

ralph lauren

DE-LOVELY
THE MOOD WAS OLD HOLLYWOOD—VERY CAROLE LOMBARD.



oscar de la renta

BLOSSOM TIME
A PINK TULIP SKIRT. (DON'T CALL IT A POUF!)

“HELLO, BEAUTIFUL!”



AGE OF INNOCENCE
A JAUNTY 1930s ALL-WHITE LOOK AT LAUREN.

What do women really want? It's something known as *beautiful*. Beautiful could be the sheer simplicity of head-to-toe white; beautiful could be an inverted tulip skirt of pink faille (don't call it a pouf!) worn with a simple white T-shirt. If you are asking, as my favorite TV pundit, **Nancy Grace** of *Court TV*, does, “What the hay is going on?”—well, beautiful is going on.

The New York spring collections were all about full-stop optimism and hope, all things bright and beautiful: the softest makeup palettes; hair that moved gently like there was a breeze in the room; and

a whole lot of really pretty dresses.

The word *beautiful* crystallized in my mind as I walked from the West Side Highway to **Marc Jacobs**'s show space on Pier 54: Ten thousand white roses, in industrial buckets and bins, lined the pathway. Inside, the party planner **Raul Avila** had constructed an archway from 500,000 more pink and white roses. Through the archway strutted Marc's girls, in strapless dresses with the smoothest construction and most brilliant colors. **Christina Aguilera** sang out over the sound system, over and over again: “I am beautiful no matter what they say...” *andré* >84



GONE A-COURTING
SWEET AND FRILLY TENNIS WHITES AT DE LA RENTA.

SERENA WILLIAMS
SHE SPENT TIME, PRESHOW, WITH OSCAR DE LA RENTA.

THE TRAINA SISTERS
VANESSA (LEFT) AND VICTORIA ARRIVE AT PROENZA SCHOUER.

RACHEL WEISZ
THE *ABOUT A BOY* STAR TURNED UP AT NARCISO RODRIGUEZ.

THE CLEMENTE SISTERS
CHIARA (LEFT) AND NINA ARRIVE AT D.V.F.

EMMY ROSSUM
RALPH LAUREN WAS HER FIRST-EVER SHOW.

front & center

rites of spring

It was a season of outstanding collections from the Old Masters—**Ralph Lauren** and **Oscar de la Renta**—as well as New School mavericks and rebels like Jack and Lazaro Proenza Schouler (who in one collection crossed the threshold from young designers to a grown-up brand that speaks to the needs of grown-up women).

Ralph Lauren soared like an American eagle across the fashion horizon with a sensational show based on the refinement and glamour of the Hollywood screen legends: **Carole Lombard**, **Jean Harlow**, a little **Myrna Loy** as Mrs. Nick Charles (without Asta), and a lot of frosty, flattering pastel pinks, blues, and vanilla ices.

Though Lauren evoked glittering moments of 1930s film, the show didn't sink into a referential pilfering of studio-days costuming. In any other hands, this would have been a retro romp through a scrapbook of Adrian's costumes for *The Philadelphia Story*, but Lauren made the 1930s look fresh and new.

The show opened with a smashing take on tennis whites: a chalk cashmere polo coat worn over a belted sweater and easy, loose satin shorts. Lauren struck a perfect balance between bias-cut elegance (the long gowns, the easy fluid skirts) and sporty modernity (**Jacquetta Wheeler** suddenly walking out in a full-legged pant of beaded denim,

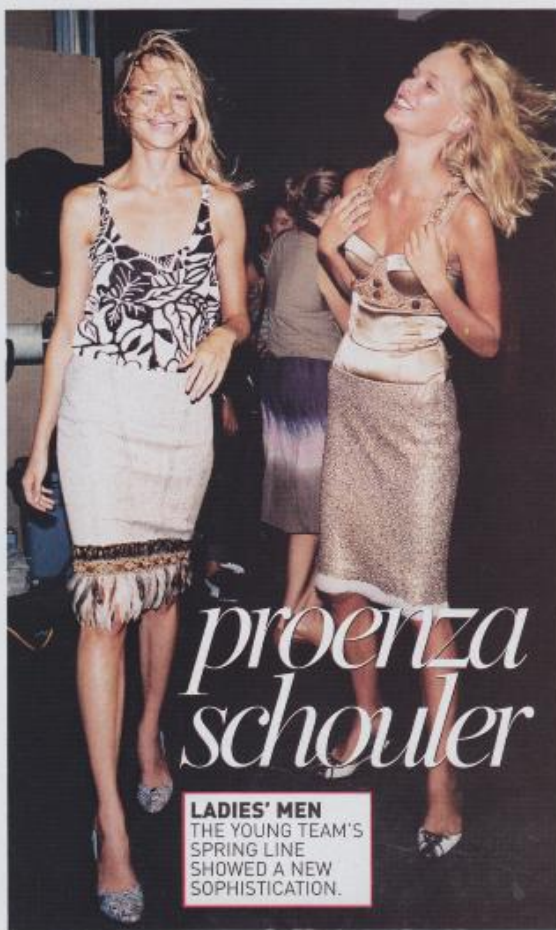
with a sharply tailored jacket and a beaded beret).

love, all

At the fine age of 72, with four decades in the business, **Oscar de la Renta** presented one of his most flawless collections ever. There was not a weak link, not a stroke of doubt, in his gorgeous lineup of society clothes.

The collection's one perfect blossom was that inverted tulip skirt of pink faille that he teamed up with a white cotton T-shirt inscribed with a message from his son, **Moises de la Renta**: ROCK & ROLL, HEART & SOUL. "This is exactly the way a young girl who lives downtown would dress to go uptown," said de la Renta.

He had been very inspired by a Saturday-afternoon visit the weekend before his show by **Serena Williams**, who dropped by his atelier wearing jeans and an orange tank top. "I could stay here for a week, just to learn," Williams, who is herself an aspiring designer, told me. "I am so fascinated by Oscar de la Renta. *andré* >104



proenza schouler

LADIES' MEN
THE YOUNG TEAM'S SPRING LINE SHOWED A NEW SOPHISTICATION.

life with andré

SPRING 2005 RUNWAY REPORT



MY FAIR LADY
D.V.F. MADE
A CLEAN BREAK
FROM HER
FAMOUS PRINTS.

*diane von
furstenberg*

I have always been a fan of his work." Williams spent an hour being fitted for the neat black de la Renta look she wore to his show. She blushed when he presented her with an homage he'd designed with her in mind: a white crocheted tennis dress that **Michelle Buswell** would wear, carrying a racket in a white-linen cover, on the runway.

"I could look at fabrics for hours," Williams told de la Renta, who invited her to sit in his studio anytime. It is connections and friendships like these that keep de la Renta young.

QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE

Like Ralph Lauren, **Diane von Furstenberg** had the screen goddess on her mind: Her wonderful show was inspired by **Ava Gardner** in *Mogambo*. "There is nothing more glamorous than Ava Gardner in that film!" von Furstenberg said of the 1953 MGM Technicolor picture, in which the sultry



BELIEVE IN ANGELS
PRISTINE
EMPIRE
SILHOUETTES
LOFTED DOWN
NARCISO'S
RUNWAY.

*narciso
rodriguez*

brunette falls in love with **Clark Gable** on an African safari.

"This collection is about a woman who travels on a grand tour," the designer explained. She offered simple all-white clothes, as well as cotton wrap dresses with soft, full skirts in banana-leaf prints, brilliant reds and greens on white. One short beaded dress was modeled after the modern homes inhabited by the Ndebele tribes. And the Serengeti was the motif for her finale: a print of giraffes stalking the landscape silhouetted against a mauve sky of chiffon.

She also showed real jewelry—stacks of gold bangles—and a heart-shaped solid-gold purse hung on a simple rope, from her new H. Stern collection.

COME SAIL AWAY

Narciso Rodriguez had Brazil, not Africa, on the brain for spring 2005. He's been vacationing there lately, and chose a color scheme snatched from the skies and beaches of Rio

and São Paulo: soft azures, tinted with a bit of sea foam.

As ever, the essence of Rodriguez's work is his attention to cut. But for the first time, he stepped away from all those sporty shapes and went whole hog up the couture trail, with beautiful white dresses caught into Empire waists, and with bodices worn over a sail of white silk. He maintains total control of his construction.

His dresses weren't done just for runway effect. They weren't theatrical. They were refined evening statements—both short (as in the white dress with the band of black textured lamé like black sand at the hem, worn by Isabeli) and long (as in the all-white finale).

I was the first to bum rush Rodriguez backstage. He wore a blue T-shirt and jeans over his newly buff Popeye the Sailor Man physique. "I wanted to make clothes that reflected the fresh air, the wind, the sky and sea, and windsurfing," Rodriguez told me. Mission accomplished—beautifully!—**ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY**