

Walk the Talk Award Entrant: Patric Seng, Bintang Models

Bintang Models and director Patric Seng has called on his personal experiences as inspiration for his own successful agency which is pioneering inclusiveness in the modelling industry.

Patric came to New Zealand from Malaysia more than 10 years ago, ambitious to break into the modelling and graphic design industry. However, after being signed, he experienced judgement and discrimination due to his sexuality and heritage and was ultimately dropped by his New Zealand agency.

A few months later Patric took his career into his own hands and found his own slot on the runway at New York Fashion Week. It was his experience that night that ignited his passion for founding his own agency, Bintang Models.

Today Bintang Models represents more than 100 different unique women, men, boys and girls from all around New Zealand.

It has grown to become a one of New Zealand's premier modelling and talent agencies and Bintang Models Talent & Fashion Booker Cage Appleby believes the exponential growth can largely be attributed to Patric's stance on inclusion for all.

With talent and models from all walks of life, Bintang Models is focused on advancing everyone's experiences and maximising opportunities.

Cage says the agency believes there is division within the fashion industry even in a country as multicultural as New Zealand. "It is a divide that Patric continues to close," he says.

"Some of the personalities at Bintang came to the agency with their tails between their legs. They were broken and discouraged for many different reasons due to their age, their race, cosmetic reasons and even their cultural beliefs.

"Patric offers a platform and opportunity to help these people rediscover their courage, their passion and their confidence, embracing difference in everyone. Some of our personalities have risen to work within the agency and we couldn't be any prouder."

Bitang models have had wide ranging success. To name but a few, Kevin Kim, Anisha Narayan and Zoe Du walk for various designers at New Zealand Fashion Week. Kingcy Jin and Moira Sun walked for New Zealand Chinese designer Su-Yun at Los Angeles Fashion Show this year. Summer OuYang and Zhou model for Karen Walker and Talia Rose featured on Bogue Italia online in 2016. Victoria Van, with her hair stylist Chinney Yup, participated in the grand final of the TRENDVISION International Hair Competition in Monaco in 2014.

Patric has taught his agents to identify the potential or spark in a person.

"No matter their gender, their sexuality, or their race, Patric has taught his teams the ability to find success within every single person which has helped to express the true diversity within New Zealand," Cage says.

"It is important to represent New Zealand's diversity so that everyone can relate to the woman or man on that billboard."

It is important to Patric that he only employs people who stand for the same beliefs, who are able to recognise and celebrate diversity.

Patric is also dedicated to supporting models throughout their career through ongoing in-house training, and mentoring at every stage.

He believes it is his responsibility not only to scout models, but to be able to foresee ongoing work for them in the future.

"Unfortunately, there is a prevalent issue in the modelling industry, where agencies sign as many personalities they can to land revenue from any fees at the very beginning of a models or actors career," says Cage. "It is an unnecessary tactic deployed by the greed of those in the position of power who take advantage of someone's courage and someone's dream."

Represented within Bitang Models are 32 per cent Chinese, 34 per cent European, 1 per cent Thai, 5 per cent Maori, 2 per cent Korean, 11 per cent Indian, 1 per cent Hungarian, 1 per cent Estonian, 2 per cent Japanese, 4 per cent Chilean, 1 per cent Black, 3 per cent Middle Eastern, 2 per cent Columbian.

At management level there are two Chinese, one African American and one NZ European.

Patric is committed to creating change within the fashion industry, and hopes that others reading about Bitang's philosophy on diversity will apply it to their own business.