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By Anjhula Bais

## Russian Revolution on the Runway



Anjhula Singh Bais with designer Olyia Mimkho. CREDIT: David Godichaud

One of the new breakaway designers to look out for in upcoming seasons is Olyia Mimkho. To discern the pretty designer from all the models would have proven to be tough if it weren't for her talent as a knit artist whose pieces truly captured the art of craft. During Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Autumn Winter 2010 in New York, Mimkho's creations captured her Russian heritage albeit through a New York lens. Some of the dresses could easily be envisioned on Sarah Jessica Parker running around for a Sunday New York brunch. As massive official coverage from the elite press surrounded the event before, during and after the runway show (including MTV who couldn't get enough of Mimkho), I managed to walk and display both my runway looks with "aplomb" to quote Mimkho, sip my champagne and have a conversation with the designer herself!

Clichéd as it may be, one of the more important investigative fashion questions is inspiration and its source. Mimkho answered, "The inspiration came from looking at my background. For the past few years I have been frequently travelling to Russia. I kept a notebook and a photo journal of my discoveries at the old flea markets, antique stores, book stores and of course the most important source, stories from my grandparents about our heritage and roots, our family before the 1917 revolution, stories from WWII and the communist era. I found it all extremely fascinating!"

Mimkho spoke about how the genesis of her collection resulted from all that was within her. She played around with the idea of Imperial Russia meets simple village folk costumes and the beginning of the Soviet era. Potentially complicated with ample room to go wrong, Mimkho took the risk at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week with her autumn winter 2010 collection, the most coveted fashion week in the world, and pulled off harmonized themes that brought out the feminine angle. The entirety of the collection was made of natural fibres of silk, wool and cashmere embellished with fur and Swarovski crystals.

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