

The Asian Age

Showstopper ramps

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Rohit Bal recreated the Garden of Eden; (right) Gaurav Gupta's childhood memory-inspired ramp

The ramp was a canvas for designers at AICW 2015, and they turned it into luxurious and elaborate settings — from yachts and hospital beds to cafes and French patisseries

A floral bazaar, a French patisserie, a hospital bed, a café, a sailing boat... fashion runways are always an extravagant surprise. For this season's Couture Week shows, various designers transformed the allocated spaces into their own dazzling synthetic paradise with theatrical splashes and mind-blowing drama, complete with mystical music, decorated tables for celebrity VIPs and more.

Designer Monisha Jaising who unveiled "The Sailing Bride" collection, transformed the runway into a majestic luxury yacht and transported the audience to a regatta. Her chic yacht was portrayed to be parked in a regatta, exclusively for the show along with a captain on board, crew members, first mate, poolside recliners with models lounging on them and a bar at the back! "The inspiration for my collection was the coming together of sports and weddings. And I wanted to portray these two against the backdrop of a luxury yacht. Hence, I spun an entire collection around a yacht wedding," the designer says.

She goes on, "Keeping in mind that you cannot to be extremely traditional while sailing on a boat, the line was a mix of fundamental hardcore Indian sensibilities in terms of aesthetics, designs and silhouettes paired with fun sporty elements. My team and I conceptualised the stage along with valuable inputs by Anu Ahuja, the choreographer of the show and it was executed by Mahesh Sharma from Black Lines. The team started working on the elements needed for the set-up a month prior to the show. The stage was built overnight with around 15-20 people working simultaneously and we spent about 8-10 lakhs in making that majestic yacht!"

Unlike Monisha, designer Varun Bahl chose an off-site location at a colonial-style bungalow on 7 Sikandar Street near Mandi House, to present his idiosyncratic combination of style and substance. In the kind of paradise perhaps the mad inventor Rotwang might have imagined in Metropolis, Bahl's show was an ode to his favourite blossom, the rose, with embellished and hand-woven versions of the flower on his bespoke pieces. From lehengas and dupattas to anarkalis and men's jackets, the collection was swathed with a bouquet of embroidered red roses on luxe fabrics. The first looks were almost psychedelic, with regal carpeting, life size rose-embedded installations, huge lounge seatings, a salad bar, a suspended chandelier, pastel tie-dye water bodies and trees, luxury rest rooms specially set up for the guests with air conditioning and mirrors, and a pristine white three-tier ramp. "Everything was in-house and we worked really hard to make sure our guests got a taste of what the brand was all about.

A successful fashion show is an ensemble of creative ideas, right from the ramp, lighting and décor, to models and clothing. It took more than a month to get everything in order but I am glad that everything went well and everyone liked it. The major challenge that I faced was the weather and since everything (the flora and fauna) was natural, I was pretty scared of the rains. Thankfully, the Lord was on our side," Varun quips.

For Rohit Bal's catwalk show, the Imperial hotel was transformed elaborately (an adjective almost universally applicable to Bal's actions) into a re-creation of the Garden of Eden. Jalal Salahuddin, creative director at Rohit Bal Luxury Weddings and Events shares, "Rohit's collection "Husn-e-Taa'iraat" which meant the 'beauty of a bird' had Persian influence with bird motifs and oodles of zardozi handwork. So we thought of creating a set that celebrated the beauty of Mother Nature. First, we incorporated the trees in the set and then added red coloured elements such as different flowers and fruits like pomegranates, cherry, apple, etc. to the whole setup, and it turned out to be perfect.

We got our inspiration from the Garden of Eden and presented an ode to all things beautiful. Keeping in mind that Rohit's couture line was also a depiction of the 1920s to 1940s era, when fashion was considered selective, he personally wanted us to recreate an old world charm. Thus, besides the garden, the set also had some mystical elements."

Lastly, it won't be wrong to say that Gaurav Gupta sees other worlds—and then he makes them. This time, he turned his genius creative eye on the "Silt and Cipher". Gaurav, who reserved his comment on the money that he spent on the ramp says, "I saw a painting when I was a child wherein hands were somewhat transforming into a tree. I went back to this childhood memory. The change in lighting was there to depict how the painting looked in day light versus night. I feel all my sets are a bit challenging, also because I like it to be a challenge for myself. We kept in mind the placement, the effects of the light, and also the fact that we do tend to sometimes sacrifice the kind of view each person sitting in the audience will get, since this time different people would have got different views with the kind of set up we had. With all the brainstorming it took us about 15 to 20 days to put the concept together.

Thanks to Ferns N Petals it was a very good experience for me. I certainly did achieve the concept I had in mind to create the feeling of an enchanted forest."