**PREMIERE CLASSE PRESS KIT**

**The Philippines at Premiere Classe**

FashionPhilippines presents eight Filipino fashion brands that are bringing Philippine artisanship to a global audience. Aranáz, Beatriz, Filip + Inna, HALOHALO. Joanique, Mele+Marie, Merriam Batara, and Zacarias 1925 each specialize in various forms of handicraft, expressed through their inspiring designs. From weaving and hand beading to wood carving and embroidery, these labels take pride in preserving yet reinventing age-old craft techniques for a contemporary market.

Marrying time-tested artisanship with modern silhouettes, inventive details, and progressive concepts, these Philippine-made fashion accessories and apparel are in keeping with today’s fashion-forward sensibilities. Beyond the fashion, however, these brands provide a glimpse into the rich culture and creativity the Philippines has to share.

Though each of their thoughtful designs tell a story, it is the skillful hands that made them that offer each creation its true artistry. From veteran craftsmen to disadvantaged mothers that are provided livelihood, to partner communities and indigenous groups that carry on traditional workmanship, Aranáz, Beatriz, Filip + Inna, HALOHALO, Joanique, Mele+Marie, Merriam Batara, and Zacarias 1925 all support these local artisans and champion their craft. For these brands, it is not just about putting the Philippines on the global fashion map, but encouraging the sustainability of traditional craftsmanship.

**ARANÁZ**

Mother and daughter trio Becky, Amina, and Rosanna Aranáz created their eponymous handbag label in 1999. However, the foundation of the brand began in the ’80s with mother 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 three women to officially launch Aranáz, and pushed them to promote the brand internationally.

Since then, the Aranáz women have taken on various roles in designing, growing, and marketing Aranáz’s handmade and slow-manufacturing processes that produce beautifully sophisticated yet artisanal handbags that embody Aranáz’s tropical-luxe aesthetic.

**ARANÁZ**

*Stand No: Concorde108*

Rosannna Aranaz, Brand Manager

Address: 344 Robinson Circle, Capt. Henry Javier St., Brgy. Oranbo, Pasig City, Philippines

Telephone: +632 9830883

Email: [rosanna@aranaz.ph](mailto:rosanna@aranaz.ph)

Website: [www.aranaz.ph](http://www.aranaz.ph)

**BEATRIZ**

Carissa Cruz Evangelista’s Beatriz accessories line 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 in the Philippines.

Evangelista continues this advocacy by providing livelihood to disadvantaged mothers through the production of her Beatriz label. By teaching them the craft of carefully laying cotton thread a single line at a time, the brand’s signature technique, they are able to create Beatriz’s intricate and vibrant patterns and apply them onto clutches, totes, and jewelry, all while learning the value of producing high-quality pieces.

**BEATRIZ ACCESSORIES**

*Stand No: Concorde210*

Carissa Cruz-Evangelista, Chief Designer

Address: 12 A. United St. Kapitolyo, Pasig City, Philippines

Telephone: +632 6543512

Email: [beatrizaccessories@gmail.com](mailto:beatrizaccessories@gmail.com)

Website: [www.beatrizph.com](http://www.beatrizph.com) | [www.instagram.com/beatriz\_accessories](http://www.instagram.com/beatriz_accessories)

**FILIP + INNA**

Fashion designer Len Cabili’s Filip + Inna is a true love letter to Philippine culture. Growing up in Iligan City in the southern region of Mindanao in the Philippines, Cabili was always surrounded and captivated by the brightly-colored garments of the local indigenous groups residing in the area.

Inspired by these communities, as well as the rich, diverse culture of the Philippines, Cabili started Filip + Inna in 2009, a clothing line that speaks to the modern-day woman but also celebrates the beauty of Filipino culture. Through the various weaving, embroidery, and beadwork styles of several indigenous groups from different parts of the country—from the Gaddang of the northern Mountain Province area to the T’boli from the southern province of South Cotabato—age-old traditions are kept alive and updated through contemporary silhouettes.

**FILIP + INNA**

*Stand No: Concorde324*

Lenora Luisa Cabili, Creative Director and Founder

Address: 712 H Jr. Yulo St., Brgy. Addition Hill, Mandaluyong City, Philippines

Telephone: +632 6961087

Email: [lenora@filipinna.com](mailto:lenora@filipinna.com)

Website: [www.filipinna.com](http://www.filipinna.com)

**HALOHALO**

Founded in 2013 by brother and sister team Rocco and Cara Sumabat, HaloHalo is a lifestyle brand based in Manila. Much like the local delicacy it is named after, HaloHalo is a mishmash of handbags and home accessories made with various materials and unlikely combinations.

They initially designed large multipurpose totes aptly called *Bayong*, made out of recycled plastic *banig*, that could be used for grocery runs, as a planter, or even storage. While the traditional *banigs* produced in the Philippines are often made with brightly-colored weaves, HaloHalo recreated their version in muted tones and fine patterns, lending it a more contemporary feel.

After a sold-out first collection, the brand expanded their line to include smaller handbags that feature buttery leather straps and unexpected bungee cord details, to home and outdoor accessories like roll-up travel mats, various-sized ottomans, and poolside recliners—all made with their signature *banig* material.

**HALOHALO**

Cara Sumingat, Owner

Address: 36 Gov. Pascual Brgy. Potorero, Malabon, Philippines

Telephone: +639178833140

Email: [halohalo.accs@gmail.com](mailto:halohalo.accs@gmail.com)

Website: [www.halohalostore.ph](http://www.halohalostore.ph)

**JOANIQUE**

An erstwhile model and interior designer, Joanique’s Malou Romero was constantly exposed to beautifully-designed accessories from all over the world throughout the early years of her career. For her own line of bags and jewelry, however, she wanted to keep the spotlight on the Philippines’ colorful history and culture.

Since establishing Joanique in 2011, Romero constantly references centuries-old art, historical and cultural icons, and even local festivals in her pieces. Collaborating with local artisans that hand-carve cultural images onto her solid-wood bags, her collections not only tell the story of the Philippines, but also showcase the craftsmanship that sets her designs apart.

**JOANIQUE**

*Stand No: Tuileries194*

Maria Lourdes Araneta-Romero, Owner and President

Address: 5925 Algier St. Poblacion, Makati City, Philippines

Telephone: +632 816 2830

Email: [malou@joanique.com](mailto:malou@joanique.com)

Website: [www.joanique.com](http://www.joanique.com)

**MELE+MARIE**

Hailing from a line of farmers from Nueva Ecija province in the Philippines, Melecio and Rosemarie Oamil ventured into entrepreneurship and built their business from the ground up. Starting off as a behind-the-scenes producer of export-quality goods for international labels, the couple later decided to pursue their own brand of accessories.

Mele+Marie, a combination of the couple’s first names, was officially established in 2012 as a line of handbags and accessories. With Rosemarie serving as the company’s managing director and Melecio taking on the role of lead designer and working in collaboration with skilled artisans, each of Mele + Marie’s handmade designs—from their abalone-shell purses to their welded metal strip *minaudières*—is an ode to their family and humble beginnings.

**MELE+MARIE**

*Stand No: Concorde213*

Rosemarie Oamil, Managing Director

Address: 290 SB Cabahug St., Ibabao-Estancia, Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines

Telephone: +6332 2361753

Email: [meleandmarie@gmail.com](mailto:meleandmarie@gmail.com)

Website: [www.meleandmarie.com](http://www.meleandmarie.com)

**MERRIAM BATARA**

Jewelry designer Merriam Batara, who hails from a family of jewelry makers from Bulacan, practiced her now trademark hand beading and embroidery 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 sold at local fairs.

Later on, the self-taught artisan improved her designs with more sophisticated details and eye-catching materials. Using various materials like silk-thread tassels, freshwater pearls, gold-dipped shells, metal hardware, gemstones, woven indigenous fabrics, and glass beads, Batara expertly combines these by hand with beading, embroidery, and wirework to create her statement-making earrings, necklaces, and other fashion accessories.

**MERRIAM BATARA**

*Stand No: Concorde212*

Merriam Lei Gisella Batara, General Director and Designer

Address: 359 F. Lara Street, Subic, Baliuag, Bulacan, Philippines

Telephone: +6344 7625202

Email: [merriambatara@gmail.com](mailto:merriambatara@gmail.com)

Website: [www.instagram.com/merriambatara](http://www.instagram.com/merriambatara)

**ZACARIAS 1925**

Zacarias 1925’s creative director, Rita Nazareno, is an Emmy-award winning former TV producer that returned from the U.S. to help out with the family’s fine-crafts business, S.C. Vizcarra.

S.C. Vizcarra was founded 94 years ago as a hand-embroidery atelier by Nazareno’s grandmother Segundina Vizcarra. Under the helm of Nazareno’s mother Vicky Amalingan-Sales, the focus moved to weaving, producing the hand-woven luxury bags and home accessories the brand is known for.

As a third-generation Vizcarra to join the family business, Nazareno’s influence has infused modern ideas into S.C. Vizcarra’s classic styles. Pushing the boundaries further, however, is her offshoot label Zacarias 1925. The brand veers away from the established, and instead celebrates the unconventional through handbags that feature asymmetrical shapes, bright colors, and art and film references, all while highlighting the S.C. Vizcarra signature weave.

**ZACARIAS 1925**

*Stand No: Tuileries373*

Marjorie Taba | Rita Nazareno  
Address: 737 Roxas Blvd., Baclaran, Philippines  
Telephone: +33 6 14 98 08 36 | + 1 415 690 0387  
Email: [marjorie@zacarias925.com](mailto:marjorie@zacarias925.com) | [rita@zacarias1925.com](mailto:rita@zacarias1925.com)  
Website: [www.zacarias1925.com](http://www.zacarias1925.com)

**Main Text**

Considered as the second-largest archipelago in the world with its 7,641 tropical islands, the Philippines is one of the greatest gems of Southeast Asia as it continues to be among the fastest growing economies in the region. Endowed with a rich culture and abundant natural resources, the country is a vibrant destination ideal for both trade and tourism. More than its white sand beaches, majestic mountains and breathtaking views, however, it is also the renowned Filipino warmth and hospitality that invites everyone to visit, explore and do business with the Philippines.

The foundation of this melting pot of trade and leisure is made up of over 106 million hardworking Filipinos known for their creativity and English proficiency. The Philippines also holds the record as one of the most highly-skilled labor forces in Asia.

The country’s globally-acclaimed credentials have been building up over the years. In 2017, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) ranked the Philippines seventh in the “most promising host countries” for foreign direct investments (FDIs) among developing countries. American multinational investment banking firm Goldman Sachs listed the Philippines as one of the “Next Eleven Economies,” estimating that by the year 2050, the Philippines will be the 14th largest economy in the world. By 2030, the Philippines is projected to become a $1 trillion economy, according to Washington-based analytics firm IHS Global Insight based on its latest “Sovereign Risk Review.” The country is also the only sovereignty in Asia that received a positive remark from the IHS.

Owing to its long history of trade and politics with other nations, the Philippines is made up of a colorful tapestry of cultures. This diverse heritage shines through in the products and services the country offers the world. Always innovative and determined to make a mark, the Philippines is intent on maintaining its economic standing. With its distinctive craftsmanship and product designs, the Philippines now has a stable export market that includes Japan, China, the United States and the European Union (EU), among others.

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The Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) is the export promotion arm of the Philippines’ Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

CITEM is committed to developing, nurturing and promoting globally competitive micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), exporters, designers, and manufacturers by implementing an integrated approach to export marketing, in partnership with other government and private entities.

For three decades, CITEM has established the country’s image as the premier destination for quality export products and services. It continues to set the highest standards of creativity, excellence, and innovation to achieve export-competitiveness in the international market.

As the prime mover in export marketing, CITEM provides export-driven programs, spearheads official participation in overseas trade fairs, and organizes signature events in the Philippines and high-profile promotional activities in key markets abroad.

**CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXPOSITIONS AND MISSIONS (CITEM)**

Address: Golden Shell Pavilion, International Trade Center Complex, Roxas Boulevard cor. Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Pasay City 1300 Philippines

Telephone: +63.2.831.2201 ext. 231

Fax: +63.2.834.0188

Email: [info@citem.com.ph](mailto:info@citem.com.ph)

Website: [www.citem.com.ph](http://www.citem.com.ph)