

FASHION



Bolivian Aymara designer Eliana Paco, offers an interview to AFP at her workshop in La Paz, weeks after presenting her traditional 'chola' (indigenous Aymara and Quechua women from the Bolivian altiplano) creations at New York's Fashion Week. — AFP photos



Bolivian designer exports high-end indigenous fashion

Centuries ago, Spanish colonizers forced their Bolivian servants to wear the puffy skirts that have come to symbolize the country's "cholitas," or indigenous women. Today, one local designer is turning the tables with plans to export high-end cholita fashion-blossoming skirts, bowler hats and intricately woven shawls-to Madrid, Paris and beyond. Fresh off her first show at New York Fashion Week, Eliana Paco, a 34-year-old indigenous Aymara designer, is ready to bring her take on a once-stigmatized style to the world.

"Cholitas"-a diminutive of "chola," a sometimes derogatory word for a woman from Bolivia's indigenous majority-were once seen here as a silent underclass of maids and manual laborers. But in a changing Bolivia currently governed by its first indigenous president, Evo Morales, Paco said she sees the traditional women's costume as a symbol of "identity and pride." She has already made her mark on the local fashion scene, where TV presenters and cabinet ministers now regularly sport the indigenous look, updated and embellished.

Her mission now is to "use that sophisticated touch to cross borders," she told AFP. She took a big step in September in

New York, where she made headlines with her latest collection, "Pachamama" (Mother Earth, in the Quechua language). "It's the first time a chola women's suit has arrived on the runway. There were 12 international models wearing our designs," she said.

Turning heads

Paco's exuberant dresses, vibrant shawls and gravity-defying bowlers captured industry insiders' attention. "I love cholita clothing. It reminds me a lot of Yves Saint Laurent and the best era of Armani, when he used bowler hats," said Spanish designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada. "I would love to take (Paco's designs) to Madrid, to Paris," she told AFP in Lima, Peru, where she was presenting her own collection.

"Until now there had never been a cholita with the marketing sense she has," Paco said she sees an international market for her designs. "I think it's possible European women could use the shawls or hats for everyday wear," said the soft-spoken designer with her ever-present smile. She envisions her shawls accessorizing Western dresses or jeans, she said.

10-kilo skirts

Paco, the daughter of two artisans, takes pride in the quality of her designs. Her colorful "aguayo" shawls are hand-woven with naturally dyed alpaca or vicuna wool. The best ones take a team of three people two weeks to finish. The below-the-knee skirts have three or four layers, each using up to six meters (yards) of fabric. They can weigh up to 10 kilos (22 pounds). A full outfit can cost 1,500 to 30,000 bolivianos (\$200 to \$4,300).

For special occasions, members of Bolivia's newly wealthy "cholita elite" add gold or silver pins, brooches and jewels that can add thousands of dollars to the price tag. "To me (the outfit) symbolizes culture, identity, pride and work, because chola women work long and hard," said Paco, who has three children. "It's also about the empowerment of independent and professional women," she said, sporting an outfit of her own design. — AFP



A worker sews at the workshop of Bolivian Aymara designer Eliana Paco, in La Paz.



Picture taken at the workshop of Bolivian Aymara designer Eliana Paco, in La Paz.



Palms Beach Hotel and Spa announces the soft opening of Beauty Lounge

After a lot of planning and hard work, Palms Beach Hotel and Spa launches the soft opening of The Beauty Lounge on November 7, 2016.

The Beauty Lounge is designed to fulfill all women's needs in a relaxing and luxurious atmosphere, where world-class beauty specialists offer their services at the salon, spa, atelier, and retail boutique. Ladies can find the latest fashion trends of high-quality evening gowns and wedding dresses that are customized to fit all sizes and tastes at the luxurious atelier. At the salon and spa, women can stimulate and rejuvenate their skin and hair with state-of-the-art techniques that will guaran-

tee a fresh, healthy and young look under the hands of highly experienced Lebanese and European professionals.

They could also enjoy a variety of hair, nail and body treatments like pure water, oil treatments, and many customized services like the solarium for the perfect tan or treat cellulite and reduce fat using the latest technology, or the collagen machine that smoothes the skin, reduces pore size, improves skin moisture retention and diminishes wrinkles. In addition, traditional and alternative massage, body and skin treatment options, herbal treatments, and laser hair removal. To facilitate a healthy lifestyle, The Beauty Lounge made all its exclusive

products and treatments available at the retail boutique to guarantee best results. Bridal packages at The Beauty Lounge are tailored to create an unforgettable experience for a special bride-to-be.

The Beauty Lounge is dedicated to provide the highest quality standards in the beauty industry to inspire women and give them the look and feel they deserve.

