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FINAL SAY

From Paris With Love

International jet-setter **SUZANNE ROGERS**

shares her **PARIS FASHION WEEK**

Spring/Summer 2018 highlights.

Though the genesis of Paris Fashion Week dates to the 1940s, it wasn't truly ignited until 1973, when—as superbly documented in Robin Givhan's bestselling *The Battle of Versailles*—a fundraiser organized by the Fédération Française de la Couture famously (and controversially) commingled French and American designers. The now biannual Paris weeks have become the nuclei of my spring and fall calendars.

Fortunately, my daughter Chloe's return to university in London wasn't until mid-October, so I was delighted to have her join me for the entire week, beginning September 26. After a multi-million dollar renovation that lasted four years, our favourite Paris locale, the landmark Hôtel Ritz, reopened last year. The setting, service, and spectacularly appointed suites remain nonpareil.

The flurry of shows was nonstop, each more breathtaking than the last. Four were particular standouts. Lebanese designer-to-the-stars Elie Saab unveiled what he dubbed his Amazon collection. The jungle theme played out in python and frond prints, and lush botanical details adorning sheer dresses, though Saab also presented exquisite day and evening wear in a wide array of vivid colours.

The brilliant Pierpaolo Piccioli revealed his spectacular Spring 2018 collection for Valentino in the courtyard of the Lycée Carnot. Paying homage to the legendary fashion house's namesake, Piccioli put his own distinctive mark on the classic Valentino aesthetic, remarking that "It's just re-seeing what you already have, but with a new perspective."

One of the week's most coveted tickets, Sarah Burton's Alexander McQueen collection, took its inspiration from the outdoors. The runway was festooned with embroidered flowers as models, seemingly fresh from a springtime shower, walked a brick path. Vibrant pinks and reds, often dramatically offset by black or white, shaped Burton's stated focus on "British-ness, being in the garden, and the healing power of nature." Chloe and I caught up with her for a lengthy backstage chat before heading to a fabulous dinner for about a dozen VIP guests hosted by McQueen executives.

A raw, industrial space in the 17th arrondissement provided an ideally minimalist stage for incurable romantic Giambattista Valli's delicious assortment of springtime confections. Taking his cues from the storybook romance of royal-born Nancy Ruspoli and postmodern artist Mario Schifano, the Roman designer again demonstrated his inimitable flair for ultra-feminine day and evening wear, with delicate floral patterns, lacy tops, sequins, and billowy gowns with waves of ruffles. A month later, that same stellar Spring 2018 collection made its exclusive Canadian debut at Toronto's Haute Affair, a gala fundraiser I was honoured to co-chair with Vonna Bitove.

At the Ritz's cozy, wood-lined Hemingway Bar, I settled in for a quiet tête-à-tête with my dear friend Erdem Moraloğlu, discussing his remarkable show and other highlights. Chloe and I also found time to savour delectable dinners at such favourite spots as L'Avenue and Le Costes. Ending the whirlwind in appropriately high style, the elegant Musée Yves Saint Laurent opened on Paris Fashion Week's final day (a companion museum in Marrakesh, adjacent to Laurent's beloved Majorelle Garden, where his ashes were scattered, was unveiled two weeks later). Located at 5 Avenue Marceau—Laurent's headquarters from 1974 until his retirement in 2002—this four-storey salute to the trailblazing genius will feature rotating couture exhibits, aptly beginning with his debut collection from 1962.



ELIE SAAB

GIAMBATTISTA VALLI



VALENTINO



ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

Runway photos from top to bottom: photo courtesy of Elie Saab; photo courtesy of Giambattista Valli; photo courtesy of Valentino; photo courtesy of Alexander McQueen.