Paris menswear Saturday: Intensity and nonchalance at Craig Green, Loewe and Hermès

By Godfrey Deeny - June 26, 2022

Menswear’s two most defiantly artistic designers – Craig Green and Jonathan Anderson – began Saturday with two strikingly unique visions in Paris, before the venerable French house of Hermès presented a salutary lesson in nonchalant chic.

Craig Green: 'Decorated Man' in the Musée de l'Homme

The inspiration was 'Decorated Man'; the location was the Musée de l'Homme; and the result was the show and collection of the season by Craig Green.
Masterminding disparate elements from WW2 watch dust covers, workerist garments and comics to Wedgwood pottery, Green presented a brilliant contemplation of men’s fashion, whose influence will extend across all continents.

All the way from his opening trio of all-white looks: with surgeon's smock and wide pants; accessorized by Sam Browne belts; dust cover chokers and wristbands; water bottles; face blinkers and the first of many structural extensions – a motorbike seat built as a front harness. Subsequently, playing in similar elements in a gentle beige, in a collection with a perfect color palette – of anthracite, faded gold, gray-blue denim and rosy rose.

Throughout, a sense of nomads gathering ideas as they traversed the planet. From silvery padded backpacks, hang gliding harnesses or man-bags, to rose gold laptop covers, belts and trouser trim. Often with the silver patches functional – actual bags in which you could wrap up the garment.

Craig also returned to his signature statement, billowing tents, extended off the shoulders of several models, who stood out graphically inside the Paris museum, covered in all-white plastic for the show.

Haute conceptual fashion, but based on great waxy cotton jackets; matte silver dusters, padded blazers and ergonomic pants. No wonder the front row was packed with the best retailers in the industry.

Green’s initial inspiration, the Decorated Man, whose concept is the body as art.

“We were trying to make a very useful man, so we added a saddle and a ladder. And conceptual objects – cans you cannot drink from, or suitcases you cannot get into,” he laughed in the backstage.

A heraldic section of giant padded coats with garlands and coats of arms, was in turn inspired by the patterns and shapes from sports magazines, where one could pick one’s own shield for school. Before a finale with heraldic motif padded coats; tunic and cloaks, all playing on the idea of Wedgwood pottery

“It was like watching Antiques Roadshow in my youth, when the ultimate find was a Wedgwood pot!” added Green, who even included a new riskier vision of his oeuvre. Brilliant bio-morphic, cut-out tops in mixes of coated materials and Japanese knitted paper, paired with padded pants.

While the all white set suggested the idea of neo-classical pottery where the background is pure white and the symbols stand out more.

Green also went into overdrive with his shoe collaboration with Adidas, the first season that the brand used the 'Boost' sole as a topside material.

“I don’t know if I am supposed to say this, but Boost was invented for cow-beds before being used on trainers,” smiled Green, who also showed completely flat pack sandals; and packable and ‘zippable’ shoes trimmed, well, in zips.

It was hard to think of any bum note in this collection, because there wasn’t one. To sum it, after 12 days of menswear and almost 100 shows, Green was the outstanding collection of the season.

Loewe: Nature-meets-technology

All about the meeting of art, social commentary, nature and cool clothes at Loewe, where another all-white décor for a remarkable sloping set. And a fairly radical switch of direction at Loewe, with plenty of active sports ideas –
for a remarkable sloping set. And a fairly radical switch of direction at Loewe, with plenty of active sports ideas – two-stripe leggings and tops – leavened into an arty concoction.

Other brands – from Dior to Zegna – have referenced the great outdoors this past week. Loewe’s creative director sent living nature out onto the catwalk.

Working with a Spanish artist, who incorporates living plants onto fabrics. The result were sneakers that sprouted six-inch high blades of grass; or moss-covered pants and Crombies.

“It’s a little like when you are young and discover you can grow watercress inside an eggshell,” smiled Anderson, explaining that Loewe planned to sell actual seeds with the footwear in flagship boutiques.

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Many models wore live screen masks; others eased down the slope in cocoon coats covered with meter sized panels of screens.

“It’s the idea that nature can be technology, or technology nature. And that if we experiment we might find different methods in fashion in order to progress,” he added.

All the screens featuring images from nature – like tropical fish or busy bees. All culled from Internet photo library Shutterstock. All making for great fashion theatre.

“We loved the idea that these photos were made by people and just uploaded,” Jonathan explained.

A key element in Anderson’s revival of Loewe has been his use of Spanish leather, slightly rawer than Italian or French leather, yet with a more subtle hand. His runway was covered in the material; from the cocoon coats to the chunky boots, made in the shape of handbags, all the way to the drawstring closures.

“I know fashion is working with the metaverse, but maybe it needs to be more about physicality. A bit like Silicon Valley, an oasis of tech surrounded by an oasis of nature. Fashion needs to be a window onto the world. Especially in this moment, when we turn on the TV and we seem less progressive,” the Northern Irishman concluded.

Hermès: Chic nonchalance

Nonchalance, from the old French word meaning disregard, was the key to this latest Hermès collection. As a sense of levity and ease wafted through this show, despite being presented under a threatening sky.
Clouds so dark, the house handed out rain-proof parkas and large umbrellas to all guests entering into the courtyard of the Manufacture des Gobelins, the city’s famed maker of tapestries. In the end, not a drop of rain fell, as the clothes suggested summer, sunny terraces; beachside cafes; Mediterranean sunsets.

“I wanted to leave the city behind. And I was seeing swimming pools; wavy patterns, distorted when seen through water; sparkling colors,” smiled Véronique Nichanian, menswear designer of Hermès.

In a surprise move, Nichanian even sent out several mega Birkin bags for boys, made in wide-spaced checks to match shirts.

Practically not a suit in sight, but a series on great jerkins and wind cheaters made in nylon, fine cottons and second skin leather. Some completed with inlays that looked like mini tiles. Barely a suit in sight, but lots of cool clingy knits in sunset and rosy dawn hues.

Most everything anchored on techy river-running sandals, as if in a hurry to make a pre-aperitif swim. Sounds like a good idea.

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