

As fluid dressing finds more takers, designer Anvita Sharma of Two Point Two discusses the way forward for gender-agnostic fashion in India



A piece from Two Point Two's latest collection, 'A Warrior's Journey'



Anvita Sharma

and establishing one's identity.

Norms are currently being questioned in our time. Consequently, clothing becomes the medium

through which we can challenge preconceived

notions. Gender is a social construct similar to beauty standards, in my opinion. Clothing is, after all, simply clothing. We, as a society, have conferred upon it its significance. It is unusual to see a man wearing a dress or saree. This is something that has been ingrained in our collective consciousness. To break such ingrained norms requires time. I believe there is a slow but steady shift in the purchasing habits of cisgender men in particular.

Women had already reached the masculine style of dress popularised by Yves Saint Laurent's tuxedo in 1966, which was too ahead of its time and was initially rejected by his haute couture clients. Contrarily, the rive gauche version was made a success by younger women purchasing it, thereby establishing the tuxedo as a classic. During the same time when many people associated feminine clothing with homosexuality, attempts to feminise men's attire did not last long. Now, after celebrities such as Ranveer Singh and Harry Styles began receiving media coverage for their daring fashion choices wearing skirts, *anarkalis*, and gowns with a tuxedo, cisgender men have begun to move away from the heteronormative neutral basic look and towards the experimental fashion path.

Two Point Two was founded in 2017 with the intention of refashioning a world that highlights the fluidity of gender and humanity itself. At the time, few brands and

members of society in general discussed the need to eliminate binary categorisation. We value individuality, self-assurance, freedom of expression, and diversity, and we encourage people to express themselves in their own way. We have an increasing cisgender clientele who purchase items that transcend the heteronormative masculine and feminine classifications of the style itself.

In the future of genderless or gender-agnostic fashion, which everyone will discover for themselves, I think both metaphorical and physical stereotypes will be dismantled in an industry where clothes are not segregated and categorised by gender. Fashion would be the most visible manifestation of self-expression, and would now invite us to a world without labels. It will become a universe that offers you limitless opportunities for individualism; where no one can interfere with your beliefs or the way you express them.

Having said that, I still believe there is still a great deal of work to be done in order to normalise gender neutrality among the masses outside of metropolitan areas, and I am very optimistic and excited to be a part of this revolution. ■



Gender agnostic, gender fluid, gender neutral, and androgyny are all terms that describe a mode of identity representation that transcends the masculine and feminine classifications of being. Male or female is the first distinction made when meeting a human being. You are accustomed to making the distinction with absolute conviction.

In this regard, clothing is one of the most significant determining factors. Fashion is the most obvious element that was created by humans to distinguish between the sexes. A saree or skirt is considered a female garment, whereas pants, which were historically worn by men, are now worn by all sexes, and have thus become gender neutral. However, gender fluidity is now an undeniable fact in its entirety. The association between clothing and sexuality is dwindling, and gender boundaries are blurring. It is primarily about self-expression

THE WAY WE WEAR... MAXIMAL PRINTS

1.



Floral-appliqué printed coat, Boutique Moschino, ₹ 82,089 approx

+



Printed skirt, Shelfies, ₹ 3,030 approx

+



Printed shoulder bag, Accessorize, ₹ 4,895



Printed bandeau bikini, New Look, ₹ 2,948 approx

+



Printed boots, Giaro, ₹ 12,097 approx



Enamel earrings, Azga, ₹ 7,650

Giving minimalistic looks a bit of a backseat, designers have been leaning towards maximal bold prints to ensure you flaunt your most creative self. Whether it's a big floral cape paired with contrasting stockings at Richard Quinn, a four-piece tropical set at Cavalli, or a multi-layered ensemble with clashing prints at Two Point Two, we are going beyond the usual this season. On the daily: Start off with a colour scheme and build on it or opt for mismatched pieces to make a statement. ■

2.



RICHARD QUINN



Patchwork dress, FRAMED, ₹ 36,566 approx

+



Printed jacket, Valentino, ₹ 4,33,164 approx

+

+



Monogram sunglasses, Jimmy Choo, price on request



Jacquard patterned vest, H&M, ₹ 3,499

+



Wide twill trousers, Uniqlo, ₹ 1,299

+



Printed mules, Payal Singhal x Paio, ₹ 2,800

3.



TWO POINT TWO



Floral-detail silk cape, Rodarte, ₹ 4,12,447 approx

+



Shimmer finish tights, Junya, ₹ 31,107 approx

+

+

Brass studs, Nicobar, ₹ 6,000



Croc embossed bag, Aldo, ₹ 8,999



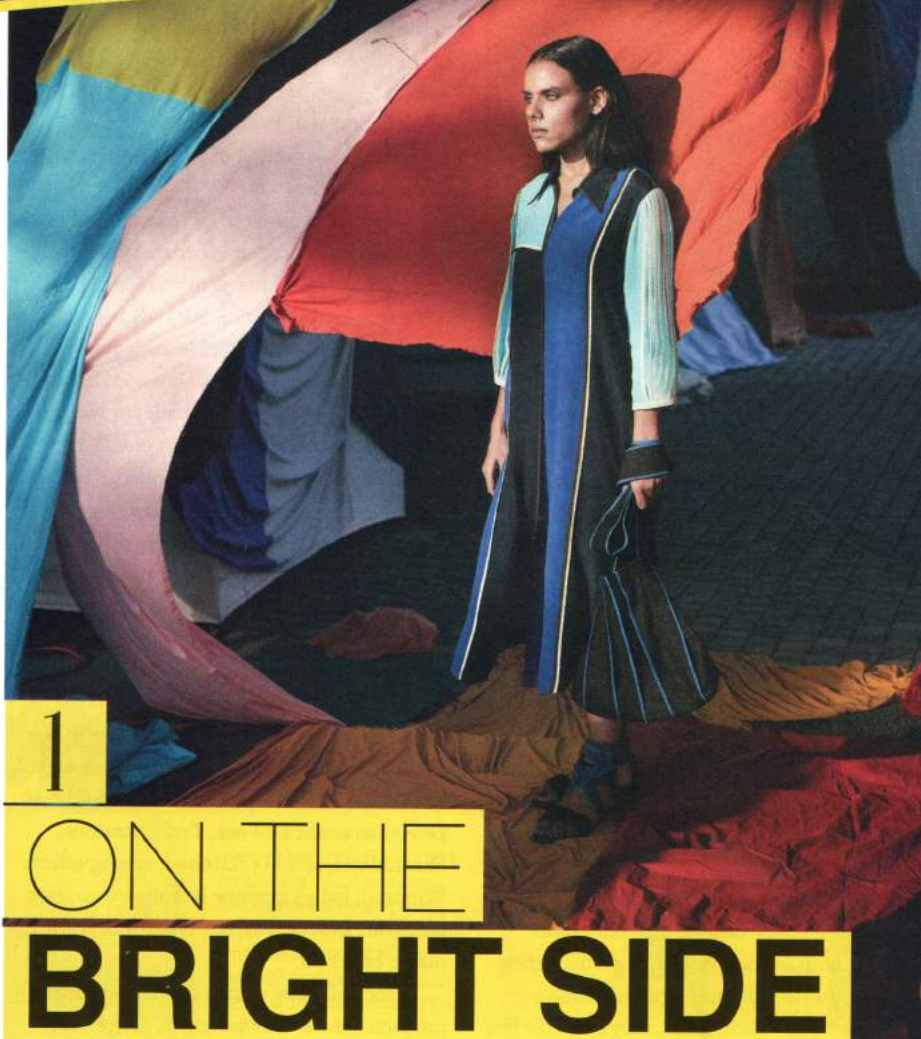
Leather kitten pumps, Mango, ₹ 5,590

+



10 HOT STORIES

EVERYONE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT



ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI continues to provide a platform to designers old and new

WORDS **NIDA NAEEM**

PHOTOGRAPHS **YUSUF LOKHANDWALA**

“Walk with aggression in your body, but not on your face,” said a renowned fashion stylist backstage. He was helping a model get his walk right. The lanky model, dressed in a sage kurta set, seemed a bit awkward, practising in front of so many sets of eyes. We later discovered that this carefully orchestrated strut was meant for the Antar-Agni show. Titled ‘Disquiet’, the collection comprised monochrome indo-fusion sets with raw-edged appliqué and pintucked detailing. Models stormed the runway, heads bent forward and shoulders heaving, while the brilliant simplicity of what they wore still



Bodice

JJ Valaya

demanding the most attention. The severity of the show ultimately made a point about the business of fashion shows in India: The bells and whistles might be necessary to pull an audience, but ultimately, the only thing that lingers in mind is well-made clothes.

Such were the scenes at Lakmé Fashion Week, which hosted its latest season in Mumbai this March, in partnership with the Fashion Design Council Of India. Showgoers were treated to a vast array of presentations, from opulent bridal showcases culminating in celebrity showstoppers to sombre, stripped-down collections speaking a new language of contemporary Indian clothing.

A FOR ART

Some designers spotlighted indigenous textile and art traditions. Take, for instance, Divyam Mehta’s ‘Kacho’, which translated the minimal dotted patterns of Rabari wall art from the Kutch region in Gujarat onto jackets for men and women. A singular source of inspiration often challenges designers, pushing them to do more with less, and this was amply clear on the Divyam Mehta runway.

Anavila Misra turned to *dabu*, an ancient mud-resist technique from Rajasthan, to create linen weaves imprinted with organic motifs in natural dyes. Taking us back to pre-colonial times, the sarees were styled sans petticoats and blouses. Emphasising the elemental character of mud, the designer made a case for being closer to nature by rubbing *multani mitti* on the models’ feet.

Elsewhere, art styles from outside the subcontinent took centre stage. For her latest outing for Two Point Two titled ‘A Warrior’s Journey’, Anvita Sharma directly pulled from the visuals found in Japanese Ukiyo-e paintings. Puffer jackets, oversized coats, and XL bags featured highly decorative prints of kabuki actors, courtesans, and Buddhist monasteries.



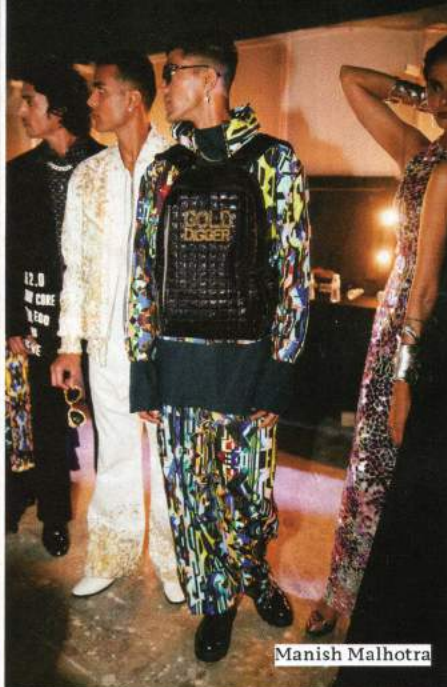
Two Point Two

UNEXPECTED ACCESSORIES

While clothes are the focal point of any fashion show, designers often incorporate interesting accessories into their looks to tie the story together and exhibit their ingenuity.

Chamar, a brand known for recycling leftover rubber and tire scraps to reimagine leather accessories and engage former tanners from the Dalit community, moved beyond just bags at the Circular Design Challenge show. In a collection titled 'Blackening Boot Polish' (all the models' hands were blackened), designer Sudheer Rajbhar extended his signature cross-stitching and rubber weaving techniques to statement earrings, fringed belts, and even eye patches.

SIXSIX further developed its narrative of 'vacation streetwear' by styling slick, ombre-drenched ensembles with neck pillows, used in the conventional way but also slung over shoulders as bags. It's doubtful whether



Manish Malhotra

these bags offer any storage space, but if designer Avni Aneja was aiming for subtle cheek, she certainly hit the mark.

Any exploration of the styling choices at LFW would be incomplete without a mention of 'Beneath' by Vaishali S. Having showcased her signature drapes at Paris Haute Couture Week, the acclaimed designer returned to Indian runways with an underwater life-inspired collection. The headgear accompanying her sumptuous corded eveningwear took after coral reef formations and sea anemones. One look even featured a towering blue hairdo. It was giving Disney villain.

Doodlage ventured into new territory with floral prints on recycled white denim, and completed some looks with lush bouquets intertwined with gravity-defying braids.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Stylist to the stars, Mohit Rai unveiled his label, Itrh, alongside co-founder Ridhi Bansal to a star-studded front row. The looks were all out disco – shimmering visions of sensual party wear – and what made them stand out were the people wearing them.



Divyam Mehta



Antar-Agni

For one, fashion industry authority Anaita Shroff Adajania got in front of the camera and walked the runway. Giving maternity fashion a facelift, stylist Antara Motiwala Marwah showed off her baby bump in all its glory in a ruched skirt set.

Other debuts also caught the spotlight during the four days. The last leg of shows marked Saisha Shinde's first runway show post gender transition. The designer opened with refreshing honesty: Right before the first look sashayed down, a disclaimer flashed, claiming that having a celebrity showstopper was injurious to the designer's health and pocket – and that the models, backstage team, hair and make-up artists, tailors and show choreographer were the real showstoppers.

Perhaps this was a good season for trans representation on and off the runway. Make-up artist, drag queen, and model Luna walked for multiple designers, including but not limited to Anavila, Monisha Jaising, SIXSIX, and Manish Malhotra. Another model who caught our eye was Gaia, whose triumphant gait on the Sameer Madan, Tarun Tahiliani, Saisha and Manish Malhotra runways was a welcome sight for an industry as notoriously gatekept as fashion. It's difficult to tell if inclusive casting will stick around. But right now, we'll take what we can get.

We were also energised upon seeing grey-haired talent, who don't fit the mould of a conventionally attractive twenty-something, walk for Nirmooaha, Two Point Two and Bodice, among other designers. Amidst a host of celebrity showstoppers, the name that stood out the most was Zeenat Aman, who closed Shahin Mannan's show. The actress brought an unparalleled radiance dressed in a red-and-black printed pantsuit. It's no coincidence that Aman's runway return occurred right after she joined – and subsequently shot to popularity on – Instagram, illustrating the power of social media to grace public figures with renewed relevance. **II**



Nirmooaha



Vaishali S



Doodlage



Manish Malhotra