

RTW COLLECTIONS FALL / WINTER 2011/2012

TREND OVERVIEW BY MARYLOU LUTHER

NEW YORK • LONDON • MILAN • PARIS

Revolutions. Tsunamis. Earthquakes. Designers leaving the runways for rehab. Rehabbed models returning to the runway.

Is it Apocalypse now? Are we arming for Armageddon? Is this the prequel to the end of the world?

The smoke-and-ashes runway and the eerie, tree-shadowed walls Karl Lagerfeld masterminded as the backdrop for the Chanel show had a definite doomsday aura, and his mostly gray collection of roomy, tweedy coveralls, no-nonsense sportswear and ankle-length cuffed trousers seemed to reiterate the somber sensibility of the smouldering runway. If fashion really is a barometer of the times, is chaos the message for fall/winter 2011/2012? Or is the theme denial?

Answer: A little of both.

For those who would like to hide out, protectionism is at hand via sweeping, oversized capes, voluminous coats, over-stuffed puffers and commodious dresses. Biggies in this expansionist movement: Rick Owens, Raf Simons of Jil Sander, Stella McCartney, Issey Miyake, Viktor & Rolf, Jean Paul Gaultier and Thakoon.

Hiding out also registers as seeking seclusion in a cloister. Monastic symbolism was at its get-thee-to-a-nunnery best at Thom Browne in New York, where the wimple-wearing models handed their habits to "altar boys" to show a panoply of checks, plaids, extreme proportions and layers over layers of baseball jackets, capes and mannish sportswear.

Ecclesiastica, an integral part of the Goth look, also registered strongly at Goth-father Owens, where the wimples, the Inquisition-worthy capes, soft armor jackets, gauntlet gloves and angelic, wing-like sleeves evoked a medieval sensibility which was also seen in the chasuble-like sleeveless coats on many runways.

Fashion's denial role begins with the idea of ignoring the turmoil of today by adopting the polite dressing of yesterday. You can take refuge in The '20s, '30s, '40s, '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s, even the minimalistic '90s—all with fashion's blessings.



STELLA MCCARTNEY



MICHAEL KORS



LYN DEVON



JASON WU



RALPH LAUREN



YEOHLEE

The return of the lady in Milan and the return of the bourgeoisie in Paris both celebrate a good-tasteful brand of fall fashion. Hats and gloves. Ladies and gents. Pleats. The updated classicism of Britain's princess-to-be Kate Middleton.

At Salvatore Ferragamo, the lady-fied and gentrified pinstriped suits by Massimiliano Giornetti gave a new impression of discretion, and houndstooth checks, herringbones and plaids mashed-up in a perfection of restraint and taste with an edge. And for updated elegance, Ralph Lauren scored with his polished leather halter dress, his tux redux and his chic chinoiserie.

The new appeal of genteel was portrayed with wit and charm at Gaultier, where his send-ups of the bourgeois woman—a woman taken so seriously in other quarters—provided a sense of humor sadly lacking in most collections. He even gave her the beehive/bouffant hairdo of '50s and early '60s memory, dyed it gray, and instructed her to shed parts of her prim-and-proper getups as she paraded the runway. His coats were amazing meldings that looked like a combination jacket and skirt but were really one piece. A *pièce de résistance*.

In the denial mindset, pretending to be rich is almost as good as being rich. Well, kind of. Enter the fur-ioso force of fur and faux fur. From fur-sided glasses at Alexander Wang to hats at The Row to a bootie at Tod's, a bag at Michael Kors, a collar at Van Noten and a bib at Fendi, fur is as important in accessories as it is in apparel. Colored furs sent buyers over the rainbow, especially the to-dye-for reds at Chado Ralph Rucci, Kors and Prabal Gurung and the rainbow hues at Gucci and Giorgio Armani. At Gucci, the moneyed look was epitomized by Frida Giannini's coats that meld fox, mink and goat hair. In addition to the long hairs, astrakhan looked especially modern in Albert Kriemler's designs for Akris and Alber Elbaz' creations for Lanvin. The fur mash-ups at Aquilano Rimondi, Roberto Cavalli and Consuelo Castiglione for Marni were a true Alleanza Italiana. And feathered furs flew high at Alexander McQueen, Norma Kamali and Christian Dior.

For pure creativity, the most notable achievements involve the technology of fabrics, especially the ones at Marc Jacobs. In Greece, where the word techno originated, it means art or skill. Jacobs combined both in his latex trousers, his cellophane blouses under rubber-spotted plaids, his dresses made of rubber to look like sequins, his overblouses of sequins to look like fur and his skirt of rubber to look like sequins.

Gareth Pugh was also keen on neoprene. Victoria Bartlett body-gloved some of her VPL models in latex and Francisco Costa called his remarkable new fabrics for Calvin Klein technical silks. As that famous line from "The Graduate" expressed it: "I just have one word: Plastics." That word spread and plastics are resin-ating at Burberry Prorsum, Costume National, Louis Vuitton, Prada and Mugler by Nicola Formichetti. The most techno-amazing evening dress of the season is Manish Arora's gown made of vinyl which was laser-cut to like a wearable doily.



CHANEL



PUCCI



DONNA KARAN



BURBERRY PRORSUM



MARC JACOBS



CHADO RALPH RUCCI

Other trends most likely to make it from the catwalk to the sidewalk:

COLOR. Traffic-stopping red is hot on both sides of the Atlantic. Best of show: The 11 red-carpet-red-y designs that opened the Chado Ralph Rucci collection. The standing-ovationed lineup included Mongolian lamb, chinchilla, sable—and vinyl. At other venues, red was often combined with shades of pink for a wine-and-roses effect. The fashion rainbow also favored teal and turquoise (noteworthy at Theia), glacial blues, grays, some yellow, a lot of black, a lot of white and a lot of black-and-white. Inlays of color bisect, trisect and quadri-sect the body in media ranging from python (major) to fur (more major) to wovens, knits and combinations thereof.

DRESSED TO KILT. Getting clannish. That's the mantra for fashion's latest fling with the Highlands. In addition to the tartans and clan plaids, Missoni's re-colored plaids and Thakoon's Masai and tribal plaids are worth checking out.

ALL ABOUT EVENING. In addition to the many new variations of *le smoking and le cigarette pant*, the newest looks for cocktails and galas combine elements of sportswear with traditional evening fabrics such as lace (loads of lace for fall), lamé (gold shines) and velvet (pile it on). Joel Diaz of Jolibe layers a ballgown with a parka, Altuzarra shelters a beaded gown with an anorak and Mulberry gives a lamé gown a shearling jacket.

ACCESSORIES. The single-sole pump looks singular. Mannish flats look trendy. Calf-high boots score. Sandals dance into fall. Platforms and wedges stay in the picture. Fanciest footwork: Derek Lam's high-heeled shearling ankle boots for Tod's. The hand-held bag is big. Or: Clutching the non-clutch doctors, totes, satchels, hobos, and hand-holding Vuitton's hand-cuffed Lockit bag. Structured bags zoom into play—importantly.

Jewelry finds of the season include Ruffian's silver collar, the Art Nouveau white necklaces at Proenza Schouler and Isaac Mizrahi, the rock crystal and filigree mash-ups at Armani and Alber Elbaz' big gold-petaled roses for Lanvin's necklaces and bracelets. Hats brim over, berets get chin-strapped, and the cloche comes out of The '30s to dazzle in panne velvet at Ralph Lauren by Patricia Underwood.

HAIR AND MAKEUP. Red, the hottest color in clothes, is also the hottest color in lips. Makeup was for the most part subdued. Read nude. Exceptions: Diane Kendal's red lip-penciled eyelids at Thakoon. James Kaliardos' M.A.C. makeup for Rodarte expressed the wheat-fields-of-Kansas theme via caramel-toned lips, cheeks and eyes. Hair was dichotomous. Ponytail up. Ponytail down. Slick versus carefree. Minimal/maximal. The warrior-worthy hair helmet by Guido Palau for McQueen was made with 100 Goody barrettes. It's called raising the bar-rette.



PROENZA SCHOULER



PREEN



CALVIN KLEIN



TRACY REESE



THAKOON



DRIES VAN NOTEN

BEST BETS:

Plaid • Puffers • Colored Fur • Python • Dots

Color: Red Alert • Capes • Sleeves

Lace • Tuxedos • Gold • Pleats

Oversized • Patterned Pants • Pencil Skirt

Shift Dress • Techno Fabrics

Single-Sole Pump • Structured Bag

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