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The Turks and Caicos Islands are a prized location for fashion shoots; cobalt blue skies, vivid turquoise seas, gentle waves lapping onto endless white sand beaches. It's the type of destination art directors dream of, a stunning backdrop which can bring a fashion collection to radiant life, instantly.

Courtney Robinson has viewed TCI as a backdrop to fashion since his youth. Armed with the knowledge gained by being a photographer's son as well as an unforgettable face that embodied the "exotic" talent trend of the time, this kid from the Caribbean had an edge when his feet hit the streets of New York. By 2009, after stints studying in the fine arts, modeling, and designing, Courtney thought it time to give back to his community - to give local aspiring models and designers an opportunity to showcase their talents, and fashion fans an annual show they would not forget.

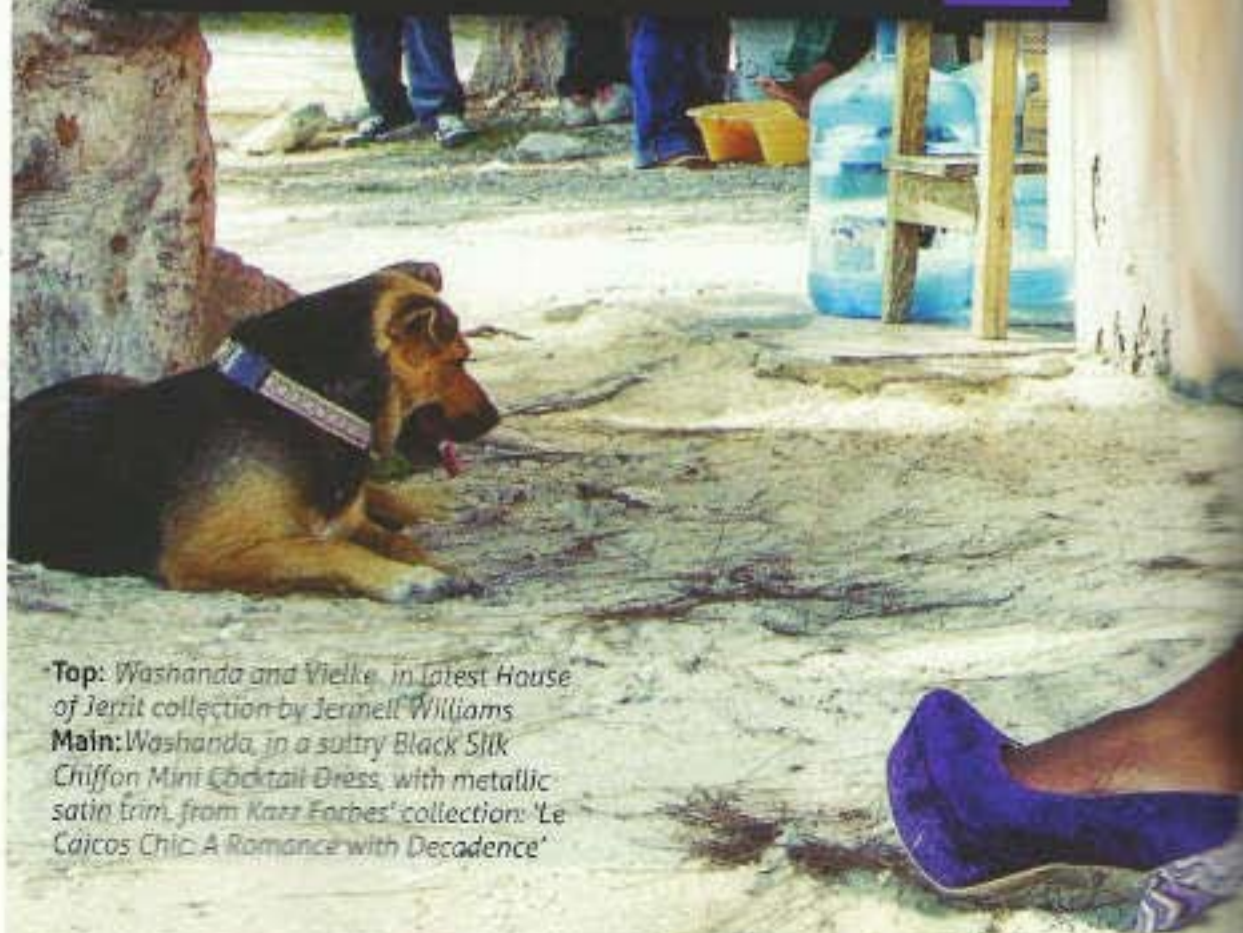
The premier TCI Top Model contest, spawned from a simple desire to bring back the elegance and showmanship of pageantry past, has grown to the third installment *Carnivalé: Culture. Music. Fashion!*, a modern, multi-media production created to transport the audience to a glamorous place far beyond the walls surrounding the crowd.

The show backs its single night grandeur by weeks of devoted preparation spent on the contestants, encouraging them to shine their brightest when they step into the lights of the big night and beyond. This year's contestants attended workshops on etiquette, interview skills, spokes model proficiency, networking, fitness and health, as well as fashion industry readiness, all instructed by diverse local experts.

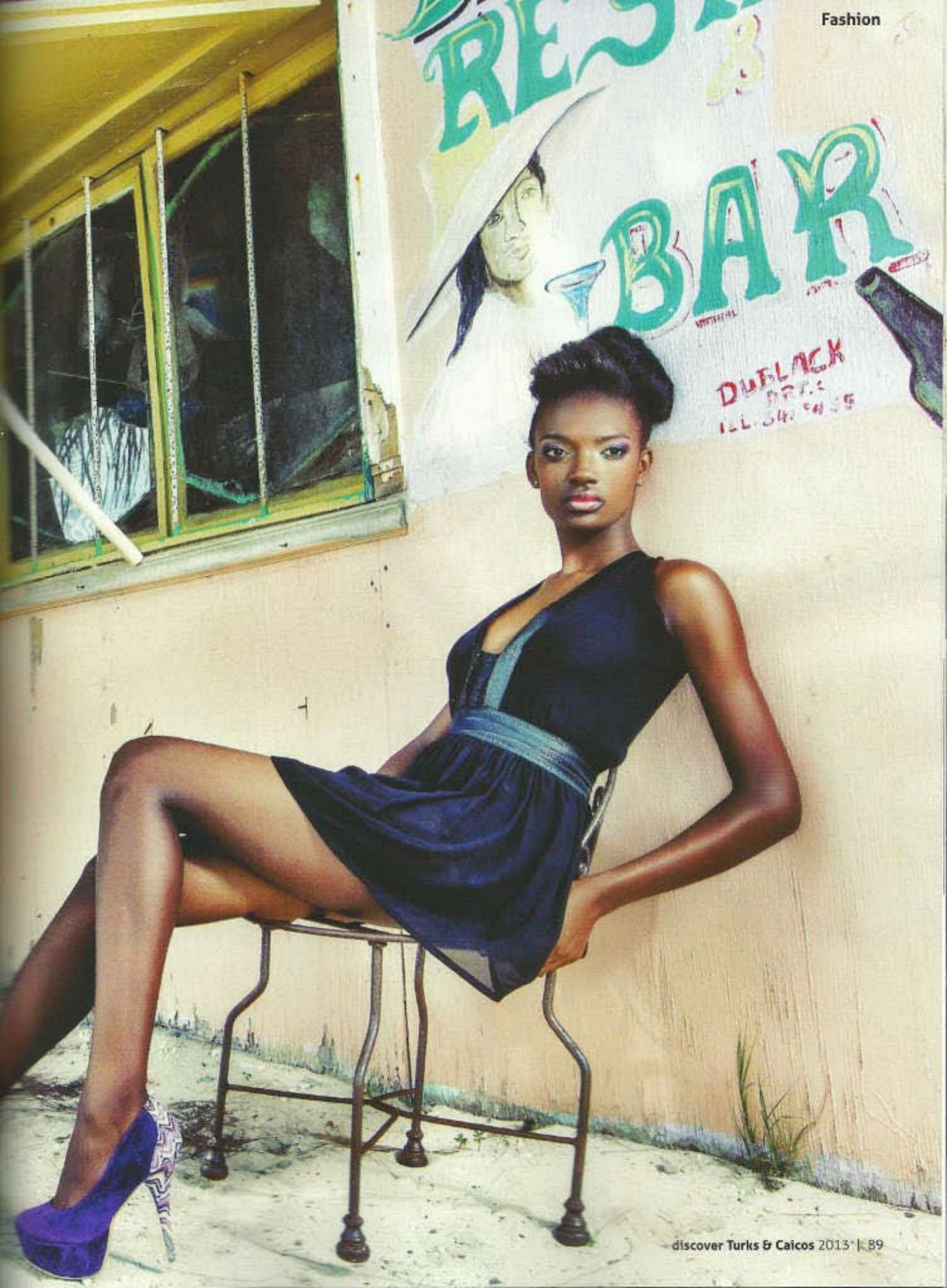
The preparatory training was evident at the highly anticipated pre-event, "Infiniti Catwalk," held on a blazing sunlit afternoon at the Somerset Resort. Each contestant walked the long loop around the sleek pool in uniquely shaped and tinted summer dresses, chosen to accentuate each woman's particular frame and personality. After the ten contestants made stylish exits, a second line up of long limbed beauties showcased the spring/summer 2012 collection of Mongolian born, Canadian based designer Oyuna Tuysuzian. Her collection featured earthy, alry pieces inspired by the diverse landscape of Turks and Caicos. Many are hand dyed "to achieve the right color and pattern to resembling those found in rocks, stones, tree trunks, sea foam, sunset, ripples on the water."



A Passion for fashion



Top: Washanda and Vielke, in latest House of Jerrit collection by Jermell Williams
Main: Washanda, in a sultry Black Silk Chiffon Mini Cocktail Dress, with metallic satin trim, from Kazz Forbes' collection: 'Le Caicos Chic: A Romance with Decadence'



"My goals are just to put my best foot forward and keep my head held high, not forgetting where I came from."



Beauty on the beach - Vielke floating in a House of Jerrit creation

For Carnivale finale, on the evening of May 12th, Williams auditorium was transformed into an uptown, urbane coliseum. Media and event planners bustled about, music pulsed, laser lights sprinted across the elevated front and center 60 foot runway. The poshly dressed crowd was as impressive as the scene. The usual Provo shorts and sandals were superseded by lipstick laughs, sparkling jewelry, and row after row of dapper dress shoes and striking stilettos.

Seat to seat mingling halted the moment masquerade dancers leapt onto stage, throwing confetti into the air, energizing the audience. After this eyeful of sculpted, shiny bodies in festive carnival costumes, the ten contestants appeared on the catwalk one by one. First in pretty party dresses and loose, wild hair. Then transitioning, in fast and furious runway form, to dark denim skinny jeans and white-t's paired with pumps and Jet black pageboy wigs. It was the perfect way to demonstrate the versatility of each girl's look.

The gala evening showcased local designer Jermell Williams' latest House of Jerritt collection. The all white ensembles were inspired by Greece; slick satins with retro edge, sheer peek-a-boo torsos, and opulent embellishments such as appliqués and ruffled gathers. An energetic music performance later, the contestants returned to the catwalk in colorful Caribbean swimwear followed by the latest collection by Saint George Fashion House's local designer Kazz Forbes. From daringly slit swimsuits and flirty tailored skirts with cropped jackets, to soft breezy floral chiffons and raven hued decadent evening gowns, the collection offered variety and sophistication.



Though they all looked like goddesses, 5'10" almond eyed beauty Washanda Registre conquered the competition, winning the top prize valued at over \$12,000. She and runner up, leggy and classically alluring Vielka Salvadore, succeeded in catching the trained eye of judges; top scouts from Wilhemina Models and Q Management from New York. As this show closed, the door has opened for these young women.

The well spoken Washanda, born in Grand Turk but raised in North Caicos, says her family and friends have inspired and encouraged her interest in modeling. Her clear determination, positive attitude, and graceful demeanor complete her charm. She aspires to model in Italy and someday grace the pages of Vogue magazine, but for now "my goals are just to put my best foot forward and keep my head held high, not forgetting where I came from."

Color loving Vielka, known to her peers as "Blondie" spoke candidly about running and ducking from the camera as a young girl. Born in the Dominican Republic but raised in Providenciales, her family and friends have encouraged the once shy girl into the spotlight. When asked about her killer catwalk she muses that it comes naturally: "It's easy. Just stretch your legs!" She hopes to one day find herself in Paris, striding down the runway for Alexander McQueen.

Despite their differences, both young women agree that this experience has been incredibly helpful in gaining confidence and insight, both into themselves, and into the challenging and exciting world of fashion. Washanda described one heartfelt moment before winning the title, "I could remember backstage at the show, Courtney saying 'you are goddesses now, the cameras are all on you, so go out there and do your best and don't forget that you can never, never fail.'"

Stacie Steensland



Top right: This Kazz Forbes Island Breeze chalk pink silk organza halter gown looks fabulous on TCI Top Model Washandra

Top film strip: Vielka in a sassy little Jermal Williams cocktail dress

Bottom film strip: Washanda showcases a turquoise silk chiffon halter dress with strap back while Vielka is also vibrant in this turquoise playsuit. Both from Kazz Forbes' 'Island Breeze' collection.