

SPRING 2008: HERE AND THERE

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTIONS REPORT BY EDDI FRANTZ

If I had a dollar for every time I heard the question: "How do you make sense of what comes down an overseas designer's runway? How much of it REALLY influences fashion here at home and how do you select those bits out of all the wild, wacky and wonderful ideas out there?"

Actually, that's three questions so maybe I should wish for more money.

The simple answer to that is ... well, it's not an exact science. Sometimes it all progresses quite naturally and designers the world over fall in step with a particular look, style, colour, fabric, detail or even accessory, and those seemingly happy coincidences (even though they take months of inspiration, research and planning on the designers' part), are what fashion is born from. Other times it isn't so cut and dried, especially when it comes to translating those big overseas hits over here.

Some ideas travel easily, while others never quite fly. Others that were just mere sniffs in the overseas collections reach fever pitch here, while some ideas that swept with tidal-wave force through Paris, Milan and New York barely cause a ripple by the time they land on our shores. Others sensibly transmute into something more relevant to our lifestyle. And every once in a while, there are a few wildcards that seem to pop out of nowhere and just spread like brushfire. Unpredictable? Yes, but this is what makes the whole spectacle so exciting.

With that in mind (after we've checked out the action at our very own fashion week as well as on the runways in the world's major fashion capitals), let's look at what were the best bets at the international and local designer collections for spring.

SHINE :

Overseas...

Although not as important as it was last year, spring days are still shining with glimmering textures on clothes and accessories, but the gleam is now more burnished than bright. Most interesting are 'gilded' knits (tipped to be a big look for the festive season) or languid bathrobe coats in burnished lamé. Shine can even get subtler as in Versace's silky, sleeveless browns over tailored pants or Diane von Furstenberg's ultra-wearable shantung khaki wrap dress.

And Over Here...

Last year's rivers of metallic gleam still ran over many items, with quite a few boldly shining examples. Silver in particular has gone from being a mere flash in the pan to become 'a new neutral' as most buyers and editors affirmed. New designer Daniel Avakian's futuristic metallics were wonderfully wearable when cut in classic shapes such as easy trenches and cuffed shorts (although just one super-shiny piece will suffice off the runway), while Eileen Kirby's fun, young party trapeze gleamed in gold. Even a few superbly tailored fabrics had the subtlest silvery sheen, such as in future star Dion Lee's elegant jacket (For more bright ideas on how to easily take a metallic shine to your look, turn to page 24.



PRINT AND COLOUR

Overseas...

The international runways were ablaze with raucous print and bold, bright colour. Almost every major designer in Paris, Milan and New York fell for florals in a big way, visited the art gallery with luscious art nouveau or impressionist renderings, or went on African safari with graphic tribal prints; more than few mixed

several dazzling prints together for maximum impact. When it wasn't printed, it was strongly coloured in every hue of the rainbow... the brighter, the better (for more fabulously fresh florals, turn to page 74).



Easton Pearson



Eileen Kirby/Kirby Purrs



Chris Esber



Eileen Kirby/Kirby Purrs



Eileen Kirby/Kirby Purrs



Nicolangela

And Over Here...

Apart from a few notable collections, such as Easton Pearson's artistic collaborative extravaganza and Akira's vibrantly mixed florals, most local designers surprisingly stayed away from prints. If they did show up, they were bold and graphic rather than sweetly romantic. One item tipped to be summer's star look is the boldly printed maxi-dress.

Turn to page 72 for some great styles to sew. Bright colour was more popular than prints on local runways, usually as one pure unadulterated shot in the season's ubiquitous sundress, more often in a silky fabric than in traditional cottons.

Violet in every shade was at the top of the colour charts, with yellow and coral not far behind (check out page 44 for more sunny shades). Nevertheless, if print and textile design is your thing, this season is definitely a great excuse to get really creative!



Yu

TAILORING:

Overseas...

The spring-summer season usually means a strong focus on the dress and indeed they have dominated fashion for the last few years, but woman cannot live on dresses alone. Designers therefore have come up with more terrifically tailored options than we've seen in recent dress-obsessed times. The strongest looks were neutral toned and tailored to a safari beat, in tawny-buttoned skirt or pantsuits. That classic combination of black and white was also stronger than ever as it made a sober

counterpoint to all those blazing colours and prints. Fashion's now standard cropped jacket still hung in there ... joined by longer styles, either in belted buttonless wraps or the big return of the slouchy menswear-inspired 'boyfriend' jacket. Pants were still generally loose-legged and slouchy, with cropped and cuffed versions looking freshest. Bermuda short-suits and details such as puffed sleeves were ongoing looks.

And Over Here...

As with overseas, suiting is continuing to gain importance over the 'summer standard of a dress'. The now-classic suit silhouette of a cropped jacket and wide-leg pant reigned supreme, refreshed with textural contrasts and intricate dressmaker details such as gathering. Designer Anna Thomas also played with contrasting fabrics and prints that breathed new life into the suit, making it perfect for our casual lifestyle. She also showed the longer, easier 'boyfriend' jacket that made waves overseas. If you haven't whipped up a pair of softer, easier pants yet, now is the time

to do so as they were unequivocally touted as a 'must-have' item of the season. Cropped, cuffed, pyjama-style, printed, or just beautifully tailored in a light, breezy fabric... the choice is yours! (Turn to page 22 for more great suit and trouser options, direct from New York).



Daniel Avakian



YU

YU



Anna Thomas

Anna Thomas

FEMININITY :

Overseas...

The spring collections embraced a classic, even retro, ideal of romantic femininity. The strongest feminine signal for spring was the fifties form of a nipped-in waist and full, swirling skirt (New York designer Donna Karan built her entire collection around this seductive silhouette, but made light work out of those full skirts by creating them out of layers of sheer

appliquéd fabric or by cutting sheer insets near the hem). Other romantic gestures of the season included a deluge of sheer, gauzy fabrics, dusky and powdery shades or lots of white, bow detailing, rows of ruffles, and new ways with lacy effects; an idea to watch as lace is tipped to be the headlining texture for 2009.



Jessie Hill



Annah Stretton



Eileen Kirby



Annah Stretton



Annah Stretton

And Over Here...

The crush on romantic femininity spread to our designers, who also fell head over heels for the charms of dusky colours, sheer fabrics, tiered ruffles and more than just a touch of lace. The full-skirted

silhouette so prevalent overseas also made a strong appearance here, with some designers even cutting through the silhouette's retro sweetness with hard-edged dramatic effects. Our bet is that a few tender touches of feminine softness here and there will be a welcome addition to any wardrobe as the weather warms up.



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