Despite the darkening clouds of Brexit, London fashion is in full bloom

By Godfrey Deeny - 19 September 2018

If a man is tired of London he is tired of life, Samuel Johnson once wrote. But it was hard to be anything other than excited by this long weekend of London fashion, with designers from a score of countries offering some brilliant ideas. We look at five that caught the contrasting moods in the capital.
Simone Rocha

All about her Chinese origins at Simone Rocha, whose Chinese-Portuguese dad John hails from Hong Kong.

The heart of the collection was a series of layered dresses based on paintings of Tang Dynasty concubines. Rocha found imitations in antique markets in Hong Kong, and experimented with making contemporary imitations of the imitations.

The designer also referenced Ching Ming, the Chinese version of Day of the Dead, a tradition her family respects every year by marching up hills in Happy Valley to wash the graves of her grandparents.

“I've been spending a lot of time in Asia and thinking about my heritage, so I wanted to reference that, but playfully. Making spherical silhouettes in tailoring and dresses,” she explained.

“There are two peaks in Hong Kong. One side is Buddhist and the other is Catholic, so naturally we walk up the right hand side as we are Catholic,” smiled Simone in the backstage of Lancaster House, and whose invitation was a photo of hundreds of people marching through Happy Valley.

Nicholas Kirkwood

We are not terribly sure which dystopian universe shoemaker Nicholas Kirkwood was referencing in his debut runway shown, but it sure looked great.

With enough TV screens, monitors and laptops to make U2’s epic Zoo TV tour look like a second-hand repair shop in a brilliantly imagined set, Nicholas sent out his latest shoe collection, accessorized by multiple looks in white: matelassé, stretch, athletic micro fiber and transparent tinted plastic.

The images were stunning, and the footwear was pretty good too – notably excellent new high heels with backward slanted heels and athletic straps; or fab new floral punk boots.

More a homage to the reassuring power of footwear should your career turn out to be an extra in Bladerunner 2. Fridge doors swung open and shut, many monitors blinked on and off as the cast marched by. On each screen 360 degree images of the footwear, and the exact measurement of each boot and high heel.
Entitled Evidence, the show also featured a live “positive hacker” with a suitably mysterious name, “CyFi,” an 18-year-old from California, who began her career at the tender age of 10.

Preen by Thornton Bregazzi

Nomadic nobility at Preen, where the models marched underneath giant silvery white nylon curtains, as if escaping their past. Rightly seen in a show where Preen’s design duo, Justin Thornton and Thea Bregazzi, focused on people who live by the season and travel incessantly.

“We were looking at gypsies and nomadic African tribes,” explained Thornton.
“We all live in a world we wouldn’t mind escaping occasionally, so looking at these people. Not refugees, but people who choose to cross borders, interest us,” added Bregazzi.

On the catwalk, Belle Epoque-style dresses that recalled the first Roma to come to Europe; ruffled shoulders draped with sheer checkered fabric like cloth from a fortune teller’s table.

Beautiful patchwork hyper-ruffled dresses, though finished with worn leather necklaces completed with tiny medallions; or Nylon pants suits, as if hand-sewn in a caravan from found raw materials. Or checkered blouses, again seemingly grabbed off a restaurant table and stitched into shape.

Models marched in marvelous battered hiking boots finished with gros grain laces and multiple straps, as if bearing the memories of all their owner’s journeys.

A generous house if ever there was one, Preen donated part of this season’s revenues to Help Refugees, a humanitarian organization.

Roksanda
Ethereal modern-day elegance at Roksanda, the eponymous brand of the London designer most devoted to romanticism. Staged inside the Serpentine Pavilion, whose annual architectural installation this year was by Frida Escobedo.

Ilinčić's starting point was the tapestry of Le Corbusier, not his architecture, but female bodies and shapes. Ideas in ceramics and furniture that great architects do outside their main job.

Adding in embroidery done on three layers; patchwork and numerals onto her languid dresses and gowns, linens that resembled tapestries and pleats that were rubberized, yet romantic, and used in '50s dresses. Her color palette was largely composed of desert, sand, spice, turmeric, poppy and Saharan sunsets.

"No, it wasn't Picasso," though it did look little like his work.

Pedro Lourenço

Once a teenage Brazilian wunderkind who staged his first show aged 20 in Sao Paulo, Pedro Lourenço is now a happening 28 year old living in London. This season he showed his latest concept Zilver, unveiling his ideas in a Covent Garden art gallery.

Excellently cut ecru treated-cotton reedingotes worn with fencing corsettes and great futuristic unisex boxing boots; or a brilliant beige trench coat cut in half to make a high-waisted skirt, topped by a green US flight jacket.
Sleekly minimalist Perfecto jackets; pale denim jeans with massively upturned hems or green nylon splash jackets finished with long zips that slashed across the torso from one hip the opposing shoulder; silver high-tech nylon kilts.

All showing on a giant video installation. Yet underlying it all, the sensuality of Brazil, and its fauna and curvilinear granite mountains.

Others carried a new handbag helmet in Pop Art colors, an item spotted at shows throughout the UK season.

"I wanted the presentation to be very basic. I wanted to show the retailer, and the consumer, how the clothes should be worn," said Lourenço, as he posed on a high-tech Zilver bike.

A welcome and brilliant return by a talent who will always be worth checking out.

By Godfrey Deeny

Copyright © 2020 FashionNetwork.com All rights reserved.