

Mum and me: Lilian posing with her mother Jenny, 68, after modelling on the catwalk for the first time at a fashion show held in Sekeping Victoria in Lebuuh Victoria, Penang.



Eye-catchers: (Pic above) A model wearing a dress covered with feathers. (Bottom pic) Bodybuilder Steven strutting down the catwalk at the Bran et Daguët fashion show.

An unconventional beauty

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Photos by **LIM BENG TATT**

DRESSED in a sleek gown sewn with exquisite French lace, the model emerged from behind the black curtain.

To cheers of excitement, she walked steadily between two rows of seated audience and paused right before three trees which rose from squares on the concrete floor.

She then raised one arm in a triumphant but elegant pose flexing her extremely toned muscles before slowly turning around to give onlookers a view of her sculpted shoulders and back.

With the Penang crowd murmuring in surprise and admiration, the model proceeded down the catwalk, repeating her routine several times before disappearing behind the dark curtain once again.

The unconventional model was Lilian Tan — the country's pride in women's bodybuilding — while the event was homegrown designer Brandon Tan's fifth solo fashion show under the brand Bran et Daguët, hosted in a little-known retreat house in Victoria Street, Penang.

While Lilian is no stranger to being the focus of attention on stage, the

walk had been a daunting 'first' for her.

"It was nerve-wrecking, but also exciting.

"I have been on stage before, but this is different. Here, instead of being stiff and flexing all the time, you have to be graceful and elegant," she said.

"It was so difficult to stop myself from walking too fast when I was so excited," she said energetically after the show.

The Penang girl, who picked up bodybuilding about 15 years ago at the age of 25, said she had been spotted by Brandon at a bodybuilding show in Penang.

Brandon, who is no stranger to picking unconventional models to showcase his designs, approached her to model in his show, held on Saturday entitled 'To Be Or Not To Be'.

The arrangement was indeed 'to be' and Lilian, along with current Mr Penang Light Middle champion Steven Mark, proudly donned Brandon's creations for his unique show.

From feathers to synthetic fur and sheer dresses to long, regal coats, the fashion show was a stunning visual display.

The dramatic backdrop of Sekeping Victoria, a former warehouse design-

ed by noted landscape architect Ng Sek San, only added to the theatrics of the night.

"We had actually gone through a few venues before coming across Sekeping Victoria," said Brandon.

"Not many people have heard about this lodging, but I fell in love with it the moment I saw it.

"The whole setting is so 'raw' and rustic and it is the perfect place to contrast with the drama and colour of the dresses," said Brandon, who established his clothing line five years ago with partner Pascal Martin-Daguët.

He said only 12 of the 34 designs had been showcased by professional models during the show.

"The rest are all my friends and volunteers, aged from 14 to mid-40s.

"By getting them to present the designs, I want to show that there is not only one kind of beauty," he said.

Brandon added that part of the night's profits would go to 4 Paws Penang Animal Welfare Society, a non-profit volunteer organisation aimed at helping homeless animals.

The society, located in Jalan Hassan Abas in Teluk Bahang, can be contacted through its Facebook page or 4paws.penang@googlemail.com.

