

MySpace.frock: Designers in their own worlds



HAIDER ACKERMANN



SONIA RYKIEL



CHER MICHEL KLEIN



LEONARD

Insouciant chic

Photographs by Christopher Moore/Karl Prouse



GIAMBATTISTA VALLI

By Suzy Menkes

Party dresses and shoes," chorused the Delal sisters, Alice and Charlotte, two of the sweet young things who had come with their yummy mummies to Giambattista Valli's show. The front row included the Hollywood hottie Jessica Biel; that stylish socialite Tatiana Santo Domingo; Mary Charteris, an art student, who was chaperoned by her glamorous aunt, Daphne Niarchos; and Coco Brandolini, daughter of the gorgeous Georgina.

And there was, indeed, something for everyone — including the talent spotters who might (or might not) be looking for a designer to pick up the Valentino flame.

For a relatively young designer, Valli's proposed wardrobe was both exceptionally polished and a little lacking in risk. He seemed to have channeled Yves Saint Laurent in the deep-crown felt hats with the early tailored outfits. (They also had YSL signature heart necklaces, but with added skulls).

The young crowd looked doubtful about the full coats that they will love, love, love when they are starting a family. The shoes — on a high platform with a sexy curved heel — were an instant hit. Their gym-honed mothers sighed over perfectly cut black pants suit and a sexily severe black coat (but hold the monkey fur decoration.)

In tune with current fashion, everything was loosened up from the time when Valli's collections looked like he was dressing the 1960s stars of the Cinecittà from his native Rome.

And by the time those party frocks came out, with their whipped-up ruffles and neck yokes with jeweled embroidery (after all, most of these rich kids haven't had their 18th birthday jewel gifts yet), there was a feeding frenzy in the front row.

If there was not much for a simple working gal to wear — well, dressing the luxe crowd may be a

tough job but someone has to do it. While Milan is often accused of working the trends, the Paris shows are so diverse that it looks like each fashion designer is in MySpace.frock — each with a mini universe.

Haider Ackermann was chalk and cheese to Valli in his mix of monkish austerity and street energy. The designer said his inspiration was a dream of visiting Tibet on a motorcycle.

But there was nothing of the down and dirty or of the ethnic trail in this strong collection.

It was both ascetic and aesthetic in its play on drapes: a wrap collar, a vest twisted and tied across the torso, the folds of a stretched neckline on an ankle-length dress in deepest purple or the loops of liquid folds in a shining short dress.

Ackermann's mix included knits wrapped across the body like Tibetan shawls, worn with leather pants or shiny vinyl leggings. The biker jackets may have had the usual heavy metal. But as trousers soft at the thighs narrowing to a wrinkled ankle are having a fashion moment, the translation from the heights of Tibet to the height of fashion was seamless.

When your invitation is a Gallic beret, it is a given that the collection will be about French chic. But Michel Klein had a different riff on fashion for uptown girls. He looked back with wit, rather than nostalgia, to the start of the 20th century, when an artist's studio was the fashionable place to be.

With a set consisting of classical nude statues and a dishy artist at his easel, it was not surprising that a model in a scarlet mohair coat laid down seductively on a couch, while others in silken and sparkling 1920s chemises looked like they were hoping to join the life class.

But this **Cher Michel Klein** show never went too far into theatrics, mixing short sharp black coats, studded leggings, fur-trimmed boots and crinkled artsy dresses as skillfully as those artists chose their palettes.

The return of Martine Sitbon,

after a four year hiatus, under the label **Rue de Mail**, was greeted with warmth from her fashion supporters. The show opened with a black satin coat, its belt threaded through the cloth. Further shiny tailoring with a satin finish suggested that the designer was looking at a newer tough woman than her former artsy creation.

When a bow was worked with tucks into a skirt, it made a statement for in-built embellishment that was created as tiny ribbed tucks and folds. Then the artisty started, first with abstract patterns in black sequins, then drawn in black on a white dresses. Black and white was a theme as a white shirt, again with those tiny corrugated tucks, paired a black skirt.

Otherwise Rue de Mail, the address of Sitbon's studio, featured sophisticated knitted dresses, fabrics that she could play with black on black and skirts that rolled up at the hem to show ruffles and roses.

Thickened up — and sharpened up — was the message at **Sonia Rykiel**. Although there were still bows and whorls of roses as feminine decoration, the collection moved towards a more covered up and tailored silhouette.

The show opened with Rykiel's signature knits as layers and skeins of soft woolly comforters. It ended with Mongolian lamb coats, brightly colored and with even stronger hues for the belts. Between that stretched the smiles of the models, who may just have been following instructions to look less miserable, but might actually have enjoyed wearing such comfort clothes.

With the rose as an emblem, not least on the softly romantic hats, Rykiel steered a course between hard and soft. A group of shiny party dresses looked like trying too hard, but there were many lively touches, like a big bag with the same bold scribble as on a dress.

When Natalie Rykiel walked out with her mother, she seemed, like the rest of the crowd on the runway, to be having fun.



RUE DE MAIL

By Maisie Wilhelm

At Léonard, Véronique Leroy put a spotlight on short easy shifts that could fill the wardrobe of any female who likes color and comfort in a feminine dress.

Quilted coats, long evening dresses and some knee-length cashmere trousers rounded out the collection.

There were floral prints, of course — brown with cream and ochre accents, navy with jade and fuchsia, and black with white and hot pink.

Leroy varied her theme on short dresses with draped swaths of silk jersey, relaxed cowl necks, clever leather belted segments that jauntily hugged one hip, and three-quarter sleeves either roomy or narrow. Prints appeared on leggings for the first time; otherwise, tights were brown or black, and suede ankle boots had an elasticized cuff with patent leather heels for extra sass.

Standout flowing floor-length gowns offered a pop of shocking pink on black, embellished with black shiny studs at the high waist. Cap sleeves on the gowns were made of gilt leather, a detail seen throughout the rest of the romantic, wispy collection as the piping on a coat's buckles or on a wide, printed belt.

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A slide show of Paris Fashion Week

GUCCI

