

**COOL
HUNTING®****READ — STYLE****PENULTIMATE'S DAZZLING DIY-INFLUENCED COLLECTION****GARMENTS THAT TEST THE BOUNDARIES OF HIGH-END FASHION**

Evan Malachosky 12 February 2020

The third collection from NYC-based designer Xiang Gao's [Penultimate](#) label—titled “Good Night, God Bless, Beautiful Boy”—blurs the boundaries of both gender and garment. Part sculpture, part collage, and entirely wearable, each piece feels concurrently elegant, beautifully crafted and DIY. Gao's fantastical arrangements of fabrics (from knits to denim, quilt and flannel) drape in unexpected directions and draw the eye to atypical details—subverting traditions of couture.



An alumnus of the [China Academy of Art](#) and New York's [Parsons School of Design](#), Gao worked under [Raf Simons](#) during his tenure at [Calvin Klein 205W39NYC](#). There, Gao served as a knitwear designer, and helped establish a particular knit style within the brand that impressed. After two years there, Gao founded Penultimate, her expression of the amalgamation of influences she'd accumulated.



Fusing her Chinese heritage and her unique Western experience, Gao aimed to recreate the ethos of the wearable art movement that burgeoned in the 1970s in her first two collections. For autumn/winter 2020, Gao doubles down on her vision by inviting New York-based mixed medium artist [David Henry Brown Jr](#) to collaborate on the collection's lookbook. Known for his dark, almost dystopian style, Brown Jr (under the moniker [David Nobody](#)) uses recognizable canned foods and sodas, doll appendages, wigs, and debris to contort the faces found in his portraiture work.



The artist's contribution to Gao's lookbook appears as decorative headdresses and masks and clever adornments for the models' hands and feet. In some instances, the additions contrast Gao's designs; in other moments, the decorations amplify the collage-like madness of it all.

With references to religious imagery and her upbringing as a cross-cultural daughter of factory owners, Gao's new collection also responds to an increased collective desire for slow fashion and repurposed pieces. Altogether it's a tantalizing range that will dazzle those within and far beyond the world of fashion.

Images by Yuta Kawanishi for Penultimate

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