

BLACK TO BASICS

words | julia dinardo

40



CALVIN KLEIN



GUCCI



THIS SEASON IS ALL ABOUT SEMIOTICS OF COLOR.

Spring 2006 runway collections veer far from the typical fare of bright and sprightly spring and summer hues. Instead of employing a plethora of pretty pastels, designers have chosen to execute restraint when it comes to color palette selections, sticking to monochromatic looks and selectively incorporated prints and patterns. With few exceptions, from New York to Paris to Milan, the dominant theme is color minimalism with whites, creams, blacks, and beiges ruling the runways.

Analyzing the Spring/Summer 2006 collections according to color can give a fresh take on fashion and offer viable clues as to where today's design direction is heading. Moreover, getting reconnected

with color symbolism can help to define the cyclical nature of fashion, and the important role color plays in influencing contemporary designs, lifestyle, and popular culture. Here, we take a closer look at four fashion houses and elaborate on the semiotics of color by breaking the houses into three distinct groups.

Neutrals with Jewel Tones and Prints: Calvin Klein and Gucci

Francisco Costa's collection for Calvin Klein was unabashedly white, a refreshing and elegant choice for spring. Representing innocence, purity, virginity, and cleanliness, the influx of white was perhaps a nod to "cleaning up" after the eclectic boho looks

of late. White is also the perfect backdrop for more complex detailing, strong shapes and robust graphics infused with bold jewel tones in hues of green and blue.

Frida Giannini felt that Gucci customers were ready for the new "Gucci" girl. Giannini conveyed the refined elegance of black as her neutral backdrop, while mixing in solids as well as original and archival prints. Floral prints added zest to the solid black garments, while the silhouettes were composed of puffed sleeves, Bermuda shorts and hostess dresses.

The use of green — think Kelly green for Calvin



PRADA

MISSIONI

BOLD OR MUTED THE AVAILABILITY OF STYLE IS ABUNDANT

Klein and Emerald for Gucci – added some pop to the collections. Thought to symbolize both positive (nature, earthiness, warmth and renewal) and negative characteristics (envy and jealousy), it's a fitting choice for the season when women worldwide covet the latest looks and bask in the glory of spring.

Multicolor Mission: Missoni

As always, Missoni provided a bevy of color combinations marked by modern detailing such as ruffles, pleats and bows. Barbara Bloemink, co-curator of the "Fashion in Colors" exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum, tells of a medieval European society that considered

multicolored garments to be in bad taste (alluding to court jesters and gypsies). The popularity of Asian fabrics and the invention of synthetic dyes propelled an increased attractiveness for multicolored clothing. Nowhere is this appeal of color more evident than with Missoni, the fashion house which epitomizes the world of beautifully made knits in a kaleidoscope of color. This season, Missoni emphasized purple and blue in their garments, while referencing, if only slightly, the neutral trend by pairing their famously colored prints with cardigans in complementary hushed tones.

Easy Neutrals, Over the Top Accents: Prada

For a collection composed almost entirely of printed or hand-painted cotton and taffeta, Miuccia Prada chose colors that clearly usher in the age of neutral dressing. While accessories and footwear quirkily gleamed in neon and metallic shades, the colors du jour for Prada are clearly beiges, creams, greys and, particularly black. Symbolizing the negation of color, black can be seen as mysterious, powerful and even evil, while at the same time conveying a sense of conservatism, elegance, refinement, and sexiness. Black is also the color of rebellion, and Prada's thought-provoking Spring/Summer '06 collection is defiantly distinctive in its stride toward muted shades and silhouettes that resist convention.