

PRINTS CHARMING



SUMMER TO FALL, PATTERN IS ALL!

by MICHELE MEYER

As designers move toward fall, minimalism is out and patterns are in, be they wordy (literally), exotic (tropical blossoms) or well-rounded (dots).

"The whole print craze has gone crazy," says Eric Jennings, Saks Fifth Avenue's menswear fashion director. "We've already done checks, plaids and stripes in recent years. These are cheery and light."

A new slant makes sense in summer: Don't you crave a fresh breeze?



All images courtesy of the manufacturers.

Facing: Nina Ricci
Satin duchesse coat, \$2,690;
mousseline printed top,
\$1,290, and skirt, \$1,090;
floral silk Arc clutch, \$1,490.
ninaricci.com

Facing, below: Sophia Webster
Nicki black patent leather with
beaded Killer pin heels, \$530.
sophiawebster.co.uk

Dries Van Noten
Black Curran embroidered
100-percent silk tank, \$760;
natural Heraly cotton/linen
blend tank, \$310; black
Pensée Bis viscose/cotton
pants, \$710; black leather/
cotton pendant, \$198; beige
leather sandals, \$970.
www.driesvannoten.be



Say It With Flowers

It's a jungle out there as men's and women's designers go furiously feral with flowers. The bigger the bloom, the better. This summer, Henri Rousseau-like water lilies grow wildly on Hermès cotton tunics and trousers, even leather boots. Enormous flame- and magenta-hued irises steam up Gucci's sheer silk columns as erotically as on Georgia O'Keeffe canvases.

"Where we saw micro-florals last season, now we see macro-florals," Jennings says. "They're large, aggressive and make a strong statement, including for men."

Buddy, these big buds are for you. Pumped-up posies man up when planted against unearthly shades. Weeded out is sweetness, leaving abstract art.

Thus, MBMJ's bold botanicals of white against black are more graphic than frou-frou on short-sleeve shirts. Dries Van Noten creates Hawaiian Goth with seemingly ink-soaked peonies and palm fronds on bombers, surf shorts and pleated trousers. >

A clash of tartans toughens up birds-of-paradise sprigged sundresses at Just Cavalli, while python beneath gives edge to posy-painted stilettos at Stuart Weitzman.

"If you have confidence, you can play with prints," says Brit-born Nina Ricci designer Peter Copping. "A country home may have wallpaper, sofa and carpet with different prints. Why not clothes? Just keep a harmony of colors."

Power flowers continue to invade fall: huge and lush against pink silk at Giambattista Valli and navy knits at Tory Burch. Adding a third dimension, Christian Dior sprinkles beaded sprigs on clutches, while Céline pins leather rosettes on jackets.

Trend Spotting

Polka dots are spot-on for summer through autumn. "They're flirtatious and festive, playful and irreverent," says Brooke Jaffe, Bloomingdale's ready-to-wear fashion director. "Dots resurface when we're looking for fun. That's why they tend to be popular in summer."

Historically, we see spots every two decades. They resurfaced to great success in the '40s, '60s and 1989, when petit points became the signature of cocktail queen Carolina Herrera.

Now it's time to go dotty again. A year ago, spirited spots sprouted on men's socks. By July, they dotted the white-on-blue dress the Duchess of Cambridge wore to introduce future King of England, George. Soon after, circles became a bright spot of ensembles in an otherwise somber navy Miu Miu fall 2013 collection.

"A classic is now cool, in part because spots form a graphic punch of positive and negative," says Ken Downing, Neiman Marcus fashion director. "We're seeing them in every size: from diminutive to daringly large, and from crisp geometrics to painterly brush stroke splotches."

Summer spot standouts speckle Dolce & Gabbana's platform sandals, Sportmax's slippers and Burberry Prorsum's men's shirts.

Not as likely to hit shelves near you are the giant white spots Armani custom-splattered head-to-toe on George Clooney for a recent *W Magazine* cover. "Large dots can look clownish," Jennings warns. "I prefer pin-dots, which look like solids from a distance. They're easier to incorporate into a work wardrobe."



Just Cavalli
Floral silk/nylon dress, \$1,050, Just Cavalli New York boutique; acrylic cuffs, runway only—not available for purchase. robertocavalli.com

As temps drop, Valentino pops scarlet and fuchsia spots on mod midis and booties.

Menswear gets to the point more subtly—on Gieves & Hawkes' micro-dotted ties. Christopher Kane cleverly connects the dots as molecules on crew necks. ▷



Dolce & Gabbana
Silk floral print blouse, \$995; silk polka-dot skirt, \$995; brass coin hoops, \$1,280; Sara calfskin bag, \$2,295; calfskin and cotton wedges, \$2,945. All at select DG boutiques and dolcegabbana.it.



Burberry Prorsum
White double-faced Bright Canvas blue linen large-dot, oversized shirt, \$595; indigo silk cropped Caban jacket, \$1,595; Viridian green linen bold stripe slim tie, \$295; navy linen slim-fit trousers, \$795; yellow suede low-top shoes, \$485. burberry.com

The Write Time

Fashion also takes a literal approach: Leave a message—on fabric. From club-cool Moschino to upscale Christian Dior, designers are creating walking billboards more ephemeral than tattoos. “The ‘selfie’ generation lives out loud in a social media-driven world,” Jaffe says. “Plus, designers want to start a dialogue.”

The range of headlines is broad, from climate crusading (“no fish, no nothing” at Kenzo) to cheery (“Love” at Céline). They’re also witty (“killer” heels at Sophia Webster, “holy chic” dresses at Moschino and “Parental Advisory Explicit Content” sweatshirts at Alexander Wang). Still others are cryptic (“hyperreality in the daytime” at Christian Dior).

While feminine instant messaging veers high-end, it’s more casual for men, on T-shirts and Jeremy Scott’s embossed crocodile baseball caps. “I’m seeing street terms like ‘Trill’ [a combination of true and real] and MHRS [Mostly Heard, Rarely Seen],” Jennings says. “They’re graphic and bold, but not something you’ll wear to the office.”

Material messages have history: Roy Lichtenstein’s comic-strip inspired Pop art of the ’60s, Stephen Sprouse’s graffiti-graphic fashions of the ’80s and Banksy’s subversive street-turned-museum art of the past decade.

But it was Lanvin’s gold script “Happy” necklaces last winter that reminded top designers mouthing off can move from *EEK* to chic. “A beautiful font turns something that could be quite tacky and garish into something elegant,” says Maria Divaris, fashion stylist to singer Miranda Lambert. “Limit yourself to one statement and err on the side of caution with what you say.”



Alexander Wang
Parental Advisory rayon, nylon and cotton sweatshirt, \$995; high-waist A-line viscose/polyamide shorts with seamed-in pocket, \$650; Marine High Gummy shoes, available in black or gray leather, \$795. alexanderwang.com

Sophia Webster
Bite Me patent leather clutch, \$450. sophiawebster.co.uk



Fall Forward

Check it out: By rotating, quilting, puncturing and basket-weaving plaids, designers take traditional tartan for a fresh spin this autumn. Valentino adds texture with rhinestones or mohair and sheared beaver, transforming blocks into diamonds in the rough on Mary Janes and cardigans.

Puff up checks with down, and they’ll gird against future polar vortexes, via Marc Jacob’s suede booties for women and Ermenegildo Zegna’s luxe bombers for men.

Edun’s ivory laser-cut felt dresses and skirts have the lock on grids—less baring than spring’s net effect at J. Mendel. Giambattista Valli’s sheer-edged squares add sizzle to ruby frocks.

Shimmering copper and bronze threads spark up otherwise preppy shirtdresses at Marco de Vincenzo. Derek Lam’s suede and leather collaged pencil skirts prove patches have come a long way since hobos ruled the rails. Similarly, rug-like yarn cleans up as Altuzarra’s elegant halters. Equally unrecognizable are menswear squares blown up on Michael Bastian’s turtlenecks and 3.1 Phillip Lim’s blazers.

Which just goes to show ... Art is in the eye of the beholder—and magic can pop up in any closet. ♦



Guy Laroche
Turtleneck dress with insets of sequin polka dots on tulle, price upon request; black leather booties, not available for purchase. guylaroche.com

Far right: Giambattista Valli
Embroidered silk dress, \$8,240; suede booties, \$1,070; both made to order at bergdorfgoodman.com.

Right: Hardy Amies
Wool alpaca overcoat in chocolate, \$1,395; dark gray wool/silk herringbone unstructured single-breasted patch-pocket blazer, \$1,195; white/navy cotton herringbone shirt, \$295; chocolate/washed navy wool reversible knit tie, \$245; Prince of Wales check trousers in charcoal wool silk, \$495; chocolate vegetable-dyed tanned leather embossed monogram tote, \$1,495; black ribbed cashmere socks, \$58; black suede and grained leather double monk shoes, \$995. hardyamies.com

