

Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer: Sheer Dressing for Spring/Summer 2018

For Spring/Summer 2018 ready-to-wear fashion there is one highly apparent trend and that is the sheer, the transparent, the translucent with no opacity visible (scarcely). Layers operate to indicate some modesty but generally speaking the body is on show underneath barely-there layers of clothing. This allows a total fabric feast as different combinations and nuances of see-throughness can be utilised and displayed. Designers have clearly had fun experimenting with a myriad of textiles and most exude femininity and are fluid in motion; wafting around the body in a gauzy, filmy, breezy manner as befitting the perfect summer day where gentle, warm air cools.

Ultra-feminine materials - lace, chiffon, organza and tulle are chosen but also functional plastic provides protection from showers that can occur anytime during a British summer. Volume with clarity is shown to result in areas of clothing that appear like clouds floating around the wearer, puffs of nothingness that surround and encase. Construction is evident where built-up edges, narrow seams and deep hems allow for varying densities as fabric ends, joins and folds. Collars and cuffs offer a movement towards opacity too, but never fully achieve this. Details are conspicuous where large patch pockets and belts nod to the utilitarian.

The body underneath is perceptible and only lightly covered with the ensuing layers. Underwear is able to be seen and for this reason simply-cut knickers with more coverage than usual are adopted and triangular-cut bras worn (or sometimes no bras). Long shirts are worn over thin skirts, belted jackets over delicate dresses, similar items of clothing are worn over/under each other.

Known for its intricate, knitted designs Missoni showed fine-gauge and see-through constructions – fishnet and chainmail effects as well as chiffon knits and warp-knitted Raschel lace. Lace-over-lace, embroidery on lace, nets of knit, intarsia and loom-worked knitted structures all demonstrate immense artisanal skill. With inspiration taken from nature, Angela Missoni chose pale or dusty pastels, pretty but strong. The clothes themselves are fluid, as most knitted garments are, but have a rich sensuality – vaporous and billowing.

Fendi selected sheer fabrics with graphic stripes, chevrons and summer plaids meeting perfectly to distract from the body discernible beneath. Here, designers Silvia Venturini Fendi and Karl Lagerfeld took inspiration from the Italian art movement – Futurism that celebrates speed and change, above all else. Go-fast lines allude to this with their differing directions - horizontally across the body and slicing diagonally. The eye follows these indicators as they hold a shape away through their choice of fabric, semi-transparent and at-once fluid and structured.

Layers of tulle build to create voluminous yet diaphanous forms in the designs presented by Simone Rocha. Inspired by vintage Victorian dolls with their fragile porcelain faces, the collection is predominantly white with swathes of the palest of pink/flesh cloth and lavish embellishment. Lace features scalloped edges, broderie-anglaise has cut-out florals, ruffles create relief areas and vivid red, sparkly embroidery act as a foil against the pale sea of softness. The embroidery has imagery of people (outlined or filled in), linking arms across the garments to impart an appropriately child-like quality to the sophistication and old-world charm of the exquisite lace. Ballooning sleeves are gathered full over upper arms to taper down to elbows in contrasting slimness, while tailored, belted jackets give an architectural form to work with the innocence and playfulness portrayed.

Christopher Kane added a different tone with a collection that alludes to domesticity and potential eroticism behind closed suburban doors? This designer is inspired for this collection by all aspects of home life. He references cleaning mops - fringed detailing on garments, footwear and also for earrings, all manifesting movement; dusters - squares of fabric stitched to hang on the bias in handkerchief-style arrangements, dishcloths - mesh-type textiles and china figurines - attention to form. Bold and bright duster-coloured yellows are teamed beautifully with fluid fabrics in various transparencies and translucencies. A can-see-all aesthetic prevails but extra large patch pockets, with red zipper accents, protect the wearer's modesty (somewhat) by being placed across the chest or slung on the line of the hips to cover upper thighs.

Preen by Thornton Bregazzi have created wispy, intangible clothing for Spring/Summer 2018 that dances around the wearer – ruffled for texture and loosely-cut to graze the skin, a far cry from body-con and much more flutteringly flattering. Designers Thea Bregazzi and Justin Thornton have chosen gossamer threads for clothes that resemble loose negligée-like gowns that literally drift, trail and wind around the wearer's form. The construction lines in the very making of the garments are clearly visible, highlighting asymmetric areas such as necklines that are made to nonchantly slide off shoulders. Inspiration is taken from the 18th century with its ruffles, gathers and abundance of fabric. The overall look is one that is simultaneously ethereal, powerful and liberating.

Chanel exemplifies wonderful textiles in this collection by Karl Lagerfeld where water is conjured up by the employment of flexible, high-sheen plastics and veils of transparent and semi-transparent fabrics. Crystal-clear, waterproof PVC is used for brimmed hats; capes whose edges are decoratively delineated – jacket length or short and simply covering the shoulders; fingerless gloves; just-below-knee-high (or thigh-high variations) boots and large tote bags carried alongside the obligatory Chanel handbag. The water theme is carried through in large crystal drop earrings. The 1960s, as a fashion decade is acknowledged here with its use of unusual materials and a look that borders on the science-

fiction aesthetic. Here, that is kept in check by Chanel-typical textured fabrics – bouclés and slubs that are always plush and interesting to touch. Soft, ultra-pastels for tweeds continue with a penchant for raw edges and the undone versus the structured. A glorious collection that simultaneously fuses the past, present and future.

Lyrical and abundantly romantic the collections for Spring/Summer 2018 evoke the poignantly sweet impermanence and transience of this season - fleeting moments of time that we all wish to grasp on to for longer.

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