

YOUTH

Students design fashion career

University works with top brand to promote a modern and stylish 'China chic' look, **He Qi** reports in Shanghai.

In recent years, the term "China chic" has become popular among fashion enthusiasts in the country. Now, a Chinese university is working with a foreign brand to support Chinese designers in this area.

North American fashion group Tapestry participated in the fourth China International Import Expo in Shanghai from Nov 5 to 10, with a special collection of its high-end brand Coach making its debut.

The collection was designed by students of Donghua University in Shanghai. Led by team leaders Chen Shuang'er and Shan Chaoran from the university's College of Fashion and Design, the designs included bags, hoodies, shoes and pet clothes.

"Our designs were focused on cats," says Chen, who majors in fashion design.

"We know that Coach has a dinosaur mascot named Rexy. Therefore, we created a cat named Kitty as the 'guardian' of Coach's consumers. We have made a series of complete designs from image to product line."

According to a survey by Chen's team, about 75 percent of Generation Z (people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s) in China tends to keep cats at home after graduating.

"Cats are popular among college students. For example, many of them spontaneously build cat houses on campus to feed them," the 22-year-old Chen says.

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Chen Shuang'er, a student of fashion design at Donghua University

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Shan, 21, who majors in fashion design and engineering, says the game of hide-and-seek was the theme for his team.

His team's designs at the expo debut of Coach included a green woven cow leather bag reflecting garden elements and the tenon structure of architecture in China.

"Our understanding of 'China chic' is what the young people like," Shan says.

Donghua University along with Tapestry launched a training program in April that aims to support young fashion designers in China through cooperation between companies and colleges, and promote "China chic" abroad.

Fifty teams participate in the program, composed of students from different majors at Donghua University, including Chen's team of four students and Shan's seven.

"We have observed that in China, 'China chic' represents a way of life for many young people and is a popular concept among them," says Yann Bozec, president for Asia-Pacific of Tapestry Group, and president and CEO of Coach China.

"Tapestry always pays attention to the development of young talents, especially young design talents in China."

He adds: "We believe that the concept of 'China chic' can be conveyed to the world by domestic talents, so we cooperate with Donghua University and communicate with their young designers."

"Through the cooperation and guidance of related courses, we have produced a lot of inspirational and creative designs."

Chen says the project will enable students to have better understanding of the market.

"We depend on imagination when designing, but also consider the demands of the market, consumers and enterprises so that we can have a more practical design. This is a rare opportunity for design students," she says.

She gave the example of making a bag design, for which her team received professional support from the brand.

"Although we are students majoring in design, we have little



Above: Chen Shuang'er (right) introduces a bag designed by her team in the Coach booth at the fourth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in early November.

Left: North American fashion group Tapestry displays its products at the Shanghai expo.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

experience of turning drawings into real products. The company used its mature system to communicate with us so that our work was more in line with the style of a commercial brand and ready to land," she adds.

The Ministry of Education launched a strategy of integrating the industry with education in 2019.

Li Jun, dean of Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation at Donghua University, says: "We are willing to promote new forms of vocational education to encourage students to practice during the learning process and consolidate professional knowledge with practical experience."

Fashion designers should be versatile — they are capable of drawing

and having a good eye for color, pattern and texture, Li says.

"For the future drivers of the market, the trend of 'China chic' is only the reflection of culture. New materials, processes and trends are all important factors to promote works of young designers."

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