Marine Serre stages Olympics-style show in Paris

By Dominique Muret - 28 June 2022

For her eponymous label’s sixth anniversary, Marine Serre set out to impress by staging the Olympic Games of upcycled fashion. And she pulled it off! On Saturday evening, the French designer, aged 30, orchestrated a joyful, spectacular show at the stadium of the Lycée Michelet in Vanves, in a vast park in the south-western suburbs of Paris, presenting a collection with a strong sportswear vibe.
Once inside the stadium, guests were welcomed by ‘volunteers’ sporting the label's ‘State of Soul’ t-shirts - from the show's title - with an Olympic logo developed for the occasion by Marine Serre. Like a speaker at an Olympics opening ceremony, Serre herself kicked off the festivities, starting the parade of athletes/models, led by a giant flag made of a patchwork of wind-blown scarves carried all along the blue athletics track. A sure sign of fate, a ray of sunshine pierced the heavy grey clouds that had been gathering ominously until then.

Swimmers opened the pageant, clad in swimming costumes made of recycled fibres. The same material cropped up later in a series of skin-tight black bodysuits and jumpsuits decorated with Marine Serre’s signature inverted half-moon, or patterned with golden baroque jewellery prints. They were followed among others by tennis players, weightlifters and footballers, led by former Liverpool striker Djibril Cissé, a Frenchman. "I love sport, it's part of my past. I practised a lot of sport as a teenager. In fact, I have always designed sportswear, since the very beginning, but I've never shown it," said Serre backstage.

The collection, as always with Marine Serre, puts a strong emphasis on clothes made from recycled materials. White cotton embroidered pillowcases turn into shirts, shorts and skirts, matched with coats, jackets and dresses assembled from different types of denim. Oversize scarves morph into flowing dresses. A maxi coat is covered with a deluge of appliqué pockets, from the shoulders to the bottom hem. Light-coloured leather triangles are cleverly fitted together to make jigsaw trousers and blousons, while lace doilies are elegantly inserted into crocheted knitwear.

For next summer, anticipating future heatwaves, Serre has used terry fabric extensively to fashion snug trouser sets, tight-fitting playsuits and assorted bathrobe-style coats. In a more sophisticated vein, she has also designed chic suits, tweed jackets with golden buttons, outfits with a tonal tapestry effect, and even she wrapped multiple gold chains around the neck, arms and waist of Lourdes Leon, Madonna’s daughter, who brought the show to a close.
The collection exuded an air of great comfort and elegance, and was punctuated by sundry accessories. "For the first time, there are many types of accessories. It took me quite a while to develop them properly. They too are made using an upcycling approach," said Serre, an advocate of organic growth. Renowned for her futuristic couture sportswear and her penchant for upcycled fashion, in six years she has become one of the hottest names in the world of fashion. Her company currently employs about 70 people, and has recently hired its first head of operations.

Marine Serre premièred in 2016 with women’s ready-to-wear, and gradually added menswear looks, which are now playing an increasingly significant role in the label's range. Hence the decision to schedule a show for the first time during the Parisian menswear calendar. “This year, menswear sales have increased by more than 30%. I realised that upcycling is rare in menswear, but men’s clothes lend themselves well to this practice, because their shapes are less complex," said Serre.

She was radiantly happy, still struggling to realise how popular she is. To sign off the show, Serre staged a big party, inviting a thousand people from her community via Instagram. “Fashion has to open up to ordinary people. The public was so happy to be able to attend this show. We felt real togetherness. For me, that’s the most important thing,” she concluded.

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