

Macy's Designer Shop Show

By Ann John

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As part of its ongoing involvement with the city's fashion industry, Macy's presented its Designers of Chicago Runway Show on Wednesday, September 27th at Millennium Park. With nine talented designers selected from the department store's own 47 collection strong "Indie Designer Shop," the range of polished, mature talent on display sent a clear message to viewers that Chicago truly has the potential to emerge as a global fashion capital. At the same time, because these pieces are currently available at Macys and at other city-wide boutiques, stylish guests were able to readily take note of what to add to their fall wardrobes.

Free to the public, the event brought out dressed up Chicagoans who waited in a rather lengthy line to get into the tent. Industry insiders and special guests partook in a reception that showcased a selection of works from other participating "Designer Shop" designers. By 7:30, the packed crowd had found their seats and with hardly a fuss or introductory speech, the show began.

Up first was Lara Miller, whose fluid yet body hugging ensembles exhibited many of the season's popular trends but with a conservative, understated charm typical of Chicago style. She made wonderful use of knits; in particular, a lovely long sweater dress draping over a simple black dress. There was sexiness to them as well, with well placed slits and openings that didn't reveal skin as much as they showed her elegant way of layering. Multi-textured pieces, leggings, and subtle draping added depth to her collection, and the mostly dark color palette included infusions of purple, a key color of the season.

Katrin Schnabl also exhibited some of the minimalist leanings seen in Lara's collection. For her, though, it's the details that make the pieces. Rows of small ruffles overlaid a simple black top. An intentional unfinished looking seam on an otherwise staid wool skirt added to it, an effortless charm. Another skirt was constructed in a way that it sashayed with the model as she walked, and her unadorned sleeveless hooded sweater would look just as good on a 20-year-old as it would on someone twice that age.

Cyndi Chan opened her Ori'En collection with a printed cotton toile dress that had a girl-like bounce. With fingerless black leather gloves worn as accessories, these clothes however weren't as much about flirty fun as it was about an edgy, but polished youthfulness. There was a layered pleated mini dress worn with an ivory wool capelet, a black wool riding coat, and a black satin working girl trench that received plenty of applause from the audience. A black silk dress cut on the bias was a marvel of construction, while a white empire waist pleated dress that looked deceptively plain from afar displayed intricate beaded detailing up close.

For a refreshing change, Doris Ruth showed a bright, exuberant collection perfect for a woman who enjoys dressing up. There were sparkles, frills, and a whole lot of metallic colors in the mix. A colorful voluminous tutu skirt, an amazing couture like black skirt, and a 20s inspired black with a layered bottom were a few of the stand-out pieces. For good, girl-like measure she included a pair of hot pants worn with a doll face cami.

As a little something for the guys, Kent Nielsen's menswear collection presented a

dapper way of dressing. Eschewing the current Hedi Slimane inspired skinny trend jeans exhibited a slight flare at the knees. Suits were also roomy, and to lighten up one otherwise formal business ensemble, he included in it a bright paisley tie.

Opening with a crop jacket and black balloon shorts, Michelle Tan's dark, sophisticated aesthetic perfectly carries the urban woman through her busy day with a no nonsense attitude. She included riding pants and a pair of jet aluminum straight leg pants in her collection as well as a number of skirts with pleated, distressed and lace details.

Welcomed with loud cheers from the audience, Orlando Espinoza's sexy, understated pieces can only be truly appreciated when seen in person and in movement. There is a restrained fluidity to his dresses; they hug the wearer but glide ever so lightly with her. He forgoes ornate embellishments for elegant details in construction, and the viewer soon gets the sense that everything he adds to a piece is absolutely necessary, whether that be ruching on the back of a skirt or a risqué keyhole in a dress.

Maria Pinto's point of view is immediately obvious that her expertise is in luxurious evening dresses. A two piece cerulean organza top and skirt cleverly played with the fabric's texture. From a slinky floor length red silk dress to a voluminous, sequined taffeta gold skirt, Maria experimented with different styles, fabrics and cuts. She included other pieces such as a lovely beehive capelet and a couple of posh wool coats, ideal complements to her evening creations.

Rounding out the show was Price Walton, whose collections veered from many of the earlier ones in its innovative details. In an all black color palette, the duo behind the label added variety with their choice of textures and embellishments. Lots of sheer fabric and plenty of ruffles added a unique touch to their many skirts and blouses. Other details included sequin embroidery, spiked sleeves, beaded overlay, and a standout nickel metal double breasted coat dress displayed a unique collar. The pieces were beautifully made and one

could only imagine the vast amount of effort and creativity that went into each of them.



Lara Miller and Katrin Schnabl



Doris Ruth and Cyndi Chan



Michelle Tan and Orlando Espinoza



Kent Nielsen



Maria Pinto and Price Walton