

Ukrainian designers embrace girl power at Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days

By Maria Romanenko. Published Feb. 9. Updated Feb. 9 at 9:24 pm



Models hold a mock protest for women's rights after presenting creations by Odesan brand WeAnnaBe during the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Days in Kyiv on Feb. 5, 2017. (Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days)
Photo by OLEG & LESYA GARBAR

Taking selfies and using emojis, but caring about international affairs and women's rights, a new generation of teenage girls is already here.

Ukrainian designers are clearly taking note.

That was apparent from some of the fall-winter 2017-2018 fashion shows presented at the Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days on Feb. 1-5, where the image of the modern teenage girl was a key inspiration.



Models pose backstage before fall-winter 2017-2018 Anna K fashion show in Kyiv on Feb. 4. (Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days)

On Feb. 4, Ukrainian brand Anna K models were smiling, holding hands and taking selfies as they strolled the catwalk. They were wearing t-shirts with slogans such as “don’t love me do” – a take on the Beatles’s “Love Me Do,” which was playing during the show. They also wore shirts with “trust me” on the front and “don’t” on the back. The image was young, fun and techie.

Anna Karenina, the designer behind Anna K, who traditionally models in her own shows, also opted for a “don’t love me do” t-shirt. At 21, Karenina is one of the most innovative Ukrainian designers. She also recently became the first Ukrainian designer to make it into the Forbes magazine “30 under 30 in Europe” list.



Ukrainian designer Anna K and model Sofia Evdokimenko walk the runway during the fall-winter 2017-2018 fashion show on Feb. 4 in Kyiv. (Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days)

Karenina is a representative of the “fourth-wave feminism,” a movement associated with online feminism and sometimes referred to as “Tumblr feminists.” The British style magazine *Dazed* in April described it as “the wave of young female artists who seek to ‘normalize the teen girl experience’ through their artwork.”

During the Anna K show, the models had smartphones in hand and filmed the audience from the runway. Backstage they posed for photographers while holding their phones as if they were about to take a selfie.

When it comes to clothes, Karenina keeps them soft and feminine by constantly introducing new cuts, elements, and silhouettes, without taking away anything from comfort. Her models most often wear sporty shoes – Anna K insists that girls don’t need to suffer in the name of beauty.

Another headliner of the Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days that conveyed the girl power trend was young Ukrainian fashion brand Navro.



Navro models pose for a photograph backstage during Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days in Kyiv on Feb. 2. The models' crowns sported slogans like "Diversity," bringing attention to important issues of today. (Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days)

At the fall-winter show on Feb. 2, Navro models wore crowns, unicorn prints and t-shirts that read "Unicorns don't cry" – a reference to the need of today's young women to stay strong and united.

In the Navro show the feminine color red was combined with denim, and denim with leather, adding assertiveness to the models' appearance. The thunderbolt prints on a few items were symbols of power and divinity – in Greek mythology, the thunderbolt was a weapon given to the god Zeus by the Cyclops.



A model runs a catwalk during the Navro fashion show at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week on Feb. 2, 2017. Thunderbolts and the slogan “Unicorns don’t cry” dominated the collection. (Anastasia Vlasova)

The models’ crowns sported slogans like “Diversity,” bringing attention to important issues of today.

Speaking of which, another fall-winter 2017-2018 fashion show by the young Odesa-born brand WeAnnaBe also carried a deeper message than fashion shows usually do. After the catwalk show on Feb. 5, the WeAnnaBe models joined together to recreate a protest similar to the Women’s March held worldwide on Jan. 21. Holding posters that read “Females are strong as hell,” “My body, my choice”, “We are not things” and “True freedom”, they also danced around and had fun, dispelling the stereotype of “angry feminists.”



WeAnnaBe models dance around while holding protest posters after the fall-winter 2017-2018 fashion show in Kyiv on Feb. 5, 2017. (Mercedes-Benz Kiev Fashion Days)

World-famous Ukrainian model Alina Baikova, who appeared in one of the latest Dolce & Gabbana ad campaigns, was chosen by WeAnnaBe designer Anna Sokol to open and close the show – the perfect women’s rights ambassador thanks to her popularity. WeAnnaBe is a young Odesan brand, and the fall-winter show was its first individual runway event, quickly putting Odesa on the fashion map, along with a several talented Odesan designers like Larisa Lobanova and Masha Reva.

The fall-winter 2017-2018 WeAnnaBe collection was dedicated to the female personality and her concerns. The clothes that WeAnnaBe has produced recently are comfortable, functional but original, which gained them attention from Kyiv fashionistas like the former chief editor of Vogue Ukraine, Masha Tsukanova.

“We have an idea about what a modern and progressive girl needs, and that’s what we base our brand on,” the WeAnnaBe website reads.