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Arrive in style

It was a bumpy ride to success for local designer Brandon Tan who designs for the label Bran et Daguet. >M3



Inclusive: Tan's fashion show in Penang features models young and old and of all shapes and sizes.

A dream driven by passion

Designer with humble beginnings follows his heart to great things

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LOCAL fashion designer Brandon Tan always gives way to Perodua Kancils on the road. His reason is that he used to drive one.

The 37-year-old Penangite, who recently held his third fashion show, has had a bumpy ride in fulfilling his dream of designing clothes.

"When I first started to learn the basics of sewing, I had to do it at night because I was working full time as an administrator in a company," he said.

"I didn't have much money, but I had passion. People told me 'You're so old also want to be a fashion designer', but you are never too old to follow your dream.

"About three and a half years ago, I quit my job to go into designing full time," said Tan, who now designs clothes under the label Bran et Daguët that he established with partner Pascal Martin-Daguët.

Tan said he was so short on funds at that time that he traded in his Proton Satria for a Perodua Kancil.

"I used to be so shy to drive that car because I'm quite tall and the car is very small.

"When I went out to meet friends, I would park far, far away from the meeting place and walk so no one would see my car," Tan said good-naturedly. He drives a Mini Cooper now.

Similar to many aspiring people in the arts, support from friends played an essential role in Tan's journey as a designer.

"I held my first fashion show in my own house and friends came to help with the makeup and other props.

"Without the support and help from friends and some generous sponsors, things would have never taken off for me," Tan added.

His latest fashion show entitled *Don't Judge Me* was held on Dec 14 at G Hotel in George Town where he showcased over 50 outfits.

The unconventional show pushed the boundaries of traditional beauty, featuring different shaped models aged from 10 years old to some well into their 60s.

The fashion ranged from trendy to traditional to avant-garde, and included looks with hundreds of feathers, old traditional wooden clogs, pairings of dress pants and sneakers and even showcased Tan in a top hat, gold masquerade mask, a long black coat and heels.

"Most of the models are volunteers or friends and are not professionals.

"As for the designs, I normally



Tan: 'I didn't have much money but I had passion'



Touch of culture: A traditional outfit by Bran et Daguët complete with old wooden clogs.

pull back about 30% to respect our local (conservative) culture.

"To be honest, when you look at some of the outfits, you'll think 'Who is going to wear that?' but the show is not about selling things, it's about creating fashion," Tan said.

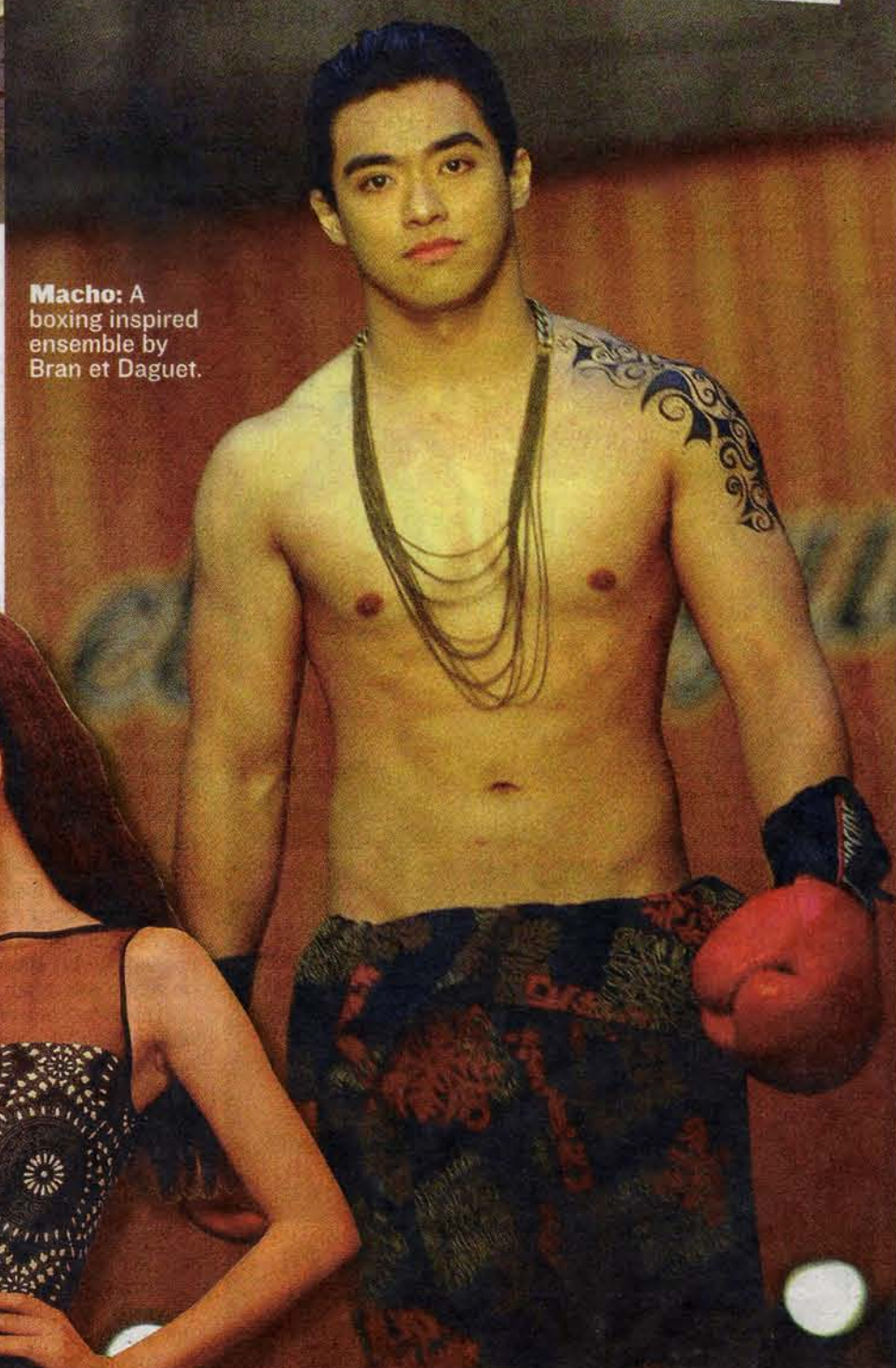
He added that the fashion industry was one sector that could be tapped to enhance Penang's tourist appeal.

"Kuala Lumpur is not the only place that can do a Fashion Week.

"There is a lot of potential in upcoming designers and fashion students in Penang, but they just don't get a lot of support or publicity," he said.

An exhibition on the drawings of the fashion show is now being held at Alliance Française de Penang at 46, Phuah Hin Leong Road until Wednesday.

Admission is free. Alliance Française de Penang is open from 10am to 6pm daily except on Sunday and Monday. For more inquiries, call 04-2276008.



Macho: A boxing inspired ensemble by Bran et Daguët.



Design variations: Models showing off Bran et Daguët dresses.