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Theyskens Theory Autumn/Winter 2011-12 Ready-To-Wear New York

By Indigo Clarke

THERE was an undisturbed silence in the audience leading up to Olivier Theyskens for Theory's show, held inside a bare warehouse space in Chelsea. It was an interesting moment of reverence to witness: the usually raucous fashion set literally stopping still in preparation for Theyskens' wares to hit the runway – and when they did, it was hypnotic.

To a monotonous beat, models stepped out in sculptural, rich-textured winter attire that at once appeared effortless and experimental. The look was decidedly European – tones (mushroom, aubergine, charcoal and olive), were muted and romantic, reminiscent of a misty winter garden, easy shapes in delicate fabrics were layered and outerwear appeared in countless styles.

Oversized tailored macs and anoraks, tweed trenches, leather and luxurious fur jackets and boxy Fifties-inspired overcoats were a few standouts that warmed the runway, along with rich cable-knit roll-neck sweaters guaranteed to cut the winter chill. This was a collection of "real" winter pieces with some necessary trans-seasonal separates and dresses – a pragmatic, and Parisian, approach to tackling sub-zero temperatures.

There was an up-scale grunge aesthetic at play, evidenced through ankle-length sweeping skirts and dresses, delicate prints and sultry skin-exposing lace, fused with a Victoriana and Bloomsbury poetess attitude. Necklines were high and intimidating on a series of severe garments featuring cinched-waists and fitted bodices, while graceful floor-sweeping print and sheer organza gowns (provocatively revealing a lot of skin), hinted at bohemian grandeur. Theyskens' refined and poetic grunge-meets-Victoriana collection is yet another step up for Theory, a brand that while renowned for their simple and effective tailoring, has not been known for a "fashion" point-of-view.