

At Celine, Michael Rider's Salade Mixte

The designer's debut for the house contained nods to the tenures of Hedi Slimane, Phoebe Philo and Michael Kors, as well as Rider's own work for Polo Ralph Lauren, reports Angelo Flaccavento.

By Angelo Flaccavento



PARIS — Michael Rider was looking both radiant and a little relieved at the end of his debut show as creative director of Celine. For anyone stepping into a top designer role nowadays, the pressure to perform is intense: the verdict comes fast and mercilessly on social media, not to mention the current state of the luxury market.

First, the good news: From slouchy tailoring and silk scarves to bags, bijoux and menswear, there was a lot of product on display meant to cater to many audiences, so the collection could perform well commercially. Whether the outing coalesced into a clear creative vision is a different story, however. And without that, product is just product.

Before decamping to the US where he put Polo Ralph Lauren back on track, Rider was a top design deputy during at Phoebe Philo's Celine, so today's show was a homecoming of sorts, held in the very same place — the tony Celine headquarters on Rue Vivienne — where he used to work. And the *salade mixte* he presented was inflected by practically all of his own past experiences, as well as all of Celine's previous identities, going all the way back to founder Celine Vipiana, who in 1968 grew the label from *maroquinerie* to *vestiaire*.

There were the broad shouldered blazers and coats with abstract buttoning, sweeping volumes and twisted takes on the classics that defined “old Celine” and the skinny jeans, blousons, shrunken blazers and scent of the bourgeoisie that dominated Hedi's tenure, as well as some decorative touches from Celine by Michael Kors and some hefty injections of prep — rugby shirts, colourful jumpers — that felt very Polo. Despite the Americana, however, it was the French sense of nonchalance that popped the most.

What's interesting is that Rider, just like Jonathan Anderson at Dior, has his eye on style and attitude rather than silhouette and design; on the way the pieces are put together and combined rather than their individual value, which is a way to let merch take the lead without succumbing to it. Taming the overstyling might help make things clearer.

