

Signature Eyewear's Carmen Marc Valvo Brand

Five things to learn about designer Carmen Marc Valvo

By Staci Sturrock | January 26, 2010 | Palm Beach Pulse

Seems like Carmen Marc Valvo is everywhere a shopper turns.

He sells cocktail dresses at Bloomingdale's. Swimwear at Nordstrom. Sunglasses at Pearle Vision. Napkin rings and throw pillows on QVC.

The New York-based designer visited Saks Fifth Avenue Palm Beach last week to mingle with fans of his chiffon evening gowns (a rainbow of saturated colors for resort, beaded neutrals for spring ...) — and to host a cocktail party benefitting Susie's Cause, a nonprofit organization that aims to educate the public about colon cancer.

Five things to know about the personable designer, who's a regular visitor to South Florida:

1. He's a survivor of colon cancer.

For several years, Valvo has teamed up with friends Katie Couric and Vanessa Williams to raise awareness about the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths. He's also a celebrity ambassador for the National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance.

One of his talking points: Speak up.

Only after he was diagnosed did the 56-year-old learn that two close relatives had already struggled with colon cancer, which can run in families.

The designer says he hopes his efforts are "making (colon cancer) a little more fashionable to talk about, so to speak."

2. He'll launch a bridal collection in May.

And he wants to keep prices between \$1,000 and \$3,000 — "not a down payment on a house," he says.

"Wedding gowns are either \$500 or \$6,000. There's nothing in that in-between range, especially for a second wedding where you're not going to have that storybook \$10,000 dress."

Carmen Marc Valvo shoes and handbags remain a possibility, too. "After that, there's not much left, I don't think."

3. He's introducing bedding to his QVC home collection.

"I'm really looking forward to that," says Valvo, who calls his Hamptons-inspired QVC offerings of beaded coasters (\$22 for four), ceramic vases (\$39) and the like "very inexpensive and beautifully made. I have a lot of it in my own home."

4. During New York Fashion Week next month, he will again unveil his collection via the JumboTrons in Times Square.

"Fashion right now is instant," he says. "Immediately after a fashion show, it's there on the Web. It's playing in Paris in the clubs two hours later. We wanted to telecast it directly to the public."

And there was this unintentional benefit: "It was very humbling and kind of cool to see my name 30 stories high in Times Square,"



Valvo confides.

5. His swimwear line has given him a higher profile.

Introduced five years ago at the annual swimwear shows in Miami Beach, Valvo's one pieces and tankinis — an exercise in old Hollywood glamour — have dramatically increased his profile.

Women who require gowns for the gala-go-round live in a few pockets of the country only, Valvo says — "Here in Palm Beach, New York, maybe some in D.C., Chicago, San Francisco... Otherwise it's the wedding or the bar mitzvah that women buy formal wear for. But everybody, no matter where they live, goes swimming," Valvo says. "I find that by including swim in the world of Carmen, it's opened up everything to more people.

"And by doing so, it helps my work with colon cancer."