

Milan Day Two: Minimalism Vs. Maximalism

If Simone Bellotti's debut was faithful to Jil Sander, restraint was never an option at Fendi, setting up a day of stark contrasts at Milan Fashion Week, writes Angelo Flaccavento.

By Angelo Flaccavento



MILAN — The second day at Milan fashion week was about the face-off between minimalism and maximalism.

Simone Bellotti's much anticipated debut at Jil Sander, after his successful upturning of Bally, had profound clarity, the kind that glorifies items and makes them desirable. The outing was almost surgical — going back to the stark, severe foundations set by Jil herself — at the risk of feeling, at times, a little chilly and scholastic. But hey, it was an assured start and a resolute homecoming, in which Bellotti's own signature — as fragile as it is twisted — registered lightly, leaving one craving more.

Everything pointed clearly in the direction of Jil Sander's founder and her legacy, from the showspace laid out in the whitewashed, modern premises of the company headquarters overlooking Piazza Castello to 90s model Guinevere Van Seenus, who opened the show. Bellotti did a wonderful job in mixing rational, uptight tailoring with more body-defining pieces, mirrored leathers and mille-feuille dresses. The dresses molded like car hoods — after Richard Prince — were a happy specimen of Bellotti's ability to mix the conceptual with the seductive, even though a stronger dose of sensuality could be what the doctor ordered. The menswear, which came with a charming Helmut Lang tingle, was more accomplished in this sense. In any case, the groundwork has been set. Now, I'd love to see the sharp twists Bellotti is so good at.

Restraint has never been an option at Fendi, but there was ample clarity in the tension between baroque and purity, in the proclivity for things that are not quite as they seem, in the humorous take on uber-luxe. Not this time: albeit upbeat, joyous and vivid, and fantastically Fendi in its faultless execution, the collection went a bit here and a bit there.

While Silvia Venturini Fendi's coming exit is the talk of the town, she delivered a romantic vision of the future, complete with a pixelated, Mark Newson-designed set that had a charm to it, plenty of Prada-ism and Meccano-style embroideries. There was a lack of cohesion, no doubt, but perhaps that was, at least in part, intentional: "I never adhered to one single beauty standard and narrowing it all to the cult of beauty is, quite frankly, pointless," Venturini Fendi said.





At Missoni, Alberto Caliri is on a mission to make the house of zigzag and fiammato synonymous with a bottomless look: voluminous, mannish tops over bare legs. He launched the idea last season and carried it over this time around. That's probably a good thing. But on the runway, truth be told, it looked a bit déjà-vu and more than a little Isabel Marant, with the Missonification of mismatched patterns and glitter galore adding much needed charm.

The effect was head scratching: there were a lot of tempting pieces — mannish jumpers and bikini bottoms, but also bijoux and bags — and the idea of owning a look is certainly clever, but the Marant feel was out of sync with the times, and far too obvious. Caliri is an instinctive designer; he should probably let out his wilder instincts.

Over at No. 21, Alessandro Dell'Acqua mixed grunge and preppy, 1940s and 1990s, slipdresses, wrapdresses and coats, with the consummate ability of a fine dressmaker and a renewed sense of lightness. Sure, Dell'Acqua's original sin — a devotion to Mrs. Prada — was front and centre, as the goings took a Miu Miu turn, but they also had a palpable freshness. Just as admirable is the way Dell'Acqua keeps doing his charming thing without screaming for attention.

At Etro, after fighting to bring his own signature to the table, Marco De Vincenzo seems to have been swept away by the codes of the house, for better and worse. On a superficial level, it looks like little has changed, but on closer inspection De Vincenzo's penchant for psychedelia is apparent. The show was full of good ideas, but too heavily styled and thus hard to digest.

