

Fashion



Models present creations by Lanvin during the men's Spring/Summer 2017 collection fashion show.

Four things we've learned from Paris men's fashion week

As the last of the Paris menswear collections go down runways Sunday, we survey the big themes of the week's fashion shows.

Fashion (still) loves England

They may have plunged themselves and the world's financial markets into crisis with Thursday's Brexit vote, but everybody still loves the English-or their style at least. From Dior's black-clad boot boys to Louis Vuitton's rakish colonial artists, British influences where ever present, liberally dolloped with pure London punk. String vests and braces have never looked so elegant as they did on the Dior runway, with designer Kris Van Assche cutting the skinhead aggression with the melancholic gothic whimsy of The Cure. Deconstructed cricket jumpers graced the Japanese label Facetasm's show and Walter Van Beirendonck embraced almost every sartorial icon of an eternal England from boating blazers to brogues and even Morris men folk dancers.

Fellow Flemish master Dries Van Noten paid homage to the 19th-century English arts and crafts movement in his show, referencing patterns from William Morris' home in Kelmscott Manor. At a time of such anglophilia, the Brexit vote came as a shock. Chanel's guru Karl Lagerfeld blamed country yokels for voting Leave, while Agnes b. got up a last-minute celebrity petition begging Britons to stay in Europe. "We are very sad," the French designer said Sunday. "Hopefully there will be another vote." Oddly the happiest man in Paris was the English designer Paul Smith, a fervent pro-European. But you couldn't but be cheerful seeing his joyful reggae-toned new spring-summer collection. "Life goes on," he told AFP. You have to be "positive and happy in this weird world".

And Scotland too...

The longer fashion week went on the more it resembled a gathering of the clans, reaching an apex when Smith unveiled the latest style to have come out of the British cultural melting pot-"rasta tartan". British for now, that is. "It's Scotland gone mad," he told AFP as his models broke out in big smiles wearing the rainbow-Rastafarian plaid in beautifully tailored beachy, Caribbean casual wear and zoot suits. Louis Vuitton, Dior, Off-White and Japanese labels Kolor and Facetasm also made eye-catching use of plaid while the hipsters of OAMC gave it a grungy Irvin Welsh urban edge.

Suits you sir!

Style critics often complain that men's fashion is boring. Always the same. Jackets, jumpers and cardigans, and most dull of all, the suit. No longer. Designers took massive liberties with the suit this week, none more so than the Vetements tyro Demna Gvasalia, who also now holds the scissors at Balenciaga. The young Georgian dramatically remade the classic suit, pulling it tighter to the body while throwing out huge padded shoulders. While many other have copied his oversized trope, none have yet done it so well. Elsewhere, arms were ripped off suits and raincoats, lapels inverted, and pockets and tailoring all revealed. But all felt like deconstruction compared to Gvasalia's radical flair.

Socks with everything

Worn high, low and-whisper it-even with sandals, socks are slowly being rehabilitated from style Siberia. While footballers at Euro 2016 in France are wearing theirs above the knee, Facetasm, White Mountaineering and the American label Off-White dared to put sports socks on the catwalk. Kenzo came furthest out of the closet repeatedly teaming socks with sandals-and matching black socks and white sandals for further shock value. Some hosiery went nearly to the knees and French label Pigalle thoroughly trashed the taboo by adding bath sandals. In one final act of pure provocation Paul Smith sent out the invitations to his show on pairs of socks. He followed this by smuggling stripey socks and sandals onto the catwalk. "Weren't they great?" he told AFP. — AFP



Agnes B'S Multiculturalism

Bright colors and African themes were at the heart of Agnes B's spring-summer collection, which celebrated cultural fusion. A Persian blue tunic vibrantly opened the show, which fused Africa ideas with Western styles. This show also had political overtones. Multicolored African wraps contrasted with T-shirt prints that humorously celebrated African multiculturalism in France, a political hot potato with the growing popularity of Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front party.

A top in blue spelled out the famous Gallic mantra "Vive la..." ("Long live...") with an image of the African continent instead of an image of France. Elsewhere, Western styles - like a cobalt-colored hooded and baseball caps - mixed with African beading. Many of the looks were beautiful but arresting, certainly not for the shy dresser.



Models present creations for Thom Browne during the men Spring-Summer 2017 collection fashion show. — AP/AFP photos