



Designs by the six Northumbria University Graduate Fashion Foundation Awards finalists

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## Fashion students make the cut – Northumbria designers named as finalists in prestigious industry awards

**The design talents of students from Northumbria University have been highlighted after six were named as finalists in the influential Graduate Fashion Foundation Awards.**

The awards are normally announced in June as part of Graduate Fashion Week, but the event had to be cancelled for the first time in its 29-year history this year due to Covid-19.

Determined that the graduating class of 2020 should still be given the opportunity to showcase their talents, the Graduate Fashion Foundation decided to go ahead with the awards digitally, adapting the criteria to reflect the current pandemic.

In total, 15 final year students from across Northumbria University's fashion programmes were shortlisted in 11 award categories. Six of them have now made it through to the finals, with the overall winners announced in September.

Among them is [Katie Gedling](#), a finalist in the [Sportswear & Leisurewear Award](#). The Fashion BA (Hons) graduate was inspired by her grandfather's work in the coal mining industry, combining this with her interest in sustainability to create her collection.

As Katie explains: "The concept for my work was greatly influenced by my Grandad's career, specifically his role as a first aid instructor, and I spent time exploring the apparatus worn by specialist 'Mine Rescue Teams'. I also drew inspiration from the continuous cycle between the extraction and exploitation of the planet's resources to create a sustainably conscious menswear collection."

Katie has recently joined iconic South Shields fashion brand Barbour as a graduate design assistant, following a placement she carried out with the company as part of her degree course.

Also named as a finalist is Fashion BA (Hons) student [Sarah Leatherland](#), who has made it through to the final three in the [Childrenswear Award](#) category. Her colourful 'Growing Up' collection was inspired by adults dressing as children and vice versa.

Sarah, who was also shortlisted for the Illustration Award, said her working methods evolved during lockdown. As she explains: "I have adapted my work. Whereas I usually try to stay tactile and illustrate by hand, I created most of my final year project digitally as I did not have as much access to physical resources."

There is stiff competition in the [Digital Fashion Portfolio Award](#) category, with two of the three finalists Northumbria students.

[Gianluca Rondelli](#) was inspired by his childhood love of comic books, science fiction movies and computer games when creating his final year project, for which he designed concept clothing for humans living in a dystopian underwater environment.

As the Fashion Design and Marketing BA (Hons) student explains: “My design philosophy is about creating something in concept and answering problems with clothing.

“My project involved designing clothing for an underwater environment which would protect the wearer from being attacked by mythical predators.”

Fashion BA (Hons) student [Megan Andrews](#) is also a finalist in the Fashion Digital Portfolio Award with her project, inspired by historical influences and classic workwear which have stood the test of time.

She said: “My project is primarily inspired by my experience of visiting the renowned marble quarries in Carrara, Italy.

“My concept centres around the view at the precipice, exploring various visual, cultural and historical ideas linked to the quarries.

“The result is a diverse outcome of menswear-workwear garments which have a sense of archival utility, referencing historical research surrounding Carrara and its quarrymen.”

Also making it through to the finals is Fashion BA (Hons) student [David Bell](#), a finalist in the [Fashion Concept Award](#). David’s collection explores the relationship between masculinity and power, examining how the construction of masculinity affects power structures, from politics and the workplace to personal relationships.

David was also one of just six students from across the UK selected to take part in a video call portfolio review with founder of the award-winning fashion website SHOWstudio Nick Knight, fashion consultant Adam Andrascik, and Vogue Hong Kong's fashion director Anya Ziourova.

During the interview David and the judging panel discussed his work, with Ziourova examining the editorial potential for the collection and Andrascik offering advice on how to get his work seen by the right people. [You can watch David's interview with the judging panel here](#). David's collection will also be photographed by Nick Knight once lockdown restrictions allow.

The sixth of the Northumbria finalists is Sarah Williams, who made it through to the final three in the [Fashion Range Plan Award](#). This was the second success for Sarah, who also recently won a competition run by Graduate Fashion Foundation and social media company TikTok.

She recently took part in a five-day residency; during which she worked with fashion industry professionals to produce a trench coat she had designed. This will be gifted to a TikTok influencer, meaning it could be seen by hundreds of thousands of people all over the world.

These latest successes are among the many examples of Northumbria fashion students overcoming the challenges posed by lockdown to finish their degree courses in style.

Fashion Design and Marketing BA (Hons) students [Emily Blair](#) and [Alex Neil](#) were both recently selected to work with footwear and clothing brand Converse and shoe retailer Size? to customise a pair of Converse Chuck Taylor All Star 70 'Multipatch' trainers, with their designs featured on the Size? Social media accounts.

There was also success for a student from the [BINUS Northumbria School of Design](#), based at BINUS University in Indonesia. Clara Shanie Pranata was named winner of the Graduate Fashion Foundation International Talent award after impressing judges with her collection, inspired by the dichotomy between rural and city living

[You can read an interview with Clara here](#) where she talks about the inspiration behind her work and what motivated her to study fashion.

Speaking about the importance of the Graduate Fashion Foundation Awards, a Foundation spokesperson said: “Our awards have always been an important part of who we are as a Foundation. It allows us to highlight the very best in graduating talent and award excellence. The awards are crucial for attracting industry as it provides a filter to the talent ensuring that they are seeing the very best work.”

Ann Marie Kirkbride, Programme Leader for Fashion BA (Hons) at Northumbria University, said: “The Fashion teams are delighted for all our students’ successes this year. The students have all worked incredibly hard to overcome the disappointment of cancelled fashion shows and Graduate Fashion Week to produce work that has been recognised as among the best in the UK, by industry professionals. We wish them all the best of luck for the final judging. We would like to express our thanks to the GFF and the supportive fashion industry for all they are doing to support the Class of 2020 at this time.”

The Graduate Fashion Foundation Award winners will be announced in September. [Find out more and keep up to date by visiting the Graduate Fashion Week website.](#)

The full list of shortlisted and finalist students for the Graduate Fashion Foundation Awards 2020 are:

**Finalists:**

- Fashion Digital Portfolio Award - Gianluca Rondelli,
- Fashion Digital Portfolio Award - Megan Andrews
- Fashion Range Plan Award - Sarah Williams
- Childrenswear Award - Sarah Leatherland
- Sportswear and Leisurewear Award - Kate Gedling
- Fashion Concept Award - David Bell

**Shortlisted:**

- Accessories Award - Chloe Fairweather

- Fashion Range Plan Award - Anna Cook
- Fashion Photography Award - Bryony Fenn and Nur Kahmis
- Fashion Publication Award - Beth Wilson and Fauve Wright
- Childrenswear Award - Anna Cook
- New Fashion Media Award - Chloe Lewis
- Fashion Illustration Award - Sarah Leatherland
- Fashion Technical Drawing Award - Rebecca Middleton and Jessica Exley

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