Ermenegildo Zegna subtly recomposes the menswear wardrobe

By Dominique Muret  -  June 19, 2021

Ermenegildo Zegna opened Milan Fashion Week Men's on Friday with one of the most successful collections to have come from Alessandro Sartori. Focusing more than ever on fabrics, treatments and manufacturing processes, the Piedmont-based luxury menswear label's creative director has been able to construct a wardrobe that is simultaneously elegant and wearable, all while remaining ultra-sophisticated.
Zegna opted for a video presentation again this season, taking viewers on a fast-paced journey through a hedge maze and into a little-known Milanese neighbourhood built by Aldo Rossi in the 1960s and 70s. Surrounded by this deserted and imposing architectural scenery, the models, which included a dozen women, marched on until they found their way onto an open plaza in the shadow of Dominique Perrault's leaning towers, in Rho, on the outskirts of Milan. The video's conclusion saw the models taking their seats at a long table set up in the waters of a fountain, in order to joyfully toast their newfound freedom.

Without exception, the silhouettes were monochrome, airy and fluid. The clothes, which looked to be as intangible as clouds, floated with ease on the models' bodies. Long coats and kimono-style jackets, cinched at the waist with a ribbon, billowed almost imperceptibly. Large overshirts accentuated the impression of lightness, not to mention the smooth matte-effect calfskin shirt-jackets which looked to be made of cotton from a distance.

Shirts, blouses and oversized t-shirts were worn with shorts and loose trousers, for looks which, like most of the outfits on show, were constructed tone on tone. When the shirts and jackets were tucked into trousers, the looks took on the appearance of jumpsuits. This impression was emphasised by an overarching workwear aesthetic that ran throughout this free and functional collection for Spring/Summer 2022, as seen in a range of pieces featuring maxi-pockets, for example.

Sartori has continued his subtle reinterpretation of classic tailoring, resulting in a new menswear uniform that is more informal but no less luxurious and which, following months of quarantine and the boom in working from home, feels more relevant than ever. "At the moment, it's probably easier to send strong new messages," said the designer.

"A modular wardrobe with pieces that are multifunctional, light, wearable and comfortable is, without a doubt, much more attractive now, because the paradigms have changed," explained Sartori, who has actually been pursuing this ideal for a number of seasons.

Dubbed "The New Set," the latest collection from Ermenegildo Zegna wants to break once and for all with traditional menswear codes, replacing the blazer with the three-button linen jacket. Suits and white shirts are out. This new wardrobe for men is built around four categories: the new jacket or over t-shirt, knitwear, new trousers with a new kind of wearability, and sports shoes.
The label has doubled down on full-colour looks for next summer - Ermenegildo Zegna

"The idea is to make all the pieces with the same colours and treatments so that you can match them as you like. It's the theme of the collection," explained the designer, who divided his latest offering into different chromatic modules: pastel pink, sand, tobacco, off white, blue and green. For further comfort, some polos and trousers were made with a new kind of knit.

"We used native wool from sheep bred in the Oasi Zegna, mixed with linen and silk. Two years ago, making this kind of material seemed impossible! We carry out research not only into design and craftsmanship, but also into fabrics. We consider knits to be important materials for the future, because they allow you to work on new constructions. They are becoming fabrics that can be used to make dresses and trousers," continued Sartori.

The result is an aesthetically pared-down collection, which is nonetheless rich in detail, elaborate finishes and new
The result is an aesthetically pared-down collection, which is nonetheless rich in detail, elaborate finishes and new technical solutions. Here, construction is king, with the clothes having been liberated from all superfluous, including linings and padding.

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