Anti-Putin protesters made their first manifestation in fashion Saturday night with banners protesting the invasion of Ukraine, outside a Versace show dedicated to regal style.

Versace: Regal'n'roll, amid anti-Putin protest

‘No Putin,’ ‘Cut Russia from Swift,’ ‘No Swift for Russia,’ read a series of cardboard posters held aloft outside the Versace show-space in west Milan, as editors, buyers and models such as Gigi and Bella Hadid, exited the show into a chilly evening.
Inside, the message was regal'n'roll, as the Versace valkyries paraded in power woman glamour. Where the key to the collection were the bustiers, cut with sculptural flourish and built into multiple garments.

One even formed the center of a power shoulder black wool suit, another was woven into a mini-cocktail dress, and paired, like many of the looks, with black latex leggings that ended in with Pinball Wizard high platform boots.

Others were reduced to a minimalist denim and seen with chalk stripe bankers trousers and off-the-shoulder hooded aviator jackets.

Donatella also played with volume with a sure hand, sending out cyan blue satin coats with peak lapels; three-sizes-too-big bankers jackets combined with matching micro-mini; and enormous black felt parkas finished with huge tart red padded sleeves.

"Looks built on contrast and tension – like an elastic band pulled tight and about to snap-back with a build-up of energy. That feeling is irresistible to me," commented Donatella Versace in her program note.

The designer did not take a bow after a show staged on a scarlet red catwalk, where all the models posed dramatically in a final tableaux vivant.

The show was also the final one for CEO Jonathan Akeroyd, who departs to take the same title running Burberry in London from mid-March.

"I will miss Donatella and Versace and Milan. I've grown to love Italy. But Burberry will be a great challenge," said Akeroyd, who helmed the sale of Versace to Capri Holdings for 1.9 billion euros in 2018. If he has as successful a tenure in his new position in the UK then Burberry shareholders should be very happy.

Tod's: Italian beauty

Designer Walter Chiapponi entitled Tod's latest collection 'Italian Beauty' and that's what he presented in a polished show and collection for the newly revived brand.
Tod’s racked up solid figures last year, as revenues rose 40% to 884 million euros. And the performance on the runway inside the contemporary art center PAC on Friday morning was pretty decent too.

Good also to see a Tod’s show that opened with such a concise all-black statement – from Gigi Hadid in cashmere overcoat; deep gorge blazer and technical gabardine pants, slit at the bottom to semi-hide her mannish boots. Sister Bella next in flawless blouse, culottes and mechanics boots; or best of all Adut Akech in a brilliant off the shoulder cable-wool cocktail worn over a man’s white dress shirt.

Crisp and concise clothes for cultured and creative women. The cast marching by a series of flat screen panels showing images of iconic Italian buildings, decomposing electronically.

Jaunty little boy jackets; cleanly cut long culottes; chunky knits all made for a great wardrobe. Spiced up with some great leather looks, from the ergonomically cut beige calfskin blazers to a series of shearling bomber jackets, whose elbows were finished with studded gommino patches to some great ranchero pants laced up at the side.

“It’s my tribute to Robert Mapplethorpe,” smiled Chiapponi, who wore a similar pair of pants. Before, one often felt Chiapponi’s predecessors were ordered to do leather, since Tod’s is a shoe brand. But with Walter the leather looks come across more as a labor of love.

Not everything worked – the matelassé jackets looked too bulky as did the assemblage trapper coats. But overall this collection felt like a real winner.

At the finale, the screens suddenly turned into a reportage of fans of the brand cupping their hands into hearts: influencers, ‘it gals’, editors and even the ever-smiling Laura Brown, who lost her position as editor-in-chief of InStyle US last week.

“I was thinking of masculine tailoring from Naples and an intellectual woman. Comfortable with sensuality. I wanted strict, black and giving shape the priority. In this difficult moment, the idea was to be clean and strong,” explained the designer.

Etro: Hot hippie chic in the cloisters
Looks like entering the extended world of LVMH is lightening up the mood at Etro, as the house showed its raciest collection in many years, ironically inside the cloisters of a baroque church.

For the past two centuries, the space has been Italy's largest musical conservatory, where Veronica Etro was very much on sing with this collection.

The designer trying out all sorts of risqué ideas from revealing crocheted naughty squaw dresses to Ibiza hippie hipsters and bra tops. Flesh was exposed in almost half the looks… in a winter collection. Leotards paired with buccaneer boots captured the new liberated mood.

Plenty of Etro's signature fabric – colorful paisley, but worn as haute-bohemian chic, and not bourgeois weekend
wear. Paisley in tangerine matelassé trousers, flared wool pants and one-sleeve mini cocktails. Party gear par excellence including fringed boho bags with gunslinger shoulder straps; hoodies with Mexican drawstrings and lizard print boots with golden amulet ankle rings.

Luisa Beccaria: Fragile romanticism

Despite this dark moment in history, attending Luisa Beccaria's latest presentation and its painterly collection felt somehow right.

"Romantic, feminine and fragile. I believe we need these emotions, especially now," commented Beccaria, who showed her collections inside the glasshouse of LùBar, within the natural history museum of Milan.

A hyperchromatic series of clothes often playing with the same print in multiple forms.

"Sarah Jessica Parker wore this coat in 'Sex and The City', so we revived it from our archive," explained the designer, pointing to three new versions. A slimline velvet coat; a long chiffon evening dress and a cool evening cocktail.

Luisa and her daughter Lucilla also unveiled a charming video – shot by Amaranta Medri and entitled 'Ludic Mood'. Shot inside the atelier of artist Sofia Cacciapaglia, whose workspace is a series of soaring walls made of discarded cardboard boxes painted impressionistically. A perfect setting for the Sicilian designer's blend of lace, stretch satin, devoré velvet and trompe l'oeil prints.

In another link-up, Beccaria created some beautifully delicate evening coats, made of shearing by Clementine Tivoli of Turin, and trimmed with her embroidered florals. Like the collection, they had a great sense of luxurious optimism.

Durazzi: A magna cum laude debut

One new brand that made a brilliant first impression is Durazzi, a cool take on equestrian style by Ilenia Durazzi, a debut signature collection presented in a Brera apartment on Friday.

Though only 34, Ilenia is highly experienced – having spent the past 12 years designing the menswear collections of first Balenciaga for Nicolas Ghesquière and next Tod's.
Her multiple takes on urban horsey chic all had great wit and panache; a blend of fine tailoring and ironic detailing. From the precision cut matelassé riding vests made into smart jackets or beautiful fringed mini-skirts, to the exact riding boots that flared up at the knee.

Finishing skirts and even tights, with fringes made to look like mini-manes – and a reference to fetishism by artists like Louise Bourgeois and Méret Oppenheim.

While Durazzi’s preppy slimline cardigans and shearling bomber jackets had all the finish one expects from the two brands were Ilenia has worked.

A lookbook video included an Appalachian horse, whose silver dappled color was echoed in leather pants with multiple holes.

“I wanted equestrian codes but for modern and real women. Taking menswear ideas but to make a women’s wardrobe,” explained Durazzi, who rides regularly herself.

Born in Urbino, Durazzi graduated from Polimoda in Florence. At just 22, she enjoyed an internship at Balenciaga which within two months led to a job at the Paris house.
Now her slow boil of a career has accelerated two gears, with one of the most accomplished debuts we've seen in the past decade. Durazzi is that good.

By Godfrey Deeny.