

## RUNWAY

## Trigère, a French-Inflected American Heritage Brand, Is Revived by a Europe-Based Canadian Designer



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Trigère Fall 2018  
Photo: Oskar Cecere / Courtesy of Trigère



Pauline Trigère is a name even the most die-hard fashion types haven't considered since Winona Ryder wore the designer's vintage black gown with matching white-lined wrap to the 2001 Academy Awards. Franklin Benjamin Elman is the exception: Today, with the help of a backer, he relaunched the brand in New York, the city where the label was founded in 1942.

Trigère, who was born in Paris and moved to New York with her family, didn't sketch, and was instead known for draping and cutting on a live model. Like Cristóbal Balenciaga, she liked an architectural silhouette. Elman, whose work experience includes stints with Costume National, Raf Simons at Jil Sander, and Rick Owens, was drawn by Trigère's ability to "fuse the tradition of French haute couture with the new world." The two designers have opposite trajectories: Trigère was a European who came to North America; Elman moved from Canada to Europe. His primary focus in the past has been shoe design, but with Trigère he is taking on a woman's total look.

The hardworking Trigère joked that she'd like to have been a pampered courtesan, but there was nothing *louche* about her work. "She dressed the wife, she didn't dress the lover," says Elman, adding that "one of my objectives is to bring a touch of the lover into the recipe." That explains the see-through plastic skirts and studded pieces in the Fall lineup. If those seemed to be trying too hard, other looks achieved the balance Elman was after, inspired both by Trigère the woman, who embraced radicalism and the bourgeois, and her work.

Perhaps to reinforce the brand, Elman adopted the current trend for logos; the lettered jacquard he used was inspired by a piece from 1973, discovered in the collection of the Costume Institute. He used the term "time warp" to describe the pagoda shoulders on some pieces, saying they channel the 1990s by way of the 1930s. Elman's use of ruffles, bodysuits, bold prints with slashes of neon, and out-size buttons seemed to borrow their bravado from the 1980s.

These were grown-up clothes with a sophistication that aligns them more closely with, say, an Alexandre Vauthier than an Alexander Wang. They channeled the style of Manhattan's uptown charity circuit of yore; a touch of high/low styling would play up their drama in a contemporary way. Among the most youthful pieces was a formfitting pink moiré dress with precisely poufed sleeves that created an impactful silhouette. The logo A-line coat was beautifully shaped, and a draped gold lame devoré velvet number with chiffon insets was a timeless take on event dressing. None of the looks were for running errands in, and that was by design. "I try to give a certain ease to clothes that are a little bit dressed up," said the besuited Elman, who is hoping that we've reached peak casual. He's offering the opposite, a polished and somewhat formal take on pieces destined for plugged-in and self-assured women—à la Madame Trigère—looking to set the night on fire.



TRIGÈRE FALL 2018