Paris: Coperni, Gauchere, Ludovic de Saint Sernin and Isabel Marant bring back lightness

By Dominique Muret • March 5, 2022

The atmosphere of the Parisian shows seems to have shed off some of the gloom that marked the first days of Fashion Week. Between the war in Ukraine and the influence of the pandemic still present today in various collections, we had a chance to pause and take a small breath of fresh air on Thursday through Fall/Winter 2022-23 collections that mixed classic winter outfits with more sexy and unbridled looks, such as those of Coperni, Gauchere, Ludovic de Saint Sernin, and Isabel Marant.
Coperni’s noisy corridors and rows of lockers transported the audience into an American high school, presenting a teenager on a journey to establish her independence. Wearing black woolen thigh-high socks, she is initially shown dressed in smart clothing. Hooded dresses, jackets, and even tailored coats in dark wool or herringbone fabrics covered the top of her head, at times making her resemble a nun.

Don’t be fooled by the teenager’s innocent and modest act however, since the looks that followed prove how she tries by any means necessary to personalize her look and stand out from the crowd. She spends her time scribbling on her handbag and pumps during class, wearing bare-legged balaclava bodysuits, or jeans so low-waisted that they end up hanging just above her knee.

Shirts and mini wrap skirts gave way to more rebellious and gothic ensembles, such as knit bodysuits with matching gloves, pants tied with a ribbon below the knee, and skin-tight latex tops and dresses in pastel shades (yellow, pink, white, light blue). She exposes the sides of her torso as well as her navel while donning the brand’s signature double-breasted outfits. For the evening, she takes out lace pieces, ruffled blouses, oversized fur coats, and a small rhinestone handbag.

Her boyfriend picks her up, not in a classic motorcycle but in an ultramodern ride, as suggested by the speed skiing futuristic helmet he carries, the only visible innovative reference in the collection. "This season, there was less emphasis on innovation and technology. We wanted to be in a more calm and pure spirit rather than a technical one," explained the brand’s designers Arnaud Vaillant and Sebastien Meyer backstage. "This collection is dedicated to Ukraine, especially to our team there. For a year, we have been working with a tailoring workshop in Kyiv. We couldn’t reach them for a week but we just heard news that they are safe," mentioned the duo. Menswear has been incorporated in Coperni’s offering through capsules for a few seasons now.
In the heart of the capital, under Rue de Rivoli’s arcades facing the Tuileries gardens, Gauchère took the city streets “to reconnect with real life and connect with the outside world.” “It’s a very emotional collection. It’s still hard to project yourself into the future. I wanted to dress a very real woman,” said German designer Marie-Christine Statz right before sending masculine-inspired silhouettes down the catwalk.

The models exuded strength and energy clad in powdered silk tank tops or bras, low-rise jeans and wide-leg pants. Their small frames drowned in the oversized, broad-shouldered men’s striped jackets. The looks fluctuated between a Berlin underground style and a minimalist rigor, with monochrome outfits that mixed loose volumes, tight fits, and fluidity with impalpable silks that barely grazed the skin.

The body was exposed discreetly via mini dresses, bare shoulder tops, slit skirts, cutouts, and deep open backs. Flesh-colored tops and skirts merged with the skin. The softness of double-faced cashmere or silk met leather, vinyl, and denim injecting the ensembles with vitality. Curly wool was sprinkled throughout the collection, seen in a hooded sweater dress, a top, and a floor-length dress.

Like at Coperni, male models were seen present in this fashion show, where they donned the same suits as the women. “Men want to wear my clothes! So, for almost two years, I started to expand my range of sizes,” she explained, amused by the fact that it is usually “the women who help themselves to the men’s wardrobe.”
Ludovic de Saint Sernin shared this same idea but took it to the extreme. His outfits, from the most sexy and feminine to the most neutral, are worn by men and women in exactly the same way, without any visible distinction between the genders. The designer, who divides his time between Paris and London, invited his guests to a basement that turned into a nightclub as soon as the spotlights hit the runway.

The return to physical shows saw him having fun strutting down the runway (almost) incognito among the models, while unveiling a collection that balanced daywear and evening wear and mixed the classic winter wardrobe, in a dark color palette of browns, grays, and blacks, with much lighter and flirty outfits.

Wool and canvas coats, maxi skirts and lace-up pants were paired tone on tone with beautiful shirts that could also be worn as dresses paired with boots. Similarly, an oversized, ribbed turtleneck sweater was transformed into a knit dress. Knitwear was also used in constructing wraparound tops, straight skirts, pants and both sleeveless and non-sleeveless tops that softly clung to the body.

The evening wear clothing become even more lightweight, such as a blouse and pants set in transparent silk, tiny open back tops, or a mini python dress with very high slits on the thighs. Chain metal tops barely covered the models’ torsos, taking the shape of handkerchiefs tied around the neck for men and as bras for women. Rhinestones illuminated knitwear and tank tops, a floor length mesh dress revealed chic undergarments, and a long transparent black dress left nothing to the imagination.
A desire for light-heartedness and fun carried its way to Isabel Marant’s collection. "It's the ballad of a girl who's comfortable in her boots. She puts on a dress with a big jacket or bomber over it, and off she goes to hit the pavement! This is the girl I wanted to show," summarized the designer backstage. The soundtrack playing in the background was a song by Kazu, singer of the New York cult band Blonde Redhead, and a true muse for Marant.

The models came out wearing boots in white, yellow, rust leather, tapestry print, and metallic blue or silver. They wore ecru-colored or sequined biker suits, jeans, or stunning leather overalls. It is best however to wear them bare-legged with flowy dresses or mini and tight outfits in stretch velvet or plush fabric. Or even better: with a smart V-neck sweater over a shirt, forgoing the skirt.

"I thought of easy-to-wear pieces, bordering on sportswear. The idea was to go with essentials. It's simple, not overwhelming, with clashing textures and a strong focus on colors," continued the designer, who went all out with bright shades (orange, electric blue, raspberry, ocher) while integrating them into a more classic color palette (black, cream, navy).

Marant closed the show with a sweater in the blue and yellow colors of Ukraine. "We are wholeheartedly with Ukraine, but unfortunately we can't do much except help them out with material things. But it's not much. The show was a little like an interlude, because we must continue going all the way. But tomorrow, it will be back to reality", she commented.

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