

Paris Day Two: Louis Vuitton, Courrèges, Dries Van Noten

You too can play “Connections” with fashion’s brightest stars, writes Tim Blanks.

By Tim Blanks



Louis Vuitton’s Spring/Summer 2026 show played out to a soundtrack of Cate Blanchett seductively intoning David Byrne’s lyrics for “This Must Be the Place” by Talking Heads, because when Nicolas Ghesquiere asks a multiple award-winning actress to speak on his behalf, she says yes. That’s some kind of influence. As is the option of presenting said show in the recently overhauled apartments in the Louvre that were once the summer domicile of Anne of Austria, Queen of France, Louis XIII’s wife and mother of the Sun King. Despite scenographer Marie-Anne Derville’s earnest efforts to anchor the presentation in a contemporary apartment of sorts inserted into Anne’s living quarters, the overwhelming impression was of a grandiose, almost forbidding 17th century splendour. This is how plutocrats of the past lived. Today’s quasi-trillionaires bobbing around on their sailboats can only gawp in wonder.

So there was a fundamental perversity in Ghesquiere choosing such a location to stage a collection celebrating the intimacy, the serenity of staying at home with those you love most. Cocooning, in other words. In amidst all those vast 17th century spaces defined by hard surfaces, “the expectation of something soft”, as he called it, was surely doomed to disappointment. But if Byrne’s lyrics declare, “home is where I want to be,” avant-pop’s master of the acerbic undertow also suggests, “make it up as we go along.” This sentiment seemed perfectly in tune with Ghesquiere’s approach.

The collection was an extraordinary grab-bag of bits and pieces from an irrational interior. Could be someone’s apartment, could be someone’s mind. There were volumes that were purest boudoir: peignoirs, nightgowns, pajamas. There were outfits for a home gym, including the couturiest funnel-collared track suit you’ll ever see. There were tapestries and curtains and carpets and couch covers and wallpaper patterns. There were turbans (Anyone here remember “Abigail’s Party”?). There was a fabulous fringed hostess gown. And there were clogs with hellacious couldn’t-find-anything-else orange ankle socks. All immaculately crafted, I’m absolutely sure, but cheerfully bereft of any guiding principle. Except home. Where the heart is — and the Lord knows how many other organs, hidden away. Or, as Ghesquiere said when one of his post-show interrogators wondered how Vuitton’s travel roots fitted into this crazy domestic reverie, “Don’t you take a little piece of you everywhere when you travel?”

Fashion’s other Nicolas followed a path as idiosyncratic as Ghesquiere’s with his spring collection for Courrèges. Nicolas Di Felice, a tidy, precise Belgian, is in love with disturbance. There was one show





where his runway rose and fell like a living, breathing organism. It released one mighty exhalation for the finale. For this collection, Di Felice chose the title “Blinded by the Sun.” It was his way of addressing the confusion of our paralytically ambiguous era. We no longer know what’s real or what’s fake. Meanwhile, the sun, floating high above, is the embodiment of cosmic duality. It tans you to a healthy glow, and burns you to a crisp. It nourishes jungles and creates deserts. It lights the way, it blinds you.

Di Felice loves duality. “I’m romantic and I’m hardcore,” he said while he was showing us round his collection. Is there a duality between André Courrèges and him? It was initially hard to see in a show which seamlessly regenerated one of the aesthetics that defined the 1960s. Di Felice encapsulated it in looks which duplicated the mini with the dropped waist defined by a narrow cloth-covered belt paired with flat boots. Comfort was important to Courrèges. He wanted clothes you could move and dance in. Di Felice amplified that fluidity. And then he went to town on his own concept. Blinded by the sun, you can’t see things as they really are. That cued a slew of subtle *trompe l’oeil*: big shorts that were actually skirts, t-shirts that looked like they were being rolled up over the head, swimsuits becoming dresses, a blouson whose raglan sleeves unzipped to create an chic off-the-shoulder effect.

The collection progressed from cool blue, with veils attached to visors, to burned-out desert shades. This season’s theatrical effect was lighting growing ever brighter, with steadily intensifying heat to match. The soundtrack, created by Di Felice and Erwan Sene, kept pace, like a techno simulacrum of Ravel’s *Bolero*. By the finale, the sunglasses that were the show invite made perfect sense. Di Felice created whole outfits from those narrow little belts and they were melting in the heat. So were the metal bracelets. At the end came dresses with sculpted sun shields. Di Felice was in love with them. “It’s a geometric shape which comes to life when you put it on you.”

And here’s the duality between Courrèges and Di Felice. One of them was designing in an era where optimism about the future drove popular culture. The other is confronted by dystopian scenarios where creativity is directed towards casting light in the darkness, even when that light blinds. Di Felice gave credit to the people around him. All the time, they told him, “do you,” he said. And to that, we add, “don’t stop!”

Thinking about this second day of an unusually significant season in Paris, it’s odd how designers often seem like they’re on the same wavelength. I bring that because Julian Klausner claimed “the primal energy of a ray of sun” as one inspiration for his first women’s collection for Dries Van Noten. And I seriously doubt he’d been talking to Nicolas Di Felice.

Van Noten’s is such a particular legacy, with so many ardent acolytes, that there were many moments when it was practically impossible to imagine an heir. But Klausner’s post-show confidence level was impressively high, like he knew he’d nailed the tricky synthesis between past and future. I can only imagine the challenge of following someone whose own magpie sensibility was such that he could roam effortlessly across times, places, subcultures, ferreting out hidden curiosities and arcane glories that he was able to incorporate into his collections. Klausner’s starting point confirmed he is more than capable of meeting that challenge. He’d been contemplating surfers, sunsets and “the elegance of a wetsuit.”

The sound of waves filled the Palais de Tokyo as the audience arrived, and the show essentially built as a wave builds, assisted by a sample of Philip Glass and the Kronos Quartet’s soundtrack for the movie “Mishima” which also craved a crescendo. From pale colours and basic shapes, with a froth of ruffle here and there, through increasingly elaborate looks — a sheer fishtailed skirt under an hourglass jacket in *moiré* was one standout — to a finale of colour-blocked gowns in graphic 1960s geometries, Klausner reinforced the tour-de-force introduction he staged with his men’s show in June. There were so many things here to enjoy — the sophisticated Hawaiian prints, the fearless union of saturated oranges and pinks, the maybe-toreador jacket over black briefs, washed silks and sneakers with everything — that the elements that weren’t quite so enthralling were easy to swallow. Sometimes too much can simply be too much.

