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OFF BRAND

At the Trump Inauguration, Fashion Means Business

The barrel curls, jewel tones and honey-toned Melania beehive of Trump Season 1 were long gone. The second Trump inauguration was (mostly) a display of crisply formal restraint.



By [Rory Satran](#) [Follow](#)

Updated Jan. 22, 2025 at 10:06 am ET



First Lady Melania Trump tips her custom navy wool Eric Javits hat on the inauguration day of Donald Trump's second presidential term, outside the U.S. Capitol building. PHOTO: CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

On Inauguration Day, incoming President [Donald Trump](#) and outgoing President [Joe Biden](#) shook hands at the White House in nearly identical uniforms of white shirts, silk ties, dark suits and navy-blue wool overcoats. Like a twisted retelling of Ingmar Bergman's

“Persona,” or “The Bizarro Jerry” episode of Seinfeld, the two grandfathers mirrored one another in irreproachable power uniforms. The only difference was in the shade of their ties: Democratic blue for Biden, and a blue-and-red pattern for Trump.

Not everyone went so by-the-book. Melania Trump donned a cinematic, self-serious hat; Ivanka Trump has treated the past week as a fashion runway; Lauren Sánchez appeared to wear a bra as a top.

With its pomp and circumstance, the presidential inauguration is an occasion for powerful symbolism. Politicians and their cohort shine their shoes and strive for telegenic presence and respectful formality.

“Today is American theater,” said Lauren A. Rothman, a Washington, D.C., style strategist and image coach who has dressed many politicians for inaugurations. “If you really understand how to walk into this day with style, success and power, you understand its theatrical nature, and therefore what you’re wearing is to some degree a costume.”

Incoming first lady Melania Trump interpreted that mandate by choosing a stern, cinematic navy wool coat by New York designer Adam Lippes and an Eric Javits hat, with sky-high pumps. Lippes has developed a reputation for dressing ladies that lunch in no-nonsense, well-fitting fashion. “Mrs. Trump’s outfit was created by some of America’s finest craftsmen, and I take great pride in showing such work to the world,” Lippes said in a statement.

Outgoing first lady Jill Biden, left, wore a violet Ralph Lauren ensemble weeks after the Biden White House gave the 85-year-old designer a Presidential Medal of Freedom. PHOTO: CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

Jill Biden, meanwhile, wore a vivid violet Ralph Lauren ensemble, reminiscent of the Christopher John Rogers outfit [worn by Kamala Harris in 2021](#). Today was something of a swan song for Lauren, who [dressed both Bidens today](#) and for much of the past four years, and who earlier this month received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from them, becoming the first fashion designer to earn the honor in the award's history. Purple is a historic signature of inauguration ceremonies, symbolizing red melding with blue.

Below, four takeaways from this week's inauguration fashion.

The Hat That Almost Wasn't

One of the inauguration's most talked-about visuals was Melania Trump's instantly meme-worthy hat, which obscured her eyes and drew comparisons to the video-game character [Carmen Sandiego](#).

"Her hat screams a fashion moment," said Rothman, comparing it to Anna Wintour wearing her sunglasses indoors. (Wintour, who told James Corden on "The Late Late Show" that Donald Trump would never be invited to the Met Gala again, would probably sniff at the comparison.) Rothman said the hat "indicates that Melania is armed for battle."

But it almost didn't happen. In an interview Monday, its designer Eric Javits described how the first incarnation of the hat was damaged en route from Javits's Miami studio to Trump Tower in New York during a snow storm a few weeks ago. With the clock ticking to Inauguration Day, Trump's stylist Hervé Pierre had to physically pick up a new version of the hat in Florida and bring it to Mar-a-Lago.

Melania Trump kept her custom hat on throughout the swearing-in ceremony and the inaugural luncheon at the Capitol building. PHOTO: EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

The hat, which was made of the same double-faced wool as the first lady's coat, was constructed by hand using nearly invisible "blind stitching," a time-consuming couture technique. "I was in a little bit of a panic after the first hat was destroyed," said Javits.

Fashion Steps Up—Especially Oscar De La Renta

The fashion industry has been ambivalent about dressing those associated with the Trump administration. Wintour, who holds huge sway with designers, declined to feature Melania Trump on the cover of *Vogue* as first lady (though she appeared as a bride in 2005), contrary to *Vogue*'s treatment of predecessors Jill Biden, Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton.

Pierre, the first lady's stylist, told *WWD* last week that some designers have even discouraged them from shopping at their stores. "I understand that you can criticize

Trump,” he said, “but to say to someone who is coming to shop full-price, ‘You are not welcome here.’ That is something that I would have never expected.” Pierre and Melania Trump did not respond to requests for comment.

Press releases and social-media posts from major brands publicizing their work with the Trumps have been rare, but that appears to be changing.

The vice president’s wife Usha Vance, center, departs the White House in a custom pink scarf-necked Oscar De La Renta coat and suede boots. PHOTO: ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

New York brand Oscar De La Renta, which is designed by Laura Kim and Fernando Garcia, has gone all in on the inauguration events, dressing incoming second lady Usha Vance in a Barbie-pink shawl coat for inauguration day and a black strapless gown for the Vice President’s dinner, and Ivanka Trump in a bejeweled column and camel coat for pre-inauguration events. Oscar De La Renta splashed these images on its social media accounts. Despite the label’s longtime association with first ladies from Jackie Kennedy to Laura Bush, the response online has been divisive, with some commenters saying they’d hit the Unfollow button, and others posting, “Make America Beautiful Again” with abundant flag emojis.

Javits, who noted that he’s made hats for women of all political stripes, said that he looked at today’s inauguration through the lens of it being Martin Luther King Jr. Day, celebrating

a man who “taught us to love our enemies.”

The Dior of It All

One French brand that was well represented at the inauguration was [LVMH](#) house [Christian Dior](#), one of the world’s largest luxury brands. Ivanka Trump carried a logo-charmed “Lady Dior” quilted handbag to today’s inauguration events, and wore a dark green 1940s-style suit and jaunty side beret by Dior Haute Couture, the brand confirmed Tuesday. In the days leading up to the inauguration, Melania Trump wore a gray Dior overcoat and a black Dior trench cape.

In a deep green belted skirt suit and hat and carrying a black Lady Dior handbag, Ivanka Trump arrives for mass at St. Johns Church ahead of the President-elect Donald Trump’s inauguration. PHOTO: SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

Notably, LVMH’s ruling family, the Arnaults, attended today’s inauguration festivities with patriarch and [one of the world’s richest men](#) Bernard sitting alongside his wife Helene, son Alexandre and daughter Delphine, who is the chief executive of [Christian Dior](#). Bernard and Alexandre wore dark suits (they typically wear Dior), and Helene and Delphine wore subdued black and white.

The Arnaults have had a long association with Donald Trump. In 2019, Trump attended [Bernard Arnault](#)’s opening of an LVMH leather workshop in Alvarado, Texas, as part of the

president's job creation initiative.

While it remains to be seen how publicly Dior and the other LVMH brands will embrace the new administration, signs point to a cordial working relationship between the Trump and Arnault dynasties.

Pictured at the swearing-in between Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg (far left) and her fiancé, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Lauren Sánchez made waves for a lingerie-inspired top under her white suit. PHOTO: KENNY HOLSTON/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Tech Shows Up, While Lauren Sánchez Takes it Off

America's tech titans swapped their hoodies for dark suits and ties for today's inauguration. Meta's [Mark Zuckerberg](#), [Amazon's Jeff Bezos](#), Google's [Sundar Pichai](#) and [Tesla](#) and SpaceX's [Elon Musk](#) appeared in a row, like really rich, preoccupied Reservoir Dogs hunched over cellphones.

The standout among them was pilot, journalist, and Bezos paramour Sánchez, who wore a slim white suit over a barely-there, white lace lingerie top, causing some to question Capitol dress codes. Today's arctic temperatures, meanwhile, drove the inauguration indoors for the first time since 1985.

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Appeared in the January 22, 2025, print edition as 'Fashion Means Business at Inauguration'.

Videos

