CAFA AWARDS

2020

The Canadian Arts & Fashion Awards were postponed from May due to COVID-19. As we wait to hear when the event will take place, FASHION celebrates the Womenswear and Menswear Designer of the Year Awards nominees. Here, we share looks from their most recent work and some of the things that inspire them.

Art direction and collage by DANIELLE CAMPBELL

HAVEN

Name: Arthur Chmielewski, co-founder. The brand is... “Authentic, functional, premium quality, timeless, innovative.” Proudest achievements: “The evolution in our process and being able to work with some of the world’s best fabric suppliers, expert craftsmen and production facilities in Canada and Japan.” Collabs: “New Balance, Vans, Clarks, Timberland, Dr. Martens, Converse.” Fall inspo: “We’ve brought several performance-driven fabrics to familiar classic Canadiana, military and workwear garments.”
BEAUFILLE

Names: Chloé and Parris Gordon. Fashion DNA: “We grew up in Toronto with a fashion-obsessed fine-artist mother. She always encouraged us to pursue creative projects in our spare time, taught us how to sew our own clothing on her little machine and infused our life with style and art. She has been hand-painting every wall, floor, ceiling, nook and cranny in our childhood home since she and our father bought it before we were born. Art and fashion were always around us growing up.” Inspo: Chloé: “Imperfections, nature, evidence of the hand, surrealist and abstract art, architecture, space.” Parris: “Music, flowers, abstract art, expressionism, people standing up for what they believe in.”

3.PARADIS

Name: Emeric Tchatchoua. Fashion DNA: “I grew up in Paris, where fashion is an integral part of the city. I don’t come from a fashion family—my mom is a psychoanalyst, and my dad is a diplomat for the UN.” Style icons: “Japanese designer Nigo, Salvador Dalí, my mother and father.” Inspo: “It ranges from emotions to philosophy, literature, movies, fine art, subculture and much more.” Life beyond fashion: “Creating furniture, photography, conceptual art objects.” Outlook: “It’s exciting that the fashion industry is slowly realizing that we can influence politics and culture.”

“The current world suffering really touches me deep in my heart, so I tap into these feelings and use art as a catalyst to get inspired, inspire others and spread a message of hope, freedom and unity.”

“Be yourself. Everyone else is taken.”
Names: Simon Bélanger and José Manuel St-Jacques. 

Fashion DNA: Bélanger: “Fashion has always been escapism for me; the sleepy suburbs where I grew up gave me a lot of reasons to want to escape. Versace in the ’90s was my favourite.”

St-Jacques: “I grew up between Chile and Canada but always in the countryside. My mother had this amazing costume box—although there were no costumes in it, only pieces of fabrics. I would spend hours rolling myself up in what I was convinced were the most luxurious fabrics imported from the most exotic places.”

Style icons: “Tilda Swinton, Maria Callas, Nina Simone, PJ Harvey, Cher.”

Inspo: “Everything. Fashion is connected to all spheres of human activities: technological advances, social structures and interactivity, religious beliefs, availability of materials, conception of the world, arts, music, literature.”

FRANK AND OAK

Name: Melisa Alessi, director of sustainability and product development. 

The brand is... “Purposeful, conscientious, elevated, functional, pioneering.” 

Proudest achievement: “Going rivetless on all of our denim. Modifying the visual aspect of such an iconic piece of clothing by removing the little metal fasteners was a risky decision and one we debated quite a bit. However, considering we no longer wear denim for the reasons it was originally designed (for miners in the 1800s), the rivets felt like trivial decoration. Shortly after, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation launched The Jeans Redesign project for circularity, and one of the criteria is to minimize the number of rivets used. We immediately became signatories. It was proof that sometimes you just have to follow your gut and do what feels right.”
Fashion DNA: Eliza Faulkner. "My mum made all of my clothes when I was a kid—she sewed everything from curtains to prom dresses and all of our Christmas pyjamas. My grandmother did the same for her, and my grandfather worked in the wool mills in New Zealand, quite literally weaving fabric."

Outlook: "Because of the pandemic, we are arguably living through the most exciting fashion moment. No one really knows how the industry will be working in six months or a year. I think it’s going to slow down a lot... Fashion has needed this for a while; it honestly feels like a bit of a relief. Small brands like mine have been working at a slower pace since day one, so it doesn’t feel too daunting."

Greatest satisfaction: "There’s a fantasy woman I always seem to be dressing in my mind—she’s sort of feral and wild and woody... but obviously very elegant and well dressed, too."

DIME

Names: Vincent Tsang and Philippe Lavio. Fashion DNA: Tsang. “My mom was in fashion as a pattern maker, so I grew up around fabrics and sewing machines. But when I started my career, I gravitated more toward photography and graphic design.” Lavio: “Growing up skateboarding, I was always interested in the design/artistic aspect of the culture, like collecting T-shirts, boards, etc. That was kind of my first step into style/fashion.” Inspo: “Megalithic structures, dinosaurs, active volcanoes.”

Greatest satisfaction: “Creating jobs that didn’t previously exist in our city. In California, there are many careers involving skateboarding. We want to show the next generation of Montrealers and Canadians that it’s a feasible career path.”

Fashion, just like skateboarding, is a tool for expressing yourself.”
JUDITH & CHARLES

Name: Judith Richardson, vice-president and creative director. Fashion DNA: “I believe my relationship with fashion started at church every Sunday. I was far more interested in what women were wearing than in listening to the sermon.”

Greatest satisfaction: “We recently launched a social media campaign to save our company after 28 years in operation. Due to the closures as a result of COVID-19, and a lack of support from our financial institution, we reached out to our customers for help through making a purchase. We were astonished at the outpouring of support. Our customers literally made it possible for us to stay in business. This was by far the most fulfilling moment of my career.”

HIP AND BONE

Name: Carlos Fogelman. Fashion DNA: “Our family’s involvement in garments and textiles spans several generations as textile distributors and seamstresses and created the foundation upon which Hip and Bone was built. The simple act of touching a fabric and knowing what it’s made of—its thickness, stretch and breathability—is, in my opinion, a true art, much like developing your taste palette.”

Inspo: “We pull from travel, walking the streets of some of the great metropolitan cities of the world. What their fans love: “We partnered with our cotton supplier to create the joggers that you will never want to take off. Our customers are addicted.”
"Do you support fast fashion? Or do you support brands that align with your values—that care about the environment and the people who make their clothes, not just the bottom dollar?"

RAISED BY WOLVES

Name: Calum Green. Fashion DNA: “I played a lot of baseball as a kid, which was the catalyst for my obsession with headwear. I used to collect a ton of baseball hats. In my teens, skateboarding and hip-hop opened my eyes to a world of branding, art, subculture and self-expression.”

Inspo: “Our wildflower all-over print was inspired by found military fatigues with hand-painted flowers. This design was a continuation of our ongoing Peace Camo series. My favourite piece is our six-foot Souvenir rug based on one of our most iconic and popular designs.”

GRETA CONSTANTINE

Names: Kirk Pickersgill and Stephen Wong. Fashion DNA: Pickersgill: “My aunt Sonia was a flight attendant who would always carry fashion magazines from whichever fabulous destination she had just returned from. At the time, flight attendants looked like models, and I was in awe of her glamorous jetset lifestyle. She had a colourful Oscar de la Renta dress that was unlike anything I had seen before. She called it ‘my Oscar.’”

Inspo: “For the past few seasons, we’ve looked to flowers—their architecture and the process of growing; the challenges of weather and light; and the role of the designer or gardener in cultivating a garden that is vibrant, diverse and rich with life.”

"It would be refreshing to think that in the future, companies will embrace diversity like they currently seek out profits and that stakeholders will ensure they are held accountable.”