

The life of a student fashion photographer

[Victoria Roffey](#) speaks to Portia Hunt about balancing university and high fashion

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Portia Hunt, a twenty-year-old Natural Sciences student at The University of Leeds, is neither the typical student nor fashion photographer, having shot backstage at some of the world's biggest fashion houses while in her first year of university. I sat down with her in Manchester's Northern Quarter to discuss the secret to shooting backstage at Dior, Topshop Unique, Burberry (and many more fashion houses) while spending her weekdays discussing Chemistry.



Portia's photography has experienced a definite snowball effect. Her interest in photography was originally piqued by a new family camera bought at age 15. From this she began taking pictures of her most accessible resource (her friends), and then took the leap from this to shooting street style at London Fashion Week. By her own admission, London Fashion Week opened up many paths that would have been simply inaccessible otherwise, but what is fascinating about Portia is the balance she has cultivated between her degree and shooting high fashion. This very sensitive balance is something she credits to her academic supervisor, who encouraged her to pursue personal opportunities (something she concedes was not as supported when she was previously studying Medicine), and now spends weekends and breaks from studying down in London in order to shoot.



My own selfish curiosity then came into play in my questioning of Portia, asking her to name drop the biggest celebrity she has photographed, something that is laughed off with the simple “my friends always want me to say [I’ve shot] Cara Delevingne...” While not having photographed Cara Delevingne, her most famous photographic subject was British icon Vivienne Westwood. But Portia, opposed to name dropping, instead describes the photographs she took and how she was honoured to have been asked to take her photo.



This modesty does no justice to the expansive work Portia has undertaken as a photographer at fashion weeks in both London and Paris. Kenzo, Alexander McQueen and Balmain are a small sample of the brands she has shot backstage for, but one would hardly guess with Portia’s meek reluctance to outwardly brag about people she has shot for.

Perhaps the most normative aspect of her combination of university and photography is her Instagram account, and indeed this has been a huge factor in increasing her success as a photographer. Portia,

when probed about people using her photography on other Instagram pages, somewhat gleefully confesses that Balmain using her photograph on their page was a high point in her career. But, rather than linger on her successes, Portia is keen to stress how Instagram is an amazing tool for getting photography seen on a simply unprecedented scale.



Always quick to add perspective, Portia continually insists that her friends at university care more about her than her photography, and that she is lucky to have an Instagram profile that garners attention and gives her work.

Despite an uncertainty as to where photography will lead her, Portia's balance of photography and Natural Sciences is one to be admired – and when asked whether she's changed anything she replied "you can only learn from what has happened and move on".



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