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Jason Wu on Meghan Markle, Next Generation and Letting His Guard Down

The designer was in L.A. over the weekend to mentor Otis College seniors and give a talk at Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

By [Marcy Medina](#) on October 29, 2018




Jason Wu onstage at Los Angeles County Museum of Art on Friday. Buddy Bleckley courtesy of MADWORKSHOP

[Jason Wu](#) is doing his part to inspire future designers, acting as a mentor to 15 seniors at Otis College of Art and Design. The program falls on the school’s centenary and was made possible by Mary and David Martin’s Madworkshop Foundation.

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Wu tasked the students with examining the history and symbolism of Forties and Fifties uniforms and men's wear and translating it into a modern women's ready to wear collection. As part of his program, Wu took the class to the [Los Angeles](#) County Museum of Art in August to examine little-seen pieces from its Costume and Textiles Department as well as its artworks and architecture. He returned last Friday to see the students' progress and take part in an onstage conversation with LACMA senior curator and head of the department Sharon Takeda.

Prior to the talk at LACMA, Wu sat down with WWD to discuss the importance of staying in tune with the younger generation as well as his upcoming docuseries.



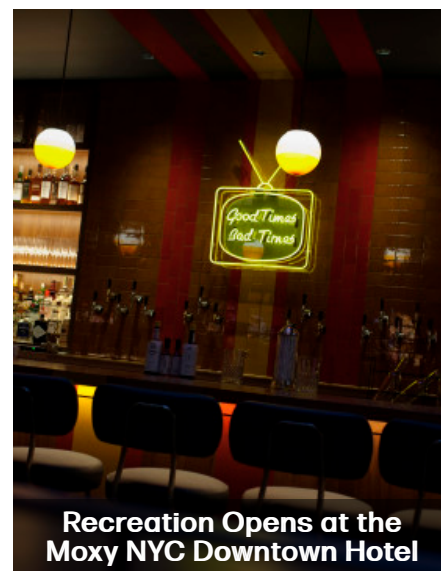
[Jason Wu](#) at LACMA with senior curator Sharon Takeda. Buddy Bleckley courtesy of MADWORKSHOP

WWD: Is this your first college mentorship?

Jason Wu: I've never really done anything quite like this before. Mary and David Martin of Madworkshop have been friends with the house of Jason Wu for a long time and when they started the workshop with architecture students last year the idea came up of how we could do a fashion version here. I thought it would be interesting for me to bring my perspective,



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especially that of New York fashion, to students here. I felt that by mentoring them through their senior project I could help groom them to be as prepared as they can be right out of school.

WWD: What was your approach for the first session in August?

J.W.: I wanted to take the students out of the classroom. Since I was a student, things have changed a lot. I moved to New York in 2001 when wireless was new. So it's hard to imagine life without Internet. A lot of my younger staff and interns tend to do a lot of Internet research so I wanted to take them out of that for once, so I took them here. Sharon curated a great collection of vintage clothes from the Forties to the Nineties, like an Adrian piece from the Forties, a Yohji piece from Eighties to a Galliano Dior piece from Nineties. They got to see the construction from the inside and outside and pieces that aren't all over the Internet. I buy a lot of vintage clothes and I think it's important to learn from the past in order to create for the future.

WWD: In what ways has the landscape changed since you arrived in New York in 2001?

J.W.: American fashion is in kind of a weird place. It's very challenging and New York Fashion Week is going through its own period of self-evaluation and everyone is looking at the business differently. I'm happy to be able to do something for the generation after me so aspiring fashion designers can be armed with as much information as possible before they leave school. Also, it's really interesting to tap into how that generation thinks and it also keeps me very current. It's really important to know what's going on and be a part of culture.

WWD: Speaking of culture, you recently dressed [Meghan Markle](#) for the third time during her trip to Fiji.

J.W.: It's great and to be able to be a part of that is amazing. Certainly Meghan is very inspiring and wears the clothes beautifully and has great poise. I had worked with Meghan a few years ago when she was based in Toronto, because I have a lot of friends there being Canadian, so that's how she got to know my work. We dressed her for one of her first official appearances in a



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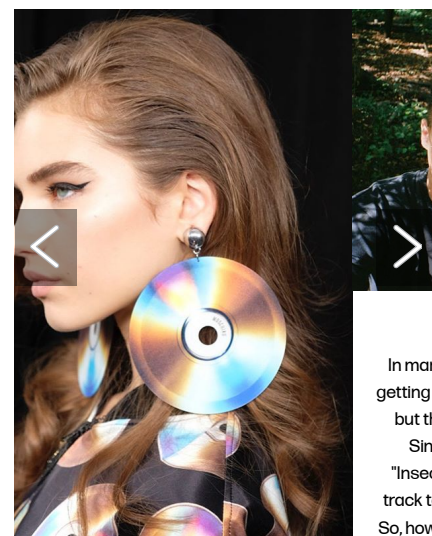


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pinning into the weekend, '90s style.
ographed by @donstahl. #wwdfashion

navy wrap dress back in February. The bright blue one she wore in London during New York Fashion Week was something from my spring 2019 collection that we had sent over with some new things beforehand.



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the Halloween spirit with these knuckle
en at Tokyo Fashion Week. Photographed
by @onix

Jason Wu mentors students at Otis College of Art and Design. Buddy Bleckley courtesy of MADWORKSHOP

WWD: Why do you think women like Meghan and Michelle Obama are drawn to your designs?

J.W.: What I try to do is create clothes that are timeless but that still feel very current. It's not overly trendy and that's something that is maybe less done nowadays, weirdly. Right now it's a bit of a "look at me" moment. I've always enjoyed things that are a little understated and more subdued, where the woman is wearing the clothes not the other way around.

WWD: Tell us about what you just finished filming.

J.W.: I just wrapped a documentary series. It will be debuting next January or February on a streaming and movie network. I was able to spend three months filming this and it was a really intense. It took me back to Taiwan to film my family and where I grew up, everything. It just wrapped at fashion week. I've never really talked about my work and my career and my life quite like that. It was no holds barred, very candid and honest and I talked about my struggles and successes and my career in a very frank way. I'm happy to do that because I think now with so much instantaneous fame from social media, people almost don't see the struggles that people have to go through, but everyone in their own way does it and it's great to talk about it. It's important to share that part of the journey.

WWD: Did you at one point forget the cameras were there?

J.W.: You really do. Also, when it's a piece like that, you have to let your guard down and be able to talk about real issues. If you don't, there's not enough material to make a show and I wouldn't want to participate in something that I wouldn't want to watch myself. You want to know what's it like. You want to be able to tell your whole story. No one's story is a fairy tale from beginning to end. It's in so many ways opposite of what our industry is, because it's all about producing a pretty picture and the glamour and we seldom address the less glamorous parts.

WWD: What part do you prefer?

J.W.: I love the unglamorous part. It's the behind the scenes that I actually signed up to do in the first place. I had to learn the front-of-house things during my career, like how to do interviews, how to meet face to face with clients. It wasn't what I started doing; I started by making clothes.

Jason Wu mentors students at Otis College by taking them to LACMA's Costume and Textiles Department. Buddy Bleckley courtesy of MADWORKSHOP

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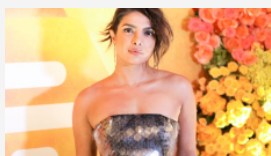
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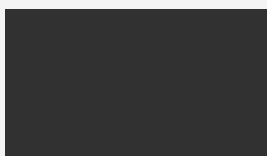
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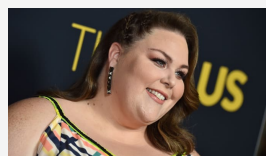
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