

ARTS & CULTURE



» **Tomorrow:** How Ikea shapes the world of home furnishings.

CATWALK TO THE FUTURE

Judging by the outfits created by Chanapatana Institute students, the legacy of Thai fashion is in good hands



LOVE LUST AND TRUST by Naruemon Thamsathien



A FABULOUS DESIGN by Jira Pianskool

EVERY ONE A 'DIAMOND'



RATTANA at a ceremony to launch her book 'Diamonds'

DAVID WALTER SPECIAL TO THE NATION

When she first joined the Thai HIV-positive support group TNP+ 10 years ago, activist Rattana Noita was "drifting without hope".

But the experience of talking with other affected people in her home province of Ubon Ratchathani quickly turned her despair into determination.

"I joined the support network, and I saw a lot of common issues and problems among fellow HIV-positive people - problems like access to healthcare and treatments resulting in lots of debt," Rattana says.

"That motivated me. I wanted to be helpful to my friends."

Through TNP+, Rattana and her allies successfully lobbied for improved health services, and have since worked in their local communities to increase acceptance of HIV-positive people. Rattana and nine other Asian women are the subject of "Diamonds", an upcoming book and film that document the emergence of the first generation of female HIV-positive leaders on the continent.

"These women are demonstrating a resilience, a courage," says Dr Jean D'Cunha, the regional director of Unifem, the United Nations fund for women.

"They're picking up the threads of their lives and taking lives into their hands. They're inspiring other women who are HIV-positive and who have the same concerns."

Unifem previewed the "Diamonds" book and movie last Tuesday evening at the Dusit Thani Hotel, where D'Cunha, Rattana and others emphasised the need for female voices at a time when the demographics of HIV/Aids are changing.

HIV-infected women will eventually outnumber infected men in Asia, says D'Cunha. In Cambodia, as

in Africa before it, such a shift has already occurred.

In Thailand in 2007, women infected by their partner or spouse made up 38.7 per cent of all new infections.

A number of factors explain the high female infection rates. Women are often less affluent and educated than men, and can lack the necessary information to protect themselves.

A power dynamic in which "sex is a male right" and women have little say over the use of protective contraception also affects infection rates. Societies in which married men are permitted multiple sexual partners while women must maintain "purity" complicate efforts to stem the increase in HIV among females.

"You can distribute condoms till the cows come home, but that's not going to solve the problem, because even condom use itself is underpinned by a power dynamic," D'Cunha says.

The pressure for women to be more "pure" and held to a higher sexual standard can also lead to greater stigmatisation for those who become infected.

A 2002 study by the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/Aids - Unifem's partner in the "Diamonds" project - found that HIV-infected women were almost twice as likely as their male counterparts to report being "excluded from social events" due to their positive status.

The same spirit of exclusion can also extend to access to healthcare and jobs.

It's this marginalisation that activists like Rattana hope to combat by living as examples of empowered women in their own communities - and beyond, thanks to the "Diamonds" project.

"It's a great opportunity for my story to be shared in 'Diamonds'," she says, "because in real life I don't think anyone would bother to hear my long, long stories and share what we've been through."



SAILEE SARANGDHAR SPECIAL TO THE NATION

Students of the Chanapatana International Design Institute (CIDI) had a chance to flaunt their creativity at a recent art-thesis exhibition at Siam Discovery, beginning with a fashion show.

Founded in 2000 by Phra Tepjetiyajarn, the abbot of Wat Dhammamongkol, the CIDI encourages young Thai designers to harness their talent and make it known to the world.

A non-profit organisation that operates in conjunction with top Italian design institutes, the CIDI offers diplomas in interior, product and fashion design based on two years' study in English.

The curriculum requires the students to publicly show their work every year.

At Siam Discovery, Italian Ambassador Ignazio Di Pace presented all-expenses-paid scholarships to Panuwat Thunyacharoen and Suthinna Lertsukprasert, enabling them to study in Italy for a year.

"This is the experience of a lifetime for me - I never had a proper job before I joined CIDI," Suthinna said.

"I worked as a teaching assistant to be eligible for the scholarship, and I'll be leaving to take my third year of fashion design at the Accademia Italiana.

"The Thai fashion scene is improving greatly," she noted. "We now see more people being fashion conscious, and more exposure being given to work by Thai designers."

With the inspiration for this year's fashion show the Seven Deadly Sins - lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride - the parade began with 10 outfits from

the spring-summer collection of CIDI's Beatrice "Ajarn Bianca" Scheer.

The concept came from a hot summer day, so the collection included dresses made of light, breezy and transparent materials in orange and light brown.

More solid materials followed, in dark brown and cream, incorporating more masculine articles like trousers and jackets, most adorned with buttons but with flattering cuts and silhouettes.

Up next were 10 looks created by the institute's first-year students. Making use of the same inspiration as their seniors, one or more of the seven sins were personified in each outfit.



The students themselves created the prints used in the outfits, all of which presented strong points of view and displayed great potential.

The main event was the work presented by 30 senior students, a total of 70 outfits that seemed to represent the future of Thai fashion.

These were avant-garde mini-collections, each distinct in terms of individual points of view and design aesthetics.

Boonwaree Varasophon's "Through the Eyes of an Envious Heart" collection made use of contrasting and eye-catching colours and transparent layering. Tight-fitting bodices paired with layered skirts of transparent material in combinations like turquoise and purple.

The recurring eyes and hearts motifs were cleverly incorporated into the design details to validate the interesting title given to the collection.

Another interesting collection was "Dead is the New Alive" by Jira Pianskool, who mixed the spiritual hues of Hinduism and Buddhism with modern shapes.

The collection combined red, yellow and saffron to create long, breezy dresses, tops paired with draped leggings and light-weight hooded jackets. The models carried skulls on ropes, while rib cages and vertebral columns were slung over their chests like necklaces. The look was completed with high-top sneakers.

"Love, Lust and Trust" by Naruemon Thamsathien clearly hinted at the designer's good sense of humour. The collection consisted of several bridal ensembles with whimsical twists like whips and fluffy handcuffs as accessories.

There was also a man's outfit in the same quirky tone,

combining a tailored jacket with shorts. There was a definite Alice in Wonderland feel to the collection, which on close inspection was quite luxurious, making use of satin, net lace and chiffon.

The students' effort and personal vision were apparent in every piece shown.

The creations were beautiful, edgy and original, suggesting the local design scene has much to look forward to. Some of the names are sure to shine in the future, both domestically and internationally.



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TODAY IN CINEMAS

GREAT THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Sabrina's Space

Sabrina Terence, a German model-turned-progressive house and trance DJ, will be in Bangkok on August 28 for an exclusive one-night only gig at MyBar at the Dusit Thani Hotel.

The statuesque Terence started modelling in Germany at 15. She has appeared in numerous magazines including the German edition of *Maxim* and the Portuguese *FHM*. She set up the modelling agency Pepemodells before moving to Miami and embarking on a new career as a professional DJ and becoming involved in the nightclub *Space*.

The cover charge is Bt300 inclusive of one special drink. Call (02) 200 9000 extension 2999.



In the groove

The Conrad Bangkok brings top Indian guest DJ, Megha Kawale, to Club 87 Plus on Saturday for "One Night Only!"

A pioneer on the deejaying scene, she'll be spinning her latest hits and East-meets-West remixes from 10pm till 2am. Kawale has been voted as one of the 100 Most Beautiful Women in India by leading publication, *Femina*. The multi-talented beauty, who's also a supermodel, walks the catwalk for top Indian and international designer brands. A traditional Maharashtraian girl, she's one of the country's main youth icons.

Tickets are B1,000 inclusive of one drink if purchased before the event or Bt1,200 at the door. Call (02) 690 9999.

Correction

The photo that appeared in the first item of the listings section last Thursday was not DJ Sabrina Terence. The correct picture appears in today's column. We regret the error.