

Macy's Passport 2007: Silver anniversary of fashion, dance and fun

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One of the best segments of Macy's Passport this year didn't have anything to do with fashion. It was the exuberant performance of the Spirit of Uganda, a group of children and teens who performed a rousing dance and drums number. It was the jolt of energy that was needed after several dramatic but somewhat slow segments showcasing clothes the traditional catwalk way.

For almost 90 minutes, guests were treated to fall fashions, song and dance theatrics and a mesmerizing finale by modern burlesque queen, Dita Von Teese. (For more on Dita, read my interview with her in Style on Sept. 30.) The gala evening, held Thursday night at the Herbst and Festival pavilions at Fort Mason in San Francisco, started with drinks and noshing in a vintage circus-themed atmosphere amid wandering Cirque du Soleil performers. On the menu: catfish BLTs, mini flautas, cotton candy and foie gras corn dogs.

The color du jour was silver - the 2007 show marks the 25th anniversary of Macy's Passport, a significant milestone for the nationally-recognized HIV/AIDS fundraiser.

Macy's and its partnering sponsors, designers and non-profit organizations have raised awareness as well as \$25 million toward saving lives or comforting those with HIV/AIDS. Beneficiaries this year include the AIDS Research Institute at UCSF; the Pediatric HIV/AIDS Program of Children's Hospital & Research Center in Oakland; and Maitri, which provides compassionate residential care to people living with AIDS in need of hospice or 24-hour care.

"We answered that call 25 years ago, and we're still here," said Robert Mettler, Chairman and CEO, Macy's West.

From the cocktail reception, guests then moved on to their seats for the show, which started with a live auction by local food guy, Narsai David. The top prize was a Mexican vacation and a Paul Reed Smith guitar, signed by Carlos Santana on stage to the contestant whose winning bid was \$10,000.

Yes, there was an underwear segment: Calvin Klein undies in black, white and peacock blue. Passport, always a combo of fashion show and theater has, over the years, included a sprinkling of celebrity headliners. Among them: Jennifer Lopez, Will Smith, Sharon Stone, Liza Minnelli and Dame Elizabeth Taylor, named a founding chair who will be receiving the Macy's Passport Humanitarian Award for HIV/AIDS Activism at the Los Angeles gala on Sept. 27. Passport's start was in 1980 with Macy's "GQ Live," a men's fashion show featuring American designers. Held in the employee cafeteria of the San Francisco store, 300 people attended. By 1983, Macy's Passport was officially born with more than 2,000 supporters attending the show.

Elizabeth Taylor made her debut appearance in 1987 and the next year Macy's turned Passport into a benefit for six Bay Area AIDS agencies - one of the first major American companies to recognize the need for AIDS fundraising and awareness.

In the mid-90s, Passport became an annual event in both San Francisco and Los Angeles.

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