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FASHION: ALL

May 16, 2008

PROFILES

Made of Honor**Joanne Reyes makes the everyday dress its own special occasion.** *By Jason Wilson*

"I've always known that one day I would like to spearhead a new design development, but in time," says Joanne Reyes. "I didn't expect it so soon, but sometimes things just happen, and you just go with it."

Following her own advice, Reyes, has diverted all of her ingenuity into her new label, **Vicente Villarin**, a stunning, couture-influenced homage to Reyes' grandfather, Vicente Villarin. As an early 20th-century composer, Villarin's artistic legacy and love of family has instructed his grand-daughter's newest design endeavor. "He loved to travel and was inspired to create and share his work with others," Reyes fondly remarks. "I've inherited the same approach, and there's definitely a reflection of him in the brand."

Reyes, whose resume is a Who's Who of couturiers, including J. Mendel, Ji Haye, and Monique Lhuillier, recently debuted her fall 2008 collection, the second in what is sure to be a promising run. The designer notes that one of her aims with the collection is to conflate couture fabrication and refinement with the accessibility and ease of ready-to-wear. Citing the "romanticism of sculpture" as an influence, Reyes, paid special attention to the classic architectural and sculptural masterpieces during travels to Paris and Florence. The fall collection was conceived using an "artist's approach, with a focus on the arrangement of objects in rectilinear and curvilinear silhouettes." Though the vocabulary might confound, one look at the collection will clear up any confusion about what's at hand.

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Each of Reyes's looks illustrates the beauty of the female form, construed through a textile re-interpretation of an architect's mediums: stone, metal, and earth. A metallic-embossed black high-waisted skirt resembles the shiny black surface of freshly polished marble. A bronze rectilinear coat straightens the body in an arresting column. And a copper, twisted "tulip" cocktail dress ends demurely above the knee, the fabric covering the waist and upper torso is folded and tucked in such a way to mimic a Corinthian frieze. The designer's hand-pleated, silk chiffon gown glistens like chiseled onyx, draping from a rippling, layered bodice atop an empire waist. For this look, the model stands head high with her hair pulled back like a Hellenic deity. Persephone maybe, majestic and terrible, carried away on the River Styx, returning from the underworld to greet the spring.

Vicente Villarin, available exclusively at Des Kohan, 671 Cloverdale Avenue, Los Angeles; 323-857-0200. For more information, go to www.vicentevillarin.com.

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