

## Milan Day Four: Beginnings and Endings

A closely watched Versace debut and a surprise exit at Sunnei marked the fourth day of Milan Fashion Week, reports Angelo Flaccavento.

By Angelo Flaccavento



MILAN — Stories that begin and stories that end. We had both on the fourth day of Milan Fashion Week.

Despite suggestions that he was out before he'd even begun amid an ownership change, Dario Vitale delivered a blasting Versace debut that was both exactly what the industry was expecting and its opposite. Did it look like Versus? For sure. Truth be told, it looked like Istante, too. But most of all it felt utterly personal, in every way: more brazen, younger, brainier, for a new customer. Vitale, a Miu Miu alum, clearly knows how to pack a punch, with an assuredness that was full of intent, at once studious and effortless.

“Versace is part of popular culture: Everybody has their own ideas about it,” he said after the show. “It is like Coca Cola.” But Vitale did Versace his own way, opting for the kind of Dionysian derangement that maximises the sexual aspect of dressing — highlighting erogenous zones while hinting at undressing. He did away with the gods, goddesses and otherworldly bodies, however, and that's what made it look very different, despite his delving into several eras of the archive.

Die-hard Versace fans may turn away, but Vitale's plan seems to be an extraction of the brand's spirit and a rewiring of its audience, connecting the label with those who probably always loved it, but never dared to wear it. Seeing the Versace signatures — menswear in particular — on bodies so different was cunning, and offered ample food for thought.

Sure, Vitale's upbringing at Prada was there to see — in the way he intellectualises the bourgeoisie and in the mock-haphazard way he put Versace's eras together — but it does not come across as an affectation. Vitale is a brainy Scorpio, and the clash is intriguing. His first outing felt Dionysian in nature. Adding a bit of Apollinean clarity could polish things up.

Just a few hours after they mock-auctioned off their label Sunnei at a presentation sponsored by Christie's, the ever sardonic Simone Rizzo and Loris Messina announced they were stepping down from the brand and incubator they created in 2014 — for real. It was a reflection on the transactional nature of contemporary creativity, but the collection — very graphic, very Sunnei — worn by some of the participants in the spectacle, barely registered.

At Tod's, Matteo Tamburini stuck to his gentle, signature gestures. Inspired by Claude Nori's photographs of the Italian summer holidays, the collection captured the gentle melancholy of the end of August, channeling it into deceptively simple pieces that were an ode to the unique *savoir faire* of the





house: intarsia leather shirts and scarf dresses, leather minidresses and long dresses, crinkled suede trench coats. Tamburini is pragmatic as he is indulgent: a contrast that he resolves effortlessly, with a light hand.

Institution's Galib Gasanov grew up in Georgia in an Azeri community and now lives and works in Italy while keeping ties with his native land and its endangered crafts. This is exactly what makes the brand he has created special: a stubborn will to translate traditional weaves into modern, upcycled materials and dramatically streamlined forms. This was Institution's fourth collection but second show, and it felt somehow reminiscent of Dior's New Look but in a rugged, ancestral sort of way that was a palpable sign of an auteur in the making.

