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FASHION

Fashion at Biden-Harris Inauguration Showcases Commitment to American Designers

At today's ceremony, the work of American designers ruled supreme, from President Joe Biden's Ralph Lauren suit to Vice President Kamala Harris's Christopher John Rogers purple outfit. Lady Gaga and J. Lo performed in more extravagant fashions from Schiaparelli Couture and Chanel

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Vice President Kamala Harris wears a coat and dress by designer Christopher John Rogers. PHOTO: ANDREW HARNIK/PRESS POOL

THE AMERICAN fashion industry is suddenly abuzz again. For today's inauguration, President [Joe Biden](#), first lady Dr. Jill Biden, Vice President [Kamala Harris](#) and second

gentleman Douglas Emhoff have all chosen to wear the work of American designers or labels, including Ralph Lauren, Christopher John Rogers and Markarian. “These moments on Day One are so important for an industry that’s been so hard hit and impacted by the pandemic,” said Steven Kolb, chief executive officer of the Council of Fashion Designers of America. “By wearing these American designers, they’re not only boosting the business of those individuals, but they’re really boosting the \$373 billion industry...We have a new administration that clearly is welcoming and wants to be supportive of our industry.”

Consciously or not, the color purple—which can be seen as symbolically marrying red and blue—is also a theme, with Ms. Harris, Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama all favoring the color for today’s ceremony.

VP Kamala Harris and First Lady Jill Biden Display an Intent to Support American Designers

President Joe Biden, first lady Dr. Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris opted for American fashion labels on inauguration day. PHOTO: JIM LO SCALZO/PRESS POOL

For today’s inauguration, the incoming first lady Dr. Biden wore a custom blue wool-tweed dress, coat and matching face mask by New York brand Markarian, which is designed by Alexandra O’Neill. Ms. Harris wore a regal purple coat and dress by Christopher John Rogers, a Black New York designer known for his striking use of color. Mr. Rogers was

recently in the spotlight for crafting the structured blue suit worn by Rep. Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez in Vanity Fair's December 2020 cover story on the congresswoman. Ms. Obama, whose fashion choices as first lady were breathlessly covered by the media and in the case of J.Crew, boosted sales of certain items, also chose a Black American designer for today's inauguration. The former first lady wore a burgundy ensemble by Sergio Hudson.

The Obamas make an entrance. PHOTO: JONATHAN ERNST/PRESS POOL

At a pre-inauguration coronavirus memorial event last night, Dr. Biden and Ms. Harris also

made strong statements in their choice of designer. Dr. Biden wore a purple dress, coat and a mask from emerging New York designer Jonathan Cohen, whose parents are Mexican. Ms. Harris wore a custom camel coat by Pyer Moss, a label founded by Kerby Jean-Raymond, a socially conscious Black designer of Haitian descent.

Ms. Harris's stepdaughter Ella Emhoff, an art student with an interest in fashion, has gotten buzz on social media for her experimental looks. Yesterday she wore a cutting-edge skirt suit and tie by the American designer Thom Browne. For the inauguration, she wore a plaid embellished coat by Italian label Miu Miu.

For the 2017 inauguration, then-first lady Melania Trump also hinted that she would support American designers by wearing a powder-blue Ralph Lauren cashmere coat and dress. However, for official events she often veered toward European luxury labels such as Dior and Dolce & Gabbana. Although she favors high-end designers, Ms. Trump's most famous fashion statement is arguably the Zara jacket she wore to visit detained immigrant children in 2018, which read, "I Really Don't Care. Do U?"

Pearls Take Center Stage Again

Ms. Harris's fashion-forward stepdaughter Ella Emhoff wore a plaid coat by Miu Miu. PHOTO: WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

Ms. Harris has made pearl necklaces, [which nod to her Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority](#), a signature, a move she continued today with her custom piece by Wilfredo Rosado, an American designer of Puerto Rican descent. The unique necklace comprises Australian South Sea pearls, white diamonds and gold. For AKA, pearls represent wisdom and polish. Dr. Biden's Markarian outfit also featured Swarovski pearls, embroidered onto the neckline. Pearls are becoming something of a symbol for the Biden-Harris administration: Hundreds of thousands of women have pledged to wear pearls today via the Facebook group "Wear Pearls on Jan 20 2021." In other jewelry news, Ms. Harris wore a flag pin made by New York brand David Yurman.

Celebrities Including Lady Gaga and J. Lo Bring the Drama

Lady Gaga sang the national anthem in an impactful Schiaparelli Couture outfit. PHOTO: KEVIN DIETSCH/PRESS POOL

Never one to shirk the spotlight, Lady Gaga arrived in a custom white coat and mask from French brand Maison Alaïa. She sang the National Anthem in a red ballgown skirt and fitted black jacket embellished with an enormous golden “dove of peace” pin, all from Paris-based Schiaparelli Haute Couture, designed by the American Daniel Roseberry. In a statement, Mr. Roseberry said, “This ensemble is a love letter to the country I miss so dearly and to a performer whose artistry I have so long admired.” Lady Gaga’s hair was braided with ribbons above her head in a style reminiscent of former Ukrainian prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko.

Jennifer Lopez performed in a head-to-toe white look from Chanel, with a long tweed coat, frilly blouse and chunky costume jewelry. Leading up to the inauguration, she posted a picture to Instagram of herself on the steps to the Capitol, wearing another Chanel tailored look in houndstooth.

Singer Jennifer Lopez wore a full Chanel ensemble to perform at the swearing-in. PHOTO: ROB CARR/GETTY IMAGES

Amanda Gorman, the youngest inaugural poet in history, was a ray of sunshine reading her work in a bright-yellow coat and red satin headband from Prada. Ms. Gorman was one of the many attendees who made masks an integral part of their outfit, with her red bedazzled face covering.

President Joe Biden Chooses American Fashion Stalwart, Ralph Lauren

Mr. Biden chose a suit and tie by the American fashion powerhouse, Ralph Lauren. PHOTO: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

For his long awaited Inauguration Day, President Joe Biden wore a navy blue suit and powder blue tie by American fashion icon Ralph Lauren, as well as a black mask, marking an immediate visual departure from his generally mask-free predecessor. Mr. Biden's inaugural outfit, like so many of his conservative style choices—barring his signature raffish aviators—was not splashy, but by wearing Ralph Lauren, Mr. Biden made a conscious nod to an American fashion success story. Perhaps this country's most significant contemporary clothier, Mr. Lauren has dressed scads of Americans in crisp, aspirational clothes in his 50-plus-year career.

Mr. Biden is not the first president to make a rah-rah American statement through his inauguration day attire. In 2009, President Barack Obama wore an inky black overcoat by Brooks Brothers, an American label founded in 1818 that has dressed 40 of the past 45 presidents. On his inauguration day in 2017, President [Donald Trump](#) apparently chose Brooks Brothers as well, though the label declined to confirm reports. After inauguration day, Mr. Trump reverted to his habit of wearing billowing suits by the Italian label Brioni that some critics found outmoded.

Lauren Rothman, a Washington, D.C.-based image consultant was optimistic that Mr. Biden's choice of Ralph Lauren on his inauguration day reveals a more-full-throated commitment to back American fashion. "The fashion industry in general has taken such a hit during the pandemic," that what the president wears can be a way to signal support, said Ms. Rothman. Mr. Obama often favored traditionalist suit makers like Hart Schaffner Marx out of Chicago and Martin Greenfield, an Auschwitz survivor in New York who crafted bespoke suits for everyone from Shaquille O'Neal to Dwight Eisenhower. Ms. Rothman posited that Mr. Biden could offer Washington D.C.'s crop of tailors a similar boost. "There are many local menswear designers in D.C. who would love to take on the business of making custom suits at an affordable price for President Biden."

Still, the pool of powerhouse American fashion labels is no doubt shrinking. In the past year, Brooks Brothers has declared bankruptcy—one of a number of American retailers and labels to close up shop or fade into obsolescence in recent years. Ralph Lauren is now a rarity in American fashion: a homegrown label that has sustained decades of success. G.

Bruce Boyer, a former fashion editor of Town & Country, who has written several books on men's fashion, noted that Ralph Lauren was among the first American brands to shrewdly tread into the international market. Even now, the many facets of the Ralph Lauren brand—from its slick Americana-drenched ads to its pony logo—are globally recognizable. Said Mr. Boyer, Ralph Lauren “represents American clothing to us and to the rest of the world.” As he sees it, Mr. Biden's inauguration-day choice operates as subtle sartorial diplomacy, spotlighting for all the authority that American fashion has had, and can still have.

And, For His Part, Bernie Sanders Wore Cozy Mittens

Senator Bernie Sanders's comely mittens were a minor sensation on Twitter. PHOTO: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Unexpectedly stealing the inauguration show to a degree, Sen. Bernie Sanders wore a pair of earthy Fair Isle-patterned mittens that were reportedly knit by Jen Ellis, a teacher in Essex Junction, Vt. who crafts gloves from repurposed sweaters and plastic bottles. The upcycled mittens made a splash on social media, with fans praising them for epitomizing

Mr. Sanders's endearingly scrappy style.

Corrections & Amplifications

A previous version of this article misidentified Yulia Tymoshenko as the Ukrainian president. She is the former Ukrainian prime minister. (Corrected on Jan. 21)

Further Reading

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