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Nature, Mourning, and Hope: The Jefferson Fashion Design Class of 2026



BY LIBERTY IMHOFF · APRIL 24, 2026



A view of works by Jefferson's Fashion Design Class of 2026; photo © 2026 Manic Metallic

The seniors of Thomas Jefferson University's College of Fashion & Textiles program had sustainable fashion on the brain at this year's annual fashion show.

Not unusual during a moment when more and more people are becoming concerned about the potential for a climate collapse, but it was reassuring to see that students have not forgotten about the importance of environmentally-sound design in a fashion industry that has seemingly deprioritized the issue.

While sustainability made its way into a number of the night's collections, there were three designers whose nature-centered work was of particular note. Brooke Boyd's collection *Metamorphosis* draws from the metaphor of the cocoon and the chrysalis to underline the process of transformation. Many of Boyd's looks give a vibe of "Mother Nature Going to a Garden Party", with ruffles, florals, and a breeziness that make the looks a perfect accompaniment to any springtime event. Annalee Capuano's *Of Wing & Marrow* explores the relationship between human nature and the natural environment. The vibe here is "Mother Nature Going to a Gala". The models' dewy skin did not go unnoticed, and neither did the nature-inflected glamour of Capuano's eveningwear. With her clear ability to construct clothing fit for high-status events, one hopes that she aims for this line of design as she decides her career direction after graduation.



A design by Brooke Boyd; video © 2026 Manic Metallic



A design by Annalee Capuano; video © 2026 Manic Metallic

Later in the show, Stephanie Lorenzo's *After Earth* paid tribute to a version of the environment that might very well become reality if we do not begin to take climate change more seriously: a world in which we are in mourning for a planet which has lost its color, life, and overall vibrancy. "Mother Nature Has Disappeared" is the sentiment in this collection, with neutrals and loose fits painting a vision of a charred and smoky world where we are forced to strip our lives down to the bare minimum to continue living on this planet. Coming after shows in which her fellow designers had addressed environmental issues in a less philosophically heavy-handed way, Lorenzo's willingness to show us what kind of world that we face if we continue to drain the Earth of its resources was commendable. (On another note, Lorenzo's ability to cut a pair of pants shines in this show.)



A design by Stephanie Lorenzo; video © 2026 Manic Metallic



A design by Stephanie Lorenzo; video © 2026 Manic Metallic

It seemed as the show progressed that what Jefferson's fashion design seniors were after is a vision for a better world. While that might sound trite, it's understandable — especially for the members of their generation. There was a thread of medieval style, for example, and while it might seem like a random thing for multiple students to zero in on, concentrating on time periods centering myth, swords, royalty, angels, and armor points to a desire for more genuine

heroes and more steady leadership. In a society where so much seems uncertain — and in some cases, downright hostile — wanting more stability is reasonable. The armor and swords, specifically, act as a stand-in for a need to show personal strength and to be ready to defend both oneself and those that you hold close.



A design by Mel Gorecki; video © 2026 Manic Metallic



A design by Gabrielle Towne; video © 2026 Manic Metallic

Elsewhere in this quest for a better world was designer Jaida Marshall's work, which focused on an Afrofuturistic vision where Black women would be able to survive and thrive in space. Her collection *Blue Mars* features space-inspired yogawear that uses such techniques as shibori dyeing to create a visual aesthetic that I've never seen in any yoga studio that I've been to. Truthfully, it is fair to wonder how some of the garments will work in practice when one is doing yoga, but the designs are intriguing enough that adventurous people would certainly be willing to try. Marshall's collection thesis here is especially important in the year 2026, as the rights of citizens in the United States continue to come under siege. Anyone paying attention to this collection should feel terrible that life on Earth is so bad that Black women have to consider going to space in order to feel at peace, but here we are.



A design by Jaida Marshall; video © 2026 Manic Metallic



A design by Jaida Marshall; video © 2026 Manic Metallic

Some designers chose to lean into nostalgia, vintage, and a life with more ease, sending looks that were free-spirited in some cases and more akin to lingerie in others. Others decided that it'd be more interesting to have fun and celebrate instead. But what is important to underline in this show is that the 2026 graduating class is facing some tough headwinds when they exit the College of Fashion & Textiles for the last time. It's heartening to see that students haven't yet lost hope that we can create a better and more just society.

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