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2019年6月14日 星期五

## 时装毕业展 落幕后 设计系学生何去何从?



莱佛士设计学院的工作室里，学生们为来临的毕业展赶工。(唐家鸿摄影)



拉萨尔艺术学院三周前举办毕业大秀。



每年年中，是本地时装设计学生最忙碌的时候，毕业展结束后，他们即将踏入职场。站在抉择的岔路口，联合早报记者与应届和已入职场的毕业生对话，了解这些学生对未来的职业规划作何打算。

+ 应届毕业生陈莹洁作品。(摄影@randy.afandi)

李雅歌 / 报道  
受访者提供照片

美国热播的设计师真人秀“Project Runway”中，超模主持Heidi Klum最常说的话是：“In fashion, one day you are in, the next day you are out.”(花无百日红)。这是个竞争度极高的行业，设计师以纸和笔为创作工具，为才为貌，拼的是才华和创意。后浪赶前浪，这个才人辈出的领域，每年都有从专业院校毕业的“新鲜血液”等待入场。

正值年中，本地艺术生最忙碌的时候，毕业展结束后，他们即将踏入职场。站在抉择的岔路口，联合早报记者同应届和已入职场的毕业生对话，了解这些学生对未来的职业规划作何打算？他们如何解读本地时尚版图？在设计师之路上，是一往无前，抑或是在某个交叉点遭遇不同的风景？

### 美10%毕业生从事设计业

回忆起几周前刚结束的毕业展，23岁的吴慧欣大大松了口气，没日没夜赶工的时刻终于过去。作为拉萨尔艺术学院服装专业设计系的一员，她的毕业作品从她脑海里灵感迸发，设计四种印花，把它们一片片拼贴起来，配合宽大的设计，一袭明媚南洋风。同届毕业的陈莹洁(23岁)主修面料设计，以环保为概念，她发现一种奇特的材质，可以在上面种绿植，定期浇水让植物生长，每年在学生作品总能带给人眼前一亮的惊喜。想想这些学生从最初只在稿纸上画草图，到如今针针线线缝出衣裳，着实令人看见创造的美好。从事时尚教育行业多年，莱佛士设计学院副院长王介侯这样形容：“这群艺术生是一群动手能力非常强，天赋异禀的创意人，喜欢通过不同的介质，或图像、服装、珠宝等来表达。传统行业的朝九晚五，循规蹈矩不适合他们，他们喜欢创作。”

王介侯说，要选一条怎样的路，她说：“要建立自己的品牌绝非易事。每个阶段存在的挑战不同。创业初期要在找资源、联络供应商、建立起生产线。之后要想着如何维持品牌的运营，找到合适的销售人员。你会发现，做生意和做设计是截然不同的事。”

这几年，来她这里实习的学生络绎不绝，之后转去学其他专业的人也不少。“这一行节奏快，一个人要身兼数职，还有很多销售目标要完成。有些学生受不了压力，但这些都是很真实的，如果承受不了，最好转行。除非你很喜欢，就不要做这一行，那就全力以赴，别半途而废。跑马拉松，你要一直跑下去。”

通过实习了解市场  
实习像一条通向现实的桥梁，给学生们有机会看清一个行业最真实的面貌。在本地品牌Weekend Sundries的实习经历，陈莹洁最大的体会是：“创立一个品牌，你什么都要做，喜欢的，不喜欢的，都得接受。”

选择服装业设计，很多人起初都带着当设计师而来。吴慧欣说入学时，“班上几乎每个人都说要当设计师”。但老师给她

们浇了盆“冷水”，说大概只有20%的人，有机会成为真正的设计师。

这数字也许是老师“口下留情”。根据美国时尚设计师协会CFDA最近一份调查显示，全美23所时尚院校中，只有10%的毕业生从事设计相关的行业。

### 确定方向后全力以赴

从莱佛士设计学院毕业第十个年头，陈莹洁有幸成为那10%中的一人，这份幸运是由莫大的决心、坚持和万份努力筑起的。作为Reckless Ericka的品牌创办人，她十分清楚在本地当一名设



造型师林恩沛。



刘安德鲁(前排左三)获得去年NewGen设计比赛冠军。

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——王介侯

她只能硬着头皮打开话匣子，后来试着以学习心态对待。“通过和客人聊天，可以了解他们的需要，这对设计很有帮助，毕竟他们才是真正穿你设计的人。”

吴慧欣一向都喜欢实习，在成为正式设计师之前，她打算通过不同的实习机会，探索每个领域，寻找适合自己的。在Benjamin Barker实习时，她做图案设计，将之前学的男装设计知识实践一番。后来又跑去做女



本地品牌Reckless Ericka设计师陈恩涵。



应届毕业生吴慧欣的娘惹风创作。

生内衣设计，在未曾接触过的领域，学了不少东西。对于毕业后的一步计划，她打算再去一份实习，继续学东西，打磨技能。她说：“趁着年轻，我想多挑战自己，尝试不同领域。实习过程中跟着品牌学习管理运营，这些经验对日后要成立自己的品牌都是有利的。”

### 亲自下水探深浅

通过实习，学生们在亲身体会中积累对行业的观察。实践多了，仿佛看到一丝亮光。吴慧欣说：“上学时，总听人说本地的时尚圈很小，事实也是如此。但当你真正‘潜’进去寻找机会时，会发现细分的职位还有很多，还是有很多条路可以走。”

陈莹洁坦言，最初选择服装设计，遭到亲戚们的质疑：“在新加坡学设计能养活自己吗？”亲自试水后，她分享感受，“很多时

刻的刻板印象来判断，路怎么走，还要亲自走才知道。在外人看来，本地时尚圈子好像很小，但却很深，例如剧组拍戏需要造型师，秀场为模特特快装做造型，需要受过专业培训的人来接手。扩展开来还是有很多东西是可以做的。”

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### 参加比赛“被看见”

时尚是个以作品取胜的行业，为了让自己才华早被看见，许多学生会选择参加比赛。

去年从莱佛士设计学院毕业的刘安德鲁(Andrew Low)就是个成功的例子，他在准备毕业设计的同时，还报名参加了Harper's Bazaar杂志举办的NewGen服装大赛，一举夺得冠军。时间一年，问及这个奖项对他的影响，刘安德鲁说：“得奖的确给我一盏小小的聚光灯，在同届毕业生中，得到更多关注度，很多业内人士通过这个比赛认识我，建立起很好的联系。本地名媛请我为她们设计礼服，还有巴黎的杂志来找我做衣服。”

安德鲁透露，希望可以在明年正式成立自己的品牌，完成从小到大的梦想。品牌名字André是他早就想好的，把自己的名字转为法语表达，代表他希望品牌进军时尚之都，甚至国际市场的

雄心。他也明白，凡事从小做起，感慨道：“毕竟创业容易守业难，时尚圈谁能站比较久，谁就是赢家。”

### 通向罗马路条条

当不少人要攀登设计师的金字塔尖时，也有人转而在时尚圈的其他出路。所谓“条条大路通罗马”，在成为设计师这件事上，陈莹洁很务实，说：“听老师介绍行业情况后，我觉得不做设计，当一名打版师也挺好的，当一个帮助者，把设计师的想法实践出来。”

制版是技术性强的工作，包含琐碎、复杂的细节处理，对于人体构造、尺寸、结构都要有精确的把握。裁剪或放宽多少厘米会影响版型的修身程度，是个细致到有些枯燥必须的手艺活。但陈莹洁说，她喜欢这项的技术活，训练扎实的基本功。

近年来为了拓宽学生的就业机会，不少时尚院校在设计之外，开设其他课程，例如时尚与传媒、视觉营销、品牌运营等。拉萨尔学院讲师王欣瑜列出往届毕业生的就业方向，在设计师之外，也有时尚写手、造型师、公关或为时尚品牌进行市场营销。

今年造型师林恩沛(Anna En)入行第12年，最早报读南洋艺术学院时，她选择时尚与市场营销。“因为当时不确定一定要当设计师，想学多一点技能，以后多一些选择。”毕业后，幸运的她在刚进得两全职业设计师的工作，一个做童装，一个做女装，但她却从兼职造型师的角色中收获更大的满足感。

造型师的体验开始于一通求助电话。朋友告诉她，所在剧组没有人懂服装，衣服尺寸全买错，问她是否能赶来剧组帮忙改良。“大家印象里，造型师好像只负责把人扮美美就好，其实并没有那么简单。电视的呈现是360度的，衣服不能像拍摄平面，单用别针固定，造型师必须在短时间内缝补改良，这就需要真的了解一件衣服的结构，才知道从何处下手，上学时打下的基础，让我可以胜任这份工作。”

林恩沛说，她喜欢当造型师带来的挑战和满足感，毕业两年后，她辞去全职设计师的工作，选择造型师这个自由职业。重回幕后走来的每一步，她坦言，依旧保持最初学习时尚的初衷，摸索着在这一行，寻找适合自己的位置。那份不变的热爱，引领着她一步步靠近最初的梦想。

## **What's next for design students after their graduation fashion shows?**

Cover image: A scene from LASALLE College of the Arts' graduate fashion show that was held three weeks ago.

In the hit American fashion design reality show *Project Runway*, host and supermodel Heidi Klum's favourite line is: "In fashion, one day you are in, the next day you are out." In this highly-competitive industry, designers strive to outdo one another on sheer talent and creativity. The pen and paper are not just tools of creation, but essential weapons in the designer's arsenal. New blood is introduced into the scene year after year, as batches of talented students graduate from fashion schools and seek to make their mark.

Mid-year is the busiest time for fashion design students in Singapore as many will be entering the workforce following the end of their graduation show. Lianhe Zaobao spoke with several graduands who are at this crossroad to find out about their career plans. How do they assess the landscape of the local fashion industry? Will they continue to pursue the path they have chosen, or will they explore alternative routes?

### **In America, 10% of graduates stay in fashion design**

Wai Yarn Ng, 23, was greatly relieved when her graduate fashion show wrapped up a few weeks ago, for she could finally bid farewell to hectic days and sleepless nights spent rushing to complete her project. A student who specialised in menswear design at LASALLE College of the Arts, her final year collection drew inspiration from Peranakan culture. She created four types of prints and patched them together to imbue a bright Southeast Asian flavour to her creations. Classmate Florence Tan, 23, majors in textile design and her collection centres around the environment, employing a special type of material which allows the wearer to grow plants on their clothing by watering it regularly.

Through the years, the creations by students have never failed to delight audiences. From when they first started with knowing only how to sketch, to now being capable of producing a full outfit, these students have grown and demonstrate beautifully the power of design. Wang Jiehou, Deputy Principal of Raffles Design Institute, said: "Today's art students have strong executonal ability and are exceptionally talented creators. They enjoy expressing their ideas through different media, images, fashion, jewellery and so on. They enjoy creating and eschew the conventional nine-to-five work routine."

When asked what sparked their choice in fashion design, many students will recall their childhood days, citing examples such as: "When I was a kid, I really enjoyed changing Barbie's clothes"; or "I was particular about the clothes my parents wanted to buy me and would always insist on choosing those that I liked"; and "I enjoyed illustrating clothes of different styles on paper." Ultimately, the goal of all is to become a fashion designer. When Wai

Yarn started lessons at LASALLE though, her lecturer gave her and her classmates a reality check, sharing that roughly 20% of students would go on to become full-fledged designers.

This is actually an optimistic estimate because according to the latest survey by the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), only 10% of graduates from the country's 23 fashion schools work in design-related industries.

### **Giving their all once the choice to pursue fashion has been made**

Ten years after graduating from Raffles Design Institute, Afton Chen is now one of the fortunate 10% of graduates. Her success is the culmination of tremendous determination, perseverance and hard work. As the founder of local brand Reckless Ericka, she is very clear about the path that lies before an aspiring fashion designer in Singapore.

"It is no easy task to establish one's own brand as each stage presents different challenges," says Afton. "At the beginning, the difficulty lies in finding resources, contacting suppliers and building a production line. After that, one has to think about how to sustain operations and find suitable salespersons. You will find that design and business are entirely different matters."

In the past few years, there was a continuous stream of students interning at her firm, and a considerable number of them eventually switched to other specialisations after their internship. "Fashion design is a fast-moving industry. One has to juggle multiple roles and achieve many sales targets. Some of the students are unable to take the pressure, but such is the reality. It is advisable to switch to another line if one is unable to cope. If you are absolutely sure about working in this industry though, then you have to give it your all. It is just like running a marathon – you have to persevere."

### **Understanding the market through internships**

Internships are like bridges that connect students with the real working world, affording them the opportunity to see the true face of an industry. On her internship at local brand Weekend Sundries, Florence said her greatest takeaway is: "When establishing a brand, you have to do everything; you have to take the bad with the good."

Like many other design students, Florence initially dreaded sales tasks. It was a challenge for an introvert like herself to chat with customers but as time passed and she grew more comfortable in the role, she adopted a more positive mindset. "Chatting with customers enables one to understand their needs. This is useful when it comes to designing because at the end of the day, the customers are the ones who will wear the designs."

Wai Yarn also enjoyed her internship period, and plans to seek out more opportunities before becoming a full-fledged designer. During her time at Benjamin Barker, she designed patterns for the brand and was able to put the menswear knowledge she had learned at school into practice. After that, she picked up another internship at a lingerie firm and discovered a lot about the field.

On her plans after graduation, she intends to take up another internship in order to continue learning and honing her skills. “While I am still young, I would like to challenge myself and try lots of different things. Internships allow one such experiences, like understanding more about management and operations, and will definitely come in useful when one wants to establish his/her own brand.”

### **Testing the waters in person**

Internships enable students to make observations about the industry. As they gain more experience within the field, many develop a more optimistic outlook. Wai Yarn said, “At school, people kept saying that the local fashion circle is small. However, if you really take the time to dive inside and search for opportunities, you will find that there are a variety of jobs and pathways available.”

Florence revealed that her relatives used to doubt her wish to study fashion design. They would ask questions such as, “Would you be able to earn a living in the field?” After experiencing what working in the industry was like via her internship, she reflected, “Often, people form judgements based on stereotypes of an industry. The only way to know if a profession is suitable is to really to experience it yourself. To outsiders, the local fashion circle may seem small, but in actuality it has depth. If you simply broaden your outlook, you will find that there are plenty of jobs you can do.”

### **Gaining exposure through competitions**

In the fashion industry, success is determined by one’s creations. In order to attain recognition at the earliest opportunity, many students take part in competitions. Andrew Low, who graduated from Raffles Design Institute last year, is one success story. While working on his graduation designs, he took part in the Asia NewGen Fashion Award competition that was organised by Harper’s BAZAAR and won the top prize.

One year on since and Andrew discussed how the award has helped his career. “Winning the top prize indeed placed me in the limelight as I received more attention than my fellow graduates. Many industry professionals knew me through the competition and I was able to build up a good network. Local socialites have thus asked me to design gowns for them, and Parisian magazines have borrowed garments from me.” Such a halo effect was

unexpected, but Andrew is determined to strike while the iron is hot and make the most of the limelight because he is well-aware it will fade.

Andrew hopes to eventually fulfil his long-cherished dream of establishing his own brand next year. He even already has a name in mind – André. This French spelling of his name signifies his ambition to break into the fashion capital that is Paris. Dreams aside, he nevertheless has his feet grounded, musing: “It is easy to set up a business but difficult to keep it going. In the fashion circle, the winners are those who are able to outlast the others.”

### **All roads lead to Rome**

While many attempt to reach the top as a fashion designer, there are some who seek other paths. All roads lead to Rome, as they say, and Florence has adopted a more pragmatic view. She said, “After our lecturer briefed us on the state of the industry, I felt that being a pattern-maker could be a good alternative. It’s just as important because they’re like the hands and eyes that help the designer to flesh out his or her ideas.”

Pattern-making is a highly technical job and involves handling complicated and trivial details. A pattern-maker has to have a precise grasp of human body structure and measurements. Tightening or loosening a garment by mere centimetres can affect the fit on the mannequin. It is similar in artistry to handicraft work and though it is time-consuming and labour-intensive, Florence enjoys it as it helps to develop her foundation in fashion.

In order to expand job opportunities for students, several fashion schools have introduced classes in subjects other than design. Examples include media studies, visual merchandising, and even brand management. According to Nadya Wang, fashion lecturer at LASALLE, many alumni of the College are currently working as fashion writers, stylists, public relations executives and merchandisers for fashion brands.

This year stylist Anna En will celebrate her 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary since entering into the fashion industry. She had chosen to study fashion and merchandising at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, stating: “I did so because I wasn’t sure about becoming a fashion designer. I wanted to acquire more skills in order to expand my options.” After graduating, she landed full-time jobs as a childrenswear designer first, and then as a womenswear designer. In between, she also found great satisfaction as a stylist, recalling an incident with fond memory.

Her friend who was part of a television crew had told her that someone bought costumes in the wrong sizes. Needing a quick fix, they asked Anna if she could help with alterations on the spot. “People usually think of stylists as someone responsible for only helping the client to look good. In reality, their job isn’t that simple. On television, the audience gets a 360-degree view of actors so issues with costumes cannot be solved in the same way as it is

done for photoshoots, where safety pins would suffice. The stylist has to literally sew in a rush, and this requires a good understanding of garment construction. The foundation I'd build in school has therefore enabled me to do well in this job."

Anna said she enjoys the challenges in being a stylist, and has since quit her full-time designer job to freelance. Reflecting on the path she has, she shared that her original passion for fashion design still drives her, and she continues to dabble in that aspect of the industry.