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THEYSKENS'THEORY

By Christina Binkley



Most every designer needs a muse to inspire them and a wife to keep them on track. Never short of muses, Olivier Theyskens may finally have found his wife in Andrew Rosen.

Mr. Rosen, president of Theory, hired the unemployed Mr. Theyskens a few months ago, much to the fashion world's shock. Mr. Rosen is known for running a tight ship at Theory, the go-to brand for wearable, affordable and minimalist working-women's apparel. Mr. Theyskens comes from another world entirely: his last two design contracts were pointedly not extended at Nina Ricci and Rochas after his fantastical, and fantastically expensive, clothes failed to sell well. In his defense, Mr. Theyskens told me a year ago that his clothes at those labels weren't marketed properly. But some retailers complained that they only fit fashion models.

So, with vivid memories of his last weird, dark, gothic collection for Nina Ricci in Paris, I was curious about Mr. Theyskens' debut full collection for "Theyskens Theory" in New York. (He presented a small capsule collection last September.) It's to be sold along with Theory, but the items will be higher priced. Bravo, Mr. Theyskens.

The collection had all the graceful, artful elements that have caused Pamela Golbin, curator of the Louvre's design collection, to call Mr. Theyskens one of the finest living designers. But it never went overboard with design, and it remained entirely within sight of what Theory is, so there shouldn't be any shock to shoppers (as long as the fit is consistent, and Mr. Rosen will surely see to that.)

I loved the easy long, loose silhouettes, and the play with some hemlines that had them shorter in the back, then veering downward in front. There was a soft strength to the clothes: the woman who wears them isn't afraid of fashion, but she has restraint. Had I been making my shopping list, I would have included the long pony coat with tails streaming behind it, a pair of soft wide-legged slacks, ... and...well, there goes my vacation budget.