



Members of the public look at completed sections of a tapestry.

Thrilling yarn: Tapestry depicts 'Game of Thrones' saga



Embroidered scenes on the tapestry depicting the hit television series Game of Thrones are on show at the Ulster Museum in Belfast.

In a Belfast museum, seamstresses are at work depicting gory battles and warring kings in shimmering threads of red and gold—an epic homage to the TV phenomenon "Game of Thrones". The team of volunteers at the Ulster Museum are putting the final touches to a 90-metre tapestry depicting all eight seasons of the fantasy saga, which reached its dramatic conclusion in May. "Game of Thrones", which first hit screens in 2011, was produced and chiefly filmed in studios in Belfast and in the Northern Irish countryside.

The Northern Irish public have taken the series to their hearts. "A tapestry is, more than anything else, a great storytelling device," explained Valerie Wilson, costume and textiles curator at National Museums Northern Ireland. "The length of the tapestry allows the story to unfold, so in many ways it's the perfect medium for telling the story of the 'Game of Thrones' project."

Styled in the manner of the treasured Bayeux Tapestry—which depicts the 11th-century Norman conquest of England—the completed piece will be transported to France to hang near its predecessor in September. "This tapestry references the Bayeux Tapestry in that it has a series of repeated icons through it," explained Wilson. The panels of the piece are woven by machine before the finishing touches are put on by hand.

Emerald green wildfire

For two years, a team of 30 has been at work on and off stitching embellishments on the icons—"blood red weddings", "emerald green wildfire" and "cold-blue White Walkers" which prove pivotal in the blood-and-guts HBO drama. Such is the graphic nature of their handiwork, the museum display comes with a warning: "Due to the depiction of graphic scenes, viewing of the tapestry is not suitable for anyone under the age of 18." The team has been



working on stitching depicting the eighth and final series.

Participants-like actors in the show—were also sworn to silence, forced to sign non-disclosure agreements to maintain the shroud of secrecy. "It was very crucial when the project launched that it had that new, fresh, almost surprise element," Wilson told AFP. After the embellishments are put on, the final panels are being added to the snaking display of series one to seven already on show to museum visitors.

"I think it's really beautiful," said Abbie Merrick—a diehard fan of "Game of Thrones", who spent a morning walking her mother through the plot woven across the fabric. "I think tapestry's a really beautiful art form and a really nice way of storytelling." —AFP

Embroiderers work on the final section of a tapestry depicting the hit television series Game of Thrones at the Ulster Museum in Belfast. — AFP photos

GAY ASIAN MILLENNIAL PROTESTS HIS WAY UP SPAIN'S MUSIC SCENE

Meet Chenta Tsai Tseng, better known in Spain by his stage name "putochinomaricon." In English, that translates as "f*****g Chinese fag."

The 28-year-old gay, Asian-Spanish singer, DJ and writer is making a name for himself in Spain for his acerbic criticism of issues like racism in the LGBTQ community and beyond, the selfie generation and pride festivals like the

festivals like Sonar and Primavera Sound. Slight and softly-spoken, Chenta weighs up every word he says, inclusive language peppering his interview, in sharp contrast with his eccentric performances and irreverent electropop songs.

"That you went to Majorca and stayed in the Ritz, that you feel alpha male and show off in the gym, that your father bought you a Ferrari so you can brag... We don't really care about your f*****g life," he sings in one song.

'You have yellow skin'

Born in Taiwan in December 1990, Chenta emigrated to Spain with his parents when he was just 11 months old. He says his first experience of not feeling quite like others happened when he was around four or five, playing with a friend. "He gave me the yellow power ranger, and obviously I wanted the pink power ranger," he remembers, laughing. "I didn't understand why he associated me with the colour yellow... and he told me, you have yellow skin, you're different."

And so it has continued, including in the dating scene. "Either they reject you simply for seeing your photo and seeing you're Asian, or they fetishise you and want to go out with you just because you're Asian," he says.

All very food-oriented, Chenta notes, which inspired the title of his first album—"Steamed Pork Heart with Ginseng." Chenta denounces discrimination generally within the LGBTQ community, which he says often favors white, muscular men who are often effeminate. As for pride celebrations, he feels there is too little focus on "women, trans women, the disabled" or those from different ethnic groups. But he's starting to come around.

This year, Madrid Pride has chosen to focus

on the 50-year fight for rights since the historic Stonewall riots in New York. It will be the first such festival since local elections in May saw Madrid's city hall swing to the right with the support of emerging far-right party Vox, which is strongly critical of the LGBTQ collective. "I feel that in the current political environment, we have to group together rather than segregate," Chenta says.

Aqua, Wieniawski

For Joan Luna, news editor at Spain's Mondo Sonoro music magazine, the attraction of "putochinomaricon"—aside from his quirky performances and "very effective electropop"—is his discourse. "The lyrics connect with people," he says. And then there is the novel fact he is an Asian electropop artist in Spain. "As Asians, we're seen as being good at jobs that aren't tied to entertainment, like mathematics and science," says Chenta. The stereotypes are so ingrained his father believed them too.

"My father always had this absurd notion that if you were an Asian (migrant), you could only do three things, open a restaurant, open a pound shop or play a classical music instrument," he says. At the time, Chinese-US cellist Yo-Yo Ma was a reference. So it was that Chenta ended up graduating as a violinist from Madrid's Royal Conservatory of Music. The only problem? He hates violin. For a key exam he chose to sing a piece by the Danish-Norwegian pop band Aqua, but also played Polish violinist Henryk Wieniawski's signature piece "Legende". "I passed with top marks." —AFP

Kimonos and colossal bows fill Valentino's colorful catwalk

Italian designer Pierpaolo Piccioli went for an explosion of bold colors at Valentino's Haute Couture collection, switching from mustard yellow to fuchsia to azure with supermodel Gigi Hadid walking in purple. Clashing textures with silks, woolen fringes and pom poms also gave the outfits a subtle complexity. Some models wore ornate beaded hats in the style of traditional tribal headpieces.

American actress Gwyneth Paltrow and models Heidi Klum and Naomi Campbell figured among the stars on the front row at the Paris runway show late on Wednesday. Hadid sported a kimono-inspired lilac gown, complete with gemstone-encrusted white, jade and orange embroidery and a colossal bow resting askew on her shoulders. Piccioli has been Valentino's sole creative director since 2016 but has been with the label since 1999. His bouffant dresses and vibrant use of color have garnered the brand fresh acclaim after founder Valentino Garavani retired in 2007.

One surprise on the runway came in a green dress and glittering trench coat, as 75-year-old model Lauren Hutton wowed the crowd in four-inch mustard heels and sparkling fuchsia gloves. The fashion house said in a note that the collection aimed to celebrate individuality, diversity and inclusivity. After the finale, Piccioli walked the runway hand-in-hand with the team of women and seamstresses who crafted the intricate pieces.

The label's Qatari owners, investment vehicle Mayhoola, had examined plans to list Valentino on Milan's stock market, sources told Reuters in late 2017, although the company has been evasive about such plans since. The show wrapped up this season's Couture Fashion Week, where an elite club of top-end designers show off elaborate, hand-made creations. The event ends on Thursday as with jewelry brands presenting their high-end collections. — Reuters



Asian-Spanish singer, DJ and writer Chenta Tsai Tseng, better known in Spain by his stage name 'putochinomaricon' performs in Madrid. — AFP

one taking place in Madrid. A qualified violinist and architect, Chenta created "putochinomaricon" two years ago in an angry nod to the insults he received in the street.

"I said, 'that's it', I'm going to start accepting my body, accepting my identity," Chenta tells AFP before a DJ set in Madrid. He composed a short song and posted it on Instagram. Two years later, he has two albums and an autobiography out and has performed in major