

Vanity Fair's guru bored by SA's bling

The fashion and style director of Vanity Fair magazine, Michael Roberts, was bemused by the prevalence of evening wear he saw on the catwalk at Fashion Week Africa last week.

Speaking on Sunday evening while waiting for the African Fashion Awards ceremony to begin, Roberts gave designers some tart advice: "Do you really have so many red-carpet events? You aren't on Hollywood's doorstep.

"The glamour quotient is too high here. It's promulgated by designers who are feted but who have very little talent," he said.

"Television programmes portray fashion weeks as endless cocktail parties for celebrities. Fashion has nothing to do with celebrity. You become a great designer if you work," he said.

Roberts, who said he won't be returning to South Africa, did have some positive comments to make.

"There are designers who are in tune with what is required from them. Taibo Bacar [from Mozambique] was head-and-shoulders above the rest. The clothes were beautifully made and had a modern take on Africanism. Print was used with restraint," Roberts said.

Roberts also liked Ghana's Kiki Clothing, and South Africa's Thula Sindi.

Matthew Zorpas, founder of The Gentleman Blogger, said the use of ethnic fabrics was not taken far enough creatively.

"I also saw bad stitching at a lot of the shows. Clearly not enough time is spent on production."

Zorpas loved the fashion duo Kluk CGDT's show.

"I was almost crying. It was the highlight for me."

Malcolm Kluk and Christiaan Gabriel du Toit treated the audience to an "installation" of models who presented their collection.

David Tlale, welcoming constructive criticism, said critics had to be well-informed.

"When it comes to African Fashion, the international media don't always get it. You can't come to Africa and complain that there's an excessive use of print. Prints might be a novelty on the European and American catwalks but this is their home."

Acknowledging that many previous shows had started late, Tlale said: "We need to fix this very soon, otherwise we'll soon lose the audience.

"I've learned my lessons and I have worked very hard to make sure that my shows start as close to the scheduled time as possible.

"We really do need to work on our time management issues."

African Fashion International, the company presenting Fashion Week Africa, said that thunderstorms and late arrival of the designers' guests had caused the delays.

The winners

Though some members of the international fashion press were vocal about the failure of Fashion Week Africa to run on schedule, most of the people who sat through the two-hour delay on Sunday night were impressed by the Africa Fashion Awards.

Peppered with performances by some of South Africa's best-loved performers - such as Lira, Lindiwe Suttle and Chiano Sky - the awards took place in a marquee at Melrose Arch, Johannesburg.

Nigerian designer Ituen Basi won the Designer of the Year: Africa award, and Ghanaian-born American-based designer Mimi Plange walked away with Designer of the Year: International award.

Mozambican designer Taibo Bacar was presented with the Emerging Designer of the Year: Africa award.

Bacar had shown his collection of rich colours and structured lines while a heavy downpour drowned out his soundtrack on Saturday afternoon.

Ivory Coast-born Paris-based Laurence Airline took the prize for Emerging Designer of the Year: International.

Doreen Mashika, from Zanzibar, was rewarded for her accessories range while South African Thula Sindi was named South African Tourism Designer of the Year.

The AFI Young Designer of the Year award went to Capetonian Kim Gush.

The Male Style Icon of the Year award was presented to Ernst & Young's Khaya Dlodla. The female version of the award was won by Ethiopian model, designer and actress Liya Kebede.

South African supermodel Candice Swanepoel was crowned Model of the Year.

Other categories were won by make-up artist Lesley Whitby, hair stylist Kevin Epstein, Jackie Burger, editor of Elle magazine, photographer Simon Deiner, fashion stylist Arthur Malan-Murison and photographer Ross Garret. The Fashion Communicator of the Year award went to Helen Jennings.

The judges were Felicity Spies, of Equality; Robyn Cooke, Style Guide Cape Town; Bryan Ramkilawan, CEO of Cape Town Fashion Council; Poppy Evans, Elle fashion director; Michael Roberts, Vanity Fair; and Jenny Andrew, stylist . - Andrea Nagel

Source: *The Times* via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>