Prada: The New Rules of the Game

By Godfrey Deeny  -  25 February 2022

A magisterial performance at Prada, in the finest collection so far from the duo of Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons. Yet, a darkly bizarre moment where fashion fought to be relevant on a day of infamy in the Ukraine.

The show in Milan was quite brilliant - a reinterpretation of the house’s codes which nonetheless looked very fresh
and very new. The mood elsewhere was dark.

A show staged on the day of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, an attack which visibly affected the atmosphere of most of the audience. Nonetheless, that did not prevent a huge gang of teenagers gathering outside the Prada Foundation in industrial south Milan, to mobile phone stars like Kim Kardashian as she entered the show.

Many of the component parts in the collection were classical Prada: felt wool; burnished leather; strass and just-below-the-knee lengths. Though, with a new quotient of naughty new transparency, and a sexy but stern mood.

Yet, the defining look were spy-coat leather coats and jackets. Dramatic cool chic which suddenly had become ominous.

“I am glad the show went well. But I was much more worried about what is happening in Ukraine. Hopefully the western sanctions can help bring down this Russian government,” said Miuccia.

Back on the catwalk, the mood was stern yet sexy from opening look, with Kaia Gerber in a white ribbed canoe-shirt, over a skirt made of a triple band of black nylon, anthracite silk and transparent lurex, over which was sprinkled abstract flowers. The design duo showed a dozen variations on this theme all the way to the final look. In a show that featured a gang of veteran supes - Liya Kebede, Élise Crombez, and Hannelore Knut – all of them owning the space.

Plus, you just know, the house will sell thousands of those t-shirt tops, even if for a winter collection it was a somewhat skimpy attire.

But the key component was the dynamic tailoring – in particular the voluminous, raglan shoulder, dark gray blazers and jackets. While for inclement weather a series of surgically cut Pacific-blue great coats finished with silver metal chains were hyper elegant.
Raf’s influence was also apparent in leather spy-coats – again cut as if two sizes too large, with 80s power shoulders – and made in hues of tobacco, royal blue and pink. However, the cover shot look was definitely the felt power coats, finished at the biceps with feathers.

In a collection where upside down triangular logos were everywhere – from the front of t-shirts to the backs of spy-coats. The models appearing in waxed helmet-shaped hairdos.

However the show, staged in a cavernous green carpeted space, despite its great clothes, felt foreboding.

Through no fault of the designers, the show and collection echoed Jean Renoir’s 1939 ‘The Rules of the Game’, a satirical comedy that captured the fatalistic mood as Europe drifted into WW2.

We know that fashion is about clothes. But not just that. If designers truly think of themselves as artists, as most of them do these days, then runway shows cannot be a comedy of manners in the current crisis.

If creators and their clothes become callous, like the figures in The Rules of the Fame then quite frankly our industry is lost.

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