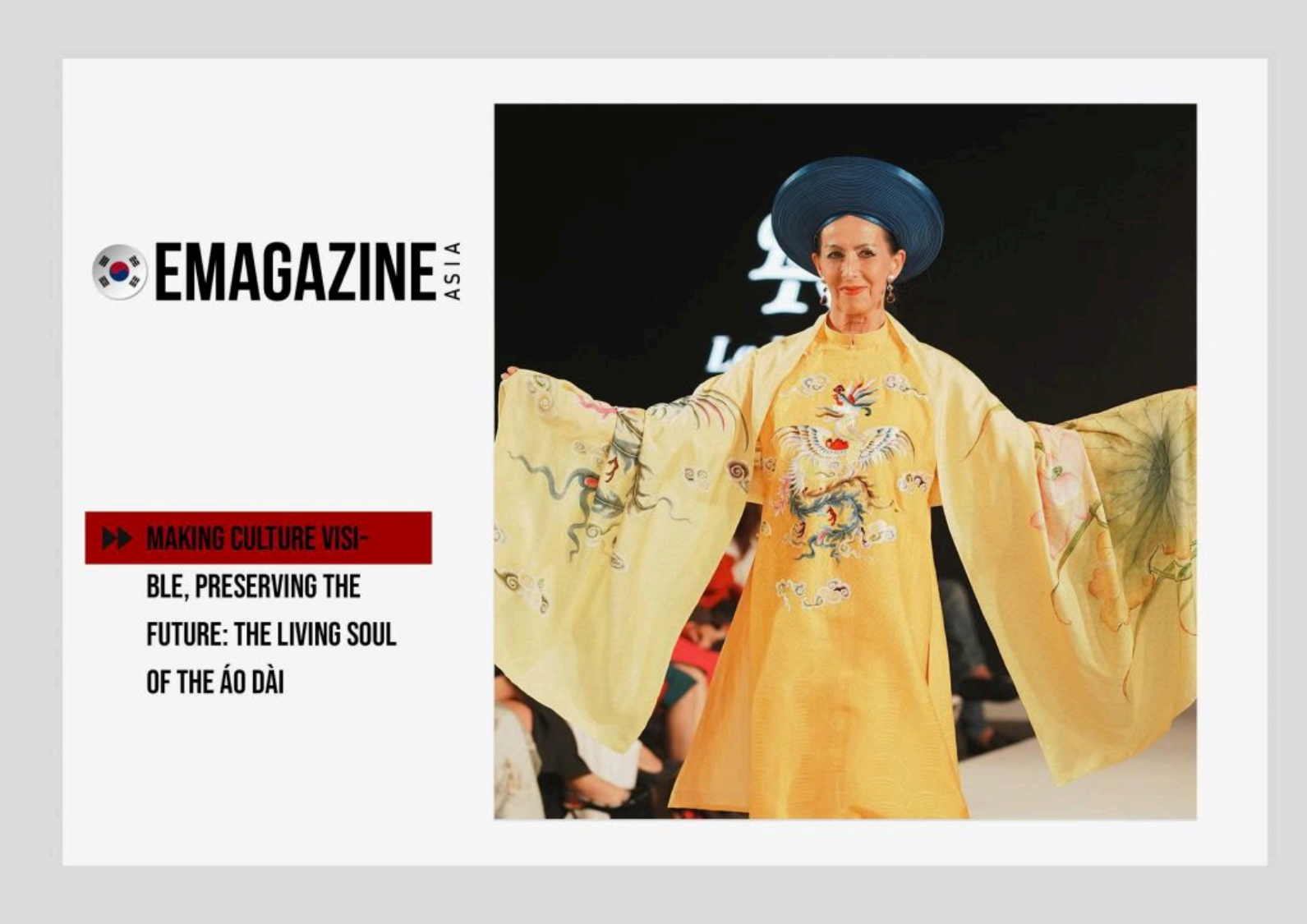


Making Culture Visible, Preserving the Future: The Living Soul of the Áo Dài

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For Isabelle Müller, wearing the Vietnamese Áo Dài at Áo Dài Fashion Week London 2026 is not simply a matter of personal elegance. As founder and president of the LOAN Foundation and a writer with a close connection to Vietnam, she sees the garment as a visible expression of cultural respect, memory and continuity.



Isabelle Müller celebrates Vietnamese culture at Áo Dài Fashion Week London 2026.



“My participation will stand for far more than personal elegance or a visit to an international fashion event,” Müller says. For her, the Áo Dài represents an appreciation for Vietnam, its stories and its many forms of cultural expression.

Set in London, a city shaped by international diversity and creative exchange, Áo Dài Fashion Week offers Vietnamese designers, artists and cultural voices a platform to present that heritage to a wider audience. Müller believes such visibility matters because culture remains alive only when it is actively carried into the present.

“Culture lives when people respect it, wear it, pass it on and carry it into the present,” she says.



Wearing a wool Áo Dài, Isabelle Müller prepares to join the Vietnamese community for a parade through the streets of London.

That idea lies at the heart of her relationship with Áo Dài. Its flowing silhouette is internationally recognisable, yet remains closely connected to Vietnamese history, aesthetics and identity. At the same time, contemporary designers continue to reinterpret the garment through new material techniques and perspectives.



Isabelle Müller wears a look from Lụa Kim's Việt Vân collection.

"The Áo Dài does not belong solely to the past," Müller says. For her, its ability to evolve is precisely what allows cultural heritage to remain meaningful without losing its roots.

Her hopes for Áo Dài Fashion Week London also extend beyond a single edition. Müller would like to see the programme become an established annual event, building international networks and creating repeated opportunities for Vietnamese designers and cultural practitioners to present their work to global audiences.

"Only through continuity can a special occasion grow into a cultural institution," she says.



Isabelle Müller (second from left) joins Mrs Áo Dài titleholders in celebrating and preserving the beauty and living spirit of the Vietnamese Áo Dài.

She also hopes the event may one day gain recognition alongside major international fashion festivals in cities such as New York, Milan and Paris. For Müller, however, the goal is not to measure Vietnamese culture by Western standards, but to allow the Áo Dài to be recognised through its own cultural strength, "as a cultural symbol with a history, a present and a future."

Fashion, she believes, may often be the first point of contact. Behind a fabric, a cut or a silhouette, however, lie stories of origin, family, craftsmanship, memory and identity.



Isabelle Müller not only embraces the Áo Dài herself, but also shares her appreciation for the Vietnamese garment with her husband.

For Müller, this is where the wider significance of Áo Dài Fashion Week lies: in showing that cultural traditions remain strongest when they are not merely preserved, but actively lived.



Isabelle Müller shares her thoughts on the importance of making Vietnamese culture visible and preserving the living heritage of the Áo Dài.

She hopes the event will ultimately become “a place of encounter, a showcase for Vietnamese creativity and a lasting reminder that cultural identity must be protected, encouraged and carried into the future with pride.”