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berlin



*Photographed by Patrick Jendrusch*

Berlin is a city of aesthetic extremes. Lilliputian architecture confronts behemoth post-communist concrete blocks, abandoned lots adjoin skyscraper tall graffitis, vanguard architecture buttresses baroque heritage mansions, while the U Bahn, which serpentine the expansive geography of the city from urban density to even denser woods, shuttles dapper dressed academics and business magnates alongside bohemian street musicians and colorful beggars. In the mix of these intense visual and cultural dichotomies is the young label Moon Berlin specializing in classical-inspired garments that integrate state-of-the-art interactive light technology—again an incongruent yet delightful encounter! Moon Berlin, launched in 2010, is the outcome of a partnership between founders Brigitte Franken and Christian Bruns and the Berlin-based research institute Fraunhofer IZM, which has specialized in research into stretchable circuit integration for over half a decade. Capitalizing on local research in the integration of interactive LEDs (light emitting diodes) into garments for everyday use, Moon Berlin developed

an illuminated-specific label. Utilizing technology developed by Stretchable Circuits, a spin-off company of IZM spearheaded by Christian Dils and Manuel Seckel, they set to task at integrating the soft and pliable circuits into tasteful fashion designs. The high-tech circuits, featuring twinkling LEDs and motion sensors, have the advantage of being directly attached to fabrics, even of the most delicate nature such as silk, via a heat fusion process. Powered by rechargeable credit-card size batteries (3 mm thick) the garments generate light for up to ten hours, which is certainly enough for a Berlin-style bacchanalian night out from sunset to sunrise. With the aid of integrated motion sensors incorporated into the circuits, the LEDs are modulated in real-time and correspond to the wearer's movements, thus creating a "sparkling" effect. What is more, the technology is so robust that it can be washed in water, just as with any conventional garment. The result of the integration of the Fraunhofer IZM technology into Moon Berlin's designs heralds a unique groundbreaking tech-fashion pairing of brains and



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beauty, which has been embraced by the fashion world as witnessed by their recent media success. Moon Berlin has since featured two collections, “I am not a robot” and “Sculpta,” both integrating Stretchable Circuit technology with interactive LEDs. The designs are focused on prêt-à-porter evening-wear, perfectly suited for special occasions such as balls, galas, festivals, red carpet appearances or media presentations. Moon Berlin’s collections are unique in their sophistication of technology coupled with simplicity of design. Inspired by the draping methods of

early Modernist fashion designers such as the French couturières Madeleine Vionnet and Madame Grès, they create fashion focused on sculpting the body as well as the experience of the wearer. The draped dresses (the predominant element of their collections) are fabricated in shimmering bronze, silver, white and black silks and cottons accented by the “twinkling” LEDs, which, when worn on the body, become expressive collaborators in the enjoyment of one’s sartorial display—a criteria germane to all fashion experiences.

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