

Fashion

fashion.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Editor || Cecile Borkhataria

Vogue Fashion's Night Out with Erdem

Cecile Borkhataria attends a Q&A session with the designer

Following every Fashion Week, an industry only bi-annual event that takes place in the four major fashion capitals, Vogue Fashion's night out takes place. This event (open to the public, yay!) sees clothing stores in the major shopping areas of the city open until late, serve up cocktails, host DJ sets and even offer discounts. Of course, these efforts are in an attempt to entice shoppers to spend their money, but as part of the evening's events, I was lucky enough to attend a Q&A session with British-Turkish fashion designer Erdem.

The talk, chaired by British Vogue Deputy Editor Emily Sheffield, gave a fashion-industry outsider the chance to learn about what the industry is really like, and just how high pressure it can be.

Set in the **Everyman Cinema** on the Lower Ground floor of Selfridges, the session felt intimate and relaxed, but the glasses of champagne served up were there to remind you that this was an exclusive affair. After a video of Erdem's Spring/Summer 2015 collection was shown, the man himself finally came in and sat down with Emily Sheffield.

Emily began by asking Erdem where he got his inspiration for the summer collection. The collection, a combination of loose, flowing dresses, was inspired by botany and Erdem's visits to **Kew Gardens**. He explained that when he plans a collection, he thinks of a narrative and draws out a story whilst asking himself "where is the woman I'm dressing going?"

In every runway show, only a handful of looks from the collection are actually shown to the audience, and the decisions of what to show on the runway take place right up until the last minute. These decisions have to take into account many considerations; such as making sure the runway show is cohesive whilst also showcasing pieces that will appeal to buyer's for large department stores.

As if the creative process couldn't be more complicated, the construction of the garments has its own set of challenges. Materials and textiles are sourced from Italy and France, and these usually close shop for the month of August, making September a very busy month for the design team. When it comes to the fashion week runway show, models often fly in a night or two before, so fitting them into their runway outfits is a last minute job. Erdem pointed out that for his Summer 2015 show, the last model fitting took place at 2am on the morning of the show!



The first look of the Erdem Spring/Summer 2015 show at London Fashion Week Photo: Vogue.co.uk

Although last minute changes and tight deadlines are *de rigueur* in the fashion world, one can't help but wonder how a designer can unwind and take a break from the stress! For Erdem, a big glass of wine right before the show works wonders for his nerves.

Erdem highlights that the buyers, those that decide what pieces to retail in stores, are a big part of

Fashion Week. They are the ones that will ultimately drive business and exposure for designers. The buying process is mathematical, and buyer's take into consideration many factors: how wearable the pieces are, how much was sold last season and if the collection fits their target customer. He notes that buyer's decisions differ across the world, because after all, a woman living in LA shops differently

to a Parisian shopping at Collette!

When asked to define the woman he designs for, he responds with "she doesn't follow trends!" He designs for a woman who owns what she wears, an individual and intelligent woman. "The woman I design for marches to her own drum" he said. With an impressive 160 stockists worldwide, Erdem's brand is growing rapidly. His first flagship store will soon be

opening on Mayfair's South Audley street. As a successful designer with growing traction, Erdem belongs to the burgeoning group of young London designers in their 20's and 30's, taking the fashion world by storm. He says that ten years ago, fewer international buyer's attended London Fashion Week, but now that's changed.