

FASHION PARIS SPECIAL REPORT

# The big question: Who is next?

BY JESSICA MICHAULT

**MILAN** The major topic of discussion during the Milan shows (can we really call it a fashion week when it was only four days?) was the truncated calendar. But in terms of the future of fashion, perhaps the more important debate is: who is next?

Who are the Italian designers that will carry into the future the fashion heritage and fine craftsmanship for which this country is known?

One of the contenders for the crown is the design team of Tommaso Aquilano and Roberto Rimondi. Tapped to design for the house of Gianfranco Ferré, they also continue to express their own vision of fashion through their signature brand, **AQUILANO.RIMONDI**, which closed out the Milan shows this season.

The duo garnered good reviews for their pared-down, daywear-focused collection for Ferré, a focus that could also be spotted in their own collection.

The show took its inspiration from Rome in the 1970s and the style of the fashion plate Marisa Berenson. The idea was to break down masculine tailoring and fabrics like tweed and to reconstruct them with a feminine aesthetic. On the catwalk, that meant wide-legged pantsuits, high-necked ruffled dresses, and statement coats.

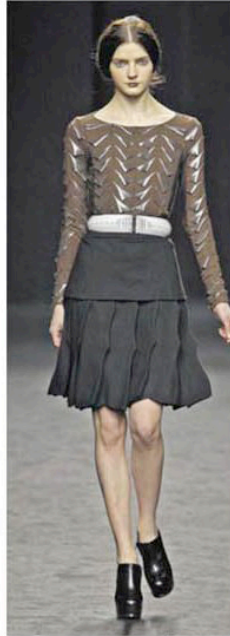
In fact, every piece in the collection made a strong statement, both for Italian craftsmanship and for the designers' love of embellishment. There wasn't a suit with fringe tweed or a coat covered in wispy feathers that didn't scream handcrafted. But among all the embroidery, microlamé and devore velvet, there were quiet beauties, like a skillfully tailored navy pantsuit or a pair of blush sheath dresses with a twist of a bow at the hip or shoulder. It was these pieces — the silence between the noise — that gave the show real impact.

The young designer **MARCO DE VINCENZO** learned a lot over the years he worked alongside Silvia Venturini Fendi, not the least of which is his ability to cut and tailor clothing with an expert eye.

He used those talents to create a collection with a moody sensibility. It mixed prints, like in a pair of sunset-shaded wide-ankle pants or a coat covered in what looked like golden tree roots, with more romantic yet sporty fare, like a jacket with black ribbon ruched at the hem and collar or a russet-



**AQUILANO.RIMONDI**



**MARCO DE VINCENZO**

striped knit dress.

The use of inverted triangle folds of fabric in contrasting colors on dresses and tops gave the collection a bit of edge. And when paired with an elegant black pleated skirt cut in the profile of a violin, the effect was melodically modern.

The starry night evening wear in velvet mauve and silver Lycra looked a bit forced. And if the collection gave the impression that the designer was trying to cram a lot of ideas into one show, then perhaps next time he could hold a few back and let the others sing more clearly.

Before the first model took to the runway at the **BYBLOS** show, the soundtrack

looped a phrase from a song by the British electronic music group The Orb: "Not equipped mentally to deal with something of this nature, something supernatural." With that kind of buildup, one had better produce the goods. And from the first outfit, the designer Manuel Facchini did just that.

Pieces in the collection got high impact attitude from digital prints of plumes, high velocity paint splatter, and "snow," that old black and white pattern on a TV screen that had no signal.

Add to that the sharp tailoring of high-collared morning coats, dresses with cleverly tiered front panels, and second



**BYBLOS**

skin denim distressed with laser burn — all of which gave the clothes a feeling of protective power.

It was impossible not to think of Alexander McQueen, who built a career in structured clothing, amazing prints and even the metallic scale adornments worn by some of the Byblos models. But that doesn't mean Mr. Facchini, who has been with the label for four years, did not create a strong collection reflecting the talents of someone who trained at Central Saint Martins in London.



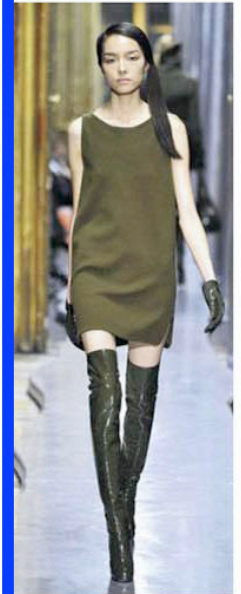
**MALO**

The Italian cashmere brand **MALO** used a presentation setting to introduce both its autumn/winter 2010 collection and its new designer Savério Palatella. The tag line was "Back to the Future," but it was the words "heritage" and "craftsmanship" that kept cropping up in conversation with the designer.

For Mr. Palatella, this apparently means creating a collection around the idea of motorcycle riders. Fitted biker jackets and vests come crafted from cashmere, with metal mesh chokers and wide cuffs woven into a knit base so that they are soft on the skin. And matte sequins are knitted into a top for a luxury take on Kevlar.

Paired with Dr. Martens boots and berets, the body-skimming cashmere dresses, which finish with a trawl-like scarf over one shoulder, looked both elegant and comfortable. And isn't that what everyone is looking for from a brand like Malo?

Although the designer **FRANCO SCERVINO** is no stranger to Milan Fashion Week, his autumn/winter collection illustrates that it is never too late to try a new direction.



**FRANCO SCERVINO**

Mr. Scervino showed a streamlined and clean collection, filled with drop-shouldered coats with volume at the hem thanks to bands of fur or tufts of Mongolian wool. The fringe-edged suede capes were very much on trend, and the plume created by twisting knitwear into three-dimensional curving columns rounded the bottom of a sleeveless dress showed the designer's mastery of the material.

Using patent leather to line the inside of a high collar was a modern touch to the classic designs, and even if the show could have done with a bit of editing, it was still a well-executed collection.