

Fashion Silhouette keeping pace with trends of today

Fashion designers present public with modern interpretations of Belarusian national costume, including for children, reviving the country's artistic heritage

By Veronika Povoleeva

Everyone wants to be stylish these days but it's hard to find your individual style unless you're presented with a certain amount of choice. The main goal of the *Fashion Silhouette* National Fashion Designers Contest is to inspire improvement professionally and creatively in the field of modelling and fashion design.

Belarusian style

The Trade Ministry event brought together fashion designers and creative teams from all over the country. Even students of garment industry institutions took part. From regional rounds, 24 finalists presented 27 collections to the jury and audience under the categories 'Pret-a-porter' (ready to wear casual fashion), 'Fashion Design' (runway collections) and 'Belarusian Costume and Modernity' (a new category giving a modern twist to national motifs).

Oksana Podorozhnaya, of the Ministry for Trade, tells us, "Innovation aims to revive the artistic heritage of Belarus: the material and spiritual culture of our country. It's no secret that women around the world wear different clothes, reflecting their psyche and traditions, formed over centuries. Modern interpretations of Belarusian costume are, perhaps, the most difficult to create. Only three entries were presented in this nomination: Bogushevsk Consumer Services Company Prestige's We are Belarus collection; Slutsk's Orsha Flax's *Colours of Belarussian Summer*; and Grodno students' Maslenitsa collection. The first was more spectacular while the other two were more practical for the modern woman's wardrobe.



Fashion designers inspired by names of Belarusian cities

rusian Summer; and Grodno students' Maslenitsa collection. The first was more spectacular while the other two were more practical for the modern woman's wardrobe.

Not the victory but participation

The jury included such prominent figures from the Belarusian fashion indus-

try as Ivan Aiplatov, Sergey Nagorny, Elvira Zhvikova and Yelena Zapekina, joined by professors from industry institutions. The jury and organising committee were chaired by the Deputy Minister for Trade, Irina Narkevich.

Entries were received from across all Belarus, with designers from Baranovichi,

Orsha, Mozyr, Grodno, Borisov, Brest, Slutskaya, Korelichi, Bogushevsk, Gourock, Vitebsk and Minsk in the final show and from both state run and private enterprises. The age of participants varied widely, with a good mix of half young and half older.

"Of course, everyone wants to win but taking part is just as valuable," empha-

sised Vitebsk State Industrial and Technical College student Alexey Sviridov. "Primarily, it's my opportunity to present my collection to a jury of professionals," he added, speaking before the show.

Expanding horizons

Alexey told us, "I'd like to see citizens in Vitebsk, Minsk and other cities dress differ-

ently, as I think their needs are not being completely satisfied. In particular, young people seek something other than what's usually sold. They lack variety in clothes shops, finding it difficult to express themselves through the way they dress. This contest is valuable in giving young designers the chance to be seen beyond fashion shows held at their institutions. They can experiment and gain recognition."

"Our society is still quite conservative in its choice of clothes," notes Ms. Podorozhnaya. "Such events as *Fashion Silhouette* help us to expand people's views on fashion, showing new colours, styles and accessories." Mozyr District Consumer Service Centre had to re-sew its collection for the final show, after winning the regional round and selling out — showing that it has achieved public appeal. Once the winners of all categories have been announced (including the winners of the Grand Prize and Audience Award) the collections will be sold through trade networks and the most popular designs will be launched into mass production.

Expert opinion

Ms. Narkevich asserts, "Regardless of where a woman lives — in the city or in a village — she wishes to look stylish and attractive. The range of clothing being sold is expanding, giving Belarusians greater opportunity to not only look fashionable but buy exclusive items. Our consumer service centres are designing collections for every taste and budget."

Journeys have their own geography

By Viktor Andrejev

Tastes differ but Belarusians still prefer to travel to Turkey, Greece, Spain, Egypt and Bulgaria for their holidays, although front-runner Greece has been overtaken in popularity by Turkey of late. Regular flights to the two and reasonably priced hotels are inspiring families to make their choice. Experts predict that Greece could return to first place in 2013 if another economic crisis doesn't hit.

Over recent years, Belarusian travellers have changed their approach to planning vacations. Travel agencies note that more people are choosing to travel in the winter

months — to the exotic Maldives, Goa, Sri Lanka and, even, Mexico. The traditional holiday period of April to October with a little 'splash' at New Year, is becoming a thing of the past. A few years ago, Mexico was considered to be as unattainable as the Moon: nobody offered tours there from Minsk. Now, little by little, we are discovering this part of America.

Beautiful Croatia has been promoted for many years by travel agents to little avail, especially since visas remain elusive. This pearl of former Yugoslavia fails to appeal to those seeking inexpensive yet high-quality holidays. Nevertheless, the Crimea remains unrivalled, and Egypt will continue to be in demand if it isn't shaken by



Native lands attractive for leisure

more civil unrest — as witnessed in Tahrir Square. In 2013, Belarus will gain access to Majorca, via two large companies, and visa-free

Montenegro is likely to prove popular. The Ministry of Sports and Tourism notes that Belarusians visit neighbouring Russia, Ukraine,

Poland, Lithuania and Latvia more than any other country.

Mogilev, the new cultural capital of Belarus and the CIS, is sure to draw domestic tourists, helped by the reconstruction of the M4, which leads from Minsk to the regional centre, allowing super fast travel. From the highest tower at Mogilev City Hall, you can admire the Dnieper flood plain, looking over ancient St Nikolas' Church and beyond, towards Buinichi Field. Other attractions include a folk village, zoo and a memorial complex marking Great Patriotic War battlefields. German tourists who visited during the filming of ONT's *Welcome to Belarus* were fascinated by Mogilev and its rich history.