



Steph Starkey prepares her Alzheimer's inspired collection for Graduate Fashion Week

May 29, 2019 13:14 BST

Final year fashion students gear up for Graduate Fashion Week showcase in London

The creative collections of final year fashion students from Northumbria University, Newcastle will be sent down the catwalk in front of industry experts at this year's Graduate Fashion Week (GFW) event.

The University's dedicated runway show will take place on Sunday 2 June at 6pm where the work of final year Fashion BA (Hons) students will be placed under the spotlight by industry experts, fashion brands and well-known

designers, at the Truman Brewery in Hanbury Street, London.

Fashion student **Steph Starkey** is one of those who will be showcasing their work, with a unique collection that puts the side-effects of early onset Alzheimer's Disease firmly in the spotlight.

Steph, from Manchester, developed her final year designs after her father, Mike, was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's in 2016. Steph's work sensitively reflects the positive approach her family took to the situation and how they try to find the humorous side of his slip-ups after his diagnosis.

With designs inspired by her dad putting clothes on inside out and back to front and jumbled speech, which is a common side effect of Alzheimer's, Steph's pieces directly draw from her experiences of her father's condition, with work that includes mixed-up letter beading and embellishments, for example.

Steph's work has been nominated for two awards, the GFW Considered Fashion Award for her final collection and the Mothercare Childrenswear Award for her design project. She said: "I like designs that are quirky and bold – fashion that isn't too serious. My university tutor has been amazing and fully supports the kind of designer I want to be, which has massively helped me.

"The Fashion course at Northumbria has been brilliant. The best piece of advice I've received during my studies is to try to do the thing you would least expect; to go against what is typical. It helped me greatly when choosing my designs and generating new ideas, and it prepared me for the competitiveness of the industry."

Emma Rigby is a Fashion Textiles student whose final year collection is making waves, with sustainability and nostalgia as the lynchpin inspiration behind her work.

Emma, from Doncaster, wanted to inspire adults to reminisce about their childhood. She has incorporated nostalgic themes into her designs with prints influenced by the narrative of a children's book she has written. She has even utilised plastic waste as a textile for some of her designs – creating sustainable nostalgia.

Emma said: “My placements at Urban Outfitters and H&M were the highlights of my degree – I learnt a lot about the kind of designer I want to be. My university lecturers were really helpful throughout the process and they have good industry contacts to help students find the best placements.

“I have loved the Fashion Textiles course. At times it is hectic but when you’re passionate about your designs, it’s work you’re happy to do. If I could give fashion students starting out some advice, I’d tell them to work hard from day one and get into the rhythm of being busy.”

Northumbria students have been shortlisted for a range of Graduate Fashion Awards. These are:

New Fashion Media Award

- Holly Jackson

Fashion Communication Portfolio Award

- Megan Houska

Fashion Design Portfolio Award

- Jasmine Bennett

Fashion Publication Award sponsored by Drapers

- Grace Brown

Childrenswear Award sponsored by Mothercare

- Bethany Dodd
- Emily Jagger

Fashion Styling & Creative Direction Award sponsored by Size?

- Chloe Greenaway

The Fashion, Fashion Communication and Fashion Design and Marketing BA (Hons) programmes at Northumbria have seen many graduates going on to enjoy successful careers at brands and agencies across the globe, including Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren and Nike, with the University's School of Design having an established reputation at the annual Graduate Fashion Week exhibition.

Harriet Eccleston graduated from Northumbria University in 2017 and her career is going from strength to strength. With numerous awards to her name – including being named as Young Designer of the Year 2017 Award at the Midlands Fashion Awards – her work continues to feature in prestigious magazines around the world. Just back from Moscow where she was one of 10 designers selected to present her designs at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Russia, as part of a Global Talents initiative, Harriet will show her first, own label collection this year.

Harriet said: “I always hoped to have my own label but that has happened much sooner than my original plan and I am so excited about what's ahead.”

Of her time at Northumbria, Harriet added: “The quality of the teaching and the amazing support from people with very different backgrounds is what stands out for me. The tutors were so helpful and like-minded – always encouraging to get the best of you. It was a great experience for me.”

Kristen Pickering, Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University, said: “At the end of four years of study, it's incredibly exciting to see the fashion students' catwalk collections but also to reflect on their individual design journeys. As Programme Leader I'm extremely proud, not only of the individual outcomes but also of our students tackling both contemporary and controversial subjects.

“Our programme ethos? It's all about craft. Practical skills – knit, print, hand embroidery – are at the core of what we do. Not forgetting the future of fashion: digital print and fabric technology. Graduate Fashion Week is the perfect showcase for our fashion students to display their individual design signatures. This is the visual handwriting that says what they're about.

“We are also immensely proud of our students on our other two programmes; Fashion Design and Marketing and Fashion Communication. Fashion Design and Marketing students have explored trend and creative craft skills to

produce unique fashion design, products and promotion for future markets.

“Fashion Communication students address the intellectual and cultural demands of an ever-changing society and audience through image, experience, film, and the written word. The staff and technicians at Northumbria University have supported the fashion students every step of the way. We look forward to seeing the indelible impact our fashion graduates have on the fashion industry at large.”

For further information on Fashion at Northumbria, please visit the [Graduate Fashion Week page of our website](https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/events/2019/06/northumbria-university-at-graduate-fashion-week-2019/) - <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/news-events/events/2019/06/northumbria-university-at-graduate-fashion-week-2019/>

Case studies, additional photos and interviews are available

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