Scott Menzel wearing a two-sided reversible cape custom printed with Menzel's own artwork. Photo: IMAXTree for Genentech

RUNWAY

A *Double Take* on Adaptive Fashion at NYFW,

From Open Style Lab

BY JOSÉ CRIALES-UNZUETA September 8, 2022

being only reachable via stairs or tiny hallways, seating often taking the shape

of benches with no room for wheelchair users, and most invitations failing to

disclose such details, show-going is inarguably ableist and exclusive. The

clothes, of course, tend to follow suit, as runway models are (with some

notable exceptions) able bodied people who wear clothes made exclusively

That fashion week is outstandingly inaccessible is not particularly top of mind to most of its attendees or staffers, but it should be. With some venues

for bodies like theirs.

fellows.

But this morning, at a ground-floor space on Fifth Avenue provided by Aritzia, the biotechnology company Genentech and Open Style Lab (OSL) came together with the spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) community to create Double Take, a first-of-its-kind fashion show featuring members of the community modeling adaptive clothing designs created for them by OSL

Singer-songwriter James Ian. Photo: IMAXTree

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"When people first look at somebody with a disability, they have these automatic assumptions about them," Sawsan Zakaria, a participant in the show who has SMA, said a few days before the event. "That's the first take, and the second is us going down the runway, we are looking stylish, looking fabulous in clothing you can't really tell is adaptive, which is what we want to start to go towards. It's a representation of the fact that people with disabilities can be stylish, and can show their personality through fashion." Lots of Hot Pink and Minis: Here's What Talk Show Host and Internet Sensation Ziwe Wears in a Week

Actress and model Sawsan Zakaria. Photo:

Photos by IMAXTree for Genentech

sleeves and back for easier dressing.

selected models and OSL fellows.

MEET VOGUE CHINA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MARGARET ZHANG

grammarly Instant **Automated** Seamless **4** A self-described "little fashionista" who often adapts her own off-the-rack clothes, Zakaria wore a printed catsuit tailored to her proportions and styled with a custom chainmail belt and boot coverings, which she says reflects her

own "more risqué, sexy chic" personal style. James Ian, a singer/songwriter

who opened the show, wore a pink suit with a jacket featuring hidden

magnetic closures to create the look of buttons without the challenge of

fastening them, while Shane and Hannah Burcaw, husband and wife social

at the elbows to facilitate bending and invisible zippers for separating the

The show featured with a music video of Ian's song "Spaces," and claps

Lexi walked along him. The event culminated with a brief Q&A with

erupted as each model made their way down the runway, some by themselves

and others in company of a family member, like Joe Lakhman, whose sister

influencers, who closed it, the latter in a purple velvet suit with stretch panels

Shane and Hannah Burcaw, social influencers

and husband and wife. Photo: IMAXTree for

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Joe and Lexi Lakhman, brother and sister.

Photo: IMAXTree for Genentech

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Rachel and Otto Knutson, mother

and child. Photo: IMAXTree for

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Tabi Haly, singer and coder. Photo: IMAXTree for

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seldom see any efforts from the industry to cater to these communities. The

point of *Double Take* is to not only showcase functional, adaptive clothing,

but also to ensure that they are stylish. "I think lots of the time, when things

have to be functional, we become reductive of what it has to look like," said

standing silhouettes to seated silhouettes [adapted for, say, a wheelchair user]

instead of taking the opportunity to create a different silhouette altogether. It

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Jenna Dewar, a designer and fellow at OSL. "It's like trying to translate

doesn't have to be as reductive as trying to fit everyone in the same box."

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Runway fashion tends to hinge on fantasy and utopia rather than on a

wearer's relationship to the clothes-i.e. real life. Through its work for

Double Take, OSL seeks to shift fashion's approach to design by refocusing

Laura Watson, fashion

Genentech

Fashion has much to learn from initiatives like Double Take. "This is a

and inclusion," Zakaria said of the show. "People are making rules and

stepping stone to multiple things when it comes to people with disabilities

decisions for people with disabilities, but without including us as a part of

happiness, and success, just like everyone else, and my disability has nothing

to do with that," she went on, "but life with SMA means navigating a pretty

trends.

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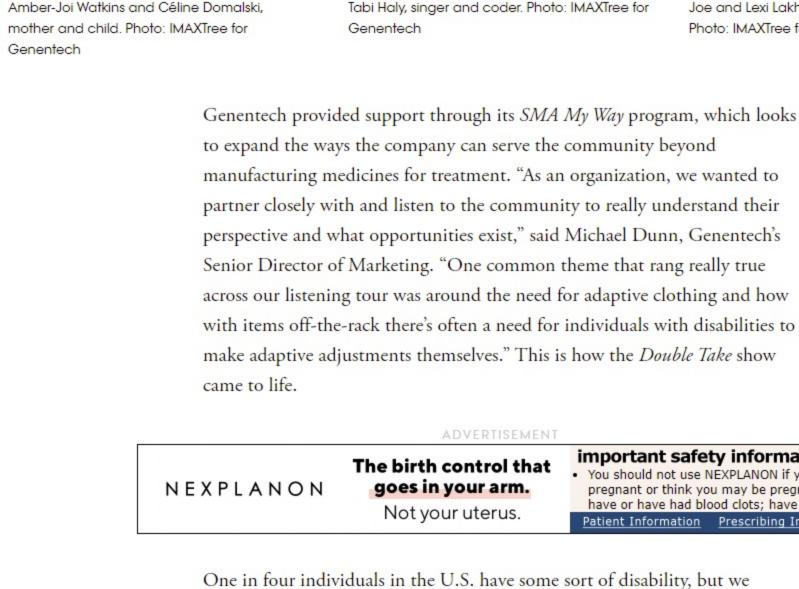
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on the wearer. "It's about changing the way we were educated to think as designers," says OSL fellow Andrea Saieh. Her colleague Dewar adds that the OSL approach is similar to that of industrial design, which centers the individual over aesthetics. "You don't even come up with the idea of what you're going to create until you spend a really long time talking to who it's for," she says. "There's things we did for Sawsan that would have never come

Kellie Cusack, writer. Photo:

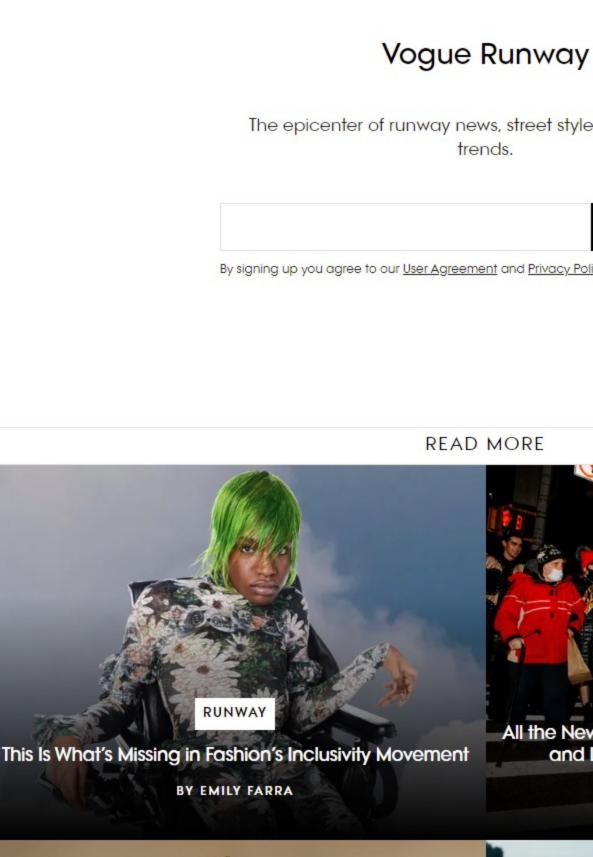
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up had we not spoken to her."

Allegra Keys, poet and student.

Photo: IMAXTree for Genentech

independent life. Just by living my normal life with SMA, I break societal norms and defy stereotypes, showing people that their typical way of living isn't the only way to be successful. Disability isn't going anywhere and people like me have needs that deserve to be met." The epicenter of runway news, street style, and emerging By signing up you agree to our User Agreement and Privacy Policy & Cookie Statement.



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BY EMILY FARRA

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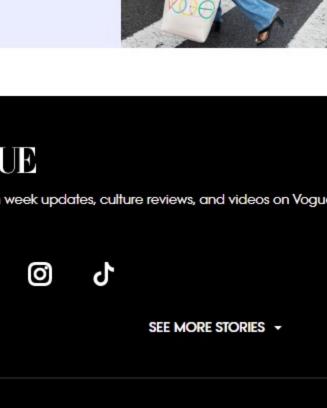
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