

WWD



Balestra RTW Spring 2023
Courtesy of Balestra

FASHION

Crystals, Fringes and More: Embellishments Reign in Milan

● Designers big and small embraced the trend, probably as a reaction to looming uncertainty.

BY MARTINO CARRERA, SAMANTHA CONTI

Against the backdrop of Italy's general elections which spurred a tense social and political debate in the country, and the ongoing global crises, designers zhuzhed up their offering, embedding crystals, fringes and sequins, and providing a mood-boosting jolt.

At Bottega Veneta, Matthieu Blazy closed his sophomore show with knit dresses in busy, exotic jacquards and contrasting curtains of fringe, while Luke and Lucie Meier had cascades of sparkly fringes, crystal embroideries and mirror appliqués worked for all genders. Massimo Giorgetti, too, had wedding bands and dangling crystals pierced to boxy blazers at MSGM.

Tokyo James' runway glowed with sparkly black designs. The British Nigerian designer sent out trousers, jeans and other pieces embedded with green or blue sparkles, and added lots of lacy ruffles to black leather dresses and jackets. Other leather and denim pieces clinked with round hoops, like earrings. James said his inspiration was outer space in all its black and sparkling beauty.

The showrooms and presentation spaces around Milan were also swimming in sequins and other sparkly add-ons to clothing and accessories.

At Balestra, Sofia Bertolli Balestra, creative chief of the family-owned company, wore a bright blue sequin shift dress with Superga sneakers as she showed off the brand's latest designs.

There was a long cape, trousers and a cropped top that matched her dress, and yet another cape covered in fabric orchids. The latter was an adaptation of a design that Bertolli Balestra's grandfather, Renato Balestra, had made as a couture design for the Queen of Thailand.

There were also stretchy sequin skirts and sarong-style skirts with matching bra tops, and other styles adorned with paillette fringes. One black pleated dress, originally worn by Pat Cleveland, was held in place by straps covered in crystals that had been arranged in a herringbone design. It was blindingly bright and attention-grabbing.

Gianluca Capannolo continued to channel his love for midcentury divas, be they Mina performing on national TV or Patty Pravo dancing the night away at the '60s Piper club in Rome. Puffy short frocks sprouted floral embellishments crafted from bioplastics; caftan-like flowing numbers in fluid silk, often trimmed in Marabou feathers, were accessorized with giant hoop earrings and necklaces protruding coral-like twigs.

Over at Des Phemmes, designer Salvo Rizza, who has secured a strong distribution footprint globally since launching in 2019, went heavy on crystals dotting the entire lineup, including on a men's boxy suit and camp shirt, and sequins arranged in floral motifs that recurred throughout.

Rizza offered day-to-night attire befitting city girls and boys always up for a last-minute party invite. He did so by channeling a refined attitude that also had a sensual touch, as in see-through midi skirts covered in rich blooming twigs or lacey crop tops, and with urban gear — loose jeans and pocketed overshirts subtly dotted in crystals.



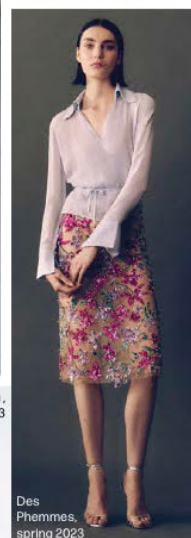
Vivetta, spring 2023



Tokyo James, spring 2023



Balestra, spring 2023



Lisa Von Tang, spring 2023



Chb, spring 2023



Des Phemmes, spring 2023

game more subtly.

Case in point, Drome's looks were more casual, but also sparkled with shiny buckles, metal

grommets and sequins. Drome's creative director Marianna Rosati took imaginary characters riding the New York subway as her inspiration, and showered one dress with canary yellow sequins (that character might have opted for a taxi cab rather than the subway) and lots of leather pieces adorned with buckles, shiny zips and whipstitching. One white leather jacket had three zippered layers so it could be worn long or short.

Rizza's pal Christian Boaro was mindful of his recently launched Chb brand's commercial viability. He complemented his non-gendered roomy tailoring, sculptural

In keeping with her playful and oftentimes surrealist touches, designer Vivetta Ponti reprised her signature tromp l'oeil hand motif for a skin-baring collection that was unusually daring for her.

Crystal-heavy hands holding rubies provocatively placed on the bosom or hips graced tailored pantsuits, denim-on-denim sets featuring puffy-sleeved jackets, and bustier mini frocks. She went as far as having hands molded from metal used as a surrealist bra with Swarovski straps, while miniskirts featured a heart-shaped front panel decorated with chunky rhinestones.

Other designers played the decorative

frocks and penchant for skin-tight lace blouses and bras with decorated pieces, including a standout cape covered in sequins and trimmed in feathers, which was sported by a male model in look book images.

A lean tunic-like see-through dress featured sparkly rhinestones, while the signature bralettes came in a new crystal-bearing rendition. The collection's balance of sharply tailored frocks with cutouts, sartorial wear and the new decorative bent is winning buyers over, the designer said. With a new distributor in tow, Boaro's expecting the brand to gain international retail appeal.

Lisa Von Tang had women-about-town in mind. She provided them with unfussy special pieces, easy to pack and throw on for a cocktail party upon landing in Shanghai or New York.

The Singapore-born creative who showed in New York last season has decamped to Milan where she plans to stay for the foreseeable future. Von Tang's party attire was centered on pajamas and undergarments as in liquid-looking spaghetti dresses and midi gowns, as well as halter neck frocks and body-hugging Chinese-inspired Qipao options trimmed in ostrich feathers or jacquard silk pajama sets that exuded sophisticated mischievousness. It complemented a minimal collection of alluring daywear presented at the art-filled Rossana Orlandi Gallery.

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