

New equations

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The party ain't over 'til the red-haired lady bows - such was the message last week at Sonia Rykiel's 40th anniversary show/dinner/interpretive retrospective, where, in honour of the French legend, 40 colleagues from Giorgio Armani to Karl Lagerfeld and Rodarte created their version of an iconic Rykiel style (the Mulleavy sisters, for example, came up with an "Obama" knit). The event went on until long past the scheduled hour of 9pm - hell, it started long past the scheduled hour. Hank Paulson might be on his knees, commodity prices may be falling, but in Paris, though fashion might feel a bit like the Titanic, the violins have resolved to play all night.

There were parties for books, courtesy of the American ambassador, who threw open his doors to celebrate retail supremo Marvin Traub's memoir, *Like No Other Career*, and Roger Vivier's Diego Delia Valle, who opened the store's private salon for Michael Robert's *Fashion Victims: The Catty Catalogue of Stylish Casualties from A-Z*.

Then there were parties to inaugurate new stores: Bulgari's bi-level boutique on avenue George V, its largest store in Europe, and Ralph Lauren's emporium on avenue Montaigne, its largest women's wear store in the world. There were parties in museums - the model-packed opening of Patrick Demarchelier's 400-photograph retrospective was at the Petit Palais; the Eiffel Tower, meanwhile, held a celebration of the Rock & Republic ad campaign. There was one at a bath house, for Jean Paul Gaultier's new look Evian bottle and even a party for a teddy bear: Karl Lagerfeld's design for Steiff. Hey, we're all going to need something to snuggle with in the cold months ahead.

Still, none of the above quite got the overwhelming screams that greeted Zac Efron and Ashley Tisdale during the premiere of *High School Musical 3* in Pigalle, an event that occurred just next to the hallowed halls of the Folies Bergère, where Loewe was holding its presentation fete and where stylistas sipped champagne and wondered what was going on. Indeed, runway-side appearances by Salma Hayek, Emma Watson, Milla Jovovich, Catherine Deneuve and Uma Thurman (among others), got little more than ho-hums. Maybe fashion is singing the wrong tune.

Or maybe it's just not adding up. This certainly appears to be the conclusion, not of the trend-watchers, who seem pretty agreed on the preponderance of jackets, bling and volume (see above), but rather of the designers themselves, who appear to be taking a self-inflicted course in geometry this season. Fashion seems to have gone back to maths class as evidenced by the leather hexagons at *Comme des Garçons*, which designer Rei Kawakubo pieced together to form dome-like separates, and the silver sequinned hexagons creating the flash on Dries van Noten's final showpiece. The geometric look was also visible in the black-and-white squares and rectangles that composed Viktor & Rolf's op art tights and T-shirts, and the multiple triangles forming Roger Vivier's bag of the moment, the Prism. Which, given the markets (parties notwithstanding), might be a good idea.

It's not the only idea around: cashmere king Lucien Pellat-Finet, for example, eschewed maths for the art market, collaborating with Marc Quinn to create three sweaters with Quinn's famous flower series silk-screened on each, thus reaching out not only to fashionistas, but the Frieze crowd. Message: if you can't get the original, you can always get the sweater. Meanwhile, jeweller Tom Binns was also making sartorial floral art, deconstructing vintage paste gems and recombining them into rainbow-hued gardens of collars.

The prototypes actually do go to various galleries, where they are displayed as sculpture and sold to collectors, but happily for the rest of us, somewhat less statement-like versions have been created for everyday Marie Antoinette wear. Called "Faux Real," the cuffs, necklaces and pins are very recession chic - politically correct and incorrect at the same time - as well as being simply beautiful.

Fonte: Financial Times, London, October 4 e 5 2008, Life & Arts, p. 10.