

# New York Fashion Week embraces spring

US designers tried to lighten a dour national mood for their spring collections with a sunny palette of lighter lilac, marigold and teal

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**M**ellow, beachy colors of ocean blue, marigold yellow and hibiscus pink dominated the runways on Monday at New York Fashion Week.

You were expecting black? Designers tried to lighten a dour national mood for their spring collections with a sunny evolution of the popular fall colors of eggplant, mustard and midnight blue. For spring, they're relying on lighter lilac, marigold and teal.

Carolina Herrera added a dash of persimmon (reddish orange) mixed with graphic black and white, pairing a soft, ethereal look with something more crisp.

"When the economy is not that good, we need to achieve, to do something even more special," Herrera said.

"Women who buy your clothes have to be attracted with something so special that they need to have it." But the closely watched Marc Jacobs went his own way for his runway show on Monday night, rejecting the tropical and graphic trends for an early 20th century-inspired collection rooted in navy and red.

## MARC JACOBS

Marc Jacobs is leading the fashion pack again by going further back than anyone else — back to the early 20th century — to find inspiration.

Jacobs lined his runway with glass panels that had the effect of fun-house mirrors for a packed house that included Jennifer Lopez, Victoria Beckham, Nicole Richie and Winona Ryder.

Jacobs is considered the bellwether American designer; the harem pants that are so popular on the catwalk this week were in his collection back in 2006.

That could mean that it won't be uncommon in a few years for women to be back in bustles and apron-style dresses à la Eliza Doolittle. Of course, these are the modern incarna-



tions — in metallic fabrics and worn in wild mix-and-match combinations.

He also offered waistcoats, back-wrap skirts with ruffles, menswear suit pieces, gaucho pants, draped striped gowns and a stunning black satin cocktail dress with a braided belt.

## CAROLINA HERRERA

At Carolina Herrera, the air and the runway were filled with feelings of civility, sophistication and luxury.

The brand favored by A-lister Renee Zellweger, who was in the audience, consistently plays the chic, well-heeled woman who has little interest in trends. Yet the lovely dresses with organza overlays or delicate ruffles played into the casual elegance that has been a strong theme at Fashion Week.

The palette of hibiscus pink, marigold yellow, teal blue and persimmon mixed with graphic black and white also falls in line with what's been popular with other designers.

"In a season that could turn out tricky, her feminine sensibility looked fresh and beautiful," observed *InStyle* fashion director Cindy Weber Cleary.

## PROENZA SCHOULER

What looks silly on one fashion runway can be stunning on another, as Proenza Schouler proved. The harem pants and jumpsuits that looked gimmicky at other shows were fantastic here.

These were definitely black-tie outfits, practically works of art mimicking the Deco era. They were covered in sequins — one was black and white, another silver and another all black with strategically placed cutaways — that created an optical illusion of movement if the light hit them right.

Maybe designers Jack McCollough and Lazaro Hernandez, largely considered the most influential of the young designers, were aiming for a statement about the old industrial era meeting the technology-fueled future: Other looks had wide, stiff shoulders that one would expect on the costumes of a sci-fi movie, paired with interesting shoes with heels that looked like they were made of spare machinery parts.

## ISAAC MIZRAHI

Inspiration comes from all sorts of places — Isaac Mizrahi took his from the insect world. The collection named *Swarm* had dresses in the spirit of dragonflies, beetles, even cockroaches.

Mizrahi had his tongue in cheek working on these outfits, but he also offered some serious fashion, including a draped gown covered in orange paillettes — the glitterpillar — and the white-on-white jacquard leopard-moth sheath dress. The white beetle-bridged gown, with a wrap-style top and full



The spring 2009 Marc Jacobs collection is modeled during New York Fashion Week on Monday.

PHOTOS: AP

white ballskirt, would look stunning at a garden wedding.

But then there were the shapeless, unfortunate dresses named pupas.

## PETER SOM

Peter Som's spring runway was a closet full of clothes for the young and beautiful set. The collection was an even mix of tropical colors and neutral earth tones, resortwear and cocktail dresses.

Som mixed textures — an organza shirt with tweed skirt, and a shiny linen taffeta dress — which gave the overall impression of chic clothes without stiffness. Corset-style tops with fuller, flirty bottoms also provided some playfulness.

In an interview, Som described the look as his signature of "quirkily romantic dressing and relaxed elegance" — and moving it to the desert. Many of the best looks, however, must have come from Som's oasis: beautiful hues of ocean blue, including lagoon, aqua and azure.

## MISS SIXTY

Miss Sixty's collection hit on many of the major trends to emerge so far at New York Fashion Week: rompers, harem pants, one-shoulder tops, miniskirts and loose, easy outfits.

The line called *New Urban Superheroes* debuted on Sunday night in front of a



crowd that included actress Blake Lively, as well as stylists, editors and retailers.

Designer Wichy Hassan, in an interview, said he was experimenting with some more grown-up looks: "In the collection of Miss Sixty, there's always hippie styles but for next season it's a little more elegant, a little more chic." In other words: This was a Miss Sixty inspired by the more worldly and luxe 1970s instead of the bohemian 1960s.

## THAKOON

The looks on the Thakoon runway had a playful — but sophisticated — naughtiness to them, with prints like lipstick kisses and false eyelashes and chiffon gowns with pleated bodices.

Skin colors such as nude, buff and beige were punctuated with textured black, deep red and bougainvillea. The lipstick kisses were subtle, like a sheer nude kisses trench coat with a tulle fringe.

And rose prints were featured on several of the dresses, such as a rose print seamed dress with dark ribbon trim.

Designer Thakoon Panichgul designed the printed dress that Michelle Obama wore the night her husband accepted the nomination at the Democratic National Convention. "Seeing it was magical," he said.

## TRACY REESE

Tracy Reese's garden blossomed early. The best outfits of her spring collection were done in florals, especially a pale oleander-rose print used for a one-shoulder slip dress covered with appliqued flowers that served as the runway finale.

Other outstanding looks presented Sunday to an audience that included Sanaa Lathan and Brandy were a chrysanthemum lantern skirt with a soft drape matched with a nectarine-colored knit T-shirt with ruffled cap sleeves and strapless garden-print top with a double peplum that was worn with green eyelet trousers.

Furthering the good girl-bad girl theme that has been popular in the early going of Fashion Week, Reese offered an ideal leather-and-lace ensemble: a taupe-colored buttery leather jacket with appliques and a lace tiered skirt.

## LELA ROSE

Lela Rose borrowed draping techniques from the headdresses of the African Mende tribe for dresses that blurred the line between funky global styles and cocktail attire for uptown girls.

One of the most interesting things to emerge from her runway show on Sunday at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week was a print Rose called "heat map" and looked like a satellite photo on Google Maps. It was an attractive navy and red print but also seemed like a social commentary about the world getting smaller.

The 2009 Spring fashion collection from Isaac Mizrahi as seen during New York Fashion Week on Monday.

PHOTOS: AP

Left: A model wears a layered silk dress in a geometric pattern at the Jonathan Saunders fashion show in New York on Monday. Far left: Models during the Robert Geller fashion show in New York on Monday.

PHOTOS: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

