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## Review: “Illume” Fashion Exhibition



BY LIBERTY IMHOFF · AUGUST 25, 2021



ILLUME exhibit, designer retail section; © Manic Metallic 2021

The Illume fashion exhibition, centered around the [Philadelphia Fashion Incubator \(PFI\)](#), is currently being hosted at the [InLiquid Gallery](#) in Philadelphia, PA. The exhibit is broken into two portions: the primary portion is a retrospective on the work of previous Philadelphia Fashion Incubator participants over the past decade, with the second portion (pictured above) being a retail area where the public is welcome to purchase designs from both former and current PFI participants.

When arriving at InLiquid Gallery, we were greeted with a sign on the locked door that mentioned having to make an appointment to view the exhibit (and to call to do so). This was not made clear in any literature before arriving at the venue. But, call the number we did. We ended up having to do this twice, and waited outside for what was about 20 minutes on a 90-degree day before finally being let in. We bring this up to say that this does not exactly create a seamless logistical experience for the attendee.



ILLUME exhibit, Philadelphia Fashion Incubator timeline; © Manic Metallic 2021

Once we finally got in, the gallery attendant led us to the check-in desk where we were given pamphlets about the details of the displayed garments and the designers that created them. To start the exhibition, there was a visual timeline (pictured above) highlighting organizational high points. Nearby, there was a comprehensive display containing photos and snippets of news stories. Both of these gave a sense that PFI has been doing the work for years to build up the fashion industry in Philadelphia (which they have).



ILLUME exhibit garments; © Manic Metallic 2021

The designers' work was situated along a black-and-white checkered strip down the middle of the exhibit space. There were 24 displays, with some carrying multiple garments from the same designers. Different types of pieces, from gowns and scarves to suits and coats, found their way into ILLUME. Some of the most promising pieces that we saw were as follows:

- The tuxedo suit from designer [Victoria Wright](#)
- The 'Hardanger Hill' coat from designer [Annina King](#)
- The 'Mariah' backpack from designer [Sherrill Mosee](#)

- The 'DAM, THAT COAT' piece from designer [Deborah Mack](#)
- The 'Alana Soul' adaptive blouse from designer [Nancy Connor](#)
- The zipper heart bolero and oversized sequin gown from designer [Autumnlin Kietpongler](#)



(l-r) Adaptive blouse, Nancy Connor; tuxedo suit, Victoria Wright; © Manic Metallic 2021

Designs in this exhibit that caught our eye did so because they were simply very well made. It wasn't difficult after reviewing them to tell that they were cut well, made of high-quality materials, and could stand up to the best designers in the industry in their respective design categories. Victoria Wright's suit, for example, has the kind of expert tailoring that industry insiders die for. Other designs were fine, but there were a couple that looked to be slightly frayed around the edges. We're not sure if that was intentional or not, but figured that it's something that our audience might be interested in knowing.



Autumnlin Kietpongler accessories display; © Manic Metallic 2021

The final portion was the retail section (see the top of this article for a photo) that was on offer for exhibit patrons to purchase work made by the designers whose work was displayed. The retail portion was intuitively organized, making it easy to navigate. In addition to sections for clothing, there were accessories available as well – including those in the above photo from Autumnlin Kietpongert.

The exhibit as a whole was well laid out, creating ease for exhibit attendees to peruse what is on display for viewing and what is on sale to the public. The designs themselves vary in type, polish, and purpose. It is worth a visit if you are in the vicinity of Philadelphia at any point in the near future.

Philadelphia Fashion Incubator’s “Illume” exhibit is open to the public to view through September 10, 2021 at InLiquid Gallery in Philadelphia, PA.

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