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# SARAH PAULSON

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## NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

*An inside look at Dolce & Gabbana's opulent Alta Moda celebrations from Canadian philanthropist Suzanne Rogers.*

### **Long known for their remarkable verve, Domenico**

Dolce and Stefano Gabbana set a new standard for collection-showcasing imaginativeness with the launch, six years ago, of their biannual Alta Moda celebrations. Apart from one show in London last year, these luxe extravaganzas have always been presented within Italy, hopping from Milan to Capri to Palermo to Portofino to Naples. This year, Alta Moda made its first foray across the Atlantic, gloriously unveiling the Spring/Summer 2018 couture collection over four nights, April 6 to 9, in New York.

The guest list is small and tightly guarded—celebrities mixing with the brand's elite global clientele. My first

Alta Moda experience was in Capri in 2014. I attended the New York festivities at the invitation of my great friend Sylvia Mantella. Night after night we shared in D&G's unique magic, alongside top customers from as far away as Moscow, Shanghai, and Dubai, and such A-listers as Catherine Zeta-Jones (attending with her and Michael Douglas's stunning daughter, Carys), Lady Kitty Spencer (the late Princess Diana's niece), Dakota Fanning, Diane Kruger, Meg Tilly, and *Vogue's* incomparably stylish editor-at-large, Hamish Bowles.

Daily invitations revealed that evening's location, including an exquisite dinner, dazzling show, and equally lavish party, each staged at a different Manhattan landmark. At day's end, as guests retired to the St. Regis—my perennial home-away-from-home in Manhattan—private buying appointments were scheduled.

Friday evening's opening event, held at the New York Public Library, focused exclusively on D&G's Alta Gioielleria jewellery creations, the show doubling as a charity auction. Sarah Jessica Parker served as both host and model, resplendent in a gem-studded set of earrings, necklace, and bracelet, won by Newport Beach entrepreneur Rob Arnott for his wife, Marina, with a bid of just over a half-million dollars.

Come Saturday, the iconic Rainbow Room atop Rockefeller Center provided an ideal setting for the men's Alta Sartoria show. Adding to the city-that-never-sleeps ambiance, headliner Liza Minnelli of course included her signature "New York, New York."

Sunday night proved grandest of all, with D&G's eye-popping women's couture spectacularly flourished at Lincoln Center's Metropolitan Opera House. Providing introductory remarks was Domenico and Stefano's long-time friend Isabella Rossellini, who, more than two decades prior, had escorted the designers to their first Met performance, of *Tosca*. (All three were guests of Luciano Pavarotti, a D&G devotee.)

Karlie Kloss opened the show in a dramatically feathered, tomato-red gown. Throughout, there were clever nods to the U.S., including army fatigues featuring back-pocket embroidery of the Statue of Liberty, a mink coat intarsia-embellished with "God Save America," several salutes to the Stars and Stripes, and Naomi Campbell's closing ensemble of a black satin bustier, Times Square-themed ball skirt, and Lady Liberty-inspired headpiece. Dinner was served on the Met stage, with sets from Franco Zeffirelli's celebrated production of *Turandot* as a backdrop, sensationally followed by fireworks at the Center's focal-point fountain.

Concluding in grand style, Alta Moda's Monday evening party at the Top of the Standard featured DJ Mad Marj and Rita Ora entertaining a marvellously eclectic audience that extended from such second-generation fashionistas as Christian Combs and Sistine Stallone to Greece's Princess Olympia. As the *New Yorker* so aptly summed up the unforgettable four-night fête, it was a "world of opulence beyond opulence, where no material desire is too far-fetched."