

Mesmerising the crowds Oxford Fashion Week

Leila Siddiqi discovers the fashionable heart to Oxford during a week of show-stoppingly stylish shows

WITH the Oxford May Day Ball and May Day celebrations, the beginning of May is always an exciting day for Oxford. However, this year it was twice as eventful, as it marked the beginning of the much-awaited Oxford Fashion Week. Sponsored by Clarendon Centre, The Malmaison, Argenteus and various other prestigious names, the string of high-profile, glamorous events panned out over a period of five days gave the city known primarily for its historic colleges and beautiful architecture a chance to show off its creative streak. Oxford Fashion Week, featuring some of the top names in the British fashion industry provided students and professionals in the cultural, almost dream like city of Oxford with an opportunity to witness and participate in dramatic fashion shows, swanky exhibitions and fashion centred talks hosted in some of the most magnificent venues Oxford has to offer.

Held at Oxford's magnificent Town Hall on a sunny Saturday afternoon, Oxford Fashion Week commenced with The Style Show, featuring nine runway shows showcasing the best of the high street brands including L.K Bennett, Zara, Reiss and French Connection along with designs from promising new talent from London College of Fashion and Oxford's own Ruskin School. Ukrainian designer Zinaida Likhacheva and the delightfully choreographed Cauliflowers catwalk show were definite show stealers.

The entire event made for a delightful day out and was attended by over 500 spectators, including designers, press and the public who enjoyed various stage acts (including a belly dancer and

Oxford Belles), drinks at the bar, facials by Dermatologica, hair advice from Mahogany (official hairdressers for OFW) and plenty of designer stalls to browse through.

“Fashion is a huge, exciting and versatile industry. The best way to get in is through work experience.”

The next event of the week was The Forum, an intellectual talk and debate on the fashionable lives of the five guest speakers, including Dolly Jones (editor, Vogue.com), Claire Wilcox (senior curator, Victoria and Albert Museum), Frances Card (managing director), David Gandy (Dolce and Gabbana Supermodel) and Tony McGee (ace photographer). The event was held in the historic Oxford Union and proved to be a fascinating and informative evening providing aspiring young designers, photographers, models and journalists with an insight into the British fashion

Capouche Amandine.

industry. All five speakers' individual accounts of their journeys to the top of their fields emphasised the importance of hard work, strong people skills and the importance of facing up to challenges with confidence. “Fashion is a huge, exciting and versatile industry. The best way to get in is through work experience. The essence of Vogue is a fashion service and it was difficult to get people to see the website as a legitimate journalistic platform. My biggest challenge has been making the website more beautiful. People still don't give it the same exclusive image as the magazine but it is updated everyday, whereas the magazine is monthly,” stated the lovely Dolly Jones.

Exclusively hosted in the Randolph's grand ballroom, The Concept Show, featuring over 38 London-based and international designers, lived up to the hype and was undoubtedly the week's most exciting event. All the right ingredients to create a glamorous and almost boutique-like ambience were present: extremely catchy music, wonderful presentation and enthusiastic fashionistas treating themselves to champagne and indulgent cupcakes. The swanky white ramp looked picture perfect, with dramatic chandeliers hovering on top amidst hot pink lighting. The hour-long show was divided into three sections, each featuring attractive models in outlandish outfits, often evoking surprised gasps and shocked murmurs from the mesmerised audience. Some of the most well received designs included Jo Cope and Gabriella Marina Gonzalez's creations as well as Ara Jo and Yvonne Lau's Lady Gaga pieces. The crowd was delighted by Piers Atkinson's hats, especially by the showstopper 'Fauna' from the milliner's 'All the World's a Stage' collection. Also worth mentioning are French milliner Emilie Zannon's wonderful headpieces (which go by the label Capouche) and Anoush Waddington's fascinating neck



Disney hat.



PAUL WARRING



TONY CUSHAW



Anoush's neck piece.