

Making Sense of Pre-Fall



Osman



Merlette



Caroline Consta



Sea

Osman

Osman Yousefzada has been busy adding to his customers' wardrobes for fall with a concise lineup of easy pieces for day and evening, rooted in his signature clean and tailored silhouettes.

Narrow cropped trousers were paired with fitted houndstooth stretch jackets or zip-front corset tops; a natty gray wool suit came with a boxy jacket and pleated culottes, while a pair of silver sequined and tiered trousers were made for on-stage shimmying.

Dresses, as always, played a starring role: in a white shirt dress with a burgundy geometric pattern, pointy collar and fat French cuffs; a silk number with asymmetric buttons down the side and statement cuffs; a few fancier ones for evening, including a halter dress, and a strapless, ruffle-front one with a creeping vine and flower pattern.

The designer had a charming tulle moment, too, winding net fabric around the collars of cotton shirts to create Pierrot collars, or gathering it in jaunty tiers for a zip-front yellow top, which he paired with black cropped trousers.

— *Samantha Conti*

Merlette

With just her second collection, Marina Cortbawi has established an aesthetic of transient, well-crafted getaway dressing with timeless design. Her Merlette label is at once minimal, effortless and exudes global appeal — featuring solid-color cotton fabrics worked into easy, lightweight silhouettes meant to be incorporated as a lifestyle uniform — without the connotations of any one season. It's a smart concept as retailers sell lifestyle categories year-round.

In Collection 2, which delivers as pre-fall, Cortbawi advanced her debut from last year while sticking to core brand codes. There was a continuation of hand-embroidered smocking, beautiful eyelet fabrics and lightweight cotton and cotton poplins worked into wrap dresses, easy off-the-shoulder dresses, peplum blouses and blouses with hand-pleated sleeves. New this season, she introduced bottoms, like ultracool kick-flare culottes and shorts that appeared to riff on men's wear, as well as the color blue, joining Merlette's color library of solid white, black and red. The overall mood remained relaxed and comfortable. Additionally, each piece is named after an off-the-beaten path destination,

like to align with the brand's escapist spirit, like "Aix" in France for the culottes or "Essaouria" in Morocco for a dress.

As for brand and store positioning, Cortbawi is aiming higher than the collection's contemporary price point. "We avoided the contemporary store route because we feel that even though the line's price is low, it appeals to someone who would buy designer," she said at a preview. That model appears to be working, with Moda Operandi opting in and additional stockists in Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, and almost 20 different locations in Japan. — *Andrew Shang*

Caroline Consta

"I definitely relate to that summer costumer, being Greek and always having a destination for the season, so I really wanted it to be very happy and full of prints and colors," said Caroline Consta of her pre-fall collection, which she actually referred to as high summer, given her buy-now-wear-now mind-set.

And it only makes sense to take the emphasis away from a particular season, as her pieces always have that vacation flair. This time around, she exuded a Latin American influence in tropical print bohemian

dresses, ruffled skirts paired with off-the-shoulder tops and in a romantic white lace number with flared sleeves. — *Mayte Allende*

Sea

Monica Paolini and Sean Monahan pared things back for pre-fall, moving away — well, slightly — from the ultrafeminine bohemian floral prints and colorful embroidered laces for which Sea is known. "It's cleaner than what we usually do," said Paolini during a walk-through, noting a new emphasis on sportswear and men's-inspired looks. "We focused more on solids to make it feel fresh."

The collection still brimmed with the label's signature feminine frills — like bell-sleeve blouses and sleeveless silk dresses decorated in border prints — but it also included more tomboy separates, including double-breasted blazers and wide-leg belted trousers in crisp cotton canvas. Several looks featured mixed fabrics, as in a flirty summer dress that blended striped cotton jersey with puffy embroidered eyelet sleeves. Elsewhere, a shearling-trimmed cropped denim jacket felt just right for a chilly summer night.

— *Kristi Garced*