Giambattista Valli: Masterly metaphysical mode

By Godfrey Deeny - October 5, 2021

Just when you thought Giambattista Valli was getting a little predictable when the Roman designer emerges from Covid and wows you with his most brilliant show in years, in a celebration of pure beauty.
Staged inside Paris’ Museum of Modern Art, the ideal location as the cast marched past multiple modernist paintings, with scores of ‘it-gals’ and influencers perched on mirrored benches inside a room devoted to the metaphysical works of Giorgio De Chirico.

Throughout, Valli lightened up the mood and silhouette, with ruffled mini cocktails and or frilly bra tops worn with matching minis. Even sending out several see-through chiffon cocktails, for a racier vision of the brand.

Worn by a highly inclusive cast, the better to display gold crystal trimmed white guipure tops and beautiful Grand Empire slim-waist dresses with a ‘70s twist.

Even his floral fantasies looked more relaxed, using 18th-century-style jacquards with technical finishes.

Four years ago, Artemis, the family holding company of the Pinault family that controls luxury giant Kering took a significant minority stake in Valli. Though, this season was the first time one really felt the effect of that investment. Since the entire collection was far more fleshed out in terms of accessories and finish. Clan leader Francois Pinault sat front-row, admiring his smart investment.
Giamba also lightened up the footwear with great new transparent sandals held together with large crystal studs and coins. Plus, he showed several very attractive new bags – mini raffia or croc bags with wee locks. Adding to the sense of optimism were several Qui-Êtes-Vous-Polly-Maggoo cloche hats.

Best of all, Valli’s shows can sometimes feel too sweet, even saccharine. Not this season where there was oodles of classy sex appeal.

“I wanted super fresh, and super young for a new generation. A new form of feminism, where you are comfortable with being a woman, and don’t have to bow down to anyone. Free and independent. It’s about the search for beauty in this moment. A search for certainty in the lockdown. Where Instagram was the window of where we might exit. Hence, all these gardens and vistas,” said Valli, after he posed backstage for photos with Paris Jackson.
Nobody does mood boards better than the Italians, and Giambattista's included bucolic images of spring-time, lakeside gardens, patrician old money pools and images of Louis Bourgeois soft statues. Along with texts reading: 'Beauty is a Place for Escape of the Mind'; or 'Don’t be Scared of Beauty.'

“Louis Bourgeois is the artist and the woman who made me best understand the most intimate thoughts of a woman. Too many people fear beauty, as it isn’t easyyyyy. Instead it’s a beautiful state of mind. So this season I wanted Lolita, but for yourself and not for others,” Valli smiled.

Designers, who frequently stay up all night to finish collections, often look drained in their backstage.

Not Valli, who was in such great physical shape that one editor re-christened him 'Gym-battista' Valli.