

NICHOLAS DALEY

S/S 21 MENSWEAR COLLECTION 'STEPPING RAZOR'

For 'Stepping Razor' Spring/Summer 21, Nicholas Daley explores the meeting of martial arts and reggae culture during the 1970s, digging deep into a unique cross-cultural connection felt across the black diaspora.

Legendary reggae artist **Peter Tosh** plays a central role in this season's narrative with his 1977 album release, "Stepping Razor," lending the collection its name. Alongside close friend and collaborator Bob Marley, Tosh was intensely interested in martial arts, both as a mode of self-defence and means to self-enlightenment. A fan of Bruce Lee and Jim Kelly (*Enter the Dragon*), Tosh was a black belt in karate and would often incorporate dramatic combat moves into his idiosyncratic live performances. His martial arts stage attire became a signature look and represents a key reference point for Nicholas this season.

Drawing a line between past and present, Nicholas calls on **Jordan Thomas** to model this season's collection. A former World and European Champion and Britain's first Olympic karateka, Jordan is due to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The son of William Thomas, himself a former European and World Champion, Jordan was raised in the discipline, guided by family friend and legend of the sport, nine-time World Karate Champion, **Wayne Otto**. The collection highlights the significance of black karateka athletes in British sport over three decades of elite level competition.

This season taps into traditional martial arts uniform with Nicholas once again referencing utility silhouettes across more complex and technical garments. At the centre of the line sits a classic waist tie Karate Gi in a sturdy custom Japanese sashiko fabric. Kimono sleeves and a roomy cut ensure an authentic dojo feel, while a matching sashiko trouser with reinforced panels plays to Daley's trademark high and wide pant fit. Illustrator **Gaurab Thakali** establishes a strong visual language for the SS21 collection, creating Peter Tosh-inspired imagery and 'Stepping Razor' typography, both in keeping with the seventies martial arts aesthetic.

Continuing the brand's on-going craft story, Nicholas calls on Japanese artisan dye specialists to create two new custom tie-dyes. Olive green and sky blue colourways are used across long and short sleeve waffle tees, as well as relaxed fit cotton/linen beach shirts and military over shirts. Specialist Japanese fabrics reappear in a woven piece-dyed beach shirt, sun dried for an unusual and irregular handle. As always, treatments and fabrics are combined in unexpected ways to create texture and depth across the collection, contemporising traditional craft techniques.

British and Irish makers continue to play a pivotal role in the brand's development. Standout contributions include a bespoke jacquard from Sudbury silk weaver **Vanners**, applied in detail across cuts. Cotswolds-based producer **Courtney & Co** supply natural nut corozo buttons, while Dundee's Halley Stevensons return with their renowned waxed cottons, adding tactile surfaces to key pieces. Recognising Ireland's incredible textile making tradition, Daley has developed a one-of-a-kind pinstripe linen in collaboration with a distinguished Wexford weaver, transforming the fabric into a baseball collar cardigan, pull-cord short and utility waistcoat.

Seventies silhouettes become a recurring theme throughout SS21, encapsulated by two key styles: a rich Japanese viscose mix Western Shirt with a soft drape and a zip-up Field Jacket adorned with a bespoke 'Stepping Razor' embroidery patch, created by chainstitch specialist, **Giulio Miglietta**. Both pieces pay respectful homage to Peter Tosh's distinct mode of dress, a perfect counter-point to martial arts-focused cuts.

"Whether through the development of unique textiles with specialists in Japan and the UK, the music of reggae legend Peter Tosh or the unique story of black British karateka athletes told via World Champion Jordan Thomas – everything becomes interconnected and pushes my own creative journey, uniting fashion, music and culture" - Nicholas Daley

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