

# Paris designers

## defy economic woes

*With the world's financial system teetering on the brink, top designers dreamed up antidotes to the economic blues that plague haute couture*

BY **JOELLE DIDERICH**  
AP, PARIS

As retail stocks plunged on Monday, Paris designers came up with antidotes to the economic blues plaguing the luxury industry.

British designer John Galliano tapped tribal influences in his ready-to-wear show for Christian Dior. Yohji Yamamoto created a haven for Zen contemplation, while Vivienne Westwood had simple advice for fashion addicts hit by the downturn: do it yourself!

French fashion label Cacharel celebrated its 50th anniversary as the Dow Jones shuddered. The index lost nearly 800 points, the biggest point drop ever for a single day, after the US House of Representatives unexpectedly defeated a US\$700 billion emergency plan for the country's financial system.



**CHRISTIAN DIOR**

Galliano went tribal for his Dior collection — tribal chic, that is.

The rebel designer used studs, staples, shells and python leather to toughen up thigh-grazing summer dresses and translucent evening gowns in his spring-summer collection, shown in a tent in the Tuileries gardens in front of guests including actresses Emma Watson, Marion Cotillard and Eva Green.

Models with hair crimped and teased into conical bobs strutted down the catwalk in fierce platform sandals, some featuring intricately carved heels that resembled fertility statues.


It was a far cry from the demurely elegant outfits that have made Dior the label of choice of France's first lady, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, but the see-through skirts will likely be lined once they hit the shop floor, if only to cater to Dior's large Middle Eastern clientele.

That will leave Bruni-Sarkozy free to pick from red carpet stunners including a striped black silk dress with a jet bead embroidered bodice.



British fashion designer John Galliano, far right, acknowledges applause at the end of his spring-summer 2009 ready-to-wear collection for Christian Dior, presented in Paris on Monday.

PHOTOS: AGENCIES



**YOHJI YAMAMOTO**

Yamamoto found a perfect recipe for meditation: ghostly models ambling along an illuminated catwalk, a monochrome color scheme and a soothing live piano sound track.

The Japanese master of minimalism appeared to have distilled fashion to its purest essence, all the while indulging his penchant for surrealist exercises like attaching strips of fabric to the elbow of a perfectly tailored black jacket, or blowing up a white shirt to oversized proportions.

In the latest of a series of collaborations with other brands, he unveiled a line of 1950s-style cat eye sunglasses developed with Linda Farrow Vintage.

Yamamoto, who turns 65 this week, is also about to fulfill a lifelong dream with the imminent opening of a Paris flagship store on the exclusive Rue Cambon — a few doors down from the former apartment of his style mentor, Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel.





**CACHAREL**

Cacharel, which helped to revolutionize women's fashion in the 1960s with its flirty, feminine creations, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a catwalk show that looked both to the past and the future.

The first half of the display showcased the creations of Mark Eley and Wakako Kishimoto, the design duo better known as Eley Kishimoto, who were hired last year to give the brand a face-lift.

Models paraded in easy, breezy summer dresses and pajama-style slacks in upbeat shades of mustard, turquoise and purple, some featuring printed or crocheted motifs of migrating birds for a retro tinge.

Then, in a surprise finale, dozens of models emerged in the label's vintage Liberty floral print cotton dresses, before taking a bow with 76-year-old founder Jean Bousquet.

Above: British designer Mark Eley, left, and Japanese designer Wakako Kishimoto have given Cacharel an upbeat face-lift.

PHOTOS: AP



**King of Zen minimalism, Yohji Yamamoto, has pared down his designs to encompass fashion's purest essence.**

PHOTOS: REUTERS AND EPA

**VIVIENNE WESTWOOD**

Westwood earned the nickname of Queen of Punk by cobbling together outfits for the Sex Pistols with safety pins. Now she wants you to do the same.

"In these hard times — dress up," she said in a handwritten statement handed out to guests. "There is status in wearing your favorites over and over until they grow old (patina) or fall apart."

One model stepped down the catwalk wrapped in reams of lush pink taffeta straight off the roll and gladiator sandals with natural leather straps that extended all the way up the thigh.

Ever the political campaigner, the flame-haired British designer took her bow wearing a green T-shirt emblazoned with "US\$30 billion" — the sum she said was needed per year to save the rainforest.

It was not the first time Westwood has criticized the futility of the fashion industry, but it was hard not to feel like she was shooting herself in the foot. After all, if anyone can do it, why pay big bucks for designer duds?



**Vivienne Westwood may be trying to put herself out of a job.**

PHOTOS: AP AND EPA