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From La Khe loom to London runway: The path to bringing Vietnamese culture to the world

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Báo Tin tức trên 

According to a Vietnam News Agency correspondent in London, on September 20, Fashion Week London 2026 Ao Dai closed with a gala night with 2 shows, bringing together 9 designers and brands from Vietnam, the UK and the US.



Fashion Week London 2026 Ao Dai closed with a gala night with 2 shows, bringing together 9 designers and brands from Vietnam, the UK and the US. Photo: VNA broadcast

A day earlier, on the afternoon of September 19, the ao dai passed through iconic landmarks of the British capital: the British Parliament, Big Ben clock tower, London Eye and Trafalgar Square.

Instead of letting the ao dai appear as a framing symbol, the organizers put the designer, collection, materials, craftsmanship and creative mindsets that refresh traditional costumes at the center. It is a professional choice, and also a way to affirm its position - placing Vietnam's cultural symbol in the correct language of the international fashion industry, to be evaluated by industry criteria, not just loved with affection.

Perhaps few people talk about poignant ao dai like a Westerner who has been with Vietnam for a long time: Mr. Terence D. Jones, former acting Chief Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Vietnam. Wearing the ao dai of La Khe silk village - the type of silk he once saw how to make with his own eyes at a display at the Temple of Literature, where artisans reconstructed the ancient weaving style of a craft village on the outskirts of Hanoi - he honestly said a little initial confusion with wide-leg pants then I found it surprisingly light - a pleasant outfit for hot Hanoi days. Then from that very private touch, the eyes of a long-time observer of Vietnam opened a deeper layer.

"Looking back at Vietnam's tumultuous history, how I appreciate seeing so many ao dai present in that history - whether in the North, South or Central, it still has the status of a national costume". That is a subtle comment: through the ups and downs of history, the ao dai still persists as a cohesive symbol, a common feature of all parts of the country. According to him, for the British, when imagining Vietnam, in addition to cuisine, perhaps ao dai is the

image that appears most clearly - the famous ao dai in pictures, in even plays on Broadway. "Ao Dai is a way to recognize who is Vietnamese, because if you wear ao dai, you are Vietnamese".

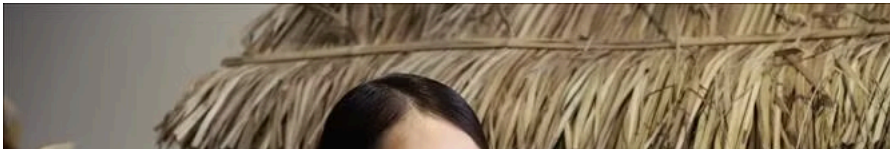
Standing with the Vietnamese crew on that runway, there were also names from the London fashion industry. For Ms. Savita Kaye, CEO of House of iKons Fashion Week London, what surprised someone like her who worked for a long time was not on the runway: "What surprised me the most was seeing the Vietnamese community - not only in the UK but from all over the world - join hands to make this event a complete success. What I'm excited about is that everyone, whether Vietnamese or not, will feel the beauty, culture, cuisine, music, fashion and creativity of Vietnam".

"The community joining hands" that Ms. Kaye saw had a specific name: The program was organized by the Vietnam Women's and Children's Association in the UK (VWCA), with the companionship of the Vietnam Association in Europe, Union of Vietnamese Women's Associations in Europe, Vietnamese Student Association in the UK and Loan Stiftung; The event welcomes guests from 28 countries and is operated by nearly 200 volunteers. This is a program initiated and implemented by the community. Resolution No. 23-NQ/TW dated August 2, 2026 of the Politburo on the work of Vietnamese people abroad places expectations on such people: preserving and spreading national cultural identity to the younger generation and future generations of Vietnamese people, promoting the role of overseas Vietnamese as "cultural ambassadors" the country and people of Vietnam".



Elite Artisan - Designer Lan Huong introduces the collection "Planet Prosperity No.2", continuing the creative source circuit that celebrates highland culture through traditional hand-woven and dyed materials. Photo: VNA broadcast

The nine designers featured on the runway on September 20 offered very different views of the ao dai. Elite artist - designer Lan Huong brings Prosperity Planet No.2, continuing a creative vein imbued with nature and culture of highland communities, weaving and dyeing in a traditional way.



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1st runner-up Miss Ao Dai All-Europe 2026 Vu Thi Thu Huyen. Photo: VNA broadcast



And there is one detail that stays longer than any introduction: the weaving industry of La Khe village and the traditional loom were brought from Vietnam to London, so that the public could see with their own eyes a craft that was being preserved by artisans. 1st runner-up of Miss Ao Dai All-Europe 2026 Vu Thi Thu Huyen shared: "To weave a silk is a wonderful process. I hope international friends see how elaborate and beautiful the products made in Vietnam are, and also to preserve their traditional professions". Bringing a loom to London means bringing a whole profession, a worker's hand and a persistent effort to keep the profession from fading away.

Model Liliana Silva shared: "People who come to watch this program, when they return home, I believe they will bring a different perspective on Vietnamese culture, because it is much richer than what we still see. on TV or still imagine. A beautiful culture, with beautiful music, beautiful colors, and beautiful shirts that I couldn't choose which designer was the best".

The event closed, but left questions perhaps even more important than the night: how far designers could experiment with ao dai; What skills and industries will be followed by the next generation; and what opportunities a Fashion Week dedicated to ao dai could open up for Vietnamese designers. Those are straightforward questions from people who understand that a successful show is never the final destination.

Huong Giang/TTXVN

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