

# What's On

'Painful, but stylish'

## Berlin passion for 1940s fashion untempered by WWII hue

BERLIN, Sept 14, (AFP): With her blotted red lipstick, perky coiffed curls and fitted 1940s skirt suit, Constanze Pelzer looks like she's stepped off a World War II film set.

From head to toe, the 49-year-old German is the picture of 1940s elegance — from the little glasses and striking jewellery to her red sling-backs, her entire outfit is authentic.

But it isn't a costume. Despite bringing to mind a painful chapter of German history, Pelzer admires 1940s fashion so much that she wears originals from the era every day and is not alone in her sartorial dedication.

"It's, at once, the fabrics, the colours, the workmanship, the high quality," she told AFP at her 1920s-1950s vintage shop, off Berlin's upscale Kurfuerstendamm shopping avenue.

### Fashion

"I don't feel at all like I'm in disguise, in this fashion of the past. I just feel right," she said.

Forties fashion conjures up the full-throttle glamour of Lauren Bacall or other Hollywood sirens.

But the era that saw Europe riven by war after the rise of the Nazis in Germany heralded utilitarian clothes for ordinary women — practical but polite knee-length skirts, wide-leg trousers



Shop owner Constanze Pelzer, dressed in 1940s vintage clothes, poses for a photograph in her 1920s-1950s vintage shop 'Glencheck' in the Wilmerdsdorf area of Berlin on May 2. Pelzer's boutique, which she says has sourced costumes for World War II films such as 'The Reader' and 'The Monuments Men', helps make Berlin a magnet for vintage enthusiasts. (AFP)

and a shapelier silhouette.

"Great fashion, but a terrible time too for many people," added Pelzer, who said she was inspired by the 'soldiering on' spirit in which women had defied shortages and devastation to look chic.

Fellow vintage lover Tina Buettner, 40, said that contradictions in 1940s fashion only deepened her fascination.

"I don't identify myself now with German ideals of the time," she said, adding that what she loved about 1940s

style flew in the face of the Hitler regime's 'perfect woman'.

"They didn't want the sculpted, rouged diva, but rather the wife at the stove, having as many children as possible... in plaits and simple, practical clothes.

"In fact, the opposite of what's fun about this," the Berlin resident said.

Both women said 1940s vintage was now an international trend and part of the fun was meeting up with other addicts in Germany and elsewhere at themed dances and dinners.

Cultural historian Mila Ganeva, of Miami University in the US, said 1940s fashion was rich and multifaceted, from the war and post-war periods, to Christian Dior's cinched, full-skirted "New Look" in 1947.

"It offers a lot, counter to our images of war, hunger, deprivation, material shortages," she said in a telephone interview.

During the war, German women mostly made their own clothes, recycling tablecloths, uniforms and menswear, she said.

But their imaginations were stoked by the more sophisticated styles of the movie screen, newsreels or magazines, shrewdly tolerated by the Nazis as a morale booster.

"In no period of time was there ever such a spectrum of fashion between the

imaginary and the real," the expert on German film and fashion said.

Costumes

Like other specialists, Pelzer's boutique "Glencheck", which she said had sourced costumes for World War II films such as "The Reader" and "The Monuments Men", helps make Berlin a magnet for vintage enthusiasts.

And the hunt for original 1940s gear can be fruitful, said Lucia Vicente, who runs vintage tours of shops and historical sites in the German capital that draw an international crowd.

Many customers are motivated by a love of Lindy Hop, a dance craze that spanned the 1940s and beyond.

Practically never-worn clothes and shoes still surface despite the war's widespread destruction.

"People took everything to the basement, the perfect place to keep everything in good shape," said Vicente, 34, from Portugal, who runs the "Lissabonbon" vintage cafe.

### Production

German fashion historian Birgit Haase said across-the-board vintage has boomed since the late 1980s and, in particular, 1990s in Germany and elsewhere, due to a craving for individuality and sense of authenticity in a globalised world of mass production and marketing.

But she expressed surprise at the choice of 1940s for everyday wear due to its historical echoes in Germany, and for stylistic reasons.

"I find it astonishing to choose a period shaped by dictatorship and then later by shortage as an ideal or inspiration," Haase, of Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, told AFP.

But Susan Ingram, humanities professor at Canada's York University, said the black-and-white aesthetic of 1940s films — the last pre-technicolour period — may lend the era a certain appeal in today's digital age.

Its popularity could also be a backlash against the "current trend of louche celebrity", she said in an email.

"The 1940s may have been a painful period but they were also incredibly stylish," said Ingram, editor of the "Urban Chic" series on different cities' fashion histories and co-author of the Berlin edition.

Buettner, whose love of 1940s detail is evident in her immaculate outfits, turns heads when she walks down the street but says reaction is positive.

She takes her devotion a step further — at home she has only vintage furniture, down to the crockery and phone.

"What I'm missing still is a (vintage) car but they're enormous for Berlin carparks."

## LoYAC



LoYAC students and officials during the closing ceremony of annual summer programme.

### Group marks end of annual summer programme

## LoYAC empowers youth

By Cinatra Fernandes  
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: LoYAC held the closing ceremony of its annual summer programme for students at its headquarters at Qibliya School the past week-end. Certificates were handed to over 700 students who were registered in the programme at a fun-filled event that included dance and music performances.

Ghadeer Ali, a member of LoYAC's Marketing Department stated that the event was a celebration of the end of a great summer and many new beginnings. "Today is a special day for us", she said and shared that the terror attack on it is the Sept 11, thirteen years ago was instrumental in the formation of a LoYAC. The repercussions of the attack on the Twin Towers were felt all over the world with the declaration of the global war on terror. In Kuwait, a choice was made not to react but respond proactively.

LoYAC, was formed with a vision to promote peace by empowering the youth in the Arab region to make better intelligent choices, resist the ways of aggression and extremism and to make them believe in a brighter future. Ali shared that the summer programme for students was one such event.

### Internships

"The summer programme is LoYAC's flagship and biggest programme. When it was started in 2002, LoYAC had just 132 students and a handful of companies participating. But that is not the case today. Today we have reached 1,000 students this year and we have proudly empowered a total of 9,000 students through our internships. We have more than 125 companies from various sectors", she shared. This year, LoYAC interns joined the new sector of aviation and gained valuable insight working at Kuwait Airways.

Farah Fawzy, a LoYAC summer intern shared that her internship empowered her to get out of her shell and interact with people. "I learnt how to talk to people instead of being shy, in the corner. As a result of the internship, I think I have more courage and am more social now."

Another student was grateful for the opportunity of working at the Sultan Center where he gained a lot of experi-

ence in multiple departments. Students who learnt how to handle the stress of a job believed that these internships gave them a head-start for the future. Ahmed Ibrahim, who worked in Laduree, experience being on the other side of the counter, learning to work fast to make sure orders are delivered on time. "I had to make sure the display is right and everything is working perfectly. I wasn't the manager but I sure felt like it sometimes," he shared.



Asna Al Sabt



Students at the event

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Ali affirmed that LoYAC does more than just act as a link between companies and students. "We also help them prepare for their job sites through a basic skills workshops. Today I would like to

thank the facilitators for their tremendous job supporting us and helping us through this workshop — Basma Al Qassar, Marwa Ammar and Alaa Nasr."

### Achievements

She shared that over the years LoYAC has been recognised by many companies and organisations for its achievements. "We have been awarded the certificate for Best Practice by the UN Habitat in 2010. We have also been mentioned in a book called 'Learning a Living' by the Qatar Foundation in 2012. The most recent and worthy of mention is the Medal of Excellence awarded by HH the Amir of Kuwait."

Apart from the training and development aspect, the summer programme also promotes the ideals of giving back to the community and teaching students the joy of giving and being in touch with their humanity through its community service programme where students can volunteer their time.

A new youth initiative in which students work on their own projects and finalise them, while competing with each other, rotates around 6 different sectors of art, health, technology, social, environmental and LoYAC. During the evening, winners of each initiative were awarded certificates.

### Opportunities

Rabaa Al Hajeri, Head of Marketing Department pointed out that LoYAC was also involved in providing students with opportunities of working abroad. "We have a dedicated international department that caters to, works and collaborates with a lot of organisations and reputable establishments abroad to bring students the opportunities to intern outside. A good example of this is the internship at Google office in Dublin, Ireland."

"We also have other programmes that are more based on community outreach allowing first-hand experience with underprivileged communities in India and Kenya," she added.

She also highlighted LoYAC encouragement of the performing arts and sport activities in order to bring the youth out of their comfort zone. LoYAC has also launched the LI Labs, a creative hub that brings together creative people interested in animation, illustration and 3d modelling.

"Talents come in many shapes so we



Ghadeer Ali (left) with winners of Youth Initiative



Ghadeer Ali (second left) with winners of Youth Initiative



Dance performance by students



Meryam Shehab plays the ukelele



A student performs a piece on the guitar



A student performs a piece on the piano

encourage dance, theatre and music. Sports is also an important pillar and football is the most popular in Kuwait. So we brought one of the best European clubs — AC Milan soccer school to Kuwait where students can acquire training and compete in Italy in the Peace tournament representing AC Milan Kuwait", she remarked.