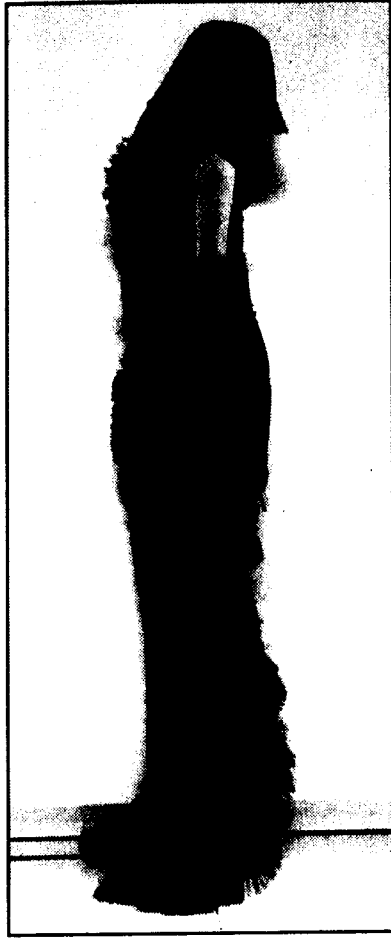
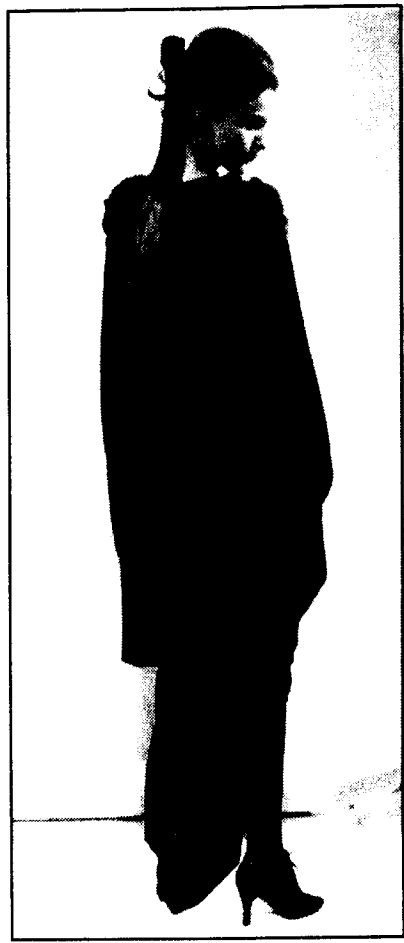


STYLE

Year of the Lion

Chanel does it again



Photos courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons: 10 Corso Como

Chanel's 2009/2010 Fall/Winter Couture show featured models posing around the life-size signature tweed jacket.

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culture editor

As September draws near, so does New York City's annual Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. With the couture shows having just finished in July, it's already time to move past fall and winter to another season, different trends and the bustle of last minute stitches or tears to make an outfit just right and as close to perfection, at least in the designers' eyes.

New York City, along with Paris, Milan and London, makes up what some industry people call "the big four." These four cities serve as the center stages for the fashion world, especially during the fashion weeks, but also year-round.

Paris Fashion Week is a highly anticipated event, like the others, but the names at the event are what spark the excitement.

Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Givenchy, Jean-Paul Gaultier. These designers are what the industry people wait to see. These fashion houses are the top players and have such a strong pull with the public and editors, consistently introducing new and expressive designs, particularly Karl Lagerfeld and Chanel.

When Lagerfeld, a German designer, took over as head designer and creative director for Chanel in the early 1980s, he brought with him a new and fresher take on the Chanel line and reaffirmed its already firmly cemented place in the fashion world. Not surprisingly there was controversy with his succession and immeasurable use of fur, but nothing would make him falter.

The most recent couture show, held in July, can vouch for his artistic abilities. As a whole, there was a refinement seen in this collection compared to the Fall/Winter 2009/2010 collection, which had a more whimsical feel.

Autumnal and rich jewel tones flanked the runway in delicately and sometimes rather drab, detailed, dresses and two piece ensembles. The crimson reds, navy blues, and emerald greens and deep browns were spectacular against the white runway. Models walked the runway in Victorian-inspired mid-calf boots, which subtly complimented their outfits.

Accompanied by pieces from pianist Timothy Andres, the models showed off the beautiful details of the new collection, which

were that of classical Chanel: use of pearl embellishments, tweed, fur lining. Not that Lagerfeld's use of leather or fur is ever condoned or, frankly, necessary, even if he did use the faux kind for the Fall/Winter 2010/2011 collection. Nevertheless the overall look of this Chanel collection was understated in just the right way and, simply put, lovely.

Besides the collection, one never really knows what to expect from Chanel's runway shows, whether it be a giant (and real) iceberg, a huge signature tweed jacket, a barn, or four larger-than-life perfume bottles. This time around an enormous lion statue stood at the center in the Grand Palais and underneath one paw was an equally enormous pearl from where the models emerged onto the stage.

What came down the runway in Chanel's Fall/Winter 2010/2011 couture collection has similarities to the styles and colors of the latest film adaptation on Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel's life, almost like a homage to the beginnings of the Chanel line.

The U.S. premiere of *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky* coincides with the showing of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2011 collection.

Based on the novel *Coco & Igor* by Chris Greenhalgh, the film follows the supposed affair between Coco Chanel and legendary composer Igor Stravinsky. Coco, played by French actress Anna Mouglalis, and Stravinsky, played by Mads Mikkelsen (*Casino Royale*) begin a heated affair after a struggling Stravinsky and his family move into Chanel's home.

The film is undoubtedly a visual masterpiece and may possibly be more visually appealing than past recreations of Chanel's life, but the chemistry between Mouglalis and Mikkelsen is not all that believable, and the constant and intense eye contact makes it no more convincing. These two powerful artists clash and there is hardly enough substance between them for the affair to last.

This film comes after 2008's Lifetime movie *Coco Chanel*, with Shirley MacLaine as the title character, and 2009's *Coco avant Chanel* (*Coco Before Chanel*).

Lifetime's adaptation was less than stellar, due in part to MacLaine's unfortunate and ridiculous attempt at a French accent, which alone made for a rather unnatural and substandard performance. Regardless, the clothing was beautiful, but no amount

of could hide the fact that the lead role was seriously miscast and the supporting characters could not keep the ship from sinking.

On the other hand, *Coco avant Chanel* gave Chanel's legacy the recognition it deserved. Audrey Tautou's (*Amélie*, *The Da Vinci Code*) Chanel was as spot-on as one could hope for it be, not only for her demeanor and how she presented the clothes, but also the actress' uncannily facial resemblance to the designer herself.

Tautou, already having close ties to Chanel as the leading brand perfume's, Chanel No. 5, spokesmodel, was given the thumbs up by Lagerfeld himself, even though Lagerfeld did not hold a great degree of influence in this film nor the one to debut in late September, though he did make sure to add his expertise on the costume design.

Praise for Tautou's portrayal did not last long and Lagerfeld later went back on his kind comments, saying that if it were his choice he would've rather had Penelope Cruz play the role.

His shocking distaste for the actress came after a comment made by Tautou and the fact that Chanel does not produce rain boots, which Tautou claimed to have worn during an interview.

If that isn't evidence enough of how brutal the fashion industry can be against actresses and models, Lagerfeld's strong opinion on weight is.

After saying that "no one wants to look at fat women," Lagerfeld surprisingly put "plus-size" model Crystal Renn into Chanel's Resort 2011 show. Obviously Crystal Renn is not fat, but the fact that the models walking in Chanel's shows rarely look larger than a size 0, maybe size 2, says a lot about the discrimination that designers have towards models and that which the models have to face.

Although it is difficult to delve into discussion about a fashion house, especially one like Chanel, without mentioning the lingering issues, it clearly remains that the time and energy put into the designs and production cannot be overlooked. That the clothing will always triumph and at the end of the day, what is done is done. Designers must not dwell on past failures or missteps because in reality, they live a world ahead. There is always the next season on the horizon and for Chanel at least, the horizon is looking very good.

THIS WEEK IN MUSIC

RELEASES FOR AUGUST 24, 2010

(IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1 | Isobel Campbell & Mark Lanegan
<i>Hawk</i> | 3 | Jenny Wilson
<i>Hardships!</i> |
| 2 | JJ Grey
<i>Georgia Warhorse</i> | 4 | Little Big Town
<i>The Reason Why</i> |
| 5 | Apocalyptica
<i>7th Symphony</i> | 6 | Ra Ra Riot
<i>Orchard</i> |
| 7 | Klaxons
<i>Surfing The Void</i> | 8 | Katy Perry
<i>Teenage Dream</i> |
| 9 | Usher
<i>Verses</i> | 10 | The Boxer Rebellion
<i>Union</i> |
| 11 | Eels
<i>Tomorrow Morning</i> | | |

WANTED

Actors, technicians, and a stage manager for
Behrend's Fall 2010 theatre production:

World War II In Revue

An Evening of one-acts, songs, and dances
honoring the U.S. at mid-century,

Directed by Dr. Chrystyna Dail

Auditions will consist of cold readings and
12-15 students will be chosen.

Students can audition on September 7th and
8th. The performances will be on November 4-
7 and 11-13, 2010. Students working on the
show can earn up to 3 credit hours. Rehearsal
times are subject to revision.

Contact Dr. Dail at cmd150@psu.edu for
more information.