



Joey Samson's fashion workout: Lean, mean and tailored

By: Alex Y. Vergara Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:42 AM September 20, 2013



DECONSTRUCTED jumpsuit

Trust designer Joey Samson to think out of the box. To mark his 10th year in the business, he held his fashion show in, of all places, the gym of Picasso Hotel in Makati City.

In "JoeySamsonX," Samson, one of the best tailors around, paid homage to the "anatomy" of a suit by featuring, among other pieces, dark and light-colored jackets and pants in various stages of construction.

It was quite jarring, even gimmicky at first, to see suits without sleeves, extra pockets and partly exposed shoulder pads. Some pieces had faux bastings that made them look more ad hoc and intriguing, while a number of pants had extra flaps and exposed pockets. Since the event was a celebration of the designer's craft, we soon understood why.

"Looks one to seven showed a step-by-step process," said Samson, who did a total of 22 looks. "It tells the story of what goes on behind the

making of a proper suit. But all the pieces are wearable. They may not look so, but I made sure that each piece of garment can be worn properly without the wearer having to worry that certain parts might fall off."

The pieces were more of a reaffirmation of Samson's love for and expertise in tailoring, than a peek into what's in store for his clients in the near future.



MANNISH with a feminine touch

Thus, the entire collection had a retro feel, but the designer insisted that all the pieces were new, including a variation of his famous skirt fashioned from a series of collars.

But Samson updated the look by using a series of collars to make two sleeveless and strapless white tops—a cropped version and one of regular length.

Legendary restraint

One top made of collars would have underscored the idea. But except for those two pieces, Samson was still able to tap into his legendary restraint by limiting the number of certain pieces, particularly his finale number.

"More than a new collection based on a trend or season, this show was conceptualized in an attempt to educate the audience on what goes on behind the proper making of the suit," he said. "It was (director) Melvin Mojica's idea to do the show in a gym."

The two also collaborated with the styling, with male models wearing black sandals, while their female counterparts wore either white stilettoes or low-heeled lace-ups and moccasins.

"The models' hair and makeup were inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's "Lady with an Ermine," said Samson. "I wanted my models to look like statues of saints. The netlike veils were extended halfway through their faces because I wanted them to look mysterious."

Before Samson segued into his finished pieces, including a soft, diaphanous and painstakingly crafted hybrid of a terno, corset and gown rolled into one for the finale, he ended the first segment with a bit of humor—showing a garment bag of a dress made of dark gray suiting material.

As for the well-applauded white finale, "I used soft tulle, almost like stocking material," he said. "My manang (seamstress) and I worked on it for a total of five days. If we include the days when she was still trying to perfect the technique I wanted her to achieve, maybe more."



PANTS-SLASH-SKIRT

Due to constant trial and error, the piece also ate up a great deal of material—anywhere from 80 to 100 yards of soft tulle. We would have wanted to see more of the technique turned into various articles of clothing, but Samson put on the brakes.

"The time and resources spent on that piece were all part of the learning process," he said with a shrug.

Huff and puff

Prior to the show, guests had to huff and puff from one floor of the hotel to another, as Samson chose to collaborate with filmmakers, visual artists, photographers and stylists such as H.F. Yambao, Gino Santos, Sarah Black, Jay Yao and Noel Manapat to highlight some of his iconic pieces, including his framed and see-through terno made from a network of wires wrapped in black fabric.

(Since the boutique hotel only has two elevators, they weren't enough to bring guests to various floors. Guests found themselves going through each floor's fire exit to get to the rooms where works were displayed.)

Each floor, from the first to the eighth, featured either an installation or a short film with sets and characters garbed in clothes that defined Samson's career.

The ground floor, for instance, featured one of his first pieces: the groundbreaking "cocoon" jacket made of tiers of cotton twill edged with zippers.

Samson gave each collaborator the freedom to pursue his/her vision, including access to whatever pieces they like from the designer's decade-old archive. This was a total departure from his initial insistence to have a say in everything.

"Since I want to be special and personal, I told H.F. (who suggested the video installations) that the collaborators had to be people who are close to me," said Samson. "They should be people I've worked with and will continue to work with. They should be people I respect."

Not a few fashionistas had to sift through and even endure some of the works to decipher their meanings. Others simply gave up and decided to cool their heels and wait for the show in the fifth-floor gym.

Not a few guests considered a series of huge framed images that lined the first-floor corridor as the evening's best collaborative works. Shot by Yao and styled by Manapat, the photos had a Peruvian feel to them. In lieu of models, the photos' subjects were ordinary people wearing the designer's clothes.

"Noel and Jay wanted to shoot in Kawit, Cavite, where I grew up," Samson said. "They wanted places that had meaning to me, so I went with them and spent a whole day in my hometown."

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