

A nod to Victoriana & Industrial work wear



Karen Walker shines. It is in her eyes when she talks of her work as a designer and as she tells the story of her spring/summer collection, *The League*, and it is the shine of diamante clusters on the cosy Dries Van Noten jumper she is wearing.

Fresh on the rack at Ballantynes, *The League* was inspired by the suffragettes, with Karen's starting point found while listening to a history podcast from the BBC. It discussed the history of the world through the stories of 100 important objects from the British Museum, with one of these being penny pieces the suffragettes defaced by stamping 'Votes for Women' across the king's image. "I loved the idea of turning themselves into placards," says Karen, with the suffragettes proudly wearing their slogan over their Victorian gowns. The resulting collection embodies much of this idea, with Karen saying it is a little bit of a nod to Victoriana and industrial work wear - mixing masculine and feminine as they have always done.



There are big graphics, with slogans such as 'young, willing and eager' adorning sweat shirting, T shirting, and clutches. Cross stitch and frills are combined with masculine washed back drills and cottons, while softer feminine fabrics are mixed with, what Karen describes as, brutalist images of broken hearts, hammers and gloves. Predominate shades of black and off white, are broken up with the colours of burgundy, ochre, marigold, orange and ultra violet. The collection also includes full length dresses for the first time – a long black and off white jersey boyfriend dress featuring industrial images, with the same images carried through to the jewellery range. The work wear and industrial feel is continued into her next collection, *Resort*, due to be released in October. After a year of intense travel Karen wanted to design clothes that were made for wearing at home - washed out cotton, drill and chambray are detailed with over-sized smocking and single ruffles in a collection of domesticity and comfort. For both Karen, and her husband and creative director, Mikhail Gherman, their life is about always living in the future and

constantly working on ideas for the next season. Their new line of eyewear, which they began work on 18 months ago, will be released globally in September, and their second season of handbags will be out in a few weeks' time.

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For Karen and Mikhail there is no creating or following trends – it is simply the love of telling a story through fashion. "It's all about having a point of view," says Karen.

