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HKDI Alumni - The Spirit of Esprit

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HKDI ALUMNI: THE SPIRIT OF ESPRIT

Hong Kong- and Germany-based fashion brand Esprit was actually founded in 1968 in San Francisco with the aim of bringing a “sunny Californian attitude” to its wares, now sold in 40 countries via 761 directly managed retail stores and some 6,332 wholesale points of sale.

Its Esprit Cares Trust, set up in 1993, provides financial support and charitable donations to various communities and includes an annual exchange scholarship for HKDI design students to participate in full-semester or short study trips to renowned design schools in Europe.

Three such award-winners were sent to Germany recently and here we report on how they earned that trip and what the future holds for them.

LAM KIN YAN INSPIRED BY MOTHS ATTRACTED TO FLAMES

BA(Hons) Final Year Project:
Autumn/Winter 2018 Collection

Lam Kin Yan's outstandingly creative work “Into The Flame” earned him the prestigious HKDI Young Design Talent Award. Inspired by the phenomenon of a moth attracted to light, Lam has employed natural-dye methods, learned during overseas exchanges, and relied on natural materials to create his winning collection of pastel-coloured designs.

“I look for ideas when I go hiking,” said Lam. “That’s why I use natural dye; it relates to Nature, and colours are an important element in the design.” Remarkably fluid and unstructured, the shape of Lam’s designs and his choice of materials came from moths. “I use materials that are fuzzy to imitate the texture of a moth, mostly wool,” he explained. “For patterns, I took inspiration from the moth’s wings. I hand-pick all the wool I use.”



Tell us about your internship in Germany. What was the most challenging project that you were involved in and how did you learn from that experience?

During the internship at Esprit, I was part of the APAC team. We came up with designs for new seasons for the Asia-Pacific region. Apart from working with my teammates, I also got to work with members from the other teams and to see the whole picture. While coming up with a design, there was so much that we had to consider, such as the current trends, the result of our last collection, the market’s response, etc. Striking a balance between all these elements was not easy and that was one of the key takeaways for me. With the guidance of my mentor and other senior members of the various teams, I was able to fully contribute to the whole design process. Loads of effort was put into work, and we were able to come up with different designs and meet tight deadlines in the end. The sense of accomplishment I got was incredibly rewarding.

Did you enjoy the experience? What do you think you gained from it?

The experience was absolutely enjoyable. I have gained so much, personally and professionally. Having to take care of myself in the short absence from my family was not as easy as I imagined it would be. Although I felt homesick from time to time, I managed to live in the moments and truly experience every step I took in Germany. Looking back, I can see that I have grown to become a more independent and responsible person. In terms of work, the experience taught me how to collaborate with my team members, to liaise with different parties, as well as present my ideas and designs. All of which were important lessons for me to become a better designer.

What are your plans for the future — both in the short term and further into the future?

My short-term goal is to successfully complete my MA in menswear technology at the London College of Fashion. It has only been a month, but there is no time for me to take it easy. I have to catch up with the schedule and execute what I have in mind for my MA collection, one that will fully represent me.

In the long term, I plan to work as a fashion designer and bring to the table designs that are innovative and original. Being aware of this goal, I am now learning the necessary techniques and trying to gain inspiration from my MA studies and personal life. It is a long journey and I hope that the steps I take will lead me in the right direction.

WILSON CHOI

MAKING AN IMPACT ON
FASHION AND SOCIETY

REDEMPTIVE
Spring/Summer 2019 Collection

Wilson Choi graduated from Hong Kong Design Institute in 2016 and Nottingham Trent University in 2017. He is part of a rebellious young generation, inspired by social issues and contemporary events. He loves challenges and getting his hands dirty. Choi received the DFA Hong Kong Young Design Talent Award from Hong Kong Design Centre in 2016. He was also the second runner-up in the Hong Kong Young Fashion Designers' Contest in 2017.

After graduation, he launched a menswear fashion brand called REDEMPTIVE — providing high-end fashion in “street” style and to emphasise the practicality and quality of its garments. The brand's distinctive aesthetic is achieved by paying great attention to small details in all of the designs and creating a twist in an unexpected and modern way. Each collection has its own story to tell. Choi believes that the young generation has a rebellious personality propelled by a heart that pays attention to the world.

Did you enjoy the experience? What do you think you gained from it?

Having the opportunity to gain work experience at a corporation level is extremely valuable. Not only did it give me unparalleled insights as to how the fashion industry operates — from design to manufacturing to retail; interning at Esprit has also taught me valuable skills including communications and professional ethics, not to mention the life-experience of living abroad.

What are your plans for the future – both in the short term and further into the future?

After graduation and upon returning from Germany, I have started a fashion brand called REDEMPTIVE and launched its first season in Hong Kong. My focus is to build this label gradually: season-by-season, city-by-city. I am hopeful of launching next season in Shanghai, then Tokyo and perhaps European cities in future.



“// THE PPT SHOW - AN EXPERIMENT ON DESIGN //”

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GIM WONG

VERSATILE BACKPACK COMBINES
STYLE WITH COMFORT

The
Backpacker

Gim Wong was awarded the Create Smart Young Design Talent Special Award for her ingenious creation, the Backpacker. Her design caught the attention of the judges thanks to its ability to transform from a jacket into a backpack.

Wong, who was also named HKDI outstanding student of 2016, says she was inspired by the philosophy and concept of a world traveller. She created her piece using only a single piece of fabric joined by zippers. Made of waterproof nylon and cold-resistant wool, the Backpacker looks like a map when unfolded.

“The map is a reflection of a world traveller,” Wong explained. “When you fold it, you can never predict what shape it will form. It’s very much like a backpacker: when you’re lost you never panic, your journey is filled with surprises and you never know what will happen.”

Backpacker is a collection designed by Wong Lai Y Gim.

Each item is cut from a single piece of fabric, resulting in the absence of side seams and optimising the zero-waste principle. Ingeniously designed zips, straps and drawstrings act as functional embellishments that spice up the structure of the pieces. Designed for outdoor excursions, the collection uses wool and nylon which will keep you warm and dry.

Tell us about your internship in Germany. What was the most challenging project that you were involved in and how did you learn from that experience?

Sketch drawing. It was full of challenges, as I needed to translate our designer's ideas into drawings and reality. It was also one of my favourite parts about interning in Esprit.

How has the experience of working at Esprit inspired you in fashion design?

To design a collection and be able to recognise fabrics is no longer enough to succeed in fashion. A fashion designer needs to go deeper, to research, identify styles, create and, at the same time, foresee the most intriguing trends and lifestyles of the present and the future. Esprit is an international fashion brand and global company, with in-house design teams for retail chains, and for clothing manufacturers that produce large quantities for the mass market. During my time there, I gained a deep understanding of the ins and outs of clothing lines, explore various methods to build products that are useful and meet customers' needs.