New York Fashion Week: Proenza Schouler, Moschino, Carolina Herrera and Michael Kors

By Godfrey Deeny - 11 September 2021

The pandemic may be a long way from being over, but they are parading down the catwalks in New York this week.
Uber sunny in mood and attitude, designers appear to be longing for a return to normalcy, even if a new normalcy comes with a nervous sense of escapism and a heightened desire for long weekends and country living.

We checked out four key Spring/Summer 2022 collections in shows spread across the city – Proenza Schouler, Moschino, Carolina Herrera and Michael Kors – as major league houses and influential designers returned to the runway in force in the six-day American season that ends on Sunday.

**Proenza Schouler: Downtown damsels on the beach**

Damsels but definitely not in distress at Proenza Schouler, still a bellwether brand when it comes to interpreting what’s next in American fashion.

Their Wednesday evening show was staged before the backdrop of water, and the signature wooden fencing found on the Atlantic beaches of North America. Which, considering that so many professional New York ladies now essentially work a four-day week, starting their weekends in the Hamptons most Thursday evenings, seemed truly apt.

That said, this was very much an urban collection from designers Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez for Spring/Summer 2022.

Brimful of powerful tailoring, from the opening slope-shoulder safari jacket or the Superwoman parka to the sleeveless wraparound deerskin trenches – one in ecru the other in dark chocolate – or a marvelous yellow zebra power coat.

Clothes for easy travel in a new, almost post-professional era, where people can escape the confines of offices and dress in a far more romantic manner. Like the great chess piece dresses, finished with beads, spaghetti-like fringes and side cut-outs – seen in canary yellow or amaranth red.

The show climaxed with a trio of high-color pastel floor-length gowns that were tremendously classy and very new. All anchored by mannish loafers and tough chic sandals, and worn with some great Dia Day Bags, jazzed up with hand woven raffia and technical faux crocodile.

"A celebration of newfound freedoms, however fragile they may seem, coupled with an absolute optimism for all that lies ahead," was how the duo defined the collection.
Moschino: Fashion pasture

The weather gods didn’t shine on Moschino this season, but the gods of wit and invention were in a kinder mood. Staged under a steady drizzle in Bryant Park, the collection was a humorous and kicky expression of upbeat fashion by the wittiest designer in the industry, Jeremy Scott.

Playing on pop retro ideas and nursery school prints he sent out short A-line dresses with puff sleeves, and mini flamenco jackets with even more miniature skirts and matching bustiers. While the most flattering of picnic dresses had buttons made of large pink hearts.

Jeremy’s favorite fabrics for next spring are naïve pastel prints with lots of pink bears, turquoise elephants and lilac lambs – great kids’ bedroom wallpaper ideas. Finished with endless bangles, beaded afros and high heels in a kaleidoscope of sweetshop hues. All the cast strutting by with matching handbags – color-coordinated to the max.

"Sweet dreams are indeed made of these," commented Scott, who ensured that ladies who lunch have rarely looked happier.

Faintly absurdist – but then again, that was a key element in Franco Moschino’s DNA – the animal prints became three-dimensional at the finale.

His stellar cast – from Gigi Hadid to Imaan Hammam– strolling by, as photographers scurried to their seats and the masked guests cowered under large golf umbrellas. Climaxing with Scott’s own bow and appearance with the beautiful transgender Antiguan-American model, Aaron Philip, in a wheelchair.
Carolina Herrera: Uptown gal celebrates her 40th

Designer Wes Gordon celebrated the house of Carolina Herrera’s 40th anniversary with an intimate show staged in a storied townhouse in the Upper East Side.

Carolina Herrera has always been one of Manhattan’s most patrician houses, and this collection was no exception. Puff-shouldered versions of Carolina’s key look – the ladylike white suit; majestic and grand black and white silk gowns, or kissing punk jacquard cocktails: all unmistakably Carolina Herrera.

Under Gordon, the Herrera gal has gotten a decade younger – seen in the beautiful white cotton shirts with puckered floral detailing and Jesuitical sleeves, or the racy micro cocktails in crimson and cream sequined check. Best of all, he played on the classic Carolina polka-dots with a new logo-lettered print in some great dresses.

Though Wes’ best ideas were probably his grandest – anthracite sequined bustiers over gigantesque swirls of satin, or jet micro dresses with enormous trains.

In a sense the collection was a brave bet on the future, that society will really reopen next spring with benefits and balls, weddings and wicked weekends. Hope Wes wins that bet.
Michael Kors: Good times in Central Park

America’s most ebullient designer, Michael Kors, returned to nature this season with a show inside Tavern on the Green, the famed restaurant just on the western side of Central Park.

It felt like old times with a gaggle of stars – like Kate Hudson who iPhoned the final – perched front row, beside the house’s new CEO Joshua Schulman and the brand’s ultimate arbiter, John D Idol, the CEO of its owner, Capri.

Though staged in a verdant park, the clothes were decidedly urban – halter neck little black dresses, flared leather skirts, and ultra-slouchy trench-coats in pink or ecru.

For evening, a divine leather sheath with cut-outs and several great confetti guipure pencil-narrow cocktail dresses or full skirts topped by singlets. For a weekend at the beach, black cashmere sweaters with a red heart and a hand across it.

Several models did carry totes and bucket bags, some with roses popping out, though this ode to jet set glamour felt a tad out of step with the current ethos.

Backed up by stand-up bassist and torch singer Ariana DeBose, crooning through classics like My Baby Just Cares For Me, it was a highly polished display, where Kendall Jenner and most of cast sported waxed back hair and ruby red lips.

In a word, this was far from being Michael Kors’ greatest collection, but as at least it was an expression of optimism after the endless lockdowns.

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