Eight fashion design students win national award

By Dani Corona

Eight undergraduates in Cornell’s Department of Fiber Science & Apparel Design (FSAD) in the College of Human Ecology each earned $5,000 awards for their work in fashion design and business in the national YMA Fashion Scholarship Fund competition.

Katelyn Ridgeway ’13 earned an additional $5,000 scholarship for her case study – one of only six such awards given to 250 entrants from 41 universities.

Scholarship winners were invited to attend YMA’s Jan. 8 banquet at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. They networked face-to-face with fellow scholars and fashion figures, followed by a fashion career fair the next morning.

The other winners from Cornell are Matilda Ceesay ’13, Caroline Delson ’13, Rebecca Dugal ’14, Emily Fipphen ’14, Susan Freeman ’13, Justine Lee ’14 and Brandon Wen ’15.

All entrants completed an extensive, merit-based application, including an interview with a YMA board member, personal essay and execution of a case study.

The case study, which constituted the bulk of the application, was no easy task. Each student designer was required to develop and market a clothing line for “tweens” – youth ages 8 to 13 years old – for online flash fashion retailers hoping to create their own brands.

Ridgeway embraced the challenge with a concept of simplicity. Her idea of no-frills clothing and accessories to mix and match stood out for its long-term potential.
“The bulk of the case study was conceptual – focused on your marketing scheme and advertising strategies,” said Ridgeway. “One of YMA’s questions was ‘How is your idea sustainable?’ My concept answered this by not only being applicable to tweens, but also to men and women overall. This could make a flash sale website less of an occasional thing, and more of a regular purchasing platform.”

While Ridgeway focused on universality, Delson, a senior studying to be a menswear designer, developed boys’ clothing inspired by soccer.

“I developed a T-shirt line all about super fandom,” Delson said. “The best part was the background work, which was new to me: in-depth, almost anthropological research about soccer fans. Designers can take so much from human experience and put it into a product.”

FSAD associate professor Van Dyk Lewis, who mentored the students for the competition, noted: “Cornell’s fashion program has proven to be extremely viable with the highest percentage of YMA award winners this year. This scholarship challenges our undergraduates to compete against students from Penn, Harvard and Parsons, with excellent results.”

Founded in 1937, YMA is a nonprofit that aims to recruit and cultivate talented students to help them become leaders in the fashion industry.

Students will use their YMA awards to help fund internships and study abroad programs or to enhance their fashion creations for the 29th Cornell Fashion Collective runway show, April 27 in Barton Hall.

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