

Franco has designs on Milan show

Clothes will feature on prestigious catwalk



"My clothes are meant to be adapted, turned inside out, made your own"



Franco works at the interface between art and fashion

HEBDEN **Bridge**
designer **Franco**
Francesca will fly to Milan later this month to show his new collection at the city's prestigious fashion week.

By Francesca Turner

The 33-year-old Italian from Benevento near Naples has also been selling his work at major events in London and Manchester.

For the second year running, Franco has won a top award at Milan entitling him to stage a catwalk show in the spectacular setting of the galleria near the cathedral.

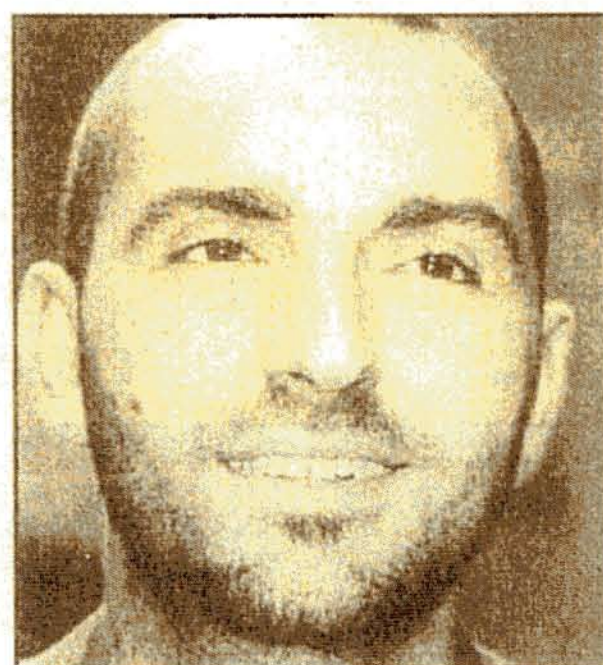
Although this widely-travelled young designer draws inspiration from many cultures, his current pre-

occupation is zoomorphic. "I'm especially interested in insects at the moment and have been using jewelled masks as part of my work.

"I want clothes to be multi-functional and to transform and mutate as they are worn. My clothes are meant to be adapted, turned inside out, made your own."

Many of his latest designs are tops that convert into skirts, cloaks or pants, and dresses that can switch from long to short.

Apart from his work with the North West Fashion Network in Manchester and the London Fashion Forum, Franco designs wedding and evening wear for local customers. He and his sister also run a boutique in Italy.



Franco Francesca

Working at what he describes as the "interface between art and fashion", Franco uses teaching languages as a kind of lucrative relaxation from the

intensity and competitiveness of the fashion industry.

One of his jobs is to create European itineraries for American students and travellers, and act as a tour guide. "I find this very stimulating because it forces me to research art, history and geography which in turn I use in my work.

"Although fashion may look like a glamorous life, it's a struggle to try and make your name against such powerful labels as Versaci or Gucci.

"Unlike an artist who pays only for his materials, fashion designers must buy fabrics, models, producers, distributors, agents... It is very complex. Most of my energy goes into my work and it can be lonely sometimes."

Milan, however, will be a social as well as a professional occasion for him as 10 friends have already booked airline tickets and hotels to share the experience with him...