

Mix Masters

Clashing styles prove that
opposites do attract.

by MICHELE MEYER

Fashion never has been so bi-polar. In this new year, we'll spot city slickers on one end (clad in futuristic leather, velvet and chiffon) and equestrian elite on the other (evoking the past in hunting tweeds, satin jodhpurs, riding boots and epaulet-adorned cavalry twills).

In this battle of town and country—of tomorrow and yesteryear—where should you stand?

At attention.

Today's twisting trends demand focus for men and women alike. Winter's horsiness shifts to spring's fetishism, military to safari and patent leather to foil and lamé.

"It's an 'opposites-attract' theory, and requires skill and imagination," says Gregg Andrews, fashion creative director for Nordstrom. "You should mix rugged with refined, masculine with feminine, velvet with leather, ornate with humble. It's the modern way to get the most from your wardrobe." ▸



This page:
Jason Wu
Halter harness point
d'esprit gown, \$6,195,
NeimanMarcus.com,
jasonwustudio.com.

Opposite page:
Tim Weiland
Leather-topped
velvet dress, \$955,
timoweiland.com.





Michael Bastian
Navy nylon quilted
Paddington coat, \$1,095;
burgundy tipped 'Blip'
v-neck sweater with
collar, \$1,255; blue/white
horizontal stripe spread
collar shirt, \$415, gray
tweed Paratrooper
pants, \$525, all
michaelbastiannyc.com.



Michael Kors
Fur-collared
hand-knit Alpaca
cardigan, \$3,995;
satin charmeuse
long tank dress,
\$995; Blake
Littleton mini-
satchel, \$695; MK
Skinny belt, \$195;
Mary Janes, \$995,
michaelkors.com.

Easy Rider

Town and Country, aristo-style, has been a clear winner for winter since it raced from the gate. "The looks are aspirational," says Daniel James Cole, fashion historian and adjunct assistant professor of fashion design at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

Lush earth hues in rugged yet luxe materials make hunt chic an unbridled success for femmes. Tommy Hilfiger's hunter-patched cable turtlenecks over silk bridle-printed skirts will be welcome at the country club and the office. The same holds for Ralph Lauren's Fair Isle sweaters and tweed breeches worn with bowlers and accompanied by the occasional walking stick. Givenchy's khaki satin jodhpurs trot into evening, as do Gucci's deep purple velvet capes.

Men chafing to join the hunt club can't tweak tradition with Dior Homme's olive leather windbreakers or Ermenegildo Zegna's quilted parkas—a look that continues into spring at Brioni, Andrews says. "If you plan to wear a quilted hunting jacket inside, make sure it's not puffy or oversized. It will protect you yet be refined enough for the office."

Also making strides in the wilds are Burberry's fox-printed sweaters and duck-head-handled brellies. Add a shotgun and hunting dog and you're set.

Should you prefer to evoke '40s stars Clark Gable alongside Carole Lombard, pile on Michael Kors' tweedy knits under red buffalo check ponchos for men and teddy-bear-like alpaca coats for women. Warning, though: Wearing those coats in the woods during hunting season could be deadly! >



This page:
Michael Kors
 Camel brushed wool and moleskin anorak, price upon request; pearl/ivory tweed alpaca hand-knit pullover, \$495; camel brushed wool and moleskin cargo pants, price upon request, michaelkors.com.

Opposite page:
 Mohair ombre plaid double-breasted coat with fur lapel, \$3,995; brushed mohair long-sleeve turtleneck, \$995; Lyndon plaid stretch flannel gauchos, \$1295; Barrington large zipper satchel, \$1,595; Monroe sunglasses, \$209; oxford heels, \$1,265, michaelkors.com.



Arguably, you can play it safer with Tom Ford's marigold-shaded chubbies and Fendi's rainbow-tinged toppers.

Or maybe not.

Beyond hues, what sets pelts apart this season is where they sprout in womenswear: along coat seams at Viktor & Rolf and tank tops at Vionnet.

Even wilder are Fendi's and Jason Wu's gorilla arms and Louis Vuitton's yeti goat-fur bags (shades of last fall's Prada It bags). Mulberry's fur pencil skirts may be winter's alternative to a feather skirt.

Below, thighs—and sighs—are the limit with Altuzarra's sex-in-the-saddle stiletto-heeled riding boots. They come with their own whip-foot-long tassels. Consider it a hint of things to come.

By spring, designers will have no restraint. Bandage meeting bondage at Hervé Léger can

be expected. But even ladylike Nina Ricci, Jason Wu and BCBG Max Azria unleash harnesses, more kinky than coltish: Wu on otherwise demure peach lace or navy tulle; Ricci under ladies-who-lunch black suits; and BCBG over lingerie.

Even male models will be buckled in at fashion-forward Duckie Brown, which slings leather leashes around shoulders of classic denim.

Such eroticism can be credited to—or blamed on—both E L James' saucy bestseller, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and photographer Helmut Newton's work, which dominated in the '70s, then was paid homage in the '90s by designers and earlier this year by museums (including Paris' Grand Palais). "And don't forget," Andrews says, "remove the bondage gear, and you've got sweet or sensible versus sultry." ▸



Jonathan Saunders
Stretch top, price
upon request; Clark
skirt of viscose
and elastane, \$816,
jonathan-saunders.com.

Shine On
The hardcore may lust after a harder look: Jil Sanders' strapless dresses and Tibi's pencil skirts in vinyl. Granted, they are suggestive. But they're also patently chic.
Come spring, the ultimate flasher proves to be Burberry, which paraded pastel metallic trench coats down its runways. So much for British propriety. Silver foil also adds sizzle to pencil skirts beneath tight taupe tanks at Jonathan Saunders.

What a Croc

Supple leather has become a year-round staple. Designers rock the croc in Fendi's winter skirts, Ralph Lauren's attachés and Giambattista Valli's glossy gold overcoat, a cocktail contender.

"Designers are making luxury skins modern, even futuristic, in blues, bordeaux, chocolate, cognac and black," notes Andrews. "The key is seeking a lustrous sheen, not disco-ball shine, and mixing them with matte fabrics."

Pucci takes it further, printing alligator on sheer black dresses, while MaxMara embosses velvet turtlenecks and Red Army style caps. ▷



Donald J. Pliner
Black vitello calf and
crocodile Dion boot,
\$495, donaldjpliner.com.



MaxMara
Camel crocodile
printed sweater, \$695,
bolero wool cap with
crocodile-printed
leather trim, \$390,
wool legwarmers
with buckles, \$540,
maxmara.com.



Gucci
Draped collared
Night Forest velvet
jacket, \$2,950;
black cashmere
deep-neck tank,
\$795; elastic-
banded velvet
pants, \$1,500,
gucci.com.

A Velvet Revolution

Not as likely to infiltrate warmer weather is the softest fall fabric—a Downton Abbey evening fave.

“Velvet hasn’t asserted itself this strongly since the mid-’90s, and on men since the ’70s,” Cole says. “It’s an extreme fabric: luxurious yet fragile. People feel special wearing it. We’re seeing it exploited in new ways, with clean, crisp, bold lines in men’s and women’s blazers and slacks. But refrain from ruffles. Those look Victorian, dated and fussy.”

Given the wait and its weight, expect it to return next winter. In the meantime, mix masters keep it modern, including Gucci with military jacket-topped easy velvet floor grazers and Timo Weiland’s leather-halter-topped columns. Expect Chanel’s new spin to skinny jeans—geometric-patches of velvet to be the most knocked-off. Or give a nod to the trend, as Burberry Prorsum does for men, showing velvet newsboy caps with army anoraks.

Military Operations

Speaking of fierce, many designers have gone green (as in army) as well as khaki and navy. Yet there’s nothing drab about the military dress rising through the ranks of retail right now.

“The colors are classics, while zippers, flaps and complex pockets make these garments much more beautiful than the average blazer,” says Mark-Evan Blackman, FIT assistant fashion design professor. “You’re getting more bang for the buck.”

Another appeal is fabrics, often Melton wool, doeskin and cavalry twills.

“What’s great about these materials is their substance: They were created to perform in pouring rain,” says Patrick Grant, design director of London’s Norton & Sons and E. Tautz. “When times feel shaky, you want to buy things that will last, that have a sense of permanence.”

Thus, Tommy Hilfiger battles chilly climes with warriors of both sexes clad in “Cadet” prep braiding-garnished pea coats and blazers, while Michael Bastian’s men storm the war front with moleskin paratrooper pants, boiled wool pea coats and fox-trimmed parkas. Also taking up the battle cry are Burberry’s army-green aviator puffers and Adam Kimmel’s Navy Seal anoraks.

A surplus of winning looks serves women, too, including Salvatore Ferragamo’s gold-button garnished jackets and Barbara Bui’s metal-button embellished Air Force-ready jumpsuits.

Fashion feels fresh with fatigues in the future. Buttons and braiding disappear, while cargo pockets breed on the silk-and-canvas khaki and olive safari-inspired shirt dresses that storm spring runways at MaxMara and Victoria, Victoria Beckham.

Across the war front, Bottega Veneta’s khaki and olive double-breasted menswear suits are perfect office-ready armor. The fight club also should be alert to Belstaff’s safari jackets, Diesel Black Gold’s olive shorts and Dries van Noten’s camo-print T-shirts. E. Tautz’s doeskin capes provide cover.

Warrior wear is so forceful, you should limit yourself to one piece at a time, perhaps adding slim-cut slacks or a white tee, Blackman says. “It’s a timeless look whether you’re 25 or 65.” ▶



MaxMara
Khaki safari blazer
over animal print
pencil skirt, prices
upon request,
maxmara.com.

The Best is Yet to Come

Extremes beget extremes. So after one of the darkest winters in years, designers trumpet: Time to lighten up!

Indeed, the spring forecast is clear—or sheer for women—and clean and crisp for all. Not only did many fashion lines show white or sand from head-to-toe for men and women, but also relaxed the silhouette. Shirts are bigger, shorts are baggier and coat dresses are back.

“The looseness and lightness of layers ran across many collections,” says Grant. “We’re looking at ways to take out all the construction of Western clothing and move toward the comfort Far East clothes used to have.”

Are the latest styles being driven by hope, nostalgia for the think-big '80s, influence of fall silhouettes from Jil Sander and Marc Jacobs or fascination for the Asian market that’s driving luxury? Or is it a desire to shake things up as we enter a new political season?

That’s up for debate. But know this. Change is coming.

Our predictions: Ports 1961’s oversized shirts, Canali’s and Billy Reid’s suits and 3.1 Phillip Lim’s easy slacks—all white—will be hits for men.

As for women, new silhouettes make it sheer madness to shop in your closet come spring. Instead, up your abs workouts and get on some wait lists. (Expect one of the longest to be for Burberry’s shimmering gold lace trench.)

If Alexander Wang’s all-white midriff-exposing halter and skirt are out of reach, give yourself some space in Fendi’s roomy marigold-edged black shift or J. Mendel’s collarless taupe lace coat.

The more diametrically opposed your choices, the more likely you’ll be right on target. ▷

Belstaff
Stanford double-weave cotton jacket in sandshell, \$1,295; matching Everley shorts, \$795; and Mercer blouse in toffee silk voile, \$595, all Barneys.com.



Burberry Prorsum
Nude pale gold laser-cut metallic leather trench coat, \$8,000; Blaze bag in clover green satin, \$2,195, and Iris yellow satin peep-toe wedges, \$675, burberry.com.



Burberry Prorsum
Petrol blue metallic leather trench coat, \$4,995, burberry.com