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# Centre for Fashion Enterprise – Nurturing Emerging Fashion Talent

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27 November 2019

## What is the CFE?

The Centre for Fashion Enterprise (CFE) is a fashion and fashion tech incubator that supports and nurtures emerging fashion design and Fashion tech talent.

The CFE was established in London in 2003 by The London College of Fashion (LCF), University of the Arts London. The CFE was set up to offer a safe haven allowing designers to maintain their creativity while facing the challenges involved in the luxury fashion industry.

## London Fashion Fund

Wendy Malem, the former Dean of LCF Graduate School, was the CFE director from 2006 to 2016. Malem is now managing the London Fashion Fund which seeks to deliver early stage funding to entrepreneurs working across sectors in fashion, starting in 2019. According to the London Fashion Fund website:

*Our initial aim is to find and fund a portfolio of entrepreneurial fashion ventures in the next 18 months, some unusual , all forward thinking , who will contribute to the resilience & definition of the fashion industry in London and UK as it shapes-up for the future, potentially encompassing design, innovation, technology , making & manufacturing and new retail .*

Judith Tolley has been the Head of CFE since 2010.

You can find out much more about the CFE at its website at [www.fashion-enterprise.com](http://www.fashion-enterprise.com)

## CFE Early Years

Initially supported and funded by the Mayor of London for 3 years, the CFE was launched at City Hall in 2003. In 2004 The London College of Fashion gifted designer studio and office space to the CFE, located in Hackney, London. In the same year, a partnership with Fashion Fringe was formed.<sup>2</sup>

## CFE Programmes

The CFE currently offers 11 programmes to newly founded fashion brands. These are:

- Market Entry – providing business tools for start-ups to grow
- Fashion Pioneer – for designer brands in need of broad business support
- Fashion Production 1 – for fashion businesses in need of production support
- Fashion Production 2 – for apparel brands needing personalised production support
- Fashion Accelerate – for designer brands needing a tailored support programme
- BBE Fashion – for companies needing business and investment planning
- BBE FashTech – for companies needing business and investment planning
- Jewellery Pioneer – for jewellery designers needing wide-ranging support
- Jewellery Production 1 – for jewellery businesses needing production support
- FashTech Pioneer – for fashion tech entrepreneurs wanting to refine the fashion industry
- FashTech Accelerate – for fashion technology entrepreneurs needing a thorough, tailored support scheme

These programmes do not offer any monetary support but focus on the provision of mentoring and expert advice delivered by 1-1 sessions and workshops. Support is offered in many fields including production planning, marketing and PR, costing and pricing, accountancy, and legal and IP.

## **CFE Support**

The CFE has supported many fledgling luxury fashion brands:

- 2005 – Erdem won Fashion Fringe and moved into the CFE studios for 3 years
- 2009 – Mary Katrantzou joined the Venture programme, now known as Fashion Accelerate, and moved to the CFE studios for 2 years<sup>3</sup>
- 2009 – JW Anderson joined the Fashion Pioneer programme

## **Erdem**

In 2005 Centre for Fashion Enterprise launched a 2-year bespoke business support programme. The Venture programme provided free studio space at LCF's Mare Street campus and access to business mentoring and industry experts. Erdem was supported by CFE under this programme and stayed in the Mare Street studios for 3 years.

## **Mary Katrantzou**

Mary was supported by Centre for Fashion Enterprise on the Venture programme, a two-year bespoke programme of business support providing regular mentoring sessions delivered by industry experts across all areas, from business planning, finance, range planning, costing and pricing, production, marketing and PR, and accountancy. The programme also provided free studio space for 2 years, pro bono legal support, wholesale production software, accountancy, and PR support. Mary joined the programme in 2009 and stayed at Mare Street for 2.5 years. Mary states the support was integral to her development. She reinforced this by saying:

*“Whilst on the New Fashion Venture Programme we experienced rapid growth and it was great to have the CFE’s expertise and knowledge to guide us in the right direction. With careful planning, we were able to sustain the growth and make positive decisions that have had a long-lasting impact. CFE helped us make decisions and implement new departments in the company that have helped immensely.”*

## **JW Anderson**

In 2009, JW Anderson was supported for 6 months on the Pioneer programme designed and delivered by Centre for Fashion Enterprise. The fully subsidised programme supported designers for the length of a season and provided regular one-on-one mentoring sessions and experts workshops on business planning, finance, range planning, costing, and pricing, production, marketing and PR, and accountancy.

## **Accumulative Support**

As of November 2019, 245 designers have taken part in CFE programmes with 1000 student internships hosted. The Venture programme has helped 38 designers since its inception and Venture designer sales have accumulated £20 million since 2007.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2003 CFE has supported in the region of 1500 businesses across all of its programmes of support.

## **Fashion Fringe**

CFE collaborates with Fashion Fringe, an initiative set up in 2003 by fashion writer Colin McDowell and IMG Fashion to support emerging designers. Fringe Erdem was the initiative's second winner back in 2005, chosen by a panel including Rosemarie Bravo, Alexandra Shulman, Jade Jagger, Joan Burstein, Hamish Bowles, Louise Wilson, and Roland Mouret.<sup>5</sup>

Fashion Fringe holds an annual competition in which all three finalists are mentored by figures in the fashion industry, including teams from Burberry. The finalists are also provided with financial support and studios at the London College of Fashion to create the collections that they will show during Fashion Fringe’s show at London Fashion Week, where a Fashion Fringe winner is named. The winner ten receives a two-year development package to set up and sustain his or her business.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> London Fashion Fund website: <http://londonfashionfund.co.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> CFE website – About: <https://fashion-enterprise.com/about>

<sup>3</sup> CFE website 16 April 2016 - CFE ‘Venture’ Programme changes name to ‘Accelerate’: <https://fashion-enterprise.com/cfe-venture-programme-changes-name-to-accelerate>

<sup>4</sup> The Telegraph 4 December 2013 - Fashion Fringe celebrates its 10th birthday:  
<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG10494531/Fashion-Fringe-celebrates-its-10th-birthday.html>

<sup>5</sup> WWD 23 May 2013 - Christopher Bailey Names Fashion Fringe Finalists:  
<https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/bailey-names-fashion-fringe-finalists-5923095/>

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