

The Crowd: Royals catch Southern California's attention

July 13, 2011



FASHION FIRST: Judges OC Housewife
Gretchen Rossi, AnQi... (Daily Pilot)

Southern California buzzed in the afterglow of the royal visit by the duke and duchess of Cambridge, William and his captivating bride, Catherine.

Their first visit to the United States as a couple was short but, oh-so-sweet. Three days of parties, polo and purpose. Unfortunately, they didn't have time for Disneyland, the Newport oceanfront beaches or a stroll through Fashion Island or South Coast Plaza, but they left an impression that will resonate with the great citizens of Orange County.

Following a very haughty polo match at the Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club, the elegant young couple changed gears and headed to downtown Los Angeles to spend Sunday with inner-city students studying at an art academy,

not far from Skid Row. The duke and duchess dug their fingers into clay, molding pigs and other animal figures. They painted with watercolors, sitting next to the youngsters at their level.

Outside of a general fascination with the royals, the O.C. connection may indeed become quite direct. As one of America's most philanthropic communities, the American Friends of the Foundation of Prince William and Prince Harry Inc., formed in 2011, is presently sanctioned by the Internal Revenue Service to authorize tax-deductible contributions from American citizens.

The Foundation, as it is known, shares three very serious goals with the broad charitable base in the county. First, it seeks to assist at-risk youth in need of guidance and support. Second, it will fund the protection and preservation of natural resources. Third, it will provide assistance to individuals and families who have served in the Armed Forces and find themselves in need of help.

All three avenues are close to the hearts and minds of generous O.C. citizens who put their time and funds into community services. Tiffany & Co. at South Coast Plaza, charitable business and personal donors will no doubt play an expanded role. Stay tuned for more on the Foundation in coming months.

The art of fashion was the subject as AnQi by Crustacean at South Coast Plaza recently hosted students from the Art Institute of Orange County for a fashion event. Graduating seniors, along with returning students, presented their designs on the runway to a sold-out crowd of very positive and supportive critics and fashionistas.

The theme of the show was "Cotton Couture," which was perfect for summer as 16 students showed off 28 original designs. Professional models paraded along a sleek 66-foot foot glass catwalk runway that bisected the main dining room of AnQi.

Some 400 well-dressed O.C. guests sipped AnQi lavender mojitos (and a few peartinis) as the students nervously watched the panel of judges review their designs. AnQi Chief Executive **Elizabeth An** joined **Gretchen Rossi** from Bravo's "The Real Housewives of Orange County" and **Jenny Lee** of Jenny Lee Bridal in making the tough calls. **May Ann Gale**, the Art Institute's fashion department director, produced the event.

Best in show went to **Roxanne Phillips**. Other design winners were **Jessica Pinney**, **Alyssa Garcia**, **Daniel Magana**, **Adriana Diaz**, **Coral Castillo** and **Crystalle Perez**.

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.

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