

We never truly grow out of our desire to playhouse. At least, this was the message behind “All I Want is a Mortgage”, Hannah Dixey’s final collection for Central Saint Martins’ graduate show. Borrowings from lives past and present glimmer through Dixey’s charming assortment of trinkets. It reminds one of a trip to a vintage shop, turned trip down memory lane. The tales of imaginary strangers and their potential backstories come alive before your eyes. Dixey, on the brink of becoming a hoarder, bases her designs on her careful collection of vintage clothing. For Dixey, fashion between the ‘20s and ‘80s seeps with nostalgia, reminding her of an era when clothes were made to last. Like peeling back wallpaper, vintage clothing has witnessed the best and worst of our lives. Dixey discusses the importance of honoring this, explaining the thought behind her oversized wooden horse brooches, colourful knitwear and wallpaper prints. Knocking on the doorstep of her new career, we hope she can bring back clothing made to last.

HANNAH DIXEY

In conversation with
ANNA JOHNSON

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Model
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ANNA JOHNSON. First, congratulations on graduating from Central Saint Martins and on a fantastic final show. The collection feels like I've opened up a whimsical costume chest and travelled through time. How does it feel to begin a new chapter in your career?

HANNAH DIXEY. Thank you! It's a weird feeling because you're so used to something for such a long time, and now the next step is this new thing, and you're just not sure how to navigate it. But it's nice. I'm satisfied with my journey at Central Saint Martins. It's come to an end, so it's time for the next chapter. The final collection was really challenging - I think a graduate collection needs to have that 'show factor' to it. It's the most extreme version of what you want to design because it needs to be. For my concept, I was quite subconsciously trying to create this fantasy world. And obviously, they are very fantastical versions of those garments. Some members of the audience told me they felt lost in this comfortable, cozy world. For me, that felt brilliant. Job done!

A.J. Daniel Roseberry [Schiaparelli's Creative Director] has previously mentioned feeling pressure to make his designs extra-large and crazy to get a viral moment. If I were a designer in this Instagram era, I'm sure I would try to make the biggest, best, and most colourful thing. Your designs are really intricate and technical, and your use of dimension is so interesting. Do you ever feel that pressure to make your designs larger than life?

H.D. Yeah! At Central Saint Martins, it's always 'go big or go home'. We do this thing where you have to put the biggest garment on the second bridge at Central Saint Martins, and you have to look at it from the first bridge. If you can't see it, then it doesn't have the impact; it's just not big enough. I honestly think it's a good thing because it pushes you. I didn't think I could create something so huge. To be able to bring that kind of scale into the real world is cool. Obviously, when you go big, there are so many things you have to think about: fabrication, can I actually get it through a sewing machine? [Laughs]. I think there's a lot of noise at the minute, and you do want to try and find something that stands out so that



it gives you the opportunity to make things that are more scaled back and a bit quieter. I think it was really good for me to push myself to make those larger pieces. The massive coat, for instance.

A.J. You included some miniature versions of the clothes wrapped around the bags the models were holding. Could you tell me about these?

H.D. Yes, I started with these half-scale garments. They were made from things I picked up from scrap stores. I had this box full of all these random fabrics and trimmings. When I was in the research stage of the collection, every evening I would just make two or three tiny, half-scale garments. I then started to scale up those patterns, but while keeping that doll-like feeling. I'd use wool, for example, but when you make a tiny garment, the wool is so incredibly thick. I needed to scale up that fabrication, so I ended up using five-millimetre-thick pieces of wool just to get the same materiality you would have in the smaller one. I did a lot of my own laser cutting for the buttons and the finishings. It's quite satisfying to take a small garment and make a huge version of it.

A.J. As a print designer, your work is rooted in textures and layering. How do you treat

the body as a site for storytelling, particularly when you play with miniature and maximalist proportions? How do you manipulate textiles to create such exaggerated silhouettes, for example, in Look 6?

H.D. The first thing I always do is get my partner, Millie—bless her! I take all my clothes out of my wardrobe and start draping them on her. My wardrobe is predominantly vintage, which I've collected from here and there. I take all of that out and try to understand what I want to do. I love to use the things I wear on a daily basis from my wardrobe, so it's fun.

A.J. I've noticed that you tend to use items from your own flat. How autobiographical is fashion design to you? I sense a lot of memories and nostalgia.

H.D. I'm a collector of things. I have so many objects. I'm kind of in the early stages of being a hoarder, I guess [laughs]. Thankfully, it's kind of contained at the minute. But for some reason, materiality and objects are very important to my process, and a lot of them are just found and discarded. It's somebody else's memories that I'm kind of weaving into my own. Someone once asked if I'm a conceptual or aesthetic designer. I thought I was aesthetic, but I've realized I'm both—almost unknowingly conceptual. I collect objects for



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their look, but when I dig deeper, I understand why I'm drawn to them.

A.J. Central Saint Martins seems like a fantastic opportunity to collaborate. I noticed you styled your prints with knitwear by Bryony Ely, and you went to Jo Grogan to commission the brooches. Could you tell me about this process? What is it like trusting somebody to bring your sketches to life?

H.D. Jo is an amazing wood carver. I met her through the Sarabande Foundation at the Christmas party. I've always loved her work, so I asked her if she would like to do it. Obviously, she was very nice and said yes. So that was an amazing collaboration. I don't think people realise how much craft and work goes into carving something out of wood. She told me it would take a week, and I just thought 'gosh, that's a really long time!' But when you break it down, it's just a very slow process. It wasn't daunting to trust people with my sketches because you tend to have constant conversations and build something up together. It made me much more decisive. Bryony did my knitwear. I've been friends with her for a while, and I thought it was really important to have that in my collection because I love a cardigan [laughs]. I did the design, we discussed it, and it snowballed into her doing the tights as well. That was fun because I had never done anything like that before.

A.J. Your past concepts have carried titles like "I fell in a bush" and "Grandma's Dogs", now followed by the sadly relatable, "All I Want is a Mortgage". There's a kind of deadpan realism at play here, channelling the spirit of normcore. Yet the garments themselves speak in rich colour, generous proportions and bold prints. Are you intentionally creating a tension between the flatness of everyday language and how expressive fashion can be?

H.D. I think the titles are quite dry, it's my British sense of humour. Over the years, I became more aware of the contrast between the bleak titles and the joyful designs. I just think, you've got to laugh or you'll cry [laughs]. "I Fell in a Bush" was the first project I did at Central Saint



Martins. It was based on a story I kept in my head from a dog walk with my mum. We saw a lady cycling who fell into a bush. We had to get her out; her hair was tangled in the woods. I thought, "That's a very me thing to do". I'm very clumsy. I created a 17th-century character who got off a horse and fell into a bush. It was very historical, with all these little textured parts. I thought it was quite funny. "Grandma's Dogs" was about my grandma, who had been in and

out of my life. She had four Shih Tzus. It was inspired by '60s celebrities and their dogs, Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe. I was looking at '60s Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, and "Funny Face". I curated classic silhouettes with a dog element always present. One panel was literally a dog in a 1960s Dior-style dress. These were first-year projects. The nice thing about Central Saint Martins is that you come into first year with all these outlandish, fantastical ideas.

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Make-up Artist CHARLIE MURRAY
Hair Stylist MOTOHARU JWAIZUMI using SAM MCKNIGH
Photographer Assistant MAX RAPHAEL
Knitwear Colab
@ Hannah Dixey, BRYONY ELY
Wooden Brooches Colab
@ Hannah Dixey, Horse and massive G bow, JO GREGAN

A.J. “All I want is a Mortgage” – this title stands in stark contrast to recent controversies in the luxury industry. Do we currently find ourselves in a moment where fashion must become more financially and sustainably honest to survive? How do you envision reconciling the joy of creating with the pressure to monetise your identity in the future?

H.D. It's very apparent that creativity is starting to get lost a bit. It's all becoming about making money. I understand that it needs to be the case from a business perspective, but I'm really hoping this next generation of creatives can make a change. At the end of the day, I really want to see people in my clothes. I want to see people walking around in them and building their own memories in them. I think there needs to be a conversation – I don't know if this will ever happen, but is profit really worth it? We're getting to a point where it's just a creative director revolving door, and it just seems to be about money. I think it does need to be more honest and sustainable to survive. I don't think there's anything wrong with being honest because at least everybody knows where you stand with the financial and sustainable side of it. “Sustainable” is a really hard word to narrow down – there are so many facets to it. Everybody has their own interpretation of that.

A.J. Some of the prints featured in your collection, particularly the chinoiserie print trousers from look 3 and the coat from look 1, are reminiscent of wallpaper—this just made me wonder about the title again. It made me think about how we crave having creative control over our living spaces, but we can't afford to as young people, particularly in creative fields. For a designer like yourself, this must be especially frustrating. Is there a link here?

H.D. 100%. The prints are reminiscent of wallpapers. Specifically, I found a really old *Habitat brochure* from Central Saint Martin's library. I started thinking about living in the '60s and realised I might've had a mortgage by now. It sounds a bit dark. It's the wallpaper I would've aesthetically picked for my own home. Then I thought: “I'd pick this now”. It made me reminisce about how people redecorate their houses or flats and peel back different wallpapers from different decades. You're peeling back different memories with it. I thought that was really interesting to try portraying in a garment setting.

A.J. Amid a growing global shift toward far-right ideologies, a certain political tension has emerged between expressions of hyper-femininity and the domestic sphere. We've seen a resurgence of “tradwife”-coded narratives across social media, often romanticising a return to rigid gender roles. The 'grandma core' aesthetic, by contrast, seems to articulate a woman's desire to retreat into softness and intimacy on her own terms. I see in your collection a quiet yearning for a stable home, rooted in choice rather than imposed tradition. How do you see your collection responding?



HANNAH DIXEY

H.D. I'm in a long-term lesbian relationship, so we have this unspoken way of life. It's not normative, but for us, it is because we've been together for 11 years. With this collection, there is an unintentional soft femininity to it. I was trying to aesthetically create my dream home: a soft, feminine household. It made me ask, “What does pretty really mean to me? What do I perceive as pretty?” I think it's the most genuine version of my feminine self. It's more than just a feeling—it has aesthetic value. The way I dress is inherently grandma core. I wear knitted jumpers, long skirts, brooches, and loafers. There's comfort, cosiness in that. It's nostalgic. I'm not sure what nostalgia I'm tapping into. I don't even know if it's mine. Maybe it's other people's. But within that, I think we all find things we relate to.

A.J. This is ODDA's culture issue. So, we're asking all our lovely interviewees: What does culture mean to you?

H.D. To me, culture is the things and people around me. Everything around me – what I touch and what I listen to. The food I eat. Whatever makes me feel good or bad. Each element of culture is as significant as the other. I think a Sainsbury's is culture. I think an art gallery is culture. ●