

THE RISE OF THE FASHION FILM

BRITISH COUNCIL PRESENTS

DRESSING THE SCREEN

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Dressing the Screen: The Rise of Fashion Film brings together work by some of the world's most famous and innovative fashion designers and filmmakers from the last 75 years.

London is considered by many to be the birthplace of fashion film and it is still the centre of activity today. Dressing the Screen explores the origins, history and pioneering role that British filmmakers and designers have played in the development of the medium.

This exhibition charts the evolution of fashion film in three main sections. The first comprises pre-internet experiments such as the early films of Ossie Clark, Zandra Rhodes and Mary Quant; the next examines the groundbreaking work of female filmmakers and how they respond to shooting the female body with work by Marie Schuller, Sarah Piantadosi and Amanda Boyle for Mulberry.

Dressing the Screen concludes with the very latest advances in fashion film, showcasing visionary technological innovations by filmmakers including Sølve Sundsbø, Bart Hess, SHOWstudio's Nick Knight and Ruth Hogben, Quentin Jones and Henry Holland.

“The digital revolution has transformed nearly every part of our daily lives, shaping how we share information and how we view the world. This new media has had an enormous impact on how we experience fashion.

From online virals to fashion blogs and platforms, the growing thirst for fashion imagery seems unstoppable. Fashion film has become one of the main tools for showcasing this digital generation, giving immediate access to high fashion delivered in an exciting and dramatic way.

This exhibition celebrates a new genre, still in relative infancy, giving a comprehensive overview of its development and as the genre is constantly shifting and morphing by the season, it also explores possible future trends.”



Belfast born Kathryn Ferguson is a filmmaker and curator working with both the British Council and the British Fashion Council specialising in the emerging genre of fashion film.

She has directed short films for fashion designers and musicians including Chloe, Selfridges, Sinéad O'Connor and Lady Gaga. Her experimental film work has been selected for film festivals, screenings and group shows around the world including OneDotZero, the 59th Berlinale, the V&A and Birds Eye View Film Festival at the BFI. As well as her own filmmaking practice Kathryn also works as a Curator and Lecturer at London College of Fashion & Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design. Her work with the British Fashion Council has also seen her join a curatorial panel creating a new seasonal film festival called Fash/on Film, which takes place at Somerset House during London Fashion Week.

Working with the British Council, Kathryn has travelled around the world visiting countries including Bosnia, Nigeria, Slovenia, Portugal, the Philippines, China and Indonesia giving talks, screenings and hosting filmmaking workshops. Building on this work, in October 2012 she curated an extensive fashion film exhibition commissioned by the British Council titled Dressing the Screen: The Rise of Fashion Film staged in Beijing as part of the UK Now Festival. The exhibition explores the origins, history and pioneering role UK filmmakers and designers have played in the development of fashion film.



FOUR-TELL

FOUR-TELL (2013)

Director: Kathryn Ferguson

Collaborators: Selfridges / SHOWstudio

Length: 11:23 mins

This celebration of International Women's Day was produced in collaboration with London department store Selfridges. Four-Tell explores the successes and achievements of four female role models: architect Zaha Hadid, creative consultant Sharmadean Reid, academic and journalist Caryn Franklin and fashion designer Bella Freud.

LADY GAGA / DAZED DIGITAL (2009)

Director: Kathryn Ferguson

Collaborators: Lady Gaga and Dazed Digital

Film Length: 01:55 mins

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This short film was produced by Kathryn Ferguson with the musician Lady Gaga during the rehearsals for Glastonbury Festival 2009. Lady Gaga models designs by some of London's emerging designers to a soundtrack played by herself on the piano.



LOOKING BACK:

THE RISE OF FASHION FILM 1938 – 1999

This section explores the evolution of Fashion Film from 1938 to the end of the twentieth century, a period marked by huge innovations in mass communications. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, technologies like film, television and radio flourished. Cut off from the fashion capitals of Paris and New York, British designers began experimenting with film; embracing the medium as a way of promoting their work to audiences worldwide on an unprecedented scale.

By the 1960s London was firmly on the fashion map. British music, film and fashion had become intrinsically linked in a period of astounding creativity marked by a burgeoning fashion-savvy youth culture. Television and film spread the word internationally and designers such as Ossie Clark and Mary Quant produced short films full of stunning fashion images that perfectly encapsulate the era.

The next major innovation in fashion film was arguably borne out of the club culture of 1980s London. The boundaries between fashion, performance art and film had become blurred and the result, captured by innovators such as John Maybury and Vivienne Westwood, mesh film, fashion and theatricality in unprecedented ways.

This section concludes with the work of Bella Freud, one of the first fashion designers to eschew the traditional catwalk show and present her work solely through film.

MAKING FASHION (1938)

With special thanks to the BFI National Archive

Director: Humphrey Jennings

Designer: Norman Hartnell

Film length: 06:22 mins

This film showcases the Spring 1938 collection of Queen Elizabeth II's dressmaker Norman Hartnell. An unusual commission for filmmaker Humphrey Jennings, who later found fame documenting World War II, *Making Fashion* is shot in Dufaycolor (one of the earliest colour film processes). A rare document of 1930s couture, the film showcases what would have been considered the very height of fashion before the onset of war led to a more sober utilitarian style. Jennings's shots of Victorian fashion illustrations, interspersed with the models, are a clever reflection of Hartnell's inspirations.



THE MARY QUANT SHOW (1974)

(Excerpts from the 1960's)
With special thanks to the BFI National Archive
Designer: Mary Quant
Film length: 00:39 mins

Mary Quant was a British designer best known for her contribution to the swinging sixties and most importantly the mini skirt. In this film, featuring footage from the 1960s, we see one of the leading models of the era Peggy Moffat wearing Quant's designs whilst dancing and performing to the camera.



THE SOUTHBANK SHOW: OSSIE CLARK

(Footage from the 1960's)
With special thanks to the BFI National Archive
Designer: Ossie Clark
Film length: 01:22 mins

This footage from the 1960s is from a 1998 TV documentary about legendary fashion designer Ossie Clark, which shows a photo shoot cleverly captured on moving image. British music, film and fashion had become intrinsically linked during the period and Clark's designs encapsulate the energy and vitality of the times.

[EXCERPTS FROM]
**EXTRAORDINARY:
ZANDRA RHODES (1981)**

With special thanks to the BFI National Archive

Director: Peter Greenaway

Designer: Zandra Rhodes

Film length: 01:54 mins

This collaboration between famed director Peter Greenaway and designer Zandra Rhodes is an early example of the blurring of the boundaries between film, art and fashion. The models are clad in Rhodes' distinctive bold printed garments and the footage, cut to the beat of the atmospheric music, prefigures techniques used in many of today's fashion films.



THE SOUTHBANK SHOW: VIVIENNE WESTWOOD (1990)

With special thanks to the BFI National Archive

Designer: Vivienne Westwood

Film length: 07:54 mins

Now a household name, Vivienne Westwood’s work in the late 1980s veered away from the punk aesthetic that bought her fame embracing historical references including the costumes of the Ballet Russes and the Comedia dell’arte. This clip from London Weekend Television’s arts programme ‘The Southbank Show’ takes the viewer into a fairytale world where Westwood’s designs are set against an array of decadent backgrounds, puppet-like performances and nostalgic melodies. Westwood was the first fashion designer ever to be profiled by the illustrious show and this footage encapsulates the convergence of film, art and design during the period.

RIFAT OZBEK (1989)

Director: John Maybury

Designer: Rifat Ozbek

Film length: 20:22 mins

In this film John Maybury, a director known for his short films and music videos, unites the vibrancy of the 1980s London club scene with designs by Rifat Ozbek. Originally screened at London Fashion Week 1989, this is one of the earliest examples of film being used in place of the catwalk to showcase fashion.



STRAP-HANGING (1999)

Director: John Malkovich

Designer: Bella Freud

Film length: 10:47 mins

Bella Freud and John Malkovich collaborated to produce this compelling and unique film that breaks the conventions of a runway show. Strap-Hanging tells the quirky story of a Japanese boy so obsessed by tsunamis that he makes himself a pair of inflatable rubber underpants in case disaster strikes. Stepping onto the subway he encounters models including Kelly MacDonald, Arielle Dombasle, Laura Bailey and Liberty Ross clad in Freud’s designs. Traditionally fashion collections have a short shelf life with trend giving way to trend, season after season. Freud’s singular vision gives the clothes an afterlife.



THE FEMALE GAZE

Over the past five years a large number of female photographers and filmmakers have been drawn towards the possibilities of the fashion film, previously a medium dominated by male filmmakers. Groundbreaking, subversive and sometimes playful they have challenged stereotypes, shooting the female form in ways that are at odds with traditional representations of femininity and glamour and that question the relationship between garment and wearer.

This section is divided into two rooms. The first explores the use of bold dance, choreography and music in films by female directors. The second continues by looking at narrative, animation and the boundaries between art and fashion film.

FAN CLUB (2012)

Director: Ruth Hogben

Designer: Louis Vuitton

Collaborator: Katie Grand

Film length: 04:19 mins

Referencing the large, sexually-charged dance numbers of 1930s musical films by director Busby Berkeley, this film by Ruth Hogben celebrates fifteen years of Marc Jacobs at Louis Vuitton. The models are clad in identical outfits, coming together to form fantastical geometric illusions that belie their uniformity. The overall effect is to celebrate the female form whilst at the same time poking fun at traditional notions of glamour.



EASTERN PROMISES (2012)

Director: Marie Schuller

Designers: Alexis Mabile, Yiqing Yinb, Junko Shimada, Guo Pei, Somarta, Maurizio Galante

Film Length: 01:29 mins

Produced as part of a SHOWstudio series of films exploring fashion in East Asia, Marie Schuller's short film showcases eleven looks from emerging couture talent from Thailand, China, Japan and France. Eastern Promises juxtaposes sophistication and playfulness highlighting the intricacy and opulence of modern couture.



HELIOCENTRIC ELECTRIC (2009)

Director: Elisha Smith-Leverock

Designer: Fred Butler A/W 2009

Film length: 03:49 mins

One of award-winning director Elisha Smith-Leverock's earlier fashion films, *Heliocentric Electric* is both whimsically nostalgic and strikingly contemporary. The plain silhouettes of the dancers accent designer Fred Butler's dynamic headpieces, emphasizing the strength and skill rather than the beauty of the performers.



HOUSE OF HOLLAND (2011)

Director: Sarah Chatfield

Designer: Henry Holland

Collaborator: Testmag

Film length: 01:19 mins

Sarah Chatfield takes the bold, tongue-in-cheek designs of Henry Holland into the stylised environs of an American shopping channel in this parody of consumption. Chatfield directs with the perfect amount of irony as Pixie Geldof and Holland himself star as the programme's hosts whilst Dree Hemingway strikes seductive, humorous poses in the label's latest designs.





HOLLY FULTON (2011)

Director: Quentin Jones

Designer: Holly Fulton

Collaborator: Testmag

Film length: 01:54 mins

Quentin Jones studied MA Illustration at Central Saint Martins and has gone on to produce animations for Chanel and Victoria Beckham. This film takes the excitement of Holly Fulton's graphic prints and exotic inspirations into a surreal and humorously collaged orchestration that brings the collection vibrantly to life. The film features enticing colours, patterns and images with just the right amount of contemporary, creative female attitude.



LØV (2011)

Director: Stéphanie Di Giusto
Designer: Vanessa Bruno
Film length: 02:49 mins

Stephanie di Gusto frames Vanessa Bruno’s bohemian, Nordic collection in a compelling fairytale landscape. Gentle and evocative, the film has a beautifully considered colour palette that draws parallels between the garments and the landscape and is backed by a stunning instrumental soundtrack.



IS MY MIND FOR ME (2012)

Director: Sarah Piantadosi
Stylist: Ellie Grace Cumming
Film Length: 02:27 mins

Shot in a captivating and honest portraiture style IS MY MIND FOR ME depicts a woman clipping and then shaving her hair. Graceful and brutally beautiful the film raises questions about how tradition dictates the conventions of feminine beauty.



SKIRT (2011)

Director: Amanda Boyle

Designer: Mulberry

Collaborators: InStyle

Film length: 04:28 mins

British director Amanda Boyle captures the subtle significance of everyday objects in this 2011 commission for Mulberry, although unusually there is no product placement. Boyle's attention to detail and powerful style imbue the mundanity of the setting and actions with a significance that emphasizes Boyle's assertion that "the aesthetic choices we make express who we are".

FILMING THE FUTURE

The contemporary fashion film revolution began when British designer Gareth Pugh presented his Autumn/Winter 2009 collection solely through film. His collaboration with Ruth Hogben was played to a live audience during Paris Fashion Week and simultaneously streamed on SHOWstudio.

In the subsequent years fashion has embraced film like never before and viral fashion films and presentations have begun to challenge and even supersede the catwalk show as a designer's best means of promoting their work.

This section of the exhibition features the very cutting edge of fashion film. Oftentimes the clothes themselves have been relegated to a supporting role, as filmmakers move beyond traditional representations of fashion towards films driven by narrative and concepts shaped by new technologies.

SWEET (2000)

Director: Nick Knight

Collaborator: Jane How

Film length: 01:46 mins

Nick Knight is one of the most influential image-makers working in the fashion industry today and a pioneer of fashion film as well as the founder of SHOWstudio. An experiment in 3-D utilizing a CT head scanner (commonly used for medical procedures), Sweet features interpretations of the Spring/Summer 2000 collections of Hussein Chalayan, Comme des Garçons, Thierry Mugler and Yohji Yamamoto constructed by designer Jane How from sweet wrappers. The futuristic images rotate to the sound of a music box producing a lysergic, unnerving effect.



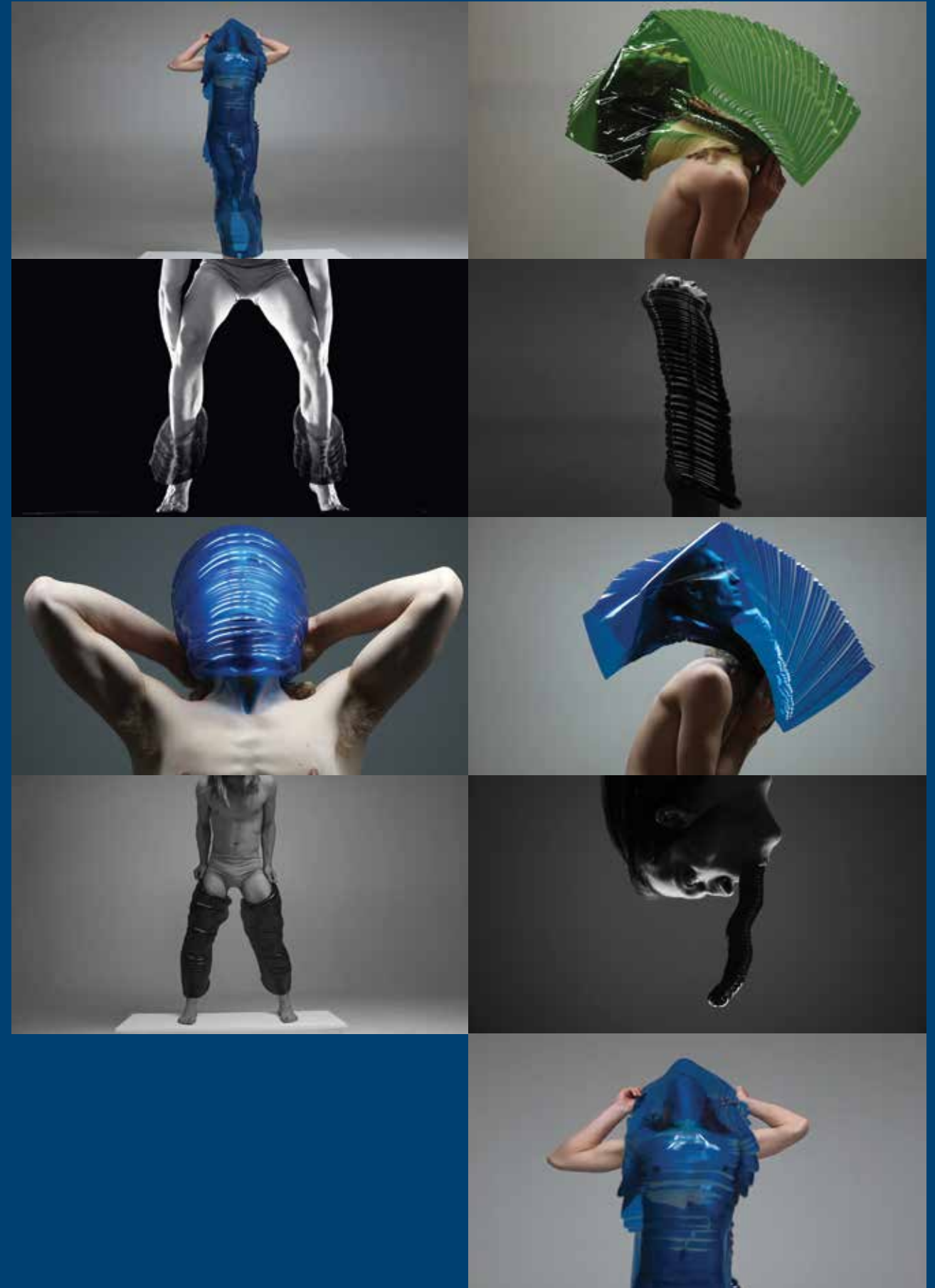
ECHO (2011)

Director: Bart Hess

Collaborator: National Glassmuseum in Netherlands

Film Length: 01:55 mins

Hess's 2011 short contrasts the human form with digital manipulation to create a hypnotic, deceptively simple animation. It features a model clad only in underwear encased in a digital shell that oscillates to the repetitive rhythms of the soundtrack.



THE EVER CHANGING FACE OF BEAUTY (2011)

Director: Solve Sundsbø
Collaborator: W Magazine
Film Length: 04:12 mins

Originally shown as a video installation with two 50-foot projections of the film facing each other, Sundsbø’s haunting work explores notions of beauty and challenges the idea that globalisation leads to homogeneity.

LANE CRAWFORD S/S 2013 CAMPAIGN

Director: Nick Knight
Film length: 01:08 mins

With this campaign for Lane Crawford, Nick Knight further pushes the boundaries of the medium, creating a film using motion capture and 3-D scanning instead of photography. The plain background emphasizes the dynamism of both the clothes and the technology in one of Knight’s most groundbreaking works.

AFTERWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS >

“This is a very exciting exhibition and I’m very pleased that we are able to add this dimension as a fringe event to DFW 2013 to help reach audiences in innovative ways: whether people come to this because of their interest in fashion or their interest in film we’re confident that what they take away will be the richness of the mix of the art forms and perhaps different ways of looking at both.”

Roland Davies,
Country Director, British Council Singapore

“The British Council is delighted to be presenting Dressing the Screen, Singapore’s first exhibition of fashion film. The exhibition highlights the UK’s strengths in the arts and innovation and the exchange of new ideas that inspire awareness of creative potential. Working with UK curator Kathryn Ferguson on a discipline that straddles both fashion and film, we have been able to fulfil our interest in engaging with the latest in digital technology and thereby in deepening our impact and audience reach.

Dressing the Screen corresponds to Digital Fashion Week’s aims to provide unprecedented access to fashion by showcasing a form of contemporary fashion expression that surpasses boundaries and is relevant to audience engagement in our digital generation. By positioning the exhibition as the fringe event of Digital Fashion Week Singapore 2013 British Exchange we extend the reach of the exhibition via the extensive digital platforms that allow for heightened cultural exchange.”

Sarah Meisch, PhD,
Director of Arts, British Council Singapore

“In recent years, Asia has become a major player in fashion. Countries like Singapore, Japan, Korea and China are positioning themselves on the creative world stage by combining rich new ideas with the sophistication of their cultural heritage, redefining what fashion is today. Singapore’s strategic geographical position represents an opportunity to be the meeting point for strategic design thinking, research and innovation. With this in mind, our academic programmes at LASALLE College of the Arts are set to meet the demands and challenges of the evolving creative industries. Contemporary in approach, the learning and teaching process emphasises innovation and the development of our future well-informed creative practitioners.

The presentation of the fashion film exhibition Dressing the Screen in collaboration with the British Council and Digital Fashion Week is a great opportunity to continue developing Singapore’s fast moving fashion industry in a time when new media is defining fashion locally, regionally and internationally. The new language for fashion is moving towards digital environments and the young around the world are at the centre of this revolution creating new online platforms, blogs and fashion films. This redefines the way we understand and communicate fashion today. Dressing the Screen takes us back to the roots of where this revolution first started in the UK, through a carefully curated selection of fashion films by film director Kathryn Ferguson showing the works of the most revolutionary and innovative British fashion filmmakers.

It is our great pleasure to work with the British Council and Digital Fashion Week to present this important exhibition at LASALLE’s Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore. This project will contribute tremendously to a vibrant, on-going dialogue between artists and creative practitioners from Singapore and those from other parts of the world.”

Professor Steve Dixon,
President, LaSalle College Of The Arts

“The focus of #DigitalFashionWeek Singapore 2013 – British Exchange is to incorporate a British essence. Beyond being curated by a UK fashion filmmaker, Dressing The Screen provides insight into another dimension of fashion by exploring the filmography of fashion. Furthermore, it contains a unique and thought-provoking section on the female gaze within fashion films. DFW would like to show the different facets of fashion, delving deeper and breaking down common knowledge that fashion is simply about the runway and glamour. That is also why #DigitalFashionWeek Singapore 2013 – British Exchange is proud to have Dressing The Screen as our fringe event. Through the collaboration with the British Council, we hope to support Singaporean and British artistic talent and both countries’ creative industries.”

Charina Widjaja,
Project Director, Digital Fashion Week Singapore

About The British Council

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. We work in more than 100 countries and our 7000 staff – including 2000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year by teaching English, sharing the Arts and delivering education and society programmes. We are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. A core publically-funded grant provides less than 25% of our turnover which last year was £781m. The rest of our revenues are earned from services which customers around the world pay for, through education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. All our work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and supports prosperity and security for the UK and globally.

The British Council’s global arts team works with the best of British creative talent to develop innovative, high-quality events and collaborations that link thousands of artists and cultural institutions around the world, drawing them into a closer relationship with the UK.

About LASALLE

LASALLE College of the Arts provides tertiary arts education within a dynamic environment that reflects the collaborative and interactive practices inherent in contemporary art. Founded in 1984 by De La Salle education, Brother Joseph McNally, LASALLE today offers a full range of diplomas and degrees in design, fine arts, film, media arts, fashion, dance, music, theatre, art therapy and arts management in the region. LASALLE was the first Asian College to be invited to take part in the London’s Graduate Fashion Week in 2010.

About Institute Of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS)

The Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS) is the curatorial division of LASALLE College of the Arts. It runs seven galleries, comprising some 1,500 square meters of gallery spaces dedicated to exploring new and experimental art across the Fine Arts, Design, Media Practices and Performing Arts. Its programme focuses on showcasing international, Asian, Southeast Asian and local contemporary arts. Its public programme includes regular publications, seminars and symposiums, visiting artists talks and events of contemporary performance, installation, design and music/sound practices. The ICAS is committed to providing a cultural and educational tool for students and the Singaporean audience to advance their knowledge and appreciation of the contemporary local, regional and international arts, that is not otherwise available in Singapore today.

About Digital Fashion Week Singapore

#DigitalFashionWeek is the world’s first shoppable live streaming fashion week. A joint partnership between DFW Creative, You Tube, Google+ and Twitter to bring the latest fashion to consumers in real time. Online viewers worldwide are able to watch live fashion week action such as backstage. pre/post show interviews and runway shows, and interact with DFW throughout all major social networking platforms instantly. Viewers are also able to make instant purchase off the live runway, with a delivery period of 4 to 8 weeks.

Aligned with the four major fashion weeks’ calendar. DFW will present two seasons annually (Spring/ Summer and Fall/Winter) in different cities, raising the profile of each city’s home-grown designers via its digital platform – Digital Fashion Week, Fashion Without Boundaries. Digital Fashion Week Singapore debuted on 20th to 22nd October 2012, with supermodel Andrej Pejic, legendary fashion icon Patricia Field, America’s Next Top Model cycle 18 winner Sophie Sumner and China’s top fashion designer Guo Pei alongside 6 top Singapore fashion designer labels as part of the event Digital Fashion Week Bangkok and Digital Fashion Week Shanghai will be launching in 2014.

Exhibition Curator

Kathryn Ferguson

Project Presenters

Sarah Meisch / Director of Arts, British Council Singapore
Kendall Martin-Robbins / Programme Manager, Architecture, Design, Fashion, British Council London
Evonne Mackenzie / Deputy Director of Architecture, Design, Fashion, British Council London

Exhibition Design & Branding

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Project Consultant (Singapore)

Cherry Chan / System Sovereign

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Lay Hong Ker

Digital Fashion Week

Keyis Ng / Creative Director

Charina Widjaja / Project Director

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Vicky Richardson / Director of Architecture, Design, Fashion, British Council London
Katelijn Verstraete / Regional Arts Director, British Council
All of the designers and filmmakers included in the exhibition
BFI National Archives

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This guide has been published to coincide with the exhibition Dressing the Screen: The Rise of Fashion Film. An official fringe event of Digital Fashion Week (DFW) Singapore 2013 - British Exchange, Dressing the Screen is supported by the ICAS and LASALLE. It opens to the public on 28 September 2013 and will run for four weeks in the lead up to Digital Fashion Week Singapore.



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