Sew green! Sew white!

Red Carpet Green Dress II – The Sequel

And then, under the category of “wishes coming true,” Jillian’s wish for her fellow designers and Associate Professor Theresa Winge remarkably came true.
Fresh on the heels of the Red Carpet Green Dress competition, Jillian’s win, and the various Oscar-related west coast events and activities surrounding the dress, Suzy Cameron was working with Nashville, TN, eco-friendly clothing designer Jeff Garner and his company Prophetik on holding a fashion show and fundraiser for MUSE Global on the streets of downtown Nashville. Suzy had met Garner through a friend while working on Red Carpet Green Dress. Garner’s firm was committed to eco and sustainable design practices.

Plans were being finalized for holding a gala fundraising dinner with Suzy and James Cameron as guests of honor, followed by a fashion show presenting Garner’s latest collection titled Southern Shores. Craig Laforest brought up the other MSU designers and their dresses and an idea from the College of Arts and Letters to possibly showcase the rest of the dresses at some future date. Mrs. Cameron and Garner wondered if the 16 designers – including Jillian, who had made another sustainable design dress for the ATD course – might be willing to come to Nashville with Professor Winge for a fashion show of their work culminating in a charity auction of the dresses to benefit MUSE Global. Again, the immediate answer was “Yes,” although, at first, a few of the MSU designers weren’t so sure that they wanted to give up their dresses for charity, as they had put a great deal of time as well as their own money into their creations.

Still, all 16 agreed to do so in the end, as they were promised that their dresses would indeed grace the runway, and they would be allowed to dress and style the models who would wear their dresses. In addition, the MSU bus trip to Nashville would not cost them anything, their food would be provided, and Jeff Garner had arranged for two nights’ hotel accommodations in Nashville for them.

OFF TO NASHVILLE
A month later at 6 a.m., Friday, April 23, 2010, a MSU short bus loaded with 15 ATD designers – one had to back out due to illness – two faculty members, Associate Professor Theresa Winge and ATD Instructor Rebecca Schuiling, 16 boxed dress forms, and two CAL communications staff members and MSU bus driver Doug Decker turned off campus and headed south. With the hour difference in time zones and excellent weather and traffic along their route, the bus rolled into Nashville just before 1:00 p.m. and pulled in front of The Standard at The Smith House, a fine dining restaurant and event venue housed in Nashville’s only remaining grand townhouse from the 1840s.

Ushered into the building’s ballroom, the College’s 15 designers went about unloading and assembling the dress forms and draping their gowns and dresses under the watchful eye and supervision of Winge and Schuiling. A plan was made to get everything ready for the evening’s silent auction, and then check into the hotel to freshen up and change, but Prophetik’s staff asked the designers to stay and assist with the catwalk rehearsal, and all had to resort to getting ready and changing into their evening wear and doing their hair and make-up without benefit of their hotel rooms.

“Allison Spencer’s gown, “Untitled,” captures all eyes.”

MSU bus driver Doug Decker assists ATD students in unloading dress forms.

The final walk of all 15 dresses included “Green Elegance” by Jen Henry (worn by CAL designer Elizabeth VanFleteren); “Eco Beauty” by Jillian Granz; “Vintage Revolution” by Christina Shaver; and “Beneath All This Trash” by Sarah Bach.

The back view of Lauren Myers’ “Untitled” gown.
While nearly everyone wished out loud that the bus had gone straight to the hotel before coming to the venue, all pulled together and made the best of the situation. Rehearsals went off reasonably well, and everyone prepped for the evening’s festivities. As 6:00 p.m. rolled around, the ballroom had been transformed into a vision of beautiful, stunning fashions. And as the event’s attendees/bidders toured the room speaking with individual designers about their creations, the atmosphere became electric with anticipation.

**CAMERONS MEET DESIGNERS**

Then, escorted by Jeff Garner, Suzy and James Cameron arrived. Suzy Cameron strode gracefully through the ballroom – looking every bit the runway model that she once was – to welcome the MSU contingent. She and her husband walked around the room visiting with each MSU designer individually, commenting and asking questions about their dresses, and posing for photographs with each. When pressed to go into dinner before they had time to meet all of them, Suzy firmly said that they needed to first visit with everyone who had come from MSU, sending a clear message that having our accomplished young women designers travel to Nashville meant a great deal to Suzy, her husband and MUSE Global. Later that evening, Mrs. Cameron said as much in her prepared remarks to the crowd at the fashion show.

Because there were not enough models to send all 15 dresses down the runway in one smooth process, several of the MSU designers again stepped in, and volunteered to wear each other’s gowns to fill the gaps. The MSU fashion show went off without a hitch. Beautiful gown after beautiful gown commanded the runway and the crowd’s attention. There were ball gowns and cocktail dresses, a repurposed wedding gown, creations made from bed clothes, shower curtains, plastic bags and newspapers. The crowd loved every minute of the show, and applauded wildly as the full line of MSU dresses and designers made their final appearance for the night.

After packing up and boarding the bus to grab a quick dinner and head for the hotel, the 15 young women reviewed the day’s events with a more knowing attitude than they had at the outset from MSU. All felt that the experience – while trying at times – had been a good one, and they were pleased that their considerable talent had been amply recognized.

Following a good sleep, the next day was filled with shopping, Nashville sightseeing, a trip to BB King’s Restaurant & Blues Club for dinner, and a post-dinner exploration of Nashville’s famed music district. At 9:00 a.m. Sunday morning, the bus headed north for East Lansing, and pulled into the Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture building’s parking lot just before 6:00 p.m. After unloading and storing the 16 dress form boxes inside the building, retrieving their luggage, and policing the bus, everyone came together for one final photograph, tired but content.

“This was an outstanding opportunity for all of us,” said senior ATD student Sarah Bach. “Having the chance to see how a professional designer’s runway show is put on, and to actually participate in it ourselves, was an invaluable experience. And being able to do it with all of these incredibly strong and creative women was absolutely phenomenal. If someone asked me to do it all again, next week, you can bet I’d say ‘Yes!'”

Associate Professor Theresa Winge discusses the MSU Apparel and Textile Design program with Suzy and James Cameron as ATD instructor Rebecca Schuiling and designer Katie Jingozian chat just behind.

All 15 MSU designers gather for an on-site “party pic” just prior to the event kick-off.