

The *runway* REPORT

February 12, 2008 | Fall/Winter 2008 Fashion Week ended with a bang. As fashion editors headed toward the tents for the finale of the internationally watched event, it was abundantly clear that fur was an essential element in almost every collection and that great American designers are at the forefront of fur fashion.

Designers continued to channel the past, with the '20s, '50s, early-'60s and '70s as their key sources of inspiration. Important new trends, key items and colors emerged as fashion week progressed. New, dressed up chic sportswear looks, including jackets and trousers, balanced out the preponderance of pretty ladylike sheath dresses and tailored suits.

New casual fur styles also emerged, notably the fur vest — shown in every style from bolero to coat-length, sheared to long-haired, and casual to dressed down. The fur muffler — perfect when paired with a tweed coat or a blazer — and the fur stole were the natural accompaniment to a beautifully cut coat or suit. The newest fur coats were frequently 3/4- or

7/8-length or integrated one, two or three furs. Fur trims were everywhere, lavishing sweater knits, tweeds, metallics and menswear plaids, and the fur shawl collar made a major statement on coats, jackets, and sweaters.

Grey tones and warm neutrals emerged as key color stories with mink, silver and red fox, chinchilla and sable leading this season's fur story. Color made a comeback on the runway and furs followed suite, showing up in unexpected emerald, sapphire, amethyst and violet tones.

With the return of great American sportswear to the fashion arena, menswear fabrications, including pinstripes, plaids and tweeds accompanied dressier charmeuse, crepe back satin and chiffon for both day and evening. Rich textural mixes of fur, satin, tweed and metallics were the order of the day as grown-up style moved to the fashion forefront. The Fall/Winter 2008 collections are all about stylish, chic fashion and the important fur looks that make them happen.

Zac Posen

Designer Zac Posen took a bold new direction in his fall collection, referencing the '20s, the '70s, the colors of the movie "Moulin Rouge" and the Belle Époque. The collection featured daytime and evening wear with lingerie details. For daytime, a superb charcoal grey shift provided a clear winning look while a cream-colored cardigan suit and a sheer black-and-white, tuxedo-style dress referenced a young Coco Chanel. An ivory beaded shift, recalling the '20s, received a modern facelift when topped with a chic opossum sleeveless coat with oversized collar. A black diagonal mink-on-chiffon jacket with a broadtail collar worn over a pink corseted crinoline dress showed Posen's skill at effectively executing his theme to create modern dressing for his chic young things.



Bill Blass



Zac Posen

Bill Blass

Under the new direction of designer Peter Som, the Blass Fall 2008 collection struck just the right note, artfully balancing the best of the past with a modern, young sensibility. Turning out smartly tailored looks for day, including sleek suit looks and tuxedo styles for both day and evening, Som channeled Blass' early collections from the '70s and '80s. The pant suit, a Blass staple, was turned out in stylish chic menswear plaids and tweeds while "le must" tuxedo styles provided a new chic alternative. The strong shades of the '70s — bright jeweled toned purple, electric blue and magenta — provided an unexpected modern accent for Som's furs. A purple karakul, sheared mink and dyed silver fox belted wrap coat with big-notch collar made a bold, yet chic statement, while an electric blue long dyed silver fox vest layered over a black pencil skirt fit the bill for daytime shopping excursions or antiquing. Blass' customer loves color and a deep green dyed silver fox bolero jacket with grey flippy skirt provided a fresh look for at-home dressing. Evening, a Blass forte, was chock full of soft, pretty styles, including important ruffled looks that evoked the master, yet had Som's youthful touch.



Reem Acra

Reem Acra

Designer Reem Acra is a designer widely praised for both her bridal and evening styles. Her Fall 2008 collection was no exception. A rich jewel-toned color story played out in satin, taffeta, velvet, chiffon and glittering metallics. Acra's red carpet looks are legendary. She is known for beautifully draped goddess gowns and this collection offered satin, metallic, beaded and cocktail-length versions. This fall, Acra proved that she has mastered daytime, too. Case in point, a beautifully shaped ruffled-edge wool coat and an amazing patchwork plum-toned cape which mixed embroidered ribbon, a deep satin border and a dyed Mongolian lamb collar. Two evening furs — a chinchilla capelet worn over a grey satin embroidered sheath and a belted black fox patchwork jacket worn over a black satin dress — offered proof that evening can be both modern and elegant.

Zang Toi

Inspired by the lifestyle of the early "jet set" who built America's great hunting and ski lodges in the Adirondacks and the American West, designer Zang Toi turned out a fall collection that balanced rustic and refined. Toi channeled the lifestyle of the well-to-do in a mostly black, red and white collection that included lumberjack plaids, Hudson Bay blankets, stripes and American Indian beadwork, all with an unexpected luxurious twist. New versions of sporty classics evoked ski weekends in the great outdoors and either went to great lengths, as in a white quilted hooded parka with Mongolian lamb trim, or were turned out in mini-lengths, such as a Russian Sable toggle coat, perfect for today's luxury customer. Sporty chic green tweed and plaid coats were given a luxe touch with black fox and forest mink collars, respectively. Evening gowns were a unique blend of rusticity and luxury, most noteworthy in a knockout red silk charmeuse column with black mink cowl draped back and in an Indian patterned red beaded gown, more likely to show up on the red carpet than at a great lodge.



Zang Toi

Carmen
Marc Valvo

Carmen Marc Valvo

Designer Carmen Marc Valvo was inspired by the sleek aesthetic of mid-century modern design for his Fall 2008 runway presentation. The collection was a meld of curvilinear shapes, fabrications with sleek surfaces, lingerie touches and movie star glamour. A cool neutral palette of nickel, titanium, black and ivory that evoked the beautiful designs of modern furniture, played out in his elegant furs. A dramatic white goat-and-fox topper worn over full black silk pants epitomized glamour and understated luxury. His modernist theme followed through in an ivory houndstooth patterned mink coat with $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeve; while a $\frac{7}{8}$ -length black mink and crocodile tile intarsia cocoon coat dramatically echoed the intricate inlay of mid-century furniture. Valvo reworked a classic in a steel grey reversible blue Iris mink coat worked vertically with an oversize convertible collar.



Sean Jean



Michael Kors



Jason Wu



Venexiana

Sean Jean

In a smart, snappy collection that didn't miss a beat, fashion mogul P. Diddy sent out a show-stopping collection that called to mind Saville Row tailoring, downtown minimalist chic and upscale sensibility. A palette of mostly grey, blue and black pinstripes adorned crunchy knits, velvet and fine menswear wools. Diddy played with slim new proportions and layering, evidenced in sweeping maxi coats and cropped knits, both in a collection that is sure to win some new converts. His outstanding outerwear included heather grey '70s-style maxi coats and topcoats with sheared mink collars, a contemporary version of a classic chesterfield. Diddy knows his way around knits and turned out some of the best this week. For the ultimate in downtown chic, a v-neck cardigan was turned out in pale grey sheared mink and cashmere. Brooks Brothers it isn't. A black zip-front broadtail and knit sweater jacket, derived from the '50s sweater set, was anything but classic. As with its namesake designer, the Sean John customer knows how to make an entrance and a cropped glossy burgundy leather aviator with dyed silver fox shawl collar offered one way to stand out in the crowd.



Sean Jean



Zang Toi



Oscar de la Renta



J. Mendel

Fur Accessories

Fur accessories figured prominently on the Fall 2008 runways, as designers formulated their fashion stories with all the right finishing touches. This season, American designers featured important fur millinery, scarves, stoles and wraps both for dressed up ladylike and casual chic dressing.

Jason Wu, winner of fashion's Rising Star award, paired a sheared black mink short muffler with a deco-patterned sheath. Michael Kors, who frequently mixes texture and style, lavished his collection with sporty chic fur mufflers such as a sensational sheared mink muffler tucked into a luxe camel suede trench. Designer Oscar de la Renta took the luxe touch one step further in his richly textured fall collection. His sable muffler, tucked into the collar of a brown herringbone coat, offered utter elegance. At Sean John, designer P. Diddy took texture to a new level integrating fur, knit and python in an intricately twisted oversized muffler.

Fall 2008 marked the return of the fur stole, due, in part, to designers' interest in the ladylike styles of the '50s and the early-'60s. To that end, Michael Kors served up some of the best, topping off beautifully colored soft tweeds and wools with sensational fur stoles. One of the most spectacular, his red fox stole, encircled the shoulder of his barrel back coat. At Venexiana,

designer Kati Stern's glamorous dyed fox wrap provided the perfect finishing touch to a raspberry sequined gown and almost stole the show.

Designers topped off the fall season in amazing fur hats, from casually stylish to and elegant. Hats were, indeed, often the finishing touch. At Zang Toi's Adirondack influenced show, Mongolian lamb trappers hats were worn with everything from rustic outerwear to evening gowns; meanwhile at Doo Ri, designer Doo Ri Chung's shapely knit mink toque matched her elegant sculptural collection. At Venexiana, a chic structured cognac wool hat, touched with red fox, echoed the lines of the retro-styled shearlings. Oscar de la Renta's knit hat with golden sable epitomizes his ultra-luxe style.

Perhaps the designer who had the most fun with fur accessories this season was Gilles Mendel, whose J. Mendel collection featured fur-trimmed peplum belts, as in his two pocket black fur with Mikado piped version, as well as lavish mufflers in wild mink and nutria. Mendel's stylish, sure-to-be-emulated fur and crystal earmuffs were the ultimate in fur accessories. His dyed silver fox version with crystal and feather trim is a money-in-the-bank style, as are all fur accessories this fall season.

Naeem Khan

Perhaps no one does high-profile dressing better than designer Naeem Khan. His Fall 2008 collection was no exception. Beautifully intricate embroidery and beading, Khan's forte, were clearly evident from the first look on the runway, an intricately embroidered black-and-white, trapeze-shaped, $\frac{3}{4}$ -length coat with black fox cuffs. In a collection that was almost exclusively colored in ivory, black and metallics, the details

of the '20s and the '70s — fur, feathers, embroidery and vintage style beading — played an important role. These lavish embellishments and Khan's modern but retro styled shapes provide all the elements that Khan's red carpet customer loves. A beautifully detailed black-and-white embroidered dress with a deep v-front and sheared black fox-trimmed, elbow-length sleeves epitomized Khan's signature style.

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