

# The National

## Loose lines

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New York Fashion Week began with a lazy start. No, it has nothing to do with the city's motivation or achievements, and is more concerned with proportions in fashion. After all, with a handful of labels starting to show their spring/summer 2010 collections a day before the official September 10 start date, one certainly can't accuse them of a lack of industry.

That night, the whole industry rallied with Fashion's Night Out, a global event organised by Vogue, The Council of Fashion Designers of America and New York City to encourage consumer confidence amid a very low point in retail. More than 700 stores throughout the city remained open until 11.00pm, featuring a range of DJs and fancy canapés for visitors who shopped for the many items on discount.

At Bergdorf Goodman, the city's premier luxury emporium, throngs of people lined the streets to enter the jam-packed store, which welcomed fashion's biggest names such as Victoria Beckham, American Vogue's André Leon Talley, Alexander Wang and Zac Posen. The diminutive Olsen twins were also there to lend a hand as bartenders, but their carelessly put together black and grey outfits of slouchy, oversize tops anchored by large dishevelled scarves produced languid shapes that seemed to capture the mood of the designers and attendees thus far.

This layering can be blamed on the unseasonably nippy and rainy weather, but it can also be read as a reactionary stance to the grown-up, put-together looks of last season. In a Soho presentation on Wednesday, Nonoo Lyons, a womenswear label by Deborah Lyons and the Bahrain/London raised Misha Nonoo, jolted its 1940s and 1950s-inspired line (a popular reference for autumn/winter 2009) of well-tailored and sharply angled jackets with an electric blue silk jacket featuring tight ruching that lent a beautiful effect to the garment.

Down the street at Erro, the brand new line Anna Larsen and Christian Stroble, it was all about rock 'n' roll, in all its slapdash sartorial glory. In the dingy, yet cool indie concert-like venue where the collection presentation was held, forlorn looking models with mussed up hair wore drippy layers of cotton T-shirts, black leather waistcoats with dangling straps, and button-up shirt-dresses arranged in purposeful disarray. Erro's louche look was perfectly punctuated with tough-looking Doc Martens boots.

At Bryant Park, the energy was somewhat less frenetic than seasons past, perhaps a direct result of the competing venue downtown at Milk Studios. The cosmetics giant MAC is sponsoring the event there, where the city's young talents such as Proenza Schouler, Joseph Altuzarra and Erin Fetherston are slated to show their wares.

The languid energy at the tents manifested itself in the clothes that were shown there too. At BCBG Max Azria, a pristine white dress opened the show with a handkerchief hem that listlessly dragged in the air as the models walked. This was followed by two



The flowing lines seen at the BCBG Max Azria Spring 2010 collection captured a general trend at Fashion Week. **Lucas Jackson / Reuters**

grey cotton dresses (one with a paint-splatter effect) with clever ruching about the waist, creating asymmetrical hemlines that will please the label's customers. These ranks include the actress Amanda Bynes, who could be seen at the show.

Meanwhile, Ports 1961 used draping to achieve the sculptural gathers of the pale-toned dresses to cater to a sophisticated clientele, and Charlotte Ronson's strict and rigid jacket shoulders parried nicely with the hanging, rolled up T-shirt sleeves that were worn under them. Duckie Brown, however, couldn't resist the softer side of things, parading models in looser silhouettes, sweaters with elegant folds, and unstructured jersey jackets that fit like simple T-shirts.

Meanwhile at Milk, Costello Tagliapietra, known for its gentle silhouettes and masterful draping techniques, thought about sustainability by debuting the ingenious AirDye technology which allows fabrics to be dyed without water. Jen Kao, who also showed at the venue, is no stranger to workmanship either. The designer exhibited a clear fondness for architectural techniques and the panelling and visible seams on many pieces gave structure to a collection otherwise characterised by its purposefully sloppy lines.

Elsewhere, at John Patrick Organic, Shalom Harlow epitomised the relaxed Americana-inspired aesthetic of the line. There were coquettish looks, but Patrick, who uses all organic fabrics, showed a slouchy cotton blouson and a relaxed shirt dress, pieces that you can easily throw on during the summer.

On the other hand Ascot Chang, the bespoke gentlemen's tailor, was all about ease, making jackets without lining for a more casual and relaxed appeal, while Monique Lhuillier's show at Christie's was unsurprisingly all about glamour. But this doesn't just mean knockout red carpet frocks. The Los Angeles based designer's collection featured a layered sunflower-coloured fringe dress, proving that she knows how to translate her couture sensibilities into cocktail dresses, too.

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