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Greener pastures for Miguel Adrover
By Suzy Menkes
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PARIS: It is a marriage made in green- grass heaven: Miguel Adrover, the Spanish designer who fought logo mania with recycling; and Hess Natur, the German mail order brand with 30-year- old roots in sustainable fashion.

The two have teamed up to create an Adrover- designed capsule collection, which will be launched online in July as part of a worldwide push to bring style to environmentally friendly clothes.

" I think I am going to make my dream come true," says Adrover, whose maverick but visionary talent has finally been recognized. " I am glad to work for this company not only because of the philosophy and sustainability behind it, but because I can work with a clear conscience."

The feeling is mutual because Wolf Lüdge CEO of Hess Natur, picked up on Adrover' s authenticity and commitment from the moment they met last year in the designer' s studio- cum- bar in Palma de Mallorca.

" We are an accepted clothing brand, but we want to be accepted by the fashion world," says Lüdge " We want someone to share our creativity, to raise answers and get more audience."

Hess Natur received an award for an African cotton project at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, and Lüdge believes that Adrover will bring a fresh edge to a company that was " green" before ecology was on fashion' s radar.

Hess Natur was founded in 1976 at Butzbach, north of Frankfurt, by the environmentalist Heinz Hess as a socially aware business with respect for the planet. With a projected 2008 turnover of € 71 million, or about \$ 11 million, the company takes as its dogma that beauty comes not just from within, but " from without: without harm to yourself, the earth or people who live on it."

Adrover, who left school at 12 to work on the family almond farm, moved to New York in 1991 and opened his Horn store in Manhattan' s East Village in 1995. His most famous pieces were made from unpicking and reworking a Burberry trench coat, a Louis Vuitton bag and a mattress belonging to the eccentric poseur Quentin Crisp. Since Adrover was dumped by his American backers, the designer returned to Majorca in 2005 and has focused his recycling ideas into a search for ecologically sound fabrics.

" It is really difficult to produce anything organic," says Adrover. " I tried to use natural fabrics. For me the experience is of learning every day. When I go to Première Vision," the French fabric fair, " 99 percent of fabrics are not organic. Only the Japanese are a little bit ahead."

Hess Natur is way out front, using cotton, wool, silk and leather that are not just " green" as a raw fiber, but throughout all the development processes. While just one " pure" white cotton T- shirt might require treatments with pesticide and fertilizer, the German company bans all polluting and toxic chemicals. From zippers through thread and snap fasteners, the clothes are the real eco deal.

Adrover' s collection is based on fluid shapes and earthy colors, with current fashion ideas like jodhpurs and dhoti pants. There are existing shops in Butzbach and Hamburg, with a Munich shop set for this year. And Lüdge imagines that global online shopping will be followed by strategic international stores.

The designer will continue with his small clothing studio in Palma and with his painting and photography. But after turning down a big brand role when he was solicited by Tommy Hilfiger, Adrover is dedicated to making this green line grow.

" I want to take it not like a trend, but as a long- term project," Adrover says. " I cannot sell myself cheap. I found my perfect match - and we have a clean soul."