

BLOOR WEST: Designer sees inner beauty

By LISA RAINFORD

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It was art deco designer of the 1920s, Erna Neumann's words of wisdom that inspired George Brown College graduate and High Park area resident Andrea Tucker's award-winning lingerie design.

"A resourceful woman who is almost downright plain can achieve the reputation of a beauty simply by announcing to everybody she meets that she is one."

Tucker's 'Believable Beauty' one-of-a-kind bra and panty set, based on one of the foremost fashion and stage designers of the early 20th century, became the winner of Triumph Canada's premier Triumph Inspiration Award in 2009.

"I was really overwhelmed," said Tucker. "I was shocked. I knew my outfit was really different. I hoped I'd be in the top three. A lot of the designs were spectacular."

George Brown students showcased their design concepts in a national

competition, during a catwalk show, this past April at the Toronto Design Exchange. The event was hosted by Breakfast Television Co-host Dina Pugliese and judged by the likes of Dan Lim, an award winning photographer and Canada's Next Top Model regular, Laura deCarufel, senior fashion editor of Elle Canada magazine and Editor-in-Chief Lisa Tant of Flare magazine, among others.

Art-inspired details such as tassels, buttoned flaps, button stockings, pleats, feather trim and the pattern of the fabric are reflected in Tucker's creation, she said in her written concept description.

"The woman wearing my creation will be a vision of confidence, femininity and glamorous fun," she wrote. "When you see my 'Believable Beauty,' you will know that she is announcing to the world that she is one."

Tucker will advance to the International finals in Milan during the Milan Fashion Week in September this year. As part of her first place honours, she'll receive 15,000 Euros, along with an opportunity to adapt her winning design together with the Triumph design team into a commercial lingerie set. The set will appear in Triumph stores worldwide as a limited line next year.

"When they announced my name, I was so grateful. I put so much work into it. I really took a chance," said Tucker.

Tucker, 38, has always wanted to pursue a career in fashion, but growing up in Ottawa she found there weren't a lot of opportunities. Instead, she went the practical route despite continuing to indulge her passion as a hobby on the side. She spent 10 years in the computer industry.

"When I told my grandma I was going to computer school, she was so sad," said Tucker. "My grandmother has sewn lingerie and bathing suits since I was little. That's her passion."

She had turned down a scholarship to design school to raise her children, Tucker said.

"I could see that she always regretted it. When I said 'I'm going back to school for fashion, she was over the moon. 'I always knew you could do great things,' she told me. I said, 'I'm doing it for the both of us,'" said Tucker.

Although she had made a camisole and some underwear for herself, Tucker had never made a bra before the competition. She was given just a month and a half to come up with a concept and complete her design.

"As construction went on, I had to learn on the way," said Tucker.

Since her big win, Tucker and a classmate, Victoria Wilson, have rented a studio in Toronto's fashion district and have launched a business, Andrea Victoria Design.

"I'm really looking forward to going to Milan," she said.

Visit www.andreavictoriadesign.com for details.