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FASHIONING THE FUTURE: NADYA WANG ON SHAPING THE MINDS OF THE NEXT GENERATION

She teaches contextual and cultural studies to fashion students and steers the conversation online as well

BY NAVIN PILLAY 23 MARCH 2020





Nadya Wang is a lecturer in the School of Fashion at LASALLE College of the Arts. She is also the founder and editor of *Art and Market* (<https://www.artandmarket.net>), a site dedicated to the business of art in Southeast Asia, and co-hosts fashion podcast *In The Vitrine* (<https://www.instagram.com/inthevitrine/>).



Nadya wears Esh by Esther, a womenswear label founded and run by her former student from the LASALLE College of the Arts. Photo: Frenchescar Lim

Why does fashion matter?

On a personal level, fashion matters because we use it to express and continually negotiate our identities. On a collective level, fashion is a rich source of information about cultures. It is an industry to reckon with, providing jobs for many and contributing significantly to economies around the world.

How do you see your role as an educator and academic in shaping the future of fashion in Singapore?

At LASALLE, I try my best to deliver a curriculum that equips my students with the knowledge, skill sets, opportunities and confidence to launch careers in the industry.

Aside from being lecturer-in-charge of cultural and contextual studies within the School of Fashion, I oversee the internship programme and industry relations. I prepare our fashion students for internships through workshops and consultations that give them the know-how to compose their application emails, curriculum vitae and portfolio. I also give advice on how to navigate the interview process and how to optimise their time at their internships.

We are in touch with businesses in the local fashion industry to run live projects within the curriculum. We invite guest speakers to share their experiences and to consider our students for part-time and full-time roles while they are still in school or after they graduate. I stay in touch with alumni after they graduate, and inform them of opportunities that may be suitable for them.



Nadya speaking with her students from BA (Hons) Fashion Media and Industries. Photo: Frenchscar Lim

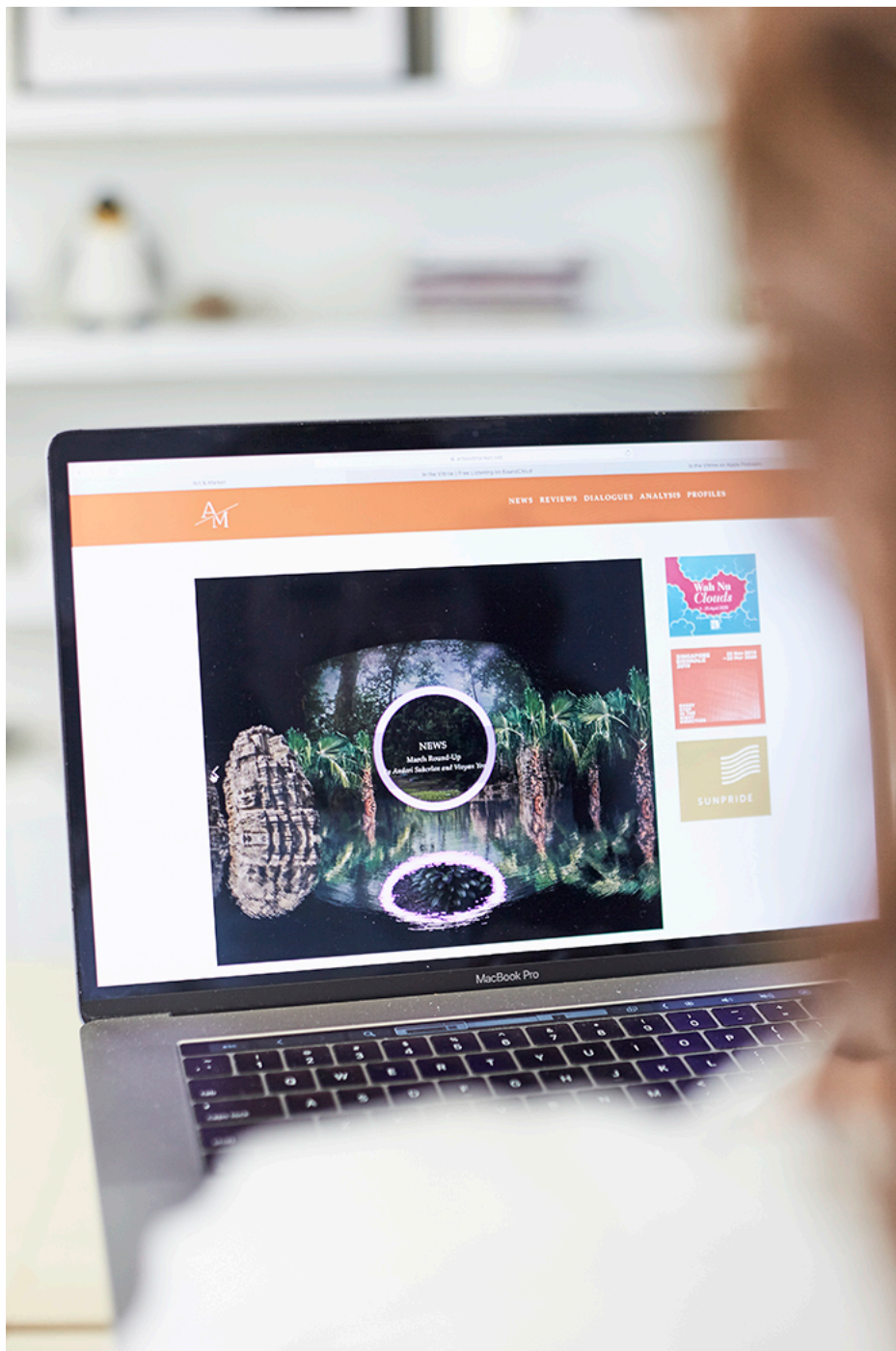
I am proud to say that many of our students achieve their dream jobs and they pay it forward by returning to the college to share their journeys with their juniors, partner us on projects, and keeping their alma mater in mind as they progress in their careers. It's wonderful that we have built a strong network with the industry that strengthens what we do within the School of Fashion.

I have also been contributing to the discourse on the local fashion industry through my writing on Singapore fashion. I have been published on platforms such as the Berg Encyclopedia of World of World Dress and Fashion, and have presented papers on Singapore

fashion at international conferences. All these endeavours allow me to share information about local fashion with an international audience, and also make me think more deeply about the Singaporean fashion identity, the paths it has taken, and what more can be done moving forward.

Currently, I'm pursuing my PhD in History of Art with the Courtauld Institute of Art. After I complete my dissertation by the end of 2021, I hope to publish my findings on historical and contemporary Singapore fashion history and how it relates to Singaporean femininity.

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Nadya working on Art and Market, a site she founded dedicated to the business of art in Southeast Asia. Photo: Frenchscar Lim

How else do you continue the fashion conversation?

In the Vitrine is a podcast project I conceived together with my friend and School of Fashion colleague **Daniela Monasterios-Tan**. It is about the business, culture and pleasures of historical and contemporary fashion in Singapore, Asia and beyond.

We published our first episode in July last year, and it's been incredibly fun to think and talk about the different aspects of fashion that intrigue us every week. We can hardly believe that we are nearing 30 episodes! We see it as a resource for our students and fashion enthusiasts who want to find out more about fashion in the region, or our opinions on fashion outside of the region.

One of our most popular episodes is "Plastic Fantastic? The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" in which we talk about the use of plastic in fashion from the 1950s to the present, our love-hate relationship with it in our own wardrobes, and consider the material's ubiquity against the call for sustainability in the industry.

Related article: [8 Fashion Exhibitions Happening Worldwide To Plan Your Vacation Around](https://www.harpersbazaar.com.sg/fashion/fashion-exhibitions-worldwide-plan-vacation/) (<https://www.harpersbazaar.com.sg/fashion/fashion-exhibitions-worldwide-plan-vacation/>)



Photo: Frenchescar Lim

What are the global trends or shifts that will make an impact on the fashion industry?

Technology has definitely changed how we experience fashion and what we expect from it. The democratisation of fashion has come to a tipping point where we are simultaneously spoiled and overwhelmed by the number of choices afforded to us.

The coronavirus has also had an impact. Some businesses are looking for alternative factories to make their products, such as pivoting from a reliance on ones they have used in China to exploring options in Indonesia. In the long term, I think we are going to see some big shifts that were already in motion before the crisis, such as fashion going slower

rather than faster, and having more intimate interactions with customers. We were already on the path of being more mindful and innovative with how we consume fashion, and this global crisis solidifies the collective want and need to do so.

Consumers want to experience fashion more responsibly. This means there is an increasing demand for more transparency about how things are made. We want to feel good about buying the things we do, and are unlikely to compromise on the use of sustainable materials and ethical labour practices.

I think this is also a good time for local fashion as we seek to differentiate how we dress ourselves from the cookie-cutter mass-market fashion that is readily available to us. But we need to hit the sweet spot where uniqueness, quality and value for money intersect, and that's not easy.

In the future, fashion in Singapore will continue to be defined and redefined by the work of numerous individuals and groups who are invested in its success.

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Photo: Frenchscar Lim

Is fashion school necessary if you want to work in the industry?

It is true that there are successful fashion creatives who did not attend fashion school, but there are also the ones who did. I do believe that fashion school prepares students for the industry because I have many students who have landed or created their dream jobs based on what they have learnt in the School of Fashion. In any industry, a strong work ethic is essential to complement what one learns in school, and it is up to the individual to put this in place.



Jewellery: PYAR is LOVE. Photo: Frenchscar Lim

Location: LASALLE College of the Arts

Hair & Makeup: Greg'O

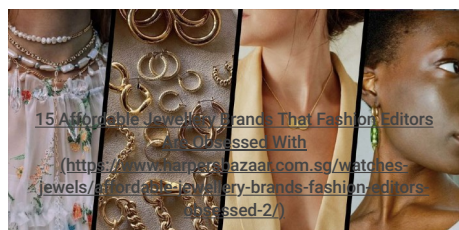
Outfit: Dress from Esh by Esther and jewellery from PYAR is LOVE

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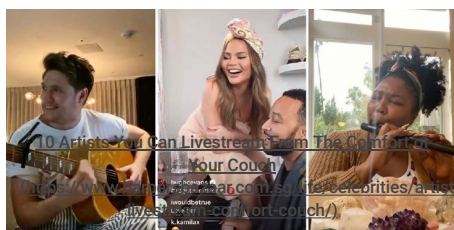


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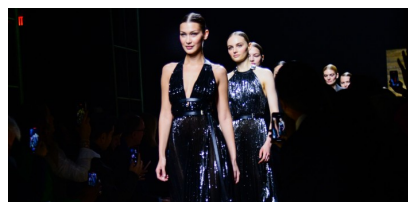
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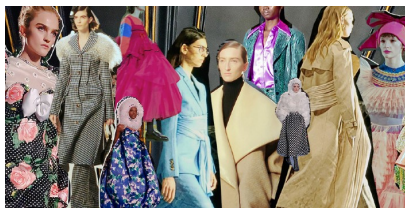


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