

RUNWAY

CFGNY Celebrated Its 10th Anniversary With a Conceptual Fashion Show

BY PAUL CHI

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A bump dress that nodded Rei Kawakubo's iconic 1997 *Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body* Comme des Garçons collection, only here the bumps were fashioned with tiny plush toys to create "cute, yet grotesque tumors on the body." Photos: Pablo Gonzalez/ Courtesy of CFGNY and Amant, Brooklyn, NY

The Asian-American multidisciplinary collective CFGNY celebrated its 10-year anniversary at the Brooklyn art space Amant on Friday night. Established in 2016 and led by artists Daniel Chew, Ten Izu, and Tin Nguyen, CFGNY (short for Concept Foreign Garments New York) challenges stereotyped narratives around identity. The collective's superpower is its innovative approach to using art and fashion to explore the term "vaguely Asian," a reference to describe a feeling of Asian identity that embraces ambiguity rather than reinforcing cultural clichés.

"In the past 10 years, I'm most proud that we haven't followed industry standards. We've really moved forward in the ways in which we believe things should be made or dealt with or delegated," Nguyen said backstage ahead of the show. "For a long time we were just making things for a small audience, and with time, we've seen that the work is resonating with people. I feel lucky that our ideas are aligning."

The presentation, titled *CFG-20260717*, was inspired by the history of video technology, in particular the development and circulation of video recorders from Asia, which enabled artistic pursuits and self expression. "Our show is really about the importation of the Portapak and how it created the video art scene in New York," Chew explained. "It started a whole culture and changed how we look and see images today."

CFGNY has been keeping busy this year. In addition to Friday's show, they currently have work in the Whitney Biennial and the Costume Institute's *Costume Art* exhibition at The Met, and a solo show at Amant. As the collective looks towards the future, what do they want to achieve in the next 10 years? "We've learned a lot along the way and want to continue to learn more," Nguyen said. "I'm curious to move forward thinking about how the practice can shake us."



Photos: Rachel Keane / Courtesy of CFGNY and Amant, Brooklyn, NY



Photos: Pablo Gonzalez/ Courtesy of CFGNY and Amant, Brooklyn, NY

There were dresses in abstract shapes, polo shirts adorned with zippers on the back, and deconstructed mini corsets. “This collection is much more sexy than our last one,” Nguyen laughed. “But, we still like playing with the idea of what cuteness means. It’s sort of ambivalent. We like clashing patterns. That’s part of our aesthetic. Sometimes you see people on the street and they have the craziest patterns and combinations and we take inspiration from that. We will overlay pieces with materials and deconstruct it, rebuild it and reimagine it in some way.”

Among the showstoppers were a series of bump dresses that nodded Rei Kawakubo's iconic 1997 *Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body* Comme des Garçons collection, only here the bumps were fashioned with tiny plush toys to create "cute, yet grotesque tumors on the body," Izu explained. "The stuffed animals are meant to become part of you. If you wear it, it becomes part of your body."

A Magazine editor and actor Blake Abbie was among the creatives that participated in the show. "It was important for me to be here," he said, "especially because Asian-American stories are rarely spoken about in the art and cultural world outside of Asia. And it's really inspiring to be with all these artists doing different things in different ways and contributing to New York's cultural landscape."

Ken Leung, a star of HBO's *Industry*, was a first-time participant. "There was a point where opportunities were so scarce for Asians and Asian-Americans. Whenever you got an opportunity, we only had one chance to do it right," he recalled. "And now, we are in a time where we're adjusting to the idea that we can try things: experiment, make mistakes. We can make it messy with our own work. We don't have to worry so much about getting it correct, and that is super exciting."

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