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A New Day at Carolina Herrera

Wes Gordon is ready to reveal his rosy vision for the house on the runway.

By [Jessica Iredale](#) on September 6, 2018



📷 A preview look from Carolina Herrera Spring 2019.
Daniel Dorsa/WWD

NEW YORK – [Wes Gordon](#) just wants to make people happy. It's a word he returns to in one variation or another no less than 15 times over the course of an interview to preview his first solo runway collection as the creative director of [Carolina Herrera](#).

"I like that idea that to zip up a Herrera dress should make you want to dance, it should just make you happy," said Gordon last month in his office at 501 Seventh Avenue here. "I think that's how we can make luxury and very elegant clothing relevant to women today, this idea that they're not precious. Live life and have fun in it, and throw your head back and laugh."

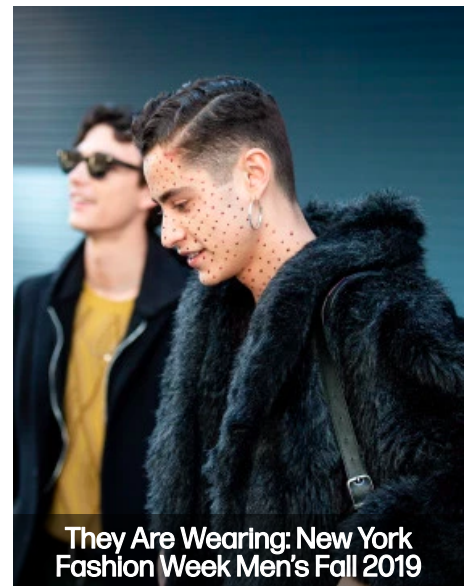
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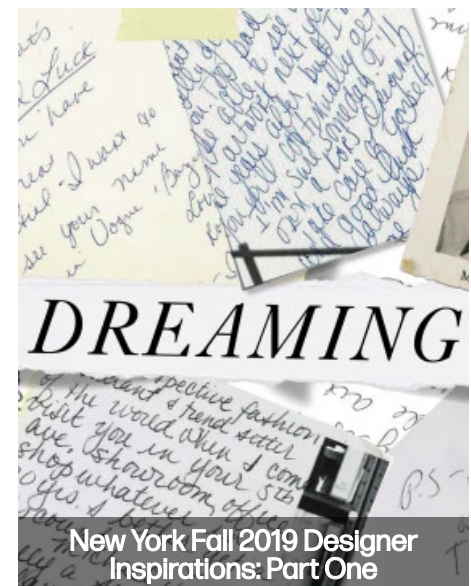
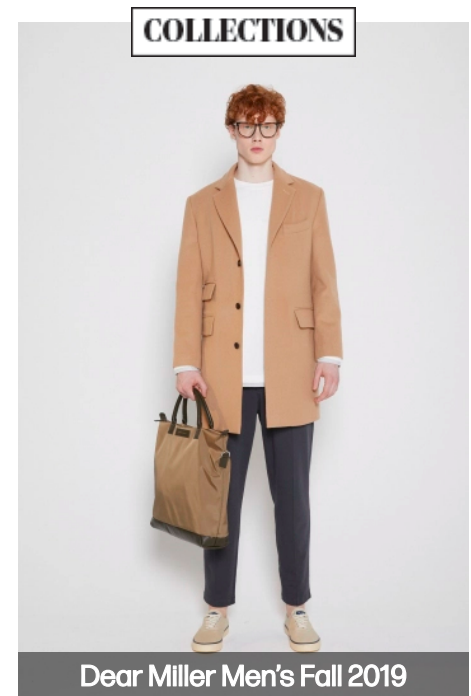
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The spring 2019 show, scheduled for Sept. 10 at the New York Historical Society, is the third Gordon has done on his own — the first being bridal; the second, resort — since being named to the helm of the house last February after [Carolina Herrera](#) took her final bow. Come Monday morning, there will be a new take on the world of Herrera, drawn by someone other than the woman herself for the first time in 37 years.

Unsurprisingly, Mrs. Herrera is at the top of the list of people Gordon wants to please with the upcoming show. So is her husband, Reinaldo. As of a few weeks ago, Gordon hadn't discussed with the Herreras any of his ideas for spring, but they communicate regularly via What'sApp, and sent a text after resort to express their approval of the collection. Gordon came on in a consultant's role at Herrera in February 2017 and worked closely with Mrs. Herrera for a year before taking over the lead role.



[Wes Gordon](#) previews a look from Carolina Herrera Spring 2019.
Daniel Dorsa/WWD

“I would never trade that year working side by side for anything in the world,” he said. “I consider the most crucial thing to any extent that I’m able to be successful in this job, it was because I was able to transition into it with her.”

Mrs. Herrera is no longer a daily presence at the company, though she is still involved as an ambassador, which leaves Gordon accountable to his new bosses at Puig, the Spanish conglomerate that owns Herrera’s \$1.4 billion business, as well as the seamstresses and patternmakers working in the atelier. But who Gordon really needs to make happy are the customers.

Just like the woman whose name is on the door, the house continues to epitomize polish, well-groomed etiquette and old-world glamour. Lately, it had become just that: old world.

Gordon, who launched his own line for modern swans shortly after graduating from Central Saint Martins in 2009, is tasked with making Herrera new, fresh and appealing for a generation of women who don’t want to spend their charity galas weighed down in yards of crunchy silk faille.

Asked for his thoughts on the role of ladylike dressing in today’s extremely casual world, he didn’t overintellectualize. “I’m really trying to articulate this woman, this fabulous woman in 2018 who wants an amazing dress,” said Gordon. “It’s such an amazing opportunity for us now at this time because, quite frankly, the world is so uncertain and so bleak, and depressing.” His mood board was full of fabric swatches with Pantone names like Tropical Peach, Treetop, Pixie Blue and Peony, scattered among photos of a young Herrera, Bianca Jagger and Anjelica Huston from the Seventies and Eighties, dressed in equally bright, peppy colors.



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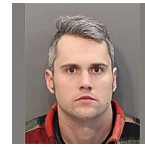
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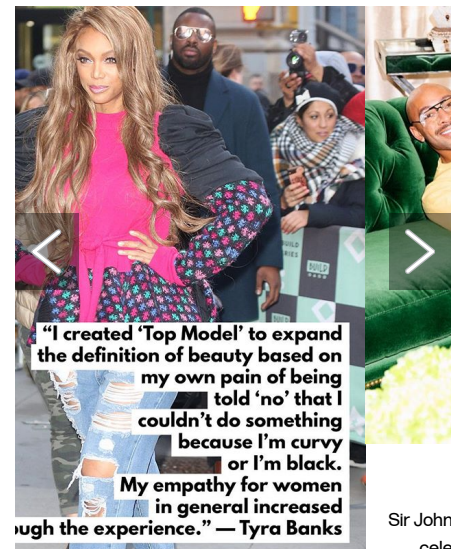


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Wes Gordon previews a look from Carolina Herrera Spring 2019. Daniel Dorsa/WWD

"There's definitely a drama for the silhouettes, a fullness," said Gordon of the spring collection. "I keep calling it a swoosh, clothes that kind of move. If the patternmaker was standing at a fork in the road about whether to go left or right and add a little more fabric or take out a little more fabric, they'll go left."

Of the house signatures, polka dots feature prominently on smocked cropped tops with flared sleeves and full skirts. There are airy dresses made from strips of mixed florals and many big gowns. What there aren't are the pristinely starched white shirts and taffeta ball skirts, Mrs. Herrera's most iconic look. "We have tons of great versions of white shirts, but we don't have any separate ball skirts this season," said Gordon.

He's also cast off the 8 p.m. time slot of the past two seasons for 10 a.m. Monday. "We're not an 8 p.m. brand," Gordon said. To that end, the show is his biggest storytelling opportunity yet. "Resort is a bigger collection of amount in pieces and sales, but

the magic of the runway is the magic of the runway, that's your first moment when you really say, invite 500 people into a world," he said.

Elin Svahn, who has been styling the collection for a while, is still on board, but there are a few changes. Gordon has enlisted Jess Hallett, who has worked with Alexander McQueen for over a decade, for casting. "I told her that this is really an opportunity to help us define this Herrera woman," he said. "I think 'woman' is key. It shouldn't be 9-year-old-looking girls. This is about a woman who's confident and cool, and at the top of her game, and happy, and healthy and beautiful." Michel Gaubert is on music for the first time. "I told him that I don't want any pretentious music," said Gordon. "I want it to be music that makes everyone tap their feet. Give me Diana Ross. Give me Cat Stevens. My dream for the show is that it's seven minutes of just happiness."



[Carolina Herrera](#)

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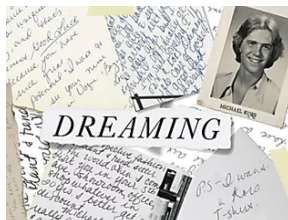
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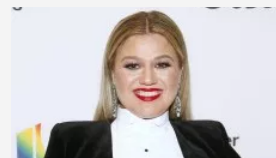
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