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Canadian fashion, mainstream media, homegrown designers, Toronto fashion scene, fashion journalism, consumer interest, advertisers, local talent, cultural identity, tariffs, shopping local, fashion events, creative talent, media coverage, fashion industry.

**SPEAKERS**

Neda Madany, Evan Zeller

**Evan Zeller**

Hey everyone. Thanks for tuning in to Behind the Review. A behind the scenes look at the work we do here at the Review of Journalism. Over the course of the fall 2024 semester, our team worked on their print features, reporting on the widespread changes happening within the Canadian journalism industry, and so this podcast series will serve as a deep dive into their reporting process, shedding light on why it's important to tell these stories now. Today, I'm joined by Neda Madany, who covered the subject of how Canadian fashion has a lack of visibility in mainstream media coverage. Hi Neda, thanks for joining me here today.

**Neda Madany**

Hi Evan, thanks for that introduction. It's so good to be here today.

**Evan Zeller**

I'm so glad I haven't had the chance to talk to you in a while.

**Neda Madany**

I know it's been so long, and I'm so excited for our chat today.

**Evan Zeller**

Oh, it's gonna be a great chat. I'm sure it will be so for any of our listeners who don't know, Neda is one of our fashion girlies. She's currently doing her internship at FASHION Magazine, right?

**Neda Madany**

Yes it's been such a good time. And I was actually on the Review last year or last semester as well. It's really good to be back. Oh, my God, you've come full circle about the fashion industry today. So that's gonna be fun.

**Evan Zeller**

It's gonna be a really great talk.

**Neda Madany**

Yeah.

**Evan Zeller**

So in terms of, like, the print feature that you wrote. Tell me a bit about the inspiration for this piece and what led you to realize that Canadian fashion wasn't being covered well?

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, I mean, growing up in the Greater Toronto Area and also kind of having a passion for fashion and storytelling, I feel like throughout my university years and being a part of student publications, I noticed kind of a gap in reporting and coverage on homegrown Canadian designers in comparison to other major cities like New York, London, Milan and I think having been a part of the scene and kind of having friends in the industry as well, identified so much creative talent that I'd never heard about until I was covering these spaces myself. So I guess that was kind of the inspiration. It was more of like, curiosity. Why is this the case? And how can we change for more visibility towards these creatives?

**Evan Zeller**

No, absolutely. Can you tell me a little bit more about this idea of, like, homegrown fashion? I'm very curious to know more about that.

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, absolutely. In general, there are not a lot of spaces for these designers to showcase their creativity. And the one major event, I feel like, I don't know if you've heard of fashion art Toronto, they're the longest running fashion event in Toronto, I would say Canada as well. I think they're starting to kind of get more attraction from Montreal and Vancouver and such. So to answer your question of a homegrown designer is just creatives who are not necessarily from Toronto, but based in Toronto and creating here, without the desire to take their talents elsewhere.

**Evan Zeller**

Okay, yeah, okay, yeah, I love that. They can kind of, kind of, like, puts, I mean, if Toronto isn't already, and, like, on their map, where people go to, like, at least we have another reason for them to, like, Come like, Oh, yeah. Look, we have a very amazing fashion culture here.

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, there's creative people here. And that was a whole point of this. It's like, why are people not talking about it, yeah, and reckon that's a good word recognizing.

**Evan Zeller**

So would you say that this kind of like aligns with what you like to write about as a journalist?

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I do kind of indulge in, like, fashion, arts and culture around the world as well, but I feel like the Toronto scene is so well it's it's different and more special to me because I'm from here, but also I feel like it has a sense of welcoming and inclusivity that I don't see everywhere. We're such a multi cultural city, and we get a lot of different there's a lot to see, and there's a lot of stories behind this creativity. I just want to hear all about it.

**Evan Zeller**

Oh, absolutely, yeah. I feel like people need to recognize fashion for that, like it's in it, in many ways, it's a great form of storytelling as well. So I love that you tapped into that. Yeah. So in writing this piece, you were able to speak to editors at fashion magazine and Elle, two of Canada's biggest publications, dedicated fashion news. Do they have some valuable insights into why Canadian magazines have been covering much Canadian fashion?

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, definitely. I feel like approaching the story, my mind was kind of in a place where, like, well, I can cover these spaces. Why can't a publication, a mainstream publication, cover these spaces? But I feel like, especially after my talk with Annika, who's also my supervisor at my internship right now, she kind of went in and explained that there are definitely efforts, and they have the connects, and they know the industry well. However, because Canada kind of lacks that interest in fashion from its consumers and demographics. Yes, it's been very hard to cover these spaces without neglecting the advertisers and kind of without considering what their demographic wants to read about, if that makes sense. Oh, absolutely, yeah. So all roads led to advertisers, and the kind of risk there would be with kind of having this teeter totter, almost with advertisers, and then homegrown talent and Canadian talent, which they and I've noticed since my internship, the conversation is brought up, how can we support these artists? And especially now with the tariffs and this push for people to shop locally, there's been a humongous shift. It's almost and these stories are doing really well for us right now as well. It's almost like people want to purchase things where they know where they came from, and they want it to feel close to them. We're seeing this really big shift. So I'm hopeful for the future, and I know that's a conversation being talked about, and they're just trying to find that balance.

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely and like, the work of advertisers, I guess. Like, they really help support, like, these more local artists as well. Like, it's very dependent on, like, absolutely.

**Neda Madany**

I know a lot of magazines are driven by advertisers, which I that's not necessarily a bad thing. That's just how, how it's always been run. But obviously there's not a lot of support and backing for these independent, homegrown designers, so it's kind of hard to make space for them while still making their business run, right?

**Evan Zeller**

Yeah, of course. So in your story, one of your sources says that while establishing a Canadian cultural identity as a neighbor to the US, Canada is possibly too humble for its own good. What do you think you meant by that?

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, this was actually like a conversation that came up in multiple of my interviews with sources that Canada kind of gets overshadowed by the United States. And to some extent, I feel that that's very true. I mean, you even see it in our musical artists like, for example, we have Tate McRae right now, who's blowing up and she's all of her kind of coverage is coming from the US, performing in the US, fashion shows, celebrities, etc. A lot of our eyes go to the US. And I feel like since we're very focused on American culture in turn, we've kind of neglected our own, if that makes sense, and we've kind of prevented from our kind of art, culture and fashion landscape to grow and flourish.

**Evan Zeller**

That's a big piece. I mean, you hear that about like, not just within the world of fashion, but like this, we're associated, in general, as Canadians for being like, we're too like, humble, or like, Oh my God, and

**Neda Madany**

I can't even, like, count the amount of times I've heard, well, well, I want to move to the US, or I want to move to Europe, because this complicated argument, yeah, this is the place where my career will ultimately succeed. This is where the most opportunities are. But the question kind of comes up, like, can we build our own opportunities here, and can we kind of shift this issue?

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely? Yeah. Well, journalism, dental is very cut through. So if you don't have, like, a firm plan of how to represent yourself, represent your brand, then that's Yeah, yeah, exactly. Um, so then, from reporting on this subject, what are some I mean, I don't know if you want, if you feel comfortable in speaking on this, but in your mind, at least. What are some possible solutions to this? And is there something that one of your sources told you that stands out as like, something Canadian journalists can do to cover more Canadian fashion?

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, I mean recognizing them, I feel like, is the first step in acknowledging their talents and creativity, a shift in consumer the consumer matters a lot in terms of what they care about purchasing, what they care about reading. I spoke to Nolan Bryant, and this stuck out, because he doesn't come from a traditional magazine background. He's the globe and mails society columnist, and he's been there for years. So he kind of has an interesting outlook on the fashion industry, because he has so much connects. But he said that in depth reporting, so not necessarily what's happening right now, but more so, what does this designer do in their free time? Or what's the story behind this garment, you know, something to really kind of grab and show, almost like behind the scenes, absolutely. And people are always drawn to that, yeah, you'll find like, oh, that's what I'm drawn to. I feel like we lack that here in Canada with our designers.

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely.

**Neda Madany**

Yeah.

**Evan Zeller**

I mean, it's kind of like, not exactly like a grim forecast of what's to come, but it definitely shows, like, what the work that still needs to be done.

**Neda Madany**

Absolutely. And I think it's an attainable change.

**Evan Zeller**

Yeah, no, for sure. Yeah. So how do you feel about the future of fashion journalism in Canada and as an intern at FASHION Magazine, what are some ways in which you are hoping to contribute to that future?

**Neda Madany**

So to answer your question about how do I feel, I see a lot of hopefulness and kind of my age demographic of journalists who care about fashion, arts and culture, I feel like we're really hungry to kind of represent these artists who are not getting enough coverage. I also am hopeful because of the shift in kind of shop Canadian and all the tariffs are terrible, but I feel like at the same time, it's forcing people to consider their purchasing and consider homegrown designers. And as for my contributions, I've spent my four years of my undergrad covering and speaking to designers on a podcast I also co host, and I want to continue doing that. I want to hear their stories and keep telling their stories like, sometimes they'll say something to me, and I'm like, wow, like, I want to write a whole feature about this one thing you just told me. And I want to continue having these thoughts and having this hopefulness and keep covering these spaces.

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely, as you should. And I wanted to kind of hone in on that. In on that, yes, for our listeners, Neda also co host a podcast. So could you please share the name of that so we can, like, encourage more people to listen

**Neda Madany**

Absolutely. So I began co hosting the StyleCircle Podcast last year with my co host Isabella, and this year we're both co directors. So it's been really, really fun. Well, we've released four episodes of our fashion art Toronto series where we've spoken with designers on each episode. So check it out. That's been really fun.

**Evan Zeller**

Yeah, so, you know, I know that everyone's kind of talking about tariffs and, um, it's kind of, everyone's in a little bit of a panic state about that. I guess we do have to kind of, like, acknowledge that there is, I don't want to say, a positive side to this, but like as like, kind of like, perhaps, like, a result of this, like, because of, you know, consumers attention being kind of turned into, like, just towards Toronto and like, outwardly there is, I guess, more opportunity for exposure for local artists. So I guess I wanted to get your thoughts on that. Like, you know, even though tariffs are these, we're not looking we're not happy about it, obviously, do you think that in some way, it has like, allowed for our attention to be turned towards more local like artisans and like designers.

**Neda Madany**

Yeah, I remember we were going into our production meeting one day, and my editor had just told me, Hey, like we're kind of thinking of writing this piece in light of the tariffs, about shopping Canadian and how we can kind of give more exposure to these Canadian brands. And I remember literally telling her, yeah, people are going to be forced to shop Canadian now. Because that was, like, my something I've been really passionate about is shopping Canadian brands. We should support our homegrown talent. The whole story is about that home grown talent. I love that. I know, yeah, but yeah, I was kind of a bitter, sweet thoughts. Obviously, the tariffs are not great,

**Evan Zeller**

um, 25% is it still budged that?

**Neda Madany**

I don't know. I don't know, but I hope we see light at the end of the tunnel,

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely

**Neda Madany**

with this. But yeah, just going back to that. I remember in the production meeting, we're going back and forth like, Well, who do we want to include? And someone with a lot of influence at the magazine said, well, we should include indie designers, independent designers. And in my head, like the light bulb went on, like, yes. Like, thank goodness. Like, we're like, because I had already formulated a list for this story and they got approved. So it was really, really nice to kind of witness this change, because I hadn't written this story that long ago. So it was like, we're seeing change now, and it's exciting.

**Evan Zeller**

And honestly, I hope that you know, just you know, if we do see the light at the end of the tunnel with these tariffs, I do hope that like that does not like that, that still allows for these local designers to, like, retain that kind of like exposure, and retain that following that they've developed as a result of, like this, this unfortunate situation, yeah, because, um, I think that, like, I like, you know, I'm not trying to be like one of those people who are like, you know, like doom and gloom, but I just, I just hope that, like, once they do develop that following it, it stays that way. Because, you know, it would be nice for the more like local artists to have that kind of like recognition, because there are a lot of stories that still need to be told in terms like their inspiration for like their designs,

**Neda Madany**

Absolutely. And, um, it's also quite exciting. I interviewed a couple of designers for the fashion or Toronto series on the style circle podcast, and a couple of them are beginning their own website, so you can shop directly from the website. Oh, really, yeah, and that's accessible Exactly, and that's not really an opportunity that's been handed to them, right? Most of the time. I noticed that it's just like, rentals and etc, garments, yeah.

**Evan Zeller**

How did they like prior to this, like, how did they and without, like, you know, the help of advertisers, how did they kind of like, essentially promote themselves. I wonder, did you get to speak to them on that?

**Neda Madany**

Yeah. I mean, this whole, the whole feature story, wouldn't have happened without Vanja Vasic, who is the director and founder of Fashion Art Toronto. And I think it's also notable to mention Vicky Milner, who runs the CAFA awards, Canadian arts and Fashion Awards. They're advocates for these designers, like they. I. Will push for their recognition, where people will not push, there aren't a lot of opportunities for them to get exposure. There's not a lot of resources they have to backing them, or funding or support as much as other cities give to their creatives. So it's not really a conversation that I've kind of engaged with these designers. However, from what I've noticed, it's primarily on social media. So they have their Instagram pages and their small initiatives around the city to like archive, and there's a couple other like small Fashion Weeks and kind of incubators that help promote and support these artists. But then again, there's, there's not too much.

**Evan Zeller**

I wanted to ask, are there, like, any kind of events hosted by, like, fresh magazine, or like these names that you mentioned, like, where it allows these designers to, like network or, like meet new people? Do they like, ever do any, I mean, I guess kind of like in this, like the event that you wrote about, where they get to kind of essentially showcase their designs. But other than that, I wonder,

**Neda Madany**

Um, I mean, I'm not necessarily, not too sure about FASHION magazine.

**Evan Zeller**

Or, sorry, like any kind of, like, other, yeah, vegan fashion brand.

**Neda Madany**

There are tons around Canada. I know Montreal has a lot of incubators and initiatives created for Canadian designers. But so far from what I know, in Toronto, we have indigenous Fashion Week. We have plus size Toronto Fashion Week. Then we have fashion at Toronto archive hosts to, like, a biannual fashion event every year. And it's an exciting time because we're seeing more people kind of have a desire for beginning initiative to support these designers. And it's also interesting, because I've seen a lot of students create magazines and outlet and publications to support these designers and like different aspects from like we have Hughes magazine, which is honing in on arts and culture, I guess, the whole realm. And then I believe, um, there's another one as well. But so to speak, there's a push for this, and people want more of it, and it's an exciting time. Now our media just needs to get on that. Yeah, exactly. And I know that it puts them in a tough position as well, kind of with their business agenda. However, it's an exciting, exciting perspective to see from younger journalists.

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely, I think, I think, as you were saying, like, our generation, we're like, showing, like, a, like, a fervent love of this and like, want to, like, see it, like, prosper and like, go far. So I'm, I think that you know how our parents are always saying, Oh, you guys are the future. You know, it's, there you go.

**Neda Madany**

We are, yeah, and I'm seeing it, yeah, absolutely.

**Evan Zeller**

Well, thank you so much for joining me today. It's been a great conversation, I've learned a lot about the fashion world. I wasn't the most knowledgeable going into it, but I just learning about the Hawaii culture within Toronto. It's been really I enjoyed reading about that in your piece.

**Neda Madany**

Yeah. Thank you so much for having me, Evan and the Review of Journalism, I had so much fun chatting with you today.

**Evan Zeller**

I'm your host. Evan Zeller, this episode was produced by me and Chloe Kim. If you enjoyed this episode, explore all of our podcasts in the podcast tab at reviewofjournalism.ca. Thanks for listening.