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Form-fitting dresses, suave suits ratchet up glamour quotient at Fashion Week

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Canadian Press: Lauren La Rose, THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO - The glamour quotient of L'Oreal Fashion Week got an ample boost Tuesday from collections boasting elegant, intricate, body-hugging dresses and gowns and sleek, suave, manicured tailored shirts and suits befitting mysterious, sexy sophisticated characters torn from the pages of a spy caper.

Black dominated the colour palette of a large proportion of pieces on display, but rich tones like amethyst and indigo also found their way in the mix.

But when it came to the Heart Truth fashion show, it was red that reigned the runway as celebrity models strutted their stuff in fiery creations by a crop of talented Canadian designers all in the name of heart health awareness.

Joeffer Coac: The designer drew inspiration from his "After Hours" collection from the 60s film "Belle de Jour," whose premise surrounds a wealthy bored housewife who ends up working as a high-end call girl.

"The whole collection is a lot more darker and moodier and it's sort of the mixture of classic with sexier and edgier," Coac said in an earlier interview.

"The manner in which the clothes are constructed and the way it's styled is how things don't appear as they are."

Dresses in aubergine electric print and velvet receive the delicate fold treatment, creating fluid, sensual silhouettes.

Pants in twill and herringbone feature a form-fitting but flattering shape.

A rich palette of bold colour tones including indigo featured in a mohair short coat and matted jersey dress blend well in contrast with more neutral tones.

Coac plays with a broad range of textures, including a midnight blue metallic basketweave topper that bears a lush sheen in its appearance.

Bustle: The minute the U.S. dollar bills were scattered along the runway, the stage was set for a showcase of high-end sophistication - and the men's leisurewear line delivered.

Model Stacey McKenzie of "Canada's Next Top Model" fame served as card dealer at a makeshift high roller table positioned at the opening of the runway while men and women alike glided through the greenbacks littered on the hardwood in suave, finely tailored suits.

Shawn Hewson, one half of Bustle's design duo, said the label always tends to do a theme reflective of a

sport or aspirational activity. This time around, casino was the name of the game.

"It's kind of like a real sort of French baccarat, high rollers room type of inspiration, not like stag parties at the MGM Grand," he said.

Hewson said they opted to do black from the first time, using fabric from an Italian mill.

Sleek black-on-black pinstriping and satin striped screen panelling offered a contemporary take on a familiar pattern style.

Black piping added delicate detailing on pants and coat collars. The duo turned the casino theme up a notch, featuring a card print on button-down shirts and the satin interior lining of jackets.

Heart Truth: The worlds of film, television, media, music and sports converged on the unlikely platform of a fashion catwalk as notable Canadian women slipped out of their comfort zones and into designer creations to promote heart health awareness.

Fashion Television's Jeanne Beker, "Canadian Idol" winner Eva Avila, five-time Olympian Charmaine Crooks and CTV news anchor Sandie Rinaldo were among the 20 celebrity models who walked the runway in red dresses crafted by notable design talents from across the country.

The Heart Truth fashion show is the marquee event of the Heart and Stroke foundation's recently launched campaign aimed at bolstering awareness of heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death for women in Canada.

Beker kicked things off in a dazzling fire-engine red strapless number by Joeffer Coc, followed by "Entertainment Tonight Canada" host Cheryl Hickey in a lush Path McDonagh creation featuring a sparkly heart cutout on the back.

"Corner Gas" star Nancy Robertson hammed it up in her Paul Hardy dress, carrying her shoes as she cavorted down the runway.

Closing out the show was actress-writer Catherine O'Hara in a sweeping Thien Le gown, who recovered with aplomb after taking an unfortunate fall at the end of the runway.

Lucian Matis: Black re-emerged as the classic go-to colour of style and sophistication, dominating the colour palette in the works of the Toronto-based designer and "Project Runway Canada" runner-up.

A succession of accented coats with fur accents later gave way to an elaborate array of body-hugging dresses and gowns oozing with sensual sophistication.

A black bodice gown unveiled from under a dramatic black veil got the beading treatment, as did sweeping dresses in silk tafetta and leather.

Delicate ruffles abounded on poet blouses and trench collars.

At a news conference Tuesday, Robin Kay, president of the Fashion Design Council of Canada, producers of Fashion Week, and Tiziana Maiolo, councillor for economic development and fashion for the city of Milan, joined forces to announce the creation of scholarships for Toronto-area fashion design graduate students.

The scholarships are intended for the grads to study at one of Milan's top fashion schools.

Meanwhile, design graduates from the four schools showcase their works on the Fashion Week runway as part of Talenti Moda Milano.

Toronto's Preloved, which recently lost its storefront location downtown in a six-alarm fire that made national headlines when it gutted a city block, also showcased their works. The trendy label cretes new pieces out of rework vintage.

B.C.-based designing duo Evan & Dean made their L'Oreal Fashion Week debut with their "refined kitsch" collection.

The designers played on extremes of full bodied and slender silhouettes, featuing fibres like wool crepe and silk charmeuse, along with pieces drenched in rich earth tones like beet and chestnut.

Raymond Boutet and Lyle Reimer, who are partners in life and business, named the label for their nephews in a bid to pay homage to family.

Montreal-based Lewd, Hibebe By: Salem Moussallam, Nada and Philip Sparks also showcased collections Tuesday.

Runway shows conclude at the tents Thursday, with Fashion Week wrapping up Saturday.

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