



Michael Cinco's couture showdown

By: Larry Leviste Philippine Daily Inquirer / 11:41 PM June 20, 2013



MAN of the hour, designer Michael Cinco.

Michael Cinco's 38 couture creations were born to rule the red carpet. His sexy Old Hollywood gowns have draped and hugged the torsos of Jennifer Lopez, Lady Gaga, Britney Spears and Paloma Faith.

Cinco's labor-intensive masterpieces opened the recent Philippine Fashion Week and made the rest coming after him seem tepid and lackadaisical. Interestingly, around 10 designers had formals that echoed the "Dream of Russia" theme of Cinco.

From papal crowns to imperial tiaras, the Cinco signature silhouettes of body-conscious column numbers in intricately cut and beaded cream, white and black were shamelessly copied—but none was as beautiful.

Dubai-based Cinco is shy and soft-spoken, and is willing to share his expertise with his colleagues.

"How I would like to bring the couture creations of childhood friends Puey Quiñones and Cary Santiago to my showroom in Beverly Hills!" he said. "We were all once neophytes 10 years ago in the Middle East; we were sharing one room and we would dream and plan our future. I feel Filipino talent can stand out abroad. We have a style that is fresh and untapped."

Marvelous details

A company called Style PR handles all of Cinco's gown placements in the US. Top stylists of A-List stars love his work.



INSPIRED by the famous Taal Barong Tagalog embroidery

And why not? I saw marvelous details such as solihya or cane weaving, the calado and open work of Taal embroidery, Filipino santo vestments otherwise seen only during Lenten processions.

Sandy and Mark Higgins, whose mother Salvacion Lim Higgins was a great fashion designer in the '50s and '60s, were seated beside me and were so proud that Michael is a graduate of their famous fashion school Slim's.

"His style is very classic yet thoroughly modern," gushed Sandy. "Look at that proportion; and the cream gowns have a hint of pink, like the inside of a conch shell."

"They look like modern-day princesses, regal with a hint of naughty," echoed Mark. "The shapes are so timeless. His gowns are actually long T-shirt

dresses, and his 'little black dress' in cream, white and black is the fail-safe shift dress. His inside construction is evident. Notice how the seemingly heavy ruffled skirts float with such ease when the model reaches the end of the runway. That is the mark of genius."

His black formal finale featured sensational beadwork, and the clothes, overall, are seasonless and timeless, still wearable 50 years from now.

But it is the incredible lightness of being of Michael Cinco that I adore, a sweet friend who's kept his humility yet never wavering in his aim for international fashion superstardom—which is his for the picking.



LABOR-INTENSIVE cream embroidery on flesh-colored tulle short formal



NOT as bare as it seems, re-embroidered lace has blush lining, truly elegant.






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