Paris: Givenchy’s streetwear couture and Giambattista Valli’s uninhibited elegance

By Dominique Muret · March 8, 2022

Major trends became increasingly more evident on the penultimate day of Women’s ready-to-wear Paris Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2022-23 season. A stronger focus on targeting the Gen Z consumers has been seen through fashion houses’s collections designed especially for this younger generation, whether in sportswear or streetwear lines like with Givenchy or more classic couture like with Giambattista Valli.
Givenchy delivered a dark and powerful collection on Sunday night in Paris' La Défense Arena. As the show began, the heavy black carpet covering the catwalk was pulled back to reveal an imposing steel structure under a glass floor where the audience was able to see the models walk from above before they emerged onto the catwalk. The audience sat on cross-shaped bleachers surrounded by four giant screens reflecting a blinding white light.

Gloved women and men, their eyes hidden behind a cap, paraded in dark looks in a color palette composed of black, khaki, grey, and brown. The wardrobe clearly influenced by streetwear was enhanced by jewelry and futuristic glasses. Jackets and bombers were worn over tank tops and layered sweaters displaying heavy-metal graphics. The female models had their legs wrapped in leather or latex leggings covered by disproportionate shoes, while the male models seemed much more comfortable in leather tracksuits or baggy pants, baseball caps, and balaclavas with visors fixed on their heads.

The streetwear lineup included faded or frayed jeans at times decorated with pearls and paired with simple white long-sleeved knits worn equally by both men and women. On the other hand, the eveningwear preferred dark-spirited leather and opted for floating and enveloping long black coats resembling those worn in the Matrix film. Artistic director Matthew M. Williams explained that he was “interested in making clothes that people wear.”

The second part of the show focused more on couture pieces through a series of mini knit dresses with pleats, ruffles or gathered edges that brought sudden bursts of color to the collection (sky blue, golden yellow, mauve). The designer also borrowed elements from Hubert de Givenchy’s haute couture archives, such as black thistle embroidery and his iconic pearls, which fringed tops and precious dresses made of large round white pearls that jingled as the models walked.
Precious details traditional of couture were seen more than ever at Giambattista Valli’s show, who reinterpreted his opulent creations with a youthful spirit. The models perched in towering platforms hid behind oversized black glasses wearing white or flesh-toned opaque tights that matched their mini skirts and dresses.

Different styles and craftsmanship collided, from Aubusson tapestry suits to leopard print ensembles, white mini dresses with gold buttons or more casual looks, such as palazzo pants paired with a long shearling coat decorated with embroidered borders. "I took this free and uninhibited femininity typical of French women and transposed it to the young women of today. A bit like the birth of a new woman. Added to this is my passion for craftsmanship, which must be supported as much as possible, and all these artistic stratifications accumulated over centuries," summarized the Italian designer.

For their evening looks, Giambattista Valli girls take out their silver and rhinestone shoes or their thigh-high python boots to go out dancing in dresses that are at times modest in water-green guipure, and sometimes precious in black lace or covered in large silver or translucent sequins. They sometimes hesitate between an outfit adorned with pink scales or draped dresses in white silk and printed with roses or poppy red. When they wish to wear something more dramatic, they dive into clouds of tulle.

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