

# TIME

INTERNATIONAL

## SUAVE

Two savvy Nottingham pairs combined to become Fearce Fionda. A hint of Galliano's boldness can be seen in this opulent evening dress of taffeta and organza



notably Liberty, Harvey Nichols and Marks & Spencer, pushed the home-grown talent.

And about the talent there is no doubt. The latest to cause a stir is Hussein Chalayan, 27, a Turkish Cypriot who is about as precocious as Galliano. His Central St. Martins graduating show triggered *Business*' interest too, and his current career is based on smart shirts and jackets. But he is known for his paper clothing—a special paper, of course—fragile, yet unrippable and washable. Like Galliano, he bases his shows on stories he dresses up.

Starved for sustained backing, young designers tend to enter partnerships to survive, giving rise to such odd pairings as Sweeney & Mulligan. Barbara Sweeney and Tracy Mulligan are on the verge of the stability that comes from lots of outlets. There is a mix-and-match philosophy, wearable clothes in unusual combinations of color and material. Like most young Brits, they base their styles on solid tailoring. Sweeney & Mulligan may not be the raciest label around, but it is bright and graceful.

Another double designer is Fearce Fionda. Reynold Fearce and Andrew Fionda met at Nottingham Trent University 10 years ago. Fearce subsequently worked for Galliano. They have more flair than financial backing and are at the expensive end of design. They love making complicated things look easy, such as double popovers on jackets. The ghost of Galliano can be seen in sinuous, bias-cut skirts; their own high spirits show in a super-abundant, circular-cut red skirt. "We're trying to make clothes more interesting," says Fearce, but he adds with determination that "we are not trying to distort the female form." They don't.

John Rocha is usually considered a British designer, but that consensus aside, it is a little hard to know why. He is of Portuguese and Chinese descent, was raised in Hong Kong and, after a tough time in England, decamped for Dublin. There he built enough success to show in Paris. In Ireland he thrives on working with craftsmen in Donegal and Wicklow. Rocha's inspired use of local tweed and linen makes his shapely designs—modern, not full-on—unusually satisfying. After all, he has often dressed up the cloth as well.

The creativity count is soaring. The route to a stronger commercial future is clear, but more enthusiasm of a practical nature is still needed. Galliano has shown how; now British fashion needs to perfect a "silly kind of beautiful."

—With reporting  
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