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LIDDY Callaway Fashion Editor

born designer's clean, minimalist aesthetic. Most pieces were black or white, though there was a khaki rain coat and two gauzy dresses in aubergine and navy.

Like most of the skirts and dresses, the navy dress featured feminine seams that Klein said were inspired by cuts of the 1930s and Manhattan's art deco skyscrapers, like the Chrysler Building.

That wasn't the only trick Calvin had up his neatly pressed sleeves. He tucked suit jackets into slim, belted jeans and used corsets to cinch man-cut slacks. (Most pieces, from jackets to pants and overcoats, were boxy, which made the models look like they'd raided their boyfriends' closets.)

Klein long ago cemented his reputation as 7th Avenue's king of wear-'em-forever separates; this line proves he's still Garment District royalty.

Fashion editors have a reputation for being a dour bunch who dress in black, and hide, unsmiling, behind dark, oversize sunglasses.

So no one would have been shocked at the sight of the spirited crowd of journalists who gathered in Oscar de la Renta's showroom yesterday to see an abbreviated version of his latest collection.

De la Renta had been scheduled to show in the Tents at Bryant Park at noon last Tuesday, the day of the World Trade Center disaster. In fact, he and his crew were

lied forth. And he did it quite gracefully.

The Dominican-born designer addressed the crowd warmly before the show began.

"When I did that first collection 35 years ago, I was full of a wonderful spirit, energy and passion," he said. "Today, I still have it. And today, it's more important than ever."

He also said that hosting such intimate shows — there were only about 60 people present — reminded him of his first 7th Avenue presentation, 35 years ago.

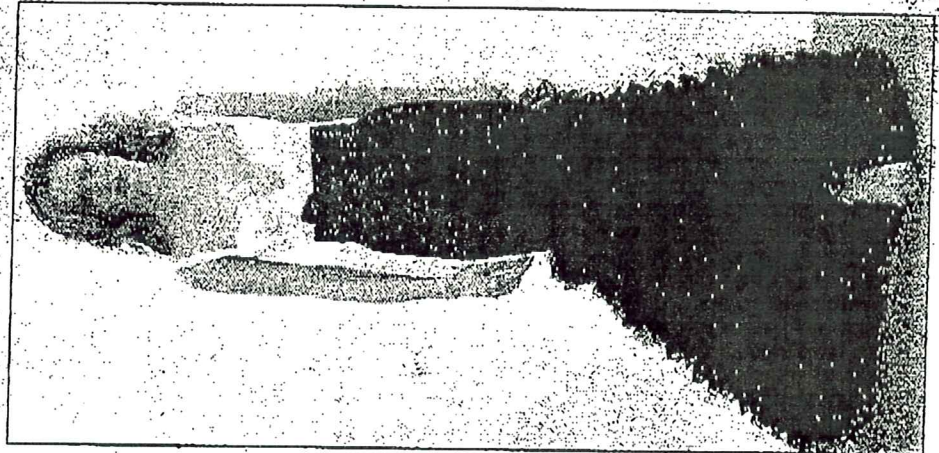
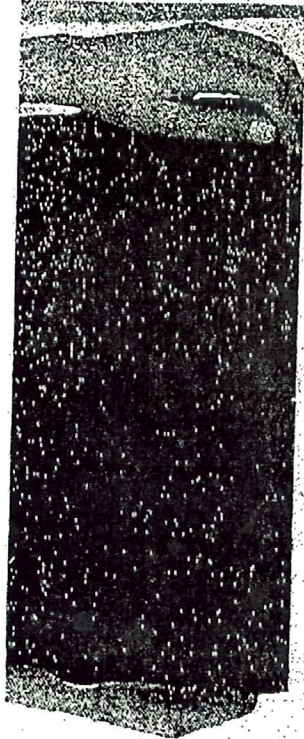
"We did a whole show on six models," the designer recalled. "The only difference between then and today is that we used to ask the girls to bring their own shoes."

Rest assured, the eight models in the abbreviated show (36 of the 76 looks originally slated for his Bryant Park runway) wore shoes designed by de la Renta.

With their twinkling toewear (one pair of sandals had "diamond" teardrops dripping from the foot straps) Oscar's girls wore safari-ready jackets and silk palm-print dresses for day, and hibiscus-embroidered linen pieces and a white eyelet cotton strapless frock — every debutante's dream dress.

The lace pieces were outstanding, especially a Chantilly lace shawl blouse worn over a silk tulle tiered skirt edged in embroidered lace.

The embroidered camisoles, flamenco skirts and blouses in black or white will be great for next season's parties — and are great proof that even if nothing else is left come next spring, there will be some beauty in the world.



Above: Calvin Klein showed many tuxedo pieces for spring. Here, a gauzy black faux vest is belted and worn over pleated pants. Left: Oscar de la Renta excels at evening wear. Here, an embroidered eyelet gown with flamenco ruffles and ribbon belt.

Klein photo, N.Y. Post; Jennifer Weisbord de la Renta photo, Don Lacro; courtesy of the designer

The met will stage a WTC relief benefit Saturday and donate all revenues. "An Evening of Giuseppe Verdi," conducted by James Levine and featuring Placido Domingo among others, will be from 8 to 11:20 p.m. at the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center, (212) 362-6000.

— *B. Hoffman*

Ailey delay

The Alvin Ailey Dance Theater season at London's Sadler's Wells Theater, scheduled to open last night, has been postponed.

The sets and props for the performances, which had been sent by plane last Tuesday, are believed to be held up in Canada. The season — the first London visit by Ailey in eight years — has been rescheduled for June.

— *Clyde Barnes*

Benefit

Merchants, N.Y., First Avenue and 62nd Street, is serving dinner tonight with proceeds going to victims of the WTC disaster. The \$50 buffet will be offered from 6 to 10 p.m. Call (212) 832-1551.

— *Cynthia Killan*