

The man behind the luxury brand

Michael Kors reveals how he fell in love with fashion

By Inès Cho
Contributing Writer

Seoul was awash with celebrities last week as Paris Hilton, Beyoncé and Michael Kors turned Seoul briefly into Tinseltown.

Although Kors isn't as instantly recognizable as Hilton or Beyoncé, or as heavily guarded, he said the attention made him feel like a rock star.

The designer and judge of the Emmy-nominated reality TV show "Project Runway" made a whirlwind one-day tour of six stores. He later attended a reception to celebrate the first anniversary of his brand in Korea.

After studying at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, Kors went on to win worldwide acclaim as the creative director at Céline. He has numerous awards including the Council of Fashion Designers of America award in 1999.

The Kors brand includes signature collections for men and women, plus a full range of accessory lines, which are sold in 350 stores worldwide.

Kors's Asian ventures started in Japan in 2002, followed by Hong Kong in 2005 and Korea, 2006.

The designer took time during his busy schedule to talk with the IHT-JoongAng Daily at the Cheongdam-dong store.

Q. What does the Asian market mean to you?

A. There's been a change in the perception of American brands in Asia. In the past, luxury in Europe and America meant casual. Asian customers started traveling a lot, and [to them] American fashion is about

having it all. You can be glamorous, sexy, luxurious and comfortable. Also everyone has so much information available. Even before we came to Korea, the public here knew Michael Kors.

So in the new market, it's important for us to find a local partner who understands the local market and my brand, because the experience should be consistent everywhere in the world.

What's changed since you worked at Céline 10 years ago?

We have the most sophisticated young customers that ever existed. Back then, a woman had to be 30 to be sophisticated. Also today people mix prices, as long as the style and quality are great.

How do you spend your time between two major collections?

We do four women's collections per year. Only two are on the runway. We do pre-collections for fall and spring, which are a big part of what our clients want to wear every day. We do four men's collections, 12 shoes and eight handbag collections per year. We do all the advertising shoots ourselves, plus the new season for Project Runway which started on Nov. 14 in the U.S. We'll film the finale during the New York Collections in February. We're opening more stores in America — in SoHo and in Greenwich, Connecticut. In January we'll find a vacation wardrobe for our clients in Florida before the next season arrives.

Your career has crossed over to journalism. Any interesting interviews?

It's fun being a writer, and I've done two interviews so far for Harper's Bazaar magazine. The first one was with Elizabeth Taylor. No one has had a more outrageous, interesting and glamorous life than Elizabeth Taylor. She still has a sense of humor, and she's very honest and very forthright. With her, she was a goddess and I was a fan. With Jessica Simpson, whom I've known since she was a teenager, it's more like two friends saying "What's going on in your life?"

What was your life like before you began designing womenswear?

I always loved to draw. My mother remarried when I was five, and I helped her design her wedding dress. And I loved shopping! I got the rush when I walked into a store and found something wonderful when I was a teenager. I think that's what fashion, when it's good, can do for you. I still get the rush, and the rush is great.

Wherever you are, you're always in competition with European fashion houses. What are your strategies?

If you want modernity and to feel fresh, it's American fashion. American fashion caters to a fast-paced lifestyle and is about balancing a sense of luxury and glamour with a sense of utility and comfort.

We combine comfort and functionality with what's traditionally considered European: indulgence and artistry. We've seen that the idea of age has changed in the world. It used to be that people bought something specific to their age group. Americans don't think that way.

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American designer and judge of "Project Runway," Michael Kors in Seoul.

By Inès Cho



Above: From left, Korean designer Chang Kwang-hyo; Vittorio Missoni, chief executive of Missoni; and Won Dae-yeon, president of the Korea Fashion Association. Left: The winning work titled "Package for Human Being" by Kang Hyun-kyung. Provided by Korea Fashion Association

Famed designer defends fashion contest

By Inès Cho
Contributing Writer

The fashion industry needs superstars, but the specialists backstage are just as important. That was the message from the Italian designer Vittorio Missoni, the chief executive of Missoni.

He was in Korea recently as a judge for the Korea National Fashion Design Contest, Korea's most prestigious contest in fashion design. Missoni is the first judge to be invited from overseas.

The contest, now in its 25th year, was supported by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy.

In response to comments from reporters that the contest has yet to produce any star designers, Missoni said the main goal was to produce a strong team of specialists rather than famous personalities.

"The goal of such a contest is not to pro-

duce superstars but operators who make up the fashion industry, which is in need of specialists, such as pattern makers, stylists, merchandisers, window dressers and so on," he said at the press conference held at the Park Hyatt hotel.

Missoni said that the Mittlemoda Fashion Award, which is open to international designers, has produced thousands of winners over the years, but only two became big stars: Alber Elbaz and Antonio Marras.

This year's "star" at the Korean National Fashion Design Contest was Kang Hyun-kyung, 22, of Sejong University. She received the presidential honor for her conceptual piece, a box whose pattern opened up to cover a human body, and for a pair of well-executed outfits in neutral colors that were more modern and trendy.

"From the first meeting, I knew she had it all together," Missoni said. "She was the only

candidate with a clear concept."

The theme of the contest this year was, "Orient, Environment and Future." Prizes included presidential and prime ministerial honors as well as cash prizes and opportunities to study at France's École de Mode Internationale or Italy's Istituto Marangoni, top European design schools.

Two veteran Korean designers — Lie Sang-bong, who recently released his spring/summer collections in Paris, and Jin Seong-mo, a professor at Kookmin University, who won the National Contest's grand prize 25 years ago — provided the highlights of the event.

The contest was held at the Seoul Trade, Exhibition and Convention Center in southern Seoul.

Menswear designer Chang Kwang-hyo headed the panel of judges.

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HOROSCOPE

RAT Your work life should flow smoothly, but you may have to tolerate a little micro-management from your boss. Your romantic life seems to be on the upswing.

OX Obstacles and hindrances could plague your workday. In the evening, invite some friends over for a nice dinner or watch a movie, and take refuge and comfort from your friends.

TIGER Do not overextend yourself by biting off more than you can chew. Balancing your work and social life could be trying, as both require your time and attention.

RABBIT Your work is likely to pile up today. However, under today's influence, you will probably have the drive and determination you need to accomplish all your goals.

DRAGON Keep your wits about you and be objective in your judgment. Your personal finances may need to come under stricter scrutiny. After work, spend time relaxing with friends and family.

SNAKE Your social life is not favored, as friends could be too busy. The same goes for your love life as your romantic partner may have their own issues to sort out at this time.

HORSE It could be a wonderful day for planning for your retirement or shifting stocks and bonds in your accounts to get a better return on your money. Your love life does not seem to be favored.

GOAT In your personal finances you could have an unexpected stroke of luck that brings you a cash windfall. Keep yourself occupied by taking up some leisure activity rooted in intellectual stimulation.

MONKEY Your money-making and business pursuits could prove to be very rewarding today, especially if your investments or business are rooted in the communications industry.

ROOSTER It seems that you will have the necessary funds in the bank to arrange financing for an unexpected business opportunity. Meanwhile, your family should provide you with comfort today.

DOG There are some strong indications that travel of some kind could be in your near future. Leisure time is favored for you.

PIG It would be a perfect time to have lunch with some old friends to catch up on each other's lives. Your health could prove worrisome, as your bad eating and drinking habits may be catching up with you.

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TV GUIDE

Programs are subject to change.

AFN Korea www.afnkorea.net	Star World www.startv.com	OnStyle www.onstyletv.co.kr	Airang TV www.airang.co.kr	Discovery Channel discoverychannelasia.com	Sports on TV
07:00 Good Morning America	08:00 Star News Asia 08:30 Seinfeld 09:00 Cheers 09:30 Friends 10:00 Ellen Degeneres Show	09:30 Sex and the City 5 10:00 Back to School 11:00 Oprah Winfrey Show 12:00 Sex and the City 5 12:30 Hollywood E! News Daily 2007	09:00 Arirang News 09:30 Documentary World 10:00 Korea Now 10:30 Hand in Hand 11:00 Heart to Heart 11:30 Dr. Heo Jun 12:00 Arirang News 12:30 Pops in Seoul 13:00 Showbiz Extra 13:30 Documentary World 14:00 Arirang News 14:30 e-Sports 15:00 Hand in Hand 15:30 Dr. Heo Jun 16:00 Arirang News 16:30 ABC Bakery 17:00 Showbiz Extra 17:30 Pops in Seoul 18:00 Curtain Call 19:00 Arirang News 19:30 Documentary World 20:00 Korea Now 20:30 Showbiz Extra 21:00 Pops in Seoul 21:30 Dr. Heo Jun 22:00 Arirang News 22:30 Heart to Heart 23:00 Korea Now 23:30 CrossWorld 00:00 Arirang News	12:00 Meet the Namal: Volcano 13:00 Horns over Africa 14:00 The FBI Files: The Great Philly Mob War 15:00 Dirty Jobs: Pig Farmer 16:00 Hazard Pay: Pyrotechnician 17:00 Ultimates: Combat Helicopters 18:00 Congo: Spirits of the Forest 19:00 Deadliest Catch 3: Trials of the Greenhorns 20:00 Animal 21:00 Battlegrounds 22:00 Sumo East and West 22:00 Futurcar: The Fuel	09:00 SBS Sports - Preview 07-08 Korea Women's Basketball 13:30 J Golf - 2008 PGA European Tour - Portugal Masters 18:00 SBS Sports - 2007 NPB 21:00 Xports - WWE Bottomline
Q Channel www.qchannel.co.kr	CNN International www.cnnasiapacific.com	Star Sports www.espnstar.com	History Channel www.historychannel.co.kr	OCN www.onocn.com	Catch On www.catchon.co.kr
09:00 Sin and Punishment 10:00 Taming the Wild 11:00 A Way to be a World Power	08:00 CNN Today 11:30 World Sport 12:00 Anderson Cooper 360 13:00 World News 13:30 World Sport 14:00 CNN Today 17:00 Business International 17:00 World News 18:00 World News in Korea 18:30 World Sport 19:00 Larry King Live 20:00 Business International 21:00 World News Asia	09:00 International Motorsport News 2007 11:00 Asian Olympic Qualifiers 2007: Australia vs. Iraq 13:00 International Motorsport News 2007 14:30 UBS Hong Kong Open 17:30 Rally Ireland 19:00 FEI World Cup Jumping Qualifier 20:00 The Top Corner 20:30 Asian Olympic Qualifiers 2007: Australia vs. Iraq 22:30 Score Tonight	10:00 Viking Conquest 11:00 Ancient History 12:00 The Human Odyssey 13:00 Forgotten History 14:00 Documentary Special 15:00 History Special 17:00 Science & Technology 19:00 History Mystery 20:00 The Human Odyssey 21:00 Ancient History	10:00 Las Vegas: Season III 11:00 Chohui Mancheon (K) 13:00 Enough 15:10 The Mummy Returns 17:30 Underworld 19:50 Las Vegas: Season III 20:50 CSI: Season VII 22:00 Doom	07:45 Hoala Girls 09:35 Inside Hollywood 10:00 L Word 4 10:45 The History Boys 12:40 Flicka 14:15 Big Bang (K) 16:15 Alien Autopsy 17:55 Silver Bells 21:30 Ultraviolet 23:00 Casino Royale 01:30 Snow White 03:35 Borat
09:00 Sin and Punishment 10:00 Taming the Wild 11:00 A Way to be a World Power	13:00 World News 13:30 World Sport 14:00 CNN Today 17:00 Business International 17:00 World News 18:00 World News in Korea 18:30 World Sport 19:00 Larry King Live 20:00 Business International 21:00 World News Asia	13:00 UBS Hong Kong Open 17:30 Rally Ireland 19:00 FEI World Cup Jumping Qualifier 20:00 The Top Corner 20:30 Asian Olympic Qualifiers 2007: Australia vs. Iraq 22:30 Score Tonight	10:00 Viking Conquest 11:00 Ancient History 12:00 The Human Odyssey 13:00 Forgotten History 14:00 Documentary Special 15:00 History Special 17:00 Science & Technology 19:00 History Mystery 20:00 The Human Odyssey 21:00 Ancient History	11:00 Blind Horizon 13:00 Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl 16:00 Small Soldiers 18:30 UFC Highlights 22:00 Wrong Turn 00:00 UFC Ultimate Fighters Season 1	07:10 For Horowitz (K) 09:00 The Sandlot 2 10:40 Hustle & Flow 12:40 Everything is Illuminated 14:30 Freedomland 16:30 Hoodwinked 17:55 For Horowitz (K) 19:45 Incident at Loch Ness 21:20 Without a Trace 4 22:10 L Word 4 23:00 Nip/Tuck 4