

# Rebecca makes a stir in world of fashion

There have been quite a few stand-out designs made in Norfolk at Norwich Fashion Week (NFW) over the years. Jo Randall's multi-coloured dress made out of dried glue at last year's Designers Show was probably one of the most talked-about pieces all year (no doubt her collection for NFW 2016, which featured outfits made from recycled crisp packets will do the same), Hannah Smith, who first appeared on the NFW catwalks in 2014 with a show-stopping ball gown embellished with roses, has continued to wow fashion week audiences with increasingly more mature collections since, and Chloe Kent who showcased her designs while she was at City College Norwich back in 2012, has gone on to complete a BA (Hons) Fashion at Norwich University of the Arts and has set up her own fashion label called Blu Studios in Norwich while she considers completing an MA in fashion.

The Designers Show is always the catwalk where you can discover new and exciting talent. This year one of the new aspiring designers to take their first steps into the world of fashion design is Rebecca Ball, who has already won a competition to have one of her designs on the catwalk at Lisbon Fashion Week in Portugal as part of design collective Away To Mars. Rebecca, like all the

Aspiring fashion designers took to the Norwich Fashion Week catwalk to showcase designs made in Norfolk at The Designers Show. Fashion editor **EMMA HARROWING** talks to Rebecca Ball, one of the youngest designers at Norwich Fashion Week 2016 about her first collection, appearing on the catwalk in Lisbon and how it is important to never stop learning.

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other aspiring and established designers/makers on the catwalk, showcased an eight outfit collection at OPEN. All this and she is still studying for A Levels in English Literature, German and Textiles at Thorpe St Andrew sixth form.

Despite her mere 18 years, Rebecca is ambitious and like many aspiring fashion designers she wants to design clothes that will be sold in shops and showcased on catwalks around the world. Judging by her determination and the fact that her designs are already getting noticed, she could be likely to succeed. I caught up with Rebecca at The Designers Show to find out more:

**How did you get involved with Norwich Fashion Week (NFW)?**

I saw on the NFW website that they were looking for designers to apply to take part in The Designers Show, an event that I went to watch last year, and I thought that this year I want to see my designs on the catwalk. I've been looking forward to the show all year, ever since I was accepted to take part. It's great to work with models, hair and make-up artists and everyone else who has put the show together, as well as meeting the other designers.

**How would you describe your collection for NFW?**

It's colourful and bright! The collection I have made features a few different techniques that I have learnt on my A level course. A couple of items are my final pieces that I made for two of the units, and these include techniques such as rust dye, puff paint, batik and machine embroidery. The shapes of the items are fairly simplistic as I wanted the colours to be the key aspect to the collection, bright, fun and vivid, as this incorporates the theme of circus (which is this year's theme of The Designers Show).

One of the most important aspects of the collection is the dyeing method I have used. Similar to tie dye, it allows the fabric's colour to be really unique as the same colour and pattern can never be achieved again.

Most of my pieces are made from silk as I love working with this fabric and it drapes and moves perfectly on the models. My collection includes skirts, tops, a dress and a cape.

**Is this your first full collection?**

Yes it is, and I was worried I wouldn't get it done in time as I haven't made so many clothes before, but it is all good practice for the future! I have only made a couple of items at GCSE and A Level, so taking part in Norwich Fashion Week has been quite a big jump, but it has definitely pushed my ideas forward positively into actual garments, which is great.

**What inspired your collection?**

For some pieces such as the crop tops I just wanted them to appear youthful and fun, and for the other items, such as the bright coloured skirt I was inspired by artists who use a lot of colour and detail, such as artist Mary Katranzou and some

■ Thorpe St Andrew School and Sixth Form A-level textile student Becki Ball working on some more fashion ideas.

Pictures: ANTONY KELLY



**I see that you have collaborated with Away To Mars - what is this about and how did you get involved?**

Away to Mars is a collaborative fashion brand aimed to promote design innovation. I found out that they were holding a design competition so I entered and the design managed to get a place to be made and shown in their catwalk show in Lisbon on March 13.

**Studying for A levels at the same time as designing must be a bit of a juggling act, how do you manage?**

It is quite difficult. It is hard balancing time between fashion opportunities like this and studying, because I need to get the grades to get into university. I love playing sports too and doing music-based activities, so that takes up some time. However, taking part in activities like NFW gives me a bit of a break from studying, as it really gives me a taste of what it could be like if I was to have the job of a designer. When I first applied to be a designer for NFW I wasn't entirely sure if I would have been able to get eight pieces made in time because of so much school work, but I wanted to get involved in the show, and fashion is something I want to do in the future; so I went for it! I think it is just about balancing the time right. You have to make sure you work hard at school, but also make some time to do the things you love,

of the colourful work from Alexander McQueen's spring 2003 collection. I am normally inspired by nature a lot of the time, especially for my A level work, where my project was based on The Natural World.

**Why are events such as NFW important to up and coming designers like yourself?**

Opportunities like these are very valuable, and I think Norwich is really lucky to have this week-long fashion event, especially as each year it gets bigger. It is quite hard getting everything made in time if you are busy with other things, but sometimes putting a little extra pressure on yourself to get things done gets you further in life and it makes you feel more proud of your achievements. Getting a career in the fashion world is really tough, so by having an extra piece of experience like getting involved in NFW is a really great way to stand out from the rest. Events like NFW are really important for up-and-coming designers if they want to get noticed and most importantly get experience for what it is like in the fashion industry.







**What's happening at Norwich Fashion Week 2016?**

■ **Today**  
Design and Enterprise Day at OPEN. This free event features the NFW pop-up shop where you can find fashion made in Norfolk and talks by Van Dal, The Shackleton Clothing Company, Caro London and the Costume and Textile Association. The event takes place between 10am and 4pm.

■ **Tomorrow**  
Fashion Excess, sponsored by Dr Martens. It's the finale show of NFW 2016 and as usual this show mixes live music - this year from local bands Soft Fiction and No Holy Men with fashion from high street, designers and independent boutiques. Fashion Excess takes place in the clubroom at OPEN, Castle Meadow. Tickets £5 in advance and £6 on the door from OPEN, Bank Plain, [www.open247.org.uk](http://www.open247.org.uk)



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**Why gorse inspires both love and hate**

This is obviously going to be a spring when, for the most part, flowers will appear at intervals rather than in a wonderful flush of colour. However there is one exception and that is gorse for the verges are now showing large drifts of the yellow flowers.

Gorse is definitely a plant which is both loved and hated. Anyone who had a close encounter with a gorse bush will confirm that those spikes really are very sharp. At an army training camp it was found that paratroopers and gorse bushes did not mix at all well. However when the growth is young some animals find the branches very palatable.

It has always been said that gorse bushes cannot stand a frost. This may have been the case some years back when winters were long and hard, but it seems they can withstand odd frosty nights quite well. The botanist Linnaeus was very fond of gorse and would have loved to have grown it at his home in Sweden, but sadly there the winters were much too cold.

It is very easy for gorse bushes to burn and they do so with intense heat. For many years they were used as fuel in bread ovens and before that were often the source of heat for funeral pyres. The fact that they burn so easily is sometimes not an advantage and as a result many a picnic party has unintentionally been responsible for disastrous heath fires.

In the autumn, after flowering is over, the ripe dry pods on the gorse bushes will begin to explode. The layers of tissue on the pods dry unevenly and this serves to build up tension ensuring that the seed is ejected as far as possible from the bush, and distances of up to 7m can be achieved. Each seed bears a little globule of fat which is very attractive to ants which will carry the seeds even further from the bushes, where they may be deposited in slightly damper conditions to aid germination.

It is quite sad that it is now very rare to see the beautiful, white washing which gipsies spread on the gorse bushes to dry in the sun.

which is sometimes easier said than done.

**What are your future plans?**

I am planning on having a gap year and I have applied to university for 2017. I intend to study fashion design at either the Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts, or at the Norwich University of the Arts. Hopefully in my gap year I can try and get an internship in fashion, I have tried applying for some, but it is very difficult. I'm also going to Germany for a few months as I'm taking part in a work abroad course.

**What is the biggest thing you have learnt so far in the world of fashion?**

You should never stop learning. There is so much out there in terms of fashion, so many garments, designers and shows that there is a wealth of inspiration that is constantly evolving. I have also learnt that fashion is a very competitive industry, so I want to do as much as I can whilst I am still young so I can get my designs noticed.

■ You can find out more about Rebecca Ball and her work on her website [beccifashion.weebly.com](http://beccifashion.weebly.com)

■ Don't miss your EDP tomorrow when EDP fashion editor Emma Harrowing picks some of her highlights from The Designers Show.

