

John Varvatos: "The Bal Harbour Shops, For Me, Is the Most Beautiful Center in America"

By [Nycole Sariol](#) Mon., Oct. 27 2014 at 11:05 AM



Photo by The Workshop

At his official store opening in Bal Harbour last Thursday, designer John Varvatos told Cultist that menswear has not yet seen a revolution.

Though it's no surprise Miami is packed with well-dressed men, there's still a large chunk of them who can't let go of those cargo shorts. (Burn them!) However, judging by the influx of dapper fellows joining together within the stark-white, exposed brick walls covered by framed vintage photos of rock icons to celebrate the designer's newest retail addition to [Bal Harbour Shops](#), one might disprove John's hasty theory of menswear, and consider the congregation of impeccably dressed dudes a revolutionary moment in and of itself.

Within the light, monochromatic expanse of Varvatos' Bal Harbour store, we got to chill with the designer, who fancies benevolent causes (25 percent of all the night's purchases benefited the Bass Museum of Art) to exchange a few words on runway extremities, his affinity with classic rock, and how, slowly but surely, Mr. Varvatos plans to take over the world -- from San Diego to Bangkok.

New Times: You told Women's Wear Daily that it's always been a dream of yours to open up a boutique in Bal Harbour.

John Varvatos: The Bal Harbour Shops, for me, is the most beautiful center in America. The selection of stores here is spectacular.

What do you think sets Miami's fashion scene apart from the rest of the U.S.?

People care about style here. There are a lot of parts of the country on the coast that don't care about style as much. And here, whether you like their style or not, is a whole different thing; people here really think about getting dressed up when they go out; it's a big deal, you know? Women especially, but it's really becoming a part of a guy's DNA, too.



Photo by The Workshop

Totally. Let's talk about the aesthetics of your Bal Harbour spot; I'm looking around and seeing some portraits paying an ode to rock iconography. Did that have anything to do with the theme of your Fall/Winter 2014 show at all?

Well, those photos are a part of my DNA, some are more recent, but I grew up with a lot of those. They had some kind of influence on me in some way. The KIIS portrait had some affect on our fall collection; we added a sort of glam theme to some fun pieces, like this coat that has some feathers on it. I always draw something from music.

Entertainment has to do with a big part of my shows. These editors that attend every show in Paris, Milan, and London, aren't just looking for nice clothes. As a designer, you need to embellish your shows more. And for me, the great thing about it is that it gives me the opportunity to have a little fantasy in my life with the clothes.

Speaking of runway shows: Your Spring 2015 show nodded to Victorian romanticism that bordered on an androgyny. Do you see menswear and women's wear merging into one market for both sexes?

My Fall collection was a lot tougher. For spring, there's always a softer side for guys. But I think guys in general want to look masculine -- straight or gay; not all, but most.

There's something beautiful about the freedom that women have, because everything about menswear is an evolution; there's no revolution about it at all. So, there is something about women's wear that's easier and not so structured.

And do you see yourself ever going back to women's wear?

I love women's wear, and it's a question everybody asks me -- even my wife. I don't know, I mean, we have so much to do [in menswear].

You do menswear so well, and it's good to stick to what you know. But you can equally rival that with women's wear.

There are definitely things that I'd love to do, even a capsule collection at some point in time for every season. I love women's wear because of that freedom, but I'm really focused on continually doing what I do even better.

You're definitely on a roll: first, your spot here, then having launched your first European store in London; and next, your Detroit store, slated to open this spring. What city do you have your sights on next?

I just came back from Bangkok on Sunday night; we just opened a store there. We're also going to be opening up something next summer at the World Trade Center, and we're looking at opening up another in San Diego and Beverly Hills.