



Gladiator glamour at Dolce & Gabbana

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It has been a busy few weeks for Dolce & Gabbana. The Italian fashion house landed one of the most coveted gigs this year, designing Lauren Sánchez Bezos's wedding dress, but that clearly didn't require the designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana to pull any punches in their Alta Moda show in Rome on Monday night.

"Full throttle" doesn't even begin to cover a show that was held in the jaw-dropping environs of the Roman Forum, the outdoor space that lay at the heart of the city during the ancient era.

Ninety looks were paraded down the Via Sacra, Rome's first street, before a front row that ran the gamut from Cher to Isabella Rossellini by way of Erling Haaland. (One front-row conversation was overheard to go: "When are you going to play for Lazio? Actually, better still, when are you going to buy it?")

Alta Moda is Dolce & Gabbana's extremely Italian take on the French-forged phenomenon that

is couture. Think incredibly expensive clothes, made to a client's measurements, with an often operatic

flavour. Just one of the things that is so clever about the brand's approach is that the show forms part of a three-day annual event, held somewhere in Italy, to which it invites 450 of its highest-spending clients. And what do these clients do in the run-up? Order themselves more Dolce — which makes for an audience dressed at least as theatrically as the models.

On the catwalk, Rome's most famous buildings and paintings adorned vast ballgowns, sleek tunic dresses and brocade opera coats that, volume-wise, sat somewhere in between. Some models were breastplated like gladiators, their body armour accessorised with flowing skirts.

Others wore velvet gowns draped like togas. Jewellery came in the form of miniature renderings of classical sculpture.

Yet there was another, more recent reference point too — the 1950s heyday of the film studio complex Cinecittà. This was

made manifest in a series of exquisitely pleated or woven dresses, some of which — in Alta Moda land — might almost pass as day wear. The clients were placing orders on their phones even before the show had ended.



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A funny thing happened on the way to the Forum, where Isabella Rossellini, left, was on the front row

