

Asia's Time

Billionaire philanthropist, publisher and group CEO of Beaumont Publishing, Frank Cintamani is the driving force behind Men's Fashion Week, Women's Fashion Week and Haute Couture Week in Singapore. He talks to *Alexandra Kohut-Cole*.

WITH A STYLE PERSONALITY that is "decisive, passionate, visionary", the man who brought haute couture to Singapore, Frank Cintamani, sees the development of the Singapore fashion scene as dynamic, particularly over the past five years. He says, "What is vital is the development of creative and design talent in the continuing refinement of fashion events and platforms." The Fide Fashion Weeks that he created are a determined endeavor to fast-track this fashion culture, "one which appreciates and understands the history, dynamics and world of fashion."

Frank's curiosity for fashion was fortified by witnessing the Paris couture shows. "I was completely mesmerized by the beauty, artistry and complexity of the collections." As he took time to meet designers, industry leaders and key players in the industry, he "gained a greater appreciation for the complexity of not just couture but fashion and fashion design as a whole".

Couture Magazine, in his publishing stable, is the only title in the region dedicated to haute couture. He hosted Couture Week in Bangkok with Her Majesty the Queen of Thailand and in 2012 Haute Couture Week in Singapore in conjunction with HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco in support of the prince's foundation. "I was fortunate to have been introduced and directed to Didier Grumbach, the President of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*. There was an immediate meeting of minds, as we both shared a common goal to ensure the future of haute couture. He is a passionate believer in the need for haute couture to



evolve and explore key markets such as Asia, and I clearly shared a vision of establishing Singapore as a gateway into the region. Of course, couture is only one element, and I recognized the need to present a more holistic offering and representation of fashion. This was the genesis of the Fide Fashion Weeks and the desire to present a broad perspective that included menswear and ready-to-wear as well as haute couture."

Frank's concentration on couture focused to the point of bringing haute couture to Asia, namely Singapore, because he is driven "by a fundamental belief that it is now 'Asia's time'". He believes that beyond the financial influence of the region, there is a "tremendous creative potential that needs to be developed and explored, especially within the world of fashion."

When quizzed on the designers that he admires the most, he mentions Yumi Katsura "who despite over 50 years in the industry remains as driven as the day she started", Guo Pei, who demonstrates that "the essence

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of couture is as vibrant in China as it is in Paris," and On Aura Tout Vu establishing that "couture is more than a romantic or classic form of femininity."

The earlier part of his career was spent advising on project finance and wealth management solutions for families across Asia. More recently, he has developed a number of multi-media initiatives including events for luxury brands and a successful publishing business. "The fashion weeks are an extension of that and all of them are quite closely interlinked," he says.

For one whose varied career has taken him all over the world, how would he define his biggest achievement so far? "I have always recognized that success in business presents an opportunity to make a difference to those less fortunate. As such, imbuing a strong element of philanthropy and social responsibility into the various initiatives has been very important to me. Of course, setting these up and seeing them succeed has been rewarding, but the biggest achievement has been supporting a myriad of charitable causes and foundations."

And the most important lesson he has learned over the course of his career is to "never give up...had I done that I would not have been able to do the things that I have. Of course, I have faced some situations that looked impossible, but in every case, there is always a way forward - it just requires a deep-seated tenacity."

Frank unwinds by going to the movies every week. "I find it a valuable way of relaxing and disengaging with my hectic business and social life. I went to the Oscars in Los Angeles, so that was a wonderful opportunity to indulge in my movie passion."

And when he has a rare quiet moment, he likes to have music in the background "While I am relaxing, or thinking about my next project, I do have a particular appreciation for classical music, the range and styles can be so broad, and I never tire of listening to it."

He has a particular passion for Japan: "It is impossible to leave not feeling enriched by its people, places and culture."



AFP PHOTO / ROSLAN RAHMAN

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
A model presents a creation by French designer Alexis Mabille during the French Couture 2012 Women's Fashion Week in Singapore on December 1, 2012; Cintamani poses with a model as he arrives to take part in the "fashion dinner against Aids" an event organized by Sidaction with French fashion federation to raise funds for the Aids research, on January 26, 2012 in Paris.

As to his ambitions for the fashion publishing side of his business, he will continue to focus on a closer integration of media and content "Publishing in a digital and online format and platform is a vital aspect of the evolution of media, and there will be some very exciting initiatives in this respect going forwards."

So what is the best part of Frank's job? "My life and career has provided an amazing opportunity to meet incredibly influential industry players whose vision and ideas have been a great source of inspiration and direction for me. In some cases, they have become mentors and provided valuable insight, which would have taken a lifetime to acquire any other way. Likewise, gaining access to some of the worlds most exciting and innovative businesses helps to develop my own ideas and concepts. It is certainly the most rewarding aspect of my job."