

DESIGNER PROFILE

BAUBLE BOYS

*Haute couture's dynamic duo Viktor & Rolf bring their
avant garde approach to jewelry*

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PARTNERS IN SUBLIME
 Horsting (left) and Snoeren in
 their Amsterdam townhouse

WITH A twin-like bespectacled appearance and shared air of intensity, Dutch fashion designers Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren greet *Rhapsody* at their Amsterdam headquarters, a stately 17th-century building that once served as the residence for the city's mayor. In the gilded, Versailles-like interior, life-size classicist portraits hang behind a composed arrangement of sleek Charles and Ray Eames midcentury modern furniture. It's the kind of unexpected juxtaposition that has become the hallmark of Viktor and Rolf's eponymous fashion label, as well as their latest collection of jewels for Atelier Swarovski.

Comprised of 19 pieces in total and strikingly titled "Velvet Rock," the collaboration marks the newest addition to Viktor & Rolf's line of successful packaged paradoxes. Simple yet graphic, the geometric earrings, cuffs, chokers and rings that sometimes cover an entire finger contrast reflective and matte crystals in jet and black colorways. Shoppers looking for the usual shiny staple won't find it here. In fact, the majority of the baubles are covered in light-absorbing flocking. "We tried to make something

brilliant *not* brilliant," Horsting says of the collection, which will be available in stores this coming February.

This is the kind of play on expectation that has characterized the label since its outset. In 1993, the duo—who met while they were students at the Netherlands' prestigious Academy of Art and Design, ArtEZ—launched their label with a collection of ten voluminous, high-waisted gowns that appeared, from afar, fit for an early 1800s baroness. However, up close—with their degraded fabric and trains constructed of piled shirts—they looked made for a modern Miss Havisham. The collection quickly scooped up top prizes at the Salon Européen des Jeunes Stylistes (an annual showcase of emerging designers) and established the duo as a burgeoning and unconventional talent. "It started with a friendship and a mutual ambition to really do something at the highest level possible," Horsting remembers of the label's earliest days.

In the 62 shows since their debut, the pair have produced high-minded collections inspired by such themes as the word no, the act of laying in bed and the financial crisis.



They have created garments made from jute, steel rigging and the red carpet upon which their designs are usually displayed. They have even redefined the catwalk with their 1999 Russian-nesting-doll-inspired fall haute couture show, which featured a single model for the entire collection on a rotating platform. "I think some sort of provocation is very much in our DNA," Horsting says. "We can't help it."

The duo's greatest provocation, however, is making the notoriously cloistered world of high fashion consumable. In 2004, they took to market a fragrance called Flowerbomb, which they describe on their website as "an antidote to reality, an expression of our dreams"; in 2006, they collaborated with H&M; and just last year, they opened up a 7,000-square-foot flagship store in Paris, which was designed to be an "invisible boutique," as it was entirely covered in gray felt.

"Similar to our desire to give hard crystals a soft, velvet touch, we like to play with opposites and contrasts by adding a paradoxical layer to our work," Snoeren explains. "It's the drive to mold the familiar in new and unexpected ways that keeps our inner fire lit." ⊕

STATEMENT PIECES
 Clockwise from top left: cuffs and a necklace from the collaboration with Swarovski; the new jewelry collection worn by the designers' canine model-in-residence; looks from their fall 2008 and fall 2005 ready-to-wear runway shows

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