Global-Inspired Fashion Show

For the first time, Kent State University School of Fashion studies debuted their work at New York Fashion Week on Sept. 9, 2022. Students shared the runway with International Fashion Academy Paris students and No Nation Fashion, a brand supported by the International Organization for Migration. Kicked off by remarks from President Todd Diacon, the inaugural show was co-hosted by Ann Walter, BA ’96, MEd ’19, director of New York City Fashion, and Jean-Baptiste Andreani, CEO of IFA Paris. Their shared purpose for the creative partnership was to increase student engagement and elevate recognition for two leading fashion schools and the impact of global cultures. Both schools understand the global nature of the modern fashion industry.

IAF Paris aims to join French fashion heritage with the world and is committed to sustainability as a corporate social responsibility-certified institution. With campuses in Paris, Shanghai and Istanbul, each year it welcomes students of 50 different nationalities, 95% of whom attend courses taught in English. Kent State University School of Fashion ranks among the top 25 in the world and the top 10 in the United States. It offers several study away programs, including New York and China, areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. NNF celebrates the meeting of cultures and promotes the inclusion of migrants in host communities through fashion. The brand is powered by the L'Neks International Organization for Migration with the support of its donors.

"The School of Fashion is committed to the values of authenticity, creativity, equity and community," says Walter, who worked in the New York City fashion industry for many years prior to becoming a faculty member. "Collaborating with IFA Paris and NNF further helped us to amplify the voices of people in the fashion industry who have been historically marginalized and underserved. It allowed us to live these values as well as our mission to transform lives through creative fashion education in pursuit of a sustainable world by connecting with others and pursuing positive change." More than 150 Kent State alumni and friends, IFA Paris guests and UN guests gathered on the top floor of NeueHouse Madison Square to see the work of top designers from both schools and Bosnian designers and migrants.

"Fashion is probably one of the most prestigious programs at Kent State," says Diane Helfers Petrella, dean of Kent State’s College of the Arts. She spoke at the show, as did Mourad Krija, interim director of the School of Fashion. "We are committed to investing in this program and letting it grow. I can’t think of any better way to show that investment than holding a show like this during fashion week in New York City."

—Lindsey Vlastic, BA ‘22

Learn more about Kent State's School of Fashion at www.kent.edu/fashion and New York City Fashion at www.kent.edu/fashion/nyfcfashion.

Global Wedding Traditions

Although wedding traditions vary around the world, many of them focus on clothing and textiles. Kent State University Museum’s current exhibit, As the World Weds: Global Wedding Traditions, draws from its rich holdings of wedding dresses and associated materials, as well as treasured pieces on loan from personal collections. The exhibition looks beyond the prevalence of wearing a white bridal gown—which has its origins in Europe in the 19th century—and highlights the rich and deeply symbolic clothing and textiles linked to wedding ceremonies around the world. From bright red robes for the Chinese bride and groom to handwoven kente cloth for the happy couple in Ghana, colorful, handcrafted textiles represent wealth and material well-being.

"Wedding dresses are one of the things most frequently offered to the Kent State University Museum," says Sara Hume, PhD, professor and museum curator. "People treasure them and keep them for the rest of their lives. I felt it very important to showcase some of the amazing wedding dresses we have, but also to challenge the assumptions people have about wedding traditions. Traditions have actually changed significantly over time and differ across cultures, which this exhibition aims to show."

Though the bride’s dress is often one of the central components of the ceremonies, there are many other participants in the festivities who have their own distinctive dress, including grooms, flower girls, mothers of the bride, members of the wedding party and invited guests.

After the wedding, many couples carefully store away the garments and other mementos from the celebration. The valuable memories linked to the festivities imbue these pieces with sentimental value and encourage their preservation and even donation to museums.

As the World Weds is on view Sept. 15, 2022, through Aug. 25, 2023, at the Kent State University Museum’s Broadbent Gallery. The exhibition is made possible with the generous support of Mr. Robert A. and Dr. Susan H. Conrad, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary; Regina and Gregg Eisenberg in honor of their 50th anniversary; and with additional funding from Leslie Royce Resnik and the Ohio Arts Council.

Visit the Kent State University Museum website at www.kent.edu/museum/event/world-weds-global-wedding-traditions. Discover different sections of the exhibition at gettheweddress.wordpress.com.

Above: A gallery view showing a range of wedding garments. Front, left to right: Grey silk chiffon wedding ensemble (American, 1800s); left of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Johnson in memory of Franklin Joseph Johnson; ensemble (Indian, 19th century); left of Mrs. Astor Miller; back, left; Mrs. ships embroidered silk summer wedding robe (Chinese, 19th century); Silverman/Hodgins Collection. Back, right: embroidered red satin bridal ensemble (long Ivory gold) (Chinese, late 19th century); Stavropoulos Collection. Front wall, left; brocade bridal curtains (Chinese, 19th century).