

Young designers take the spotlight

Winners of the Swarovski Young Designers Awards announced



From left, Mona Osman Ahmed Badawi, amateur runner up; Joseph Lalongisip, Innovation Award winner; Selina Farooqui, student runner up; Ayesha Chaudhary, student winner; and Helen O'Connor, amateur winner, were announced as the winners of the Swarovski Young Designer Awards on the final day of The Bride Show Dubai, pictured here with their winning designs.

Three winners of the ninth Swarovski Young Designers Awards were declared last night on the final day of The Bride Show Dubai, for the student, amateur and innovation categories.

Helen O'Connor walked away with first place in the amateur category for her wedding dress featuring broad crystal encrusted shoulders with unique decorative branches. Helen, a South African who lives in Dubai, beat off the competition from nine other contestants, all of whom reside in the UAE, but hail from around the world, from Sudan to Sri Lanka.

The student finalists waited in anticipation as Ayesha Chaudhary was called to the front for her cream backless gown, with translucent gauze covering the midriff. Studying at the Centre for Executive Education (CEE), Ayesha was shortlisted from 10 finalists from five fashion institutes in Dubai.

Finally, Joseph Lalongisip from the Philippines took to the stage at the Dubai International Exhibition Centre when he was announced the winner in the innovation category, judged solely from all contestants' innovative use of Swarovski crystals. His intricately made wedding dress featured over 1,000 Swarovski crystals and included a chiffon parasol as a modern day veil.

"This is overwhelming, I still can't believe it," said Joseph after he received the award, which includes a year long internship at Swarovski Middle East. "I came to Dubai to pursue my dream, and winning here at The Bride Show Dubai is my big chance to become a fashion designer."

The finalists' designs have been on display during The Bride Show Dubai, alongside more than 400 exhibitors from 13 countries from the fashion, beauty and travel industries.

The Awards came to an exciting culmination when each design, made by both amateur and student fashion designers, was professionally modeled on the catwalk. A panel of esteemed judges from the Middle East fashion industry examined the wedding dresses in terms of design, technique and innovative use of Swarovski elements. Dana Tarabishi, Communications Executive for Swarovski Middle East, was welcomed on stage after the fashion shows and judging to announce Joseph, Ayesha, and Helen as the 2008 winners.

Daphne Cota, Exhibition Manager of IIR Middle, the organizers of The Bride Show, said, "The three winners were chosen from nineteen finalists, who were selected from more than 300 aspiring fashion designers who initially entered the Awards, a long standing tradition of The Bride Show Dubai. They all showed such innovation and talent."

The judging panel comprised Ghania Azzam, Fashion Editor of Zahrat Al Khaleej magazine, Hussein Jain, renowned UAE fashion photographer, Mohammed Bahraimi, Fashion Designer & Owner of Eve 'n' Black Abayas, and Melanie Penny, Fashion & Beauty Director of OK! Middle East magazine.

The Bride Show Dubai, organized by IIR Middle East, ran from 23 - 26 April at the Dubai International Exhibition Centre. The four-day event included fashion shows from renowned names such as Manish Malhotra, Amato, Ghanati Couture, Julea Domani, Tijan Trading and Rahmanian Haute Couture as well as high end shopping for brides-to-be and their families.

- Lindsay Johnston, Total Communications Dubai also photo -