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SUBHEADLINE: Renowned Italian designer Renato Balestra's latest collection aims to restore the mystery of women

BYLINE: WANPHEN SRESHTHAPUTRA

The man who "captured the heart of Thailand" some 10 years ago is back for another round of charm. World-famous Italian designer Renato Balestra, invited by the royal family to show his collection as part of a charity gala and personally received by the Queen in 1990, will be in Thailand for a fashion show to be held at The Oriental Bangkok.

Presented as an extravaganza of Italian haute couture, the event will feature Balestra's Autumn & Winter Collection 2000-2001, which has already won worldwide acclaim. The collection was first presented last July at the International Fashion Festival in Kotor, Montenegro (in the former Yugoslavia), attended by the president of the Republic of Montenegro and the mayor of the city.

In Bangkok, the event will be presided over by Her Majesty the Queen, with proceeds going to the Organ Donation Centre of the Red Cross Society of Thailand.

Merging warm, autumnal colours, and blending ultrasoft wool and oriental silks, Balestra's collection unfolds under the theme of "Enigmatic Diva".

"After seeing so much vulgarity and nudity, I think women should be enigmatic, mysterious, intriguing. More than being completely uncovered or exposed, she should stir up the desire to know more," Balestra commented during a press conference held at the Oriental recently.

"Intriguing" and "glamorous" are definitely the key words of the show, which revels in an unfurling of pearls, shining gold and precious embroidery. "Why would someone pay so much to look poor?" the designer inquired with a large smile.

No doubt Balestra's fashion show _ featuring 20 models and some 120 dresses _ will be impressive, true to the image of the Trieste-born artist, who has designed clothes for many of the world's most prominent figures.

They have included Empress Farah Diba, the first ladies of the Philippines and Egypt, Saudi Arabian princesses, international celebrities, famous actresses, and of course, HRH the Queen of Thailand.

The upcoming high-fashion show will also be peppered with a few surprises, as well as tinted with Thai touches and flavours. Some of the dresses have been inspired by Thai traditional dancing costumes, while the finale will be yet another surprise, paying homage to Thailand; "a dress which doesn't look like any other dress I have ever designed, something extremely special", Balestra commented.

For its unique flavour, harmonious aesthetics and lavish style, no doubt the show will be one of those rendezvous that would be a shame to miss.