Press release: Lifestyle

**Filipina Designers Head to Paris for the Premiere Classe Trade Show**

**MANILA, Philippines; September 2019 –** Philippine fashion takes the world stage once again at this year’s edition of Premiere Classe, Paris Fashion Week’s foremost accessories trade show. Happening from September 27 to 30, the Philippines will be represented by seven brands that showcase uniquely Filipino designs and materials.

Dedicated to high-end fashion accessories, the Premiere Classe trade show has become a springboard for many designers to showcase their creations to a global audience. And for the Philippine participating labels—Aranaz, Beatriz, Filip+Inna, Joanique, Mele + Marie, Merriam Batara, and Zacarias 1925—the event is not only a great opportunity to gain business opportunities abroad, it is also a venue to showcase Philippine culture and local craftsmanship.

At the helm of these fashion brands are ultra-talented, creative, and business-savvy women who lead their brands with the mission of elevating Filipino craftsmanship.

Mother-daughters Becky, Amina, and Rosanna Aranaz launched their eponymous handbag label in 1999, but the roots of the business began in the ’80s with mom Becky’s manufacturing and export bag business. After a few years of doing the bazaar rounds in Manila, the positive response from local buyers inspired the trio to officially launch Aranaz and even push the brand internationally. Since then, the Aranaz women have taken on various roles in designing, growing, and promoting Aranaz’s handmade and slow manufacturing processes that produce beautifully artisanal handbags.

Unlike Aranaz’s more feminine leanings, Rita Nazareno’s Zacarias 1925 features bags with unconventional concepts that constantly challenge the traditional lines of her family’s heritage brand, S.C. Vizcarra.

An Emmy-award winning former TV producer in the U.S., Nazareno returned to the Philippines to help out with the family business that initially started as an embroidery atelier under her grandmother, Segundina Vizcarra, and later a fine crafts business lead by her mother Vicky Amalingan-Sales. When Nazareno came on board, she infused fresh ideas into S.C. Vizcarra’s classic weaving techniques, and took even bolder steps with Zacarias 1925, whose handbags are the perfect blend of S.C. Vizcarra’s handcrafted legacy and progressive designs.

Fashion designer Lenora Cabili’s Filip + Inna is a true love letter to Philippine culture expressed through fashion. Growing up in Iligan City in Mindanao, Cabili was always surrounded and captivated by the vibrant garments of the local indigenous groups residing in the region. Inspired by the rich, diverse culture in the country, Cabili started Filip + Inna, apparel that spoke to the modern-day woman, but also celebrated the traditions of our culture through the work of artisans that keep the antique craft of weaving, embroidery, and beading alive.

With her background in modeling and interior design, Joanique’s Malou Romero was constantly exposed to beautifully-designed pieces. For her own line of bags and jewelry, however, she wanted to keep the spotlight on the Philippines’ colorful history and culture. Constantly referencing

centuries-old art and even local festivals, Romero works in collaboration with local artisans that hand-carve cultural images onto her solid-wood bags.

Carissa Cruz Evangelista’s Beatriz was born out of a love for fashion, but is sustained by her experience working with community-based enterprises during her time with the Department of Trade and Industry. Evangelista continues to empower disadvantaged communities through her Beatriz accessories line by teaching them the craft of applying thread patterns onto clutches and hand cuffs that produce vibrant and eye-catching results.

Rosemarie Oamil, co-founder and female force behind Mele + Marie, owes their success to their hard work and unwavering faith. Together with her husband and the brand’s chief designer, Melecio Oamil, Mele + Marie’s unique designs are constantly inspired by their humble beginnings, family experiences, trials and triumphs. Rosemarie grew up in the farming fields of Nueva Ecija and worked her way up slowly, partnering with her husband in their initial exporting business. In 2012, they decided to create their own label, Mele + Marie, featuring handmade bags and accessories made with unique materials like abalone shells and hand-welded metal.

Jewelry designer Merriam Batara, who hails from a family of jewelry makers from Bulacan, practiced her craft with scraps and excess beads from her family’s workshop. Partnering with a friend from college, Batara’s early work consisted of wired butterfly jewelry pieces that she sold at local bazaars. The self-taught artisan improved her designs further with more sophisticated details and eye-catching materials, specializing in hand-beading and embroidery in her one-of-a-kind earrings, necklaces, and fashion accessories.

This year’s group of Premiere Classe participants, organized by the Department of Trade and Industry’s Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (DTI-CITEM), proudly represents the Philippines, as well as the talent and perseverance of the Filipina woman. Discover their stories and what Filipino artisanship can offer the rest of the world, through their designs at the Premiere Classe fashion event in Paris.

*For more information on the event, as well as other projects, visit citem.gov.ph.*

*Photo caption: Seven Philippine brands will showcase their unique designs and materials at Premiere Classe Paris with the mission of elevating Filipino craftsmanship.*

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