



APPEARANCES

Working Theory

Olivier Theyskens' designs lend a dark glamour to the stalwart of office-appropriate chic

by BOOTH MOORE

Belgian designer Olivier Theyskens is back on the fashion scene, launching a capsule collection for contemporary label Theory. And women's closets may never be the same. Theyskens' Theory collection—\$70 to \$1,150, set to be in stores by February—includes silk pleat-front pants and skirts and stretch wool blazers cut with a notch so they slip off the shoulders slacker style. (“The way I wear mine,” he says.)

Affordable luxury is a switch for Theyskens, 33, who put the fashion houses of Rochas and Nina Ricci back on the map, after making a name for himself at the tender age of 21 by dressing Madonna in a sleeveless black satin coat dress with hook-and-eye closures for the 1998 Academy Awards.

In his Paris tenure, he was a critical, if not commercial, success. His runway designs featured dresses embroidered with human hair, jackets with wing-like frills between the shoulders and Belle Époque-inspired gowns painted like Monet's *Water Lilies*. But his uncompromising techniques sent prices skyrocketing, and in 2009 his contract at Nina Ricci was not renewed.

Then Theory came calling. “This is a collection for my friends, who I want to be able to buy my stuff,” says Theyskens. But the capsule collection is just a hint of things to come. This fall, the designer's title will be artistic director for the \$500 million Theory brand—both men's and women's wear. And at least one person is betting on a winner. Theory co-CEO Andrew Rosen has named his star racehorse Theyskens' Theory.

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