



Edmonton designer Stanley Carroll will be showing his new approach to fashion with a new line, Pieces.

PHOTOS: RICK VANWILLIAMS, THE JOURNAL

# Stanley Carroll is back in *fashion*

Designer returns to city to rediscover his creative voice

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When renowned Edmonton designer Stanley Carroll quit fashion in September 2009, after almost 27 years in the business, he was disillusioned with the industry.

He was done with "the superficiality of it," he says, the rigidity. "I was absolutely convinced that was it."

It was, at least until a couple of months ago.

Like broken-up bands that reunite, a Recovered Eminem, and the thrice-retired Michael Jordan in 1995 and 2001, Stanley Carroll is making a comeback.

While he'd been away, Carroll says, he realized something: "I guess what I was fundamentally fed up with was largely the fashion industry; not the fashion process. In fact, I had started to miss the whole essence of creating and designing clothing."

He has decided to give fashion another go, but on his own terms. This time, he doesn't have a storefront — just a studio,

a web presence and the occasional pop-up store.

He's continuously designing clothes on a small scale, without regard to seasons or collections — each piece stands on its own. No longer does he feel compelled to make apparel that would both reel in buyers and look good on size zero models, two often mutually exclusive demands.

Carroll will be showing this new take on fashion, which he calls Pieces, for the first time Friday at Western Canada Fashion Week.

"Basically, I came up with a different formula for doing it," says Carroll. "I really wanted to continue to remind myself that the reason I wanted to come back to designing clothes was because of the creative process. I really wanted to find a way of keeping that."

Esthetically, the new Stanley Carroll isn't very different from the old Stanley Carroll. The veteran designer describes Pieces as "both simple and distinct" and "a little truer to form."

For his fashion week showcase, Carroll has created about 32 ensembles, including 18 David Bowie-inspired men's looks, comprising trousers, shirts and jackets, and 14 women's outfits, of which a good chunk are knit dresses. Pieces average between \$200 and \$300 each.

On many items, Carroll has employed a "rebuilding" technique where garments are essentially cut apart and reconstructed to create unexpected tucks or in one case, eyes and a mouth.

"I wanted the items to be of individual strength," says Carroll. "I wanted to give people the opportunity to get one piece that packs all the strength."

So if you want to add just one Stanley Carroll shirt to your closet, you can do that.

"It doesn't need a whole supporting cast," he explains. "It goes back to that whole idea that this is not about making whole collections and saying, 'Customer X, have I got a

wardrobe for you.'"

Despite not having a brick and mortar store, Carroll says he has not had much difficulty attracting customers.

"I was blown away (by) just how quickly and how positively the clients that we contacted... reacted and how we in fact ended up evolving essentially through word of mouth," he says.

Carroll hopes to build more buzz with days-long pop-up shops designed to be one part retail, one part art exhibit.

"The next shop that I want to do, I want to build the entire store out of cardboard — everything from the racks to the change rooms." Pop-up shops will be announced on Facebook or stanleycarroll.com.

While showing at fashion week might seem to be the antithesis of separating himself from the industry, Carroll likes the creative outlet the runway represents.

"I frankly kind of missed that energy and focus that a showcase like a fashion show can give you," he says.

"I just like the idea of seeing this stuff on a runway. It allows me to play a bit more, be a little bit more creative still. ... There's still nothing like it."

But don't expect to see Carroll extending his line to stores and shows around the world. "I wouldn't be doing this again if I felt that I was going back to my same old ways," he says.

Life in quasi-retirement was quite nice. He travelled back to his native Holland, did some drawing and sketching, even ended up penning an as-yet-unpublished children's book. Writing, he says, has always been something he wanted to do.

But it's clear that Carroll's heart never left fashion.

"I'm certainly relieved to be designing clothes again," he says. "At the end of the day, it's a stupid, superficial thing to do, but somehow, that's how I get my kicks. That's my creative voice."

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For his fashion week showing, designer Stanley Carroll has created 14 women's outfits, many of which are knit dresses.



Carroll has used a "rebuilding" technique where garments are cut apart and reconstructed to create. In the example above, eyes and a mouth.



Carroll designed items of individual strength, so if you want to add just one of his shirts to your closet, you can do that.