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Highlights from Brighton Fashion Week 2015

Vikki Knowles (https://collectively.org/en/contributor/vikki-knowles/)

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Masquerade: House of Sequana

Upcycling, fair-trade and DIY skills just got sexier. That’s because another S-word, sustainability, took centre stage at BFW 2015 (http://www.brightonfashionweek.com/show/). Key to this was the much-anticipated eco-chic strut fest that is the Zeitgeist Catwalk Show (http://www.brightonfashionweek.com/blog/bfw-zeitgeist-show). It set All Saints church in Hove alight on Friday night. Zeitgeist highlighted game-changing designers and was – aptly – the high point of events, not to mention founder Lizzy Bishop’s fave.

WATCH OUR INTERVIEWS BACKSTAGE AT ZEITGEIST WITH DESIGNERS AND MODELS:



Zeitgeist: Models in Georgia Dorey / Photo: BFW

Ethical production processes were, of course, de rigueur for all designers. In taking part they had signed up to make a “pledge towards sustainability”. For some, that meant fishnet face-wear and dresses made from discarded McDonald’s and Coke packaging.

(https://collectively.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Screen-Shot-2015-10-21-at-18.30.10.png)

Impressions: Louise O’Mahony at Zeigeist, left. Right: Milica Vukadinovic /Photos: BFW

But while the designers and models just couldn’t keep the S-word off their lips, the key intention for Bishop was for output that might be mistaken for mainstream fashion and not, er, hippy clobber. “It was nice to show designers on the catwalk and for people not see that they were ‘eco’ as such – they were just amazing designs.”

“What was so nice about our event is that it wasn’t up its own arse”

While Zeitgeist lived up to its name in popularity, Bishop says the core drive of BFW is to pass on what it knows to the wider public. This education imperative was in full swing in the city’s Open Market. Fashion students and guest designers were whipping up glamour chic from a mountain of ‘rag-grade’ clobber on Thursday.

READ OUR COVERAGE OF THE ‘ONE TONNE OF CLOTHES’ FASHION SALVAGE EVENT
(<https://collectively.org/en/article/brighton-fashion-week-kicks-off-with-an-upcycling-feeding-frenzy/>)

(<https://collectively.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/brighton.jpg>)

But upcycling ain’t just for the trained fashionistas. “We had colleges engaging,” she says. There were lessons on how to upcycle and make things, how to sew, and swishing – pooling clothes and exchanging them.

Related story: Swishful thinking: How clothes-swap parties put the fun back into fashion (<https://collectively.org/en/article/swishful-thinking-how-clothes-swap-parties-put-the-fun-back-into-fashion/>)

Meanwhile, the wittily titled ‘Sew Fabulous’ classes took attendees through the basics of sewing both by hand and by machine. There was even a drop-in lunchtime repair clinic for garments waiting for that tomorrow which never comes.

Students from local universities – aka the designers of tomorrow – were offered free tickets to the events. And from Orsola de Castro’s fashion revolution talk, to SCAP (<http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/scap-2020-commitment>) [Sustainable Clothes Action Plan] workshops on reinventing design, and the ‘Future of fashion’ panel debate – the up-and-comers present weren’t pulling any punches.

Check mates: Minnan Hui at ShowReel / Photo: BFW

“You could tell they were a really engaged audience, being really challenging and asking lots of questions,” says Bishop.

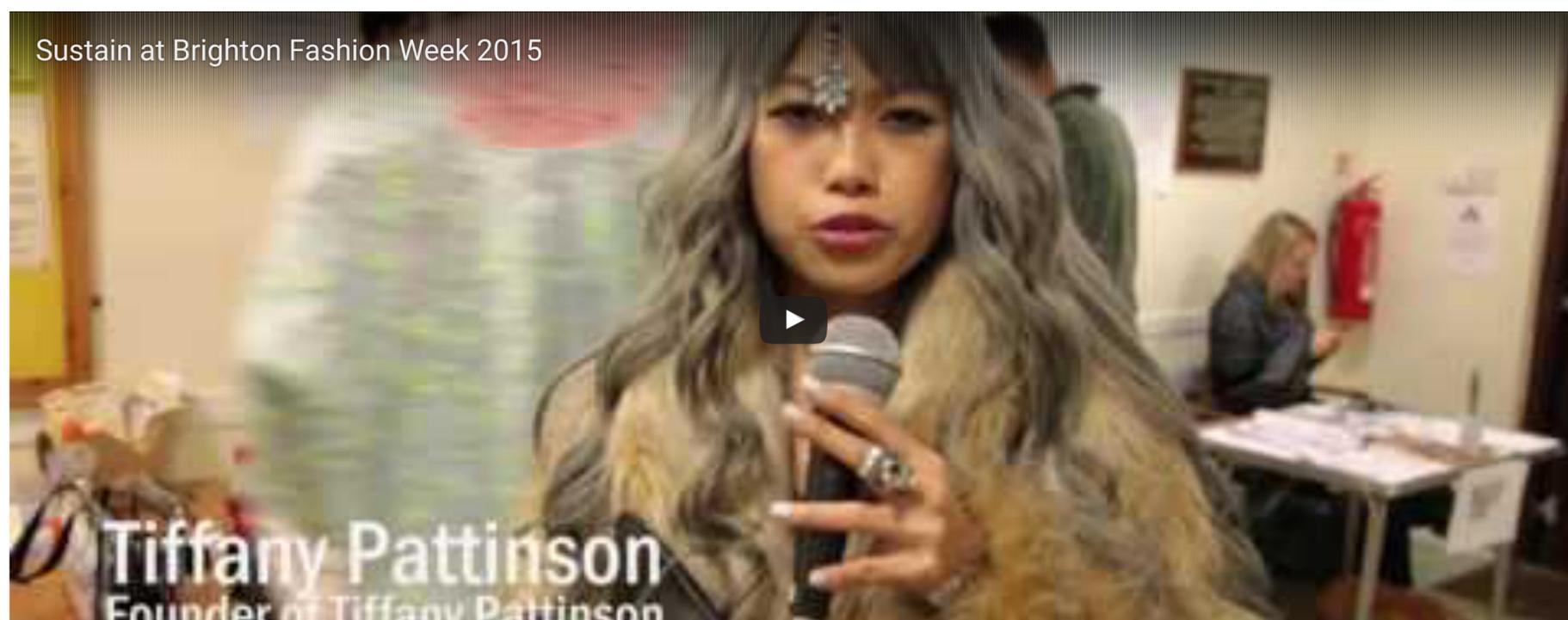
If feedback from the press, bloggers and designers is anything to go by, BFW was abuzz with a super-cool vibe. “What was so nice about our event was that it wasn’t up its own arse,” adds Bishop. “Everyone was friendly and kind, which just goes to show that niceness is in”. Yes we work in fashion, she says, but there is no reason to be ‘la-di-da’.

Indeed, Brighton Fashion Week has challenged a few of the usual ideals. “Hardly any of the models were below a size 10 and then we had mixed-race and all different types of models,” she tells me.

Shapes: Vingi Wong at ShowReel / Photo: BFW

And they’ve taken the sustainability story seriously – from the goodie bags, printing materials and even recyclable cups. But as Bishop assures me, “nothing can be 100 percent”. And the message isn’t to look at your newly purchased loafers in shame. Instead, it’s about challenging people’s perceptions and educating them. And that’s not to mention casting the spotlight on innovators. Bishop adds that a large number of sustainable designers have yet to make it to the catwalk. “I think it’s vital that this happens.”

WATCH THE CATWALK ACTION AT BRIGHTON FASHION WEEK’S ‘SUSTAIN’ SHOW:



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