

Sneak Peek at Fall/Winter 2007 Fashion



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LOOKING AHEAD AT NEXT FALL: Winter may not have left yet, but the fashion world is already preparing for the next fall and winter seasons. At the New York and London Fashion Week, we've been seeing an abundance of black and lots of dark or muted colors for fall—no surprise there—that were shot through with metallics or with bright and spare accents here and there. Marc Jacobs was a universal favorite, with sleek tailored silhouettes and great accessories (L). Relative newcomer Asprey (relative at that ... it has been making luxury jewelry for about 225 years now) got designer Hakan Rosenius to launch its first clothing line with a classically feminine, retro look, here with a lovely pink dress and brown jacket combination. Two designs, by Carmen Marc Valvo, reflect a clean, classic silhouette with some play with the fabric's texture and color (R). We've noticed the use of belts as a central accessory for many designers. Intentional or not, this amounts to a literal focus on the waistline, which is all too appropriate given the ongoing debate about thin models!

Health and Fashion Collide on Catwalks

Spotlight on Models' Health in New York

NEW YORK (Reuters)—The global fashion industry is under siege from critics who want skinny models off catwalks, and during New York's fashion week the focus on models' health shifted to the American capital of fashion.

The issue has been hot since the death in 2006 of two anorexic Latin American models and concern that impressionable girls will see ultra-thin bodies as the ideal.

The Council of Fashion Designers of America, the U.S. industry's trade group, in January issued guidelines for a healthier industry, but stopped short of enacting regulations on models' weight.

The council's guidelines recommend teaching models about nutrition and eating disorders, banning models under 16 from runways and offering healthy food backstage, with no smoking and no alcohol.

But at fashion shows in New York, there was a steady supply of free alcohol and cigarette smoke was in the air.

"I can be naturally thin," said Russian beauty Sasha Pivovarova, 22, lighting a cigarette as she prepared for a show. Her advice for young girls is simple: "Don't try to look like me."

Backstage at 9 a.m. one day, the breakfast buffet included champagne, miniature pastries, coffee, and caffeinated energy drinks.

"Champagne has always been served. We take one sip. None of the girls get drunk," said Polish model Magdalena Frackowiak, who at 19 is below New York's 21-year-old legal drinking age.

The designer's council did not return calls seeking comment.

Model after model says she has a high metabolism and no time for proper meals between shows.

One cleaner backstage said he could smell the problem.

"We can smell it. They're doing a lot of vomiting," said a janitor who identified himself as Dennis White, by the toilets backstage where models prepared for one early morning show. "They look too skinny, like they've got to eat."

A Fashion Week spokesman said no one by that name was listed as a credentialed worker and denied models were making themselves vomit backstage.

The janitor, who said he was a 28-year-old Brooklyn resident, was one of two uniformed cleaners interviewed by Reuters while they took out trash. The second man echoed the sentiments of the first, but asked not to be named.

Skinny models dated back to Twiggy in the 1960s, said Nian Fish of the designer council's health initiative. She said the group could not demand heavier models. "It would be like asking Rubens to paint skinny women and the New York City Ballet to use bigger size ballerinas."

Council President Diane von Furstenberg insisted the group was right not to enforce weight guidelines by demanding that models have a minimum body-mass index—expressed as a ratio of weight to height—or demanding they pass a medical exam.

"There should be guidelines and no enforcement," she said.



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NOT SO THIN, PLEASE: Sixties fashion icon Twiggy set the stage for rail-thin models. Shown above, in late 2002, Twiggy wears a dress presented from Italian stylist Gattinoni for Spring-Summer 2003 in Milan, Italy. The icon looks fuller and balanced, having gained more weight over the decades, though looking at her fashion spreads from the '60s she may still appear slightly chubby after gazing at today's models.

Weight Debate Overshadows London's Fashion Stars

LONDON (Reuters)—As fashionistas and celebrities poured into the city for one of the most hyped London fashion weeks in years, organizers found themselves defending their decision not to ban super skinny women from the catwalks.

"We feel strongly that banning is not the right course to take. It's very discriminatory. You can't tell by looking at a model and you can't tell by weighing a model whether she is suffering from an eating disorder," Hilary Riva, chief executive of the British Fashion Council, told Reuters Television.

Responding to calls for regulation, the council, which organizes London Fashion Week, has issued guidelines to designers for the autumn/winter shows urging them to use only healthy models to show their collections.

Eating disorder campaigners for the first time were also patrolling backstage at some shows, distributing leaflets and a helpline number to models. One restaurant popular with the fashion crowd said it was offering free food to models to encourage them to eat more.

But unlike their counterparts in Milan and Madrid, the London organizers stopped short of an outright ban on skinny models, who critics say encourage eating disorders.

Peter Ingwersen, the Danish founder of fashion label Noir who showed a masculine collection last week, full of neat, tailored pieces, said a ban was not the way forward. "It's not enough just to say ban,

ban, because any law will never change that. It's always been there and it'll always be there. The only way forward is education," he said.

Noir's fitted shirts, belted trench coats, and flowing evening gowns went down the catwalk on the backs of two of Britain's best known models, Lily Cole, and Erin O'Connor—both the subject of British media speculation about their body size.

Voluminous gowns were also the theme at last Monday's show by Dane Peter Jensen and Duro Olowu, a Nigerian-born former lawyer who agreed with the decision not to ban skinny girls.

"I think it's a bit hypocritical considering in Hollywood you have all these actresses who are obviously anorexic and they still put them on covers," he said.

It is upstart stars such as Olowu and designers Christopher Kane and Todd Lynn who are credited with putting the buzz back into this London fashion week after years of playing poor cousin to glamorous fashion capitals Paris, Milan, and New York.

Fashion bible U.S. Vogue last month enthusiastically showcased some of London's rising fashion stars and its online site Style.com reported that London was "back on a fashion high it hasn't seen for a decade."

Last week's hottest ticket though was not for a home-grown product, but for U.S. designer Marc Jacobs's one-off show last Friday to coincide with the opening of his London store.

Farhi, Jackson Play It Safe With Classics in Black

LONDON (Reuters)—British fashion designers Nicole Farhi and Betty Jackson both opted for sleek cuts and tight belts in their new collections on the catwalks at London Fashion Week last Thursday.

Farhi took a safe road through the graceful territory that has been her trademark, sending models down a slate grey catwalk in muted shades of black, deep navy, and subtle grey check.

Thin leather belts nipped in the layers of knee-length coats, loose cardigans, and silky tops. Felt hats with wide brims and long leather gloves added definition to simple outlines.

Jackson chose thick, stiff belts with bow clasps, quirky round hats with neck ties and fluffy yellow fabric for her final pieces in a more daring, yet essentially classic collection.

Models strutted to guitar music and thumping beats, showing off black gauze dresses, red and white spot prints, and gold dresses littered with small bows. Guests packed in for the show craned their necks from the back of crammed stands.

Both collections made use of tailored coats, jackets and were shot through with black—a color that has dominated the London shows this year.

London Jeweler's Catwalk Show 225 Years in Making

LONDON (Reuters)—British jeweler Asprey finally made it down the catwalk last Friday with its first show in the 225 years since its 18th century creation.

Models at London Fashion Week strutted through Asprey's renovated flagship store (which contains a mock 4-storey brick house and courtyard inside)—near London's exclusive Bond Street wearing airy coats and puffball dresses.

"Asprey is the oldest luxury lifestyle house in the world so why not have ready-to-wear as well as the china and

jewelry?" clotheswear designer Hakan Rosenius, who was brought to Asprey six months ago to launch its own clothes, told Reuters.

Trenchcoats featured heavily for boys and girls in the show, appearing in sparkling silver, soft brown leather, and with Russian government-style eagles below the collar.

Snakeskin skirts, full-length gowns, grey tartan, and rich velvet red suits with green ties presented a sleek British look. "Just to see luxury like that is such a joy.

He's [Rosenius] got the best eye for color and that really came out in the menswear, it was really bold," Susannah Constantine of British television's fashion double act Trinny and Susannah said.

"They [Asprey] have found the right person. It's taken them 225 years to do it but they got him," she told Reuters.

Long-established brands were not alone at London Fashion Week's final day. Asprey's updated British look was not dissimilar to students' work from prestigious London art college Central St. Martin's.

The college, which has a history of big fashion label graduates such as John Galiano and Stella McCartney, showcased an explosion of funky men's suits, wearable Victorian dresses and corduroy hunting trousers.