

YOUNG DESIGNERS

The art of designing for women

An interview with Oscar Leon, a fashion designer who has been running his own design company for the past three years

A.A.
● Part of the fashion show *Passarel·la Gaudí* is dedicated to new creators, a section in which Oscar Leon took part this year for the second time. Leon, who is about to open his own boutique on the Barcelona's Carrer Avenir, gave us his views on the world of fashion.

Does taking part in the Passarel·la Gaudí open doors?

Apart from helping with commercial contacts, what it does is give you lots of image contacts. It's important in terms of the press, but not so much for sales; not only for us,

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but also for the big brands.

Is there a market for all these young designers?

I think there is. If you have a product that is a little different, you can find your space. The point is that your image is very important, and until you



The Catalan designer Oscar Leon has just taken a quantum leap by breaking into the overseas market / A.PUIG

start making a name for yourself, people don't take much notice of you.

Do you carry out the whole process yourself?

Apart from the dressma-

king, I do it all. I prefer not to make so many sketches, I like to go directly to the pattern-making stage.

Do you get outside workshops to do the dressmaking?

Yes, because they have all the machinery you need, machines for attaching collars, sleeves, everything.

And when does your inspiration come to you?

I start with the image of the girl I am dressing and from then on I just let my ideas flow. The hardest thing is to design the first four items for a collection. Once you've done that, the others just come easily, each one inspires the next.

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"The hardest thing to do is to design the first four items for a collection... after that, the ideas just come easily"
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You've started exporting to Japan and Britain. Is it easier to sell overseas?

We haven't started selling yet, but we've got the contacts, thanks to COPCA (the Catalan overseas trade promotion board). But yes, people overseas are open to different things.

All the big designers make clothes for women. Is it easier to design for a woman?

Much easier, because dressing a woman doesn't only mean designing clothes, it means shoes, accessories, etc. It gives you much more leeway, more to play with.

Making of a fashion show

A brief insider's view of the frenetic preparations involved in setting up a fashion parade

MARTA WENDLINGER

● An empty space transformed within minutes. The make-up people have already started to alter their first fresh, pretty model into something altogether different. Others pour in. Some of the models look a bit disoriented, not knowing what exactly to do until they find a friend or recognise the designer they have been assigned to.

Minutes later, the designers march in. Unlike the models, they know exactly what to do, striding directly towards the hanging poles. They hang everything up and create a little niche for themselves. They find their assigned models, and start the process of dressing them. The young women, a few men, and even three young girls, continuously try on and take off clothes.

Each model walks for at least two designers and has to know what exactly they have to wear for each, including shoes, bags, hats, and other accessories.

The make-up continues and the results are shocking. This is not your typical

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"The make-up session continues and the results are quite shocking"
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cal cosmetics, but what's typical these days for fashion shows? The young people are hardly recognisable — some have their lips painted bright red, others are white. Splotches of colour define their cheeks and eyes, from pinks to greens to everything in between.

The next step is the hair and it takes

quite a long time. It's amazing how a simple messy look can use so much hair spray, so much poofing, and so much concentration. But it does. Some girls wear hats or other items that must be worked into the hairdos; others are luckier and just have to deal with their hair. But it's clear that everything's there, and the designers relish in the moment.

Now it's time for the finishing touches. And don't think for a moment that it's been hours from the time the first model or designer walked into the room. It's only been a little over an hour.

Before the frenzy really begins, there's a little time to relax, drink bottled water, smoke a cigarette. The music begins; it's hip-hop. Parents, friends, professionals, and others fill the seats; those that can't find a seat gather on the pe-



A recent Barcelona fashion show / EFE

riphery. Posters are placed on the stage. The judge's table is set up. The microphones are tested and re-tested. The anticipation builds; the music continues to beat. And the show begins.