 "New World Baby"), Evolution (AW19 "Our New Kin") and "Transcendence" (SS20), has reached a state of Consciousness - being aware of the simultaneous presence of multiple selves, parallel worlds and, ultimately, the meaning of existence.