

Refined Fendi

Continued from Page 9

fably chic in the shapely coat that opened the show. The models walked out on raw boards, with a wood and python clutch bag to match, emphasizing the essence of the show: the raw and the refined.

"A lot of workmanship and a lot of contrasts," said Venturini Fendi, to describe how a sweater as felted as a Tibetan yak would meet a long, skinny cape-backed coat. The furry knit might appear just on the arms — and occasionally those sleeves broke out in bright harlequin patterns, echoing a motif on the bags. It seemed as though the two designers really were working in rhythmic tandem.

The cape effect was a recurring theme, as a contrast to a slim, tightly belted dresses. Coats pierced with the oh-so-fashionable studs added a touch of the military but nothing seemed forced and Lagerfeld's expertise shone through in all the furs. The rapper Eve, sitting front row, looked like she wanted the lot — and Fendi has not stirred up that kind of enthusiasm in a while.

Revival is a perennial subject at fashion houses hoping to burnish their brands. And at **Pucci**, the British designer Matthew Williamson is now charged with taking the house of the prince of prints into the future.

Well! Have you ever looked at the burnt orange, mud brown and maroon 1970s hotel curtains and wondered how anyone could have invented such a combination? If you accept Williamson's take on Pucci, that look is again à la mode, as the designer turned the succulent shades and prints that Emilio Pucci drew under a Florentine sky into the murk of the decade that design forgot.

Of course, being Williamson, he made his bunch of leggy, dolly bird models, stomping out in colorful hose on platform-soled shoes, seem quite merry — in spite of being weighted down by plaques of metal and wood. They, and the matching bags, looked like they had been dismantled from modish 1970s furniture.

It was a look — a little bit Gucci in the Tom Ford days, when the flat-haired, doe-eyed models set out on a hedonist night out. And it was a teeny bit YSL, with chubby coats in vivid colors topping jersey dresses. But was it really Pucci?

The brand's revival came with fashion's new surge of print, and you might think that there was enough to work on in the archives without inventing what looked like an abstract take on Florence's Duomo. The heart of Pucci is Florentine. But it is also casual in that early jet set, international way.

Although the geometric, solid-colored coats that opened the show were well-cut, they were essentially urban. There was no genuine sportswear.



DAKS

And where other designers (with Prada and Marni leading the pack) are experimenting with techno fabric, Williamson is concentrating on embellishment, looking back to his favorite Bohemia for mirrored squares. Maybe, with astute buying and marketing, Pucci will thrive on this collection. But it did not seem to speak for the soul of the brand.

Daks is having a new injection of talent as Giles Deacon took over the Asian-owned British brand, whose name supposedly came as a play on "Dads with Slacks." Deacon might have had some fun with that, by sending out an update on once-revolutionary relaxed pants. Instead, he buried the one single symbol of the Daks check (most recently seen on a Japanese golf course) as a small tailored jacket with a large and concealing velvet wrap.

Deacon, who did his own fine collection in London last week, then did what he knows: bold use of volume, with skirts or jackets having slightly padded hips that created a strong silhouette. Yet the entire show, bare legs and buckled ankle boots, seemed messy.

"We looked at a lot of archive from the 1920s and played around with it," Deacon said. And one patchwork of green squares was put together with panache.

Suzy Menkes is the fashion editor at the International Herald Tribune.



TRUSSARDI

Photographs by Christopher Moore/Karl Prouse

Off-piste

MILAN
Yes! It's snow time! Not, of course, around this city, where the precocious spring weather has ruined the favorite weekend sport of the Milanese. But if you can't get it in the mountains, what about off-piste on the fashion runway?

By the time the last salopette in bright blue nylon had marched down the catwalk, no one could doubt **MaxMara's** desire to compete in the next Winter Olympics. Or, judging by the stirrup, old-style ski pants, this was a vision of mountain wardrobes past.

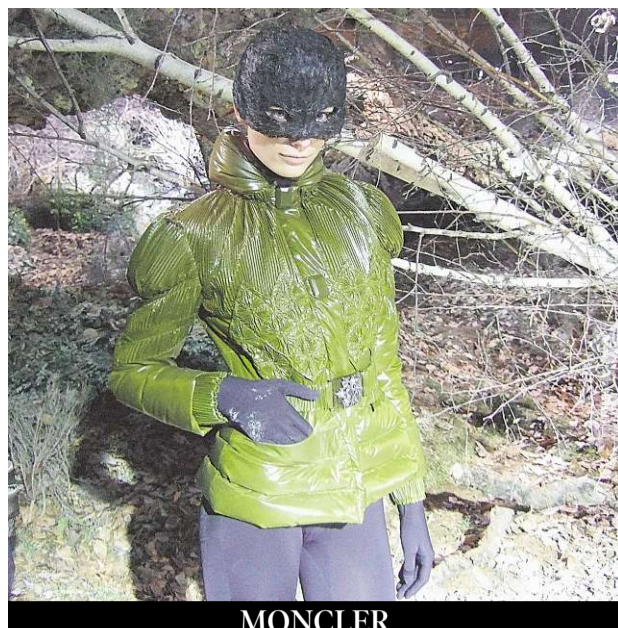
No snowball was unturned in this cold weather gear: long military and shearing coats for onlookers facing frigid temperatures. Fluffy knits for those who want to support the MaxMara team with a logo on their chest. Or hefty wool with epaulette fringe running like a shaggy yeti's fur right down to the wrists and in colors that would never be missed in an avalanche search: Yellow! Orange! Blue!

Much of this skiwear was really about layering, with the snug blouson over a longer tunic and pants as the lead look. Or another polar trend of the puffa jacket worn inside tailoring. The result was often more military than mountain style, but the individual pieces made up a straightforward sportswear collection.

Gaia Trussardi, now creative director of the company, also was on the snow track, with a runway that was crystalline like a sunlit glacier and anything from a pony skin coat to a satin dress in snow white. **Trussardi** may even have invented a fun new accessory in the furry ankle bands that slipped over sexy shoes. The show could have done with more outerwear, like the ankle-length drawstring parka. For all its young, fresh look, the bags that were held flat under the arm, which is the current trend, seemed to be the focus of the show.

Skiwear at its most haute (and we are not talking mountain peaks) is the project of **Moncler**, where Alessandra Facchinetti takes the company's all-weather jackets and makes them dramatically different. In a winter wonderland of bare branches or with models caged behind windows, these Moncler pieces were rich in embellishment and showed the finesse that can be brought to the summit of sportswear.

— Suzy Menkes



MONCLER

Maisie Wilhelm for the IHT



MAXMARA

Spot Light



Maisie Wilhelm for the IHT

Bally hoo

MILAN

"Look at that — it looks so modern!" said Brian Atwood, the new creative director of Bally, which is celebrating 155 years since Carl Franz Bally founded the Swiss company.

Atwood, who graduated from working a decade with Versace to found his own eponymous line in 2001, was referring to the limited edition shoes from Bally's history that have been updated, with minimal changes, and put on sale at the re-opened store on Via Montenapoleone.

Shoes with woven straps from 1939, could — and will — walk right out on streets of today. They are one of three from the archives given the makeover treatment. But Atwood has another source of inspiration: the book that the company has brought out that traces, along with the history of Bally itself, the development of one and a half centuries in footwear.

"Bally Since 1851," published by Skira in 2006, has color plates and charming images of illustrations that have captured the decades, from a drawing of a 1920s flapper sitting admiring her shoes to men's brogues appearing elegantly at the end of silken socks.

Atwood won an award from 2003 from the Council of Fashion Designers of America, and he is famous in the fashion world for once showing a presentation by contortionists, who corkscrewed their bodies and legs, the better to show off the shoes.

So what is Atwood creating for Bally? He's still working on it with his designs hitting the stores only in 2008.

— Suzy Menkes

For dreary days of winter, lively leggings



Photographs by Dino Fracchia for the International Herald Tribune

Many women patronize the Calzedonia stores for the styles, right, now popular in Milan.

By Maisie Wilhelm

MILAN
Although it may be the warmest February that Milan has seen in a while, on Italian women everywhere — from the bohemian district of Porta Ticinese to the swank via Montenapoleone — there is not a bare leg in sight.

Hosiery is back, and the legs are the new blank canvas for a decorative, individualist statement. One woman passes by with a spidery web of lace creeping up from her boots; another's Coke-bottle green pantyhose enliven her black ensemble.

This whimsical approach to hosiery, as seen in kaleidoscopic stripes, garden-party floral prints or retro geometric patterns, is creating a delightfully bright mark during the dreary days of late winter.

"For a while going without stockings was in style," says Alessia Margiotta Brogna, a communications manager who has worked in fashion for eight

years. "Now, even though we are experiencing one of the mildest winters and there is no need to, women are wearing stockings again."

This is good news for businessmen like Sandro Veronesi, president of Gruppo Calzedonia, which owns the giant Calzedonia hosiery store chain.

"After years of decline, we can define the market as stable," he said, referring to stagnant sales that picked up last autumn, just as the leggings craze took hold again.

Last year, the group's Calzedonia stores (whose name is a play on the Italian word for "socks") sold about 50 million pairs of tights and socks from its 677 stores in Italy alone. And its revenue totaled €210 million, or about \$276 million.

In Italy, which has a rich history of stocking manufacturing dating to World War I, the popularity of hosiery is notable.

"Italian women are among the largest group of European consumers of hosiery," Veronesi said. Milan alone

has 15 Calzedonia stores, which sell just hosiery and swimsuits. And, as in many Italian cities, the city is peppered with specialty, shoebox-size shops that sell only socks and stockings.

For all the hosiery they buy, women are slowly starting to take more risks with flashy tights.

Franca Sozzani, editor-in-chief of Vogue Italia, says she has only recently noticed more and more women on the street wearing vibrant hosiery. Why walk on the wild side? "They must think it's sexy," she mused. "It comes from the idea of being more glamorous, more in fashion. They want to do something different, more colorful."

If color and uniqueness are the aims, the designer Miuccia Prada will be driving women to Italian hosiery stores in droves. At her fashion show Tuesday, Prada, whose edgy trends are often gobbled up by the masses, showed two-tone knee-high knit stirrup socks in incongruous color mixes that will, no doubt, whet the appetite for a fashion statement on the brink of modernity.



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