

Sexuality of women feature in daring works of designer Ivan Frolov

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A model proudly parades Ivan Frolov's design during a fashion show on Oct. 13.
Photo by Volodymyr Petrov

Scantly clad women hang from the ceiling in Kyiv's Salut Hotel, as people make their way to their seats, the scene accentuated by dim lighting and tantalizing music. No, it's not the start of an erotic performance, but a spring-summer fashion show by Ivan Frolov, part of Ukrainian Fashion Week.

Frolov is a Ukrainian designer who by the age of 23 has put together an impressive portfolio: He is a five-time participant of Ukrainian Fashion Week and a holder of the 2014 Best Fashion Award for the "Breakthrough of the Year."

Frolov designed the dress Ukrainian singer Jamala was wearing when she won the 2016 Eurovision song contest, and has been noticed by a lot of the Ukrainian and foreign media.

His design philosophy is "intelligent provocation," which implies overt but tasteful sexuality.

"When you create sexual clothes, the main task is not to cross the line, to stay within the edges of beauty instead of going into vulgarity," Frolov said in an interview with the Kyiv Post a few days after his Oct. 13 show.

He speaks slowly and carefully, thinking through every word. Despite working long hours and spending three consecutive nights leading up to the show with no sleep, he

hasn't got time to rest as he is already preparing his fall-winter 2017-2018 collection.

Clothes with a heart

Frolov was born and grew up in Kyiv. Ever since he was a child, he knew he'd become a designer. He graduated from Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design in 2013 with a degree in construction engineering and debuted at the Ukrainian Fashion Week at the age of 20.

Frolov says that it's important for him for his designs to be more than just pretty objects, but have a purpose and philosophy. His clothes even have a heart, a literal one: Every piece of clothing has a silver heart on its label, echoing the brand's heart logo.

"It may sound weird but it actually works. I get people messaging me things like 'I wore your bra today and I had a good date,'" the designer says.



Ukrainian designer Ivan Frolov at the rehearsal of his S/S 17 fashion show on Oct. 13.

Collection theme

Each of Frolov's collections examine female sexuality from a different angle. School and first love were the basis of his F/W 16-17 collection.

Frolov's earlier collections explored the themes of BDSM, death, striptease and smoking. His last capsule collection was dedicated to transgender and transsexual people.

“It is the social responsibility of every artist to go beyond the commercial side and take up important themes,” he says.

His inspiration for the latest collection was the Far East. The collection includes lingerie, bras, and lace dresses, which the designer says is “a part of his brand’s DNA,” with the addition of a new element – corsets.

“People come to our brand to find something sexy,” Frolov says. “Every fitting is a step for them in a new direction, as they rid themselves of stereotypes and complexes.”

Recognition

Frolov has worked with many Ukrainian celebrities, his most notable collaboration being that with Jamala. Making the dress she wore for the Eurovision song contest in Sweden in May was a “task of national importance,” the designer says. The dress is still in Stockholm, at the ABBA museum where it was taken after the show.

“It’s very flattering, but Jamala is such a great, talented and professional singer that I think she would have won even if she’d worn jeans and a plain t-shirt,” says Frolov.

The dress he made for Jamala was a sophisticated multilayered gown that combined a dress and pants. More than 25 meters of wool and silk went into the dress, deliberately making it heavy.

“It just wouldn’t have looked natural if she’d worn a light chiffon dress for such a deep song,” Frolov says. Jamala’s winning song “1944” was about the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944.

Frolov already sells in four major Ukrainian cities: Odesa, Kyiv, Kharkiv and Dnipro, and is thinking of expanding abroad. But he remains humble – blushing and laughing when asked about his success.

“Every time you talk about my popularity it feels like you’re making fun of me,” he says.