

The Telegraph

t2 on Sunday

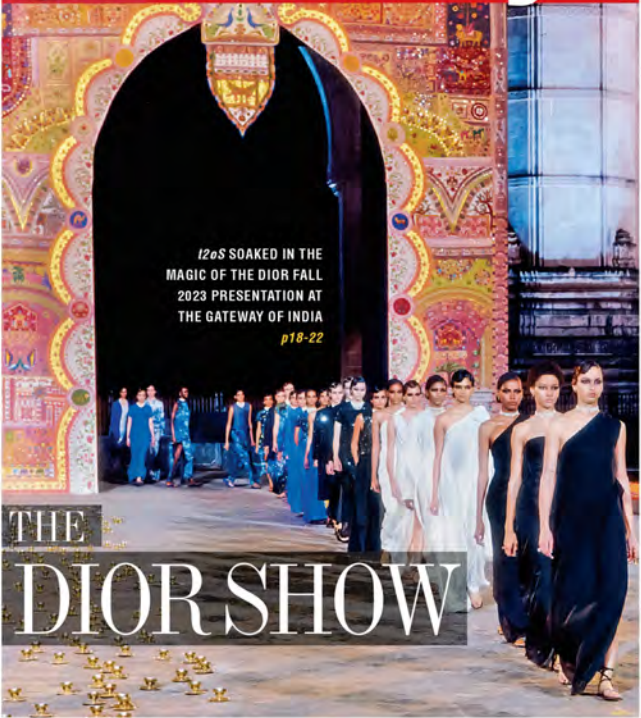
2 April 2023

12oS SOAKED IN THE
MAGIC OF THE DIOR FALL
2023 PRESENTATION AT
THE GATEWAY OF INDIA

p18-22

THE

DIOR SHOW



COVER STORY

THE DIOR DIALOGUE

Indian craftsmanship is at the heart of the luxury brand's creative conversation. *Smita Roy Chowdhury* of t2oS was among a select audience that experienced the Dior Fall 2023 show in Mumbai

Lazily scrolling through the *hef* (Fashion of Fashion) Instagram page sometime towards the beginning of March, I came across the announcement that made me sit up and take note — French luxury label Dior to showcase its Fall 2023 womenswear collection at the iconic Gateway of India in Mumbai? Wow!

Days later, the invite was herey hokey — to attend the historical show on invitation from *Chiranjeev*!

Good enough!

Many more good things

soon came up the larger-than-life Dior Fall 2023 presentation at the iconic monument in Mumbai on March 30: The runway show — with the Gateway of India decked out in full Indian splendour, almost like a celebration of *Indevisible India* — stole our hearts the minute we stepped in.

Pickering dyes, and elaborate and vibrant floral rangolis decked up the premises while the gate was beset with the number of a

typical Indian woman, looking in with a glimpse of the rich craftsmanship of the country that the house of Dior is associated by. The dying rays of the setting sun by the sea, the majestic Taj Mahal Palace lit up in all its glory, the dim yellow lights from the chandeliers and soft incense-filled music setting through the glass — all of it combined to create an atmosphere that, coupled with the feeling that you are in the midst of witnessing history being made, was sure to give you goosebumps!

The stars started walking in — from international actors such as Manoj Williams (of *Game of Thrones* fame), Cara Delevingne and Simon Ashley (Miss Sharma of *Brigitte Jones*), Thai drama stars Milla and Apo — who created quite a stir with howes of fans chasing their craves outside the venue — to Bollywood A-listers, the audience was a select one, befitting the stature of the show. With minutes to go for the show to start, the ever-graceful Rekha made an impactful entry, in her signature golden Kapoor as an and

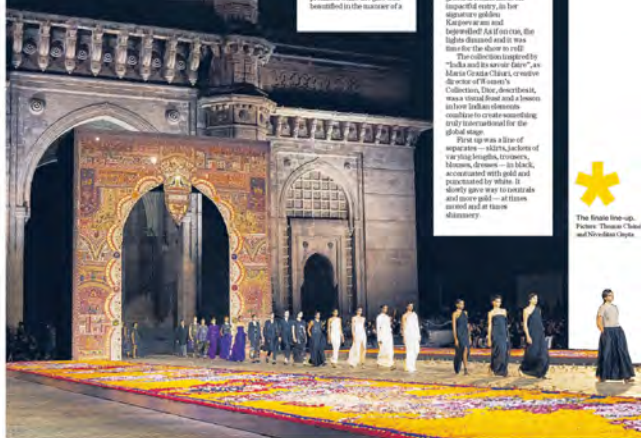
below!

As if on cue, the lights dimmed and it was time for the show to roll!

The collection inspired by “India and its spirit of life”, as Marie Gracia Chaur, creative director of Dior’s Women’s Collection, Dior, described it, was a visual feast and a lesson in how Indian elements combine to create something truly international for the global stage.

First up was a line of separates — skirts, jackets of varying lengths, trousers, blouses, dresses — in black, accented with gold and punctuated by white. It slowly gave way to neutrals and more gold — in tones used and at times

slightly.



The finale line-up. Photos: Thomas Chelak and Nivedita Chelak



The toran featuring over 300 kinds of crafts was the focal point of the scenography of the show at the Gateway of India. Pictures: Nivedita Gupta

Colors crept in, first a luminous yellow — bright canary yellow as well as dull yellow ochre in a print with motifs drawn from India. A few isolated greens and blues emerged. A number in *ganchha* checks stood out. And then with a bang there was a full blown line in pinks — satiny powder pink to shocking magentas — followed by deep blues and purples.

Traditional Indian embroidery was the hero of the collection and there was a great mix of silhouettes and slimmer too in the form of full on glittery short dresses and long gowns in different leers. Flirty skirts were paired with plain tops or the other way round. The show came full circle, ending with a sequence in blacks and whites. Long floor grazing gowns — off shoulder voluminous ones as well as one shoulder sleek ones with thigh slits, easy oversized shirts, loose pants, jackets long and short, belted, shift dresses, pyjamas, skirts — both structured short ones as well as long draped ones.

The array was vast. The vibes were used too — easy breezy to glam golden and money things in between. The models wore their hair close cropped, with dark eyes and strands of pearls around their necks.

That this collection was India inspired was evident not just in the intricate craftsmanship of the embellishments — from the *ganchha* to tie and dye and

rich Indian textiles, from the print to motifs of Indian flora and fauna, to the skirts influenced by saris, drapes and knits... it had India written all over! Yet so international! Rich silks from South India, intricate needlework representing crafts from various parts of the country, use of beads and sequins... the collection shone the spotlight on "both the deep friendship nurtured between Dior and India, and their respective heritage that meet and enrich each other".

"Fostering a new ingenious way of talking about feelings and emotions that can connect us with a country and its culture is precisely what Maria Grazia Chiari wished to accomplish in this Dior Fall 2023 collection, with a view to exploring the collaboration, work relations and friendship linking her for many years to India and Karishma S Shah, who directs the Chanakya studios and the Chanakya School of Craft, in Mumbai," says a release from Dior.

A day before the show, Chiari attended a chat between Maria Grazia Chiari and Karishma S Shah to know more about the association. While Maria has been acquainted with Chanakya and their work with crafts heritage of India since 1962, it was in 2011 that they together conceptualised the Chanakya School of Craft.

➔ CONTD ON P20





The tower was made by women of the Chanakya School of Craft and it uses more than 1,000 patches. Picture: Nivedita Gupta



"It was in 2014 that we felt the need to preserve because in my lifetime I have seen some crafts disappear. We wanted to build this institution... we spoke about it and from the onset we decided to do this together... we created this beautiful space," revealed Karishma.

"I think it is beautiful because you can realise something with your hand... Crafts are treated differently in different countries... I have seen all from my mother, but her craft was not a choice, it was a necessity, she worked as a seamstress... but for me it was a choice. In some countries crafts are treated like art... like in France, in Paris, it is treated like art... that is very important," said Maria. "It is important to train the new generation in these arts... you know, in India the transmission of the skills is from the father to the son, while in Italy it is from the mother to the daughter," she added.

A dialogue with the crafts has been at the heart of Dior. "For all the companies have the same level of craftsmanship. At Dior, we are talking about the level of haute couture... the textile, the embroidery, the accessories... there's very high sensitivity about these... I think it's part of their values as a brand..." added Maria.

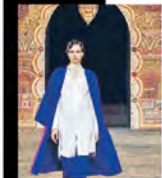
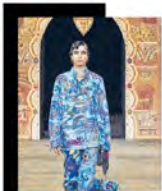
Using the media for a special opportunity to visit the Chanakya archives and atelier, Karishma said, "We at Chanakya School of Craft have created artistic installations around the main campus and the tree of life... People can see the artisans will be demonstrating their work, lives that people are able to realise how much skill is actually required before it becomes your style..."

Maria added, "Hereditary fashion shows are super short and it's impossible to show... sometimes a fashion show is not enough to show the hard work that has gone behind the collection..."

Karishma steered the conversation to the tower that was part of the scenography of the Dior show at the Gateway of India. "We would also like to share with everyone the idea of the tower that the Chanakya School of Craft has created for us," she started. And Maria continued, "The idea of the tower was to express how much welcome I feel in this country. I thought it would be great because people sit on the top of their houses in India and welcome people."

Karishma shared how the tower has historically been a community activity for women for centuries. "And every state has their own way of expressing welcome and warmth. We thought there couldn't be a more fitting way to welcome people to Dior. We welcome everyone to experience our craft as the tower has been imagined and hand-crafted by the women at Chanakya School of Craft. It uses more than 1,000 patches and we have used over 200 different genres of craft. And each woman has chosen their symbol of luck, their way to express welcome," said Karishma. Maria added, "It was really a dream and it was possible to realise that because of Karishma. The artisans are proud of their artwork... when they showed the tower, there were emotions behind it."

The chat ended with Maria picking the spot beautiful because she has come across in India. "Beautiful, magenta women I see here... Karishma I think it is very beautiful... I came across some incredible women that are making India... Last night we met Rohini and she was so fascinating... I was so fascinated by her energy... she has an energy that was incredible... I would love to have that kind of energy," she said with a smile.



Louise pictures courtesy Dior



Maria Grazia Chiuri, creative director of Women's Collection, Dior, in conversation with Karishma Bharti, artistic director of Chanakya

THE GALAXY AT THE DIOR SHOW

FROM P20



RISHIKA



MAGGIE WILLIAMS



Virat KOHLI & ANUSHKA SHARMA



SONAM KAPOOR AHUJA



CAMILLE COTTIN



CARA DELEVINGNE



CHARITHRA CHANDRAN



DEVA CASSEL



SMONE ASHLEY



FREIDA PINTO



LAKSHMI MENON



KOHLIHI KAPOOR



KARLIE KLOSS

CONTD ON P22

FROM P21



JESSE BUCKLEY



KARISMA KAPOOR



LAETITIA CASTA



LIZA KOSHY



ANUSHKA SHANKAR



MIRA RAJPUT KAPOOR



NAOMI ACKIE



NATASHA POONAWALLA



POOJITHA JAGANNATHAN



ANANYA PANDAY



DIANA PENTY



SOBHITA DHULIPALA



ASHA SHETTY