

Sanaz Masoumi MFA'24 reflects literature and culture in her wearable art

by Linda Lenhoff, October 31, 2023



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Out of the blue last summer, Sanaz Masoumi MFA'24, decided to contact the Portland Fashion Week organizers to see how she might be able to attend or be a designer for them next year. "The owner of the Fashion Week gave me a hello in Farsi in response. He said he'd like to showcase my art as a featured designer this year." Masoumi only had three weeks to get ready for the show and put together seven additional designs. Even more exciting, she's been asked to attend next year's annual New York Fashion Week.

Portland Fashion Week served as Masoumi's first show in the United States, but it's far from the first showcase of her work. The Iran-born designer had previous shows there and created a small clothing brand. "But in Iran," she says, "we can't have runway fashion shows. Instagram is kind of our runway fashion show."

Three years ago, Masoumi managed a group of six other designers to bring a fall/winter collection to life with 100 special outfits. "Our exhibition was sealed by authoritarians just two hours after opening because models in the Instagram photos didn't have a hijab on their head," she said. She had canceled events twice before and considered emigrating since 2015.

Masoumi felt welcomed by PNCA, where she is working toward an MFA in Applied Craft and Design. "After deciding to leave my country because of the restrictions, I started applying for universities," Masoumi says. "I like the atmosphere and especially the campus, where all of the shops are together." Masoumi also calls out Applied Craft + Design Program Department Chair [Sara Huston](#) for her great teaching and support. "My mom says, 'She saved your life,'" Masoumi adds, as Huston helped her come to Portland.

Masoumi feels welcomed by the United States. "The responses to my clothes from Portland Fashion Week were lovely and satisfying for me because the moment I entered with my pieces, everyone said, 'Wow, these are outstanding!'" The organizers immediately offered to feature her work for four more nights and have a special show with models.

Masoumi draws inspiration from Persian weaving and rugs in her clothing designs. On her Instagram, she says her creative journey is inspired by Kurdish Kilim patterns and that her curiosity surrounds "the intersection of art and fashion ... Each stitch and color tells a story, capturing cherished memories."

Watch Masoumi create a piece [on her Instagram](#).

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