

# WWD

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**1 Billion Euros**  
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## Clean Slate

Jonathan Anderson made a clean sweep of the past with his bold new look for Dior womenswear, as seen in these sculptural creations. One of the most eagerly awaited at Paris Fashion Week, his debut collection drew a standing ovation.  
*For more on the Paris shows, see pages 6 to 13.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM KATZ SINDING

**WWD**

# The Reviews



  
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## Dior

"Do you dare enter...the House of Dior?"

With these words projected on a giant screen, Jonathan Anderson opened his first womenswear show for the French fashion house. Call it his way of throwing down the gauntlet, now that everyone's a critic.

The atmosphere inside the tent in the Tuileries gardens was electric: Anya Taylor-Joy, Charlize Theron, Jennifer Lawrence, Jenna Ortega, Jisoo, Jimin, Greta Lee, Mikey Madison, Rosalía and Willow Smith were just some of the celebrities in the room.

Delphine Arnault, chairman and chief executive officer of Christian Dior Couture, sat between French First Lady Brigitte Macron and Johnny Depp, the longtime face of the brand's bestselling fragrance Sauvage. Towering over the gray marble runway was an inverted pyramid on which a film was played before the show.

Anderson took a hammer to the brand's prior messaging — a Hammer horror movie, to be precise. He commissioned Adam Curtis, a documentarian known for his psychedelic mash-ups of archival footage, to splice film of old Dior shows with flashes of '60s B-movies and Alfred Hitchcock classics like "Psycho." It ended with a vortex of images symbolically "sucked" into a shoebox on the floor.

In a preview, Anderson said he wanted to pay tribute to all his predecessors,

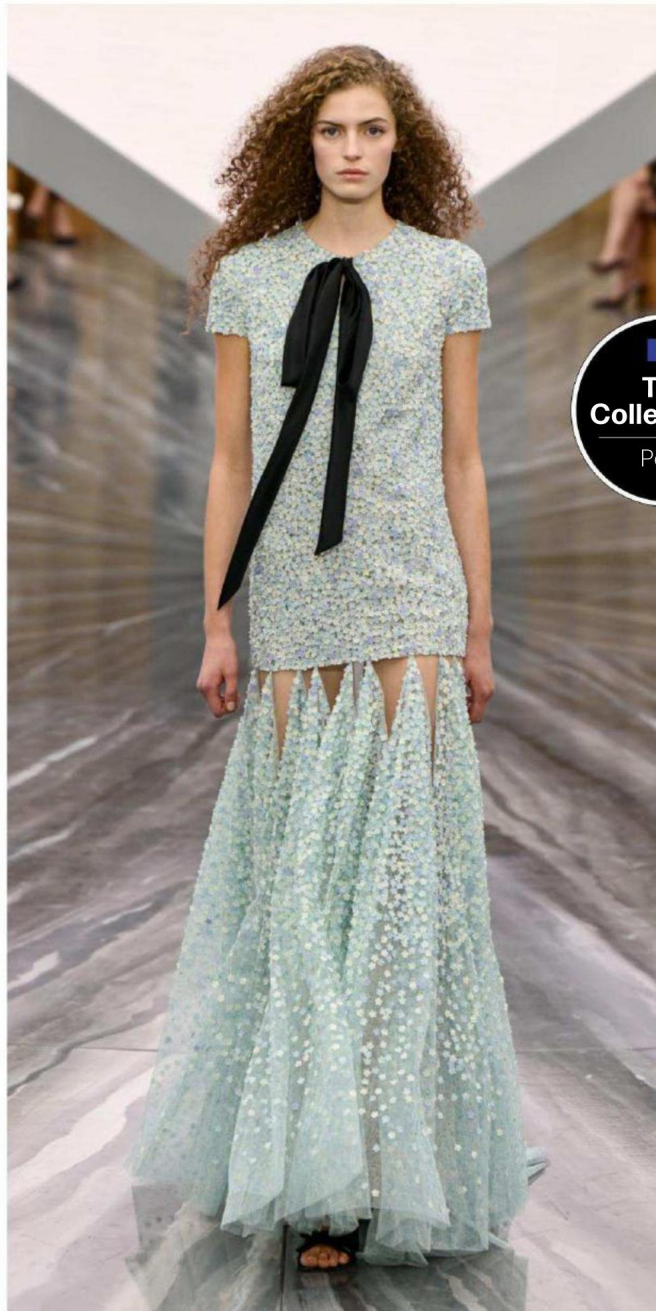
from founder Christian Dior to Maria Grazia Chiuri — but especially fellow Brit John Galliano, his gateway into the Dior universe. And then he wanted to forget about them and do his own thing.

The film, he said, was a metaphor for his state of mind as he attempts to jumpstart the crown jewel of luxury conglomerate LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton amid a crisis in luxury spending.

"I have never been under more pressure in my entire life, and I'm usually the person who puts the pressure on, but this one is more complex, because it used to be that it was never more fashionable to like fashion. Now it's more fashionable to destroy fashion," he said.

"Everyone has an opinion. It's a lot of noise, but in a weird way, every person who went into this house had to deal with noise," he continued, noting that Yves Saint Laurent and Galliano both shocked observers with their Dior debuts. "There are these moments where the audience has horror at what they're seeing, and then they warm to it."

For anyone harboring doubts about Anderson's womenswear direction, based on the looks he teased on the red carpet, the show provided some reassurance. The outfits had a lightness that was not immediately apparent in those earlier efforts, starting with the opening look, a white plissé lampshade dress that floated on invisible hoops. ▶



  
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Anderson leaned into Dior's architectural approach, but instead of quoting the brand's historic H line, or A line, he made up his own. In his show notes, the designer described it as a play between "harmony and tension." In reality, it looked an awful lot like his previous work at Loewe.

The Bar jacket, the litmus test of any Dior collection, was modeled after the one in his first Dior men's show in June, but shrunken to doll-like proportions.

There were variations on bubble dresses and pouf skirts, done in vaporous lace or fuzzy knits; plissé satin tops with stiff lace collars that swooped down the back, and wispy negligees in cage-like box constructions. Anderson also experimented with jersey, with the kind of lumps-and-bumps dresses best left to Rei Kawakubo.

As the first designer to head both the men's and women's divisions at Dior, he set the foundation for the dialogue between the two. "I want people to try to be transversal within the store. It's about playing with clothing," he said.

Sometimes, that meant matching his-and-hers looks, like his stiff-collar shirt, knit cape and jeans combo. His sculptural men's cargo shorts, a reference to the deep folds of Dior's 1948 Delft dress, were reworked as miniskirts.

"Ultimately, it's idea-making," he said. "That's where I think good fashion can come from, which is not worrying if you're gonna get it right or wrong. It's about working at the ideas."

It meant letting go of the pragmatic approach of Chiuri's tenure, in favor of something more clearly geared toward a younger clientele, as evidenced by the abundance of chopped-off denim skirts. "Young people want to engage with it. There can be space for both," he shrugged.

Longtime Dior devotees might need a minute to catch up with Anderson's new look, even though it was deeply rooted in the craftsmanship of the couture workshop.

Micro embroideries and painstaking fabrications, like the hundreds of scallops on his mini-Junon dresses, were all part of his drive to elevate the brand. For Anderson, it's about selling a fantasy, something he believes is deep in the DNA of Dior.

"It's a house that's been able to burn itself down and reinvent itself, and I think this is genius, because it's unique," he said.

If Bernard Arnault, chairman and CEO of LVMH, loved what he saw, it was hard to tell. He maintained a poker face throughout the show, despite a flood of new accessories, a category at which Anderson excels.

Highlights included the Cigale bag, inspired by the archival dress of the same name, which should sell like hotcakes, if the price is right. Anderson and Nina Christen, the buzzy designer in charge of the label's footwear, also had a shoe for every occasion, from cool loafers to dainty mules adorned with giant floral rosettes.

The rest of the room, at least, was won over: Anderson took his bow to a standing ovation. Dior is dead. Long live Dior.

— Joelle Diderich