

Rag Trade by Amy Serafin

Boho and a Bottle of Rum

THE SEASON'S FASHIONS INCLUDE ATHENA, THE AGE OF AQUARIUS, ANDROGYNY AND A LITTLE 'AHOY, MATEY' TO BOOT



THIS SPRING THERE'S no need to regret missing the fringes and follies of the Summer of Love or even, for that matter, gadding around ancient Greece in a toga. The season's looks offer the possibility of

reliving those historical fashion moments and many more.

From Led Zeppelin revivals to endless talk of inflation, the 1960s and '70s just won't let us go. But go ahead, take a drag and inhale, especially since boho style is so very chic this time around. You might develop an addiction to the camel-coloured leather fringe of Roberto Cavalli's mini-dresses and trench coats, or stage your next sit-in wearing Olivier Theyskens' cool streetwear collection for Nina Ricci, including beads and bandannas, rock concert T-shirts and liquid satin trousers. It seems there's no better way to launch a revolution than from the comfort of your bed (just ask Yoko Ono), and so pyjama dressing has taken on a life of its own, from Stella McCartney's loose satin tops and matching shorts to the wink-wink, nudge-nudge sexiness of John Galliano's slinky nighties and leopard teddies at Dior. Floaty chiffon and ruffles are so ubiquitous women will practically levitate this spring.

The hippie theme means tie-dye and crochet are more than just a flashback, while low-crotched dhoti pants conjure up visions of lazy days in Goa. At Balmain, Christophe Decarnin has found inspiration in Indian styles from Bombay and the Big Horn Mountains: floor-length skirts and tie-dyed elephant trousers, beads and macramé, funky suede vests and a fringed white poncho with an eagle motif. Hair is worn long and loose, of course.

Pocahontas isn't the only exotic creature to be channelled in a season that's as ethnically mixed as the Brangelina clan. Among the looks, Comme des Garçons' Rei Kawakubo takes a fabric printed with African hairstyles and layers it with stripes, half-jackets and ruffled skirts in an aesthetic free-for-all

that only she can pull off. Many houses are doing harem trousers and kimono dresses, such as the gaily printed creations at Kenzo. For the first time ever, Paris invited not one but two Indian designers for Spring 2008



Jean Paul Gaultier

Fashion Week, just in time for the ballyhooed launch of *Vogue* in India and further evidence of that country's expanding influence as a market and a provider of talented craftspeople. The Delhi-based Manish Arora made a splash in the French capital with kaleidoscopes of colour, sequins, tassels and the odd reptilian neck ornament. Of course, he had to compete with Jean-Paul Gaultier's idealistic vision of India at Hermès: turbans or hair twisted into similar-shaped knots, Nehru jackets over jodhpurs tucked into crocodile skin riding boots, off-the-shoulder saris, and shades of gold, saffron and aubergine. For his own eponymous brand, Gaultier has gone to the Caribbean – the *Pirates* version, that is – with female Jack Sparrow understudies tackling the high seas of fashion in camouflage prints and sailor stripes, leather trousers and bustiers, skull caps and tricorne hats, and swashbuckler attitude galore.

The only thing missing from Gaultier's runway show was the parrot, though it would be understandable if birds decided to make themselves scarce during Fashion Week just to avoid being turned into the latest party dress, what with the abundance of feathers showing up on necklines and handbags and fluttering from shawls and dresses. In a show that paid homage to his friend Isabella Blow, Alexander McQueen created a gorgeous pair of rainbow feather wings and didn't hesitate to use what looked like an entire bird on the bodice of a dramatic ball gown.

Ancient Greece is as contemporary as ever, with goddess gowns and the asymmetrical one-shoulder look in full force. This trend is beautifully captured in Alber Elbaz's collection for Lanvin, where long dresses in rich jewel tones billow with artfully crafted pleats and draping. And if there's one imperative this season, it's to make sure your wardrobe is well stocked with gladiator sandals – the steeper the better. Serious fashionistas won't be caught dead without the knee-high woven leather version by Nicolas Ghesquière for Balenciaga.

Spring's colour palette sizzles with rich shades from fuchsia to turquoise, paprika,

absinthe and chartreuse, and glitters with sequins everywhere. Talk about Flower

Power: floral prints are in full bloom, even where such frivolity is least expected, covering Ghesquière's uber cool creations, or peeking out from the deconstructed darkness of Yohji Yamamoto's line. Dries van Noten proves his gardening skills with a marriage of clashing prints and patterns that somehow comes out

looking as well tamed as Versailles. Across the Channel, where green thumbs are a national source of pride, the street-smart designer Luella Bartley's spring collection has scatterings of tiny buds on Liberty prints.

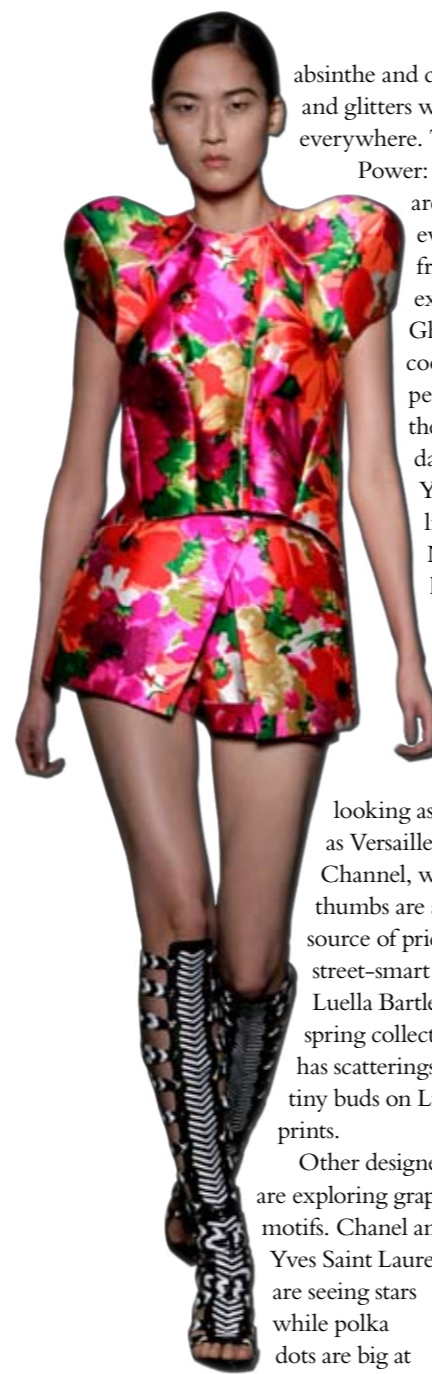
Other designers are exploring graphic motifs. Chanel and Yves Saint Laurent are seeing stars while polka dots are big at Givenchy and

tiny at Sonia Rykiel. There are pinstripes on Dior's three-piece trouser suits, multicoloured stripes at Chloé and wide bands that move from the clothes right up to the funky black wraparound shades at Martin Margiela.

Tomboys will be happy to find that this season is not just chiffon and flowers; they can still put on a structured blazer while keeping the sex appeal quotient turned up full. The trick is in the

unexpected mixes. Viktor & Rolf combine a fitted black jacket with an oversized tuxedo shirt and long skirt, Dior goes with the glamour of a white Marlene Dietrich tux, Ann Demeulemeester pairs long vests trimmed with rooster feathers and silky

striped pyjama bottoms, while at Yves Saint Laurent, Stefano Pilati offers up a remarkably wearable collection including button-down shirts or college blazers with high-



waisted trousers. Note the shoulders, as prominent as they were in the 1980s but with a completely different shape: rounded hillocks for Balenciaga, space-age triangles for Martin Margiela, chic little caps on the jackets at YSL.

Finally, for those who've long lusted after Valentino, it's now or never. The master has designed his last season and taken his final runway bows. While the happy few are placing their haute couture orders, his ready-to-wear collection also offers a pulse-quickenning array of choices: off the shoulder shifts in cotton-candy shades, polka-dot halter dresses tied up with a bow, and those long, sexy form-fitting sheaths perfect for collecting your best-actress trophy. ■

From left: Balenciaga by Nicolas Ghesquière, Lanvin and Martin Margiela