

The Crowd: Witness to a 'genius'-level fashion show

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A model participates in the WOC Fashion show. (Daily Pilot)

Journalists must be cautious when using terms like "genius" and "inspired" to describe any person who is central to a story.

Last week in Costa Mesa, this columnist encountered genius while covering a ladies' luncheon on behalf of The Women of Chapman.

Arriving at The Wildflower Linen Salon in the relatively new design center known as South Coast Collection, this particular event was called for noon. A champagne reception would precede a luncheon fashion show created by the woman behind Wildflower Linen, **Youngsong Martin**.

Donna Bunce, co-chair of the Chapman gathering, called me in advance to explain.

"Youngsong will create a fashion show using her table linens, draping them on models, and pinning the fabric, turning the linens into garments," said Bunce with a twinkle in her voice.

"Really," I replied.

Thinking to myself, I asked "do I really need to go to a tablecloth fashion show?" Frankly, I did not expect to have much to write about it, but I went anyway to show my support for Chapman and Bunce.

Lesson learned: Do not prejudice something that is new and unknown.

Youngsong Martin is, without question, a creative genius. Ok, I used the word. And I offer it with total, unequivocal praise, as I have never witnessed such a beautiful, inspired fashion show.

Not in Orange County, not in Los Angeles, New York or even on the runways of Paris and Milan. What Youngsong created with tablecloths and pins was breathtaking. It truly was fashion as art. A moving canvas of inspired design.

Joining Donna Bunce in chairing the event was **Donna Calvert**, with support from **Kathy Hamilton**, president of The Women of Chapman. Nearly 70 well-dressed women arrived at Wildflower for the spring event, most of them unaware of what was to unfold.

Sharing champagne toasts in the salon and checking out all of the fabrics designed by Youngsong (which she fashions into table linens rented to the event trade) were **Donna Anderson, Adrienne Brandes, Barbara Eidson, Martha Green, Ollie Hill, Sheri Nazaroff, Mona Nesseth, Charlene Prager, Valaree Wahler and Mary Roosevelt**.

Following small talk in the salon, the fashionistas were ushered outside and down the courtyard into a massive, all-white painted warehouse with polished concrete floors, fully-exposed venting and electrical wiring in the ceiling. The typical contemporary space, it was a gallery of sorts.

Youngsong worked against the expected and set up a luncheon more appropriate to the dining room at Buckingham Palace. Old-world lace overlays topped silver-gray satin table linens draped to the floor. Silver and crystal candelabras sporting tall slender white tapers flickered in massive quantities. They were set up along the banquet tables, framing what would soon become the runway for the models.

Lunch was prepared and served by Culinary Creations by Good Gracious Events. Raving over the lemon pepper salmon roulade entrée, which was somewhat retro, a flashback to food served at posh ladies luncheons of the 1950s and 60s, the crowd also praised the verdant floral displays by **Gina Park** of The Mille Fiori.

Then the show began. The hottest rock-pop music pulsated. Maroon 5's "Moves Like Jagger" changed the mood from subdued to high energy.

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Exquisite models from Alice Kim Cowell and the Refresh Talent Agency in Los Angeles appeared dressed in Youngsong's table linens. Christina Noelle designs provided the jewelry, and handbags came from Jessica Grant.

The crowd was mesmerized. And it was not just a few models and a handful of pinned designs. It was a full couture show. Passersby in the design center were stopped in their tracks, forming a gallery outside the tall glass doors.

At the end, there was a rousing standing ovation as guests, including **Bette Aitken, Donna Bianci, Terri Carr, Donna DiBari, Irene Mathews, Eileen Hanley, Janeen Hirson, Ann Manassero, Carol Wilken, Dorcas Preston, Joan Stevens, Kristen Rhynerson** and **Gwen Williams** applauded the creative genius of Youngsong Martin.

Brava.

THE CROWD runs Thursdays and Saturdays. B.W. Cook is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.