NYFW: From New York with love

By Roxanne Robinson - 15 February 2022

However deep the freeze came over New York Monday morning, great fashion warmed plenty of hearts on this chilly day at fashion week. Three designers showed plenty to love about their collections and spirits.

Coach

"Long ago, and, oh, so far away," began the lyrics of The Carpenters 1971 hit song ‘Superstar’, sung by the late Karen Carpenter with her angelic voice. It was one of two songs by the saccharine and wholesome seventies brother-sister pop music duo that helped cement the scene Stuart Vevers of Coach created for the Fall 2022 show.

The set and show notes evoked a friendly small-town American place. The set, inside Basketball City, featured home facades, an old station wagon, kids riding bikes, and an Afghan dog being walked all at dusk, where golden hour seemed to linger forever. A fixation on this sort of Americana has been the executive creative director's MO since taking the reins in 2013.

Fast forward almost ten years, and distilling that design impetus is aimed squarely at Gen Z. Sure, mom and dad may love the great accessories and even the outerwear. These days Vever's pursuit of today's youth and their various tribes has helped put Coach's parent company Tapestry Inc. on track to top 2021 level of $5.746 billion in
various tribes has helped put Coach’s parent company Tapestry Inc. on track to top 2021 level of $5.746 billion in revenue.

In Coachville, USA, no one seems to be bogged down in such matters. Instead, they enjoy simple pursuits and simply turn staple clothing pieces into fashion statements. The biggest news lately for Coach is the oversized proportions and then some, just like the kids like them. Shearling jackets, baggy surf shorts, and enormous t-shirts for those who prefer a male aesthetic and late 1960s and early 1970s dress styles modeled after little girl dresses—think Mia Farrow in 'Rosemary's Baby'—for a feminine side. They came short and flirty in chiffon floral prints with Peter Pan collars and lace yolk details; one group was endearing white pointelle crochet dresses.

"My collections often begin with a feeling, and for Fall, the feeling was love," said Vevers in a prepared statement. "To express this, the collection explores tensions between romance and toughness to reinvestigate Coach heritage. I liked the idea of creating a nostalgic world somewhere in America seen through a widescreen lens, mixing the energy of today with the nostalgia for pop culture that has always inspired me."

The tension was easy to spot. Immediately following the sweet quartet out came what could best be described as a biker or leather daddy; Vevers alluded to that in the ‘The Coach Neighborhood Newsletter’ handed out to guests and post-show notes. Even quaint American towns have a mysterious underside. Here, however, Vevers was introducing a line-up of archival leather styles—including a 1964 sling bag—for the next-gen to discover. After all, it is a leather goods house. The finale styles featured leather, given a graffiti print courtesy of Mint+Serf.

It was all very nostalgic and heartwarming, apropos for Valentine’s Day. The Coach family of entertainers, personalities, and influencers was there in force; Megan Thee Stallion, Hari Nef, Tommy Dorfman, Quincy Brown, Rina Sawayama, Bob the Drag Queen, Rickey Thompson, and more. They were just the kind of folks Vevers hoped would live in Coachville.

Carolina Herrera

Wes Gordon’s Valentine’s Day morning show for Carolina Herrera was a fiesta of amor with plenty to love. Gordon’s added a bit more Latin flair to his collection of elegant and sophisticated cocktail and evening dresses, but it was all in the name of dramatic fashion.
Borrowing from French composer Georges Bizet's 'Carmen', Gordon used a guitar rendition of "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" (also known as 'The Habanera') as part of his runway musical selection.

"There is a drama and a boldness and a beauty that I always try to capture in the collection that is in sync with Latin culture," he said post-show in an interview. "Our woman is bold and self-assured and loves dramatic clothing. But no matter her nationality, she dresses to impress. I think the moment for all of those," he continued adding, "I saw this 110 percent in our business. People are excited to wear clothes. It's no longer about 'I have a special occasion', so you buy a dress. Instead, you buy the special pieces, and they turn any moment into an occasion."

These clothes were the occasion indeed. Smart cocktail numbers hinted at Hollywood's Golden Age—think a close-knit button cardigan and skinny cigarette pants worn under a full taffeta skirt and train. Tension was created between the lean silhouettes, which recalled matador costumes and volume, such as mutton gypsy sleeves on blouses played throughout the show. Beading and paillettes brought a dose of sing to the line-up.

Colored added to the excitement. A tiered skirt looked like an expressive painting with a yellow waistband, black overlay, and pink underlay—ditto on a dress in black, yves klein, and light blue. An exquisite red, pink and purple tulle strapless dress captivated and drew attention to the other statement, form.

You could say shape took home the top prize. In various iterations, a series of dresses made from poof tulle balls closed the show. These may be Gordon's most prized designs.

"I'm obsessive-compulsive when it comes to creating the clothes. Most of the pieces you saw were created 4 or 5 times in muslins before being cut in the real fabric," he explained. This type of craftsmanship rivals European houses.

"I'm so lucky to work at Herrera, which has a full atelier right here in New York City," he added.

Coincidentally Monday's show gave him a chance to thank that atelier. After Gordon took his bow, he brought out two older gentlemen in white design room smock coats. This would be the tailor's last show before retiring after 19 and 22 years in the Carolina Herrera design room. It was also poignant that the show took place in an empty retail space (lots of those in New York these days) in the Flatiron district where the New York garment industry was born.

"They are irreplaceable, but fortunately, we have some more talented sewers and tailors joining the team," Gordon assured. Earlier, he noted the importance of appreciating every moment, which, in this show, all most certainly did.

Âcheval

Sofia Âchaval de Montaigu and Lucila Sperber, co-founders of Âcheval, sent NYFW an Argentinian Valentine’s Day surprise for their Fall 2022 collection presentation.
The pair hosted a dinner at Socialista, the Casa Cipriani private event space with a South American vibe. It was the perfect spot to showcase the upcoming season’s collection inspired by the northern Argentinian countryside, writer and poet Jorge Luis Borges, and Gen Z. The former account for the colorful knitwear and sailors-inspired looks. Velvet was vital to this tightly edited group as tailored pieces and dresses take cues from the gaucho lifestyle and tango culture.

The playfulness was attributed to Gen Z but where they will experience the clothes. “We have a new partner Arthur Madrid of Sandbox. The collection will twin between the metaverse and the real world.”

The first drop will appear in both worlds in June with a plan to launch a new product every two months. “Gen Z will discover on the metaverse and then will buy in real life, for instance. They are sometimes one person in the metaverse and another in real life,” noted Lucila. “We wanted to capture the e-commerce vibe, and we see that we can match reality with cyberspace.”

A special treat for guests was an interpretative horse dance by a modern dancer wearing an Àcheval poncho. She warmed guests up for Sebastián Faena, a friend and photographer who shot their Fall 2022 campaign and sings. Wearing a signature Àcheval corset, Faena wooed guests jumping up on a banquet belting out a sultry tune.