



CALIFORNIA FASHION ASSOCIATION

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FIDM Graduates Its First Class of Menswear Design Students

By Deborah Belgum | Thursday, June 25, 2015

About 200 people attended a reception and exhibition to celebrate the graduation of the first-ever students who completed a new advanced study program for menswear at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles.

At the exhibition, the seven menswear students in the program displayed three looks from their collections and then were graded by a panel of judges on things such as tech packs, fabrics and colors, and accessories collections to go with three apparel groups, themes and distribution strategies.



The panel of nine judges included FIDM menswear instructors as well as **Ilse Metchek, California Fashion Association** president; James Costa, design director at Jachs NY; T.J. Walker, Cross Colours vice president; and Joe Knoernschild, co-founder of Hurley and Billabong USA.

Awards were given out at the June 18 event to two students. Zachary Hall from Pasadena, Calif., won the “Most Marketable Collection” prize, and Devon Figueroa from Peoria, Ariz., won the “Most Innovative Collection” honor.

Hall’s inspiration for his collection came from science fiction. “I like the futuristic world” and the human ingenuity it spawns. His collection of jeans, soft jackets and T-shirts also included a long, dark cape with oversized epaulets. Hall plans to launch his own line, called Katabasis.

Figueroa looked to the Spanish conquistadores for his collection’s inspiration. “I chose the Spanish conquistadores because that is my heritage and their influence was so far-reaching,” he said.

This summer, Figueroa is completing a product-development internship at Nordstrom in Seattle. The other five students in the program were Ken Fung from Hong Kong; Seung Wan Han, Jiyeob Jang and Hyunkyung Kim from South Korea; and Manuel Padilla from Gardena, Calif.

One of the highlights of the academic year was a seven-day visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti to visit garment factories. In Santiago the students toured in Santiago the Grupo M factory, one of the largest woven and knit manufacturers in the Caribbean region. The huge conglomeration of factories makes clothes for Dockers, Levi’s, Hanes, American Eagle Outfitters, Under Armour and Jockey.



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Grupo M Vice President Joseph Blumberg showed students how to do everything from transform designs into tech packs to fabric production.

Then it was on to Haiti to another large Grupo M facility that employs 7,000 sewing-machine operators who sew garments and then send them back to the Grupo M facility on the border, where the clothes are laundered, sent to treatment and dye facilities, and then packed for shipping.

The students were also hosted by Jagsport, a small, full-package contractor in Santiago that does one to 250-unit orders, primarily for school uniforms. Wacoal, a Japanese lingerie company with operations also in Santiago, showed students production processes that could be applied to any kind of apparel.

“Part of the tuition included a trip to the Dominican Republic and Haiti to see contractors,” said Roni Miller Start, the FIDM chairperson of apparel-industry management, menswear, who helped launch the program.

She noticed that all the final projects being done by the advanced students were often in menswear but they didn’t know how to do menswear. In addition, almost 300 companies use FIDM’s career center for menswear. “There are jobs out there,” Miller Start said. “But right now they have to train people to do menswear when the students already have the basic pattern, sketching and sourcing skills.”

Menswear also is an area of fashion that has really taken off. That was reiterated by Costa of Jachs NY.

“This program is important because menswear is one of the fastest-growing categories in fashion and one of the least utilized categories in fashion schools,” he said.

Cross Colours’ Walker noted that it was good that FIDM has carved out a dedicated menswear program that has an emphasis not on men’s suits and dress wear but sportswear.