

The season's hottest looks are art inspired. Lucky for us, designers are working with a pretty palette

Spring ahead



LEANNE DELAP

ldelap@globeandmail.com

As pretty as it is, spring 2008 is a bit of a dog's breakfast: The main trends – colour, transparency, whites, suiting and pattern – make a pretty package, but they don't tie together with a bow.

"The only line through the season," says Suzanne Timmins, fashion director for Hudson's Bay Co., "is cross-pollination of fashion and art and music. It's art, art, art, right now," making a barking noise. "Miami Basel is the march of the penguins."

Thus, the movement to bright hues and bold prints. "It's the age of conceptual cre-

ativity," Timmins says. "Pattern always follows bold colour."

The other major trends are less easy to parse. White is obvious: a blank canvas. Transparency is a bit of a gimmick; it will be a fun add on. Suits pave the way for fall, when fashion will be about simple uniforms again.

As for shoes, while chunky platforms ruled the runways, flats will prevail on the street. (Fear not, height lovers: Some pretty heels can still be found.) Accessories are big – literally. "Go big or don't bother," says Tara Wickwire, public-relations director for the Gap. From seventies-style pendants to big link chains, it's time to pay attention to our necks. Cuffs are still popular too.

And yes, finally, the second run of the eighties is almost over. Get ready for the nineties revisited: bright colour and pattern meets simple shape. It's time to make a statement, ladies.



FOLLOW SUIT

The day suit was almost dead, but it surges back to the front of our closets this spring. Chanel, of course, leads the pack with a sleek red tweed number, a sexy update of the house's classic style. Because it's spring and one can wear bare legs again, the season's chunky heels balance things out nicely. 'The shoes this season are puzzling,' says Vancouver stylist Faranak DaCosta, who herself is investing in wedges. 'The outrageous clunky shoes won't make it off the runway. And face it, we are just not giving up our flats! They are far too comfortable.' Pattern is key to the day suit, but don't mix up your checks and plaids. Matchy-match is the way to go with a suit. Stay with one pattern, and match the shoes to the predominant colour.

Suits Plaid jacket, \$298, and pants, \$148 from Gant (1-800-652-9839). Tweed skirt suit, \$6,525 from Chanel (www.chanel.com).

Shoes Cole Haan canvas slip-ons, \$165 at Ron White (www.ronwhite.ca). Open-toed pumps, \$700 at Chanel.

Accessories Silver bangles, \$75 each from Alex Schleicher Inc. (www.alexandraschleicher.com). Wall Street messenger bag, \$298 at Roots (www.roots.com).

WHITE ON

No one waits for the May long weekend to bust out the whites any more. In Paris, Stella McCartney presented a ghostly collection with layers of frills and frippery. Here in Canada, new designer Ashley Rowe, who works under the label Miss Rowe, offers this voluminous puffy dress. Paired with sheer canary knee-highs and Marc Jacobs sky-blue sandals, it surfs the body; a cinch belt at the waist is the way to go if it feels too muumuu. Remember to balance out white gear by adding ballast, such as classic Frye boots with white jeans. And feel free to mix whites and creams, DaCosta says. 'I love lavenders and greys with whites right now too. The look isn't strict, it's ephemeral, floaty.' White is also a great canvas for bold jewellery choices, Wickwire says. 'Vintage inspired cuffs, statement necklaces and cocktail rings are having a big moment right now.'

Dress \$850 from Miss Rowe (www.missrowe.com).

Jacket Hannii Y hooded jacket, \$650 at Holt Renfrew (www.holtrenfrew.com).

Jeans \$128 from Penguin (www.originalpenguin.com).

Blouse Phillip Lim, \$295 at Holt Renfrew.

Shoes Marc Jacobs multitone heels, \$550 at Davids (www.davidsfootwear.com).

Frye campus boots, \$350 at Ron White.

Accessories Yellow knee-highs, \$2 at Winners (www.winners.ca).

Envelope clutch, \$128 at Roots.

J. Rox Originals by Jane Apor necklace, \$425 at Finn (416-961-0101).





BUSY BODIES

The patterns on offer are not for shrinking violets. Following the boffo Balenciaga spring collection with hydrangeas as big as your head, big florals are big news. Suddenly, even a little shift dress can deliver a punch. 'Funnily enough, tall or full-figured women can pull off big prints best,' says the Bay's Timmins. 'Of course, it takes a certain attitude too. It is the opposite of what people usually think: Big prints can actually make you look slimmer. But petite women can be engulfed by pattern. You can get the trend with smaller scale.' As to the question of mixing patterns, Timmins suggests staying with one 'ground' colour. 'And don't mix florals with florals, or plaids with plaids. Some women just have a knack, and when it works, it works. When it doesn't - scary!' When in doubt, leave one pattern in the closet.

Dress \$195 at Banana Republic.

Shoes Thierry Rabotin sandal, \$395 at Ron White.

Accessories J. Rox Originals by Jane Apor bracelets, \$360 at Finn. Bubble Collection rings, \$135 to \$165 from Alex Schleicher Inc.