

## **London: full of eastern promise**

*Bronwyn Cosgrave*

Midway through London fashion week, gossip circulated that Phoebe Philo, the former Chloé designer who has just taken over as creative director at Celine, may relocate the label's design studio from Paris to London. Back in the late 1990s, as Tom Ford hit his stride at Gucci, he did the same, shifting the Italian luxury label's atelier from somnambulant Florence to swanky, cosmopolitan Mayfair. Ford chose London because it is the centre for everything fuelling the fashion design process -namely contemporary art, pop music and product design. And so it remains, although a fashion editor, cooling her Yves Saint Laurent-platform-shod feet between London shows, explained that Philo - who is married to New Bond Street art dealer Max Wigram -probably wants to remain in London to be close to their children. Whatever her reasoning, fusty Celine would certainly perk up with a dash of the effortlessly offbeat cool that characterises the best fashion week shows staged in the city.

London's leading edge is a consequence of the looks now consistently delivered by its crop of East End designers - those creative forces who, operating studios in Hackney (the borough with some of London's cheapest rents), displayed the most directional clothes (seen in the pictures here). One, the 25-year-old Scot Christopher Kane, shuttles between his Dalston, east London, studio and Milan, where he consults for Versace. He pushed "jungle wild" to a new height of sophistication with his "me Tarzan, you Jane" babydoll dresses. Shoreditch-based Erdem delivered gowns made of vibrant Italian Taroni silks and delicate French lace, as well as sharp Mackintosh raincoats. The look strikes the balance between edgy and demure. Glamour girl Roksanda Ilincic showed the best frills.

Giles Deacon - although Ms design headquarters is a converted Shoreditch school-house - often resists the East London tag because, at 39, he is nearly a decade older than the rest. Rumour also has it that next year he'll leave London to present his collection in New York. Will Manhattan get Pac-Man - the theme driving his spring/ summer 2009 collection? The move may be risky for Deacon, whose collection - also riffed the bold colour palette associated with designer Peter Seville's album - covers for 1980s Manchester bands such as New Order.

The prime minister's wife, Sarah Brown, at the Downing Street reception celebrating fashion week's 25th anniversary on Monday, wore a purple scoop-neck number by Jaeger. Perhaps because, as she reasoned when Carla Bruni-Sarkozy arrived in London in March, "When you are standing next to a supermodel, nobody pays that much attention." Brown should have chosen home-grown high fashion over mid-market, mass-produced clothes. She would have sparkled in a suit or dress by Graeme Black - the Scottish designer who launched the week on Sunday with an assured collection of sumptuous knit suits, inventive lightweight leather and modern event finery. Or she could have worn exceptional tailoring by Julien MacDonald, who presented an atypical line of streamlined-luxe in shades of chocolate, navy and sand.

After all, if Bruni-Sarkozy tails her husband gowned in Dior with Van Cleef & Arpels baubles, and Laura Bush wears Oscar de la Renta in the White House, why can't Brown edge her outfits upmarket?

The prime minister himself would have proved welcome at another big LFW party, this one hosted by Alber Elbaz, Lanvin's creative director. The party marked the opening of a Lanvin men's wear flagship boutique on Savile Row. If the venerable Paris brand's bespoke suit service proved too costly for the PM to justify in today's climate, perhaps Lanvin's PR might stretch to a discount?

**Fonte: Financial Times, London, September 20 e 21 2008, Life & Arts, p. 7.**