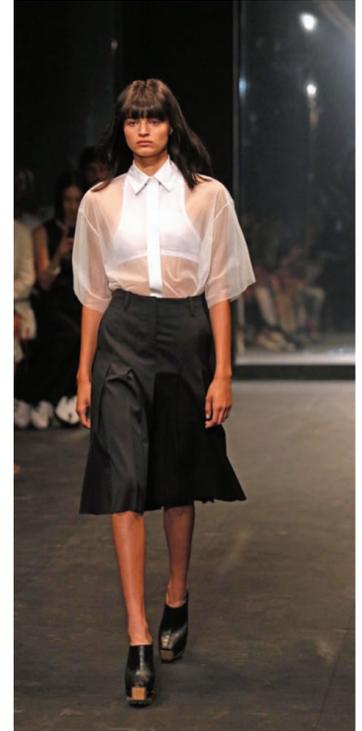


Fashion



Sexy is the new black at Vera Wang
 That's the word from Vera Wang, who made her point in tiny black bandeaus and bra tops, short shorts, sky high heels and plenty of sexy shoulders, if shoulders are your thing. She included a pop of red, mesh and sheer elements, and a dose of gold sequins, with just a touch of mink in a mini-vest and spiky ostrich plumes on shorts, boy shirts and a halter-neck dress serving up those shoulders as cutouts did elsewhere.
 Wang said backstage after the show that she drew inspiration from the duality of life, the pleasures of the imagination a bit of mystery. "There is that side that's very, um, not prim but controlled, and then there's a side where you let go, you allow yourself to have a bit of fantasy in your life. So in a way it was a rift, not literally, of 'Belle de Jour,' the movie." That would be the Catherine Deneuve classic directed by Luis Bunuel, telling the story of a repressed French housewife who becomes a prostitute. Prostitution aside, Wang knows how to create sexy. The mighty high shoes, on the chunky side with a lug, sporty sole, were a big part of that effort, she said.
 "How am I doing? Better now that no one tripped," Wang smiled. "I wanted them to feel sexy." With Kylie Jenner on her front row, Wang considered the Kardashian-Jenner family influence on fashion today. "They're celebrities but at the same time they not just embrace, they adore fashion," she said, "and I think that has had a very big influence on people."



Models walk the runway during the Vera Wang presentation at New York Fashion Week.



Serena Williams returns to fashion week
 Serena Williams says her recent US Open defeat was not a loss, but a win and a learning experience - and that she's happy for the opponent, Roberta Vinci, who derailed her quest for a Grand Slam. "We should be happy for each other, you know what I mean?" Williams said in an interview Tuesday after presenting her second collection for her fashion line, the Serena Williams Signature Statement Collection for the HSN network, at a high-profile runway show that drew influential Vogue editor Anna Wintour and other fashion heavyweights - not to mention rapper Drake. "We gotta build up each other. We can't be angry."
 "I mean, I won four Grand Slam (tournaments) in a row, and got to the semis in another one, and I've done that twice," Williams said. "I mean how many people have done that? So, yeah, it wasn't a loss for me, it was a win and a learning experience. And I tried hard. Unfortunately the girl I played just outplayed me that day, you know ... She probably deserved it. And I am happy for her." Williams, who won last year's US Open as well as the next three Grand Slam tournaments after that, also said designing was a great break from the pressure of her tennis career. "I love what I do obviously, but I also sometimes need a break from that - and I love fashion," she said. "It's something I have a passion for."

Not that there wasn't also pressure coming from the fashion world. Williams said that this time, she really felt pressure to deliver. Her new collection - shown to a soundtrack that included several of Drake's songs - had a very contemporary vibe, with lots of fringed leather and suede, in skirts, jackets and dresses. (She herself was wearing a revealing fringed leather skirt that showed tiny short shorts underneath.) Highlights included a sleek, tiered black fringed dress; a black gown with a line of fringe down the back; and a short, deep green bomber jacket.
 Earlier, on the red carpet, Williams tried to explain how she combined designing with her demanding life as an athlete. "Honestly, I don't know," she said. "In between matches ... we have this great group chat, and we just talk all day about the designs. We send pictures. We send notes. And technology has been able to make life a lot easier!" So, has she been able to sit down and breathe, since her final US Open match last week? "In a couple of hours I'll be able to breathe," she laughed. — AP



The Serena Williams Spring 2016 collection is modeled during Fashion Week in New York.