

Paris: The Final Day — Last Women Standing

Miuccia Prada tells her own story at Miu Miu. How much of Virginie Viard's is in Chanel?



Gigi Hadid walks the runway for Miu Miu Spring/Summer 2024. (Getty Images)

PARIS — Last day of the show season, and Miuccia Prada's Miu Miu gave a fabulous sendoff to Spring '24. She said she usually has a theory about fashion — the collection was called “A Rationale of Beauties” — but this time she worked without a theoretical safety net and showed “what I really, personally like.” The reference in her show manifesto to “the joy of life” came straight to the point of clothes that were, in fact, joyous. Inclusive too, not only for the co-ed spirit, but also for the ease with which Miuccia mixed genders, decades, cultures high and low. As twisted/straightforward as a polo shirt and a pair of jeans accessorised

with a big sparkly necklace (they'd be real diamonds if she was wearing them), or a black brocade coat with a little back bow, classic couture, thrown over a speedo and a tiny pelmet skirt, or a schoolboy blazer over bermudas. Mocassins! Monkstraps! Combinations which looked they'd been casually, spontaneously thrown together from a whole pile of swimsuits, uniforms, underwear, sportswear, evening wear and vintage (or "touches of history" in manifesto-speak), all of it revolving around the hip-slung silhouette that has turned Miu Miu into a sales sensation. But the seeming spontaneity resonated in provocative ways that were anything but simple. That these clothes are capable of imbuing their wearers with a peculiar power was embodied in the appearance of Cailee Spaeny, unrecognisable from her breakthrough performance as Priscilla Presley.



Miu Miu Spring/Summer 2024 look 1. (Indigital)

"I want to embrace complexity, not simplification," Miuccia said, by way of an explanation. This, she rightly felt, was the spirit of the time. While fashion's been trying to nail down security (Quiet luxury? Meh!) in the midst of all the social, environmental and economic tumult, she found the joy in defiance. "I tell the story of my life, because I see what I read, what I know." And by the time you read this, she may have become a grandmother for the first time, opening a new chapter in the story.



Chanel Spring/Summer 2024 look 1. (Indigital)

Compared to her voluble mentor Karl Lagerfeld, Virginie Viard has been a positive sphinx at Chanel, but I've always liked to think she has been able to weave the story of her life into the threads of Gabrielle Chanel's — if she cared to, that is. The backdrop for her show on Tuesday was the view from the villa in the South of France where Chanel holidayed in the 1920s and '30s with her friends Charles and Marie-Laure de Noailles: huge, lush flowers, houses spreading up a sun-drenched hillside. And the clothes took a casual cue from that resort-y atmosphere: flipflops on the feet, terrycloth poncho over the swimsuit, tweedy bathrobes for the pool, sequinned trackpants, strawberries embroidered on a cropped tank, poplin shirt and shorts. Geometric patterns, licorice allsort stripes, pixelated checks and patchworks animated the landscape. For evening, there were organza babydolls and floral hostess gowns. I doubt you'd ever see Viard in any of it — maybe the jeans with the tweed jacket, though a black band T-shirt seems more her style — but there was something about the relaxed easiness of the attitude that pointed to her. It definitely made you want to know a lot more about the sphinx.

Problem was, that ease was eventually overpowered by the sheer merchiness of the presentation. When there's so much stuff, the clangers start clanging. Later in the day, Miuccia Prada offered an object lesson in the power of focus.

FASHION REVIEW

The Most Influential Woman in Fashion

How Miuccia Prada — and Miu Miu — became the muse of the season.

Plus a detour through Chanel and Louis Vuitton.



Miu Miu, spring 2024 Credit...Julien De Rosa/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images



By [Vanessa Friedman](#)

Reporting from Paris

Oct. 4, 2023, 4:00 a.m. ET

Want to know what you will wear next?

Quite possibly a rah-rah skirt so short it shows your rear end or (if you are of a mindset that eschews rah-rah skirts) a pencil skirt or pair of trousers or even pair of men's swim trunks that sit so low on the hips they flirt with [bumster-dom](#). They'll probably be cinched with a wide leather belt or at the very least expose the elastic logo waistband of your underwear.

With them, a schoolboy striped Oxford shirt, navy V-neck sweater and navy blazer. Or maybe you'll forget the pants and skirts entirely — too much to think about! — and just toss a jeweled flapper wrap dress or a gold brocade opera coat over your shirt. Then you might stuff an extra pair of shoes, the kind that gave you blisters so you had to put Band-Aids on your heels but you love them so you'll take them anyway, into your handbag before sprinting out the door.

Or that's what you may wear next if what appeared on the [Miu Miu](#) catwalk at the close of Paris Fashion Week is any indication.

But why, you say, scratching your head, would Miu Miu have anything to do with it?

Not just because the show was fantastic — one that seemed to be channeling Simone de Beauvoir or Natalia Ginzburg en route to the flower market after a late night of pub quizzes and philosophical debate.

But because ever since Miuccia Prada enlisted Raf Simons as [co-creative director at Prada](#) in Milan, freeing herself up to pay more attention to what had always been seen as Prada's little sister line, the Miu Miu brand — not to mention Mrs. Prada's whole aesthetic — has quietly become one of the most influential in fashion.

Image



Miu Miu, spring 2024Credit...Miu Miu



Miu Miu, spring 2024Credit...Miu Miu

If in doubt, simply consider the number of audience members who arrived at the show in hot pants and tights (not since the age of Mary Quant have so many upper thighs been so visible). Or consider how much Mrs. Prada's work has shaped what has appeared on other catwalks since this fashion month began.

Indeed, it would not be overstating things to say Mrs. Prada has been the muse of the season.

The Mrs. Prada Effect

It started during New York Fashion Week, when [Joseph Altuzarra](#) offered up what was essentially an ode to early Prada in cocooning uniform coats, sheer pencil skirts and frumpy knits — a theme that was repeated three weeks later in Paris at Matthew

M. Williams's show for Givenchy, which featured similar Prada-isms in pastel shades speckled among his lithe black dresses (elegant, but generic).
Editors' Picks

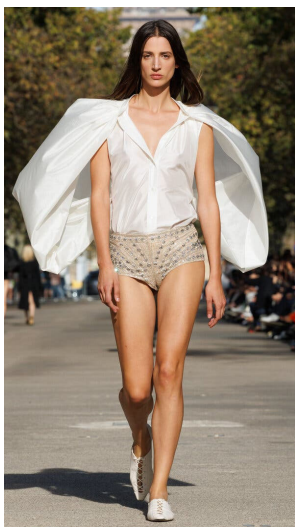
Image



Givenchy, spring 2024Credit...Givenchy

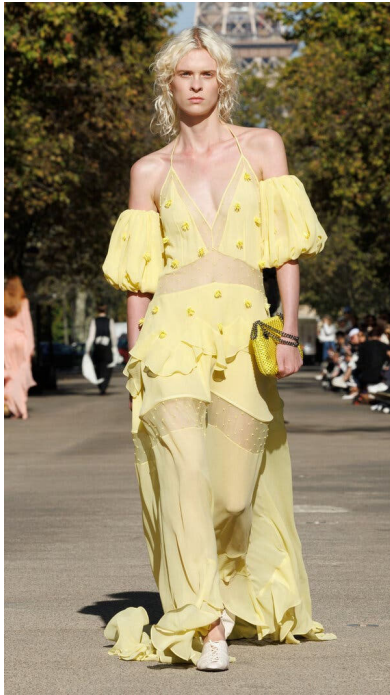
In Milan, short shorts — the kind that looked an awful lot like the hot pants Mrs. Prada showed for Miu Miu last season, which were an evolution of the truncated skirts she showed the season before — became the trend of the week at Gucci, Bally and Etro. Versace embraced the concept of the shorts set, which came in the wake of the [Miu Miu set renaissance](#) of early 2022.

Image



Stella McCartney, spring 2024Credit...Stella McCartney

Image



Stella McCartney, spring 2024Credit...Stella McCartney

Hot pants — dotted with costume jewels even — popped up again at Stella McCartney, paired with ruffled tuxedo shirts and cool suiting, amid the backdrop of the designer's sustainability market showcasing various material technologies, and a host of her own greatest hits. Even Victoria Beckham, who seems to be struggling to find a new fashion identity, threw some bodysuits, with undies peeking out around the edges, under cardigans into her mix of tailoring and transparency.

It's not that anyone is overtly referencing Mrs. Prada (or it's not like most of them are). But she has become so masterful at cozying up to the clichés of gender, burrowing down and recontextualizing them, so good at using clothes to wrestle with the desire to be pretty and frivolous and serious and stressed all at the same time that her work has started to shape the culture it reflects. In the real world of the street, and the digital world of influencers.

Image



Victoria Beckham, spring 2024Credit...Isidore Montag/Gorunway.com

At which point it gets regurgitated back through the maw of other designers, amplifying the ideas. It's not trickle down or trickle up as much as trickle out.

ADVERTISEMENT
[SKIP ADVERTISEMENT](#)

A Detour to Vuitton and Chanel

The Miu Miu effect marks a pretty big shift in the biorhythms of fashion month. After all, years ago, when Mrs. Prada moved her Miu Miu show to Paris to create some breathing room between it and the Prada show in Milan, it was a sort of an addendum, or coda, to the week, after the mega brands of Chanel and Louis Vuitton had brought the season to an end. Lately, however, those shows seem increasingly niche; not smaller physically, but speaking mostly to an echo chamber of their own (paid) celebrities and acolytes.

Image

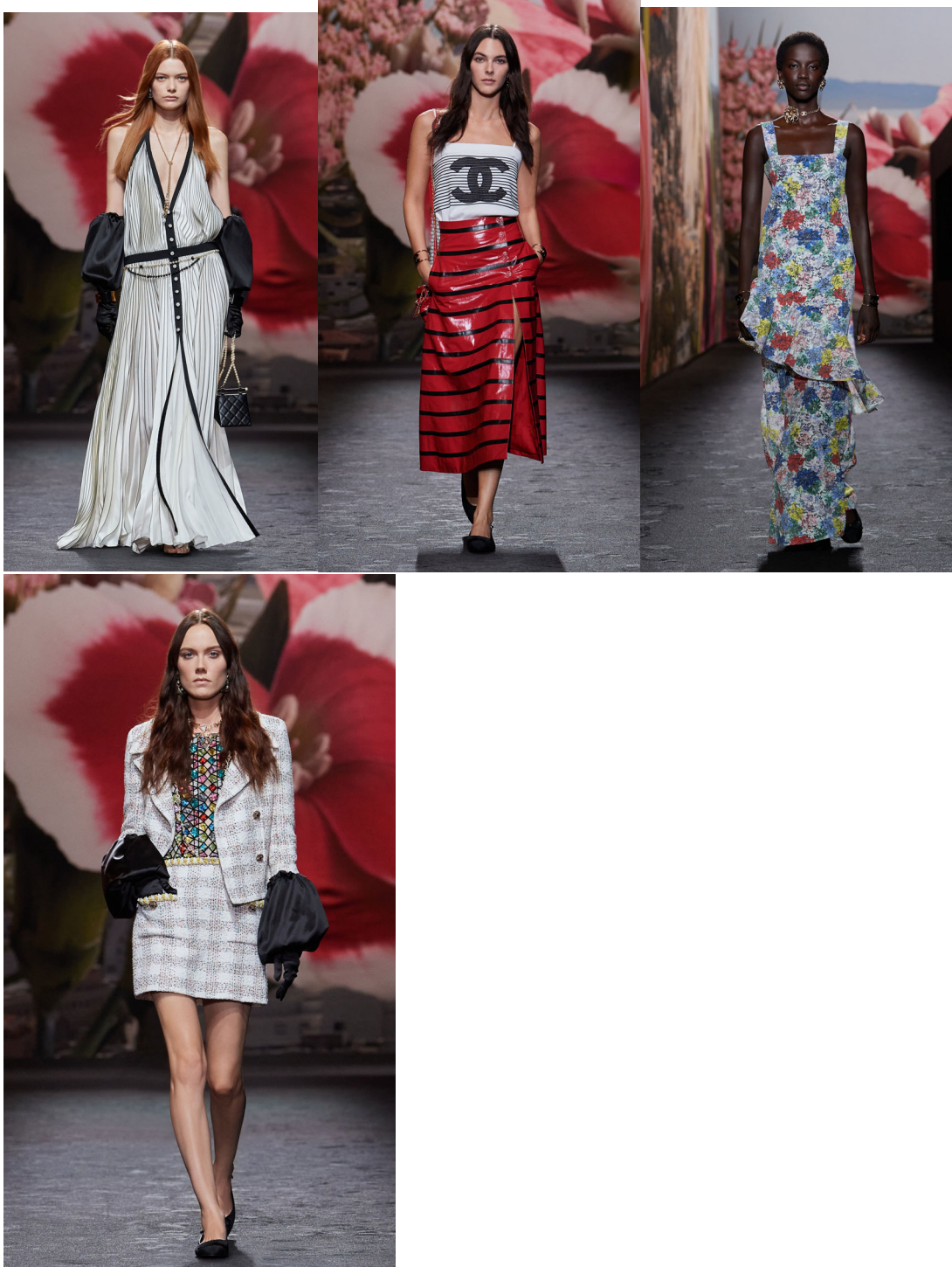


Louis Vuitton, spring 2024 Credit...Vianney Le Caer/Invision, via Associated Press

Vuitton, for example, was held in the brand's new building on the Champs-Élysées, a former Art Deco palace hotel, now a construction site for what the brand would only describe as “a new project.”

The soaring ground floor interior had been shrink-wrapped in orange plastic (100 percent recycled and 100 percent recyclable said the show notes) to resemble the interior of a hot-air balloon because, you know, travel (and the brand's birth as a trunk maker). And because the clothes from the designer Nicolas Ghesquière — layers of striped and plaid mousseline belted at the hip, with leather jackets, candy-cane clown pants and elaborately beaded tweeds — had their own floaty fussiness to match.

They were complicated-looking, no matter how light the construction, which paradoxically gave them a very French air. You don't want to wear them, but they are compelling all the same. Even if they also seem like a very acquired taste that might take too much effort to acquire, like sweetbreads.



Chanel, spring 2024Credit...Chanel

At Chanel, meanwhile, Virginie Viard was riffing on the Villa de Noailles, the 1920s artistic salon in the South of France and the creative milieu Coco shared, with bouclés and seaside stripes, long-line bathing suits and flirty cover-ups, logos and flowers and pearls galore. The problem is, for every great piece — a pleated black and white halter neck gown, for example, or a kind of ironically fun tweed caftan — there's another that has all the subtlety of boardwalk souvenir shop Chanel without any of the irony.

“Whatever”

It’s Mrs. Prada’s self-awareness and ability to both love fashion and recognize the issues with it, to embrace the inherent tensions and related absurdity of even worrying about such tensions, that makes it possible for so many to recognize themselves (or their many selves) in her work.

“Fashion comes when you want a distraction, when you are not too serious,” she said after the Miu Miu show. “But then you need to think about the rest, so you need clothes you can live with, and clothes that you can think with.”

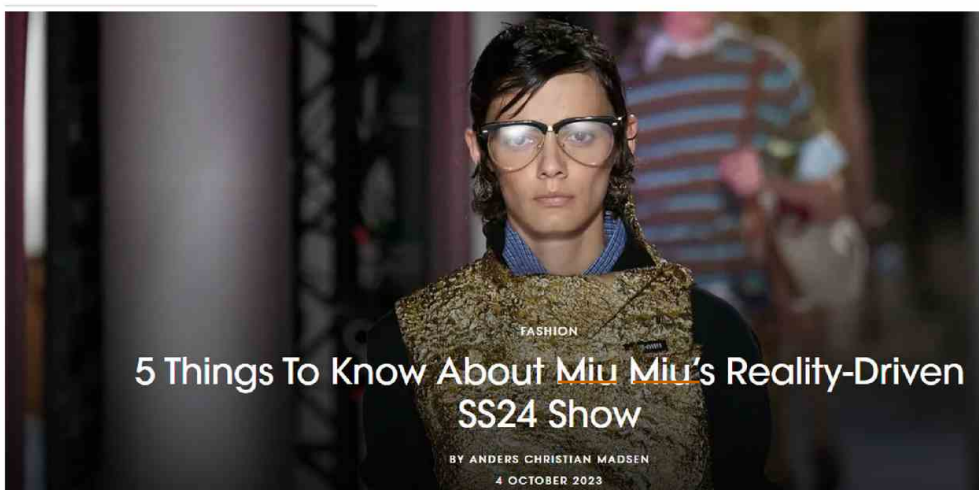
During the show, a piece of video art titled “Gravity & Grace” from the Qatari-American artist Sophia Al-Maria played on screens set up around the venue, featuring a stuntwoman, Ayesha Hussain, in those Prada hot pants, gas station jackets and knee-high boots, going through different exercises with a sword and a cross bow, and twirling around like a jewel-box ballerina. It didn’t have much to do with what was on the runway, other than evincing, the show notes said, “a congruent intellectual viewpoint.”

At the finale, after Cailee Spaeny — the actor who plays Priscilla Presley in Sofia Coppola’s coming biopic “Priscilla” — had walked out in a plain black coat, the video flashed a close-up of a gum-chewing face and the word “whatever.”

It was the perfect ending.



BRITISH VOGUE



Miuccia Prada's spring/summer 2024 Miu Miu show continued her exploration of reality-driven styling, with dishevelled layering, lived-in knitwear and short-shorts and colourful plasters fixed to the feet as an accessory. Below, Anders Christian Madsen reports from Paris Fashion Week.





Things got real

Few brands are as present on the real pavements of the world's capitals these days as [Miu Miu](#). The momentum [Miuccia Prada](#) has created with the real-girl look she started carving out some four seasons ago reflects and impacts a current desire for realness. Because when you talk about [Miu Miu](#) that word keeps popping up: *real*. On the final day of the show season, she amplified and almost fetishized that idea as real-life real-girl representatives Sydney Sweeney, Emma Chamberlain and Mia Goth looked on from the front row.



The [Miu Miu](#) look intensified

[Prada](#) re-established the [Miu Miu](#) silhouette that's seen recent collections fly off the shelves: skimpy hemlines expressed in knickers (worn as daywear), shorts and tiny tennis skirts paired with oversized blazers, bombers and coats. Triangular tops styled with low-slung tailored trousers continued the Y2K vibe beloved by a new generation of shoppers. The collection was underpinned by a decidedly preppy mood that riffed on an American idea of ease: crested jackets over polo shirts over shirts worn with Bermuda shorts.





The wardrobe felt lived-in

Prada imbued her garments and accessories with what she called “traces of living”: marks on leathers and suedes, and fabrics that faded as if they’d been washed too many times. She called the pre-worn sensibility an expression of “existing love” demonstrated by the repeated use of clothes. A similar sensibility was reflected in the “real” styling of the slightly dishevelled layering of dresses, jumpsuits, cardigans and T-shirts, which evolved the barely-got-out-bed look that characterised last season’s collection. As a brilliant nod to real life, the toes of flip-flop-wearing models were adorned with neon-coloured plasters.





There were moments of gold

Fashion's current appetite for the anti-ostentatious may have been represented in the realness of the [Miu Miu](#) collection, but [Miu Miu Prada](#) is also aware that this mentality isn't that real; that the young people who wear [Miu Miu](#) are driven by a desire to dress up. The gold-foiled dresses and skirt suits – not to mention the opera coat that closed the show – brought that element of fantasy to proceedings and served as a reminder that a real-girl mentality doesn't have to be dull.



It was a [Miu Miu](#) hall of fame

As always, the [Miu Miu](#) show came with a stellar cast: singer Troye Sivan flew the flag for the [Miu Miu](#) boy, while actors Cailee Spaeny and Mame Bineta Sane were joined by the artist Petra Collins and the





photographer Eddy Aldridge. New-era [Miu Miu](#) girls Gigi Hadid and Amelia Gray Hamlin were back to welcome the original models that paved the [Miu Miu](#) way: May Anderson, Rosemary Ferguson, Liu Wen, and Karolin Wolter.

