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	HuffPost	
	<i>The Essence of Estethica: London Fashion Week's Platform for Emerging Sustainable Talent</i>	

I remember going to one of [Christopher Raeburn's](#) sample sales a few years ago with fellow HuffPo blogger [Christine de Leon](#). We were very excited, hoping to grab a piece from one of his early collections - a rare archive item by a designer that, we were sure, was headed for the stars. Fast forward to February 2014, and Raeburn is - not for the first time - showing his collection on the main catwalk at London Fashion Week, as well as having designed the uniforms for the Amex Insiders (Somerset House's concierge team) - the latest in a long string of exciting collaborations he's been working on season after season.

Memory goes back again, to when he first exhibited at LFW as part of [Estethica](#) - the British Fashion Council's initiative for the promotion of sustainable and ethical fashion, launched in 2006 by Orsola De Castro, Filippo Ricci and Anna Orsini. For the past 8 years, Estethica has proved an excellent launching pad for a large number of brands committed to more responsible design and production practices. It has offered mentoring, exposure, and in many cases the first opportunity to show at one of the four main global fashion weeks.

What Estethica has done is to firmly place ethical fashion on the map. With the ultimate aim to be able, one day, to 'blend in': sustainable practices would be the norm, and brands will once again only need to stand out for their aesthetic, on the back of their unquestionable ethics - just like with Christopher Raeburn. Has the goal been reached? If not 100% of mainstream fashion has been converted yet, this season's new formula shows that Estethica really is pushing the envelope.

Developing its tried-and-tested formula, the platform has appeared under a new guise. It still supports brands that are pillars of the conscious fashion movement, and have been staple names of past editions, like [Pachacuti](#), [Mich Dulce](#), [Katrien Van Hecke](#) and [Bottletop](#) - but, recognising they were ready to 'infiltrate' the mainstream, these four established labels were offered a space within the main Designer Showrooms (characterised by a subtle Estethica tab).

And when it comes to the core concept of launching, nurturing and mentoring new brands, that's when the new concept really reveals its new, winning formula. With the tag 'Fashion For A Sustainable Future', it is clear the mission for the new 'Estethica: Emerging Talents' is to forge a new and stronger generation of sustainable forces. And the quality of the selected labels leaves little space for doubt as to the success they will have and deserve.

The collections on show were eclectic, innovative and created out of outstanding craftsmanship:



Devika Dass founded her label in 2012, following a trip to the Andes where she discovered collectives of women creating extraordinary pieces with traditional knit techniques. So craftsmanship is behind not just her collection, but the whole ethos of her brand. The signature look for AW14 is the 'eco-fur': a bold play on textures, with ruffled yarn giving extreme character to dresses, gilets and coats.

Flavia La Rocca's collection is composed of clean lines, highlighting a clever concept. Through concealed zips, each piece can be deconstructed, with the parts forming a new garment or accessory - like the dress splitting into a skirt and a coat - to mix and match into several outfits. This is an example of modular clothing that offers durability to the wearer, as well the opportunity to reduce on the numbers of purchases - but the brand ticks many other boxes on the sustainability chart, like the use of recycled and regenerated fabrics and an entirely Made in Italy production.

Katie Jones of Louise de Testa belong to Orsola De Castro's roster of young *upcyclers*, and brought a pop of colour to the exhibition. While Jones works with reclaimed Aran jumpers and leather garments, which she embellishes and embroiders enhancing the essence of the original piece, Louise de Testa works with pre-production remnants and end of rolls to manufacture a graphically bold but sophisticated line of luxe sportswear.

Cangiari also brought the essence of Made in Italy craftsmanship to Estethica: from its hand-loom fabrics, weaved by the ancient Calabrian tradition, to the precious tailoring finishes. The production chain is entirely local and controlled by GOEL, a social enterprise that promotes the employment of disadvantaged people and fights for the social and economic renaissance of the region.