**Asian women hosts Fashion expo**

Women from Burnley’s Asian community have joined forces with fashion experts at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) to create a range of contemporary headscarves and hijabs, inspired by rare Asian textile samples from the world-class \*Gawthorpe Textiles Collection (GTC)… reports Asian Lite News

**An exhibition exploring fabric, fashion and faith by undiscovered artistic talent**.**The striking results of Hidden Gems, a project funded by the Arts Council, will go on display at an exhibition in the Burnley Mechanics from**12 July until 7 August**.**

The project team, incorporating four artists\*\* and led by UCLan’s Senior Lecturer in Fashion Design Amanda Odlin-Bates and Principal Lecturer in Fashion and Textiles Bev Lamey, worked with an intergenerational mix of local Burnley women for a period of several months, producing contemporary textiles for headscarf designs.

Playing a key role in the growth of ‘modest fashion’\*\*\*, the art of scarf styling is an important outlet of cultural expression. The way a hijab is worn says as much about a Muslim woman as the way a westernised woman would style her hair.

Commenting on the work, UCLan’s Amanda Odlin Bates, said:  “Working from traditional decorative motifs and patterns, our participants and artists have created designs suitable for digitally printed textiles.

“The results are stunning and really fulfil the brief of uncovering hidden gems from the rare samples in the textile collection at Gawthorpe and finding hidden gems of undiscovered artistic talent from the local Asian community.”

The project has helped to develop new perspectives and interpretations of GTC and to share the extensive textile samples with a wider audience.

Charlotte Steels, Director, Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, added: “We are incredibly proud to have been part of the Hidden Gems project alongside the University of Central Lancashire. The enthusiasm and passion of the team created an excellent programme for participants. The project has produced a stunning body of work which showcases the fabulous talents of this amazing group of women from Burnley.”

Working with scarf stylist, Yasmin Taju, make-up artist Humairah Zaman and photographer Alex Hurst the team created captivating portraits of each of the women and girls proudly wearing their own scarf design in the library at Gawthorpe Hall.

One of the contributing artists, Lisa Scarlet Ryan, said the participants responded to her workshop in colour and pattern placement with great enthusiasm: “I have seen the blossoming of women who were unsure and quiet the first time we met, into people who are confident and proud. Personally I have learned a lot about scarf tying, the reasoning behind wearing certain headwear at certain times and how important it is to the wearer as an individual. It made me realise that in something so modest there can be a great deal of freedom and empowerment.”

Participant Shazia Shahbaz said: “This project has risen above my expectations, it’s been fun and a pleasure. As a housewife and mother I have never had this opportunity. I now feel beautiful and confident about my self-image. Everyone should try something outside of his or her comfort zone. I’ve been so lucky to experience this with my daughter.”

Fellow student Saba Saeed added: “My creative side has really been re-ignited by this project. It’s so inspiring seeing women coming together in this way.”

 The project has strengthened collaboration between UCLan and GTC, creating a strong platform to launch further joint bids to catalogue and digitise the archive, and to develop a textiles centre of excellence in East Lancashire linked to the collection.