

FASHION

**Desmond Tutu Center Opening
Desmond Tutu Hotel and
Conference Center
180 Tenth Ave
December 4, 2007**

**Written by Allison Ford
Photographed by James Bluck**

**Opposite Photo:
Designer: Romanitza**



What better way to commemorate the opening of the Desmond Tutu Center than with an evening of multicultural fashion and performance by artists from around the world?

The Tutu Center, named for the Nobel Peace Prize-winning bishop of Cape Town, South Africa, is Manhattan's newest luxury hotel and conference facility. Housed in a seminary, it has been renovated to be a fully modern building complex that incorporates green technology while retaining its historical charm. The Tutu Center complex includes guest rooms, meeting facilities, a refectory or dining hall, as well as open lawns and garden spaces.

Guests congregated in the rectory, with its soaring restored roof and austere chandeliers, to watch performances ranging from Congolese dance, classical music performance, Flamenco, to a traditional Chinese "Lion" dance. The evening also included a couture fashion show, presented by designers from this September's Couture Fashion Week.

The collection presented by Russian designer **Tatyana Parfionova** was an explosion of color and texture - diaphanous gowns paired with boxy, structured jackets, and all in jubilantly colorful prints. The gowns featured embroidered finishing elements and a liberal use of sparkle to create feminine, flowy dresses, and the mixing of patterns kept them youthful.

Paris Gordon showed an abbreviated collection, of just a few ensembles to introduce her line. She showed Roberto Cavalli-inspired separates, from draped modern shirts to embellished jeans that were urban and elegant. The silhouettes emphasized curves, and her use of prints fun and fresh.

Evening gowns were the order for the rest of the night, and the next collection up was from Germany's **Henrieta Duffner**. Her collection contained the most liberal use of color, from deep chocolate brown to ivory to dusky cadet blue. Her gowns were heavy on the detailing, from draping to bows, to smocked front designs. The silhouettes of her gowns were architectural and aggressive, but softened by her use of detailing to keep them from being too conceptual, and her use of accessories was inspired.

Former model Romanitza Claudia Iovan showed pieces from her line, **Romanitza**. The gowns featured bold use of prints, many of which were complimented by sequined lace overlays. The overall effect was interesting and eye-catching. The patterns and colors were bright, and well-matched to the complimentary panels used in the gowns. The dresses featured details such as accordion pleats, asymmetrical hems, maribou, and sequins, and just the right amount of sparkle

The evening's standout collection was designed by the producer himself, **Andres Aquino**. Mr. Aquino is a New York-based designer, artist, and producer, and his simple designs were wildly elegant and luxurious. His gowns, although made in light, soft, and feminine fabrics such as satin and velvet, also featured a great deal of modern asymmetry. The designs were mostly elegant, monochromatic evening looks, sometimes punctuated by contrasting accessories. The details were meticulously crafted, such as straps across the back, or an expertly fit bodice. The gowns were young, fun, flirty, sparkly, and exactly what to wear to a fabulous holiday party.



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Andres Aquino



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