



Valentino RESORT 2026

There are many dilemmas that pop up in the industry now and again: should fashion make one dream or should it sell? Should it reflect the moment or offer an escape from reality? In times when established brands and indie labels alike are scratching their heads to find the right formula to reverse the slump in luxury sales, the answers might be contrasting.

But probably few things have been darted more with such questions than Alessandro Michele's work at Valentino, which over the past year has polarized the fashion audience, who are either enthusiastic about his unique, flamboyant style or criticizing it as Gucci redux.

Both can now have their take on a slight shift.

For resort 2026, Michele conjured a fun look book showing his tribe on a bed, mainly sleeping but also occasionally playing the guitar, doing a crossword puzzle, taking selfies or having a snack. While one can fantasize about what these characters are dreaming of, Michele seems to have woken up to reality.

Still oozing his distinctive handwriting, these images revealed a less charged approach to looks, which gave more clarity to his designs as well as those affinities between his and the brand's codes that sometime get lost in the

razzmatazz of runway shows.

The women's offering was utterly feminine, with all its chiffon dresses;

polka dot ruched gowns; bouclé sets in candy tones; bon-ton skirt suits, and girly A-line dresses with cutouts, as well as cute cropped cardigans with lace inserts paired with pencil skirts with feathery trims to create pastel colorblocking.

Floral embroideries, ruffles, bows and heart shapes were recurrent elements, as were the bourgeois undertone and the echoes of the '70s and '80s. These surfaced in the more boho printed frocks, broderie anglaise dresses, denim separates and folk-inflected vests, as well as the flared silhouettes of pants that came with fitted blazer jackets in tailoring.

The collection charmingly ping-ponged between the ornamental and the streamlined, both lovely in their own way. The introduction of gobelin jackets added to the opulent velvet ones embroidered with sequins and beads and the strong graphism of the luxe outerwear pieces, which ranged from shearling trimmed coats to shorter options in animalier motifs.

The stunning eveningwear alternated between delicate tulle gowns and matching capes richly embellished and sequined and essential dresses, including a long-sleeved one in the house's signature red with a side gathering and slit and a black-and-ivory number with see-through detailing on the front.

What if fashion dreams and sales could coexist, after all? Looking at his résumé, Michele surely knows a thing or two about it. — *Sandra Salibian*



