

# ACTUALITÉS

## A Feel For Fashion: Étienne Russo

INTERVIEWS  
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A discreet yet decisive presence within the fashion system, Étienne Russo has shaped the contemporary language of the runway from behind the scenes. Founder and president of Villa Eugénie, a fashion show production company, he began his career in the 1980s working on the organisational and technical production of Paris fashion shows, developing an acute sensitivity to rhythm, space and timing. Over the years, he has contributed to redefining the fashion show as a constructed experience, where scenography serves the collection rather than overpowering it. Known for his rigour, restraint and narrative clarity, Russo has collaborated closely with maisons such as Chanel, Hermès, Louis Vuitton and Schiaparelli, establishing Villa Eugénie as a benchmark for cultural intelligence in fashion presentation.

**Haute Couture has gained widespread popularity due to overcommunication. Do you see this as an advantage or a disadvantage?**

It is both. Visibility has allowed Haute Couture to reach audiences who would never have encountered it otherwise, and that is positive. But overcommunication can also flatten meaning. Couture is not made to be consumed instantly. It needs time, silence, and distance. The challenge today is not to communicate more, but to communicate better, with respect for what Couture represents.

**In today's fast-paced society, how can it coexist with the slow processes of crafting Haute Couture?**

Precisely because everything moves so fast, Haute Couture feels necessary. It reminds us that some things cannot be accelerated. Craft, gesture, and time are not weaknesses, they are values. Haute Couture exists in another rhythm, and I believe society still needs spaces where slowness is not the exception, but the rule.

**How do you envision the future of Haute Couture?**

I don't think Haute Couture should try to reinvent itself radically. Its strength lies in continuity, not disruption. The future of Couture will come from its ability to remain faithful to its foundations while allowing each generation of designers to reinterpret them with sincerity. It must stay rare, demanding, and uncompromising.

**What is the most significant change you are seeing in fashion right now?**

The acceleration. Everything has become immediate: images, reactions, judgments. Fashion used to allow time for digestion. Today, it barely allows time for perception. This changes how collections are created, shown, and remembered. The question is how to preserve depth in a system that constantly pushes for speed.

**Can craftsmanship keep fashion, and Couture, alive in these troubled years of the system?**

Craftsmanship is not a solution, but it is a foundation. Without it, fashion loses its credibility. In troubled times, people look for authenticity and meaning. Craftsmanship embodies both. It does not save the system, but it gives fashion a reason to exist beyond commerce.

**What is your perspective on the role of new technologies in Haute Couture?**

Technology should serve intention, not replace it. In Haute Couture, technology can help visualise, transmit, or preserve knowledge, but it should never overshadow the hand. I see it as a tool, not a language. The language of Couture remains human.

**Your work enhances the inspiration behind the collection, creating the world it inhabits. Have you seen the role of scenography change over the years?**

Yes, very clearly. Scenography used to frame a collection. Today, it often extends it. It has become a narrative tool, not just a setting. That said, the responsibility has grown. Scenography should never dominate the collection. Its role is to reveal, not to distract.

**What excites you most about fashion at the moment?**

Transmission. Seeing designers who care deeply about craft, about meaning, about learning from those who came before them. When fashion becomes less about noise and more about dialogue, it becomes exciting again.

**When was the last time you marvelled over something in fashion?**

When something felt sincere. When I sensed that a collection came from necessity rather than strategy. Those moments are rare, but when they happen, they remind me why fashion still matters. One of those moments was Dries Van Noten's final show, Menswear Spring–Summer 2025. Reduced to its essence, it was deeply emotional and free of excess. The scenography, the music and the clothes worked quietly together, without trying to impress. Everything felt necessary. It was a moment of truth. I also felt this during Maison Margiela Artisanal Spring–Summer 2024 by John Galiano. It was fragile and unsettling at times, but profoundly sincere. It reminded me that Haute Couture can still be a space for risk, emotion and humanity. Rick Owens' work often gives me that same feeling. His shows are built around the body, movement and attitude, with a radical coherence that never seeks approval. There is something raw and essential in the way his universe unfolds, and it stays with you. And of course, Alexander McQueen has always been a reference for me. I still remember La Poupée (SS97), where models appeared to walk on water, creating images suspended between reality and dream. I also remember SS99, No. 13, when Aimee Mullins walked the runway wearing sculpted wooden prosthetic legs. These moments transformed the body into a poetic and political statement, and left images that remain engraved in fashion history. These are the moments that come to mind now, but there are so many others. Fashion is made of these rare instants, and when they happen, they stay with you for a lifetime.

*This interview has been lightly edited.*

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