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KEEP VIETNAMESE. MIX PARISIAN. IMPRESS THE WORLD



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We meet with Ngoc Linh, the very first **Vietnamese fashion entrepreneurship**, who currently owns a fashion brand “De la Mora” in Paris. Her company was successfully held top 10 emerging **fashion brand** in **Paris** 2023.



For many enthusiasts of **fashion**, residing in **Paris** is often seen as a dream come true, given the city’s romantic allure and descriptions like the city of love or **Parisian fashion capital**. However, my own journey to Paris has been a thrilling, exhausting, and a roller coaster of emotions.

Vietnamese fashion designer, Luu Ngoc Linh, founder of the widely emerging fashion brand “De la Mora”. Planning to bring wind of **Paris** back to **Viet Nam** for the first time in her mid 30’s.



Born and raised in Vinh Long city, a small province in **Viet Nam**'s southside, she wasn't surrounded by fashion. Growing up in the 2000s with limited internet. The **modern** and **integrated fashion** was an unfamiliar concept until she first met **RMIT University**.

We were able to catch up with Linh after she received an invitation to become **RMIT Fashion Program** talk show. Coming back for this homecoming, Linh was so excited and said she is ready for becoming a Trendsetting **fashion entrepreneur**.

What was it like growing up in Vinh Long city? You must have been one of the few Fashion enthusiasts?

As a young little girl growing up in Vinh Long, a serene town located in the heart of Vietnam's lush Mekong Delta. This small town is known for its **traditional handicrafts** and **cultural tradition** than for its runway shows, brought me the earliest understanding of austere beauty from rivers and traditional costumes such as "**Áo Dài**" and "**Áo Bà Ba**".

In Vinh Long, fashion or aesthetic wasn't spoken of with the fervor found in the glamorous pages of **cosmopolitan** magazines. Instead, it whispered through the rustle of lotus silk and the vibrant patterns of **Áo Bà Ba**, and **Áo Dài** worn by local women. My fascination with **fashion** often felt like a solitary pursuit, as few shared my enthusiasm. Here, there's a shared conviction that true beauty is internal, and external appearances are fleeting. Raised with the adage "tot go hon tot nuoc son" (Goodness is better than beauty), this principle has not deterred me from pursuing aesthetic, the

art of transforming one's environment and possessions pleasing to the eyes.



In fact, I've come to realize that mindset wasn't right for me as we can always choose to pursue **holistic beauty** from inside out. That way of thinking catalyzed me to spend countless hours, from **sketching designs** to the overall **fashion concept** art inspired by the **natural materials** surrounding me, dedicated to blend **traditional elements** with **modern vibe**.

Passport to fashion: “We need more than just an innate aesthetic mindset in order to achieve in the fashion industry”.

From my earliest memories, I’ve had a profound passion for **fabrics** and **garments**. Yet, my aspirations extended far beyond spending hours drawing and sketching **clothing designs**. My true ambition has always been to own a **fashion company**, where I could have control over every detail, from the fabric to the smallest button. However, my life was initially marked by uncertainty and a lack of clear direction.

Despite possessing a distinctive set of creative skills, I found it challenging to go through the complexities of the fashion industry and lacked the foundational knowledge necessary to manage a business.

Knowing **RMIT** in 2012, this university was the sole institution offering a major in **fashion enterprise** and provided me with tons of unfor-



gettable lessons that I still apply in today's job. I still remembered a lecturer once told me: "We don't teach you **fashion** theoretically, we teach you to explore it in the right way".

These curriculums motivated us to delve into the historical context of fashion while staying anchored in the need of the **contemporary world**.



From the foundation of **French Haute Couture** to the meticulousness of **Japanese streetstyle**, we barely missed nothing. It is crucial in **RMIT** to understand not just the aesthetics but the philosophy behind different **fashion movements**. This wide perspective was vital as it enabled me to appreciate fashion through the form of expression that across borders.

"If my fashion knowledge and unique perspective are the claws, then the values I learned at RMIT University are the honed edge that makes them truly powerful." – Ngoc Linh

Failure from looking “Áo Dài” through the lens of “haute couture”.

Eight years spent in **Paris** have expanded my perspective on the **high-end fashion industry**. The cultural approach to **fashion** in **Paris** was beyond what I had known back home, where **fashion** served as an expression of **community identity** and shared customs. In contrast, **Parisian fashion** is a narrative of **personal revolution**, where a single piece of cloth can profoundly express someone's **personal identity**.

For an emerging **designer**, the challenge to distinguish oneself while honoring the complexities of **high fashion** is immense. The industry here fiercely protects its **legacy**, making entry into its exclusive circle quite challenging, especially for **young designers** from less renowned backgrounds. With its rich tapestry of **fashion history**, "I had to work at belonging to fit in the new playground and this requires not only talent but also perseverance"- said Ngoc Linh.





When I first emerged with the concept of “**Haute Couture**”, I was shocked and overwhelmed by its concept of meticulous, detailed, and high-class are far beyond everything I could imagined before. Being enchanted by this **fashion** definition, I dream of transforming **Áo Dài** in to the next world’s **traditional materials**. But I failed and realized, **Áo Dài** itself, doesn’t need more validation and approval to become an **icon** and deserved to be recognized by international audience, especially **Vietnamese**. It is emerged in me that, to achieve that dream, **Áo Dài** should convey more than just an old term: “**traditional costume of Vietnam**” and more from a **garment of future trend**.

A close-up, over-the-shoulder view of a person's hands using a white stylus to draw on a tablet. The tablet displays colorful fashion sketches of garments. In the background, a laptop screen shows a grid of fashion images, and several fashion magazines are scattered on the desk. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a creative workspace.

*“If plan A doesn’t work, there are
still 25 letters left in the alphabet”
– Ngoc Linh*

De la Mora

Once a **designer** grasps the ebb and flow of the **fashion world**, they realize that being outdated or **fashionable** is merely a transient phase. Ultimately, it’s one’s **unique style** and enduring presence that persist. Embracing this truth, I shifted my focus from creating the most visually stunning pieces to crafting **garments** that transcend time and enable wearers to express their **individual values** and **identity**.



“When
discussing
aesthetics,
mere beauty is
not enough.”
- Ngoc Linh



Blending the knowledge acquired in **Paris** with **traditional materials**, I crafted a series of “**12 Ladies in Áo Dài**”, each symbolizing a month of the year. This **collection** has earned accolades from three esteemed fashion institutions: **the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode (FHCM)**, **La Chambre Syndicale de la Mode Féminine Prêt-à-Porter**, and **the Hyères International Festival of Fashion and Photography**.

Message from Linh:

*Dear **fashion lovers**, I know the struggle you face in chasing your dreams right now. It's one thing to strive tirelessly, but quite another to embrace the setbacks along the way. I once attempted to blend the **Áo Dài** into an unfamiliar world and to measure it by standards it wasn't meant to meet. It was through this misstep that I learned a vital lesson as a **fashion entrepreneur**: failure is simply a step in the journey towards crafting a work of art.*

