

Fashion heights

This season's fashionista is simultaneously strong and powerful, writes **Maeve Hosea**; sensual and joyful in clean, minimalist daywear, flamboyant evening wear and luxurious accessories



Earlier this year, on the runways of New York, Milan, London and Paris, leather and tweed were back in a big way and so were the glitz and glamour of the 1980s. After-dark looks employ shimmer and sparkle as well as bold floral patterns. Colour takes hold with accents of crimson, cornflower and canary used as on-point statements. Pleats are pervasive. The outerwear story is all about the dramatic layering of oversized coats, blanket throws, capes and more, allowing fashion devotees to bundle up with wit and style. Let's consider the headline trends from four of the fashion big hitters.

CHANEL GOES BACK TO NATURE

Legendary designer Karl Lagerfeld's collection for Chanel

this autumn/winter looks to the great outdoors for sartorial inspiration, a place where coats sweep the floor and necks are swathed in gorgeous oversized scarves. Championing the return of outerwear, Chanel's runway at Paris' Grand Palais was a feast for the eye, an instagramable spectacle. The runway was lined with nine towering oak trees and overflowed with crisp brown leaves. With Lagerfeld muses such as Carla Bruni and Keira Knightly in the front row, the moody autumn forest proved a suitable backdrop for a sassy yet infinitely wearable collection.

This season the designer successfully marries Chanel's signatures of tweed, pearls and little black dresses with feisty statements. Underneath the coats are leaf print ruffle dresses or

black lace minis, jazzed up with leather opera gloves in zingy shades and oversized earrings featuring the iconic interlocking 'C' logo. Covetable items of this graceful, yet strong, look include quilted black trousers, elegant skirt suits and gold over-the-knee-boots. chanel.com

LEATHER ACCENTS AT LOEWE

The artisanal approach continues to reign supreme at Loewe, a label loved by discerning style seekers including Jenifer Lopez and Queen Rania of Jordan.

This season, creative director Jonathan Anderson puts a focus on the Spanish fashion house's craft heritage. His collection, a showcase for the art of construction and deconstruction, is technically adept yet classic and elegant.

Leather is key to the original yet wearable look. We see it deftly employed as both fabric and adornment, adding depth and detail to flared coats and capes.

It is cleverly used to impose structure on a cotton plissé dress, or is spliced through lace. And, it falls in vertical panels down smocks; edges the pockets of trousers; and appears as the puffed sleeves of a coat. Must have pieces include calf length coats; airy white silk dresses with hints of lace beneath and the stylish leather edged suiting. There are also shimmery evening gowns, razor pleat skirts and miniature totes – one of this season's most notable accessory trends – in beautiful two-tone leather. loewe.com

POTENT GLAMOUR FROM YVES SAINT LAURENT

"Fashion dies, but style remains," observed Yves Saint Laurent, the French designer whose bold take on classic Parisian glamour spanned four decades. The bold YSL oeuvre epitomised freedom and elegance from the beginning and is widely credited with inventing the modern woman's wardrobe. In the 1960s, Saint Laurent famously pioneered 'le smoking', a tuxedo for women.

Power dressing and sex appeal are the watch words for the label this season too. At the ready-to-wear shows in Paris earlier this year, YSL designer Anthony Vaccarello's models walked the runway in tiny shorts, plunge-front tops and thigh-skimming dresses.

Top: Exterior of a Valentino store in Las Vegas strip – Valentino is an Italian luxury fashion house founded in 1960 by Valentino Garavani



Whilst some wore sheer black tights and others sported long bare legs, the models wore boots with almost every outfit. They were accessorised with diamond earrings throughout.

In a predominantly black colour palette, signature YSL looks this season include evening gowns with inventive necklines, metallic jacquard tops and sequinned

Top: Karl Lagerfeld and Chanel models at Grand Palais for Paris Fashion Week
Above: Yves Saint Laurent Museum in Paris
Right: Veronika Heilbrunner and Justin O'Shea attend a Loewe show

tuxedo jackets. Other covetable elements of the brand's signature decadent luxury include shearling, leopard print and statement jewellery such as glittering chandelier earrings. ysl.com

DREAMY ESCAPISM AT VALENTINO

Dreamy Escapism at Valentino Valentino, a fashion house with a predilection for romance, makes a strong case for both drama and elegance this season.

A stunning voluminous pink feathered gown worn by model Kaia Gerber was just one of the show-stopping looks of the label's haute couture show earlier this year.

This season's collection sees talented designer Pierpaolo Piccioli building on the hallowed heritage of Valentino himself, the couturier who famously dressed everyone from first ladies to sirens of the Silver Screen. Continuing that tradition, today's fanbase counts Dakota Fanning and Melania Trump among its number.

For autumn/winter Piccioli's creative influences include the drama of Greek mythology and 18th century paintings, which he expertly reinvents into powerful, modern silhouettes. Stunning pieces in crepe, organza and wool

come in painterly colours, with flowing lines, floral motifs and lavish embellishment. The must-have buys for lovers of Valentino's particular variety of courageous elegance include backless jumpsuits, extravagant capes, bold print evening gowns and long pleated skirts. valentino.com
fashionweekdates.com ■
The world's top fashion weeks in Paris, New York, London and Milan respectively, run each September and February with the haute couture shows scheduled for July in Paris.

