

This season was always going to look a little different for DANIEL W. FLETCHER, even before seismic external factors took hold. In January, the designer chose to work to his own schedule, narrowing the gap between collection and consumer. The autumn/winter 2020 collection is released to press and customer on the same date for the first time, building further into the ever-expanding direct-to-consumer aspect that affords the designer greater autonomy.

As ever an intrinsic part of the Daniel W. Fletcher DNA, craftsmanship carries even more weight with the new added pressures of Covid-19. When work-from-home measures were instigated, Fletcher reached out to the seamstresses who he had been building relationships with since his graduate collection and were facing employment challenges of their own.

"When the virus hit it had a huge impact on manufacturing and the possibility of not being able to produce this collection at all became very real," Fletcher says. "When my factories closed I wanted to make sure that the seamstresses I work with were still able to support themselves. I've spent the past few months working with them directly and sending materials to their homes. Now, I feel this collection is a testament to the skill and hard work of these amazing women: I dedicate this collection to them."

Resourcefulness manifests further. Fletcher — confronted with supply-chain challenges — used this time as an opportunity to reuse, recycle and reinvent the resources around him. The result sees boating-stripe shirts and shorts made from silks usually reserved for tailoring, while monochrome denim sets and shirts have been hand painted by Fletcher during lockdown isolation.

Some pieces will seem familiar, drawn from Fletcher's work on Next In Fashion, where he explored womenswear and brings it to his offering for the first time this season. Pieces will be sold in genderless XS-XL sizing to open up formally to his long-established womenswear clients.

"Focussing on my online store has allowed me to produce a collection which feels true to my entire creative vision. It has also allowed me to re-focus on what I want to say, how much I'm putting out into the world and slow down — something I hope the rest of the fashion industry will also consider."

Ultimately, this is a deeply personal collection for Fletcher, rooted in his own experiences of growing up and working in modern Britain: "it's about freedom of expression, gender, sexuality and the overriding message on discovering identity." The sense of British heritage that has long framed Fletcher's work is evident, yet taken to a more abstract place. A duffle coat is deconstructed and turned inside out, lace trimmed nightwear becomes daywear, and signature pieces are reconstructed in new ways. The result remains joyous and optimistic, emerging out of a time of struggle and much needed change; embracing the very real challenges facing designers today to reset the DANIEL w. FLETCHER brand offering.

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