


From prom regalia to structured pieces, Ezra Santos heeds the call of Dubai

September Grace Mahino - The Philippine Star 
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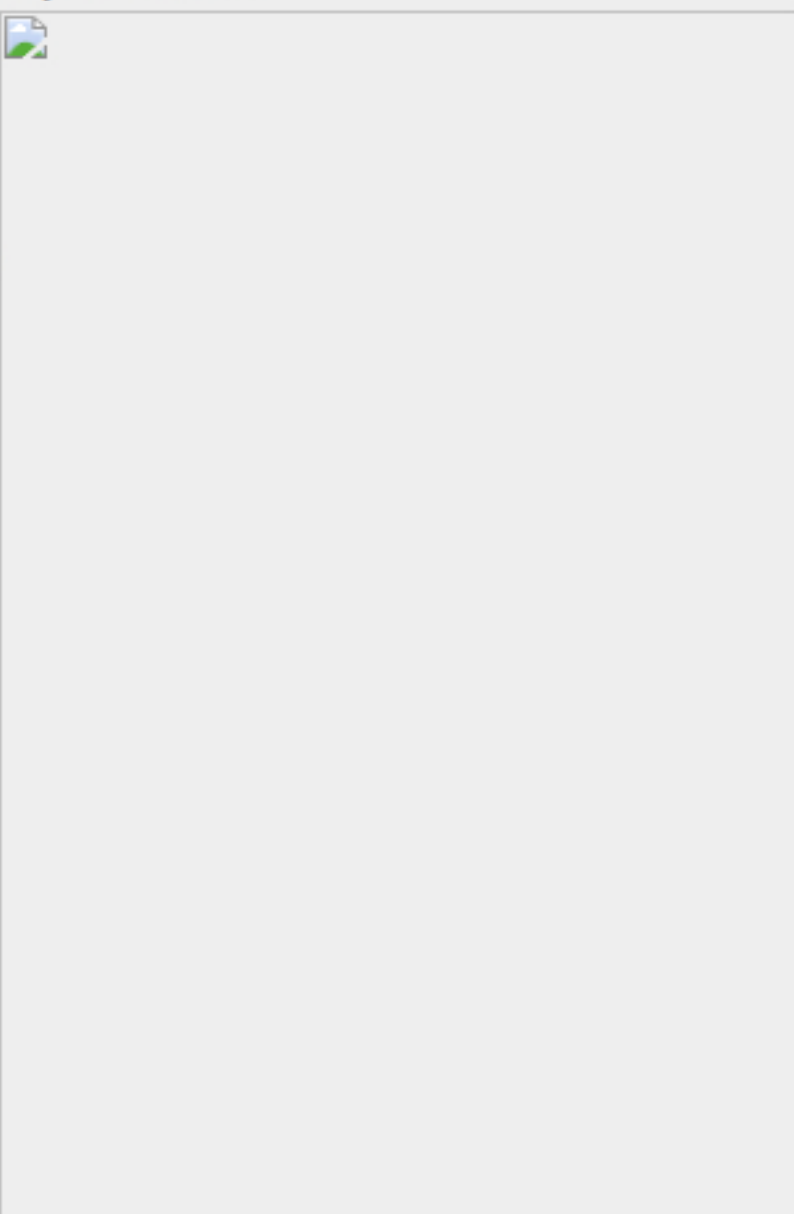
MANILA, Philippines - Dubai-based designer Ezra Santos infrequently makes homecoming trips, given the number of clients he has back at the United Arab Emirates. Hence, when he does take the flight back to Manila, it's bound to be a fashion event and for his recent home visit, he headlined this year's Red Charity Gala, held last October 19 at the Rizal Ballroom of the Makati Shangri-La Hotel.

Now in its sixth year, the Red Charity Gala is staged annually to raise funds for the benefit of the Philippine Red Cross and the Assumption High School Batch 1981 Foundation. Presented by Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Kaye Tinga, it's a gathering that attracts celebrities, society figures, and business leaders alike as it combines social mingling, a dinner, an auction, and a fashion presentation into one lively evening that runs late into the night.

The Red Charity Gala fashion show in particular is an event in itself as every year, it rolls out a massive collection from a celebrated Filipino designer in a show directed by Ariel Lozada and styled by Noel Manapat, with the hair and makeup done by Patrick Rosas' team; past headliners who've had the Red Charity Gala spotlight singularly put on their creations are Dennis Lustico, Cary Santiago, Rajo Laurel, Furne One, and Michael Cinco.

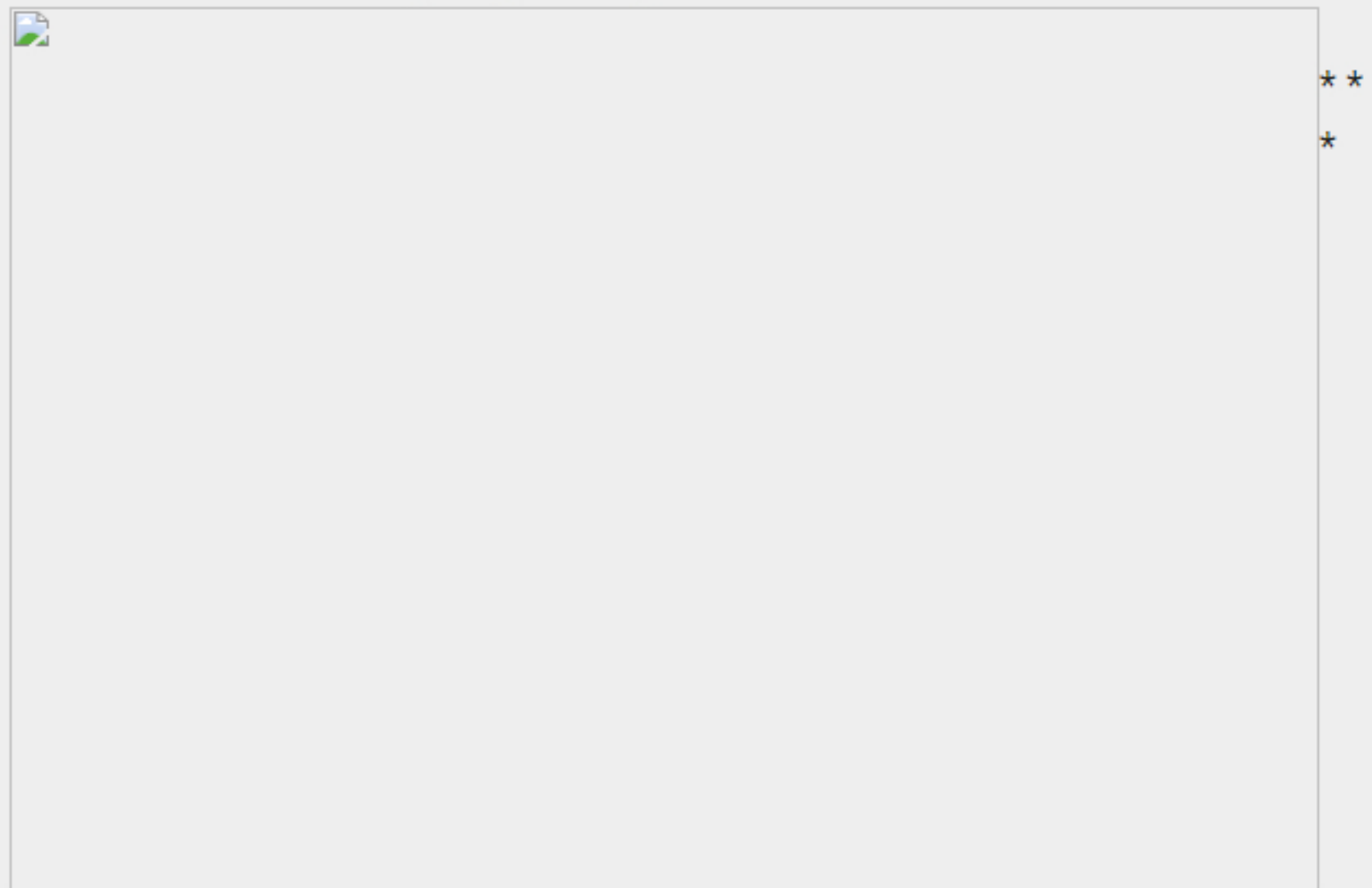
Santos now joins their rank. Inspired by the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements, the designer labeled his 44-look theme "ædivine romanticism." It's a modern take of the '20s golden era of fashion when glamour, beauty, and art reigned supreme," he said. Tulle, crepe, lace, and crystal embroidery were key element.

Full-length gowns were predominant in the collection, the silhouettes ranging from full, flouncy ball skirts to serpentine cuts to the liquid look of metallic gowns that highlight curves and dips by play of light; one of the more interesting shapes was a nude strapless neoprene dress with an asymmetrical hem "shorter in front than at the back" that curves inward slightly, like a partially opened tulip turned upside down. There were also plenty of aggressive shoulder treatments such as leg "muttons, stiff capped sleeves, Balmain-esque (circa 2009) crystal-encrusted spiky shoulders, and bodices with the panels extending up and over the shoulders. The designer also presented ivory slim-cut jumpsuits, one with the pleated bodice extending into a train and one with the pants legs *attached* to a train.



It was when he played around with forms and functions that Santos' design savvy shone through. It was also when he didn't rely on the Swarovski and pageantry regalia, when he opted for a more understated approach, that things got interesting; the structured and minimally embellished neoprene pieces speak of a more modern and cosmopolitan world-view worthy of an internationally acclaimed designer. Also among his first few looks were white gowns that featured a black and white print "clean and fresh takes on evening and formal wear amid the sea of figure-skimming gowns tacked on with lace and crystals.

Given the number of looks presented, Santos' presentation felt like three or four collections jammed into one. It's understandable, though. With his flourishing design career in Dubai keeping his Manila shows few and far in between, no one can begrudge him of being excited to show his home country how well he can do the plenty of things he can do.



The Red Charity Gala was presented by Bench in cooperation with Megaworld, Smart Infinity, Sta. Elena Construction & Development Company, Sunlife, Swatch, and Tresemme, with special thanks to Makati Shangri-La, Robert Biancaflor Group, Remy Martin Cognac, Penfolds Wines, Villa del Conte, and W/17.



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