

After Milan, Paris kicks off menswear shows

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After the furs, tartans and velvets wheeled out for Milan's men's fashion shows this week, Paris delivers its own vision of menswear for next autumn and winter over four days of catwalk shows.

Held on the eve of Paris' women's couture shows kicking off next week, the four days will be a marathon for the thousands of buyers

and fashion types on hand, with 44 shows plus a score of static displays.

The only new designer on hand in Paris this season will be American Shawn Collins, whose 2005 Los Angeles establishment caters to Hollywood stars. After having worked for eight years with celeb designer John Galliano, Shawn Collins' style is both laid back and luxurious, with the accent on quality fabrics for "men who don't follow trends," said a spokeswoman for the label.

A longer sleeker look for men with the accent on mixing styles -- such as donning a three-piece suit but without the tie -- is expected to be the watchword for next winter, according to Paris fashion trade weekly Le Journal du Textile.

For the first time in its history, iconic Italian house Valentino this week will be displaying its creations for men in Paris rather than Milan, a nod to its founder who quits the world of couture this month after an illustrious 45-year career. Taking over the men's lines will be Ferruccio Pozzoni, 47, formerly of Brioni, Prada and Miu Miu, who will show his lines during a showroom presentation.

All eyes during the four-day stint will be on Belgian Kris Van Assche's only second collection for Dior since the departure of Hedi Slimane last year -- the designer who revolutionised both the house and men's fashion in general with his new-look skinny pants and ties for men. The Belgian designer will also show designs for his eponymous house.

Missing from the Paris catwalks will be the house of Yves Saint Laurent, its first no-show since designer Stefano Pilati took over from Tom Ford in 2004. Pilati however will be giving a static display of his lines. At Ungaro, Franck Bochet is showing his second collection while the house of Cerutti makes a comeback to the shows with a first collection by another Belgian designer, Jean-Paul Knott.

Of the dozens of labels present at the Paris men's shows, particularly awaited are Louis Vuitton, Jean Paul Gaultier, Yohji Yamamoto and Givenchy on Thursday, Rykiel, Kenzo, John Galliano on Friday, Emanuel Ungaro and Hermes on Saturday and Lanvin, Dior, Paul Smith and Smalto on the last day, Sunday.

Dior Homme, Dolce & Gabbana and Paul Smith were rated the three most popular designers for men, according to a poll conducted among fashion buyers by the Journal du Textile. Next in line came DSquared, John Galliano and Kris Van Assche in that order.

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