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NEW YORK FASHION WEEK: RUNWAY RECAP

DEFINING THE NEXT GENERATION IN FASHION

Academy of Art University's School of Fashion presents the New York Fashion Week Spring 2020 Graduate Show at Skylight on Vesey

By Niya DeGroat Henry, M.A.
fashion journalism

As eager attendees ascend to the third floor of the Financial District's Skylight on Vesey, six womenswear designers and three menswear designers anxiously wait backstage ready to unveil their New York Fashion Week (NYFW) collections. The show venue is a former trading floor. It offered an urban feel and, at first sight, a darkened space with an open industrial floor. Around it, industry insiders, influencers, and global media filled the seats of the prized front row, including esteemed journalists Suzy Menkes and Cathy Horyn and New York designer Andre Walker.

One by one, models turn the corner to reveal captivating collections focused on exaggerated silhouettes, intricate draping, and effortless layering of oversized statement pieces. Inspiration fills the room, pulled from the most unlikely objects and people who reside on the fringes of society; the social misfits, the warriors, the



(L-R) Christopher Cabalona, Hanbit Ku, Yue Shen, Yi Pan, Yaryna Zhuk, Abby Yang, Chelsea Grays, Ying Jin, and Qing Guo.
Photo by Danielle Rueda.



School of Fashion Executive Director Simon Ungless and graduate students backstage at NYFW. Photo by Danielle Rueda.

ostracized, plus the occasional mystical flower with elusive powers. Their thesis projects offer understated fashion with a purpose. Woven into the seams are social and political implications affecting the world, such as globalization, climate change, and representation, to name a few.

The show's strong focus resonated with the crowd. In a post-show Instagram post, Menkes, editor of Vogue International, wrote: "I like the way this college focuses entirely on the clothes designed by students—no bells and

whistles, but a chance to see the cut and flow of fabric." Simon Ungless, executive director of the School of Fashion, echoed that sentiment about his students in an interview with Menkes, "You are going to see a really edited group of graduate designers. They are not interested so much in decoration—more in cutting, construction, proportion and silhouette. They are very craft-related in terms of really beautiful construction. They do everything themselves." He continued, "We eliminated nearly everything. It's just clean, pure clothes."

For these next generation designers, the future of fashion is both sustainable and purposeful.

View the collections as they appeared on the runway on page 2.

LATEST NEWS

Women's Soccer

Anissa Wilson breaks single-season goals record against William Jessup.
PAGE 11.

Arts & Entertainment

"Stumptown" series artist and illustration alumnus Justin Greenwood talks about the graphic novel's new TV adaptation. PAGE 25.



"Stumptown Vol. 4: The Case of a Cup of Joe" cover illustrated by Greenwood. Photo courtesy of Justin Greenwood.

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NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

RUNWAY RECAP

Qing Guo, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@qing.g](#)

Guo is a multi-lingual costume-designer-turned-menswear-designer who focuses her designs “on detail development and fabric manipulation by combining innovative details with traditional tailoring.” Her graduate collection featured vegan leather and played homage to the traditional paper lanterns of her Chinese culture. The lantern motif is evident in the sleeve, pant, and jacket details of her monochromatic creations.

Hanbit Ku, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@hanbitku](#)

Female empowerment serves as the focal point for Ku’s womenswear collection, which featured sophisticated drapery through an almost deconstructionist point of view. Exposed cutouts and zippers twist and turn over the body, allowing the wearer to playfully shift the placement of the drapes for better movement and functionality, while still maintaining the look’s edginess.

NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

RUNWAY RECAP

Yi Pan, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@bonniepan118](#)

Pan’s collection is inspired by the 2017 dystopian animated short “Being Pretty,” which illustrates a society’s ostracization of anyone deemed unattractive. Pan’s garments are made to be worn by “those who have disabilities or bodies that society considers different,” so that they can accept themselves as they are. The idea of imperfect beauty is highlighted by the oversized garments in pastel colors, with delicate billowing details.

Yaryna Zhuk, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@yarynazhuk](#)

The inspiration behind Zhuk’s collection is the contrasting shapes created by light and shadow. According to a Ukrainian myth, those who find a magical plant known as the ‘fern flower,’ which only blooms once a year, can achieve eternal happiness. The fern flower motif is evident in the strategically placed ruffles that hang and sway from the garments. An important feature of Zhuk’s collection is her use of zero waste and waste-reduced pattern cutting—a sustainable process that “investigates the possibility to create fun and interesting shapes using simple forms without the need for cutting off too much fabric.”

NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

RUNWAY RECAP

Chelsea Grays, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@__chelsea.g](#)

Grays' menswear collection is a social documentary about San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, and its people. Grays connects this examination to the life and struggles of street artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, who was known for graffiti paintings and pattern mixing. Similarly, screen-printing and mixed media wool felting applied to oversized garments refer to the painter's work.

Abby Yang, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@aaabbbbyyya](#)

Yang uses the shape of the hands as a source of inspiration for her debut collection, centered on the trials and tribulations of love. "I explored the idea of feeling the weight of emotions that love carries within, like frustration and anger. I decided to translate that burden into my collection through the use of exaggerated hand-inspired silhouettes." Like several of her fellow designers, Yang incorporated mixed media by bunching and gathering fabrics in the details of her garments, mostly notably around the sleeves, pants, and shoulders.

NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

RUNWAY RECAP

Christopher Cabalona, B.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@chris_cabalona](#)

Cabalona based his undergraduate thesis on clowns of the 1900s. Unlike the traditional circus or birthday clown, Cabalona's clowns are refined and sophisticated. With a color palette of off-white, Cabalona showcases tailored straight-jacket suits with elongated sleeves, metal fixtures, and ruffled shirts.

Collaborative Collection: Yue Shen (M.F.A. fashion design) & Mingyang Zhang (B.F.A. knitwear design)



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

[@yue7979](#)
[@mingy.zhang](#)

The collaboration between Shen and Zhang effortlessly blends wool with knit in a collection that "explores the transformation of women, as they define their strengths and embrace their weaknesses." It's an interplay of opposites; soft and hard, light and heavy. Shen's cocoon-like wool constructions shelter the fragility of Zhang's knitwear in a color palette of navy blue and gray.

NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

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Ying Jin, M.F.A. fashion design



Photos by Randy Brooke/Getty Images.

@0yyoungj

Jin based her womenswear collection on observing children fearlessly riding horses during a walk around San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Her collection is a fusion of re-imagined Equestrian-wear with saddle buckle belts and metal closures. The collection represents "calm femininity through volume and cut."

FROM THE FRONT ROW

Front row conversations

Interviews conducted by Karis Battle, M.A. fashion journalism, Priyanka Malhotra, M.A. fashion journalism, and Christianne Philippone, B.A. fashion journalism



Rosemary Ponzo. Photo by Danielle Rueda.

"I am a costume designer and I have been coming to this show for 14 years and I absolutely love seeing the students' new work. [The School of Fashion] opens a lot of doors to the industry for the students. I always want to buy some of the things I see on the runway because they're so unique."

— Rosemary Ponzo, costume designer and blogger, Rosemary Ponzo Designs

"It is really great to come and see what Simon [Ungless] does because we are from the same fashion education and come from the same generation in Europe. Today, I'm expecting to see beautiful, gorgeous creations with a point of view."

—Aki Choklat, fashion accessories designer and educator



Aki Choklat and Keanan Duffy. Photo courtesy of Getty Images.



Lara Lettice Johnson-Wheeler. Photo by Danielle Rueda.

"When I was in San Francisco, I saw the graduate show a few months ago. I got to speak to a few of the students and share a critique of their work. I'm expecting to see what Simon [Ungless] does best, which is bringing his *avant-garde* Britishism to the wide and eclectic student body that is at the Academy of Art University. I'm really excited to see what they do with texture, particularly. It's something I really noticed last time I was there."

— Lara Lettice Johnson-Wheeler, contributing editor at Tatler, writer for LOVE, Showstudio, and Vogue UK

NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

CATHY HORYN

Cathy Horyn shares her vision of the fashion industry today

By Priyanka Malhotra

Cathy Horyn, fashion critic for *The Cut*/*New York* magazine and Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Academy of Art University (2011), attended the Graduate Fashion Show at New York Fashion Week. Speaking with fashion journalism students prior to the start of this year's show, she shared her thoughts on the fashion industry.

Q: What are you expecting from Academy of Art University's Graduate Fashion Show today?

A: I'm expecting to see young talent that is doing what relates to their age and their time. I know Simon [Ungless] from way back, and he was very positive about this group. Usually, when Simon is positive, then I know he is right.

Q: What are your past memories of the Academy's fashion shows?

A: I [attended the shows] at Lincoln Center. I also came out [to the university] as part of the graduation program and went to classes, and helped teach a class with Simon—that was several years ago.

Q: What would you say about 'fast fashion' taking over luxury brands? Do you think that is possible?

A: No. Fast fashion won't take



(L-R) Simon Ungless, Suzy Menkes, and Cathy Horyn. Photo by Danielle Rueda.

over luxury brands—they are two separate things—and the world of wealthy people is huge. Around the world, people really do want a very particular kind of quality, and there are a lot of brands out there already—traditional brands or heritage brands—whether it's Hermès, Chanel or Dior. I do think that fast fashion gives [luxury brands] some competition and that everybody gets ideas from each other. The established companies were probably looking at the fast fashion brands for ideas

about distribution and delivery.

I think that what we see happening in the last decade with the internet, e-commerce, and technology, the changes that we've already seen will simply continue and accelerate. Amazon will get into the game because they are big on the luxury end and they will get on that, for sure, I would imagine. It's a really confusing time for designers because their career path is not the same. They may not want to open their own brand. Instead, they may want to work for Chanel,

or Dior, or Oscar de la Renta, and that part is very interesting.

Q: As a journalist and a fashion writer, what's one thing you hate to see on the runway?

A: I hate seeing a lack of knowledge, a lack of awareness about the world. I saw a collection the other day, it was about something from the '70s, and I don't want to see that anymore. People have moved on from that. I want to see something maybe about proportions or silhouette, or

thinking about incredible fabrics. One of my favorite designers at the moment is Demna Gvasalia at Balenciaga. I love what he is doing there, it's very thoughtful. He is interested in technology and is looking to solve problems.

Q: What is your vision of the fashion industry today?

A: Well, it's a tough question because I'm probably a traditionalist in a certain way. I still want to see somebody come along who understands the world like Martin Margiela did and who understands that we can do something that is not luxury—a different thing. He had a concept and created a world around that concept. It wasn't for everybody, and I'm still looking for those. I have a very high standard about that; I loved what Rei Kawakubo did, and I know the world is changing, but I think that those individuals will come along. The problem is ... it's a very small market. The big brands like Chanel, Dior or Yves Saint Laurent, they all make a lot of noise, a lot of stores to build, and a lot of products. And someone like Martin Margiela, even 10 years ago, is a very small business, but I like that.

Priyanka Malhotra is an M.A. fashion journalism student at Academy of Art University.

FROM THE FRONT ROW



Carine Bizet. Photo by Danielle Rueda.

"I like to see what the West Coast can produce and their talent level; fashion is not only in New York—it's a big country!"

—Carine Bizet, journalist, *Le Monde*

"This is my third season attending the Academy's show. I'm always excited about new, emerging talent. I love the Gucci's, the Fendi's, the Prada's, but it's getting a bit boring. We see the same things in all the magazines, we need something young, fresh—Gen Z is the new era!"

—Kim Dillinger, wardrobe stylist and TV personality (*Bravo's* "Blood, Sweat, and Heels")



Kim Dillinger. Photo by Danielle Rueda.



Andre Walker and Chelsea Grays. Photo by Danielle Rueda.

"I've been coming to the Academy's show for maybe 10 years, if not longer. I'm most excited for any school that has talented and creative students. Fashion for me is authenticity, creativity, personal style, and inspirational style."

—Miss' J. Alexander, *America's Next Top Model* catwalk coach and judge

"I've reviewed a lot of the M.F.A. collections while they were in progress in San Francisco this past spring, and I am eager to see the development and final outcome. For me, it's less about excitement at this point, and more about observation because I'm looking at the progress from start to finish, the evolution of the designs."

—Andre Walker, fashion designer



—Miss' J. Alexander. Photo by Danielle Rueda.