

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART FASHION SHOW, 1947-2017

Exhibition Celebrating 70 Years
4-26 March 2017

This exhibition celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Fashion Show at The Glasgow School of Art (GSA). Over the years, the format, location and emphasis of the event have changed, although collaboration, team working and GSA's Students Union remain central to organisation. Through photographs, film, press cuttings and ephemera many of which are held by GSA's Archives & Collections, the exhibition depicts a visual history of this annual undergraduate event.

On the 14th January 1947, students from the Art School and College of Domestic Science came together in aid of Charities Week, to present a mannequin parade of more than 30 specially made outfits. During the early years of the fashion show local press commented on different styles of garments, from 18th-century dress to modern swimsuits. The extra-curricula nature of early shows is apparent, with students noted as working during the holidays. Reports from the 1952 event mention a student committee charged with organisation. The programme for the coronation themed 1953 show, lists a team comprising convenor, associates, stage director, publicists, treasurer, electricians, compere, graphic designer and mannequins.

Unusual materials and accessories, in particular headwear, commonly feature in shows of the late 1950s and early 1960s. From the mid to late 1960s more wearable and functional garments appear, often displaying geometric patterning and sometimes developed due to industry connections and competitions. During this period the event relocated from GSA's Assembly Hall, to various venues

including the Mackintosh Building, with shows in the Lecture Theatre, Mackintosh Room and Museum. Shows were also held at external venues including Culzean Castle and the Scottish Design Centre.

GSA's Haldane Building became a regular choice for events throughout the 1970s. Large-scale placement prints, embroidered motifs, oversized garments and costumes featured in these shows. From the mid to late 1970s the theme of the fashion shows, decided upon by the organizing student cohort (usually from the 3rd Year of a 4-year course of study), directs event design. For the 1977 'Fashion Circus' show, models paraded on a floor of sawdust and a gorilla costume featured. For 1978, the impactful visual identity of the show depicts a silhouette wearing a red carnation; this detail follows through to the programme, ticket and corsage worn by the show's compere. The programmes from this period state that garments can be purchased from students via the relevant department. The Bourdon Building Assembly Hall, now GSA's Library was also used for the event.

The first known audio-visual recording of the event is from 1982; this and other recordings (1984, 1985 and 1986) show a range of outfits from costumes to more wearable garments. Throughout this period shows appear to engage with topical, social and political themes, through performance-like presentations. The majority of 1980s shows took place in the Assembly Hall, the Students Union, indicating support for the event from GSA's Students Association. Throughout the history of the fashion show the involvement of students from departments across GSA is apparent, particularly when associated with GSA's Activities Week.



Photographs from the mid 1990s show backdrops, in front of which a mix of outfits are paraded. At this time, textiles at GSA was divided into 'Printed & Knitted' and 'Embroidered & Woven'. During this period design aspects of the show became more integrated into the undergraduate curriculum. By the late 1990s, as build up to Glasgow's year as City of Architecture and Design 1999, there was a shift in the scale of the show and large venues were used around the city. Themed 'Morphogeneis', the 1998 show included 40 collections, with projections of video works by GSA's Interior Design students. In 1999 GSA's textile departments were amalgamated into a single Department of Textiles combining embroidery, weave, print and knit.

At the start of the new millennium, large-scale fashion shows continued, taking place in the Fruitmarket and the Arches. The show moved back to GSA's Assembly Hall in 2004 and the 'boutique' was introduced to raise additional funds. With curriculum change the organisational aspects of the event were integrated into the textile design curriculum. This is still the case today, students work in groups and aspects of the project are delivered by GSA's Careers Services. Recent shows have provided opportunities to work on live projects with external organisations and companies, or with practising designers.

The Students' Union, renamed 'The Art School' continues to be used as the venue for the show, although external sites were used during the development of GSA's Reid Building. The introduction of undergraduate fashion design at GSA in 2010 has meant that garments by fashion student are shown alongside those produced by textile students. Themes of recent shows have challenged students to consider the role fashion can play in the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes, explored issues of cultural appreciation and addressed gender neutrality.

For the 70th Anniversary fashion show, 21-22 March, 3rd-year fashion and textiles students have selected a period between '1947-2017' for inspiration. Tickets can be purchased from the GSA Shop or tickets-scotland.com

Special thanks go to those who responded to the GSA fashion show call for items and information. Particularlry to those who have lent and donated material. If you have any information or items please contact archives@gsa.ac.uk



Image: GSA Fashion Show Flyer, 1953
GSA Archives & Collections, GSA/EPH/01/1920/07

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