

Haute Couture Heats Up

By Tracey Porpora

The dress has made a comeback--Whether your flavor is a short, romantic organza dress for a night out on the town, a kimono-inspired gown for a black tie affair, or a metallic mini that's just for fun. While much of Spring and Summer haute couture fashion relies heavily on elegance, Paris and New York runways have been dominated by body-hugging fabrics, sleek silhouettes, and abstract patterns and colors.

If an evening calls for dinner and dancing, Peter Som's organza evening gowns with high waistlines and short hemlines are at the top of the fashion priority list for the well-dressed woman this Spring. However, one of the most talked about couture collections is from Christina Dior, which features bold-colored Japanese inspired gowns resembling kimonos, as well as peplum skirts and dresses with full skirts. Meanwhile, Karl Lagerfeld's haute couture Spring and Summer collection is all about glamour with gowns adorned with ostrich feathers and sequins, skirts of see-through tulle and slim bodices colored in metallic pinks, and burnished gold and gray.

Fashion runaways also showcased geometric and abstract prints for a fun and flamboyant Spring and Summer style. Glam styling reminiscent of the 1980s has been making appearances in everything from active to evening wear, with many top designers using gold or silver brocade fabrics in their collections. However, white and variations of this basic color--eggshell, ivory and 'diamond white'--again can be seen in much high-fashion casual and evening apparel. Still fashionable for Spring and Summer are Bermuda shorts or gaucho pants--many with pin stripes--for both dress and play. Many fashion moguls, like Peter Som, have designed sleek styles of Bermuda shorts that flatter

many body types, and take women from the boardroom to the bar. Many of these styles can be worn with ballet flats for a dressed-down look, or dressed-up with high wedge sandals.

For casual wear, designers are incorporating a lot of breathable cotton fabrics into their collections to allow for comfort, as well as style. Meanwhile, business attire has been dominated by a look that is professional, yet sleek and sexy. Body hugging suits and separates featuring many tight skirts paired with form-fitting, one-button blazers are being shown by designers, like Proenza Schouler, for Spring fashion.

Meanwhile, men's high fashion for Spring and Summer is being dictated by wide-waisted, baggy trousers paired with slouchy jackets from haute couture designers, like Yohji Yamamoto. Many top designers are experimenting with color for Spring and Summer men's collections. For example, Dries Van Noten's refined collection for Spring/Summer includes a lot off-white, black and gray, but also features suit styles in powdery pink, turquoise and yellow.

Glam fashion also is back for men; such designers as Christian Dior have offered Spring collections with "chest-revealing" tunics with dangling shirt tails, as well as shorter jackets that have a subtle sparkle and sheen. Other Summer men's fashion centers around loose fitting, front-pleated shorts, paired together with tight-fitting polo tops."