

FASHION Has a STORY to Tell

Curated by Rhonda P. Hill, founder of EDGE Fashion Intelligence



"**FASHION** Has a STORY to Tell" highlights selected work from international emerging fashion designers who express deeper issues about the world we live in through a framework of storytelling. These designers consciously define their work as art, composing unique sculptures in cloth that tell a story. Non-conforming and experimental, they have created an innovative body of work that has timeless appeal, substance, is culturally savvy while sending a strong message through their designs, often reaching viewers otherwise not engaged in our aesthetic

discourse.

This new generation of designers is not about 'cut and sew and sell'. Their work is about concept, meaning, and why it matters to create. They present their collections through a framework of storytelling on world issues with a defiant and passionate resolve to protect earth's resources; in an age of divisive politics and multiculturalism, to celebrate cultural and individual identity; to raise concern for technology and the loss of real-time human connection; and to recognize untold history while calling attention to the unfairness of marginalization. This framework of storytelling manifests through their design.

For example, Isabella Diorio tells the unknown story of American pioneering women in the military who served and sacrificed for their country, some going as far as disguising themselves as a man in order to serve. "It's not just about the garment itself but about the story behind it," says Diorio.

Abiola Onabule, influenced by her Yoruba Nigerian heritage, uses Adire and Aso Oke textiles. Onabule describes the role of cloth within this heritage as having its own distinct storytelling, identity, and importance in a person's life. She says that cloth created for special occasions is stored and cared for to be brought out and talked about, "conjuring up memories of the cloth's original outing."

Identity truth is central to these designers and our times. Karen Glass shifts the "design anatomy of fashion" transforming "gender juxtaposition towards gender neutrality" as a means to "explore and reassign gender." Glass, Onabule, and Diorio give voice to fashion as a "story to tell," they are the leading edge of an elite group of designers who integrate design principles and storytelling.

“**FASHION** Has a **STORY** to Tell” is a convergence of culture, fashion, and art that offers an educational experience and intelligent way of understanding a contemporary designer’s contribution to culture. Art fundamentally creates culture. Fashion, like art, embodies the time we live in and, as a society, we bear witness to the interpretation of its historical and cultural significance. This exhibition will open up dialogue, invite an exchange of knowledge and ideas, as we witness and examine a global view of fashion’s role in our culture. Showcasing 30-40 objects of bold designs exhibiting artistry, imagination, and relevance, " **FASHION** Has a **STORY** to Tell” captures the zeitgeist of our times.

When we start to see how fashion serves a purpose in culture and history, we begin to dismiss the frivolous, and assimilate a more responsible and historically astute approach to it. Viewers want to engage, they want to dream and indulge in the aesthetics while understanding far-ranging social issues, and this show helps them advance their knowledge of fashion’s deeper purpose.



Notes:

- The title is work in progress. “NOT About Cut and Sew and SELL” or “FASHION Has a STORY to Tell” are current working titles, among others.
- This is an initial statement summary. The final will identify and briefly profile each designer’s contribution to the exhibit.
- 30 – 40 objects are a rough estimate that includes mannequin ensembles; 2 dimensional installations, and concept videos
- I’m working with 10 designers of which 9 have confirmed their interest. I think the show can accommodate up to 10, but I’ll see as I look at selections per designer based on layout.