

LEADING LADY

Versace corsetted matte-jersey gown, Versace gold platform heels, Bvlgari white-gold and pavé diamond necklace, earrings and ring

Beyond the



In this *Philippine Tatler* exclusive, Asia's first supermodel Anna Bayle is captured by the lens of the celebrated US photographer Nigel Barker while she speaks about her glorious years as the Queen of the Runway as well as her exciting future

Spotlight

“Modelling is like a consulting business. You never know when you will be booked for the desirable jobs. It is better to take them when they are offered to you”

“I knew it was time [to retire] because I wasn’t having fun any more in what I was doing.” So wrote the first Asian supermodel Anna Bayle (pronounced Bay-lee) in an e-mail from New York. When she ended her career on the catwalk, Bayle was one of the highest paid fashion models in the world, having succeeded in getting into the fashion runway’s coveted top-10 enclave. Two of her contemporaries, the Brazilian Dalma and the African Iman, had already retired three, four years earlier but she, who was in her 30s then, was still working beside 17-year-old models, prompting her agent to call her “a miracle.”

It was, however, time to move on.

“I actually orchestrated my retirement,” she said. When Bayle started modelling internationally in the eighties, she told herself that since her first stint was with a top designer (Thierry Mugler), her last would be with a top designer as well.

“So years before I retired, I already asked Christian Lacroix, who I am very close to, that when the time comes, to tell me and I’ll pack it in then. I told him I want to stop with the best. We had this understanding and I worked for years with him until he told me it was time. And his was the very last show that I did,” she related.

Bayle may have ended her season on the runway but not her life in fashion. Settled in New York, her second home, she exposed herself to the other aspects of the beautiful world she entered at the age of 16.

Enrolled at the University of the Philippines then as a premed scholar and a member of the varsity basketball team, Bayle was urged by her friends to join the Miss World beauty pageant. “I saw that the finals were going to be held in London and I had always wanted to see Big Ben, so I joined,” said the model in an earlier interview.

Though she did not win the title, she caught the eye of the local fashion designer Auggie Cordero. A close relationship began

with Cordero as mentor and Bayle as student. From the designer the teenage model learned everything that is to know about fashion. Her eyes opened to the exciting world of this profession in the fashion capitals of the world and she began to dream of going out there to try her luck.

It did not take long before she went to Hong Kong, where, on a lucky streak, she found herself replacing the then supermodel Billie Blair (who met with an accident) in the Hong Kong Trade Fashion Show. Then it was New York and, soon, Paris. In a milieu of Caucasian models, Bayle stood out with her long black hair and exotic features. *Vogue* magazine once featured her on the cover, her back turned, showing her long, silky black hair. That photograph sealed an image that lingered long in the fashion world.

In just two years after breaking into the international circuit, Bayle astounded everyone by becoming one of the top 10 models of the world, earning the title “Model of the Eighties,” and even rose to top three. Clearly, she had attained supermodel status, the first Asian to rise that high. But this stature didn’t drop on her lap; neither was it given on a silver platter. The 5’10” Filipina model worked hard to get to the top, and gave up a lot.

Tough Choices

Bayle was not only a professional but a hard worker as well. During the fashion seasons in New York or Paris, she used to model an average of nine shows a day where most of her colleagues would do only one at the most. “I was always running,” she said in another interview. “I’d be in and out of the car or, if the traffic’s too heavy, I’d take the train.”

Such serious work ethic endeared her to the top designers and they paid her a day’s rate for one show just to get into her heavy schedule. All this, however, came with a price.

On her website, Bayle recalled one particular Christmas when she had to choose between head and heart. “My boyfriend and I had planned for a weeklong trip to fall on

my birthday, December 6,” she wrote in an article titled “A Model Christmas.” “However, my agent in Paris called me for the Big 4.” The Big 4 was a yearly show to which the Japanese designer Hanae Mori invited four other international designers to do a week of shows in December. This involved intensive dress rehearsals and three shows a day. The line-up that year included designers that she worked with all the time: Lacroix, Moschino, Vivienne Westwood and Mori, of course. It was too good a job to pass up so Bayle made a decision. “So there I was in Japan, completely jetlagged and all alone on my birthday,” she wrote. She decided to buy bottles of champagne and before the last show, opened them and passed around plastic cups to the girls in the dressing room. “I did not say that it was my birthday but we had a small toast. It was comforting to share a drink with my fellow fashion soldiers [other models who did the whole circuit of Milan, London, Paris, New York and Tokyo],” she said.

Such tough choices would mark Bayle’s modelling career, which spanned 25 years as against a model’s lifespan during her time of two to three years only. What sets her apart is perhaps her intelligence, which gives her that focus to know what she wants. The decision, for instance, to drop her personal vacation for her professional work was made because she believes “modelling is like a consulting business. You never know when you will be booked for the desirable jobs. It is better to take them when they are offered to you.”

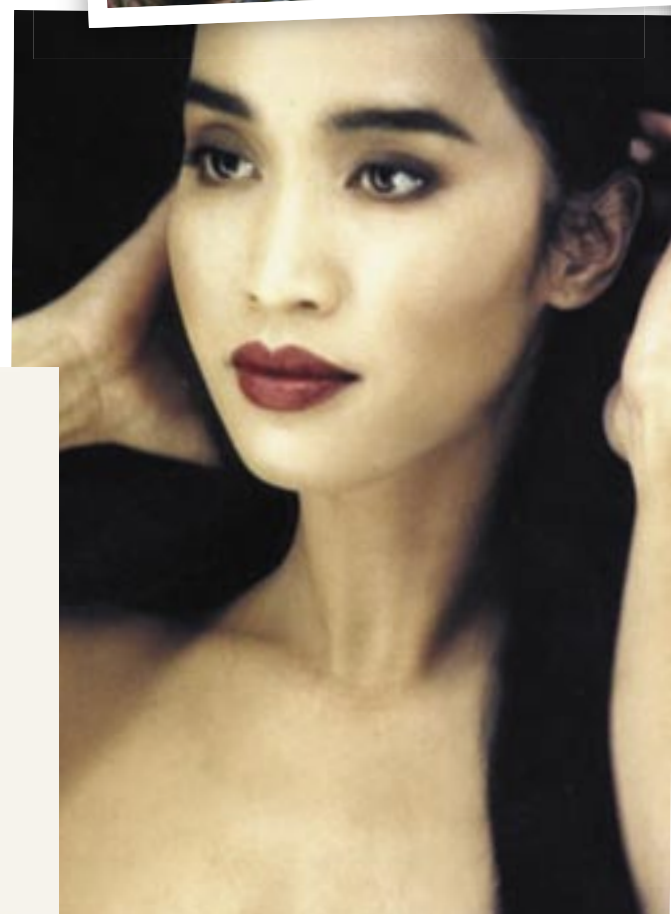
She has no regrets with the choices she made; except for one: “When I look back, I realise I was too busy working and was completely focused on what I wanted and what I had to do to get where I wanted to go. [If not] I probably would have made different financial choices. For a start, I would have bought more real estate.”

It is admirable how, since day one, Bayle already knew what she wanted, where she wanted to go and how she would get there. She has made very few, if any, compromises along the way and has earned a reputation for

ANIMAL INSTINCT

Jayson Brundson zebra print silk chiffon asymmetrical gown, vicini heels, mona yellow-gold and pearl necklace, mona black pearl earrings and Bvlgari white-gold and pavé diamond ring





A MODEL'S LIFE

Top left clockwise:
Photo by Norman Parkinson; Cover for *W* by George Chinsee; Anna with her son Callum; Anna with other top models including Iman; The First Asian Supermodel photo by Peter Beard; Faily for Azzadine Alaia; Photo by Marlon Corvera; Photo by Jerry Salvanti

Opposite page clockwise:
Ad for *Vogue* magazine; From Lanvin Couture; Photo by Tony Marino in Boracay; Photo by George Chinsee; Cover for *Harpers Bazaar, Italy*; Modelling for Genny





THE SWAN

White halter taffeta gown with
black paillettes by Yuki Yao



Photography **Norine Perreault** | Make Up Artist **Kevin Mqueen** | Hair **Rieko Shiba**

Because she is a single mother, she described her parenting style to be a “hybrid.” She said: “On one side I am nurturing but on the other side, I am very firm on setting limits as I am both ‘father’ and ‘mother’ to my child”

standing firm on her beliefs.

It is a well-known story in the fashion circuit that she did not acquiesce in the demand of a top designer for her to cut her long hair. In the early years she was also asked to change her name to Maria Montezuma, but she refused. “I am a Filipina. No matter what they do to me, I’ll always be a Filipina,” she explained.

Such focus helped her along, so much so that when it was time to shift gears, Bayle also did very well. She is now a beauty editor, her own blog writer, soon-to-be television host, owner of her own lipstick line and a mother to 9-year-old Callum.

After the Runway

When she retired in 1994, Bayle started working for Elsa Klensch, then-anchor for CNN *Style*. “She asked me what I was doing and I told her that I was writing for Asian newspapers and magazines. She told me that she would teach me television, so I travelled with her for about two years as an editorial assistant and learned the ropes,” the new “retiree” said.

She also went into her own business and produced her own line of lipsticks. “I had the windows of Henri Bendel’s for two weeks and made record-breaking sales,” she said.

At about this time, Bayle got divorced and decided that it was time to put career on hold and concentrate on raising her child. “Single motherhood is not very easy, but I wanted to be physically present for my child, 100 percent, even though I had the help of a nanny too,” she said. This decision was prompted by her belief that a child acquires 97 percent of his intelligence from birth until the age of 7.

In her e-mail, Bayle also described her parenting style as “hybrid.” She said: “On one side I am nurturing but on the other, I am very firm on setting limits as I am both ‘father’ and ‘mother’ to my child.” She makes use of “positive reinforcement” a lot, ladling on the compliments when her son has done a good job.

“I also encourage him to openly express

his feelings and thoughts,” the doting mother continued. As a result, she described Callum as an independent and assertive boy. Normal, also, are clashes between two fire signs (Leo and Sagittarius). “But at the end of the day before we go to sleep I say sorry to him and he does the same and we tell each other how much we love each other,” Bayle said. The great bond between mother and son, plus comments from everyone, assures her that she is doing a good job as a single mom. Her best reward comes from Callum himself, who fills up his many notes to his mother with drawings of hearts.

While on the domestic mode, Bayle found some time to work with a real-estate investing business in Manhattan owned by a woman who used to handle her portfolio of properties. She handled the firm’s European clients.

When Callum turned nine, Bayle began to have more free time to pursue other goals. “My child is slowly and surely making his own choices now and is spinning out of my orbit of influence,” she said. “He is gaining more independence and I really don’t want to hold him back by being at his reach all the time.”

Anna Today

Our e-mails caught Bayle in-between covering the New York Fashion Week. She is currently the beauty editor for *lookonline.com*, the first Internet fashion-trade newspaper. Here she shares by-lines with the likes of Grace Mirabella, former *Vogue* editor; Marilyn Kirshner of *Harper’s Bazaar*; and Bernardine Morris of *The New York Times*. “I have been going backstage interviewing the designers with a television crew,” she said.

She also recently set up a business that teaches models how to walk. “It is more of a mentoring arrangement. I take one girl at a time, help her with her portfolio and set cards, then send her to agencies that I think will be interested in them,” said Bayle, who has been famous for her tiptoe walk. Unlike models today who march like pretty soldiers

in a parade, the Filipina supermodel created a name for the way she glided on the runway, toe first.

But the biggest news about Bayle these days is her upcoming television show. Called *The Next Anna Bayle*, it will basically be a search for the next Asian supermodel. Already, the concept, which is on its pilot show stage, is capturing the media interest. Last year *The Wall Street Journal* called her “The First Asian Supermodel” when it predicted that the new face of the supermodel will indeed be Asian.

New and aspiring models will also learn from the show as Bayle said that she will give a lot of tips and share many of the lessons she has learned through the years. As a teaser, she gave us three tips to start with:

- Be yourself: be original, do not copy anyone;
- Keep yourself informed: learn the business;
- Have good energy and always be positive.

For more, she said, “Watch the TV programme!”

It would be interesting to note how Bayle would impart her knowledge through her show. Runway modelling has changed so much during her time. She herself is the first to acknowledge this.

“It is not only I, but a lot of people in the industry as well who notice the differences,” she said. “I was a model in the eighties, the decade of excess. The designers of the seventies and eighties (Mugler, Montana, Kenzo) put up a different kind of press show. It was more of a spectacle and these spectacles were incredibly original, artistic and simply beautiful. It called for models that had a flair for dramatics and also excess. The shows lent themselves to the creation of divas.”

Today, however, Bayle said that the shows are more of a march. “It looks quite robotic,” she said. As a result, she observed that the present crop of models does not have as much a personality of their own as the models of the earlier eras. “They have become robotlike and uninteresting, having very young, undeveloped personalities,” she said.

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No Looking Back

When a whole new world in the fashion industry opened to Bayle more than 12 years ago, she never made a step backwards. This included her firm stand on doing retrospective shows. "Since then, I have been asked to do a lot of retrospectives (YSL, Valentino, Mugler, Givenchy, etc.) for a lot of money, but I always declined," she said. "Dior even wanted to fly me and my son first-class to do a Galliano couture show but I passed. Even with my lipstick line, I was advised to go back to the fashion scene and do some shows; but I am known to be hard-headed and I told my

mentor that I will try to do it another way.

"Recently, I was in contact with the Lacroix people about my blog (*annabayle.com*) and they reminded me that Lacroix will have an anniversary of sorts. I know what they are angling at, but my decision will stand." The bottom line is, she said she is very happy that she bowed out while she was still "a queen."

There is so much to look forward to anyway. "Ten years from now, I will be watching reruns of *The Next Anna Bayle* show. The phones in my agency handling Asian models will still be ringing nonstop. I will be writing my third

book and my son, Callum, will be going to college, hopefully in a college or university not too far from me," she listed her dreams.

She also said, "And maybe by then, I would have found a companion for life or this special person I would spend my golden years with would have finally found me." It seems Bayle is giving her heart a chance this time. While we do not expect her to waver in her plans or make compromises with her decisions, it looks as though her heart now plays a big part in her grand scheme of things. This may just spell the difference in what more lies ahead after the catwalk. □

HEAD TO HEAD

NIGEL ON ANNA

I was sitting in the front row of the Chado Ralph Rucci show at the New York Fashion Week when Anna Bayle walked up to me and introduced herself as the first Asian Super Model. Of course she needed no introduction. I immediately took her up on the chance to shoot her for the *Philippine Tatler*. As with everything in the fashion industry, it was a "right-place-at-the-right-time" situation.

As soon as I arrived back at Studio NB, we began planning the shoot. Anna was completely open and a charm to work with. It was no surprise she had such an illustrious career; she moved in front of the lens as if she were born to be there. As an image maker, those are the moments you live for and never forget.

ANNA ON NIGEL

A month ago, I got a call from Anton San Diego, editor-in-chief of the *Philippine Tatler*, to do the cover for their fashion issue. I immediately agreed, as it is a great honour. Timing was not the best for

me, because I had to cover the fashion shows for *LookOnline.com*; that meant 10 gruelling days of fashion shows at Bryant Park.

So there I was in the shows with a TV crew to also film footage for my TV show, *The Next Anna Bayle*. I figured that I had to be wide-eyed and mentally ready for the shoot, so I kept putting it off until the collections were over. Anton, the epitome of cool, was very understanding and gave me no pressures. I appreciate that he trusted my professionalism, which made me want to do my best for his magazine.

On the last day of the shows, at Chado Ralph Rucci, the finale of the New York season, I was more relaxed, after having had a couple of drinks with the famed Bernardine Morris of *The New York Times*. I espied the handsome Nigel Barker, who has been in the front row seats of all the fashion shows, patiently waiting for the show to start. I suddenly remembered my cover shoot with the *Philippine Tatler*. I also had very good rapport with Chit

Lijauco, the magazine's esteemed writer who wrote the piece on me and wanted the pictures to be special. I got up from my seat and with my typical 'selective spontaneity' and brazenness, introduced myself to him. It was a wide stab because I did not even know if he would be in town after the shows. I discovered that he moved to New York years ago and is now based here.

Shooting with Nigel was intriguing and a lot of fun. Here is a very good-looking TV celebrity who turned out to be down-to-earth and a pleasure to work with. Having been shot by illustrious photographers in my lifetime, I consider this photoshoot an honour as well. And, girls, he is more handsome in person and absolutely charming!

Nigel's preferred stylist, Rodney Hall, chose very beautiful garments and told me he used to watch me every Saturday on *CNN Style* with Elsa Klensch, when he was 11 years old in Barbados. With a wink and my forefinger to my lips, I said: "SSHh...it's our secret."



POSED FOR PERFECTION

Versace matte-jersey gown with plastic insets, Versace platform sandals, Bvlgari white-gold and pavé diamonds earring, ring and bracelet