

Kent State’s School of Fashion Turns 40!

AS THE SHANNON RODGERS AND JERRY SILVERMAN SCHOOL OF FASHION DESIGN AND MERCHANDISING CELEBRATES ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY, WE LOOK BACK AT SOME OF ITS IMPORTANT MILESTONES.



The atrium of Rockwell Hall

1981 President Brage Golding receives two checks for \$50,000 each as an initial contribution for a fashion design facility (Dec. 31, 1981).

1982 Kent State Board of Trustees passes a resolution to create a school of fashion design and merchandising (June 10, 1982).

Kent State University Dazzle Fashion Show (attended by the Duke and Duchess of Kent, England) is held in Cleveland as a fundraiser for the new school (Oct. 8, 1982).

1983 Fashion designer Shannon Rodgers and apparel manufacturer Jerry Silverman— New York retail fashion partners—donate their extensive fashion collection to Kent State.

Their gift (which includes 4,000 costumes and accessories, nearly 1,000 pieces of decorative art and a 5,000-volume reference library) founds the Kent State University Museum, which is closely linked to the School of Fashion.

Stella Blum is appointed inaugural director of the Kent State University Museum (1983-1985).

Gladys R. Toulis is appointed inaugural director of the School of Fashion (1983-1985).

The School of Fashion officially opens with 350 students and three full-time and three part-time faculty (July 1, 1983).

The Kent State Board of Trustees approves the naming of The Shannon Rodgers and Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Design and Merchandising (Dec. 9, 1983).

1985 Elizabeth K. Davic serves as interim director of the School of Fashion (1985-1986).

The Kent State University Museum opens to the public (Oct. 1985).

1986 June F. Mohler, PhD, is appointed director of the School of Fashion (1986-1993).

1987 The inaugural student fashion show is held in the Broadbent Gallery at the Kent State University Museum (May 5, 1987).

1989 The School of Fashion establishes its Hall of Fame (April 1989).

1990 A grand opening of the School of Fashion is held in the newly renovated Rockwell Hall (April 20, 1990).

1993 Jean Lawrence Druesedow is appointed director of the Kent State University Museum (1993-2018).

1994 Elizabeth A. Rhodes, PhD, is appointed director of the School of Fashion (1994-2009).

1997 The June F. Mohler Fashion Library opens in Rockwell Hall (Sept. 1997).

1998 The Morgan Foundation technology grants and endowment allow considerable expansion of technology within the school.

2002 The semester program in Florence, Italy, for fashion design and merchandising majors begins (fall).

2003 The School of Fashion celebrates its 20th anniversary with 750 students and 11 full-time and nine part-time faculty.



Study at Global Fashion Capitals

Fashion is a global industry. And Kent State University School of Fashion, consistently rated among the best fashion institutions in the world, continues to draw industry notice. Currently, it is the only fashion program in the United States that makes study away experience a compulsory part of the curriculum.

The School of Fashion’s Study Away program provides immersive opportunities for students to engage with international fashion industry professionals and observe street style and retail venues in some of the top fashion capitals of the world.

For more information visit www.kent.edu/fashion/study-away.

2006 Kent State’s New York City Studio (now known as Kent State University New York City Fashion) opens with Emily Aldredge as inaugural director (2006-2012).

2010 J.R. Campbell, MFA, is appointed director of what is then called The Fashion School (2010-2018).

The TechStyleLAB is initiated.

The Kent State University Museum celebrates its 25th anniversary (1985-2010) with the exhibit, *Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen*.

2012 The Fashion School Store opens in downtown Kent (April 18).

2015 The KnitLAB is created with donors’ purchase of a state-of-the-art industrial knitting machine.

2018 Sarah J. Rogers is appointed director of the Kent State University Museum (July 2018).

2019 Louise Valentine, PhD, is appointed director of the School of Fashion (2019-2022).

2020 Ann Walters, BA ’96, MEd ’19, PhD ’23, is appointed director of Kent State University New York City Fashion, after serving as interim director since 2018.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, students present the school’s first virtual fashion show. (The 2021 Fashion Show is also presented virtually.)

2021 Kent State’s School of Fashion Design and Merchandising again ranks among the top 10 design and fashion merchandising programs in the United States according to Fashion-Schools.org.

2022 Mourad Krifa, PhD, is named interim director of the School of Fashion (May 22, 2022).

For the first time, Kent State School of Fashion students debut their work at New York Fashion Week (Sept. 9, 2022).

2023 2023 Annual Fashion Show (presented by Dillard’s) takes place in the Kent Student Center Ballroom (April 26-29, 2023).

—Phil Soencksen, BS ’89

2023 Hall of Fame

In 1989, The Shannon Rodgers and Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Design and Merchandising inducted the first class of honorees into its School of Fashion Hall of Fame. The inaugural class included Rodgers and Silverman.

The Hall of Fame was established to recognize outstanding contributors to the world of fashion and create opportunities for Kent State fashion students to connect with leaders in the industry.

This year, as the School of Fashion celebrates its 40th anniversary, it has named Omar Salam, founder and creative director of the global fashion house Sukeina, as the 2023 inductee of Kent State University’s School of Fashion Hall of Fame.

Salam joins an illustrious group of inductees that includes Kenneth Cole, Estée Lauder, Oscar de la Renta, Dana Buchman, Leonardo Ferragamo and Josie Natori.

He plans to exhibit a selection of his spring/summer 2023 collection, titled “Cardinal,” this spring at the Kent State University Museum. A full exhibition of his work will follow in January 2024.



Omar Salam