

2010 February 14

Runway Reviews: Alexander Wang



Alexander Wang
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(NEW YORK) Alexander Wang

How do you know if you matter in the fashion world? By whether you were at Alexander Wang's runway show obviously. Opting for a celebrity-free front row, Wang packed the house with It-girls and every high-profile editor and buyer a young designer could dream of. Everyone else was forced to watch the show live-streamed on SHOWstudio or broadcast in Times Square.

Wang delivered to his powerhouse audience a reinterpretation of the suit he refers to as "Berlin schoolboy meets velvet *du jour*." And by reinterpretation we mean completely ripping a suit to shreds and putting it back together in the subversively hip way only Alexander Wang could. Many of the suits, if you could call them that after they were given the Wang treatment, were cut to reveal stomachs and backs and short enough to show skin above thigh-high legwarmers.

Beyond the suiting, there hasn't been this much velvet and chenille in a collection since the 90s—crop tops, skirts, jackets, wraps, leggings—but if anyone could bring it back it would be Alexander Wang and his horde of loyal followers.

And no Wang collection is complete without a few perfect party dresses, which closed the show. A few girls looked ready to snatch a Grecian-inspired, asymmetrical gold jersey mini straight off the runway.

Runway Reviews: Elie Tahari, Badgley Mischka



Elie Tahari, Fall 2010
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of glamour. Fur, metallic fabrics, beading and glittery trim made it clear this was not intended to be your average grocery-shopping attire. But for designers all about outrageously over-the-top glamour, they exercised ample restraint to make the contemporary line wearable yet special enough to treasure.

(NEW YORK) Elie Tahari

Elie Tahari's Fall 2010 collection showed a touch of evolution from previous seasons but largely stayed within the brand's sweet spot of trendy, yet easy to wear. "It's just evolving and growing," Tahari said. Life is getting better every day. Women's wear broke down into either black or bohemian. A series of more attitude-filled black pieces included plenty of leather and fur. The bohemian group of looks also included fur, but was more focused on gold, grey and orange silks and knits. Menswear was simple and wearable, focusing on monochromatic looks in dark colors. Altogether, a strong showing for Elie Tahari that is sure to keep retailers pleased

Badgley Mischka

Mark Badgley and James Mischka truly outdid themselves this year by putting on two runway shows in one. First, 15 Badgley Mischka looks culminating in the traditional wedding gown followed by twice that number of looks from contemporary line Mark & James. The gown line delivered exactly what Badgley Mischka is known for—high wattage eveningwear. Several show-stopping pieces were covered top-to-bottom in sparkle with a subtle ombre effect. The contemporary line was not without its own brand

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BCBG Max Azria



BCBG Max Azria
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(NEW YORK) It was all about color-blocking and layering at BCBG Max Azria. The show was nothing if not consistent. Its singular focus was easy urban daywear that, with a bit of restyling, could seamlessly take you into cocktail hour. Semi-sheer black long sleeve shirts and cream tights were the base for fluid frocks printed in sharp geometric patterns and neutral tones. Asymmetrical draping and belts gave the pieces an artful nonchalance and a few of the pieces included transparent pleating to give a bit of unexpected drama. Customers for last season's body-conscious mini-dresses with sheer paneling were limited to those with bodies to die for but the Fall 2010 collection has mass appeal. The wearable and chic pieces are nearly certain to be a hit at retail.

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Runway Reviews: Victoria Beckham, Behnaz Sarafpour



NewsLetter_Victoria_Beckham

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(NEW YORK) Victoria Beckham

Victoria Beckham greeted each guest attending the intimate showings of her new collection personally, discussing the fabric, concept, color, fit and construction of each piece. Inspired by Dick Tracy and the film noir femme fatale, Beckham's pieces mixed structure with draping, achieving a series of elegant silhouettes for both day and evening. The models sported round sunglasses from the recently-relaunched Victoria Beckham eyewear collection. Red, black, and white platforms produced in collaboration with Brian Atwood were striking as well, mostly for their skyscraper height.

Runway Reviews: Gary Graham, Bensoni



Gary Graham

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(NEW YORK) Gary Graham

Whether it was a graffiti'ed painting of Peter Stuyvesant or a mugshot of David Bowie from 1974 (looking impossibly glam, we might add), Gary Graham's inspirations were not typical—and neither was the outcome. Grunge-y layers, asymmetrical cuts and drapes, and several off-kilter prints (occasionally bedazzled with sequins) made for a messy—but intentionally so—collection. Abstract print leggings topped with layers of knits may be tough for the average girl to pull off, but that doesn't mean there weren't plenty of wearable elements to Graham's presentation: a cropped leather jacket with thick furry sleeves will be covetable for chicsters of all fashion stripes, and a gauzy black sequined dress may have been hidden under layers, but just a peek added a touch of pretty. Graham didn't forget his boys, either; a last minute addition to the presentation was a handful of menswear looks. "We've been kind of building up to it," the designer explained, "because all the guys I work with have nothing to wear! A lot of our fabrics just lend themselves to menswear. We're taking it one step at a time. It's a whole kind of different thing."

Bensoni

The backstory for Bensoni's Fall 2010 collection took Benjamin Channing Clyburn and Sonia Yoon on a journey through the decades to bring grandma's wardrobe up to date. "Our inspiration was about this girl who is rummaging through her grandmother's closet who is this very glamorous and opulent lady with lots of fur and dresses and jewels, and the girl tailors it to be young and modern," Yoon explained.

Using the concept's broad theme to full effect, the line played with a wide variety of materials including wool, brocade, silk and fur. The fabrics were adorned with plaids, checks, florals and paisleys, not to mention plenty of the Bensoni's signature ruffles. Amid the hodgepodge, one element clearly stood out. The designers' demonstrated a facility for working with fur that will hopefully be a permanent addition to the line. A look in which the designers topped fluid high-waisted black pants and a draped sequin top with fox-fur vest was particularly exceptional.

Runway Reviews: Jeremy Scott, Michael Kors



Jeremy Scott
Getty Images

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(NEW YORK) Jeremy Scott

"I'm a designer with humor," says Jeremy Scott. Although the theme wasn't as uniform as last year's Flinstone's collection it was equally tongue-in-cheek. Mini-dresses, catsuits and leather jackets were covered in walnut-sized jewels, dangling crosses and prints of Jeremy Scott labels. A little black sweater dress with "little black dress" written across the back drew plenty of chuckles. On the more outrageous end of the spectrum, models wore belts with five-foot leather cutouts of female silhouettes attached to the front. Another model went down the runway in bikeshorts and suspenders with attached cones covering her breasts and yet another wore a double-ended dress, wearing one end and carrying the other on a hanger. The designs are not for the faint of heart but for anyone who wants to make a statement that they don't take themselves too seriously, it doesn't get any better.

Michael Kors

The ultimate champion of ease and comfort, Michael Kors delivered his signature relaxed glamour Wednesday morning, and there was no doubt why the world equates American sportswear with Kors. Camel and charcoal hues

were sleek, simple and wholly sophisticated while gilded knitwear lit up the runway. Anorak coats with fox fur detailing were luxe and opulent while never overcomplicated. A bronze paillette jersey gown felt both playful and relaxed. The staggering 64 looks underscored Kors' timeless ability to inject effortless beauty into each one of his creations.

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Runway Reviews: DKNY, Hervé Léger by Max Azria



DKNY

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(NEW YORK) DKNY

The signature cityscape touches highlighted Donna Karan's latest line named 'New York Art and Soul.' Sequined skyscraper blocks found their way into a line heavy with boyfriend vests and coats, super short dresses and skirts, trenches and collage dresses. Heavy leather and wool were lightened with bluebirds blues, sapphires and peach tones. Numerous schoolgirl looks came in the form of equestrian plaids, and pleated and plaid minis. (I have linesheets for you guys to do your magic!)

HERVE LEGER BY MAX AZRIA

"Lingerie," was all Max Azria had to say about his starting point for Fall. How appropriate for a Valentine's Day show where front row guests (Carine compris) were spoiled with Godiva chocolates! Season after season, Azria tweaks the bandage dress enough send shoppers clamoring for the latest styles, and Fall was no exception. Corset-style lacing tied the collection together, and ruffles layered onto hips added a touch of directional volume. A fresh addition to the line? Three pair of laced-up bandage pants.

Runway Reviews: Calvin Klein Collection, Isaac Mizrahi



Calvin Klein
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(NEW YORK) Calvin Klein

After years of staying on course with futuristic and purist exploits that no one in fashion had even dreamed of, much less put on the runway, Francisco Costa has gained a huge advantage over the rest of the pack. His new collection for Calvin Klein is polished to perfection, an exquisite fine-tuned ode to what this true original has always stood for. That the world is now trailing him comes at no surprise. In a palette of mostly bone, black, Klein blue and matte silver, he gave both loyal clients and Calvin neophytes a reason to worship. From a flawless black sheath made of bonded viscose and hammered cashmere to a wool and silk draped coat with a roomy, sculptural sleeves, this flattering and imminently wearable collection caters to the Calvin Klein Collection woman at her best. She even has a few splendid options for evening, courtesy of silk lurex column dresses that will appeal to those heroic, happy few gala-goers who remain loyal to understatement. Bravo.

Isaac Mizrahi

Isaac Mizrahi described his show as an "Upper East Side camping trip" referencing bag ladies, Irving Penn, the Met Museum's Japanese Armor show, Avedon and even *Avatar* as influences. On

that note, his set became a cityscape with trees looming overhead and a live band drumming away in the corner. But despite all the references, the clothes were mostly understated, cool, and wearable, such as a cashmere polar fleece shift and a quilted olive jacket. A camo vest with a sparkly green, fur-trimmed hood and a dress with a print of the skyline were more obvious. A series of sequin dresses conjured up Mizrahi's supermodels of yesteryear. The series of seven "winter fairy" looks that closed out the show under falling snow made for a breathtaking finale. Overall, there is plenty to fill his new store just off Madison Avenue.

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Chado Ralph Rucci



Chado Ralph Rucci

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(NEW YORK) "Subtlety of detail is more easily appreciated at close range," said the Chado Ralph Rucci. The intimate runway show took place inside the designer's showroom where no one was more than 10 feet from the dresses and it was apparent to all why Rucci is haute couture.

Fur is luxurious no matter what but Ralph Rucci makes it art. He dyed Russian sable black and combined it with horsehair. Minks were bleached or knitted together with fox. The same can be said of feathers, which were used to diverse and dramatic effect on cocktail dresses and gowns. Sheer tulle paneling tied the collection together adding interest and lightness to otherwise simple silhouettes.

The refined and regal quality of the pieces are bound to end up on women like Hilary Clinton—there were pants suits with her name on them—and Michelle Obama, not to mention the New York upper crust who turned out in full force to support Rucci at the show.

Runway Reviews: Yigal Azrouël, Cynthia Rowley



Yigal Azrouel

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Rowley has nicknamed her "chic monster-girl collection." A number of pieces that looked like they were covered in fur or feathers turned out to be thin strands of hand-cut lace on organza. Silk tassels in every color of the rainbow covered some pieces and accented others. Technicolor prints added a wow-factor to more simple silhouettes. She also kept in mind how the dresses would photograph while designing due to a collaboration with Gagosian. Photographs of roughly 15 dresses, front and back, were appropriated and printed onto dresses. "I feel like there is a little wildness floating around out there, and I wanted to do things that are luxurious but have texture and movement," Rowley revealed.

(NEW YORK) Yigal Azrouël

The downtown, Yigal Azrouël girl has grown up a bit in Fall 2010, with day pieces and tailoring featuring prominently in the collection. "I definitely see suits playing in my collection more and structured pieces," explained the designer. "I think the woman that wears the suit is very confident. She's taking a little bit more risk. She's powerful and strong and has much more to say." Of course, in Azrouël's hands, these are not suits you'll see on Wall Street. Fur and leather detailing make it clear he hasn't forgotten the cool-factor he's loved for. Also evolving? Accessories. About 10 bags were produced, but they did not appear on the runway. There was plenty of leather—Yigal promised even more leather pieces at retail that did not make it to the runway—and sexy minidresses. As usual, we saw a couple floor-length but relaxed dresses that became insta-hits. Actress Malin Akerman said that she's already eyeing a bright red, long-sleeved crepe gown for the red carpet.

Cynthia Rowley

In seasons past, Cynthia Rowley has dipped her toe into edgier and more experimental design. She has sometimes even waded. But for Fall 2010, she delved into the deep end for what

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Runway Reviews: Zero + Maria Cornejo, Rad Hourani



Zero + Maria Cornejo

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(NEW YORK) Zero + Maria Cornejo

Maria Cornejo explored the same themes for both men and women this season: tailoring, menswear details, strong shoulders and cocoon shapes. Her menswear, now in its second season, pushed her into slightly more androgynous territory than in seasons past. Tapered pants, loosely draped around the hips made appearances on both men and women, as did slouchy knits and skinny leather pants. Still feminine were Cornejo's softly structured dresses where color and pattern came into play.

Digital prints included one inspired by Cornejo's own shadow and another by yellow autumn leaves. The

pieces employ the "riotous joy of explosive color" to evoke a vaguely African feel, according to Cornejo. Also unique to women were two black, shearling jackets, one of which Cornejo wore to take a bow.

Rad Hourani

"It's all about transformation, layering and unisex," Rad Hourani explained of his fall collection. The jackets were twisted about until they may have been upside down or backwards as far as the audience could tell, but the ambiguity was intentional—there's no proper way to wear the pieces. A coat can be worn as a cape, backpack, skirt or just about anything else you can imagine, Hourani revealed. Sleeves and fingerless gloves were both detachable. In theory, it sounds gimmicky—but the result was thought-provoking clothes that could have come straight out of a Tim Burton film. The rest of the collection was par for the course for Hourani: an all black, androgynous collection full of leather, neoprene, chunky knits, sequins, and zippers. And, of course, the bandage leather pants he's best known made appearances in several styles, so there's still something for the customer who prefers their clothes not have transformative qualities.

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Mackage



Mackage
© Getty Images

(NEW YORK) "We thought that it was the time to evolve into the ready-to-wear," said Eran Elfassy and Elisa Dahan, the duo behind outerwear line Mackage. "We took a lot of ideas from the coats and what we always had wanted to pair with the coats and developed them."

Mackage's first ready-to-wear line made ample use of the design team's outerwear expertise. Their facility for working with leather was evident from the wealth of leather pieces and trims including a standout black leather mini dress with cutout back, contoured seaming, and structured cap sleeves. Of course the striking outerwear, flush with knit detailing, fur-lined hoods and yet more leather trim, was simply a given. A handful of the coats were difficult to distinguish from dresses showing why the move into a full line was so natural.