



Some of the Northumbria staff and students with work included in Exhibition 140. L-R: Holly Oliver-Newman, Olivia Eplett, Senior Lecturers Emma Jane Goldsmith and Kristen Pickering, Sophie Dodds, Taima Castor and Emma Athroll.

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Anniversary exhibition celebrates fashion through the decades

The rich history of Newcastle's flagship department store, Fenwick, has been brought to life in an exhibition supported by fashion educators and students from Northumbria University, in time for the store's 140th anniversary.

Tracing the roots of the business back to 1882, when John James Fenwick opened a shop as a ladies' tailor and mantle maker in Newcastle, the [Fenwick Exhibition 140](#) will showcase the people, places and products that

built the iconic brand which remains popular today, trading from nine outlets including Newcastle, York and London.

Research conducted by Senior Lecturers in Fashion at Northumbria, [Emma Jane Goldsmith](#) and [Kristen Pickering](#), and supported by alumni researcher Molly Nixon, resulted in the compilation of a digital timeline of historic events from the 1890s onwards after the Northumbria team were granted access to the private Fenwick family archive, housed at Newcastle's Discovery Museum.



Details were uncovered of influential patronesses - young women in society who possibly met at Fenwick whilst attending fittings with the store's talented tailors - who influenced stylish and innovative clothing for their

quickly evolving lifestyles during what was a time of great social change. Their stories, combined with key moments in the history of Fenwick, have provided an inspirational launchpad for second year student fashion designers to create their own capsule collections of clothing, printed textiles and knitwear, inspired by each decade.

The timeline, data uncovered in the research and the creations of nine Northumbria students will form part of the exhibition, which will centre around a restaurant called *Café 140*, serving a British menu which includes sumptuous cream teas and nostalgic cakes and desserts.



Emma Jane, said: “The Fashion team at Northumbria feel extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to work with the meticulously preserved, private Fenwick family archive, looked after by Tyne & Wear Archives. This journey has enabled us to view the original documents of this historical, family-owned department store and through our trained eyes as fashion educators and designer's, we have identified, synthesised, and extracted the hidden gems of data from 1890's onwards and used it as a starting point for several creative student projects.

“After a prolonged period learning online, our second year BA Fashion students adapted very quickly to working in the fashion studios and workshops, converting creative design development into contemporary fashion garments, printed textiles, and knitwear, engaging with the same skills and processes as J.J. Fenwick has done for decades. We have definitely been on an inspirational journey so far. The Fenwick story is fascinating and we look forward in showcasing more work throughout this birthday year.”

[View embedded content here](#)

Folders of original pamphlets promoting sales at Fenwick between the 1890s and 1930s, kept in the University Library, have been released on a special long-term loan so they can feature in the exhibition. The project has been a partnership between [Northumbria's BA Fashion](#) programme, Fenwick and [Tyne & Wear Archives](#) - the organisation which now preserves the impressive archive of documents which record the heritage of the Fenwick brand.

Kristen explained: “The contemporary fashion garments, printed textiles and knitwear chosen to appear in the exhibition, demonstrate how designers can take original research and, through their imagination, reinterpret it into forward-thinking designs relevant for today’s Fenwick customer. They represent part of a bigger body of work that BA Fashion students, across all levels, participated in during the first semester of 2021. We look forward to sharing these as the celebratory year progresses.”



Alongside the garments in the exhibition, student portfolios will provide a window into some of the creative design and manufacturing process used, with each project relating to a specific decade and linking closely with the original Fenwick family archive.

An accompanying film will give an overview of the entire project and the breadth of work completed by students. *Exhibition 140* and *Café 140* will

remain open daily throughout the rest of 2022.



Leo Fenwick, Head of Brand at Fenwick, said: “We are very proud to be working with students from Northumbria University who have so brilliantly interpreted fashion through the decades, using our rich archive as inspiration. Fenwick has always sought after and nurtured local talent from across our communities which truly speaks to the heart of the brand.”



Northumbria School of Design is home to an award-winning creative community, delivering an exciting range of fashion courses. For more information visit www.northumbria.ac.uk

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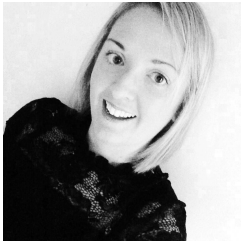
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