

# Sense and style

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The Hindu Fashion designer James Ferreira. Photo: Nagara Gopal

‘Fashion today is inspired by Bollywood, Mollywood and any other wood and that is scary.’

‘We are not showcasing India in our designs.’Cricketers and stars have become so greedy and are selling everything – they have deprived models of jobs.’

‘Rajnikant is the classy gentleman. He doesn’t endorse, does charity and doesn’t talk about it. He makes money through one film and that’s why God gives him.’

It’s not everyday that conversations with the fashion fraternity sound like these. Making these strong statements is none other than designer James Ferreira, who has always been known for his frank approach and forthright comments. In Hyderabad, the designer was at Lakhotia Institute of Design in Abids inspiring

budding designers to find their own niche. “I am very excited to be in Hyderabad,” exults Ferreira. “The students did not respond well on the first day but the second day was quite exciting as we had a good interaction. What is available in New York is today available in Hyderabad and Pune. I told the students to log on to the internet to check the fashion pulse and know to be different and not copy.”

Ferreira has been vociferous about being original and creative and doesn't mince words while talking about the 'mass production' happening in the name of fashion. “Individuals in any field should strive to be better each time. I tell them, 'you are your competition and you can only improve by being better.’” Recalling his younger days, he says, “I was a strong individual and would do what I wanted to do. I drove my parents crazy. I dropped a subject and in the exams I would just write 'Not interested' and return the exam paper,” he smiles. Hailing the US system of education, he says, “Children are taught to cook, stitch and look after themselves. Here we spoil our children especially sons. Children should be taught carpet weaving and stitching when they are seven. After they are 12, their fingers cannot be moulded,” he shrugs.

Ferreira has cemented his name as the 'king of drapes' and his signature style has been to follow one's passion. “Earlier we would have one week for rehearsals. The girls would do their own hair and makeup and we would work, plan and have fun while shooting. There was camaraderie between models.”

He abhors hypocrites and believes in being truthful rather than hide behind a mask. “I was honest with my parents about my sexual orientation when I was 21. Once you are honest, there nothing to fear,” he says and continues, “The verdict on article 377 has been very silly and ridiculous. As long as you don't hurt another human being and what you do behind closed doors is your own thing. This verdict will cause greater harm. As a society, we are full of hypocrites. Being hypocrites bores me to death. We are a different people when we are at home and become another person when we are with our friends, workers and at office. We do not respect workers. When was the last time we said 'Thank you' to a liftman or the rickshaw guy?”

With a vast experience and as a teacher now, his focus has been to spread love for the country and tell the young brigade to break the mould and be a leader. Among

the younger designers, he finds a winning streak in Rahul Mishra who has incorporated India and its elements in his designs. “He is successful because he has embraced India. We have taken our handicrafts and handlooms for granted. India is the only country in the world to give pure couture to the world but we are not doing anything to propagate it,” he points out.

At the end of the interview, as the photographer requests James Ferreira for one last pose, the ace designer guffaws, “Arre bas karo. I don’t look good. I am not a superstar like Amitabh Bachchan.”

Styles this season

**What’s hot:** Natural fibre

**What’s not:** Synthetic fibre

**Style or comfort:** Comfort over anything

**Little black dress:** Little red cocktail dress. We are a country of colours.

**Budding designers:** Get rid of *Anarkalis*. Do not follow the leader. Be a leader.

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A model showcases Ferreira's creation