



STARS HIT DIOR'S ENCYCLOPEDIC 70TH BIRTHDAY SHOW IN PARIS



Christian Dior feted its 70th birthday at Paris' Couture Week Monday in style with an accomplished, star-filled show that mapped the iconic house's journey across the world. It was an unabashed, encyclopedic celebration of femininity in all its guises for Maria Grazia Chiuri - the house's first female designer. Here are some highlights of Monday's fall-winter 2017 collections.

Dior front row

Dior breathed a sigh of relief that it didn't rain on Chiuri's first outdoor presentation - and her best show to date. But the unexpected rays of sun caused their own set of problems for the myriad VIP guests that included singer Celine Dion and actresses Jennifer Lawrence, Natalie Portman and Kirsten Dunst. They sweltered alongside the forest-like show decor of verdant grass, exotic trees, huge wooden elephants, crocodiles and eagles at the Invalides venue.

"I'm going to stand in the shade as it's just too hot," model Karlie Kloss explained as she raced away momentarily for the refuge of a tree from her front row seat. Meanwhile, actor Robert Pattinson - a Dior brand ambassador - mingled with guests in the cool of the shade cast surreally by a gargantuan atlas, hoisted up above the show foliage.

Dior's female empowerment

The starting point of Chiuri's empowering, feminist display was a 1953 Atlas etching of five continents discovered in the Dior archives, which mapped the house's global expansion. Chiuri took Monsieur Dior's own words - that a collection should represent "all types of women in all countries" - and gave them renewed legitimacy - as the house's first female head.

The ankle-length silhouettes, which riffed on the 1950s, celebrated powerful female trailblazers of history - and the bold styles worn by women thousands of miles apart. A loose, pleated gray wool menswear aviator outfit was called "Amelia Earhart," in celebration of the American aviation pioneer who succeeded in a man's world. An anthracite jumpsuit with a chic, Asian-style crossover and large turned-up sleeves was named "Siam" in celebration of Thai women's style. And a deli-

cate, sexy tulle dress with peek-a-boo sheer sections - called "Andalusia" - evoked iconic black Spanish lace. But this wasn't just an encyclopedic check list - and the 66 varied looks packed some true style. Gently cinch-waisted silhouettes billowed out into beautiful culottes, alongside voluminous full skirts in organza, or vintage pleated evening dresses. This couture season, Chiuri really found her voice.

Ralph & Russo's plumage

In a white shoulderless halterneck, actress Zendaya joined "Fast and Furious" star Michelle Rodriguez in a silken teal coat dress to add star power to the Ralph & Russo front row. It was perhaps a welcome boost to a collection that was hard to pin down. Tamara Ralph's designs are a red carpet favorite - and no doubt some looks, like an asymmetrical pastel plum satin gown that unfurled around the bust, will be a big hit. But the collection - which moved between varying pastel shades - seemed to lack focus at times.

Big Ottoman-style cone hats, strapped under the chin, defined many of the shimmering gowns doused with lashings of embroideries and sequins. Then, there were the feathers. Plumes shot out from large shoulder sections, down a cinched 60s skirt, across the arm like a bird's wing, and then down the chest on one black-and-silver, traffic-stopping gown that evoked a peacock with its tail feathers down. There were plenty of great dramatic moments - including an off-white feather hat that might have been the pick of the late Elizabeth Taylor. — AP

