

Slim Pickings

Martin Yambao - The Philippine Star ⓘ

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MANILA, Philippines – In celebration of their 55th year, Slim’s Fashion & Arts School presented their Student Exhibit for 2015 at the SM Mega Mall Fashion Hall, last Oct. 9-13. As Slim’s was founded in the year 1960 by the great couturier Salvacion Lim Higgins (Slim) and her sisters, fashion students looked to the decade of the ‘60s for exuberant inspiration. Slim’s is the oldest fashion institution in the Philippines and throughout its time, the school has consistently produced designers who have helped shape the local fashion scene.

Each year, the school chooses to do a “best of student work” exhibit, looking beyond your typical graduate runway show. “Choosing pieces for the exhibit is typically a difficult task,” shares Sandy Higgins, “because there’s simply a lot of good work to choose from. Many good pieces are often left out simply because there are better ones. In the end, the work is selected purely on merit – all of these pieces are part of their class projects. Produced within limited timeframes and with mandatory techniques, none of these are showpieces – this is pretty much the level of work they’re expected to produce within their courses.”

On the creative landscape of the ‘60s, what goes on behind every exhibit and what’s next for Slim’s, *YStyle* sits down with Slim’s president and director Sandy Higgins for the lowdown.

YSTYLE: With the intention of foregoing runway shows or graduate showcases, what are your main motivations for showcasing student work via exhibit?

SANDY HIGGINS: Slim’s opts for exhibitions because the work has to stand up to close inspection. Our students are trained to produce well-executed pieces anyway, and this simply underscores the importance of that.

With runway shoes, both students and viewers are bound to be distracted by the production, the music, the “hype” – which is really just garnishing. Our exhibits are about the work, which should speak for itself, without bells and whistles.

A real designer shouldn’t have work that’s just good on paper or good from a distance. The real challenge for a designer is how will it be executed, and how well?

Can you tell us more about the theme behind this year’s exhibit?



Iviane Santos cuts a playful salute to the rise of plastic and experimental materials for this psychedelic garment. All photos by J.C. INOCIAN

The school was founded in October of 1960 and is celebrating its 55th year now, (so) our idea was to look to that decade for inspiration.

They were interesting years for fashion: it was the decade when ideas came from the street and the youth, rather than trickling down from couture and high society.

Were the students given the research beforehand or were they tasked to discover ‘60s fashion by themselves?

Slim’s students are always tasked with doing research themselves – not just in ‘60s fashion but, more importantly, in the events of the ‘60s in general.

Which pieces for you stood out in the exhibit?

My perspective would probably be different from that of the average viewer because I’m looking past the apparent – most are immediately impressed by the construction of the garments but to me, that’s a given. I tend to be more interested in those who found inspiration beyond the obvious for their design ideas.

Like the sneaker-inspired day *terno* by Ray Ann Gutierrez – the sneaker rose to prominence in that decade. Or the garment by Anj Ong inspired by G.I. Joe dolls, which typified attributes that were in those days reserved for males. There were many others who scratched beneath the surface, some looking to ‘60s ideology for their inspiration. It signifies their ability to come up with clever designs that are original, and not just superficial translations of fashions in those times.

Moving forward, what can we expect for the next Slim’s exhibition?

SM has very kindly supported this year’s exhibit, as do the designers, industry professionals and potential clients who come to see the work. I think we all see the need to nurture the next generation of design talent – to put their work forward, and to give them a chance to hear real feedback. It’s also an opportunity for them to show their families and friends what they can do.

Since this is a somewhat significant year for us, the school will be involved in several special activities over the coming months. As for next year’s exhibition... you’ll have to wait and see!



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