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Russia's Voitenko Wows the Catwalk in Rome

By Chris Gordon

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Voitenko's playful accessories include floral collars and huge corsages.

Russian-born, Milan-based designer Julia Voitenko recently unveiled her latest Esme Vie collection in Rome at Italian couture fashion week "AltaRoma."

Voitenko has been showing her made-in-Italy designs for the past three seasons, garnering critical acclaim and industry support along the way. She has emerged as one of the best young designers to come out of Vogue Italia's "Who's On Next" talent support program, and Vogue Italia editor-in-chief Franca Sozzani has been photographed wearing Esme Vie designs — high praise indeed.

Sozzani also included Esme Vie in the "Vogue Fashion Dubai Experience" last year, which launched a collaboration between Dubai Mall, the world's largest luxury shopping center, and Vogue Italia that brought eight emerging designers and their collections to the United Arab Emirates for the first time.

The Esme Vie summer 2015 collection renews Voitenko's interest in bold graphic statements while maintaining the purity of line and old-world, handmade craftsmanship that have become the hallmark of her brand. The precious materials used for the creations include Satin Double Gabardine, Double Duchess Satin and Silk Faille fabrics, derived from prestigious Italian silk weaving mills.

Known for horizontal lines that bisect her dresses and sophisticated color stories, the new motifs incorporate vertical stripes to give a lifting, slimming shape to her geometric volumes and a pinwheel-like effect perfect for warmer weather.

Elisabetta Villa / Getty Images

Masterful draping and pleating were features for a number of dresses.

In Rome, she showed short, baby-doll cocktail dresses alongside full-length evening wear, all of which exuded an undeniable sophistication and an élan vital.

While staying true to her preferred palette of dusky, muted colors the Esme Vie collection also included a number of pale, champagne-colored dresses that brought to mind the glamour of past eras while remaining resolutely modern through masterful draping and pleating. Inspired by the colors of summer, the shades of seaside and sky blue, pink and violet hues bring to association the beauty of lush summer gardens in full bloom.

Making clothing that is sober and pure, Voitenko tempered the severity of her lines with floral collars and gigantic corsages. Because they were the same color as the dresses they adorned, they appeared as organic embellishments that add glamour and interest rather than extraneous distractions.

In a field where young designers often look to the street for inspiration, it is refreshing to see Voitenko take the high road and do it so successfully. The designs she creates seem as if they would be as equally at home at the most decadent cocktail party as within the hushed atmosphere of a restrained museum opening.

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