Valentino enchants Rome with its haute couture collection

By Dominique Muret - July 11, 2022

Valentino delivered a spectacular show in Rome on Friday night. After a detour to Venice last year, the luxury house owned by the Qatari investment fund Mayhoola went back to its roots.

The company unveiled its Fall/Winter 2022-2023 haute couture collection entitled 'The Beginning' in the heart of the Italian capital, between the centrally located Spanish Steps and Piazza Mignanelli, where the historic palace occupied by the fashion house is located and where it held its fashion shows in the past. A total of 102 silhouettes were unveiled in front of 700 guests.
The excitement in Piazza di Spagna was already palpable at around 7 p.m., where a small crowd poured in behind the barriers that blocked the whole area, while a few lucky people were already seated against the windows of the surrounding buildings. Among the celebrities in attendance were the American actress Anne Hathaway, who took a seat next to Giancarlo Giammetti, partner and longtime friend of the brand's founder Valentino Garavani, who himself was unable to attend. Also present were representatives of the main fashion associations, such as Pascal Morand, Carlo Capasa, Raffaello Napoleone and 120 students from various fashion schools.

Suddenly the buzz of voices was covered by music and the audience wandered back to the splendor of the Alta Moda of yesteryear, from 1986 to 2003, when the Italian couture week traditionally ended with the famous television program "Donna sotto le stelle" (Woman under the stars). During it, the most prestigious Italian fashion houses (such as Versace, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Roberto Cavalli, Valentino, and Ferré) paraded on the monumental Spanish Steps and its double flight staircase.

The first model descended from the top of the staircase in the golden afternoon sun and tackled the 137 steps of the famous baroque monument, which led her down to a long catwalk in Piazza Mignanelli and all the way to the brand's headquarters, "where it all began". Her mini cocoon dress composed of giant red roses in taffeta was designed by creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli as a tribute to the legendary Fiesta dress created by Valentino in 1959.

This ensemble was followed by ruffled blouses made of delicate gazar silk, voluminous faille and organza skirts, including one embroidered with turquoise feathers, flowing shirt dresses of crepe fabric with feather-trimmed puffed sleeves, tight-fitting sheath dresses in silk cady, dresses with thin straps covered entirely by fine ostrich feathers, and billowing dresses of chiffon voile that danced in the wind.
The collection was light and breezy, while the typical Roman Ponentino wind gracefully lifted the trains of the garments. The looks were further accentuated by feathers dancing at ankle height as well as wide headdress with clouds of feathers.

"I wanted to show a different interpretation of Valentino's romanticism, with more lightness. In this collection everything is linked to movement," said the designer to a handful of journalists.

He remembered his youth, when he came to Rome from his hometown of Nettuno, located more than an hour away from the capital, to be in the audience of the show "Donna sotto le stelle". He also recalled his early days working for the firm in 2020 as an accessories designer.

"At that time I was working with Valentino. And since then we have been in constant exchange. After these 23 years, I felt like I was having a conversation with him. An ideal conversation, forward-looking, symbolizing a new beginning," he said.

References to the brand's codes ran throughout the collection, starting with roses. They were seen partly as giant and three-dimensional protagonists on tops, jackets, or pinned to the buttonhole of a coat or a cape in silk plush, and at times quite discreetly, tied around the ankles. In addition, wide bows and ribbons wrapped around waists, such as in a coat made entirely of contrasting braided ribbons. And, of course, the famous Valentino red, which was used for multiple pieces, was not missing from the show.

As usual, the designer expanded his color palette to include deep, bright colors (such as emerald, mint and jade green, neon pink, burgundy, plum red, purple, and lime green) for monochromatic looks or unexpected color combinations. The models seemed to be coming home from a party in the early hours of the morning wearing fishnet stockings with rhinestone-studded evening gowns or pantsuits with micro sequins while British singer Labrinth sang live. Casually dressed gentlemen also appeared wearing loose-fitting pants and simple tank tops, with gorgeous cashmere coats and sometimes glamorous long leather gloves on top.
With an inclusive selection of models, predominantly members of minority groups, the fashion house presented its mix of menswear and womenswear pieces on models of different proportions and ages without assigning them defined genders. With this gesture, Piccioli wanted to send a clear political message against prejudice and homophobia.

"Body shapes puts this issue in the spotlight. Everyone can finally be free to express themselves as they are. And by deciding to unveil the collection in this Roman monument of historical importance, I wanted to show this emphatically and officially. I believe that you can tell a lot with beauty. It is another idea of beauty that tells of a world that is changing," he concluded.

During the final bow, the designer did not forget to stand next to his entire atelier team, whose members received rounds of lively applause.

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Translated by Roberta Herrera