

## New York Fashion Week

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Not too long ago, Fashion Week was an event restricted to only the chicest cities of record: Milan, Paris, London, and New York. While the fashionable four continue to reign as the industry's nexus points, now it seems that nearly every city big or small can claim a Fashion Week of its own—from Amsterdam to Athens, Bangkok to Berlin, Cape Town to Copenhagen, Sao Paulo to San Francisco, a swimwear specific one in Miami, and an eco-friendly extravaganza in Portland—you get the picture. Designers showcasing their wares through runway shows have officially gone global.

Though the popularization and globalization of New York Fashion Week has given undiscovered talent the world over their moment to shine, rarely does a designer's notoriety travel outside his or her own city limits (Ever heard of a top designer from Kuala Lumpur? Neither have we). Enter Couture Fashion Week to solve that problem. The three-day event taps up-and-coming international designers to display their unique handmade designs in New York before a crowd of upscale boutique buyers and the press. This past weekend, the shows were held in the Westin Times Square; below, a breakdown of the shows we were able to catch.

The highlights of New York Fashion Week:

### Michael Mioné

[www.mionedesigns.com](http://www.mionedesigns.com)

The native New Yorker who originally hails from the Bronx (a place about as foreign and exotic as they come) kicked off the line-up on Friday afternoon, opening his show with an opulent beaded green gown, followed by a peaches-and-cream prom-inspired dress adorned by a rhinestone belt. The rest of the collection was equally as inconsistent and could have been better edited to feel more cohesive: a garden-party-ready green taffeta skirt with flower-appliqués and a silver brocade strapless bodice marched down the same runway as gauzy safari-inspired prints and a black-and-red striped column dress with flamenco-like fringe at the bottom hem. Mioné interned under Bob Mackie before opening his couture salon in a SoHo loft, a fact that became evident in his heavy use of bling in adorning his work. While some strapless dresses were poorly constructed up top, leaving the models dangerously close to spilling out, and a romantic white dress with bows fell just short of ethereal thanks to a stiff, immovable skirt, where the FIT graduate succeeded was in a simple black flapper-fringe halter dress.



### Sushma Patel

[www.sushmadesigner.com](http://www.sushmadesigner.com)

Also an FIT grad, Patel debuted her first collection in her native India in 1998 and continues to create and sell her Indo-Western designs at her boutiques in Atlanta and Mumbai. Hand-embroidered and embellished saris predominated the collection, each made with opulent fabrics such as jorjut, sufane, kangiwaram and silks, and covered in crystals sewn in jaw-dropping, intricate patterns. Highlights included a sari created entirely from fresh flowers (from the head dress to the model's rose-petal earrings) and an adorable gold brocade tulip-skirt dress modeled by Patel's young daughter.

### Jean Fares

[www.jeanfarescouture.com](http://www.jeanfarescouture.com)

The Lebanese designer, a favorite of the Middle Eastern upper crust who established his own fashion house in 1992 and has designed evening gowns for Miss Lebanon 2004 and signer Shada Hassoun (the 2007 winner of the Arab world's American Idol, called Star Academy), presented his new collection, entitled "Living...Energy," on Friday night. Fans of Project Runway's Rami would also appreciate Fares' skill for draping, rouching, and creating flattering form-fitting lines. The models slinked down the runway to Lebanese pop music in dazzling silver and gold gowns with plunging backs and sheer cutouts for an overall sexy vibe. Also strong were romantic bejeweled cap sleeve gowns in muted earth tones. Fares missed the mark with one or two errant denim pant and shirred leather jacket combos, but otherwise scored with his interesting take on the dresses-with-pockets trend by making them sheer and covered in baubles.



**Milena Dobrev**

If Betsey Johnson were Bulgarian, she would be Dobrev, a spunky young designer whose edgy clothes were delivered in shocking, bright colors. Hot pink and electric blue leggings dominated her looks, which came down the runway skin-tight and see-through. Dobrev has worked for Vivienne Westwood and is best known for her designs for theatrical productions, so it's only natural that her over-the-top club wear, incorporating thin silicon rubber, reflective fabrics, leather and silk satin, be attention-getting. One stunner was a neon color-block dress with a voluminous skirt, which balanced out the otherwise body-conscious line.

And one more line from New York Fashion Week:

**Lourdes Libman**

Though she hails from the Dominican Republic, Libman's designs are more ladylike and demure than skin-revealing or risqué. The designer, who created Aero Mar and Falcon Airlines leisure suits and the winning evening gown for Miss Universe 2004, showed classic yet edgy pieces, like a brocade blue-green jacket over a sheer moss-colored skirt. An electric blue gown whose collar was rimmed with a matching feather boa was quickly reconciled by a dramatic black dress cinched at the waist by a crystal brooch and a shirred zebra-print dress that moved fluidly down the runway.

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