

Bellevue Reporter

'Project Runway' stars highlight Tukwila fashion show

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After a season on Bravo's hit show, Project Runway, past contestants Sweet P and Nick Verreos are used to having their designs judged by the likes of Heidi Klum and Michael Kors. Recently, it was their turn to step off the runway and into the judge's seat.

The pair made a special appearance in Seattle over the Labor Day Weekend to host the International Academy of Design and Technology "Imagine 2008" Design Expo. The event took place in Tukwila on Aug. 29 under the runway lights of a New York style fashion show. The Design Expo featured an interior design display, digital arts film presentation, silent auction, third annual fashion show and VIP reception.

The fashion show concluded with a preview of the upcoming designs that will be auctioned off at the 2008 Caffe Couture Fashion Show at the Bellevue Arts Museum on Sept. 27. The silent auction will be followed by A Masquerade Fashion Show benefiting the student programs at IADT (www.amasquerade.com).

Sweet P and Verreos met backstage prior to the Imagine 2008 fashion show to pre-judge the students' fashion designs. They judged each garment on a number scale depending on detail, construction, creativity, fit and overall style.

"If there weren't so many good designs it wouldn't be such a hard decision," Sweet P said, as she carefully examined each design.

The garments fell under one of three categories: Best Daywear/Career Wear, Best Evening/Costume, and Speciality. A committee, including faculty members and IADT advisory board member Rose Dennis, narrowed down the collection of garments prior to the final judging.

As the director of the IADT Fashion Design Department, Monir Zandghoreishi was first introduced to Verreos three years ago by one of her students. Verreos now makes a trip out to Seattle each year to take part in the annual fashion show.

"Rose is one of the most stylish women in Seattle and Monir is like a second mom so how could I not fly out for this," said Verreos, who quickly became a fan favorite on season two of Project Runway after winning the "Barbie Challenge." Backstage, he shared stories from his time spent on the show while he and Sweet P selected one winning garment from each category and an overall Best in Show.

Under an oversized white tent, guests took their seats as the lights went low and the music turned up. Models strutted the runway, wearing designs from 28 IADT students, from freshman to graduating seniors. After the fashion show, Sweet P and Verreos announced the student winners, highlighting the work of Monica Kitchen, Sara Najjar and Lynne Wedul. Tera Lee Bacon's fall collection won for Best in Show. She was awarded a certificate signed by the judges and a scholarship for her exceptional designs.

Immediately following the fashion show, Sweet P and Verreos were front and center for a walk-off. They then invited Monir Zandghoreishi to follow. All three strutted their way down the catwalk to the applause of a sold-out crowd.

The show concluded with a special presentation to Seattle Couture Designer Luly Yang. The gown and wedding dress designer was awarded the first ever IADT Lifetime Achievement Award.

The design expo benefited the Face, Heart and Mind Foundation, a non-profit that provides reconstructive plastic surgery and mental health counseling for children who suffer from physical and emotional scarring as a result of abuse.

For more information on the academy visit www.iadtseattle.com or call 206-575-1865.

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From left: Sweet P (Season 4), Sharice Giacomini, President of IADT-Seattle, and Nick Verreos (Season 2).