

# Wearable tech struts down the runway at Fashion Week

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Image 1. A model walks the runway wearing a ThunderLily x 360Fashion Network robotic dress at Fashion Week in New York City, September 6, 2019. Photo by Thomas Concordia/WireImage

Fashion and technology have often gone together, improving clothing production and bringing the world's high fashion to the masses. However, at fashion shows in early September in New York, robotic designs took center stage. New York City's Fashion Week, an international event showcasing new fashion collections, began on September 6 and ended on September 14.

The dresses were conceived with the help of a kit designed by Anina Trepte, a former model and founder of the 360Fashion Network, a company that specializes in fashion technology. Trepte wants designers to integrate technology into their work even if they cannot code themselves.

"I am on a mission to encourage other women to get into tech," Trepte said.

Designers Clare Tattersall and Azrael Yang used Trepte's kits to create six dresses, which were unveiled at a fashion week show organized by Melange, a movement promoting diversity in fashion and the arts. The show was held in a church in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City.

## Technology As Creative Tool

Tattersall is from Great Britain but lives in New York. She created one dress with large futuristic flower petals that open and close mechanically on their own, creating the perfect eye-catching cocktail attire.

A second dress has a large silver hood that goes up and down with the click of a button.

The last is a fitting frock for the #MeToo era, featuring bits of metal fastened to one shoulder. When hidden motion sensors detect someone who is too close, the metal rattles and shakes.

Yang, who is based in Beijing, China, took her inspiration from the ocean and seaweed. Her creations gently flow like waves, guided by sensors and environmental data.

"A phenomenal result," Trepte said of the dresses.

Trepte, a tall American-born German woman with red hair and big blue eyes, gave up modeling and moved to Beijing more than a decade ago to devote herself to fashion tech.

"All the designs and the tech on these clothes were made by women — and the men did the sewing, ha ha ha!" she said.

For Tattersall, the founder of New York-based fashion tech company ThunderLily, education is key.

"My goal is to get girls involved in math and technology, show them that technology is a creative tool," she said.

### Activated By Sensors

Tattersall teaches girls of all ages about wearable technology, which she believes could be especially important in the future in terms of improving our health and fitness.

The dresses were also shown at a separate exhibition in New York's Union Square, along with some of Trepte's own wearable tech. Trepte made jewelry that lights up, wallets that charge cellphones, and an "SOS" ring that sends a text and a GPS location to an emergency contact.

Also on display were kits to make gloves with LED lights or coats with heating. The show even had a robot that can prepare drinks and is activated by wearable tech hidden in the sleeves of a jacket.

A lifelike robot named Sophia, made by the company Hanson Robotics, was a special guest at both the Harlem show and the following exhibition.

Her features and gestures are lifelike, right down to her eyelashes, creating an unnerving effect.

At the Melange show in Harlem, Sophia gave a speech about diversity, while on the runway were models of all shapes and sizes, races and sexual orientations.

Rag & Bone joined the robotic fun in a different way. For its big return to New York Fashion Week after a three-year absence, the fashion company deployed a giant robotic arm to film its runway show.

The images were shown live to the public on giant LED screens.

The robotic arm was connected to sensors capturing the models' movements. The creation was almost a character, according to Aaron Duffy, who directed the robot for the show.

It went from "kind of playful" to "pretty scary," Duffy told Fast Company magazine.

