

Domestic designers' proposals for clothes

132 designers from across country demonstrate their collections at 21st *Fashion Mill-2012* Festival. For all those who failed to attend the fashion show, read on...

By Yekaterina Molotovich

The fashion historian and host of the *Fashionable Verdict* TV programme, Alexander Vasiliev, greets the audience each week with the phrase: 'It's absurd to follow fashion and it's stupid not to'. We instantly dive into the world of fashion and glamour — even those who have no natural feeling for style. Of course, shaping your own image isn't easy from watching TV; however, the *Fashion Mill* presents us with huge amounts of inspiration.

This spring, the Belarusian capital has been swept by a wave of design and beauty festivals: Belarus Fashion Week, the *Miss Belarus* Beauty Pageant and, now, the *Mill* (followed by a big fashion market at the National Beauty School). The Belarusian State Pedagogical University invited to take part in the International *DziKaVaTa* Fashion Contest. It's impossible to remain aloof from fashion trends when there is such an abundance of fashion events.

Philosophy, retro and black square

According to Ilona Anson, the project manager of the *Riga Habitus Baltia* Competition for Young Fashion Designers — invited to the *Fashion Mill* as an expert — Latvian designers are known for combining unusual elements in their collections. "Our designers have penetrated the sphere of science, drawing inspiration from physics and chemistry," she emphasises.

Judging by the *Fashion Mill*, it seems that Belarusian designers are more rational, while being keen on history and philosophy. Yulia Galkina's *Philosophy of Freedom*, Yekaterina Gladkova's *Pilgrim* and Yulia Golyakh's *Generation* were bright examples.

Designer Yekaterina Vargan tells us, "I found inspiration for my collection from actress Marlene Dietrich and mostly relied on early 20th century images. They say that fashion turns full circle every 25 years. Simplicity and elegance, a flower brooch, a



Demonstration of collections during festival

string of pearls, the combination of black and white, a tailored, slim-cut jacket, a little black dress and fitted cardigans continue to form the core of true ladies' wardrobes. Cropped trousers are an absolute hit this season, looking great with either open-toed sandals or shoes on heels."

The enchanting catwalk show at Minsk's Sports Palace wasn't merely a holiday. The major task was to select best designers and give them a chance to demonstrate their collections at prestigious fashion festivals abroad.

The 'Fashion School' nomination was won by prêt-à-porter women's collection by Natalia Kostroma of Rechitsa, while Tanya Martynovskaya's collection of men's clothes also took first place. Anna Zuenok had the best collection for teenagers and Yekaterina Sinit-skaya presented the best children's clothes.

Stylish beginnings

The *Fashion Mill* is a great place for novice designers to present themselves and, of course, it's in the state's interest to support them, as many later find employment with domestic light industry enterprises. The Education Ministry of Belarus and the National Centre of Art Creativity for

Children and Young People organises the festival while Belarusian enterprises provide fabrics free of charge and beauty salons offer make-up and hairdressing services. Designers usually pay to participate in foreign fashion events but, with state support, an impressive 121 collections of clothes and accessories by new designers were shown free of charge.

Any young designer with the desire can realise their dream of presenting their collection in Belarus. Irina Mikhalevskaya demonstrated her collection of brightly coloured children's clothes, with her 'Black Cat' retro-reflective flickers. She is still studying at the Gomel State Technical College of Public Services but her collection is already enjoying popularity abroad. "My clothes are selling well in Germany online," Irina admits.

The audience was enchanted by the children's collections, especially those worn by children from Minsk's orphanage. Afterwards, the young models were able to keep their outfits as gifts thanks to *Stylish Beginning* charity project.

Graphic images

Some collections paid homage to iconic couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga — the founder of sculptural silhouettes in the 1940-1950s. He invented the legendary bubble dress, shirt dress and sack dress, as well as collarless blouses. Yulia Bogdanovich's *Black Bird* collection gave an interesting variation on the white shirt dress, worn back to front, with a patent black belt. Of course, any girl can create a similar outfit at home.

Floral and faunal prints remained popular, alongside ethnic motifs. Exotic prints on dresses, skirts, jack-

ets and trousers remind us of tropical climes but designers also drew inspiration from their homeland. Irina Galkevich's charming women's *Milk Picnic* collection featured lace maxi skirts and wickerwork handbags and belts, reminding

Alisa Alisova's *Flavour of Fuchsia*, Ksenia Bosyakova's *In Cacharel Aroma* and Anastasia Voronovich's *Montmartre Violets* were especially intriguing, in shades of muted purple, violet and pink.



us of holidays, but also stylish in an urban manner.

White was the most fashionable colour at the event, with many monochrome collections in evidence, alongside tender pastels: soft caramels, creams, pale pinks and peaches, mint green and banana yellow. These modest colour schemes are simple in their freshness, yet also complex and intriguing. Naturally, pastels suit almost everyone and are easy to combine with other colours.

Caught in the net

We are said to be living in the age of mobile phones and the Internet, so it's hardly surprising that some of our Belarusian designers are inspired by this technology. Alina Balaban and Yekaterina Astashkevich drew on networks and phone 'cell' communication, with handbags, shoes and headgear transformed into 'love networks', to search for broken hearts.