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Flou Season

For her runway debut at Chloé on Thursday, designer Chemena Kamali referenced the late '70s and followed her own inclinations toward "natural femininity" and "undone-ness." Here, a trio of her ruffled chiffon outfits, captured backstage. *For more on the Paris shows, see pages 8 to 14.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM KATZ SINDING

The Reviews



Chloé

Chemena Kamali did a bang-up job with her runway debut for Chloé, capturing the brand's sunny nonchalance, natural femininity and youthful élan, while also injecting some of the playfulness Karl Lagerfeld plied during his two brand-defining tenures.

During a preview at the brand's showroom, Kamali plucked a fall 1978 runway image from her mood board and practically hugged it, so enamored is she of the roomy coat cinched with a quirky belt with the Chloé name handwritten in gold metal.

She's besotted with that whole late '70s period, also reprising a frothy, lace blouse featured in a Chloé campaign from 1977, teaming her runway version with artfully faded jeans or cool black pants lapping over the shoes.

"It's a period I find extremely relevant because a lot of the codes and values were established in that era," she said. "It was so much about joy and freedom."

Yet her show, staged in a raw, brightly lit space carpeted in cream, embraced a wide swath of Chloé's history. In the audience were previous ambassadors like actress Clémence Poésy; Martine Sitbon, who designed for the brand from 1988 to 1992, and Philippe Aghion, the economist son of Chloé's feisty, fun and unabashedly feminine founder Gaby Aghion, who rose to his feet at the end of the show. ▶






The Collections
 Paris



On the runway, you could see winks to some of the other designing women at Chloé: Kamali's camel ensembles reminiscent of the Hannah MacGibbon era; the blue chiffon dresses and octagonal handbags harking back to the Phoebe Philo days, and the quirky leather knee pants with fringe suggestive of the edgier days of Natacha-Ramsay Levi.

Kamali, like Gabriela Hearst just before her, fell head over heels in love with Chloé since forever.

Born in Dortmund, Germany, and smitten with fashion, Lagerfeld was Kamali's idol, and Chloé her number-one target when it came time for a graduate-year internship. She hopped a train to Paris, turned up at headquarters and

pleaded with the receptionist until she finally summoned someone from the studio. Her perseverance paid off, and her portfolio opened a door that swung open a few times. She started under Philo, later returning to Chloé under Clare Waight Keller, and now third time's the charm.

Kamali relished her previous stints, when all the women in the studio would fit the clothes on themselves. "Intuition is so important in the way we dress as women, and I think that's connected closely to the Chloé spirit," she explained. "It should feel honest and sincere and rooted in reality."

Sitbon gave her effort a thumbs-up, saying Kamali captured the "cool but pretty" essence of the house, its light spirit and its mix of "fragility and strength." — Miles Socha

Backstage photograph by Adam Katz Sinding
 Runway by Giovanni Gastel