



# RICCARDO'S NEW YORK TRIUMPH

GIVENCHY'S AWE-INSPIRING NEW YORK DEBUT WAS A LESSON IN HOPE, INCLUSIVITY, AND LOVE

It was easy to be skeptical of Givenchy's September 11 New York fashion week debut. A French luxury brand hosting an extravagant, celebrity-studded spectacle on the 14th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks seemed inappropriate at best, blasphemous at worst.

Creative director Riccardo Tisci proved the skeptics wrong. Tisci, who was celebrating 10 years at the helm of the storied house as well as the opening of its grand new Madison Avenue flagship, didn't just put on a fashion show at Pier 26 in West TriBeCa. In collaboration with his dear friend and partner in artistic crime, Marina Abramović, he produced a unifying experience that forced editors, media darlings, designers, and lucky members of the public who had won tickets in an online raffle to remove themselves

from the frenetic frivolity of NYFW and be mentally—perhaps even spiritually—present in the serene moment Tisci and co. had created. “The collection was a very different way to show,” Tisci explains. “It was a performance involving art, music, and beauty...which is my world, the world I've tried to show for 10 years at Givenchy.”

Though we were told to arrive at six PM, the show didn't begin until well past seven. But the wait for the first model—Tisci muse Mariacarla Boscono—to hit the runway wasn't occupied by the typical toe tapping and phone checking. Of course, there were camera flashes and giddy gasps as members of the Tisci tribe, including Courtney Love, Liv and Steven Tyler, Nicki Minaj, Amanda Seyfried, Kim and Kanye, and more settled into their front-row seats. But guests were,

for the most part, more interested in absorbing the scene. As the sun sank into the Hudson, painting the sky a breath-taking tangerine, the fashion flock perused the set, constructed of recycled materials like destroyed wood and rusted scrap metal. It looked like a postapocalyptic urban landscape, but its decrepit nature was somehow calming, as was the soundtrack, comprised of chants and songs from six different religions and cultures. Abramović's performers, all of which were dressed in crisp white shirts and black pants (a theme that tied into Tisci's collection, but more on that later), were a subject of fascination, too. One stood beneath a spigot atop a platform while water washed over her, the New York skyline serving as the backdrop. Another walked in slow motion, lapping the vast runway several times before the likes of Joan Smalls, Kendall Jenner, and Jamie Bochert took his place. It felt as though Tisci and Abramović were insisting that we all just calm down, that we simply be still for a moment and recognize how lucky we were to be sitting there on a perfect New York evening with the Freedom Tower—a symbol of remembrance, strength, survival, and perseverance—watching over us.

The preshow, if you will, was elegant, pensive, and impactful, and Tisci's S/S '16 collection followed suit. It's a celebration of the dark, romantic, sensual wares that have made Tisci's tenure at Givenchy such a success, and by revisiting his “greatest hits,” Tisci unwittingly reminded us how much his work has influenced the fashion world's tastes, trends, and even designers over the last decade. An ode to black and white, the 88-look show began with boudoir-ish satin separates and slip dresses, all trimmed in lace to baroque effect. There was slick black suiting and lace shirts for the men, who broke up the parade of Tisci's exquisite couture gowns. Most of those ornate designs were paired with his now signature facial adornments, expertly applied by Pat McGrath. The alternating male and female models brought to mind a walk down the aisle. And that seemed deliberate, especially considering the closing line of Abramović's letter to Tisci, which was placed on every seat. “The event that we are creating together is about forgiveness, inclusivity, new life, hope, and above all, love.”

There is no doubt that a lot of love went into Givenchy's New York event. “I'm into family. I'm into love. I'm into gang. We all live for love; love is the only thing that doesn't have a prize, a religion. It's what puts everybody on the same level, and that's the point of this,” says Tisci. But love wasn't the only emotion rippling through the crowd. Many guests cried while the models took their finale turn to a live performance of “Ave Maria.” Some smiled and gasped at the painstaking couture confections, like Smalls's ensemble, which boasted an explosion of velvet and tulle. Others paused and looked away from the runway to silently stare at the Freedom Tower glowing against the black sky. It was impossible not to feel something while sitting in the world Tisci had crafted.

Fashion should make us feel something. It's an intimate part of our lives and a reflection of our times. What's more important, however, is that fashion has become an open, widely watched platform, so why wouldn't a designer as tightly tuned into the global mood as Tisci use it to make a statement about resilience, beauty, and love? “I wanted to show the freedom of expression, strong point of view, and unique style of these Americans and people I love and respect,” Tisci asserts. From clothing to concept, his outing did just that. It was a profound success—a triumph, even, and it proved that fashion can be as powerful an art form as any. **KATHARINE K. ZARRELLA**