

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2014

# FASHION **NXT**

Experience What's Next

## 2014

## Portland's **FASHION PROFILE** goes global

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STATION PLACE | PEARL DISTRICT  
**October 8-11, 2014**



Dress from the MT  
Costello line by Michael  
Costello. Costello is  
showing his Spring 2015  
couture collection at  
FashionNXT on Saturday,  
October 11. Photo by  
Rose City Photography.



📌 Creations by Chinese designer Song Hong will be shown at FashionNXT on opening night, Wednesday, Oct. 8.

# Welcome to FashionNXT 2014

## Portland's premiere fashion showcase

By **TAMARA ALAZRI**  
SPECIAL WRITER

Portland is a city often regarded for its emerging talent, and five “Project Runway” winners are reason enough to celebrate. We still may be leaps and bounds away from the glitzy, big brand fashion world of New York and Paris, but we’re cultivating our own brand of coolness. Time Magazine, The Wall Street Journal and even the Italian fashion magazine Flair have taken note. If you’re like most Portlanders, you may appreciate the independent streak that the Northwest offers. Many of us cherish the fact that anything goes here, and there are virtually no rules when it comes to fashion. You simply come as you are. But there are those who have

mentioned that they’d wish to see more of a high-fashion market here. “I recognize that Portland is casual and I do wish we’d see more of a luxury market here,” says Erica Lurie, owner and designer at Garnish Apparel in the Pearl District. It could very well be that Portland is like San Francisco in the ’60s. There’s a sort of counterculture happening in Portland right now, particularly with fashion. We’ve got a flock of people moving here from all over the world, and shops have to adapt their clothes to a broader audience. “Stores like Frances May, Stand Up Comedy and Table of Contents are introducing a new level of fashion to Portland,” says John Blasioli, former designer at The Portland Collection. “They are setting the bar for independent

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📌 FashionNXT runs Oct. 8 to Oct. 11 at Station Place in the Pearl District.

### ABOUT THIS SECTION:

“FashionNXT” is produced by Oregonian Media Group’s Custom Publications department.

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# Kai Yeung Yau

KAI YEUNG YAU is one of the two talented designers from Nganlok presenting his spring/summer 2015 collection at FashionNXT. Yeung studied fashion design in London before moving back to Hong Kong. In 2012, he helped to establish Beijing brands NICETOMEET U and UOOFO-STUDIO. His designs have been featured in “Vogue China,” Style Bubble and “The Daily Telegraph.”

Fashion watchers will be interested in seeing whether Chinese designers at FashionNXT receive as much recognition as their American and Western European counterparts. Within the industry, many more Chinese-American designers have earned success, like Alexander Wang and Derek Lam, but even they each started out with large fan bases.

There is a difference in the way American fashion designers and Chinese fashion designers communicate with their audiences, because of culture. “America is a society whose culture very much focuses on individuality. There is more freedom for designers to express themselves through their work,” says Yeung Yau. “In China, there’s less of this sense of individual-



➔ Kai Yeung Yau

ity to express one’s self, rather focusing more collectively, as an entity and a family.”

This is Yeung Yau’s first trip to the U.S., and what he’s looking forward to most is collaborating with other Ameri-

can fashion designers interested in taking their work overseas, into China. In terms of fashion, the U.S. provides more choices and more expression. “In China, it’s more of a status symbol and less about personality and taste.”

Fashion watchers can liken Yeung Yau’s aesthetic and vision to Chinese-American fashion designer Alexander Wang, whose contemporary designs are all about affordable luxury, and a representation of Normcore (a unisex fashion trend characterized by unpretentious, average-looking clothing). “More designers in China and all over the world are going in the direction of the middle market,” says Yeung Yau.

In 2006, Frida Giannini stepped in as Creative Director of Gucci and forever changed the name of “luxury,” rather opting for more of a Normcore style, essentially creating a more universal look. The further and further fashion evolved, the more Normcore, the more anti-brand and anti-image it becomes. Eventually, the whole world will be able to acquire luxury at middle market retailers. This is just what Yeung Yau is trying to accomplish as a designer.

With the Internet becoming the biggest platform for young designers to showcase their work to a broader audience, it’s becoming easier for designers to market; but they still have to be strategic. Currently, Yeung Yau’s strategy is to focus solely on selling in the China market, but he eventually hopes to expand his reach.

One thing he doesn’t want to see change is the way his clothes are sold in stores versus online. Taobao is a popular clothing website in China that sells relatively inexpensive fashions (it’s comparable to eBay). But Yeung Yau, whose average price point falls in the \$300 range, doesn’t see using Taobao as an easy fix to expanding his reach; he believes selling online caters to the fast-fashion customer, and wants to remain an in-store only brand or the foreseeable future.

Yeung Yau’s Spring/Summer 2015 collection will consist of unique quilting materials reminiscent of the ’60s era. “I’ve used a lot of subtle embroideries, so my work is elegant, simple and clear,” says Yeung Yau, an open-minded, young designer who can’t wait to travel to Portland.

# Michael Costello



➔ Designed by Michael Costello

You know what they say in fashion. Start small. Start simple. And grow your empire. That’s just what American fashion designer Michael Costello did as a child. But perhaps his success resulted from the extra-long hours he put in as a teenager when launching his very own couture collection at the age of 14, and opening a boutique at 15.

From that early age, Costello has maintained his love for dressing the female shape in feminine, luxurious evening gowns that would eventually become the embodiment of his brand. He originally launched his career as a contestant on “Project Runway” and later on “All Stars.” Draping has always been at the core of his design, and thinking back to old “Project Runway” episodes, he was one of the few designers who created a runway look with no such plan but a piece of beautifully cut Charmeuse fabric, which he’d drape in various directions over his naked mannequin.

With a worldwide and dedicated fan base of major celebrities, Costello admits that he no longer worries about sales and who’s going to buy his gowns. But it’s taken him years to get to this place. “Many people don’t realize how hard I’ve worked to get here. It’s been a solid 15 years of dedication and sleepless nights, with lots of failure behind me,” says Costello.

Apart from Christian Siriano, “Project Runway” winner of season 5, Costello remains one of the few designers from the show whose career has catapulted to success. This year marked his first solo debut at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week, where he presented a number of evening gowns.

In the past, the mermaid silhouette became one of Costello’s trademarks, but that’s

evolving into something much more glamorous, such as more separate looks of elevated sleeves, fitted embroidered gowns and textured silhouettes. His work is more detailed, varied and glamorous than ever. His classic mermaid silhouette is not as obvious, and is more conforming to the woman’s shape, instead focusing on the rich textures imported from Italy, specifically for this collection. He unquestionably designs for the glamorous woman.

Nearly everyone in the industry will agree that a fashion designer must demonstrate creativity and marketability to succeed, because that’s just what the market demands. At the end of the day, designers aren’t designing for themselves, but for their customers. Being able to find that balance of staying true to one’s self while having the ability to influence a wider audience can certainly become challenging.

Money aside, Costello gives some of his best advice in helping Portland designers to grow their own empires. His advice is simple: use social media. “I don’t think people realize how powerful a tool social media can be for their business, but it’s what helped grow mine, especially through Instagram,” says Costello. But the key is to utilize each channel for the right reasons. Find that balance of what works for you, and do it often. It’s all about consistency.

This will be Costello’s third year showing at Portland FashionNXT and this city’s fashion community couldn’t be more excited. To see his designs evolve over time is a magical experience. “I really think there’s something to be said for a city that houses five ‘Project Runway’ winners. You can’t deny that there’s talent there,” says Costello.



# Nganlok

Nganlok is a China-based design firm interested in recruiting a breed of young designers who are working to build a more extensive and global audience. The firm gains valuable international experience by referring its designers to study fashion in Western European markets like London and Paris before recruiting them back to Hong Kong to further develop their work.

Because of the fashion industry’s extremely competitive nature, it’s not uncommon for many graduates to find themselves working one or more jobs outside of design to support their business. “This sort of entry level work is common in what we’ve seen among young fashion graduates in the U.S. and Europe, which is what we’re trying to avoid,” says a Nganlok company representative who targets students with a background in fashion.

In China, a country responsible for consuming nearly

one-third of the world’s luxury goods, Nganlok is trying to move the fashion industry into a different direction by creating affordable fashions for the rapidly growing middle class.

It seems that the Chinese have always had a love affair with status and flashy premium brands. Therefore China represents a dichotomy, with two primary types of consumers: one that’s willing to shell out \$4,000 on a Prada handbag of their dreams, and another that happily opts for the knockoff version.

“You see a lot of copycat work here (in China), and we want our designs to be very unique. We want to blend personality with design,” says the Nganlok representative. Another observation is that the American market has embraced more affordable fashion brands than their Chinese middle class counterparts. Nganlok wants to see China be more American in that regard.



📌 Designed by Kai Yeung Yau of Nganlok

The wonderful thing about Nganlok’s work is that they’re all about innovation and target-

ing the next new wave of young designers who are interested in shaking things up in China’s

luxury market. The company is focused on designing fashions for those who can’t necessarily afford the Gucci or the Prada, but want to look and feel just as fabulous.

Two of Nganlok’s most prominent designers, Kai Yeung Yau and Yuanyuan Ji will be traveling to Portland to premier their Spring/Summer 2015 collection at FashionNXT’s *A China Moment* show on Oct. 8. Nganlok is interested in using FashionNXT to establish a professional exchange with American designers, and to determine whether young Americans are interested in showing their work in China. Having traveled to Paris, New York and Milan Fashion Week, they feel that those shows focus on the very commercial side of fashion, whereas FashionNXT offers more of a creative avenue. Its value is not necessarily to promote sales but to instill a level of creativity that isn’t so viable at other major fashion shows.

# Atiz Fashion House

Founder of Seattle fashion company Atiz, Swati Padmaraj hails from Mumbai, India. She moved to the States over two decades ago, got married, raised two children, then fulfilled her dream of working in fashion. But before fashion came a lengthy career in science after receiving her Masters in Inorganic Chemistry and Marketing.

“I came from a culture where becoming a doctor or lawyer were the only exceptions,” says Padmaraj.

While growing up in Mumbai, her culture was very much focused on a more traditional style of dress such as the tunic top, leggings and scarf. These elements are seen throughout much of her collection to date, yet with an American twist.

Within her Spring/Summer 2015 collection debut, FashionNXT guests can expect to see beautifully colored brocade gowns that are rich in



📌 Designed by Swati Padmaraj, Atiz Fashion House.

quality, silk collarless jackets and classic pep- lum styles that are perfect for daywear and evening.

Padmaraj started out designing ethnic wear in-

spired by her mother who almost always covered her head in a scarf. (It wasn’t like the traditional Muslim hijab that covers the entire head, just

the hair.) This look has become a staple piece amongst many of Padmaraj’s collections, and is known as the trench gown made from organza and outlined with floral embroideries.

She describes her “fashionista” mother as greatly influencing her love for fashion. “She used to call me her Jackie-O,” says Padmaraj, who nearly always cut up, sewed up or patched up her own garments. “I never wore something once without doing something to it.”

During the past 20 years, the fashions in India have evolved to become less conservative, although designers there are considered to be more traditional than American fashion designers.

“I grew up wearing blue jeans and T-shirts, because we had to wear breathable fabrics,” says Padmaraj. “People wear a lot of cotton there, but I don’t consider it to be the most environmentally friendly.”

Atiz creates clothes for women that give them a sense of empowerment. Cropped jackets with elevated shoulder pads, high quality fabrics and detailed finishings are her hallmarks. “Atiz gives the international woman a wearable experience in distinctive fashion that is at once exotic and recognizable,” says Padmaraj.

Seattle, and its fashions, must be a far stretch from India. Padmaraj does wish that more people in the Pacific Northwest would take the time to dress up. But, she believes there’s a tremendous potential market for fashion in Portland, and FashionNXT brings in a culture of an educated, empowered woman.





# International Day of the Girl takes a front-row seat at FashionNXT

By VICTORIA PRUETT

SPECIAL WRITER

The United Nations passed a resolution in December 2011 declaring Oct. 11 as the International Day of the Girl to raise awareness about all issues concerning gender inequality around the world.

FashionNXT 2014 and Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest will kick-off this year's celebration in Portland on Friday, Oct. 10. In preparation for this event, Girls Inc. members drafted a Proclamation of the Day of the Girl, signed by Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber and Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, stating the need for awareness, action and commitment to bettering girls' lives throughout the Pacific Northwest and across the globe. Girls Inc. girls will read the proclamation at the opening of Friday's FashionNXT runway show.

This is the second time that Girls Inc. and FashionNXT have partnered to inspire a connection with local girls and the

## EVENT INFO

Friday, Oct. 10

**Pre-runway show reception:** 6-8 p.m.

Station Place, Northwest Ninth and Northrup, Pearl District

**Tickets:** [fashionxt.net/tickets](http://fashionxt.net/tickets)  
Use code Girlsinc1410

design community. FashionNXT provides an opportunity for the girls to take part in a world-class fashion-forward lifestyle event with exposure to designers of all ages and backgrounds, from young emerging entrepreneurs to seasoned professionals.

Whether on the runway, in an art class, or a computer lab, inspiration and confidence are the seeds that drive our youth to reach for their dreams and make a difference in their communities and for their families.

"Girls Inc. works to ensure that girls have the support and skills to enhance their financial competence and confidence and to help



Girls Inc. will read a formal 'Day of the Girl' proclamation at FashionNXT on Friday.

them exercise control over their financial future," said Elizabeth Nye, Executive Director at Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest.

"Teaching girls about entrepreneurship and exposing them to successful role models in the design and fashion industries is a way that we can support girls' aspirations to start businesses that will contribute to our thriving community."

Vicky, a high schooler and Girls Inc. member, was a

participant in Day of the Girl at FashionNXT 2013. "Girls Inc. and FashionNXT helped me discover my personal interest in photography and pursue my dream of becoming a pediatrician," said Vicky. "Through these two programs, I have built up my confidence to feel comfortable in my own skin and become a better leader who will help my community."

Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest works to inspire all girls to

be strong, smart and bold. Since 1998, the nonprofit organization has been serving girls through after-school Girls Groups and enrichment programs. Their research-based curricula navigate a variety of topics from STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects and economic literacy, to whole body health, peer aggression, and leadership. In July 2014, Girls Inc. kicked off its Eureka! Program, whose purpose is to engage and educate girls around STEM and to provide a multi-year path to future career opportunities. Within the past year, Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest has served more than 1,000 girls. The organization aims to serve 10,000 girls annually by 2025.

Join FashionNXT and Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest to celebrate International Day of the Girl starting at 6 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 10. Guests will have the opportunity to meet members and staff, purchase raffle tickets to win a designer purse, and honor all strong, smart, bold girls worldwide.

## Show opens with *A China Moment*

East meets west on opening night of FashionNXT 2014 with the fashion show *A China Moment*, featuring the fusion of traditional and contemporary new designs from Shenzhen, China. Shenzhen fashions have graced runways in London and New York, and now will be seen exclusively in Portland at FashionNXT.

FashionNXT bridges cultures with international runway shows that reflect Portland's rich cultural diversity. Last year, FashionNXT showcased Philippines on the Runway, which was presented by the US-Philippines Society. The show celebrated Filipino-American History Month and was headlined by Manila-based designer Francis Libiran, whose fashions were worn by Miss Philippines when she was crowned Miss World 2013.

*A China Moment* is presented by QR Fashion and features gifted Shenzhen designers Lu Yu, Nganlok and Song Hong. Lu Yu has a Fashion and Art Design degree and has worked with My Teno and EIN, two leading apparel companies. She is also the founder of Maison LuYu, which delivers affordable, entry luxe lifestyle and creates the attitude of balancing both quality and fashion trends for urban professionals. It is known as the casual, spontaneous

and self-advocating clothing brand for career women.

Song Hong is the CEO and designer of CASHMERE, a prestige brand that combines simple yet fashionable scarves, dresses, shoes, gloves and a full range of products made with cashmere from beautiful Inner Mongolia.

*A China Moment* will show what is trending in China, while potentially opening doors to the China market for other international FashionNXT designers.

Shenzhen is one of China's most successful special economic zones. Located in Guangdong province bordering Hong Kong, Shenzhen is a financial and trading center known for its high tech industry, but also as an international fashion city. The city is home to more than 3,500 garment companies employing 400,000 people, and is the headquarters of more than 300 domestic and international top fashion brands.

Founded in Shenzhen in 2005, QR Fashion is a holistic creative agency that focuses on brand development and marketing of Shenzhen-based fashion throughout China and internationally. *A China Moment* kicks off FashionNXT at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 8.



Unique designs by Song Hong will be among many on display during *A China Moment*.





🔌 The QBracelet by QDesigns made waves in fashion circles with its sleek blend of wearability and functionality. The bracelet is used to charge smartphones, with a built-in rechargeable lithium-ion battery.

# What's the real next fashion frontier?

## Wearable computing

**F**ashionNXT is on the leading edge of the next fashion frontier – wearable computing.

In an interview with Fashionista, the iconic New York Times street fashion photographer Bill Cunningham said, “I think the fashion world needs to come to grips with reality: the reality is you have the whole country electronically connected.” Cunningham continues: “Look at the lines waiting to get into that Apple store on Fifth Avenue. Do you see a line waiting to get into Bergdorfs or Saks? The future belongs to this generation and the high-tech world is it!”

While astute, the esteemed octogenarian Cunningham falls short of making the critical connection between fashion and technology. James Kernan the

CEO QDesigns which makes the widely applauded QBracelet smart phone charger, is more direct. “The connection between fashion and technology might be critical, but it’s a very one-sided relationship,” says Kernan. “Fashion doesn’t need technology, but technology needs fashion.”

Kernan takes that message to heart with the QBracelet. “W” magazine’s digital editorial assistant writes, “This bracelet by QDesign... is so sleek and minimal you might be inclined to put it on even when you’re fully charged.”

Global technology companies are getting it. Google Glass is collaborating with Oakley. Samsung Gear is collaborating with Diesel. Intel launched its MICA smart bracelet with

Opening Ceremony and will sell through luxury retailer Barneys New York.

FashionNXT has been on the leading edge of this new fashion frontier. At FashionNXT in 2013, “Project Runway” winner Michelle Lesniak not only showed how Intel technology helps her create, she demonstrated how she could engage the World of Things to showcase her collection through gestures recognized by smart eyewear, a first in the world of fashion on a major runway.

This year FashionNXT is collaborating with Pacific Northwest College of Art’s Make + Think + Code program: Wearable Technology competition for Japanese student delegates.

FashionNXT will also continue to demonstrate how once defined

boundaries between fashion and technology have become blurred, through a Wearable Technology Fashion Competition, presented by Digital Trends. Executive Producer Tito Chowdhury gathered a “Who’s Who” in technology and fashion, to comprise the judging panel, including:

- **Jeremy Kaplan**, Editor in Chief, Digital Trends;
- **Howard Nuk**, Head of Industrial Design, Samsung Design America;
- **Michelle Lesniak**, Fashion designer, winner of “Project Runway” season 11;
- **Eden Dawn**, Style Editor, “Portland Monthly” magazine;
- **Russ Stromberg**, Account Director, Synapse;
- **Matt Rhoades**, Design Lead, Nike;

- **Mark Francis**, Venture Lead, New Business Initiatives, Intel;
- **Karim Rashid**, Global Design Visionary.

Rashid was recently named by “Interior Design & Architecture” one of the “Top 10 Interior Designers Who have Changed the World.” In bestowing the recognition, the magazine described Rashid as, “one of the best industrial designers of his generation.”

Portland could become the epicenter of wearable technology given its heritage of technology and fashion. The engagement of such luminaries in the Wearable Technology Fashion Competition affirms FashionNXT’s vision and its leadership in the convergence of fashion and technology. It’s leadership that’s seen nowhere else.





# Fashion: Show to feature tech, Chinese designers

Continued from Page 2

designers while offering more of a hybrid take to Portland's local scene, integrating both high-end designers and independent designers under one roof," he says.

I'd like to think that it's important for fashion shows to produce a similar quality of work, which means not just local. In order to grow as an industry, we must be able to target a broader audience as well.

Tito Chowdhury, Executive Producer of Portland's FashionNXT, has successfully raised the bar for the quality of fashion shows locally produced. "It's important to see the quality of difference with fashion, and the way to do that is by targeting a broader audience demographic," says Chowdhury.

His four-day annual show has gained national and international attention after being named the No. 1 fashion show outside New York by Time Magazine.

Apart from the spectacular venue, glamorous runway and high profile designers, the show is about so much more. "You have to be able to create an experience," says Chowdhury, an encounter I have yet to witness from other local fashion shows whose target audience is typically young twenty-somethings who attend just for the show. FashionNXT introduces a class of designers that come from all over the world such as "Project Runway" designers Michael Costello, Seth Aaron and Irina Shabayeva, along with this year's Chinese designers Lu Yu, Ganlok and Song Hong.

Since premiering in 2012, FashionNXT has become an internationally recognized fashion week that presents "what's next" on the runway and in the lifestyle plaza. And let's not forget about Costello, whose career has skyrocketed since we last saw him. Costello is taking his collection on tour this year, kicking things off in September at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week, followed by Dubai Fashion Week, Australia Fashion Week, El Paseo Fashion Week and of course, FashionNXT.

"I've designed a gorgeous collection of evening gowns, which I can't wait to show in Portland," says Costello. He adds, "It's everything I've ever wanted to make. I won't be showing any stretch gowns, but expect to see mermaid silhouettes. It's going to be a truly



➔ New designs like these by Lu Yu will be on display on opening night, Wednesday, Oct. 8, at FashionNXT.

luxurious collection with many fabrics from Italy." Costello, who has designed for the likes of Beyonce, Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton, will present his first solo collection at New York Fashion Week's Lincoln Center.

## Converging Fashion and Technology

FashionNXT has also focused on bringing the apparel and technology sectors together, as both are like a couple that people can't take their eyes off. They feed off each other and inevitably look to the other for ideas.

Irina Shabayeva, winner of

"Project Runway" season 6, will present her new line of high-tech fabrics to this year's runway show, something she's never done before. "I'm most excited to be part of a show that inspires innovation," says Shabayeva. Technology has even become an important tool for show guests to share their runway experience with their smart phones, and with the world beyond the show.

FashionNXT honors the ways in which technology has changed how we live. When Google Glass was first introduced in February 2013, designer Diane Von Furstenburg debuted the smart eyewear

product at her spring 2013 show in New York. Yet even before that, Chowdhury had covered a runway with black solar panels from Hillsboro's SolarWorld, which was then emulated two years later at Paris Fashion Week. The aspirational SolarWorld Collection created by Seth Aaron was shown again to great fanfare at LA Fashion Week.

In 2013, Chowdhury took the Google Glass experience to the next level by having Portland designer Michelle Lesniak demonstrate an original smart eyewear prototype on the FashionNXT runway.

This year, FashionNXT will in-

troduce a Wearable Technology Fashion Competition. While wearable technology is coming, the question is 'will it be worn?' The competition invites tech companies to compete for the most fashionable wearable technology. Global tech leaders such as Intel and Samsung are among those collaborating in the competition, presented by Digital Trends.

## Globalizing Portland's Fashion Profile

Through FashionNXT, Portland is moving to the world stage in fashion with designers from three continents. Last year, the US-Philippines Society chose FashionNXT to present Philippines on the runway. This year east will meet west again as models and designers will travel nearly 6,000 miles from China's Shenzhen province to walk the runway during opening night's main event, China Moments.

This is happening in Portland? Imagine that.

Long ago, Fern Mallis, former Executive Director at the Council of Fashion Designers of America, had a vision to change the global fashion industry by giving American designers a platform to show their collections on a world stage, and to be able to compete with the Europeans. The show she conceived was originally labeled as '7th on Sixth' before becoming known as New York Fashion Week. You can liken Tito Chowdhury to having a similar vision by giving a platform for both emerging and notable designers to continue to build their businesses, especially in Portland. For the past three years, Chowdhury's vision with FashionNXT has created a movement unlike anything visible in Portland thus far, but it comes with an obligation of investing a lot more hard work, a lot more time and a lot more education to inform others in the community. Like so many entrepreneurial minds, success attributes to seizing opportunities when nobody else will, and taking risks when others are scared. "Culture happens when people defy rather than conform," says Chowdhury.

FashionNXT runs Wednesday, Oct. 8 through Saturday, Oct. 11, at Station Place (Northwest Ninth and Northrup) in the Pearl District. The complete show schedule and tickets are available at [www.fashionxt.net](http://www.fashionxt.net).