

Future Fashion

Fashion isn't just about the latest handbags or skirt length. These four designers look at the future of fashion, from embedded computer chips and LEDs to digital printing, virtual runway shows and convertible, mechanised outfits.

So much in the world of fashion is about *the now*. But some fashion designers don't care about current trends; they're more interested in the future of fashion. And they're not waiting for the future to arrive; these designers are dragging stitching and draping into the computer age, with technologies that will transform a jacket into a fabric-based computer, or utilise the latest in digital printing. How will the huge leaps in technology, printing, or wireless communication influence fashion? These designers will show you.

Hussein Chalayan

www.husseinchalayan.com

Hussein Chalayan's fashion career began with his 1993 graduate show at Central St Martin's which consisted of silk dresses that were buried in his back garden for four months and then exhumed. Since then, he has created a dress that can be folded into an airmail letter and posted and also, in his Spring/Summer 2007 show, *One Hundred and Eleven*, presented a history of the 20th century by transformed garments mechanically from one era to the next.

Guided by subject matter not readily connected with fashion, the British Cypriot designer's work represents his comment on the world, and history, science, anthropology and technology inform the ideas behind his collections. The Design Museum in London recently showed his first large-scale British exhibition, *From Fashion and Back*, focusing on his innovative use of materials, meticulous pattern cutting and progressive attitude to new technology.

The foray into retail, however, will run concurrently with Chalayan's more explorative work. "In many ways the clothes are by-products of the concepts I work with, monuments to the ideas," he says. "What the visitor sees in *From Fashion and Back* is how different worlds relate to each other and how everything is interconnected." **Sam Eichblatt**



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THIS PAGE: Lasers and lights in Hussein Chalayan's Spring/Summer 2008 show, *Readings*; a transforming mechanical garment from his Spring/Summer 2007 show, *One Hundred and Eleven*.

Nadeesha Godamunne

Auckland

Nadeesha Godamunne's first collection, a range of three dresses that won her a spot at Italy's *Mittelmoda Fashion Awards*, is surprising in every way. First, it's deceptively simple. What appears to be a layered series of garments is, in fact, one basic knit slip dress with shoulder pads to lend structure. The *trompe l'oeil* effect (literally "to trick the eye") that gives the collection its name hails from the Baroque period. Godamunne also loved early Cubist works where a three-dimensional image was flattened across a two-dimensional surface. "I thought, 'How can I do that with clothes?'" she says.

With the help of technology, as it turned out. Godamunne, currently completing her Honours in fashion illustration at AUT, used its Textile Design Lab to print her illustrations onto fabric. The process involves hand-drawing, scanning, painting and pattern-making. "The sewing is the easy part," the designer says.

With John Galliano and "weird directional stuff" as influences, it's not surprising that Godamunne is already questioning the boundaries of her discipline: "I'm interested in designers who question how people actually wear clothes," she says. **Sam Eichblatt**



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Nadeesha Godamunne

RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT: Two dresses from Nadeesha Godamunne's student collection *Trompe l'oeil*.

Lilypad

www.hlt.media.mit.edu

High-Low Tech is being touted as the 'new craft' with an aim to integrate traditional craft with high-tech engineering, producing pieces like embroidered circuits, paper computers, or temperature-sensing scarves. Dr Leah Buechley, the director of the High-Low Tech research group at MIT's Media Lab in Boston, recently visited Auckland to work with AUT's Textile Lab.

Buechley is an expert in the field of electronic textiles and has designed pieces including a bike jacket with flashing turn signals that are operated by lifting the arm, creating a garment with built-in and controllable safety features, while at the other end of the spectrum, she has designed a thick cuff bracelet with LED lights that flash in different patterns and colours.

Buechley has made her research accessible for crafters outside of the lab. She invented and sells the LilyPad Arduino, a basic (and low-cost) construction kit that enables novices to build fabric-based wearable computers. With this kit of parts, crafters are able to imbed computer chips, lights and sound devices into fabric, embroidery or knitting. **Nicole Stock**



“High-Low tech is being touted as the ‘new craft’.”

THIS PAGE: A cuff illuminated with LED lights; Turn Signal Biking Jacket. FACING PAGE: Lonely Hearts' Fashion Week installation using LG screens; digital print on Mohair; a shot from the installation film.

“Technology has opened up an emotional response to our work – we’re just learning that.”

Steve Ferguson



Lonely Hearts

www.lonelyheartsclub.co.nz

For anyone who saw its installations at the previous two NZ Fashion Weeks, Lonely Hearts' embrace of new technology will be familiar. Eschewing a traditional show, the designers teamed up with electronics supplier LG to present *What Is Your Damage?*, a continuous, circular plasma screen projection of their collection that played on the opposing idea of an ancient cult: it took place inside a 'cave' of unravelled VHS tape with a primitive soundtrack composed for the show.

“It gave the audience a perspective you usually only get in films,” says one of Lonely Hearts' three designers, Steve Ferguson. “Technology has opened up an emotional response to our work – we’re just learning that.” It has also brought them closer to a worldwide audience. After two stories on the installation appeared on the Fashion Toast blog, visits to the Lonely Hearts website spiked sharply and enquiries from all over the world now arrive daily.

As well as incorporating technology into their fashion shows, the designers have also worked with AUT's Textile Lab in developing prints that can be digitally printed onto fabrics like Mohair, which has been difficult to clearly achieve in the past. **Sam Eichblatt**