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Fashion marches on

The show is over but the weeklong extravaganza that is Fashion Week leaves its imprint

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STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE -- As Fashion Week New York packs up its tent and blisters begin to heal on the well-shod feet of some 3,500 people who viewed collections from 100 designers in Manhattan's Bryant Park -- and beyond -- here's a look at some of the people who helped make it a really good show.

The designer Rabia Yalcin, a devout Muslim, said she is lucky to have been born in Turkey, a nation where Islam is the predominant religion but where all faiths are embraced.

"I am proud to be part of a country that has wonderful tolerance and acceptance," Ms. Yalcin told the Advance through an interpreter.

Ms. Yalcin always covers her hair in public and dresses modestly. But her designs, shown Monday at the St. Regis Hotel as part of Couture Fashion Week, emphasize the beauty of a woman's body.

Her gorgeous gowns featured bare backs, legs and torsos draped in netting, bare arms. She draws her inspiration from the ancient culture of her homeland, with skirts that look like harem pants and sleeves that incorporate an Ottoman motif.

Ms. Yalcin explained the disparity between her personal style and her design philosophy this way: "This happens because of my embrace of the whole world and my love affair with everyone in the world."

Huma Gruaz, a Chicago art curator who works with Ms. Yalcin, said Ms. Yalcin doesn't face any criticism at home or in other Muslim countries. Underneath their chadors, women in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran are among the most fashionable dressers in the world.

Ms. Gruaz said Ms. Yalcin's European clients come to her for an entire wardrobe, which is why her collection ranged widely from muted blues to bright tangerine to black, from casual to elegant. There was even a bridal gown, accented with purple tulle.

"It almost looks like different designers created the collection," Ms. Gruaz said. "She wants to bring a really fresh approach to fashion."

Ms. Yalcin's clothes were shown during DesignersForDafur benefit in February, but this is the first time her full collection has been seen in the United States.

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