

ENTER THE DRAGONS

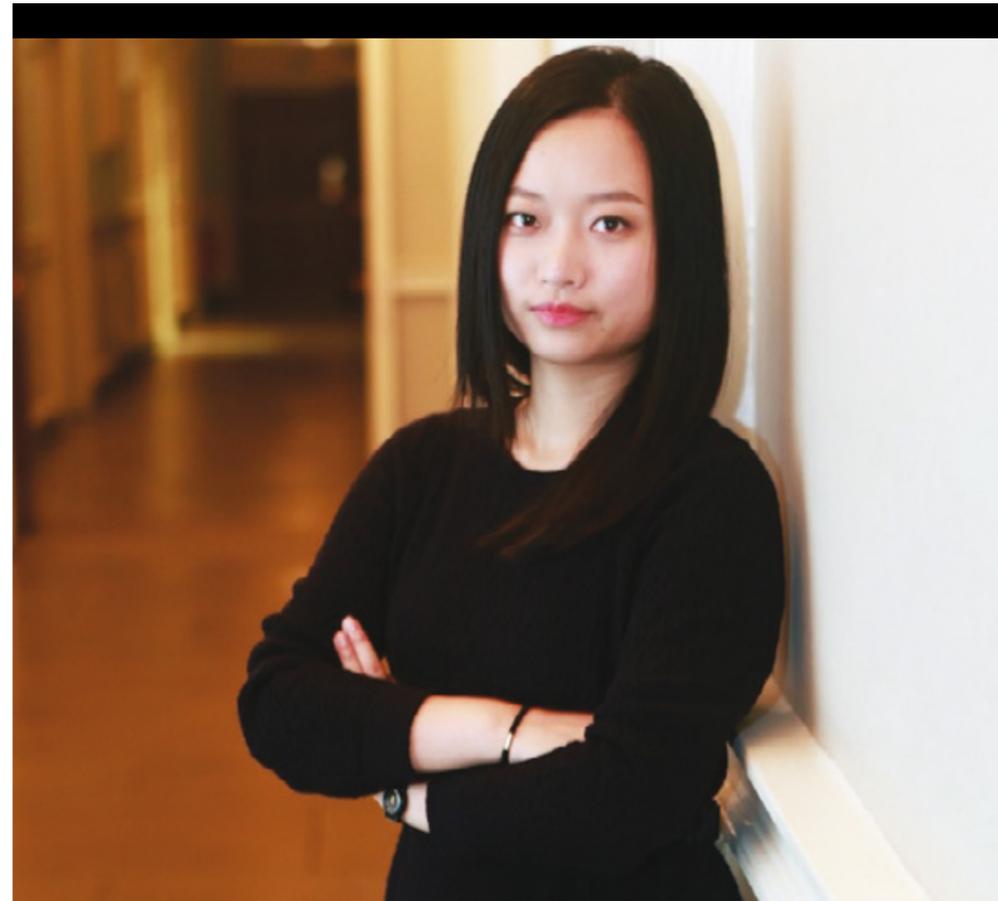
4 MAINLAND DESIGNERS TAKE LONDON FASHION WEEK BY STORM

London is fast becoming a hotbed for Chinese creativity, with emerging designers from Hong Kong and mainland China sharing the catwalk with global brands such as Burberry, Paul Smith and Vivienne Westwood. At London Fashion Week in February, *Zoey Goto* meets four of the talents at the forefront of a distinctly Chinese fashion wave sweeping Britannia.

With increasing numbers of young, creative and ambitious individuals from mainland China migrating to London in search of inspiration, it should come as no surprise that the British capital has witnessed a surge in Chinese designers. The number of Chinese students enrolling at art and design courses across the city's universities has risen a staggering 150 per cent over the past five years, and upon graduating many choose to stay in London, either working for design houses or starting their own labels.

In turn, Chinese retailers are offering their support and stocking the wares of these London-trained and based talents.

Chinese names are cropping up on the major London catwalks at a remarkable rate. To name but a few: the cartoon-loving surrealist Yang Du, recent Royal College of Art graduate Xiao Li, menswear designer Xander Zhou and graduates of the prestigious Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design Huishan Zhang, Yifang Wan and Haizhen Wang, who are regulars at London Fashion Week.



“ THE CHINESE CUSTOMER IS BECOMING SO MUCH MORE POWERFUL. ”

YIFANG WAN

FROM Xiamen
TRAINED Wan graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2010 and launched her own label in 2012.

DESIGNS Womenswear
CLAIM TO FAME Wan hit the headlines in 2012, when Lady Gaga became her first celebrity client – at a concert in South Korea, the queen of pop wore a piece from Wan's graduation collection.

WHAT ELSE? The designer has garnered praise for her clever use of draping and conceptual minimalism, and received the L'Oreal Professional Award for Young Talent for her degree show in 2010. She also won the prestigious Vauxhall Fashion Scout Award last year – a prize that included a sponsored catwalk show in London and Paris.

INSPIRATION Wan's autumn-winter 2014 collection is inspired by artists' and sculptors' studios, with soft, tactile fabrics such as wool and mohair. The collection might best be described as 'intelligent workwear': thoughtful and unexpected fabric manipulation transforms knee-length skirts, tailored trousers and smart shirts from their usual traditional office context.

SAYS "Chinese designers are appearing on the international stage and I think one of the reasons is that the Chinese customer is becoming so much more powerful."

WHERE? London, Milan, Shanghai, Beijing and Taipei.

WEBSITE www.yf-wan.com



HUIZHAN ZHANG

FROM Qingdao

TRAINED Zhang graduated from Central Saint Martins and spent a year working for Dior in Paris, before launching his own label.

DESIGNS Womenswear

INSPIRATION The autumn-winter 2014 collection is Zhang's attempt to reinterpret the textures of the landscapes he saw during a road trip through China. It features a refreshing use of colour and a broad palette of textiles, with fabrics that include intricate embroidery and crystal embellishment.

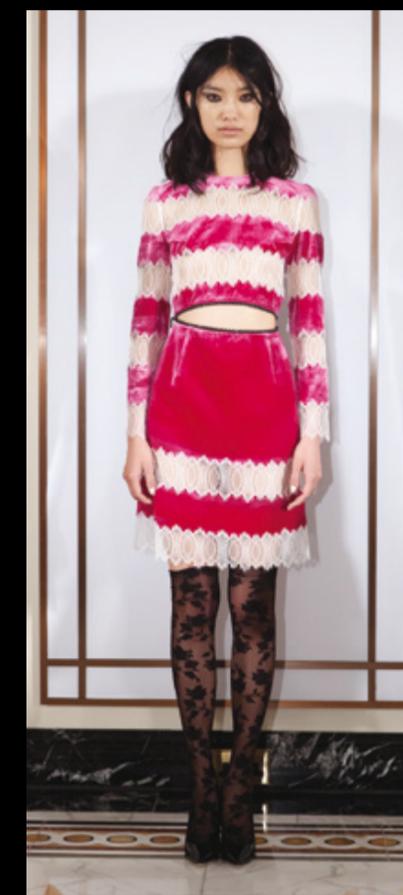
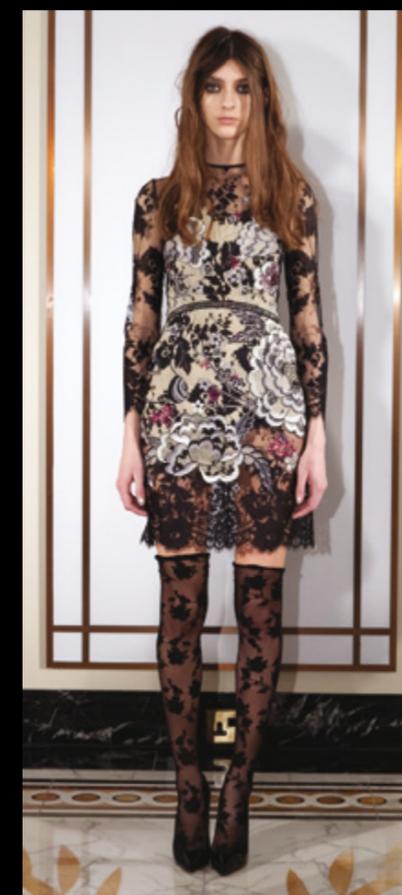
WHAT ELSE? Zhang has made a name for himself with his luxury womenswear that proudly declares itself as having been 'Made in China', and with his contemporary take on Chinese design.

SAYS "When I first started, people thought that putting a 'Made in China' tag on a luxury item was a joke! I try to introduce Chinese culture into my brand. This does not mean putting a large Chinese symbol on the garment; it is about making people see how Chinese values can be modernised and carried on with the new generation." He adds: "There is now an interest in what people in China want and think, so it is a good time to show the world our culture. My brand is trying to show that Eastern and Western cultures can become bound very naturally and peacefully."

WHERE? Zhang has showrooms in London and Paris. Joyce Boutique in Hong Kong and Shanghai also stocks his clothes.

WEBSITE www.huishanzhang.com

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“ YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHINA ARE INCREASINGLY ABLE TO SEE THE WORLD AND WANT TO MAKE THEIR OWN VOICE HEARD.”

YANG DU

FROM Dalian
TRAINED Yang studied fashion in Beijing then left China to gain a degree and masters at Central Saint Martins. She worked for the likes of Vivienne Westwood, Giles Deacon and John Galliano before starting her eponymous label five years ago.
DESIGNS Clothes and bags
CLAIM TO FAME Yang Du is the label of choice for celebrities such as Alexa Chung and Sammi Cheng.

WHAT ELSE? She has shown her distinctively vibrant and quirky collections at London Fashion Week for nine seasons, twice winning the New Generation showcase.

INSPIRATION Yang's designs are infused with a strong sense of the surreal. She credits designers such as Franco Moschino as her inspiration, while Galliano and Westwood showed her how to cross-reference different cultures while retaining her own identity. Her collection for autumn-winter 2014 features her trademark knitwear in kaleidoscopic colours, with accessories featuring kitsch animal faces. She was inspired by a humorous book by Takkoda called *Famous Faces*, in which cats, dogs and guinea pigs are dressed up as iconic humans such as Charlie Chaplin and Elvis Presley.

SAYS Yang recalls that when she was growing up in China, the creative industries were not considered a realistic way to make a living. "But since the country is developing financially, young people are increasingly able to see the world and want to make their own voice heard."

WHERE? Available exclusively from Joyce Boutique

WEBSITE www.yangdu-duyang.com/home.swf



HAIZHEN WANG

FROM Dalian

TRAINED The Central Saint Martins graduate worked at Max Mara, Boudicca and All Saints before setting up his own label in 2010.

DESIGNS Womenswear

CLAIM TO FAME He was selected by Christopher Bailey of Burberry as the winner of the Fashion Fringe Award.

INSPIRATION For his autumn-winter 2014 collection, Wang finds inspiration in a photo of a kneeling woman, with dots of shadow emphasising her spine. Taking this as a starting point to explore the body frame, he creates a collection with a strong emphasis on protective outerwear.

HIGHLIGHTS Belted leather macs have tactile fur sleeves and collars, and long tasseled neckpieces soften the angular edges of his sharp tailoring. Wang uses a monochromatic colour palette, with herringbone and houndstooth fabrics appearing throughout the collection.

WHAT ELSE? For London Fashion Week, Wang eschewed the traditional catwalk format and instead presented his models to the crowd at regular intervals – in a style reminiscent of Dior's 'New Look' collection in Parisian salons in the 1940s. In between presentations, he mingled with the crowd. "You get to meet the guests and talk to them," he says. "It's a new journey for me and feels fresh and exciting."

SAYS "Everyone is talking about China, not just in terms of the sales but also creativity. Chinese people are eager to be more involved."

WHERE? Wang has a boutique in Portobello Road, London.

WEBSITE www.haizhenwang.co.uk

“EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT CHINA, NOT JUST IN TERMS OF THE SALES BUT ALSO CREATIVITY.”

