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# An Introduction to a Career in Fashion Design

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*"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is something in the air. It's the wind that blows in the new fashion; you feel it coming, you smell it, in the sky, in the street; fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening."*

— COCO CHANEL

SOMEHOW, AT SOME POINT IN YOUR LIFE, SOMETHING INSPIRED A CREATIVE SPARK INSIDE OF YOU. Perhaps when you were a child, you discarded the original outfit that your Barbie™ doll came in and created a much more elaborate one. Or when you were growing up, you were completely enamored with how stunning your mother looked as you watched her get dressed up for a night on the town—her dress, her shoes, her jewelry, her hair! No matter how you arrived at your decision, welcome.

There is nothing quite as rewarding as being a fashion designer: a creative visionary who, from a mere brainstorming concept, creates a fully saleable collection seen on runways, in stores and catalogs, and on people around the world. From idea to finished product, fashion designers do a lot more than just design. During a typical workday, a designer can cast models for an upcoming fashion show, meet with the public relations director to discuss international press, troubleshoot a fit issue with the technical design team, seek counsel from the legal department to ensure the hangtag meets government regulations, and discuss last season's bestsellers with merchandising.



Look 34 of the Spring 2012 Peter Som Runway Collection.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: DAN LECCA. COURTESY OF PETER SOM.

As a fashion designer who dreams of launching your very own collection, you will have the opportunity to express not only your own unique design aesthetic to the world, but also your personal viewpoints on societal issues and life-changing moments in history, ranging from politics and world peace to charitable and philanthropic causes, gay rights, and environmental sustainability. Renowned fashion designer Kenneth Cole is famous for expressing his strong personal opinions in his advertising campaigns. This is only one of the many thrilling ways that you can use your innate sense of style, refined color sense, individual creativity, and artistic talent to influence people, lifestyles, and trends. So, in essence, fashion designers hold the key not only to creating innovations in fashion, but also to relaying a message that is important to them.

Fashion is not just a product; it is an extension of who people are, how they embody, perceive, portray, and conduct themselves, and how they live. Fashion is a mood lifter; it can enhance our life and lift our spirits—and, most of all, it can bring us joy. Many people take pride in expressing their personal aesthetic through what they wear and how they wear it, from head to toe. There is a psychological aspect to fashion that can have a profound effect on the consumer (for example, a sense of confidence or an overwhelming feeling of power) when he or she puts on a specific garment, shoe, accessory, or even fragrance, and a good designer will always keep this in mind when designing for their target customer.

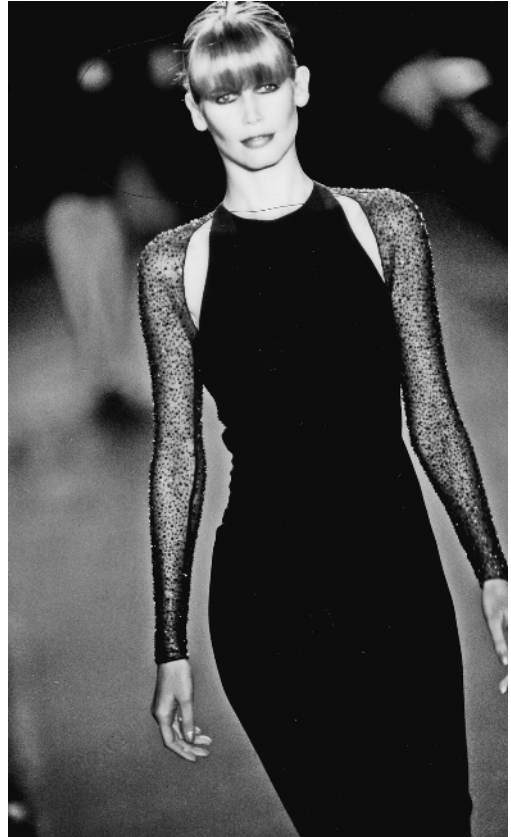


On her: Night dress. On him: Kinsley jacket and Panos pant from Panos Emporio. COURTESY OF PANOS EMPORIO

Fashion designers have the opportunity to dress their customers for both their careers and their social lives—from their most exciting moments to their very worst days. From the newborn baby on his first day home from the hospital, to a child's first day of preschool, to the teenager attending her senior prom, to the college student walking down the graduation aisle, to the unemployed man who needs to ensure that he lands his only opportunity for a job offer, to the bride-to-be walking nervously but excitedly down the aisle, you will play a fundamental role in supporting and touching people's lives with the fashions you create for them in these vital moments in their lives.

The distinguished Tunisian fashion designer Elie Saab lived this dream, dressing actress Halle Berry for the 74th Annual Academy Awards presentation, when, in 2001, Berry became the first black woman to receive an Academy Award for Best Actress. In her emotional acceptance speech, with tears rolling down her face, she cried, *"This moment is so much bigger than me. This moment is for Dorothy Dandridge, Lena Horne, Dianne Carroll. It's for the women that stand beside me, Jada Pinckett, Angela Bassett, Vivica Fox, and it's for every nameless, faceless woman of color that now has a chance because this door tonight has been opened."* Even though Mr. Saab was not on stage with his client, he played a vital behind-the-scenes role in two very important ways. First, he helped his client to feel confident for her important occasion. Second, he built a certain trust level with Halle Berry that prompted her to select him as her designer of choice for her big moment. The bond that forms between the fashion designer and client often results in a lifelong friendship.

It is here, in this fascinating world, that ingenuity comes to life and creative interpretations have limitless bounds. And for the thousands upon thousands of fashion designers around the globe, this feeling, this integral part of who you are and how you express yourself, will become your livelihood. And day in and day out, through the grueling hours and intensely stressful moments, this passion will help drive you to design collection after collection, season after season, year after year.



Claudia Schiffer in the Halston Premiere Collection by Randolph Duke. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.

## What Is Fashion Design?

Merriam Webster's dictionary defines a fashion as a prevailing custom or style. Fashion design is the process of applying a creatively envisioned style into wearable clothing and accessories. Clothing (also known as garments, attire, or dress) in its most simplified definition, is a covering for the body, usually made of fabric, and accessories are used to supplement a wardrobe and are either purely decorative (such as jewelry), useful (such as a watch), or necessary for everyday living (such as shoes). The most common fashion accessories include handbags, shoes, gloves, scarves, millinery (hats), belts, gloves, hosiery (including socks, stockings, leg warmers, and tights), jewelry (including earrings; necklaces; wrist, arm, and ankle bracelets; rings; piercings; and watches), sunglasses, pins, neckties, bow ties, and suspenders.

The fashion industry is divided into five main markets according to price point: haute couture, designer, bridge, moderate, and mass. However, there are additional markets that are just as important to be aware of, including one-of-a-kind, bespoke, contemporary, secondary, private label, and discount. The following sections provide a listing and explanation of all of the fashion industry markets, from highest to lowest price point.

### ONE-OF-A-KIND

A one-of-a-kind piece or ensemble is the *crème de la crème* of fashion, and is fully customized, and made-to-order for a specific client according to his or her exact measurements and specifications. One-of-a-kind garments are considered the pinnacle of luxury in the fashion world because only one of its kind is in existence. Custom-made garments are crafted at the haute couture (French for “high fashion” or “high sewing”) level, using only the finest fabrics, trims, embroideries, and appliqués. The price point reflects that level, due to the high quality of materials used and the superior extent of detail and workmanship that goes into making each piece.

Custom clothing is often referred to as the *pièce de résistance* because it is considered a true, irresistible showpiece at every level. It is considered by many to be an art form; finished custom pieces are often displayed in museum exhibits around the world and sell for thousands of dollars at auction. A custom client may request one piece or an entire wardrobe for a series of special events, such as black-tie galas. It is the responsibility of the designer to come up with each of those items according to a specified timeline and perhaps a personal branding theme that the client wishes to be carried out throughout his or her customized ensemble.

Celebrities who are presenters at an awards show, or who have received industry award nominations, will often be seen wearing a custom dress designed especially for the occasion. Other custom clients may include a *celebutante* (a person who is famous for being famous), a jet setter or socialite who is attending an exclusive event, a debutante who is making her debut into society at the cotillion ball, a high-profile businesswoman who is being honored at a conference, a low-profile client who prefers to remain anonymous after receiving an inheritance, or anyone who has an appreciation for custom clothing.





Angelina Jolie wearing Randolph Duke Couture at the 56th Annual Golden Globe Awards, held at the Beverly Hilton, Beverly Hills, California. GETTY IMAGES, 1999. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.



Hilary Swank wearing Randolph Duke Couture to accept her Best Actress Oscar for *Boys Don't Cry*, at the 72nd Annual Academy Awards, held at the Shrine Auditorium and Expo Hall, Los Angeles, California. KABC, 2000. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.

## AUTHOR'S INSIGHT

Several years ago, I attended a function in New York at which legendary fashion designer Oleg Cassini discussed the custom-made wardrobe he created for First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy during the John F. Kennedy administration. Mr. Cassini was Jacqueline Kennedy's couturier, creating three hundred elegant outfits for her, from her simple A-line dresses to her iconic pillbox hats. Her Inauguration Day ensemble, a pillbox hat and a fawn-colored wool coat with a sable collar over a matching wool dress, dazzled women around the globe, who rushed to find copies so that they could adorn themselves just like Jackie-O. Mr. Cassini spoke about Mrs. Kennedy's innate sense of style and how she knew precisely how she wanted to be portrayed to the citizens of the United States and to the people around the world. Mr. Cassini presented his vision to Mrs. Kennedy, and they collaborated on various looks for all of the presidential events she would attend.

As Mrs. Kennedy was a style icon and a woman who epitomized class and grace, one would imagine that her personal fashion couturier would have dressed her accordingly, and he did, but he also had foresight and took risks. He envisioned a more progressive look for Mrs. Kennedy when he suggested he create a one-shouldered gown for one of her events, a style that was not worn by women at the time. Mrs. Kennedy was open to his idea "as long as the president agreed." President Kennedy obliged, and the world admired the wardrobe statements that Mrs. Kennedy made throughout the years.

Costume designers are fashion designers who design and create customized costumes for film, television, performing arts and stage productions, fashion shows, special events, or other performances for “talent” or show business personalities, actors, models, singers, dancers, and other performers. The process sometimes involves extensive research of a historical component, such as the replication of clothing from a particular era, needs to be reproduced. Once the research is complete, designs are sketched, and fabric is sourced and purchased, then draped on a form (i.e., mannequin) or patterned and then produced. The costumes oftentimes require accessories, such as hats, headdresses, tiaras and other jewelry, hosiery, masks, wigs, and footwear. The process may involve the creation of something unique, like a full-body cat suit for a musical. Costume designer John Napier won a Tony Award in 1983 for Best Costume Designer, for the Broadway musical *Cats*. A singer such as Britney Spears will need a completely customized wardrobe created for her worldwide concert tours, consisting of several head-to-toe outfits for each series of songs, matching each corresponding stage set. So the costume designer will need to carry out a feeling in the costumes and ensembles that will correspond with the overall concert theme. Some costume designers become famous themselves, such as Patricia Field, who created the outfits for the characters Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte, and Samantha for the popular HBO television series *Sex and the City*, as well as the movie and sequel. Singer and actress Madonna had 85 costume changes in the movie *Evita*, which shows how important a role a costume designer plays in the overall production of a movie.

In addition to running his own company, legendary fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi was the costume designer for three Broadway revivals, one operetta, one opera, and a film. Certain unique circumstances come into place for a costume designer that an ordinary fashion designer would not necessarily encounter. For example, costume designers have to pay special attention to the needs of the particular person they are fitting. For a dancer, the fit of his or her clothing is critical in ensuring that movement is not inhibited during performances.

## ***An Interview with Todd Thomas, Costume and Fashion Designer***

› ***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

I was inspired to design out of necessity, since I was living in a small town at the time and fashionable items were not available to me.

› ***Please describe any fashion design positions you may have held prior to launching your own collection, Tailor Tinker.***

I started working on Seventh Avenue in New York City and worked for a loungewear manufacturer and learned many important things there. It was not the most artistic or glamorous job; however, it gave me lots of information which has been vital in the way I have approached my career. Along the way, I worked as a fashion tailor on photo shoots for high-end clients. I worked with different photographers and editors who gave me insight into marketing and advertising, and freelanced and consulted for other companies. I've worked on fashion shows, and I've worked with a multitude of entertainers on a personal level and have done some theatrical and movie work.

› ***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own collection?***

Start out with a very concise plan and have an idea of how you want to evolve so you can sustain yourself on many levels, both financially and creatively. It is all about sustaining a lifetime of work.

› ***What is your design philosophy?***

I have a major reverence for craft and quality, both classic and sartorial. I feel it's important to make

an investment in something that is going to serve you for a while.

› ***Who inspires you as a fashion designer?***

Geoffrey Beene, who was kind of an iconoclast in that he did his own magnificent thing superbly and was an architect of style and beauty and genius and creativity, and did it in a way that was his own. Another designer and journalist who has moved me deeply is Elizabeth Hawes. She opened her own design house in New York and became a fashion critic and then later became a labor leader. I also love Norma Kamali. She spoke to me at the moments I needed it most in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She was revolutionary then and still is today. I absolutely love Azzedine Alaïa for being consistent, for his aesthetic, vision, and dedication to his work.

› ***You are the genius fashion and costume designer behind the gorgeous creations for the world-famous Victoria's Secret Fashion Show. Please describe this experience, as well as how far in advance the creative process begins.***

I am now in my ninth season as the collection designer. We work with the design team and try to frame and capsulize what they are thinking and projecting for VS and what their ideas are going to convey, as well as what products will be hitting the stores and what will be featured on their website. We have the luxury of creating something that doesn't necessarily have to translate to sales as much as it is about designing an idea that people want to aspire to emotionally. It is about creating a narrative, something that is going to move people and make a great show. I've had the good fortune

of working with the most interesting people, including the House of Lesage who does the embroidery for us, who also does the embroidery for Chanel and all the couture houses. We work with the best shoe designers, corset makers, fabric painters, and jewelry people. We've already begun working on the show this year, so it's nearly a year-round process.

➤ ***How did you first get interested in costume design?***

It's been a multicultural kind of thing. I've always been a visual person, always been inspired by cin-

ema and music; these are all things that have been a driving force in creating image for me. For me, it was many things; it wasn't just the whole fantasy that is the fashion world. For me, inspiration comes on many levels.

➤ ***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

One of those days when things don't go wrong, or if they do, something good comes out of it. You can take the reins off of whatever has been frustrating, and it winds up being an "aha moment." It's that turbulent, cloudy moment that turns into something that ends positively.

## HAUTE COUTURE

French for "high sewing," or "high fashion," haute couture (often referred to more informally as "couture"), describes handmade, made-to-measure garments using only the most luxurious fabrics, such as the finest cashmere, fur, suede, leather, and silk, sewn with extreme attention to detail by the most skilled seamstresses, often using hand-executed techniques. It is the fusion of both costume and high fashion and is often seen on the most affluent and famous people.

The Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture is an association whose members include those companies that have been designated to operate as an haute couture atelier or house. Haute couture is a legally protected

Bolero detail from the "Elle Gala Dress" worn by Swedish actress Josephine Bornebusch when hosting the Swedish *Elle* Style Awards in January 2010. Couture design by Halewijn Bulckaen for H&M, 2010. COURTESY OF HALEWIJN BULCKAEN.

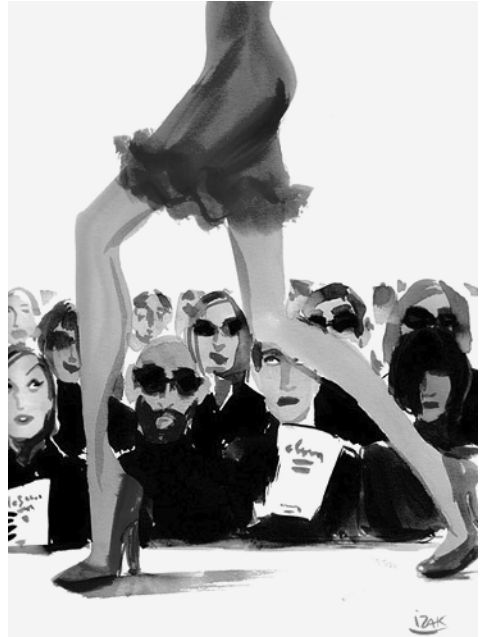


and controlled label and can only be used by those fashion houses that have been granted this designation by the French Ministry of Industry. This governing body annually reviews its membership base, which must comply with a strict level of regulations and standards in order to maintain membership. The membership list changes annually as a result of its stringent criteria.

The couture house is headed by a fashion couturier who oversees a workroom of skilled workers who practice their hand-made craft as experts in either dressmaking or tailoring. The process may begin with a sketch, an illustration, or a draped and cut muslin or toile, depending on the designer's preference. To finalize a couture piece, fine trim, embroidery, and embellishments are often purchased by outside sources, who are expert practitioners in their respective field and then meticulously sewn into each piece. Exquisite fit is an inherent quality of a couture piece. The client will endure a series of fittings to determine that exact measurements have been achieved, to ensure not only precise fit but also style and comfort, which are equally essential.

When haute couture collections were first produced, they were presented to the press, buyers, and high-end clientele in a trunk show format in a designated salon. Each model carried a card that indicated a corresponding look number, making it easy for those in attendance to jot down the garments that were to their liking. Once selections were made, the client would sit with the designer, who would then fit the garments to that client's specific measurements and exact preferences, or a buyer would reproduce them for their own store.

Today, the couture collections are seen on the runways during Paris Fashion Week. Pricing typically begins in the high thousands and can reach into the hundreds of thousands for these fine garments. Many companies use the glamour and appeal of their couture collections, which account for a small market share of their overall business, as a catalyst to boost sales for their ready-to-wear, accessories, and fragrance businesses, which represent the bulk of their revenue. Couture collections are often used as a "visual advertisement" to bring excitement to the brand and to elicit sales for the more affordable ready-to-wear collection. Style.com, the online home of *Vogue* magazine is a great resource for previewing the couture runway shows, both in photograph and video format.



Illustrated by Izak Zenou for Henri Bendel, 2004.  
COURTESY OF IZAK ZENOU.





Illustrated by Izak Zenou, Personal Collection, 2006.  
COURTESY OF IZAK ZENOU.



Some well-known couture labels are Armani Privé, Atelier Versace, Chanel, Christian Dior, Givenchy, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Valentino. The *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* accepts “foreign” members; however, there are only a handful of fashion designers outside of Paris who practice the fine technique of couture craftsmanship. Elie Saab, Giorgio Armani, and Paul Smith are examples. The French Ministry allows for outside members in an effort to show their strong belief in the importance of the globalization of the fashion industry. Ralph Rucci, Rick Owens, Adam Kimmel, Zac Posen, and Mainbocher are the only American designers to have achieved haute couture status. They have each been invited by the Ministry to show their collections in Paris and currently are, or have been, members of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*. Interestingly enough, Thom Browne, a New York–based menswear designer, independently showed his collection in Paris as a nonmember. A complete list of current members can be found at [www.modeaparis.com](http://www.modeaparis.com).

## BESPOKE

“Bespoke” is a British term used to describe individually crafted and patterned men’s clothing. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “bespoke” as made-to-order clothing, made to each individual customer’s precise measurements and specifications. Although bespoke is not a protected label, like cou-

Gieves & Hawkes bespoke suit. PHOTOGRAPHER:  
ADRIAN LOURIE.



ture, the Savile Row Bespoke Association (a professional organization consisting of Savile Row tailors) has attempted to set a standard by providing minimum requirements for a garment to be allowed the prestigious use of its name. Savile Row is a very short street in central London, called “the golden mile of tailoring,” famous for its bespoke tailors, among them Davies and Son, Gieves & Hawkes, and Norton and Sons. Historical Savile Row clients have included Napoleon III and Winston Churchill.

## DESIGNER

Also known as ready-to-wear (oftentimes abbreviated RTW) or “off the rack” and by the French term *prêt-à-porter*, designer clothing is factory made and finished to fit standard sizes. Don’t, however, let the phrase “off-the-rack” fool you. Whether mass produced or offered in limited quantities, designer clothing is exclusive and uses the finest imported fabrics and trims. Ready-to-wear collections are generally presented twice a year (Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter) during fashion weeks around the world, and they appear earlier than the couture collections. The price point can oftentimes exceed \$1,000 per garment, but can range in lower price points or skyrocket to high three-figure numbers. Some of the most popular designer labels are Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, Vera Wang, and Catherine Malandrino. Style.com, *Vogue* magazine’s online website, offers a seasonal presentation of all designer fashion shows in both video and photo format.

“Quai de la Tournelle” from the Fall/Winter 2011 Catherine Malandrino Collection. The collection follows a girl with a Parisian, edgy spirit, along the promenade of Quai de la Tournelle. COURTESY OF CATHERINE MALANDRINO.



In Paris, the *Chambre Syndicale du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode* is an established association, created in 1973, that is made up of all the fashion designers who produce ready-to-wear. The *Chambre Syndicale de la Mode Masculine* is an association that specifically includes the top menswear designers who produce ready-to-wear collections.

## BRIDGE

Bridge garments are in between ready-to-wear and better, and carry a price point generally ranging in price from \$300 to \$600 per garment. Career wear and separates, along with dresses, are often indicative of a bridge classification. DKNY, CK, and Anne Klein II are examples of bridge labels.

## BETTER

Better is one step down from bridge. Sportswear, various coordinates, separates, and dresses may all appear in better collections, and will typically sell for less than \$600 per piece, but they primarily fall into a price point range of \$150–\$300. Some of the most popular better labels are Ellen Tracy, Kenneth Cole, and Anne Klein.

## CONTEMPORARY

Contemporary collections offer trendy apparel at a relatively affordable price point aimed at women in their twenties and thirties. Cynthia Steffe, Rebecca Taylor, and BCBGMAXAZRIA are all considered contemporary designers.



Illustrated by Izak Zenou for John Lobb, 2006. COURTESY OF IZAK ZENOU.

## SECONDARY

Secondary lines are used by designers who want to offer a lower-priced line aside from their designer collection. The price points differ, but these fashions can generally be found for less than \$300 per piece at retail. Marc by Marc Jacobs and Lauren by Ralph Lauren are considered secondary lines.

## MODERATE

Moderate fashions are promoted to the average, everyday customer and usually retail for less than \$100 apiece. Some of the most popular moderate retailers are Liz Claiborne, Abercrombie & Fitch, Nine West, and the Gap.

## PRIVATE LABEL

Merchandise that is manufactured by a store, or in partnership with an apparel manufacturer, is considered private label. Store advantages include greater control over production, cost, pricing, advertising budget, and design. Private label runs a gamut of price points and is generally produced for the bridge to moderate markets. Some of the most successful private label businesses are International Concepts (I.N.C.) for Macy's and Hunt Club for J.C. Penney.

## MASS

Mass market or budget caters to the lower end of the apparel continuum, with retail pricing generally under the \$50 price point. Product categories generally include casual sportswear such as t-shirts and jeans. Some of the most popular budget retailers are Old Navy, Target, Wal-Mart, Kmart, and Kohl's. Mass market is made in large quantities and is geared toward the general public.

## DISCOUNT

Discount merchandise, also referred to as off-price, is excess merchandise that did not sell at its full retail price through its original and intended retailer. These items can be found at varying price points in an array of retail outlets such as Filene's Basement (the inventor of the off-price store concept), Ross Stores, T.J.Maxx, Loehmann's, Marshalls, and Saks Fifth Avenue OFF 5TH. Discount merchandise can also be found in factory outlet stores.

Within these price points, clothing classifications fall into various product categories, including women's, men's, young men's, collegiate, tweens (pre-teen), juniors, children's and layette (newborn) including dresses, casual wear, separates, suits, sportswear, tailored clothing, evening-wear, formalwear, outerwear, intimates, maternity, and swimwear.

## *An Interview with Nanette Lepore, Fashion Designer*



Fashion Designer Nanette Lepore. PHOTOGRAPHER: ELIZABETH LIPPMAN.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

➤ There were lots of different times in my childhood when I realized I loved making clothing, but it wasn't until I got to college that I knew I could actually be a fashion designer. I used to constantly sew from age 10 up to the beginning of high school. I was sewing every weekend, all weekend, every night. I was up until four in the morning, often-times sitting in my room sewing, and my parents

had no idea I wasn't sleeping. I loved making clothing! When I got to college, I had a professor who told me about FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology, in New York), and I didn't realize there was a fashion school I could afford until then. I have a bachelor's degree in business, and then I got an associate's in fashion design from FIT. I will always be grateful that my professor took me under his wing and told me to attend FIT.

***Please describe any fashion design positions you may have held prior to launching your own collection.***

➤ I worked for about 3-4 years before I started my own line, and each job was a very different and unique experience. It was difficult, as fashion design positions are not easy. In my first job, I was sketching in a closet, sitting in between racks of clothing. After that, I went on to a knitwear company whose collection was made in China, and it was a rough crowd (a lot of back stabbing), and my company is not like that at all. I then moved on to a job that taught me so much, which was in a boutique, designing clothing in the basement. I would do collections for her store and do specials for her customers, so I'm really good at doing specials now for people who come in and need something unique. I would travel with her to Europe for her buying trips. She carried Claude Montana, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Moschino in her store, and I got to see the insides of these showrooms, and I went to some fantastic shows in Paris. We shopped tiny lines in London, and it gave me the knowledge that I could do my own line. I learned about all these small factories in the garment center, so I knew I could manufacture in New York, and I didn't even realize they were here the whole time.

***Please discuss how you began your line and what your greatest challenge was when first launching your collection.***

› Originally, I rented a storefront in the East Village in New York that was 500 square feet for \$500 a month. I had a partner, and we each borrowed \$5,000. We were located between a gas station and a soup kitchen. It was a rough neighborhood. My advice to anyone starting is to be right next to your customer so you can see what's working and what's not working. I quickly went into the wholesale business from retail. We applied to the Coterie and got accepted. Our first season there was unbelievable, as we had \$250,000 in sales. Keeping the business afloat without money was our biggest challenge.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own collection?***

› Think small at first. I think starting out in retail is so much better than wholesale because you don't have all the additional markups. If you are going direct to your customer, you can sell something that cost you \$50 for \$100. Find a small shop in your area and work at it and learn it before you launch into the bigger world.

***What is your design philosophy?***

› I've always wanted everything of mine to stand out and have some unique look to it, so that on a selling floor in a sea of clothing there was something special about everything I made. So if I made a white shirt, it had to have some special trim or detailing so that it looked different from the rest; it is more about the fineness of the details and also guaranteeing a beautiful fit for my customers so they feel good in the clothing. You learn how important fit is right from the beginning. The first time Neiman Marcus called and said, "You have to take back 200 dresses because



Spring/Summer 2012 Nanette Lepore Collection.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARIA VALENTINA, 2011.

they don't fit," I made a vow that was never going to happen again. Mistakes still sometimes happen, but they don't happen like they used to when we were smaller and we were just trying to manage it. But you learn to follow the little warning signs that come up so you are better prepared.

***How does the design process begin for you? Do you begin with a theme or some form of inspiration, a silhouette or a recently discovered can't-live-without fabric?***

› It really starts more like a painting and roughing in the prints and the patterns. The boards get put together slowly. It starts with one or two prints, and then we put together a color palette. We ship every month now, so every month is an ordeal of trying to come up with a really special group with unique

styling. During the months that coincide with the shows, we really push to explore new silhouettes and work on what really feels new to the customer. I like to push myself into a place that I'm not that comfortable or familiar with, so that I feel like I expand what I love and what I feel my customer wants.

***Who has had a major influence on you as a fashion designer?***

› I have memories of great women who were around me growing up. I was so impressionable as a young person. I remember my mom's style really well. She was really daring and always had great clothes. My Aunt Sandra's mother had a chiffon leopard blouse; I remember she was so beautiful and regal. A woman with great style can make an impact on you as a young kid and stay with you forever.

Spring/Summer 2012 Nanette Lepore Collection.

PHOTOGRAPHER: MARIA VALENTINA, 2011.



***You have dressed famous people such as Sharon Stone, Blake Lively, Leighton Meester, Eva Longoria, Scarlett Johansson, Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, and many more. Obtaining a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. How did this evolve for you?***

› Jennifer Lopez wore a top from one of our runway shows on an MTV talk show, which happened through a stylist. Sarah Jessica Parker wore our clothes on *Sex and the City*. The press you get from celebrities wearing your clothing really makes a difference in your business. I never wanted it to distract me and allow me to lose focus and productivity because every month I had to come up with a collection, so I never focused on it. But now a lot of it comes naturally. It's fun to balance both of these worlds. I'm lucky to have that opportunity. It's nice when you see a celebrity wearing something in their personal life of yours that you never knew she had. That happens a lot with the actress Kelly Rutherford.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of your brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

› We are all really new to social media and we really just jumped into social media in 2011 in a big way. It moves fast, and people move fast with it. It's a game that you have to play quickly. It's more about sharing ideas and feelings instead of trying to make it about shopping in my stores. The potential for it to grow into something huge is enormous, but you never know where it's going to go. We go through our tweets every day. We'll drop a surprise on somebody that I think is really fun. We have a "Who Wore It Best" contest, and the winner gets a little surprise. I'm not sure if it will actually build clientele from it, but we are having a ton of fun with it.



***How do you design garments and accessories that are both true to your design aesthetic and vision and commercially saleable? Is there ever a conflict?***

› There is a lot of conflict. It's hard because often-times you take a plunge into something that is really different and the customer buys it and loves it. But you always walk the line and question when you should sacrifice a design to become more commercial. It is a question I ask myself at least once a week, if not more. Sometimes your risks take off, sometimes they don't.

***Your clothing and accessories can be found in nine of your Nanette Lepore boutiques worldwide, including locations in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Las Vegas, Boston, Chevy Chase, London, and Tokyo; in specialty boutiques such as Scoop and Olive and Bette's; and in department stores such as Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Bloomingdales. What advice would you give to an aspiring fashion designer who is pounding away at the pavement trying to land his or her first retail account?***

› I had been working in retail before so I knew who to target when I began my collection. You need to make a target list. Look at lines you want to hang with. Don't kid yourself about the cost of things. The lower the price can be, the more of a clientele you are going to pick up. People are not willing to shell out designer prices for an unknown name. It is very rare that someone can be in a designer price point overnight. When I adjusted my pricing to be more in the contemporary world, my business took off because I was hovering between contemporary and designer for a long time, and it wasn't working. Try to listen to the advice of the people around you and from the people you look up to. Barneys is the first account for a lot of designers because they are

open and willing to try new designers. Take many road trips with your clothes in the back of your car, and target the shops you want to be in. Going door-to-door, you will have to be a bit pushy and persistent, but don't be too pushy. You cannot have a feeling that it is beneath you to go in with a suitcase to charm the stores. Be clever about putting your stuff up on a website to try to sell online.

***Your website is so inviting and fantastic! Do you play an integral role in its maintenance?***

› We do meet about it when there is a big change, so when there is anything that they change, they run it past me. I have input over everything that goes up. Although I am not involved in the actual

Spring/Summer 2012 Nanette Lepore Collection.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARIA VALENTINA, 2011.



logistics of making it happen, I am really involved with the artistic feeling of the website.

***Incredibly, 85 percent of your collection is manufactured in New York City, and your design, patternmaking, production, and shipping departments are based in your design studio in New York City's Garment District. How are you able to keep your costs down, since you are not able to directly benefit from the lower labor costs of outsourcing your manufacturing operations overseas?***

› With a business of my size, Asian factories are really not much cheaper. When we've counter sourced a lot of things, we've come up with very close to the same costs by manufacturing here. By the time you produce it in China and import it here and pay all the import duties and shipping, we are oftentimes at the same cost. I'd rather have the control and be able to maintain it and look at it every day. Manufacturing here, I have better quality, better inventory control, better ability to turn around and restock someone who is selling something well, and I can use higher-quality fabrics. To me, that far outweighs any marginal cost differences that would happen if I was manufacturing in China, or India for that matter. Everything I make overseas, I am disappointed in. I never feel like the fit is as good as the things that we make in New York, and I never feel like the fabric qualities are as nice as the fabric qualities that I am able to use working in New York. When I work in New York, I import all of the Italian fabrics because I am using a lot of the same fabrics that the high-end designers are using. We work with the Italian mills and then import the fabric to New York and cut and sew here. I can't import Italian fabric to China, as it costs me a fortune

to do that because of all the duties they put on it, they make it impossible.

***You, along with fashion designer Anna Sui and several other designers, organizations, and companies, spearheaded the "Save the Garment Center" campaign in an effort to save New York City's Garment District. What prompted your involvement with this effort, and what still needs to be done?***

› I had heard that the Garment District was at risk for being pushed out to move overseas. I couldn't let that happen and knew I had to face it head-on. The small designers are here because the factories are here, and we will lose them all the minute the factories close. The international press and buyers come here because there are so many small American designers here. We need to get the word out. We need more involvement from the entire design community. There is an ethical code here for giving back to the future and keeping the Garment District intact. I want to leave a legacy for my daughter and for the designers coming next.

***You run your own fashion design firm and are married with a child. How do you balance it all?***

› I don't think I balance it all that well. I just try to spend as much quality time with my family as I can. I try to have meals together with my daughter, in which we talk about her day or we play games. I try to be there in the morning to make breakfast for her and help get her out of the door. We take a lot of family trips together with my sister and her kids and my dad. Kids remember those times.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› I would want to wake up in Italy anywhere near water. How about Capri or the Amalfi Coast? I love Italy, I love being on a boat in Italy, I love hiking down the hill in Capri to go to the beach club and then boating and swimming through the emerald grotto, and then getting back out of the boat and

having a nice lunch with white wine and fresh fish and pasta, and then hiking back up the hill to burn off the calories and jumping in the swimming pool at the top of the hill, and then taking a little nap to get ready to hike up the hill again for dinner, then taking a little stroll and visiting the shops. That's my perfect life!

***An Interview with Reem Acra, Fashion Designer***

Reem Acra at work in her design atelier. COURTESY OF REEM ACRA.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

› As a student at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, I had the opportunity to design and produce a collection for a fashion show there. Two thousand people attended the show. It was when I was on stage that I realized that this would be my career.

***What was your major while attending the American University of Beirut?***

› My major was business administration, which has been very helpful being a business owner of an international fashion company!

***While in college, you attended a party wearing an intricately embroidered silk organza gown that you created from your mother's dining room tablecloth. A fashion editor happened to be at the party and took notice. What happened next?***

› It was this gown that got her attention and inspired her to arrange for me to have a fashion show at the university. It was an amazing and exciting time for me. Everything happened very quickly.

***Did you immediately begin working in the fashion industry after completing your studies at both The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York and its Paris counterpart, Esmond Ecole de Mode? Also, please describe any internships, apprenticeships, or on-the-job training you had before you launched your own collection.***

› When I was at FIT in New York it was a very special time for me. I received every award that the school offered its students, such as the Madame Grès and

the Woolmark Foundation awards. When I sewed the first dress for my dressmaking class, my professor told the class that the quality of my design should be featured in the windows of the famous New York specialty retailer Bergdorf Goodman. After graduating from school, I worked for a firm as a private-label development designer for several years. It gave me extensive experience in product development and the overall American market. I transitioned into interior designer for a few years after this experience, which I enjoyed, but I always knew I would go back to designing. I started my company not realizing I needed to have a business plan or a strategy, but just out of a love for creating beautiful gowns.

***In 1997, you launched the Reem Acra Bridal Collection, which quickly became recognized for its luxurious fabrics, intricate embroidery and beadwork, and elaborate designs. What prompted you to begin designing bridal gowns, and how did this lead to your ready-to-wear collection launch six years later?***

➤ It began when a friend of mine asked me to make a dress for her to wear to her wedding at the Hotel Crillion in Paris, and the media loved it both in Paris and New York. That first dress turned into an order for thirty dresses, and so a business was born. I started designing ready-to-wear at the request of Neiman Marcus management, who was looking for a new designer collection for their stores.

***In 2003, the same year you launched your ready-to-wear collection, you opened your flagship store in New York. What does it feel like to own a boutique that houses your entire collection in the heart of the luxury retail world?***

➤ When I opened my store in 2003, it was the most amazing experience for me. It was a dream-come-true. The opening party was unbelievable, and I was walking on air. I've moved my store from Madison



Spring/Summer 2012 Reem Acra Runway Collection showing strapless beaded gown with side ruching in multicolor embroidery; baby ostrich shrug with beaded embroidery. PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF DAN AND CORINA LECCA.

Avenue to one of the most prestigious buildings in New York, the Crown Building, located on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street. It's above the Bulgari store on the corner and has a very couture environment.

***What is your design philosophy?***

➤ I have an insatiable desire for luxurious fabrics, texture, rich color, and anything made by hand. My creations particularly appeal to women who are looking for glamour and sophistication for the most significant moments of their lives. My strong sense of technical acumen, tremendous creativity, and attention to detail are the basis for my philosophy that is driven by my love of fashion and design.



***How does the design process begin for you? Do you begin with a theme, an inspiration, a silhouette, or a recently discovered can't-live-without fabric?***

› I'm inspired by my life—by the places I travel to, the museum shows that I go to, and by my close friends and family. The starting point for me when I'm working on a new collection is often a new silhouette that I am refining or a unique fabric or material.

***As a fashion designer, you are renowned for being able to match a look to a woman's personality. Your clientele encompasses celebrities, royal families, socialites, style icons, and all women who have an appreciation for the high level of beauty and workmanship that goes into designing your pieces. Please describe what the process of working with a client is like and what you feel is the most important aspect of this collaboration for a fashion designer.***

› This is such a hard question, but such an important one because the collaboration between the client and the designer is very exciting to me. When I meet a client for the first time, there is a certain magic that happens when I feel like I can see the essence of the person I am designing for. It's about the client's personality and how she will look in the gown that I design for her. It usually happens for me in just the first few minutes upon meeting her.

***Being able to obtain a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. Who was your first celebrity client?***

› The first celebrity to ever wear a gown of mine was Halle Berry, and the dress that she wore reflected her personality and accentuated her beauty. It was a very exciting moment that I will never forget. It took many years to develop the celebrity clientele that I have today and a lot of hard work developing those relationships. Now the celebrities trust me to make them look elegant and beautiful on the red carpet.

***The Reem Acra ready-to-wear and bridal collections are sold by 150 of the world's most prominent retailers, such as Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, and Saks Fifth Avenue in the United States, as well as Saks Fifth Avenue and Harvey Nichols in the Middle East. Your collection is also available at specialty retailers across the world, in Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Istanbul, Egypt, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and Korea. What advice would you give to aspiring fashion designers who are pounding away at the pavement trying to land their first retail account?***

› It's very basic, but very important advice—deliver quality designs on time that the store will be able to sell.

The first wedding dress that Reem Acra designed. COURTESY OF REEM ACRA.



***Is there a specific approach you followed that allowed you to reach the level of prominence and success you have achieved in your career that so few designers have been able to attain?***

› My parents raised me to work hard and never give up. It's a lot of long hours and just plain old perseverance. You have to have a great deal of inner strength and be able to see the big picture.

***What advice would you give to an aspiring fashion designer who is trying to launch his or her own collection?***

› Be true to your own style and aesthetic.

***As a fashion designer with a namesake collection, you partner with your executive management team and creative heads to ensure that all the steps of developing and selling a collection—such as design, technical design, merchandising, visual presentation, quality control, fashion show production, public relations, sales, and marketing—are running smoothly. How do you manage this process with your staff?***

› You have to have the very best staff that you can find to help you be the best designer you can be.

Having great people working with you is an invaluable asset and should never be underestimated. They have to be smart, quick, and ambitious. They have to understand the brand and be able to give you the right kind of support to do what you do best.

***Currently, you are designing five different apparel collections, including haute couture wedding and evening gowns, bridal royal and seasonal collections, ready-to-wear seasonal collections, and an accessories line—a huge undertaking for any designer. How do you achieve balance between your career and personal life?***

› It's not a balance, it's a complete circle. Your career and your personal life become one, and it is your life, not separate parts of your life.

***Describe what the ultimate perfect day would be like for you.***

› My ideal day would be a day to myself to design fabrics, drape, and sketch, while listening to the music of French singer Édith Piaf.



## *An Interview with Anna Sui, Fashion Designer*



Portrait of Anna Sui, 2011. PHOTOGRAPHER: JOSH JORDAN.  
COURTESY OF ANNA SUI.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

➤ When I was four years old, I was already talking about becoming a designer (my best friend from kindergarten, Candee, tells me so). I'm not exactly sure where I first got that notion, but it was probably something I saw on television. I always had it in mind that a designer had beautiful fabrics and a big sketchbook and would drape cloth around a mannequin and go out to lunch. It seemed like a very glamorous life. I always went fabric shopping

with my mom. I watched her sew and I would take the scraps and make doll clothes. Once I understood how patterns worked, I started making things for myself to wear to school.

***Please describe how you landed your first design job.***

➤ In my second year at Parsons The New School for Design, in New York, I overheard two seniors talking about a job opportunity at Charlie's Girls, with Erica Elias. I ran up there with my student portfolio, and I got the job. I was in heaven. That was probably the best job I could have ever landed because Erica gave me my very own design room. I had sewing ladies. I had a draper. They had five different divisions, so I could design swimwear, sportswear, and sweaters. I learned how to do everything. She was a very tough boss, but without that experience, I don't think I could ever have had the same opportunities that I later enjoyed. When Charlie's Girls closed, Erica's name still opened doors for me at many of the other big sportswear houses.

***In 1981, you were interested in launching your very own collection, but were not completely sure how to proceed. What led you to launch your collection?***

➤ I had some friends who made jewelry and were trying to sell it at a big New York trade show. I made five pieces of clothing, and they asked me to share a booth with them. To my delight, I got orders from Macy's and Bloomingdale's (and was featured in an advertisement in *The New York Times*)! At the time, I was working for a company called Glenora. The man who owned the company saw the ad and said: "Isn't this girl on our payroll? Why does she have

an ad in the *Times*?” He said if I didn’t stop my side business, he would fire me. I had all these orders to fill, so I got fired. That’s how I started my business.

***Your first fashion show was not until 1991, ten years after you had been in business. Why didn’t you decide to show earlier, and what prompted you to stage your first show?***

▶ Until then, I never imagined attempting to stage an actual fashion show, as I’m always very pragmatic about business. All my friends at the time worked in fashion, including photographer Steven Meisel, stylist (later fashion editor) Paul Cavaco, hairdresser Garren, and makeup artist Francois Nars, along with the most popular models of the time, Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington, all of whom I knew socially. My apartment was like “Clubhouse Central.” Everyone would come over and hang out. Birthday parties were always at my house. We all knew each other really well. My friends conspired together to encourage me that it was the right time for me to take the plunge and consider producing a show. This was at the height of 1980s “power-dressing,” with companies like Chanel, Lacroix, and Versace at the forefront. Competing against those companies seemed like the scariest thing I had ever done. I felt like I had to find my own voice and present my sensibility in a staging that would stand up next to other big-name fashion houses. Everybody contributed in putting together that first show: the production, the hair, the makeup, the models. It was so touching to me. I was so lucky to have help from all these very talented people.

In addition, the season before I did my first show, I went to Paris with Steven Meisel to see the ready-to-wear collections. We went to the Jean Paul Gaultier show with Madonna. When we got to our seats, Madonna said, “Anna, I have a surprise for you!”

When she opened her coat, she was wearing one of my dresses! I had seen racks and shopping bags in her hotel room from all the biggest, most prestigious houses, and she chose to wear my dress! I was so flattered. I thought if Madonna could pick from the best designers in the world and chose my dress, it gave me a little confidence that I might be able to do a show one day too.

***What has enabled the Anna Sui collection to have such a prominent global presence?***

▶ That first show was one of the giant breakthroughs of my career. I suddenly started getting a lot of press notice internationally. It was a case of being in the right place at the right time. All the Japanese department stores were coming to New York looking for American designers to develop distribution deals together. I started getting a lot of offers. The company that I finally chose was Isetan. It has been the most amazing partnership as Isetan made my collection so famous in Asia. They opened freestanding Anna Sui boutiques in Japan. I also have 12 licenses, including a cosmetic line. And the German company Wella asked to develop perfume with me (now with Inter Parfums), which is what made me a global brand.

I also give my parents a lot of credit for my success. My father was a structural engineer, and my mother studied painting. They met when they were both students in Paris. I get the business side from my father and the artistic side from my mother. After they married, they traveled throughout Europe for three years and finally settled in the U.S. I was born in Detroit. Growing up and learning about Chinese culture from my parents and hearing them talk about all the different places they had lived prepared me for thinking globally. This perspective took away any fears of being able to function in a foreign country. Their experiences were a gift to me.



Anna Sui and Sofia Coppola backstage after the Spring/Summer 2012 Anna Sui fashion show in New York. COURTESY OF ANNA SUI.

***Who has had a major influence on you as a fashion designer?***

› My favorites from the history of fashion design have always been Paul Poiret, Coco Chanel, Ossie Clark, and Zandra Rhodes. I also am always inspired by what Barbara Hulanicki did with Biba.

***What was your greatest challenge when launching your collection?***

› The biggest problem was always money. Starting with \$300 is not a good business plan. I always had to do extra design jobs on the side just to keep my company going for the first ten years. I reinvested every penny I made back into the business. There

were times after I paid my employees that I didn't even have enough money for a subway token, and I would have to walk to my office in the Garment Center. In those early years, I was often offered magazine-editing positions, but I had to remain steadfast about being a fashion designer. I wanted my own thing, and I resisted anything that would take me off that path. You have to have an incredible focus. That is one of the big keys to success. There are sacrifices and trade-offs that you have to make along the way. But you have to decide for yourself what's more important.

***What is your design philosophy?***

› People are attracted to my fashions because of all the elements I put into them. There's always a very sweet, feminine, girly aspect: a touch of nostalgia. There's also an aspect of trendiness, the hipness I try to create by adding a dash of rock-and-roll coolness. There's always that ambiguity, the good girl/bad girl thing. All of these facets have to go into my designs or it doesn't look like Anna Sui. Every product I put my name on has to personify the "World of Anna Sui." When a customer buys a tube of lipstick, it should give them the same excitement as buying a dress from my collection. If it doesn't, then I'm not really doing my job.

***How does the design process begin for you?***

***Do you begin with a theme or some form of inspiration, a silhouette, or a recently discovered, can't-live-without fabric?***

› Fabric development and planning for my shoe collection always come first because they take the longest. Of course I have to have a little bit of an idea about the theme, but all the research is done in tandem to other aspects of the preparation. I think I have the perfect job, as everything I'm currently obsessed with can serve as inspiration for my work

(films, exhibitions, music, books, travel, flea markets). My personal life is so intricately intertwined with what I do. I love doing research, learning about something new. I always want to share with my customers all the things that I am excited about. I want to take them on that journey with me. I try to get my customer as interested and as inspired as I am.

***You are known for being a very realistic fashion designer. How do you design garments and accessories that are both true to your design aesthetic and vision and commercially saleable? Is there ever a conflict?***

➤ Yes, I am a very realistic designer. I understand that there's a big difference between a fashion show and the actual product that a consumer buys. In my own store, I see what women want. I hear what they're asking for. On the runway, I'll do crazy styling and crazy accessories (I feel a show has to have a bit of theatrical whimsy), but there's always a beautiful dress or a great shirt underneath.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of your brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

➤ I understand these venues are increasingly important in the contemporary world. Besides my website, I have a Facebook page that posts up-to-the-minute Anna Sui news.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own fashion collection?***

➤ There's only one Calvin Klein and there's only one Tom Ford. You have to figure out your own niche. Competition and circumstances are tough. Be true to yourself, which is the key. Do what you are best at and learn your craft. It is better when you are young to decide for yourself what your main interests are

(couture, ready-to-wear, junior, active sportswear) and only take steps (schools, internships, jobs) that move you in the right direction. My father always told me that if I want to have my own company, I should be in the office every day before the rest of my staff and stay later than anyone else. That philosophy of hard work and dedication has always inspired me.

***Throughout your career, you have been recognized with various awards, such as the CFDA's Geoffrey Beene Lifetime Achievement Award, which pays tribute to fashion designers who have contributed to American fashion. You joined the ranks of such legendary fashion designers as Yves St. Laurent, Giorgio Armani, Ralph Lauren, Bill Blass, and Diane von Furstenberg, who were all recipients of this award. Time magazine added you to the list of their top five style icons. What does it mean to you to be recognized by your peers and to receive such high honors?***

➤ I am humbled and honored. My motto has always been, "Live your dream," and that's what I am doing. It's a thrill, but a lot of hard work.

***You, along with designer Nanette Lepore as well as other designers, helped spearhead the "Save the Garment Center" campaign in an effort to save New York City's Garment District. Why did you get involved with this effort?***

➤ All of the Anna Sui Collection is made in New York in sewing shops within five blocks from my office (except a small group of sweaters and some special diffusion projects I work on for department stores). I have a sentimental attachment to New York—it is my home, my identity, and the birthplace of my success. I worked for a lot of big Seventh Avenue junior companies. None of them





Spring/Summer 2012 Anna Sui Runway Look #25. COURTESY OF ANNA SUI.

are around anymore. Seventh Avenue influenced my work ethic. There was no better training. It made me who I am. Today, kids think they'll go straight from school to designing a collection. If they don't succeed, they're finished. The district is not just important for New York, it's important to America. The New York fashion industry was at one time the largest employer in the United

States. New York fashion is of interest to the whole world; everybody wants to show here. What would it mean to me if it dies out? It would break my heart. Also, what is lost is all of the wonderful American-made suppliers of wools, lace trims, pleating, embroidery, buttons, etc. I used to access everything I needed, gorgeous old-world quality workmanship, right in my own neighborhood, and we can't let that slip away.

***Your website is so inviting and fantastic! How did the design of the site evolve, and who created and maintains the content?***

› Our fragrance licensee takes care of all the technical planning aspects. The wonderful illustrator Dean Landry ("Chooch") does all the artwork. I adore his charming cartoon version of my "world."

***How do you find balance in the fast-paced world of fashion?***

› The business part is very difficult and takes up more of my time than you'd think. Figuring out a new collection is a daunting challenge every season. Basically it's simple—I love what I do. Of course I work hard, but I believe that when you are passionate about your work, it's more like a way of life, a true pleasure.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› If I'm not working, I love the flea market. After the market, I love going to lunch with friends and then spending the afternoon at a museum or catching a movie together.



## An Interview with Dennis Basso, Fashion Designer



Fashion designer Dennis Basso, 2011.

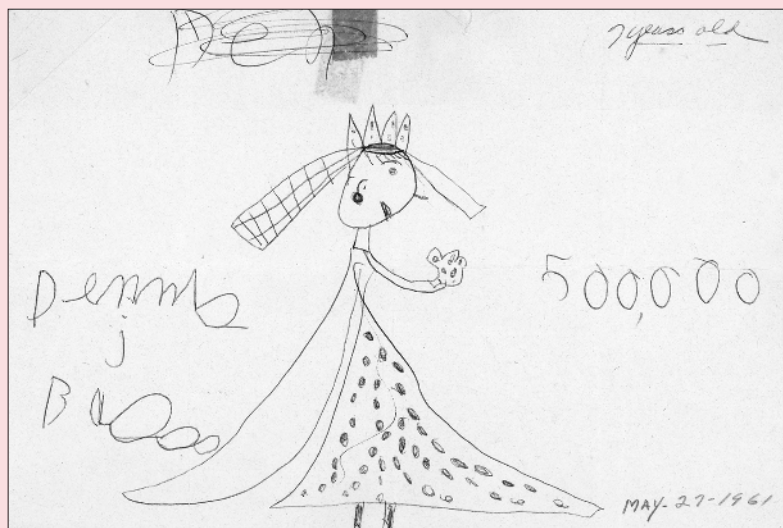
***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

➤ As a child, I actually always wanted to be a designer. I was in kindergarten and very focused about being creative, and I always had a connection to women's things. When everyone was outside playing, I was inside sketching. It was always my desire very early on.

***What was your greatest challenge when first launching your collection?***

➤ In 1983, I started my company, and my greatest challenge was to develop and be known and have the respect of my peers within the fashion industry. Being a young man, it took a little time, but I was always fortunate because I always received very good reviews from *The New York Times* and *Women's Wear Daily*. It is always a challenge, it never really ends. When you think it's not a chal-

Sketch of a bride by fashion designer Dennis Basso, created at age 7.



lenge is when you are not at your creative fullest. As soon as you become blasé, it completely changes the scenario.

***Your collection for QVC is a huge success.***

***Describe what this experience has been like for you.***

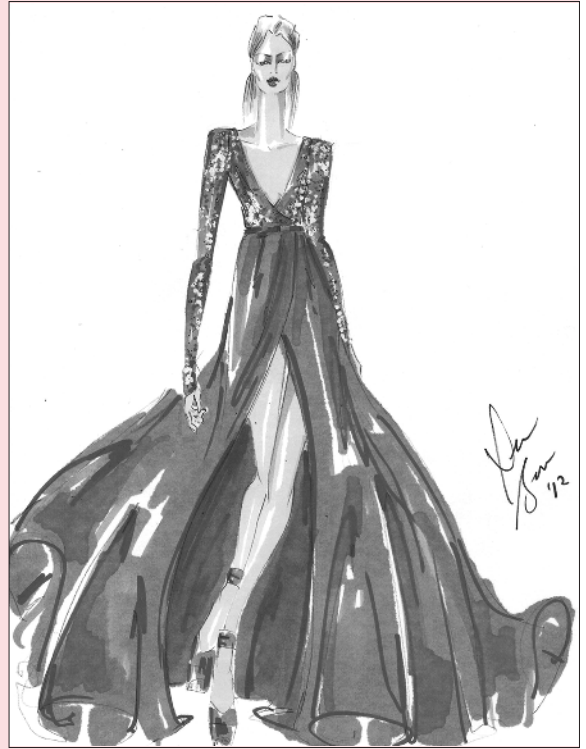
➤ From day one, I was always involved in the very high-end luxury market. In 2013, I will be celebrating my twentieth year on QVC. I have always had a desire for show business, and when this opportunity came along, to be on television and deal with fashion and reach a huge broad audience, it was just magical for me, and I took so easily to it and I loved being able to dress so many women. It's been a growth process, and it's terribly exciting. To be able to create something that not 20 people are going to wear, but 20,000 people—it changes the chemistry of it a little bit. I love to bring them good fashion. Today, pretty clothing is available at all price points. With good taste and good design structure and vision, you're able to create something great. It's a fun way to communicate. It's like a living, walking, talking catalog.

***What is your design philosophy?***

➤ Clothing should give you a personal message. Whether it's so comfortable or the fabric is so wonderful or it's just such an amazing design, it should make you feel good. I wake up in the morning very happy for the day, and I like to think that comes through in my collections.

***How do you successfully design seasonal collections that are both true to your design aesthetic and vision and commercially saleable? Is there ever a conflict?***

➤ This is where the line is crossed: you'll see these spectacular shows in Paris from the haute couture collections, which we all have a fantasy to design, but they are not necessarily saleable. I feel it is im-



Fall/Winter 2012 Dennis Basso Collection illustrated by Dennis Basso.

portant to bring a collection year after year that has some wonderful detail, that sets it apart, and that is wearable. It's my general philosophy to dabble in a few areas, as I like to be able to bring varying things to varying people.

***In 2011, you launched a stunningly gorgeous bridal collection for Kleinfeld. What made you decide to branch out into the bridal arena?***

➤ Launching bridal was a dream come true for me. The whole concept of bridal and the whole concept of the happy occasion very much appealed to me. It has been so well received, I think it's one of the leading bridal labels at Kleinfeld. To be in that small, elite group has been a wonderful personal award.

***Being able to obtain a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. Who was the first celebrity you dressed, and how did it evolve?***

› Over the years, we've dressed some of the great divas of our time, from Diana Ross to Natalie Cole, Liza Minnelli, and Elizabeth Taylor. In the movie *The Devil Wears Prada*, Meryl Streep wears my coat in the opening of the movie; it is the coat you see when she gets out of the car. Jennifer Lopez has worn our things in a music video. Years ago, we



Model is wearing a taupe chinchilla long vest with broadtail trim, along with a cayenne colored embroidered dress. She is holding a cayenne color chinchilla mini-bag. All items are from the Fall/Winter 2012/2013 Dennis Basso Collection. MODEL: COCO ROCHA. STYLIST: LORI GOLDSTEIN. PHOTOGRAPHER: BERNARD HUNT, 2012. COURTESY OF DENNIS BASSO.

did an amazing coat for Barbara Walters. We dress so many different types of celebrities that are reflective of the Dennis Basso brand that appeals to a lot of different women and different looks. Some of the time, stylists approach us, and sometimes it comes from personal relationships I've developed, as I'm very friendly with Natalie Cole, Liza Minnelli, Diana Ross, and Barbara Walters. Other times, it is through great costume designers who have asked to work together. We designed some garments for the movie *Chicago* for Catherine Zeta Jones, and we designed fox-trimmed capes for Renée Zellweger. Sometimes celebrities just pop into the store. It takes on different ways of how they find you.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own fashion collection?***

› Like any career, you need to have the enthusiasm, talent, and vision to see yourself going in that direction. I think you just have to pursue it, and if you are really focused, you can't give up. If you really want it, granted, it's a little bit of timing and a little bit of luck, and of course, talent, but if you really want it, it's going to be out there.

***How do you find balance in the fast-paced world of fashion?***

› I have found the balance a little better as I have gotten older. When you are younger, you feel the need to be everywhere and everything. As you settle into your career and really know who you are, you are able to participate in what makes you feel good and what is right for you. You have a better vision of where you are going and how important private time is with some of the friends you have made along the way who are in fashion. And when we're together, 20 percent of the time is spent on the design world; the rest is talking about our personal lives.



***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› The ultimate perfect day is when we are out at our house in Watermill, New York, and we have one or two couples of great friends over for the weekend, and it's an easy-does-it kind of day: lunch by the pool and then a dinner party with other close friends, sort of relaxing, but yet having great food, great wine, great music, and lively conversation. Having great friends around us is a wonderful feeling.

Model is wearing white Russian broadtail and lynx coat and she's holding a white Russian broadtail train case/handbag. Both items are from the Fall Winter 2012/2013 Dennis Basso Collection. MODEL: COCO ROCHA. STYLIST: LORI GOLDSTEIN. PHOTOGRAPHER: BERNARD HUNT, 2012. COURTESY OF DENNIS BASSO.

## What Do Fashion Designers Do?

A fashion designer conceptualizes and creates apparel or accessories collections on a seasonal basis, with a target market (end user of product) in mind. Fashion designers can be employed by apparel or accessories manufacturers; couture houses, fashion ateliers, or design studios; department and specialty stores; boutiques and other retailers; in universities, as an educator, professor, fashion historian, dean, administrator, or researcher; and in museums, as a curator.

Fashion design is influenced by cultural norms and is generally dictated by the continuously changing trends in society. Some fashion designers choose to use their own vision as their mechanism for creation and do not follow trends, or follow them minimally, while others follow them on a seasonal basis. While it is often thought that fashion designers only create and sketch concepts for garments, in actuality they are intimately involved with several different aspects of the design process. The apparel designer works closely with a team of workers who play a crucial role in creating a collection on the product development side. They consist of patternmakers who make full-size paper patterns for the manufacture of clothing using their expertise in body proportions and fabric knowledge to interpret the designer's apparel sketches into various pattern pieces, and tailors and sewers who construct and make prototypes and samples. For a more detailed look into the responsibilities of an apparel designer, you may refer to Chapter 3.

Many apparel manufacturers, especially the larger and more established brands, produce more than one product category. Within each product category, there are general subcategories and then successive sub-subcategories. As a fashion designer, you may be responsible for designing one or more product categories, one or more subcategories or one or more of the sub-subcategories, depending on the size and structure of the company. The following is an example of the breakdown of subcategories within a larger product category:

### Menswear (Product Category)

#### Tailored Clothing (Subcategory)

Suits

Sports Coats and Blazers

Dress Shirts

Trousers

Overcoats

Formalwear

Tuxedos (Sub-subcategory)

Cummerbunds

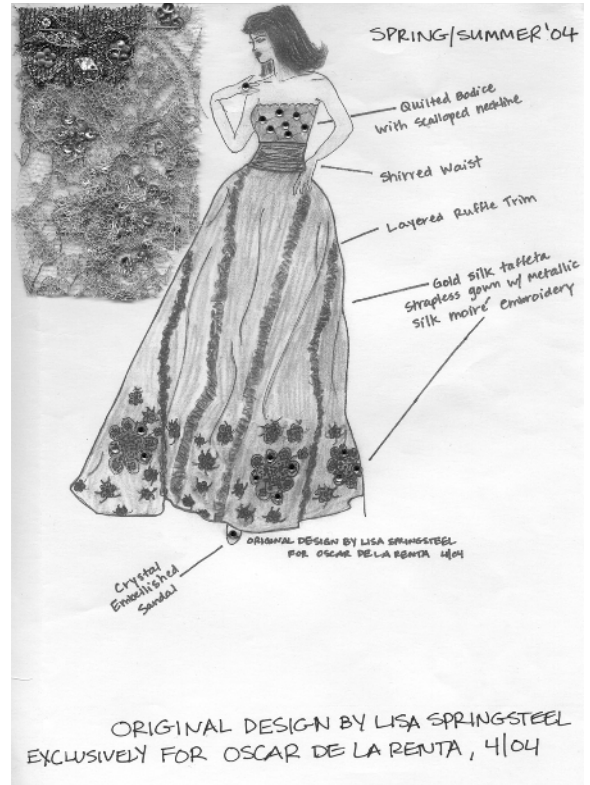
Bow ties

There are six different types of designers including, 1) apparel, 2) accessories, 3) footwear, 4) technical, 5) CAD (computer-aided design), and 6) textile. Now we'll take a closer look at the functions of each.





Original design conceived of and illustrated by Lisa Springsteel exclusively for Oscar de la Renta. Floral silk chiffon gown with sequin and beaded floral strap trim detail and floral sequin trim hemline, 2004. COLLECTION OF THE AUTHOR.



Original design conceived of and illustrated by Lisa Springsteel exclusively for Oscar de la Renta. Gold silk taffeta strapless gown with metallic silk moiré embroidery, quilted bodice scalloped neckline with crystal embellishment, shirred waistline, and layered ruffle trim, 2004. COLLECTION OF THE AUTHOR.

## APPAREL DESIGNER

An apparel, clothing, or fashion designer creates women's, men's, juniors, children's, and layette apparel, including dresses, casual wear, separates, suits, sportswear, knits, eveningwear, formalwear, outerwear, bridal, intimates, maternity, and swimwear, and usually specializes in one of the aforementioned function areas.

Fall/Winter 2012 Diego Binetti Collection. PHOTOGRAPHER: ADAM WEISS.



## *An Interview with Randolph Duke, Fashion Designer*



Spring 2008 Randolph Duke Couture, Los Angeles Fashion Week. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.

***You are a fashion, shoes, accessories, and home furnishings designer for your Home Shopping Network (HSN) collection called “The Look,” a fashion television commentator, an author, previously a consultant, and if that’s not enough genius for one person, you’ve also been a costume designer for various theatrical productions, including ballet. How do you balance it all and still remain sane?***

› It is the combination of having the right staff in place and being a great multitasker.

***You originally studied classical piano at the University of Nevada, in Las Vegas, before attending the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM), in Los Angeles, California. What made you decide to pursue a fashion design career?***

› Piano was not my destiny. I was good, but not great at it. I began painting when I was eight years old and showed promise as an artist. I had a professor who mentored me and guided me to develop a portfolio, which is how it all began.

***You began your career designing swimwear for Anne Cole in California and later for Gottex in New York. You then launched your own sportswear line in 1987, complete with a boutique on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Were you simply over the top with excitement at this time?***

› I didn’t think as much about what I was doing when it was happening, which is the beauty of youth.

***What was it like for you to transition from working as a designer for an apparel manufacturer to launching your own eponymous collection?***

› The progression was natural. When I owned my own store, I produced small quantities. Once I proved myself at retail, I was able to launch my wholesale business.

***Explain the methodology you put in place prior to actually designing the Halston collection that gave you the history and foundation needed to begin the design process. What sort of research did you undertake to understand the heritage of the brand? Did Halston have extensive archives that you were able to dig into?***

› There was not too much of an archive for me to go through. Instead, I considered the type of modern clothing that I thought Mr. Halston would be making today if he were alive. For example, he wouldn’t still be doing Ultrasuede, he’d be into microfibers.

Spring 2008 Randolph Duke Couture, Los Angeles Fashion Week. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.

***Random House released your book, *The Look*, in 2006. It helps women of all ages dress most appropriately for their size and shape. Your client Marcia Gay Harden said this about you, "I first met Randolph Duke through my stylist while preparing for the Academy Awards. Randolph studied my body type, he understood a woman's body, and he celebrated hips and busts and elegance and drama and maturity all in one swooping gesture of red. Randolph worked with me and the dress was perfect!" Did the concept for the book stem from your natural ability to transform a woman? If not, how did it come about?***

➤ When I moved back to Los Angeles, I did a lot of thinking, and one of the things that kept popping into my mind was that there were so many questions I had about the subject, and what seemed to be a disconnect. It prompted me to get inspired to create a book, a tool that I felt was missing. I started doing some research in terms of what tools there were for women when it came to defining their own personal style and cultivating it and being able to express it on a daily basis. I started this experiment in which I would just look at women in public. And I noticed something universally that stuck out for me in almost every case, and it was a proportion problem. I had something that wasn't on the market—a guide that helped women get dressed almost from the inside out; it was a process. So often people think style can't be learned, but I have the notion that it can be taught to some degree. It was born in the idea that I wanted to create a tool for the customer.

Marcia Gay Harden wearing Randolph Duke Couture to accept the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for *Pollack* at the 73rd Annual Academy Awards, held at the Shrine Auditorium and Expo Center, Los Angeles, California. GETTY IMAGES, 2001. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.



***So many accomplished designers have developed thriving Home Shopping Network businesses. What prompted your foray into the television retail environment?***

› I had been on QVC in 1992, and it was a short-lived run. It was very early in the pioneering years of electronic retailing. Then another opportunity came up in 2001 with HSN that seemed like a great prospect, and because I had done it already, it wasn't foreign to me. The formula was good and it made sense, and I wasn't afraid of it at all, and so we began.

***Every successful fashion designer who runs his or her own design atelier must put together a talented team who can execute his/her vision. How important do you consider this?***

› This is an interesting question, as this has always been the biggest challenge for me. There were times in the beginning where you do it all, due to financial restraints. I remember rolling racks to 7th on 6th in New York with dark sunglasses and a hat on so no one would see it was me; you do what you have to do. I've learned over the years that delegating is a wise thing, but it involves a lot of trust. You have to learn how to trust. I've had everything from a skeleton crew to a very fleshed out crew. I do think fashion is a collaborative business, and it relies very much on the fact that you can't do it all yourself. Now I would not have a business without the proper management people in place.

***There are so many talented and hopeful fashion designers around the globe. What advice would you give a fashion designer who is struggling to establish that certain je ne sais quoi that enables him or her to stand out among the competition?***

› I'm not sure there's any one formula to doing that. What I am suggesting for students or people who

are considering becoming fashion designers is to stay very aware of what it is that you love, and try not to get too caught in the trap of what you think people will like. One is pandering and a bit manipulative, and one is kind of true. And it doesn't have anything to do with whether you think people will like it or not, because once you go down that road, you've really lost the authenticity. My most successful outings in my shows were when I was completely true to what I liked in every sense, using music that I liked and picking the models I liked. It required the kind of discipline of listening to other people's opinions, but ultimately making your mind up in the end.

***What advice can you give to an aspiring fashion designer?***

› My #1 advice would be to never feel embarrassed to ask for help. In the fashion business, it doesn't seem cool. But it's not the case. I think people want to be a part of your creation. Make friends with as many people in the areas you need to evolve.

***The fashion industry has changed so drastically over the years with the proliferation of fashion reality TV shows, such as Project Runway on Bravo. How do you feel about the impact this has had on the fashion industry and on the very heart of what fashion means as an artistic endeavor and an art form?***

› There are so many designers today who haven't studied fashion in school. It seems a little less defined. I get frustrated because everyone thinks they are a fashion designer. In fashion, it is a little unfortunate because it is underestimated in terms of the ingredients it takes to become that thing. There are so many ways to reach that goal today.



***The fashion industry is known as being filled with an abundance of wonderfully creative people with eccentric personalities. At times, the drama can reach operatic proportions. From where do you think this stems?***

› This is a really interesting question. I think it comes with the territory. It makes it more interesting, more exciting, to be so dramatic. In some ways, it's unique to New York. It's a very New York thing. It's part of becoming a brand. A lot of it has to do with what people expect and want from someone in the fashion industry.

***You have been called "Clothing Royalty" and the "King of Red Carpet Glamour." What do you think of these descriptions, and how do you view yourself?***

› There is a kind of a kismet in how things happen. It's flattering when people think of you in that way and say those things. I was more of a dramatic and serious person in my youth, and now my truer self is coming out a lot more, which is sillier and much less serious.

***Describe what the ultimate perfect day would be like for you.***

› The ultimate perfect day for me would be doing what I love and being completely content and happy where I am. It is when I am completely present in the moment, not thinking about yesterday, not thinking about tomorrow, and at peace.



Spring 2008 Randolph Duke Couture, Los Angeles Fashion Week. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.



## ***An Interview with Ralph Rucci, Fashion Designer for Chado Ralph Rucci***



Portrait of Ralph Rucci, 2012. PHOTOGRAPHER: RICK GUIDOTTI.  
COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

➤ I had always been fascinated with the beauty of women and the inner grace that they possess. As a child, I would always go shopping with my mother and was often permitted to choose her clothing from an early age. I remember she had a neighborhood dressmaker, a man of great talent and skill,

and I was allowed to choose Vogue/Butterick patterns of Christian Dior and Balmain. Certain images spring to life immediately. A hot pink slipper satin Dior boxy bodice and straight pegged skirt with a pillbox hat. The hat and the bodice were beaded with small hanging crystals or briolettes. I thought that it was the chicest thing I had ever seen. I also remember that my mother had an emerald-green satin Dior coat which was essentially a half-circle with two flipper short sleeves and a full band collar that extended beyond the décolleté. When she moved in this coat, the flares swooned out in a majestic, regal movement. She had an ivory duchess silk satin Balmain all cut on the bias—a sleeveless narrow sheath, swept to one side and draped to the high waist/low hip, ending with an enormous geisha obi as part of the dress. The obi was doubled so that the fabric remained crisp and stood out so that you could see it from the front. What made this cocktail dress incredibly poignant was that the dress mirrored the social climate of the time. My mother had it made for the opening of a movie she was attending. Imagine this: Women and men wore evening attire to the opening of movies. It was the opening of Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra*. Little did I even dream that I would one day be sitting with Elizabeth on her bed and planning clothes around her mind-boggling jewelry collection. But all of these designs and colors were approved by me with complete calm and a certain unknown authority. Now, you can say that might be the DNA within, but it was years before anything became very clear.

While I was in high school, I discovered fashion magazines and began to approach the study of fashion as an academic. I would discover a designer, and

began to find a thread in the work that I was drawn to. It was not until I was in college that a major breakthrough occurred. I was in the stacks researching a paper for my Aesthetics class in philosophy. I was leafing through an issue of *Harper's Bazaar* and was stunned. I discovered a double-page photograph of a bride and her attendant; only both were photographed from the back, and the bride was in white gazaar and the attendant was in black gazaar. Both costumes were trapezoidal, with the bride having a long train. The shots were taken by photographer David Bailey, by the direction of Diana Vreeland. I was speechless. I had never seen anything so pure and so sculptural and so perfect in my entire life. I knew that it was art. I discovered they were conceived of and made by Cristobal Balenciaga. Since I was also painting at the time, I felt liberated. In my mind I related the Balenciaga clothes to American painter Robert Motherwell's piece *Elegy to the Spanish Republic*. Thus, I began my real journey.

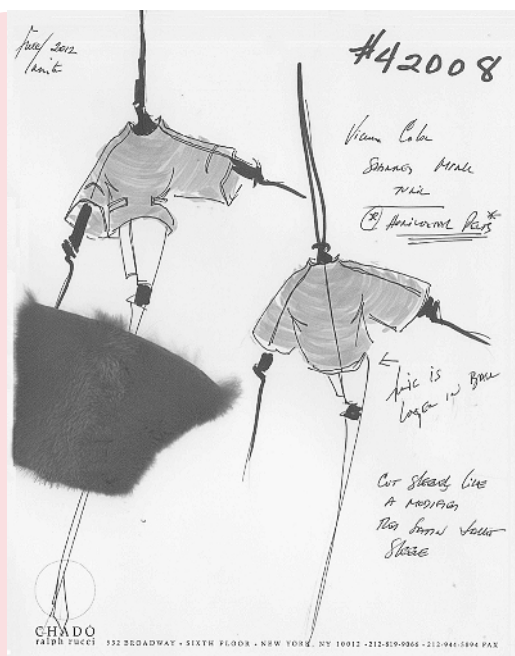
***You trained under Halston. Please describe how you obtained this incredible opportunity.***

➤ I knew from all of my fashion research that I only wanted to work for Halston. I thought he was the greatest designer at the time: the consummate minimalist and revolutionary who created an entirely new fashion after the 1960s. So I devised a plan to get a job interview. If you remember Halston had his cathedral on Sixty-Eighth and Madison Avenue in New York. His made-to-order department (he refused to use the term *couture*, since we were in America) was on the third floor with his office.

I told my sister that we would go to the made-to-order department and that she would order something from the collection. She thought that I had totally lost my mind. Nevertheless, we went to his office and she ordered a timeless ivory cashmere jumpsuit and matching kimono. This was in 1975 and she still wears it today. While all of this was happening, I asked the vendeuse to arrange an appointment for me to see Halston. She was shocked and amused at my strength and nerve to be so bold. So I enrolled at FIT, took the necessary technical classes, and came back in two years, and she arranged for me to have an interview with Halston. I might have had enormous bravado, but I promise that when I first met Halston my teeth were chattering in front of his mirrored sunglasses. Halston was a genius, period.



Chado Ralph Rucci Spring/Summer 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. White Caviar Beaded Shell and Pant with Satin Apron. PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.



Chado Ralph Rucci Fall 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection.  
SKETCHED BY RALPH RUCCI.

Chado Ralph Rucci Fall/Winter 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection.  
Sage Green Shirred Mink Pullover and White Wool Barathea Pant.  
PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.

### ***What was your greatest challenge when first launching your collection?***

› Money. It was in 1981 and I decided it was time. I knew what my life's work was, and I had to get on with it. I was 23 years old, and the important thing to impart is that I already saw myself and knew that I was a fashion designer. I now had to do it and begin my body of work, take all of the influences—Grès, Balenciaga, Halston, Galanos, Norell—and find my own vocabulary. Since I already had relationships with seamstresses, women would come to my one-room studio apartment at night to help me, and I would drape and cut all day. My close friend Vivian Van Natta, whom I met while at FIT, assisted



me from then on for the next thirty years, giving me the space to work and think.

### ***What is your design philosophy?***

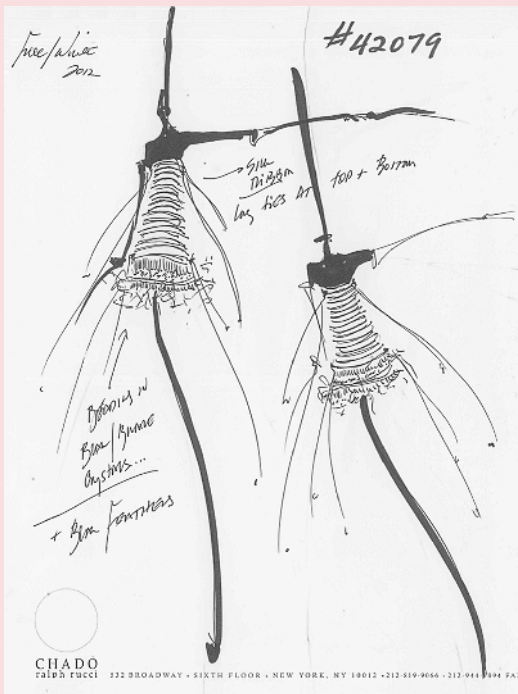
› Reduce, simplify, and find the very essence of what you are looking for. Never decorate a woman, but instead, find the elements to enhance and work to erase what is not attractive. Apply the logic of proportion. Add grace to her existence. Honor her. Discover new ways to make clothes and seek the impossible within our métier. Know how to do it right and then discover a new way. Never accept that you have arrived, and always remember that the greatest work comes from a place of humility.

**What is the meaning behind the word “Chado” in your brand, “Chado Ralph Rucci”?**

➤ Chado is the centuries-old tea ceremony involving 331 steps, each with its own formality, from the greeting of one’s guest to the final gesture of offering a cup of tea. In 1987, I chose to use this word to represent all of the steps, significance and participation of other individuals that go into making a collection.

**How do you successfully design season after season a collection that is both true to your design aesthetic and vision and commercially saleable? Is there ever a conflict?**

➤ You must allow your mind to first find the catalysts that allow you to discover the key themes to a collection, and then through research and sketching and toile development, you begin to find your way. During this process, you begin to see the logic and necessity for more dresses, more raincoats here, more jackets there: the need for the spectacular that pulls the entire picture into crisp clarity. If you go in deep and make sure you not only have clothes for your core audience, but also a newer more youthful audience, and for an international market, as well as what the press needs to seduce them from their daily grind, then you have achieved a small part of your story. But, for me, I must do this within a very particular, controlled environment: office to home, home to office, with only meditation and lifting weights in between. I cannot talk about the collection and feel annoyed if I am questioned, because I am still in limbo. In a way, the collection finds you while in this space.



Chado Ralph Rucci Fall 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection.  
SKETCHED BY RALPH RUCCI.

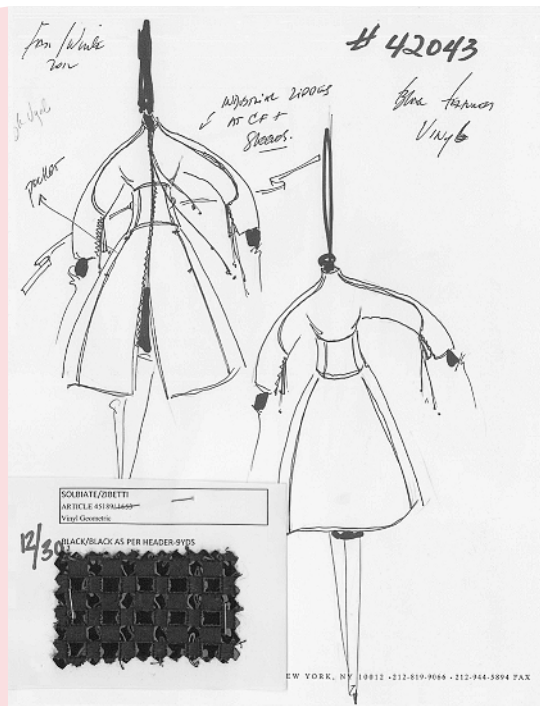
Chado Ralph Rucci Fall/Winter 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. Black Silk Ribbon Strapless Dress.  
PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.











Chado Ralph Rucci Fall 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. SKETCHED BY RALPH RUCCI.

Chado Ralph Rucci Fall/Winter 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. Black Vinyl Raincoat. PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.



***How does being an accomplished painter help you when designing your collections?***

› The experience of painting moves me into my fashion work with more clarity and inspiration and allows more possibilities. Also, often artwork is screened onto the fabric and then used in the collection.

***What can't you live without?***

› Privacy.

***How do you find balance in the fast-paced and ever-changing world of fashion?***

› Through my friends, family, staff, and the sanctuary of my home, my books, my statuary, and my English Bulldog, Twombly.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› Not speaking, no telephone, and being in the water—the greatest tranquilizer in the world. I am comfortable alone, but it is also quite wonderful spending the day with someone who you love and who loves you back.

## ACCESSORIES DESIGNER

An accessory designer creates products such as handbags, belts, scarves, hats, eyewear, and hosiery that will be used to complement clothing.

The “Cassia Weekender” is a multi-purpose carry-all for the office, gym, or a weekend trip by Canopy Verde, 2010.  
COURTESY OF CANOPY VERDE.



## FOOTWEAR DESIGNER

A footwear designer creates various styles of shoes, including flats, loafers, clogs, moccasins, sling backs, pumps, eveningwear shoes, sandals, wedges, espadrilles, boots, sneakers, and slippers that will be used to complement clothing.

Spring/Summer 2010 Juan Antonio Lopez Collection by Ana Borges.  
COURTESY OF ANA BORGES.



Kimi shoe from the 2011 Hetti Rose Collection. Heel type: Plastic covered with kimono fabric. Upper material: Vintage kimono textile fabric/leather. Lining: Leather. Sole: Leather.  
COURTESY OF HETTY ROSE.



## ***An Interview with Shoe and Accessories Designer, Stuart Weitzman***



STUART WEITZMAN, 2012.

***You apprenticed under your father, who owned his own shoe business called “Mr. Seymour,” and learned the trade at an early age. However, you graduated from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, headed for Wall Street. What led to the launch of your own brand?***

› I originally had planned to conquer Wall Street right out of school, but unexpected circumstances led me to join the family business to help out, and I have never looked back.

***You call yourself a “shoe engineer” because you believe footwear must function properly, above anything else. Please elaborate on this point.***

› A shoe must function, first and foremost, which is why comfort and fit are obligatory elements of a great shoe design. Of course, without beautiful lines, eye-catching appeal, or something fanciful about it that just makes you smile, success will not be the result of just a comfortable shoe.

***What is your design philosophy?***

› I design for the modern woman who wants high fashion, yet doesn't have to sacrifice comfort.

***Many people don't realize your shoes are manufactured in Elda, Spain. Please describe why you chose to manufacture in this part of the world.***

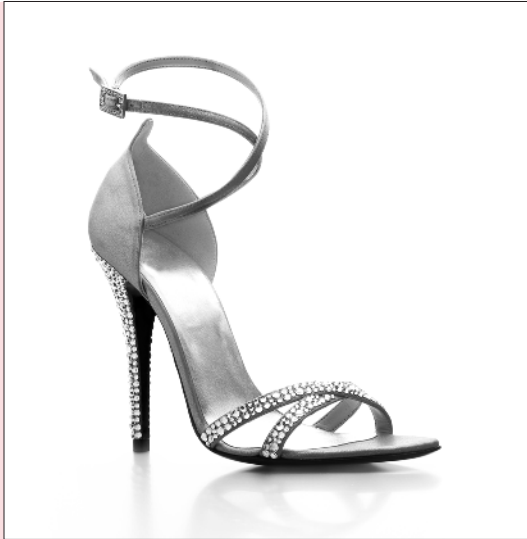
› Ever since a group of shoes made in Elda caught my eye with their exceptional quality and workmanship, it became my home. Our entire team, from sewers to partners, gives their all to the product and treat it as if it's their own. It's quite unlikely that I could have established such camaraderie elsewhere.

***You have been recognized for the impact you have made on the Spanish footwear and handbag industry, and as a result, you were named El Hijo Predilecto Adoptivo de Elda, which translates to “Favorite Adopted Son of Elda.” This title has only been bestowed upon four people since the end of the Spanish Civil War, and you are the only non-Spaniard to ever receive this recognition. Please explain how you felt when you first learned of this prestigious honor.***

› I was very proud and humbled to receive such a distinguished honor from the region. It's something I will always treasure deep within my heart.

***You have an expansive retail presence with 33 retail stores in the United States and 42 international store locations, with flagship stores in New York, Beverly Hills, Paris, Milan, Moscow, and Beijing. Your collection is also carried in fine specialty and department stores such as Saks, Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman, and Scoop NYC, and in Harrods in England, Isetan in Japan, Lane Crawford in China, Printemps in Paris, and Harvey Nicols in Dubai. Interestingly enough, you opened your first retail store in Las Vegas. Please describe why you chose this location for your retail debut.***

› We're a brand who is renowned for its playfully glamorous lifestyle, so Las Vegas seemed very fitting.



STUART WEITZMAN, 2012.

***So many women all over the world seem to have such a fascination with shoes. To what do you attribute this shoe obsession?***

› I have so often been asked, “Why do women love shoes?” and the answer is so obvious. What is the first wonderful story that most little girls read about? Yes, something as simple and accessible as a beautiful shoe, makes her feel like a princess. Who wouldn’t want to be Cinderella for a night?

***Being able to obtain a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer’s career. You have provided shoes for the red carpet appearances of celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Eva Mendes, Jennifer Aniston, Eva Longoria, Katie Holmes, and the list goes on. Who was the first celebrity you dressed, and how did it come about?***

› A phone call from Barbara Walters herself started my celebrity clientele base.

***Your bridal shoe collection has been worn by several celebrities, including singers Pink and Carrie Underwood and socialite and businesswoman Ivanka Trump, for their***

***respective weddings. Please provide an overview of your bridal collection.***

› Evening has been synonymous with the brand since its beginning, so a bridal collection was an early product extension of the brand. I do like to create most of my bridal collection in transparent materials, such as vinyl, mesh, and chiffon because they show off a beautiful foot in a sexy way and have the ability to go with anything, from day to night.

***Your company offers one of the widest ranges of sizes (4–12), in an unprecedented four widths (slim, narrow, medium, and wide), enabling your brand to capture a large market share. What was your motivation behind this?***

› Shoes are complicated to construct and are not like clothing, where one size can fit all or can be grouped into small, medium, or large, which is why I added a wide range of sizes and widths. I like to cater to the wants and needs of the customer, which I see as fit and comfort mixed with fashion.

***Have you ever considered designing a men’s shoe collection? If not, why?***

› The fun of designing women’s shoes is the playful materials you can use, like feathers, crystals, and colorful snakeskins to name a few. Unfortunately, a men’s line would not allow me that same creativity that I enjoy so much about the design process!

***Is there a new and exciting product launch on the horizon for Stuart Weitzman?***

› Yes, but everyone will have to wait and see.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of your brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

› Social media allows me to talk directly to my loyal customers to get feedback, especially regarding products, but also all related company initia-



tives; share exciting company news; as well as offer rewards. It is the ultimate focus group in moving forward toward the future.

***What advice would you give an aspiring shoe or handbag designer trying to launch his or her own collection?***

› If you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life. My job I consider my hobby, so I really enjoy every aspect of it.

***I attended a Fashion's Night Out event that you hosted at your Madison Avenue store a couple***

***of years ago. I recall seeing a ping-pong table in your store, which was a unique addition, amongst the other festivities. I understand you hold ping-pong tournaments throughout your showrooms and factories. When did you first acquire an interest in this sport?***

› It was a favorite pastime of my childhood that I became reacquainted with late in my life. It is the best exercise for the body and mind.

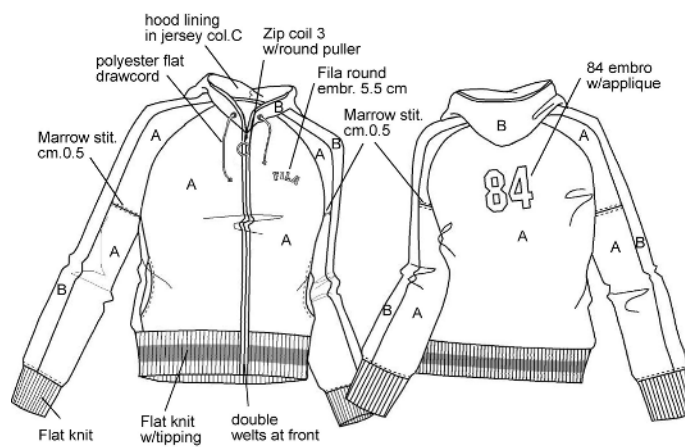
***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› Playing ping-pong.

## TECHNICAL DESIGNER

A technical designer is responsible for establishing and maintaining technical specifications across one or more product categories and for ensuring consistency in fit. A technical designer will attend design and staff meetings, direct and lead fit sessions, and produce technical packages (also known as “tech packs”) that communicate the measurements and specifications needed to produce a sample, in WebPDM or some other

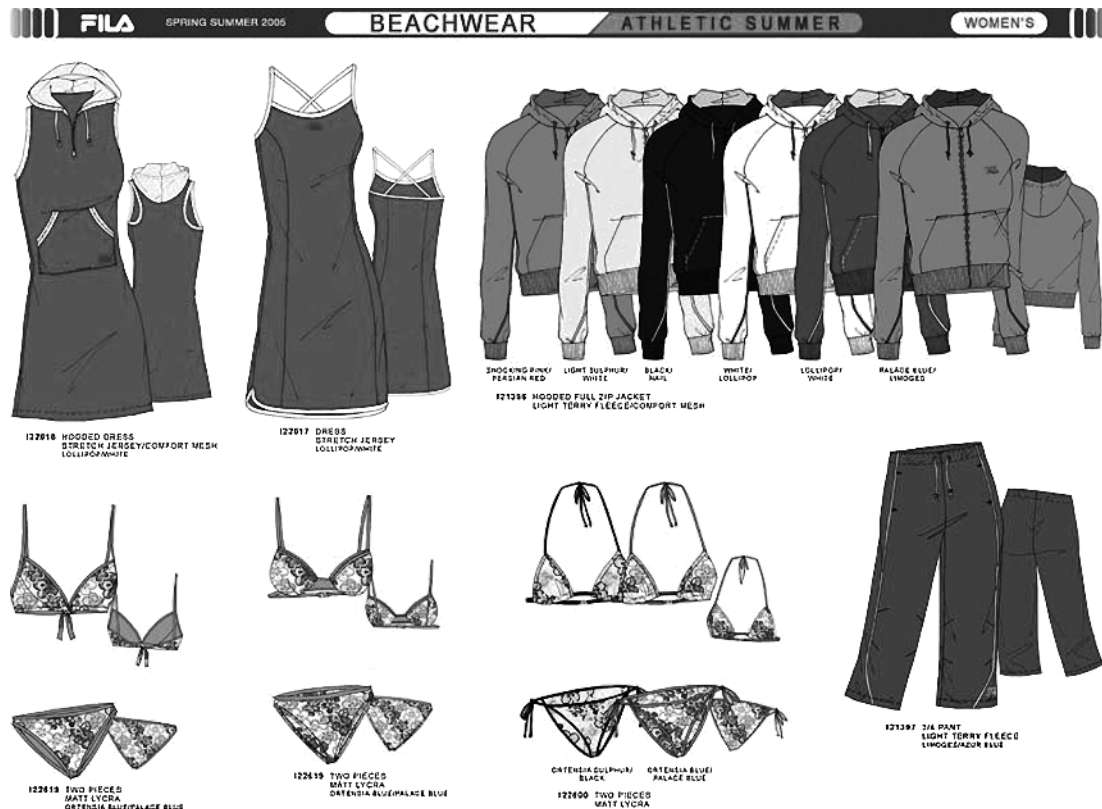
data-tracking software, for each style containing detailed product specifications (“specs”). He or she will also create technical sketches; hand off tech packs to overseas or domestic factories/vendors for sample and bulk production; check accuracy of measurements, fit, and construction of first samples, counter samples, and all pre- and post-production samples; fit garments on fit models or a mannequin/dress form; communicate changes to overseas factories/vendors/sourcing offices; and continue this process until all pre-production and post-production samples are approved. A technical designer will also manage the sample approval process effectively by following a strict production calendar to ensure deadlines are met and the process is kept on track, as well as identify potential production and quality issues and make recommendations to ensure that brand integrity is upheld.



Technical sketch for the technical package specifications for Fila Heritage Collection by Noreen Naz Naroo-Pucci, 2003. COURTESY OF NOREEN NAZ NAROO-PUCCI ON BEHALF OF FILA.

## CAD DESIGNER

A computer-aided design (CAD) designer is responsible for creating prints and patterns through original artwork, re-colorations, reworkings, and repeats. One major responsibility is participation in initial brainstorming design meetings, to understand concepts, themes, fabrics, silhouettes, and color stories. Once these items are communicated by the design team, the CAD designer will use a CAD software program to execute flat sketches, prints, look book sheets, detail sheets, and conceptual board and color sheets; create color palettes; and make revisions as needed until all designs have been approved. A CAD designer will also collaborate with internal and external departments, including design, merchandising, fabric research and development, overseas offices, vendors, and print studios to execute the creation of designs and maintain and track all artwork that has been developed.



Spring/Summer 2005 Filà Beachwear CAD for Athletic Summer group by Noreen Naz Naroo-Pucci. COURTESY OF NOREEN NAZ NAROO-PUCCI ON BEHALF OF FILA.

## TEXTILE DESIGNER

A textile designer uses CAD software to create and execute fabric designs for woven, knit, and printed fabrics, trims, and embroideries used to make apparel. Major responsibilities include researching the latest trends in fabric, silhouettes, and color; attending various fabric trade shows across the country and internationally; reviewing protos (prototypes) and strike-offs; approving final designs; and communicating with overseas mills.

### *What Do You Do on a Daily Basis?*

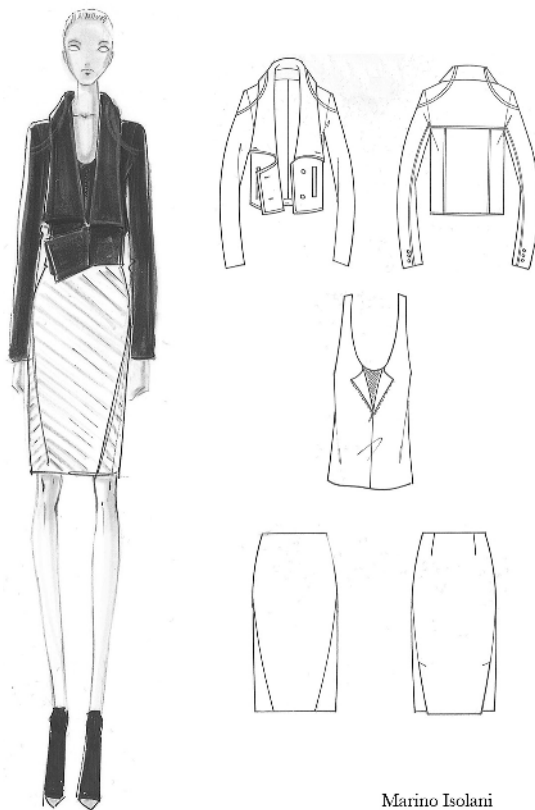
› Every day is different. I like to walk around the different places I visit for research, such as vintage shops, art galleries, and museums, or I spend hours surfing on the Web. Inspiration is everywhere, and I keep a notebook with me so I can sketch everything that comes to mind. I also keep tear sheets from magazines in my notebook.

*Marta Buscaroli, Freelance Designer, Emanuel Ungaro, Paris, France*

› I measure samples, fit samples on a live model with design in attendance, write fit comments that include illustrations and photos of corrections, send the comments overseas, and answer questions from vendors.

*Samantha Baxter, Technical Designer, alice + olivia, New York, New York, USA*

› My job requires me to wear many hats, which include designing women's wovens, knits, shoes, fabrics, trims, beading, and print developments. I start my day by meeting with international mills and selecting fabrics, discussing developments, colors, and lab dips. Later, I work with my director to edit down my selections and discuss trials, beading and print developments and prepare artwork to send out to our agents overseas. Then I start sketching, while keeping in mind our direction for the season, using inspirational research such as pictures, books, archives, and vintage pieces. It's important for me to stay focused and work with a fabric in mind so



Marino Isolani

Fall 2012 City Hell's Angels sketch by Marino Isolani, 2011. COURTESY OF MARINO ISOLANI.

that I can fully understand how the garment will behave and move. I also work on specs and figure out the proportion and measurements of my designs. I observe the garment with a technical eye and provide as many detailed sketches as possible to properly convey my designs to the patternmaker.

As soon as the first prototype is ready, I review it during fittings and analyze the fit and construction of my design, while making sure that the garment and the body are in perfect harmony. After marking, writing, cutting, and pinning the prototype, I discuss all changes with the patternmaker and move on to the second proto until the design is perfect and ready for the runway.

*Marino Isolani, Associate Designer, Bill Blass Women's Collection, New York, New York, USA*

» As a creative director, it is important to make sure that I have the best team of creative and brand specialists working together to share my vision for the collection and the overall brand image. The world of fashion is forever changing, so I conduct research on future trends, styling, and the arts which I do on a daily basis. I combine this with my passion for color, fabric innovation, and sketching looks. This forms a solid direction for the clothing and accessories collection, so I always have new ideas waiting to be developed when needed.

**Eyan Allen, Creative Brand Director, Hugo Boss  
Womenswear, Stuttgart, Germany**

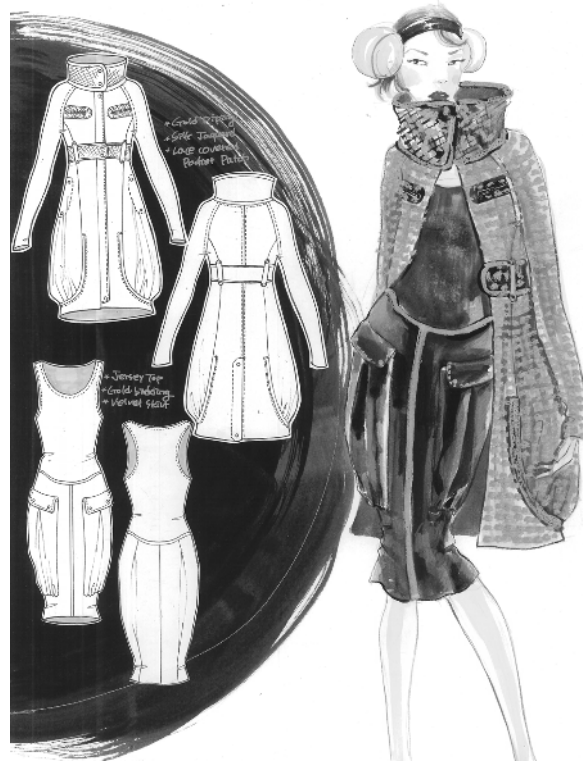
► My tasks on a daily basis involve a lot of prep work, pattern and draping, and overseas communication. The work of a technical designer mainly involves the fit of the garment. We fit sewn samples on a live model, adjust the pattern to improve fit, and then communicate the changes and corrections to factories overseas. Our goal is to achieve a consistent fit for all of the garments in our bridge line. We work very closely with our design and merchandising teams to achieve the best look and fit for each garment.

*Rebecca Clarizio, Associate Technical Designer, Michael  
Kors, New York, New York, USA*

» My day starts with a large hazelnut coffee at Gregory's on 40th Street before heading to my office across the street. I take care of fabric orders

from all over the world and oversee samples by communicating with China vendors through e-mail. After that, I stop by our sample room and have a conversation with my patternmakers and sewers about current styles they are working on, to see if the draping or sewing is correct. In the afternoon, I work on sketching, fabrication, print developments, line planning, or costing, depending on collection due dates. Working hours end around 7:00 pm during slow time, and then I go to the gym to work out or meet friends for dinner. However, when our fashion show is close, I stay at work late and contribute to the saying that Fashion Avenue never sleeps!

**Christina Kwon, Designer, Mark + James, Badgley  
Mischka, New York, New York, USA**



Fall/Winter Collection illustrated by Christina Kwon and inspired by Cremaster, Matthew Barney, 1996. COURTESY OF CHRISTINA KWON.

### *What Do You Do on a Daily Basis? (Continued)*

› My work day begins with answering e-mails from overseas agents. Garment construction details, design details, specs, and grading clarifications are a few of the everyday topics of discussion that take place between a technical designer and the factories. Before our customer falls in love with the beautiful clothing items at the store, each style takes a production journey. Technical designers are the builders of the garment. Once designed, every item is developed following technical specifications and construction requests. After receiving a prototype sample from the factory, we measure it, fit it on a fit model, and make necessary corrections in fit and construction. We make sure all design ideas are transformed and interpreted correctly from the flat sketch to the finished garment. We also ensure that the garment is made following the industry's standards for quality.

*Andrey Oshlykov, Senior Technical Designer,  
Anthropologie, New York, New York, USA*

› The season begins with primary and secondary research collated into mood boards, as well as developing a theme for the season. The previous season must also be taken into account so that there

is some cohesion between the two. Above all, the brand's values must be represented and respected. After much discussion, colors for each category are collated, bearing in mind when these colors will hit the store and what will already be on the shop floor, so that two seasons work together in unison. The design process can finally begin, in the form of rough sketches, shapes, and proportions to build a range plan of all categories, which will form the basis of the collection. Designs are worked into, measurements are added, vendors to produce each piece are selected, and the prototyping stages begin. At this time, we will also meet with fabric mills to review their trends and select potential fabrics from their collections that will work for the collection. Prototypes come in, and fittings begin. Once the prototyping stage is over and a final sample is made in the actual fabrics selected from the meetings, the reward comes in photo shoots for the lookbook and the fashion week show. At this point, I'm already back at mood board stage for the next season, so there's no time to stop!

*Paul Austin, Menswear Designer, Gieves & Hawkes,  
London, England, United Kingdom*



Spring/Summer 2011 Mr. by  
Roland Mouret Collection.  
SKETCH BY PAUL AUSTIN.  
COPYRIGHT 2010.





Fall/Winter 2012  
Diego Binetti Collection.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: ADAM WEISS.

› I see each day as a brand-new opportunity, so I try to make the best of every day by creating adventures, opportunities, and memories. I get up, meditate, give thanks, prepare a fresh cup of coffee, take a shower, turn on my computer, listen to radio news, organize my day, and then embrace the challenges of the day.

*Diego Binetti, Creative Director, Binetti, Inc., New York, New York, USA*

› My day begins with visiting a few online blogs and design resource websites to keep on top of industry news, as well as any emerging trends. Before I begin the design process, the merchandiser and category manager provide a line sheet listing the SKUs (stock keeping units) allocated to each category, including suggested retail cost and channel of distribution. I sketch several versions of a style. After a design is agreed upon, I use a predetermined color palette and print out several options. After the sales force, management, and marketing department approves the design, I create a tech package and send it to the merchandiser. We receive several vendor packages daily, which include protos, lab dips, knit-downs, and fabric approvals. If we receive an accessory proto, I spec it, adjust sizing if needed, cut into it to reshape, or mock up a detail. I then e-mail the comments along with revised tech packages and

trim sheets to the merchandiser. When we receive a garment proto, we set up a fit time and discuss pending visual comments and solve any fit issues. I update the sketch and tech pack when necessary. Several times a year we have sales meetings, which require presenting the designs to our national and international sales force. Feedback that we receive is applied to samples, pre-production samples and ultimately in bulk production.

*Heidi Honkavuori-Harlor, Senior Handbag Designer, Nixon, Encinitas, California, USA*

› Contrary to popular belief, a designer does not spend every day sketching new designs. During an entire season, about 10 percent of my time is spent on actually designing. My day-to-day is spent creating tech packs, conducting fittings, having meetings with the merchandising department to strategize, and responding to e-mails from the development team. But I always have time for a foosball break.

*Jason Lee, Sport Performance Apparel Designer, eldejo.com*

Fresh orange juice, strong Italian coffee, and a croissant start my workday. As soon as I get to the office, I look at my agenda to remind me of the meetings of the day. Almost every day, I have a meeting with my design director to talk about my collections, new ideas, and the development

*What Do You Do on a Daily Basis? (Continued)*

process, and she gives me priorities for the day. The design process starts with in-depth trends and materials research from magazines, traveling, the Internet, and fashion blogs. We travel every season to the biggest cities around the world (New York, Shanghai, Milan, London, Paris, Hong Kong), shopping, taking pictures, and observing the daily style of the people on the streets. I send the technical sheets to the Chinese factories and then collaborate with the graphic designer on the development of the all-over prints and graphics. Once the prototypes are submitted, we have several meetings and our design team decides which are the best ideas, materials, and concepts to work on, and we discuss target prices and the structure of the collection. Next, we review all the prototypes, colors, and styles and launch the collection, respecting the table time. It's



Alexia dress from Panos Emporio. COURTESY OF PANOS EMPORIO.

important to keep your mind open to different ideas because often during the seasonal collection you have to change details or add new styles at the last moment, and you have to be ready with a problem-solving spirit. We prepare mood boards and inspirational video clips in Photoshop. Afterwards, we present everything to our agents and distributors all around the world, and at the same time I start to work on the next collection.

*Vanessa Marzi, Senior Accessories Designer, Kipling, Antwerp, Belgium*

➤ One of the best things about being a handbag designer is that no two days are ever the same. At the start of a season, I mostly spend time researching and sourcing. This involves a lot of time away from the drawing board visiting exhibitions, galleries, flea markets, and any other places of inspiration. I use mood boards to compile this research and present my ideas to the team. Once a basic range concept is established, I attend trade shows and visit leather and fittings suppliers and manufacturers to source key components and materials. I then sketch detailed handbag designs which are then compiled into technical packs. Using Photoshop, I scan my hand-drawn sketches and then render with color and shade and show front, back, base elevations as well as an inside view, measurements, and a half-body pattern. I then add any additional information needed by the factory/sample maker in order for them to make an initial prototype.

*Emily O'Rourke, Freelance Handbag Designer, London, England, United Kingdom*

➤ On a daily basis, I actually manifest my visions on paper, then I use CAD to bring the designs to a clear visual. Using CAD allows me to easily and effortlessly add colorways, fabric, and textures to perfect the vision. I am also a patternmaker; therefore, I am able to create a pattern based on the CAD, which is my next step. I use a sample sewn out of muslin, or, if available, I will use a

less expensive fabric similar to the final desired fabric. Once the sample is complete, I have a fit model test the fit and flow according to ease and functional ability. This process is completed for several weeks until a complete seasonal collection is assembled.

**Randi Randolph, Apparel Designer, Randi Designs, Los Angeles, California, USA**

› My daily work routine consists of several tasks, including working on new prints, creating all-over repeats and placement layouts, recoloring existing prints, and creating new colorways. If necessary, I reduce colors for better yardage pricing. Most of my work is done digitally in various CAD design programs, predominantly Illustrator and Photoshop. I present finished artwork to my company's design team. Once approval is received, I assemble a print package to be sent to a factory for production. I communicate on a daily basis both with factories overseas and the local representatives of the factories, to ensure my artwork is being correctly processed from sample yardage to bulk production. After my print package has been sent, I file a copy of it to make it accessible for further development.

**Irina Romashevskaya, Textile Designer, Maggy London, New York, New York, USA**

› My days usually consist of fittings, reviewing patterns, and making appropriate corrections. We have concept and update meetings with production and design to make sure we are all on the same page. There are also seasonal pass-off meetings with design, in which we review design cards to develop new product. Solving production problems and making garments look saleable in a tight economy with increasing costs make the job challenging and fun!

**Angela Silletti, Technical Design Management, Men's Wovens, Macy's Merchandising Group, New York, New York, USA**

For me it starts with a concept, an idea, a mood which I can find during my travels, going to the museum, watching a film, visiting a tannery, reading an art book or a magazine article. Then different concepts are given from the creative director who follows the development of all the brand's collections and oversees the process, ensuring a common thread that connects everything, while respecting the DNA of the brand. We define lasts and heels, generally following the direction of the merchandising department, which, after a careful market analysis regarding sales and competitors, suggests a skeleton of the collection, indicating occasions of use, heights, and quantities. We then pass all the sketches to the factories, where technicians develop and implement the first maquettes. In the meantime, we draw models, generally divided into thematic groups based on usage or on a detail that is repeated. At this point, we receive a first prototype that will eventually be revised and corrected. After these steps, there is a monitoring meeting, which involves the whole team, including designers, sales, product development, and the shoe technician. During this process, many models will be discarded, and sometimes we will need to add new ones. Then we choose colors and materials before our final presentation.

**Lisa Bozzato, Freelance Women's Shoe Designer, Via Spiga, Milan, Italy**

› On a daily basis, I do about four hours of pure design work, including sketching, writing tech packs, making mood boards, and anything to do with the design process. I Skype clients if I have any questions to ask them, and if I have any upcoming travel, I book that online.

**Jessica Good, Freelance Shoe Designer, shoedesign.co.uk, London, England, United Kingdom**

› Being an independent freelance fashion designer, I have the luxury of choosing my projects. I spend a good part of my day on the Internet gathering

*What Do You Do on a Daily Basis? (Continued)*

"Step on It" by Dipika Lakshmi, 2010. COURTESY OF DIPIKA LAKSHMI.

materials, conducting research, and discussing the details of the project requirements with my clients. I closely watch the current trends by subscribing to newsletters from fashion magazines and following different brands and blogs. Having my presence on the Internet has helped me connect to my clients and land long-term projects.

*Dipika Lakshmi, Freelance Fashion Designer, Coimbatore, India*

› As a designer, a typical day for me would include attending business meetings with clients, researching global luxury markets and brands on the Internet, sketching, designing, cutting patterns, supervising seamstresses for quality control, traveling to the Irish linen factory to purchase fabrics, responding to e-mails, networking on LinkedIn, carrying out feasibility studies, sales and marketing, checking my e-commerce website to prepare orders to export to international markets and individual clients, and preparing seasonal collections for private showcasing events.

*Joan Ghali, Owner, JoanLido, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland*

› I review programs that are in work with both overseas vendors and with my cross-functional team. We may be working on three to four seasons at a time, which overlap in their particular stage of development. This can involve meetings, market research, quiet design time, creating development packages, and reviewing runway shows.

*Diane Mahood, Creative Technical Designer, Sweaters and Knits, White House/Black Market, Ft. Myers, Florida, USA*

› I spend time researching seasonal trends for men's prints and patterns for the upcoming season. Along with other designers, the directors and I will competitively shop the market, to research any up and coming trends that we should be aware of early in the planning process. Part of my job is to make appointments with various print and textile vendors that specialize in and sell vintage textiles, prints, and original artwork that we may purchase for the season. I will put together trend boards, highlighting what I think are the biggest trends in prints and patterns, and present them to my director and the design team. Based on the items that the team has purchased on various shopping trips throughout the United States and Europe, the directors will start to rig our development room and break down the samples into various trends that they think are relevant for our customer. It is from these rigs that we present to the heads of design and merchandising to get alignment on the upcoming season. Once these ideas have been signed off on and a color palette is in place, we roll this out to the merchandising team ("kick off"), and then design and merchandising collaborate on the big ideas. Merchandising will hand-design a breakdown road map of each product category, representing what is needed for each of their areas, and then design will start designing into it. Once merchandising, design, directors, and senior vice presidents have aligned, I will start sending out

artwork to vendors so design can start to receive sample yardage and full garment samples of each print and pattern ready for our next milestone meeting, which is adoption. Sometimes groups are dropped, and sometimes items are added. During adoption and leading up to it, I will be researching the next season, and then the process starts all over again.

*Grant Young, Senior CAD Designer, Old Navy, San Francisco, California, USA*

› Research takes up a large part of my everyday tasks. I'm constantly looking at my favorite websites, blogs, and magazines for inspiration. I try to read about something new each day which might inspire me to create something different.

*Rachel Richards, Design Director, Footwear, "B" Brian Atwood, Rachel Rachel Roy, Boutique 9, The Jones Group, New York, New York, USA*

› We've got four markets a year, spread apart by three months. Each collection starts about four months in advance of each market. I could easily be wrapping up the current market I'm designing for while starting to research the one right after it. The process always starts with researching silhouettes, materials, fashion trends, color, and hardware, as it is key to branding the collection. Internet research, trend forecasting agencies, trend shows, inspirational brand shopping, and working with tanneries are key to idea conception. I work closely and am in contact daily with my product developer and merchandiser. As the day progresses, if there aren't urgent last-minute revisions, which is 50 percent of the time, I research into whatever aspect I am feeling that day. Most of the time, I start off with silhouette. The shape and function of a bag are the most important thing.

*Cynthia Chang-Saada, Senior Handbag Designer, The Sak Brand Group, New York, New York, USA*

› As an accessories designer, I am constantly researching current trends and fashion markets. I visit art galleries, museums, and libraries for inspi-

ration as much as I visit shops and street markets to get a good understanding of current trends and styling. I often find myself checking people out, as it is one of the best inspirations that a fashion designer can get, as you can see everyday people living their lives as they walk on streets, go to clubs, or drink coffee in a sidewalk café. A lot of my research is also done on the Web, where I can check catwalks and research different brands, companies, and fashion blogs. I then translate all the information gathered into my own interpretation of what would match the needs of the brand that I design.

*Thomas Halford Ayers, Senior Accessories and Jewelry Designer, Toto Design Studio, London, England, United Kingdom*

› I currently work as a senior designer for three divisions of a major high-end bridal company in New York City. My primary responsibility is to work directly with the owner of the company in brainstorming, designing, and draping gowns for each collection. However, I am also responsible for overseeing the development of gowns. I am expected to troubleshoot with other teams such as patternmakers, cutters, production managers, directors, and the CEO of the company to make sure that all stages of creating the gowns are running smoothly. In addition I am present at all major design meetings, fittings, castings, styling sessions, photo shoots, major shows, and presentations as needed to ensure that each gown is presented appropriately. Another aspect of my job is to work with patternmakers and cutters to produce garments from previous collections that our clients may order. I also work closely with the director on special orders placed by important clients. Most of my day is spent designing and I start by researching the industry trends with a wide range of resources. From my research, I discuss ideas with the creative director for each collection for which I create mood boards, select fabrics, trims, beading layouts, draping techniques and other embellishments. I then



*What Do You Do on a Daily Basis? (Continued)*

Sketches for Debut Collection by Paul Hernandez, 2011 COURTESY OF PAUL HERNANDEZ.

draped the dress and work with the pattern maker to create a sample for approval by the creative director. At home and in my leisure time, I like to relax with a cup of iced coffee and a fresh sketchbook and jot down ideas for future use. I invested in my own mannequin and sewing machine at home to experiment with draping techniques and further develop my own skills. Anyone who thinks that being a fashion designer is easy has yet to have worked in the industry, but anyone who says it is not inspiring and fun is most likely not meant to be a fashion designer. It is a tough industry, but it is immensely rewarding.

*Michael Cho, Senior Evening and Bridal Designer, New York, New York, USA*

› I am the head designer at IGO, which is an active wear line for both men and women. Currently we are designing for the United States Army Boxing Team. A typical day can include fitting on models, drafting production patterns, creating new concept sketches, and technical flats.

*Paul Hernandez, Head Designer, IGO, San Diego, California, USA*

› When I wake up in the morning, I do things to ground myself. I usually spend a few minutes meditating before going on my morning run. Feeling great every day by starting off the morning right makes it easier to envision new designs and stay on

task. After exercising, I check my agenda and make an hour-by-hour plan for the day. Because I am an independent design consultant, my days vary. Some days are spent working as a “ghost” designer for one of my clients’ brands, and the other days are focused on my eponymous capsule collection. I search for inspiration in untraditional places like vintage art history books, cars, and interior architecture. Design is the ultimate luxury in life, love is the ultimate passion; both are necessities.

*Shari Seidlitz-McCandlish, Creative Director/Owner, Geoni Studios, Los Angeles, California, USA*



Aramöt Carryall Satchel sketched by Shari Seidlitz-McCandlish for Geoni Studios, 2012. COURTESY OF SHARI SEIDLITZ-MCCANDLISH.

## History of Fashion Design: Then and Now

For a fashion designer, it is crucial to have an understanding of how the fashion industry got its start, from both a historical and inspirational perspective. It all began when Louis XIV, the king of France who reigned from 1643 to 1715, ordered life-sized fashion dolls dressed in the latest Parisian fashions to be sent to all of the European courts. Aristocratic women would have their dressmakers copy the clothing on the dolls and grade them to their size. It was Marie-Jeanne Rose Bertin (1747–1813), the French milliner and dressmaker to Marie Antoinette (queen of France from 1774 to 1792), who was credited with being the first French fashion designer who brought fashion to the forefront of popular culture.

### CHARLES FREDERICK WORTH



Portrait of Charles Frederick Worth in 1895.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: GASPARD-FELIX TOURNACHON.

Charles Frederick Worth (1826–1895) became the first person to emerge as a fashion couturier. He had an established *maison couture*, or fashion house, in Paris; he was a member of the *Chambre de la Syndicale* and was a registered couturier. Considered the “Father of Couture,” he began the tradition of being founder, creative director, and image maker for his own brand and was the first person who decided what his clients should wear. He was English and worked at several drapery shops in London before moving to Paris in 1846. He worked for a Parisian draper and married one of the company’s fashion models, who would wear his shawls and bonnets in the store to show his customers. He decided to make a few dresses for his wife to go with the accessories he produced, and as you may have guessed, customers requested copies of the dresses. In 1858, he cut a deal with Otto Bobergh to open Worth and Bobergh. They dressed empresses,

countesses, debutantes, and other titled and notable women. He then caught the attention of the rich and famous in New York and Boston, who would travel to Paris to be dressed by him.

He was known for being able to redefine the female shape, by using simple, luxurious fabrics in flattering silhouettes with the perfect fit. This formula proved to be a huge success for Worth, and in a risky move, he strayed from the norm of allowing his customers to dictate their selected designs and instead, four times a year, held what today is known as an informal trunk show. He became so popular that he had to turn away customers, which only heightened his elite status further. He completely revolutionized the dressmaking business by coming up with a concept that



no one else had thought of at the time. Instead of being known as a mere artisan, he was considered a true artiste.

In 1871, Worth had to shut down his business due to the Franco-Prussian War, and when he reopened, he left his original partner behind, now calling his design firm The House of Worth. His sons (one of whom was the founder of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*) joined the business, and it flourished until Worth's death in 1895. The work of Charles Worth has been commemorated with the Charles Worth Gallery at the Heritage Centre in his birthplace of Bourne, Lincolnshire, in England.

Empress Elisabeth of Austria wearing a Worth Courtly Gala Dress with silver stars, 1865. ARTIST: FRANZ XAVER WINTERHALTER (1805–1873), OIL ON CANVAS.

## PAUL POIRET

French fashion designer Paul Poiret (1879–1944) was the second most renowned fashion designer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Poiret was ambitious and sold his sketches to couture houses throughout Paris. In 1896, he was hired by fashion designer Jacques Doucet, and they sold 400 red capes made from his very first design. He later joined the House of Worth and designed simple, practical dresses without any fuss. However, his modern take on dressmaking was not well received by Worth's already established and conservative clientele. In fact, Princess Bariatinsky of Russia exclaimed, "What a horror!" upon first sight of a kimono-cut coat designed by Poiret.

Portrait of Paul Poiret circa 1913. COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.



Poiret decided to establish his own design house at the beginning of the twentieth century. He made a name for himself with his signature kimono coat, the very coat that was initially rejected by his previous clientele, driving the point home that every fashion designer must stay true to his or her brand and vision. Poiret created flamboyant window displays and held legendary parties to market his work; he became known for his innate ability to market and brand himself as no other designer had done at the time. Poiret's house expanded to include furniture, decor, and fragrance. In 1911, he introduced *Parfums de Rosine*, which was named after his daughter, and he became the first couturier to launch a signature fragrance. For the unveiling of the scent, he hosted a grand costume ball held in his palatial mansion, attended only by the *crème de la crème* of Parisian society.

During World War I, Poiret served in the military and wound up leaving his fashion house behind. When he returned, his business was on the verge of bankruptcy. In 1929, Poiret's house officially closed. He became a street painter in Paris and died in 1944, poor and unrecognized for the ingenious ways in which he influenced the fashion industry. His friend Elsa Schiaparelli paid for his burial, which allowed him to regain some recognition.

Prior to Poiret coming onto the scene, women were wearing corsets, and Poiret is best known for liberating women from these tightly fitted garments and using his superior draping skills to create free-flowing, uninhibited dresses (a radical change from the tailored looks that were popular at the time). He invented the hobble skirt (a skirt with a hem at the knees that hinders the wearer's stride) and is also credited with originating harem pantaloons and lampshade tunics. Poiret's inspiration came from antique dresses, and he favored clothing cut along straight lines and constructed of rectangular shapes.



Model in Paul Poiret gown in 1914. COURTESY OF GEORGE GRANTHAM BAIN COLLECTION.

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Fashion is the only attempt to realize art in living form.

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— PAUL POIRET

## JEAN PATOU

In 1912, French fashion designer Jean Patou (1887–1936) opened a rather small dressmaking salon called Maison Parry. An American buyer bought his entire collection in 1914, around the time World War I began. Patou had to temporarily leave his couture house to serve as captain in the French army, and he reopened his business in 1919. At the turn of the twentieth century, the flapper look was all the rage, and he eradicated that look by lengthening the skirt and introducing sportswear for women. He is considered the inventor of knit swimwear, and is credited with creating the tennis skirt. He was also the first designer to popularize the cardigan. His mission was to make clothing comfortable.

He went on to invent the women's designer tie, using dress fabrics. In an unprecedented move, he then created the first suntan oil. When the Great Depression hit, not only did the stock market come tumbling down, but so did Patou's couture business, as customers could no longer afford his clothing. Like any good designer, he reinvented himself and decided to launch a fragrance collection to boost sales. The most recognized perfume he created is "Joy," which remained the most expensive perfume in the world until he invented "1000," based on a rare flowering plant. Before Joy came onto the scene, Patou launched several other perfumes, all based on particular events that were happening at the time. The GWP (gift-with-purchase) was not a common marketing tactic at the time, but Jean Patou came up with the idea of including a silk scarf, printed in the same pattern as the perfume box, with any perfume purchase. Joy remains the world's second-best-selling scent, second to Chanel No. 5. When Patou died in 1936, his sister and brother-in-law continued running his design house as a family business until 2001, when Procter & Gamble acquired the company.



Portrait of Jean Patou. PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY BAIN NEWS SERVICE.



## MADELEINE VIONNET

Madeleine Vionnet (1876–1975) was a French fashion designer and was called The Queen of the Bias Cut, because she introduced the bias cut to the fashion world. She was considered an architect of sorts and is best known for her Grecian style dresses. Vionnet did not hide the fact that she was a deeply private individual, taking on a no-nonsense and—as legendary and beloved stylist and fashion editor of 60 years, Polly Mellen, would say—“fussy finished” attitude. Vionnet often articulated a disdain for the fashion world, boldly affirming, “Insofar as one can talk of a Vionnet school, it comes mostly from my having been an enemy of fashion. There is something superficial and volatile about the seasonal and elusive whims of fashion which offends my sense of beauty.” Vionnet was not concerned with the glamour of the industry, but rather with her authenticity and her ability to execute her vision of the female form and the beauty of a woman.

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The dress must not hang on the body, but follow its lines. It must accompany its wearer and when a woman smiles, the dress must smile with her.

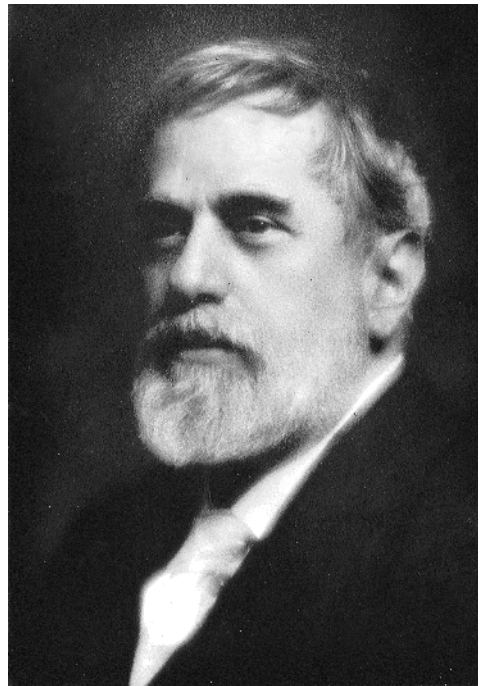
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— MADELEINE VIONNET

## MARIANO FORTUNY

Mariano Fortuny (1871–1949) was a Spanish fashion designer, and though trained as a painter, Fortuny was also an accomplished architect, inventor, couturier, and lighting technician. His wife, Henrietta, was an experienced dressmaker and helped construct many of his designs. He lived with his wife in a Venetian palazzo, which he called his “think tank,” and he set up separate themed rooms for inspiration. Fortuny drew from the airy Greek styles that followed the natural curves of a woman’s shape. He went against the popular styles of the time and created the Delphos dress, a shift made entirely of hand-pleated silk with glass beads.

Fortuny also invented the Knossos Scarf, his first fashion garment, which was made of silk, with a geometric print, and rectangular in shape. He manufactured his own textile dyes and pigments for his fabrics, using methods used in ancient civilizations.



Portrait of Mariano Fortuny. WITH PERMISSION FROM FORTUNY, INC., NEW YORK



Fortuny factory located on Isola Della Giudecca in Venice, Italy, as seen from Zattere. PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKE RIAD, 2009. COURTESY OF FORTUNY, INC. NEW YORK.



Bolts of fabric from the 2012 Colourismo Collection. PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKE RIAD, 2011. COURTESY OF FORTUNY, INC. NEW YORK.

He began to experiment with printed velvets and silks and dyed them using a wooden block press that he invented. His dresses are regarded as art and can be seen in public museums, as well as in his own dedicated space, “Palazzo Fortuny,” which is located in Venice, Italy.

## JEANNE-MARIE LANVIN

Jeanne-Marie Lanvin (1867–1946) was a French designer and founder of the Lanvin fashion atelier. Her clever use of elaborate trims, fine embroideries and beaded decorations in toned-down floral colorways became her trademark look. Lanvin got her start when the over-the-top clothing that she designed for her daughter caught the attention of wealthy passersby. They requested this clothing be made for their own children, and a business was formed. She naturally evolved to start making dresses for her young clients’ mothers, and that led to clientele including the most famous people in European society. She officially became a couturier after joining the Chambre de la Syndicale and opened up a boutique on the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris.



Illustration from La Gazette du Bon Ton, “Deux modèles de Jeanne Lanvin,” 1922. ILLUSTRATOR: PIERRE BRISSAUD.

By 1923, the Lanvin conglomerate included a dye factory in the western suburbs of Paris. During this time, she opened additional specialty shops dedicated to specific product categories, such as home décor, lingerie, menswear, and furs. However, her most substantial development was the creation of Lanvin Parfums and the inauguration of her signature fragrance, Arpège. She eventually launched Lanvin-Sport and created another legendary perfume, La Boule. She even created Lanvin-Décoration, an interior design department in her store. She was clearly a forward thinker and was always on the cusp of innovation. She was best known for designing mother-and-daughter outfits and built her legacy around this concept, which was very new at the time.

## COCO CHANEL



Portrait of Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel, gelatin silver print by Adolf de Meyer, 1930s. PHOTO CREDIT: ROGERS FUND, 1974.

Gabrielle Bonheur “Coco” Chanel (1883–1971) embodied the true rags-to-riches story. When she was 12 years old, her mother died and her father left the family. She was put into an orphanage where she learned the seamstress trade. She became a licensed hatmaker and opened a boutique in Paris, which she called Chanel Modes. A theater actress wore her hats in a play, and Chanel’s company began to thrive. She opened a second boutique called Chanel Biarritz, in Deauville, France, and created casual jersey clothes to sell for this boutique. By 1919, she was inducted into the *Chambre de la Syndicale* and was then able to establish her couture house in Paris.

In 1924, Chanel established Parfums Chanel and Chanel No. 5 was the first perfume she launched and remains the highest grossing perfume of all time. The French government claims that a bottle of Chanel No. 5 is sold every thirty seconds.

A pivotal moment in Chanel’s career came in 1931 when she was introduced to American film producer Samuel Goldwyn (of MGM fame) in Monte

Carlo. He presented Chanel with an offer of a lifetime. For one million dollars, he would fly her to Hollywood to design costumes for all the stars of the great films of the time. Of course, she accepted.

At the beginning of World War II, Chanel closed all of her stores, and eventually reestablished her fashion house. She continued to work until the January 10, 1971, when at the age of 87, she died in her sleep, shortly after overseeing the finalization of her spring collection.

Her legend continues today with German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld at the helm, carrying on her tradition for the house of Chanel. Several films, television shows, a Broadway musical, and many books have been written about her, including the fantastically inspiring children's book entitled *Different Like Coco*, written and illustrated by Elizabeth Matthews. Chanel will go down in history as a woman who lived life in her own way, on her own terms, and in the way she saw fit. Chanel was a pioneering fashion designer and woman whose modernist thought, menswear-inspired fashions, and pursuit of expensive simplistic classics made her a central figure in the world of fashion in the twentieth century. She was the only couturier to be named in the “*Time* 100: The Most Important People of the Century” list.

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Fashion fades, only style remains the same.

—COCO CHANEL

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## ELSA SCHIAPARELLI

Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973) was born into a wealthy family, and felt her luxurious upbringing suppressed her creative energy. So she moved to New York and then to Paris to explore her appreciation for both fashion and art. In Paris, she began making her own clothes, and her close friend and confidant, designer Paul Poiret, urged her to start her own business—which she did, with little success. A year later, she launched a new graphic knitwear collection, and with a stable foundation in place, she then launched ski wear, swimsuits, and dresses. She created a divided skirt for a tennis player at Wimbledon. In the early 1930s, she added an eveningwear collection.

In 1940, Schiaparelli moved back to New York and remained there until the end of the war. Upon her return to Paris, her business was never the same, as she could not modify and adjust her collection to the changing times. Her business closed in 1954, and she died in 1973, after writing her autobiography and retiring, with homes in both Paris and Tunisia.

Schiaparelli was known for her creative use of unusually themed prints, and was the first designer to use not only zippers, but dyed-to-match (DTM) zippers. She was highly focused on luxurious and fancy trims in unusual themes, such as bees. She invented culottes, wrapped turbans, embroidered shirts, pompom hats, barbaric belts, wedge shoes, and mix-and-match sportswear separates. Her modern way of thinking extended to her runway shows, in which she tied music into the theme of each of her seasonal collections.

Above anything, Schiaparelli was inspired by modern and contemporary art and surrealism. She collaborated with several artists, including Jean Cocteau, but her collaboration with Salvador Dali produced her most significant designs. They consist of the lobster dress (white silk with crimson waistband and hand-painted large-scale lobster), the tears dress (light blue evening gown with trompe l'oeil tears, paired with a tear cut-out veil, lined in bright pink and magenta), and the skeleton dress (black ribbed crepe with trapunto quilting, producing a raised surface). She



launched several perfumes and created the color “shocking pink,” based on the 17-carat pink Cartier diamond named *Tête de Belier*. She designed the wardrobes for actresses such as Mae West, for the movie *Every Day's a Holiday* (1937), using a mannequin created with Ms. West's precise measurements, and Zsa Zsa Gabor for *Moulin Rouge* (1952).

Perhaps Schiaparelli's most significant legacy was that of bringing a sense of playfulness and humor to fashion with her infusion of art and imagination. She loved to experiment with various combinations of fabrics, colors, and textures, and was inspired by new technologies that were coming on the scene at the time. She was the first designer to use synthetic fabrics in a couture line, working with acrylic, cellophane, jersela (a rayon jersey), and a rayon and fildifer (a metallic thread) blend. In 1930, she created the first evening-dress and jacket ensemble, and made the first clothes with visible zippers. This led to her obsession with using eccentric fastenings and buttons, such as a silk-covered cauliflower button on a jacket.

Coco Chanel referred to Schiaparelli as “an artist who designs clothes.” She was the first designer who saw the importance of collaborating with other artists of creative genius, and was the first designer who took the seriousness out of couture and brought a rather fun aspect to the process. Her clientele truly appreciated her forward-thinking mentality.

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Fashion is born by small facts, trends or even politics, never by trying to make little pleats and furbelows, by trinkets, by clothes easy to copy, or by the shortening or lengthening of a skirt.

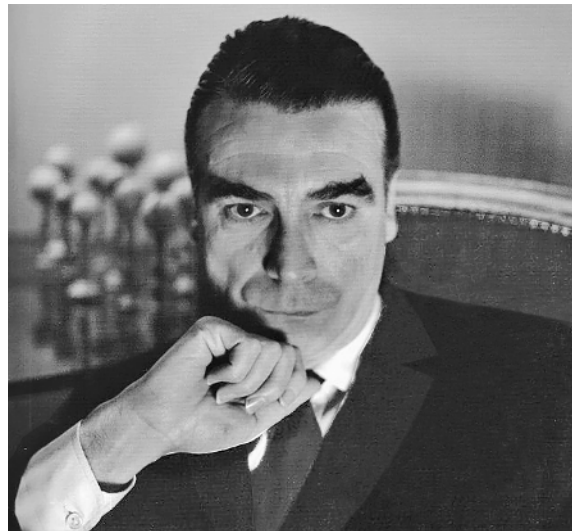
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— ELSA SCHIAPARELLI

## CRISTÓBAL BALENCIAGA

Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895–1972) was a Spanish fashion designer who ran the fashion house of Balenciaga and who was so highly regarded by his peers that he was referred to by Christian Dior as the “master of us all.” Balenciaga got his start by opening a boutique in Spain in the early 1900s. He expanded with two additional boutiques and dressed the Spanish royal family and anyone associated with aristocracy. With the onset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he was forced to close his stores and move to Paris.

Balenciaga established his couture house and sent his collection down the



Portrait of Cristobal Balenciaga, 1950. JAYPOFROMVOX/CC BY 2.0.



runway for the first time in the fall of 1937. The press praised him as an avant-garde innovator. This positive press not only popularized him as a fashion designer, but boosted his sales. Carmel Snow, the famous editor-in-chief of *Harper's Bazaar* magazine, became an immediate advocate of his work. His clients would travel to Paris during World War II just to purchase his clothing. His designs were linear, crisp, simplistic, and sleek—a completely different approach from the full skirts Dior was designing.

In an unprecedented move in 1957, Balenciaga presented his runway collection to the fashion press the day before the clothing was to be delivered to retailers, instead of observing the thirty-day standard lead time the industry followed. His purpose in doing this was to try to prevent knockoffs. The press, as you would have guessed, was not so pleased, and he eventually went back to the regular schedule. He had very distinct ways of doing things and rebelled against the *Chambre de la Syndicale* by never becoming a member. So, technically speaking, Balenciaga's collection could never be considered haute couture.

Cristóbal Balenciaga closed his atelier in 1968 and died three years later, reportedly having never given a single interview to the media. In 1986, Jacques Bogart S.A. acquired the rights to Balenciaga and has gone through several creative designers at the helm, including Nicolas Ghesquière, who has been the head designer since 1997.

Balenciaga is best known for his precise tailoring. The brand is most famous for its motorcycle-themed handbag collection, as well as its structural garments. Diana Vreeland, the legendary columnist and fashion editor for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, once said, "In a Balenciaga, you were the only woman in the room." Vintage Balenciaga is a mainstay among celebrities, fashion editors, and fashionistas alike. In March 2011, the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco opened the exhibit *Balenciaga and Spain*, a 120-piece fashion retrospective paying tribute to the legendary fashion career of Cristóbal Balenciaga.

## CHRISTIAN DIOR

Christian Dior (1905–1957) was born into a wealthy family and lived in a seaside beach town on the coast of Normandy. Dior's parents insisted he study political science with the hopes that he would one day become a diplomat, but Dior had other plans for himself, as he always had his sights set on the fashion world. He earned a living by selling his fashion sketches on the front stoop of his home and he then began working as an assistant for couturier Robert Piguet. After his deployment from the military, he began working for Lucien Lelong, as head designer alongside Pierre Balmain. Dior firmly believed that women were ready for a new, luxurious postwar look, and, in 1946, after hiring 85 employees, the House of Dior was born and decorated in Dior's favorite white and gray color combination. His first line was shown two years later, and clearly exhibited free-flowing, flowerlike, and billowing skirts with a striking hourglass silhouette.

In order to achieve this hourglass look, Dior lined his fabrics with percale (a plain-weave fabric made of cotton, polyester, or other blend), which made his dresses flare out from the waist,



Portrait of Christian Dior, circa 1950. PHOTOGRAPHER: BELLINI. COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN DIOR, S.A.



Christian Dior with model, Lucky. COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN DIOR, S.A.

giving his models a very curvaceous form. Carmel Snow said to Dior of this collection, “It’s quite a revelation, dear Christian, your dresses have such a new look.” It was from that moment on that this became known as “The New Look.” So the partnership and strong relationship that Dior shared with an editor led him to gain glorious press for his new idea, and in turn helped him gain incredible exposure and success. The Dior client list ranged from legendary film actresses Ava Gardner and Marlene Dietrich to Princess Margaret and the Duchess of Windsor. Dior died while vacationing in Italy in 1957.

Christian Dior was best known for his superior innovations and for creating, for the first time in fashion designer history, a global brand extending across various product categories. Fashion designer Christian Lacroix says of Dior, “He was so famous in France at the time, it seemed as if he wasn’t a man, but an institution.” Dior himself once related the story of a time when his grandfather took him and his cousins out to dinner, when they were little. His grandfather had asked his young grandson what he intended to be when he grew up, to which he replied, “Christian Dior.”

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Zest is the secret of all beauty. There is no beauty that is attractive without zest.

—CHRISTIAN DIOR

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## An Interview with Peter Som, Fashion Designer



Sketch by Peter Som for the Spring 2012 Peter Som Collection. COURTESY OF PETER SOM.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

➤ I had always loved to sketch clothes and shoes as a kid, but it wasn't until a family trip to Paris when I was ten that I discovered what fashion really was about. My sister bought copies of *Paris Vogue* and *L'Officiel*, and when I opened them, I was awestruck. It was in the early eighties and, seeing Claude Montana and Thierry Mugler all over the pages, I knew at that moment what I wanted to do.

***After graduating cum laude (with honors) in art history from Connecticut College, you attended***

***Parsons The New School for Design in New York. What degree did you obtain?***

➤ I received a bachelor of fine arts degree in fashion design.

***At Parsons, you were the recipient of the Isaac Mizrahi Gold Thimble Award. Please describe the purpose of this award.***

➤ Parsons was known for its designer critic program, where a group of seniors got paired with a designer who would mentor them on their senior fashion show. It was a great honor to receive the Gold Thimble Award, as I greatly admired Isaac and his modern chic take on classic American sportswear.

***While at Parsons, you apprenticed with two legendary fashion designers, Calvin Klein and Michael Kors. Please describe how you obtained these incredible opportunities.***

➤ The Calvin Klein internship was through Parsons. They needed a group of students for a few weeks to work on a specific project. When the project was done, I asked if I could continue. My internship with Michael Kors came about because I knew that eventually I wanted to start my own company and that interning at a smaller company would be important (at that time, Michael Kors was a small company). I obtained that internship with the help of the Parsons fashion office and lots of persistence! Internships are crucial to gaining on-the-job experience! I did everything from run errands, to dress models for shows, organize fabric, and take notes at meetings.

***After graduating, you worked in design for Bill Blass and eventually became creative director of womenswear. Please describe your experience there.***

➤ I joined Bill Blass as an assistant designer after graduating from Parsons. It was amazing to be a wit-

ness to a world of luxury that his clients lived in and demanded. The fabrics, the embroideries, and this type of workmanship were the closest thing America had to couture. Returning as creative director was a chance to carry on the heritage of the brand into the future.

***Who has had a major influence on you as a fashion designer?***

› There are so many people who have influenced me, as this industry is built on mentorship and passing of information and advice. You need to be open to receiving it, which is the important thing.

***What was your greatest challenge when first launching your collection?***

› Launching my first collection was the easy part, as it is three parts ambition and one part naiveté. There was nowhere to go but up, but it's the challenges of staying in business and building the business that take work!

***What is your design philosophy?***

› Feminine and wearable.

***How does the design process begin for you? Do you begin with a theme or some form of inspiration, a silhouette, or a recently discovered, can't-live-without fabric?***

› I always start with sketching and an idea of a mood or a theme. I usually let the pen and paper lead.

***Do you have a separate team that researches, sources, and globally develops your fabrics and trims, or is that the responsibility of you and your design team?***

› My design team does everything. They are amazing!

***How do you successfully design garments and accessories, season after season, that are both true to your design aesthetic and vision and commercially saleable? Is there ever a conflict?***

› It's all about a balancing act; you need some of each. If I'm going to send a low-cut sheer dress with a train down the runway, I will make sure that I have a version in the showroom that is lined and in a cut that all women can wear, not just the model.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of your brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

› Social media is probably the most important vehicle to get our message and clothes out there. Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest are how people communicate.



Sketch by Peter Som for the Spring 2012 Peter Som Collection.  
COURTESY OF PETER SOM.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own fashion collection?***

› Have a point of view and believe in it. Let yourself be creative, but also be tough on yourself. Finding a solid business partner is crucial. He or she will allow you to do what you do best—design.

***The Peter Som collection can be found in premiere specialty stores such as Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, and Nordstrom. What advice would you give to aspiring fashion designers who are pounding away at the pavement trying to land their first retail account?***

› Never give up. And most importantly, listen to all feedback and adjust accordingly without losing who you are about.

***How do you find balance in the fast-paced and ever-changing world of fashion?***

› Make sure that you make time for friends, family, and loved ones. The pace of fashion is so fast that it is easy to get swept away. It's perfectly okay to miss a party so you can stay home and watch TV and eat take-out!

***What three things can't you live without?***

› Coffee, sleep, and the beach.

***What is your favorite quote?***

› “Tell me the how, why and what.”



Look 32 of the Spring 2012 Peter Som Runway Collection.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: DAN LECCA. COURTESY OF PETER SOM.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› Morning at the gym, sketching and working on fabric with my team, and then a home-cooked meal with friends!



## ***An Interview with Daymond John, CEO, TV Personality, and Entrepreneur***



Portrait of Daymond John. PHOTOGRAPHER: UDO SPREITZENBARTH, 2010. COURTESY OF DAYMOND JOHN.

***Along with a few other companies, you helped to pioneer the urban apparel market with the launch of your FUBU (“For Us By Us”) collection. Please expand on this.***

› We were one of about ten who were just starting out in the urban market at the time, but we have been credited with taking our brand to a major global level.

***Prior to FUBU becoming an established brand, you and your partners showed the collection in a hotel room in Las Vegas because you could not afford a booth at the MAGIC trade show. You received over \$300,000 worth of orders, proving the importance for emerging designers of thinking outside of the box. Were there other examples in which this type of creative thinking played a part in a successful endeavor?***

› Wow, there have been so many things that I’ve done. We spent all of our money to get in front of the music producer, Teddy Riley. He was hosting a charity event down in Virginia which we attended with our shirts in tow. We wound up giving the shirts away to all of the artists and important people. One of the local media hosts named Ralph McDaniels wore the shirt often, and people would ask him about it every day, and he, in return, put us on his local cable station, and we gained a lot of publicity from it.

***What was your greatest challenge when first launching your collection?***

› Our biggest challenge was making the goods and being able to broaden the scope of the line.

***As the CEO and founder of FUBU, how involved are you in the actual design of the products?***

› It depends on what brand it is, how much attention it needs, and if it is licensed. Most of my brands are licensed right now, which is not an easy thing to do. But once that partnership is established, my involvement with design comes into play mostly at the beginning, when the licensee is trying to find out the DNA of the brand.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own fashion collection?***

➤ Become a local hero first. Sell your product in your local area to family and then to strangers, and get feedback on why your product is working or not working. Then the ambassadors for your brand will start to grow in different territories.

***How did you go about landing retail accounts when you launched FUBU?***

➤ The first account for me was not the big guys; it usually begins with the specialty stores. It is simpler to work with the specialty stores first. Once I showed sales from the smaller stores, the bigger stores started to look at me.

***As one of the “sharks” on the hit ABC television show Shark Tank, you have the opportunity to make people’s dreams come true by providing funding for their business concepts. When it comes to fashion startups, what are the main factors that prompt you to invest in one?***

➤ First of all, it is always going to be sales. As the saying goes, “You can make up your own opinion, but not your own facts.” Sales will prove how great the product is, and I also look at how long someone has been in the business and their total years of experience.

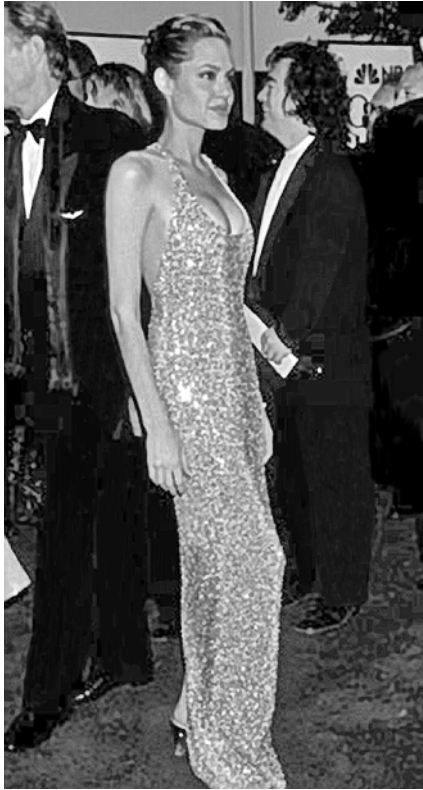
***As a CEO, entrepreneur, author, motivational speaker, television personality, and investor, how do you find the elusive work/life balance?***

➤ The biggest challenge that I have is time management. Surrounding myself with great people and also understanding that I need to surround myself with great people is key. You will go through a lot of people to find the perfect partners. I don’t get discouraged when I fail at finding the right people. Instead, I keep moving on to find that right one. It’s like dating.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

➤ Waking up, fishing, and doing some relaxing stuff, making some form of a deal on the phone or in person, and spending time with my kids.

Today, fashion is a global industry and is covered worldwide by the media, which has played a major role in catapulting the fashion industry to the prominence it has today. In addition, two very prominent industries, both music and entertainment, often partner with the fashion industry in various promotional and collaborative ventures and efforts, parlaying the coverage even more extensively. It is important to note how much of an impact the entertainment industry has on the fashion industry. Hollywood has had an ongoing historical connection with fashion, most notably exemplified by our enduring admiration for style icons such as Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly. This interest then sparked a curiosity about the costumes these legendary actresses wore in famous movies such as *Roman Holiday* and *Rear Window*, and suddenly costume designers such as Edith Head became a household name. Today, actors and celebrities who walk the red carpet are asked by television hosts to divulge who designed their outfit—with the now ubiquitous question, “Who are you wearing?”



Angelina Jolie wearing Randolph Duke Couture at the 56th Annual Golden Globe Awards, held at the Beverly Hilton, Beverly Hills, California. KABC, 1999. COURTESY OF RANDOLPH DUKE.

This media attention and the development of the devoted designer-celebrity relationship catapulted designers to icon status, and they are now touted as celebrities themselves. The societal interest in these fashion designers and the clothes they design has served as a catalyst for the popularization of the career aspect of the fashion industry, propelling the careers of celebrity stylists such as Rachel Zoe, who is now a fashion designer herself, and fashion photographers such as Bruce Weber and Mario Testino into stellar celebrity status.

The media have capitalized on this interest with the onset of numerous fashion-career-based reality television

shows, movies, and documentaries, which have become huge successes. (A complete listing of television shows, films, and documentaries with a fashion theme can be found in the Appendix).

Further evidence of the vast coverage of fashion extends to the Internet. With the onset of hundreds of style-related websites that feature media clips, video presentations, and photographs of U.S. and international designers' seasonal collections, never before has fashion been so accessible for so many people around the globe. The dominant crossover of fashion,



Spring 2012 Pamela Roland Advertising Campaign. PHOTOGRAPHER: NIGEL BARKER, 2011.



coupled with the mass media coverage, both online and off-line, demonstrates the sustainability of fashion design as a solid career choice. In the twenty-first century, we are seeing a massive growth rate in the number of famous people who have created their own fashion lines, including Madonna, Victoria Beckham, Jessica Simpson, Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, and Christy Turlington, to name just a few. Despite all the media coverage and glitterati, at the end of the day, fashion is a business. And what a large business it is! Let's take a look at the fashion industry by the numbers.

Chado Ralph Rucci Spring/Summer 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. Python Circular Banded Skirt and White Tucked Chiffon Button Front Blouse. PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.

## The Worldwide Fashion Industry by the Numbers

Now let's take a look at the fashion industry by region in sheer volume and numbers. According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in the year 2006, approximately 26.5 million people worked in the clothing and textiles sector worldwide. In the year 2000, worldwide consumers spent one trillion dollars on clothing.

Over four million people are employed in the fashion industry in the United States, in the areas of design, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, retailing, advertising, communications, publishing, and consulting.

The highest number of fashion designers based in the United States are employed in the states of New York and California. According to the American Apparel and Footwear Association, in 2008, \$374 billion was spent on fashion and accessories annually in the United States, making it the fourth largest producing industry for America's economy.

New York City is considered by many to be the fashion capital of the world, serving as the headquarters to more than 900 fashion companies (more than Paris, Milan, and London combined), employing approximately 173,000. It boasts more headquarters of fashion designers and fashion retailers and has more showrooms than any other city in the world. New York City offers the largest amount of retail space in some of the most visible and highly trafficked locations in the world, such as Times Square, Madison Avenue, and Fifth Avenue (40 million visitors annually), and it demands the highest cost per square foot of retail space in the world. It houses the

headquarters of the most well-known fashion publications and newspapers (including *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Town & Country*, *GQ*, *W*, and *Women's Wear Daily*). The industry hosts approximately 75 trade show and market week events each year, bringing almost 580,000 out-of-town buyers and other visitors into the city, creating yet another tremendous boost to the NYC economy. The retail market in New York City is the largest in the country and is also growing at an enormous rate, with projected employment by clothing and accessories stores increasing by 17 percent by 2025.

The concentration of fashion jobs in New York City is more than three times greater than the number of fashion jobs across the entire United States. It is the largest manufacturing industry in the city of New York, generating approximately \$55 billion a year in revenue, and is expected to contribute a staggering \$865 million to the New York City economy during the two weeks of Mercedes Benz New York Fashion Week alone, in 2012.

A fashion capital (or fashion city) is a city that is classified as a major center for the fashion industry. Activities including the design, production, manufacturing, and selling of fashion goods, as well as regularly hosting major fashion events (such as fashion weeks, award presentations, trade fairs, and career expos) will generate significant revenue for the economy. There are four main global fashion capitals: New York, Paris, Milan, and London. Traditionally held in major fashion markets such as New York and Paris, fashion weeks now take place all over the world, in cities such as Seoul, Tokyo, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, London, Moscow, Hong Kong, Singapore, and in smaller cities such as Jacksonville (Florida), Charlotte (North Carolina), Charleston (South Carolina) and many more.

Fashion weeks are events lasting approximately one week, in which fashion designers present their seasonal collections to editors, journalists, buyers, and industry heads. Fashion Weeks generally occur twice a year for both women's ready-to-wear and menswear, once in February for the fall season and then again in September for the next year's spring season, each lasting for one week. Spring women's haute couture collections are shown in January, and fall women's haute couture is shown in July of the previous year. Menswear fall collections that are shown in Paris and Milan occur in January, and Spring collections occur in June of the previous year. Pre-fall and resort collections shown in New York generally are presented on a smaller scale in the designer's showroom or another venue, whereas in Paris and Milan, they are usually shown as a regular, full-scale fashion show.



Look 14 of the Spring 2012 Peter Som Runway Collection. PHOTOGRAPHER: DAN LECCA. COURTESY OF PETER SOM.



## An Interview with Zang Toi, Fashion Designer



Spring 2012 Zang Toi Collection. PHOTOGRAPHER: EKA HALIM.

***Growing up, you loved to sketch and draw and dreamed of becoming an interior designer or architect. What led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

› I have always been interested in beauty ever since I was young. I would marvel at beautiful things and places and sketch them. When I got the opportunity to further my education at Parsons in New York, I jumped at the chance. I have never looked back since.

Spring 2012 Zang Toi Collection. PHOTOGRAPHER: EKA HALIM.

***Please describe your educational background, as well as any internships, apprenticeships, or jobs you held prior to launching your own collection in 1989.***

› When I was 18, I left Malaysia for New York. Two years later, I began my studies at Parsons The New School for Design. I started working for Mary Jane Marcasiano while I was still in school. I left after five years to start my own atelier.

***What is your design philosophy?***

› Timeless beauty with a touch of movie star glamour

***You are known for infusing color into your designs and have produced some of the most stunningly gorgeous and colorful pieces that are truly museum-worthy. Has your Malaysian upbringing influenced your aesthetic? What other factors influence your overall design philosophy?***

› Malaysia is truly a vibrant country full of different cultures. In terms of aesthetic, Malaysia is so colorful!



When I first started out, I used all the bright colors like fuchsia, orange, chartreuse, and purple because it reminded me a lot of Malaysia. For the past 13 years, my work has been influenced by the beauty of Paris!

***At the House of Zoi, I understand your design process begins with color. Do all of your initial concepts start from color alone or might you be inspired by a particular silhouette or by a recently discovered fabric?***

› Color has played an important role in my collection in the past, but in recent years, traveling to different parts of the world has played a much more important influence in creating my collections.

***For any aspiring fashion designer, staying true to one's brand is a key component in establishing credibility. What other factors do you feel play a major role in creating a foundation for one's collection?***

› To me, the single most important factor to success is work ethic; work hard and work smart.

***In 1992, you launched your moderately priced bridge collection, Z. Please describe what prompted you to offer a diffusion line.***

› Z was launched to satisfy the demand from various department stores and is now also available at my boutique in Malaysia.

***You've dressed such famous women as Sharon Stone, Eva Longoria, and singer Fergie from the Black Eyed Peas. Obtaining a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. How did you acquire your first celebrity client?***

› Through word of mouth, as I have never had a publicist since I established my atelier in 1989.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer who is trying to launch his or her own collection?***

› Hard work and always stay true to yourself.

Actress Kirstie Alley closing the Spring 2012 Zang Toi Fashion Show.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: EKA HALIM.



Actress Sharon Stone wearing Zang Toi. PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED BY WIRE IMAGE.



***You were quoted as saying, “There are so many young designers who are eager to be stars right away. But ego can be the worst killer to any young designer. You can’t let the press and the hype go to your head. If the work doesn’t meet the demand and the quality, it doesn’t mean anything.” Please describe how you were able to keep your ego in check as your career progressed and you became more successful and famous.***

› I was born and raised in a small village in Malaysia, and I had to work extremely hard to get to where I am today. I feel most successful when the ladies pay full retail for my designs. I work hard at designing and creating beautiful clothes in the best possible quality that earn the trust and admiration of my ladies.

***You are the recipient of many prestigious awards and recognitions, including knighthood by the Sultan of Kelantan from your hometown in Malaysia. Can you describe what it feels like to be given such high honors?***

› I feel incredibly privileged to be awarded such high honors. I didn’t expect any of these recognitions and awards, but I’m definitely very thankful for all of them.

***How have you dealt with the press and fashion critics over the years, especially at the beginning of your career when you were still trying to establish a name for yourself?***

› I’m grateful for the praise I’ve received from fashion critics and press over the years. I feel encouraged to work harder to deliver my best efforts. I also appreciate the constructive criticism that I’ve received because these comments help me reevaluate my work so I can see things from different perspectives. From both good and bad press, I’ve definitely improved myself as a designer.

Spring 2012 Zang Toi Collection. PHOTOGRAPHER: EKA HALIM.

***How do you sustain balance between your personal life and your work life?***

› I am very busy every day, but I love being productive, so it has never been an issue for me. I am very close to my family and a small circle of loyal friends, so I try to make time for them. I keep in constant touch with them, and I visit my family in Malaysia whenever I can, and they visit me here in New York as well. I also like throwing intimate dinner parties to host my friends. It’s something I enjoy doing to show my appreciation for their beautiful friendship.

***Describe what the ultimate perfect day would be like for you.***

› I would start the morning with a run around the Central Park reservoir, then head to the office and get some work done for my collection with my amazing House of Toi angels, followed by hosting an intimate home-cooked dinner for my family and friends in my home. Productivity and being surrounded by family and friends, now that’s perfect.



## *An Interview with Kay Unger, Fashion Designer*



Kay Unger, 2007. PHOTOGRAPHY BY STYLEEXPO.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, growing up in Chicago, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

› There was not necessarily a pivotal point, but I got a sewing machine when I was eight years old, and I taught myself how to sew using the instructions; it was very inspiring. When my parents went to sleep, I took the quilted bedspreads off the bed and cut them up and made skirts. I was lucky enough to grow up in a family of very fashionable women. My grandmother was a milliner in Chicago. She was head of the millinery department at Saks Fifth Avenue and eventually opened up her own milli-

nery store in Chicago. She was a very elegant woman, and my first real inspiration and indirect mentor. She was so spectacular. My parents would go to the best events at the White House and they were part of the Rat Pack, and my mom wore the most outrageous, incredible clothing by Norman Norrell, James Galanos, and Charles James. I would literally sit on the floor of her dressing room and watch her get dressed, and to this day, I remember every one of those dresses. All of this affected me. And because I was so exposed, I thought how in the world could I become a fashion designer? It seemed like they were such geniuses, and I thought there was no space for someone new. I always pursued the art side of my career because I didn't know until later in life that this kind of career was available to me.

***You studied painting at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, before switching to the fashion design program at Parsons The New School for Design in New York. What led you to pursue a fashion design career?***

› I have always been a very independent person and always wanted to pay my own way and take care of myself. I never thought I could make a living out of being a painter, and I wanted to keep it more of a hobby. Washington University had a fashion design department, and I decided during my second year to try it and see how I did. I actually did very well, and I decided to try Parsons. I wanted to try for the most prestigious school, and that's basically how I went about it.

***Upon graduation, you apprenticed with the legendary fashion designer Geoffrey Beene. Please describe what this experience was like.***

› It was spectacular! I was his assistant, and Issey Miyake was also his assistant at the same time. I was

the only female assistant that Geoffrey Beene ever had. What I learned from Geoffrey because we were lucky enough to sit in the same room was how not to ever give up. I was taught to work very hard on each garment to try everything to make it the best it can be. The other really interesting thing that I have taught everybody for all the years I have been in business is the way of charting a collection that I learned at Geoffrey Beene. There were little sketches of everything he was working on and it was pinned on a bulletin board by product category for every month of each delivery for each season, and it has been my formula that I have used ever since I've been in business.

***Please describe any internships and design jobs you had prior to launching your own line.***

➤ One of the first places I worked was Gayle Kirkpatrick. I worked on the fashion shows, I worked with the drapers and helped them pick the fabrics, and I did all the sketching. My first real design job was with Traina-Norell. I did formal fashion shows, my clothing was on the cover of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*. From there, was when I went out on my own. Back in those days, internships did not exist. You could not intern unless you already had a job.

***Under your company, Phoebe Company, LLC, you oversee the design for four separate labels, including Kay Unger New York, Phoebe Couture, Unger by Kay Unger, and Kay J's by Kay Unger. Please provide an overview for each of these collections.***

➤ Kay Unger New York is daytime clothing, evening suits, eveningwear, and evening separates for a sophisticated customer who is very fashionable, but not a fashion victim. We are very well known for our gorgeous prints, which comes from my painting background, and we develop most of

our fabrications. Phoebe Couture is what we call "Younger Unger." Phoebe is the name of my partner's daughter. Whereas Kay Unger is the first dress that a mom buys her daughter, Phoebe is a little bit less expensive than Kay. Color drives this collection. The customer is from age 13 to 60. We also make women's sizes to 14–24 in both Kay Unger and Phoebe Couture. Unger by Kay Unger was initiated in 2001 after September 11th. So many women were looking for jobs, and I wanted to make clothing that women could wear to interviews. For the first year, the collection was completely made in New York to support the city during that difficult time. It is conservative with flair. Kay J's is on a temporary hiatus. It began when Neiman Marcus came to us and said we love your prints and fabrics, and we want you to make pajamas for us. We also did robes. Everyone loved it. It's been a lot of fun. Often a store will come to us with a niche for a certain product, and a specific program will be developed.

***What is your design philosophy?***

➤ Fit and femininity. I always challenge my customer and myself to evolve and to try new things. Wearing my collections, a woman will always feel fashionable and appropriate.

***How does the design process begin for you? Do you begin with a theme or some form of inspiration, a silhouette, or a recently discovered can't-live-without fabric?***

➤ For me, it is a variety of things. The times I've done themes have been the most unsuccessful, because it seems forced. I like the collection to be cohesive. There is always real data that we look at. I'll look at what did well last year and the year before that: what colors sold, what things were too early. And then I look at what I feel is changing. I look at vintage and my own personal vintage by shopping my own



closet. And then I revamp and rework them. I do a tremendous amount of fabric research, but I have to work on silhouette and fabric at the same time. A lot has to do with what the fabric market is offering now. We also listen to our stores' needs.

***What advice would you give to an aspiring fashion designer who is trying to launch his or her own collection?***

› Having done it two or three times, one of the really important things is you must know how to make a garment, how to construct it, drape it, sew it, and everything about it. There are so many great vehicles for getting advice. As an aspiring designer, you can go to the CFDA and speak to so many organizations to gain mentorship. You must have a good lawyer and a good accountant before you begin. Don't try to be everything to everyone. If you look at a Michael Kors garment, you know it's Michael Kors; the same holds true with Marc Jacobs and Donna Karan. It has to make a statement. Nobody is going to buy your clothes and promote them if you don't stand for something. It has to have a look. Having a great logo is quite useful as time goes on. For Phoebe Couture, people fell in love with our label before they fell in love with the clothes. Start with online selling before you go to the department stores, because they buy small quantities and your clothes get automatic exposure, and you don't get markdowns. It is a fabulous way to sell.

***As a fashion designer with a namesake collection, you partner with your executive management team and creative heads to ensure that all the steps of developing and selling a collection—such as design, technical design, merchandising, visual presentation, quality control, public relations, sales, and marketing—are successfully implemented. How do you manage this process with your staff?***



Resort 2012 Kay Unger Floral Printed Gown. PHOTOGRAPHY BY STYLEEXPO, 2012.

› This is the biggest challenge. Designers are never taught how to run a business, how to be a boss, how to run a team, unless they've gone to business school. Business coaching is extremely important. I have a head of each design team, each reporting in to me. The hardest thing is to keep in touch with everyone, and delegating and letting people make their own mistakes once I've guided them. That's part of my philosophy. It's not easy because I travel a lot. You have to communicate and talk to each other all the time.

***You spend a large percentage of your time interacting with your customers through in-store appearances. Please describe what role you play with them.***

› I go into the dressing room with my customers 90 percent of the time so I see exactly what's going on.

I have an incredible relationship with my customers. I respect them, I am designing for them, so if I don't connect with them, I can't design what they want.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of your brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

➤ It plays a huge part, and it is hugely successful. We don't have a public relations department, we do it ourselves. The customers love it when we post photos of what we're doing and tips we offer. It is an easy vehicle for showing things quickly, rather than having to update an entire website. I wish I could write a blog. You can see an instant response from your customers—it's really great.

***Among your many recognitions, in 1999, you were inducted into the prestigious organization Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World. Ten years later, in 2009, you were recognized by the City of Hope National Medical Center (a cancer treatment facility) as Woman of the Year for your contributions to your profession, community, and various charitable causes. What did it feel like to receive such high honors?***

➤ Honors are always wonderful. It acknowledges the hard work you've done and recognizes you. The best part is that it has allowed me to move forward with my philanthropic endeavors. You can help people immediately, and I love being able to do that.

***In 2007, you began opening Kay Unger and Phoebe Couture boutiques in China through a licensing agreement with the JT Group of Hong Kong. Asia has become such an emerging and prominent retail market for the apparel industry. Are there plans for continued expansion throughout Asia?***

➤ Yes. Within this year, we opened two stores in Seoul, Korea, which has been hugely successful. It is an easier market than China. We have a franchise

model that works really well. It looks like we will be expanding to Toronto next.

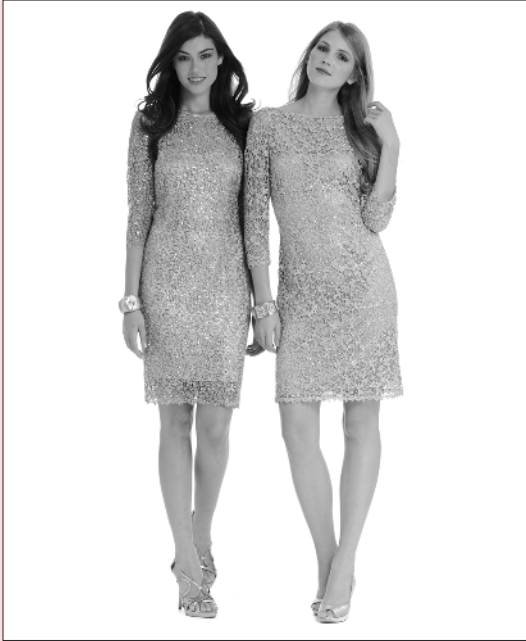
***In 2008, Kay Unger New York Eyewear and Phoebe Couture Eyewear were launched. Please explain why you decided to expand into the eyewear category.***

➤ Licensing is interesting. Sometimes it is successful and sometimes it is not. It all depends on the company with which you are working. The purpose of licensing is to get your name out there and to add to your brand a product that you think your customer would like. We do not sell in department stores, but rather in doctors' offices all over the world and in stores like Sam's and Costco. We make glasses for all nationalities. Each nationality has a differently shaped face, so it gets very interesting. We do teen wear as well; it's fascinating.

***Kay Unger New York and the Phoebe collections are sold in more than 20 countries, including the U.K., Turkey, Brazil, Australia, and Canada. The Kay Unger New York line is sold at fine specialty retailers, including Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, and Lord & Taylor. What advice would you give to an aspiring fashion designer who is pounding away at the pavement trying to land his or her first retail account?***

➤ There are many stores that will help young designers, for example, Opening Ceremony. Make sure you get paid up front once you deliver the product; otherwise, you won't ever get paid. Look for stores and websites that sell your look. They are all looking for new merchandise, and they all love the idea of somebody new, providing you can show them you can deliver.

***You have dressed several celebrities, among them Oprah Winfrey, Vanessa Williams, Tyra Banks, Angela Bassett, and Marcia Cross.***



Spring 2012 Kay Unger 3/4 Sleeve Lace Sheaths.  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STYLEEXPO, 2012.

***Being able to obtain a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. What are some of the ways in which you get connected to celebrities in order to dress them?***

› A stylist will call, or we will start to notice that everyone is wearing our clothing on television. So we'll pick up the phone and call their stylists and discuss ways in which we can offer our clothing for them to borrow to wear to different events, and now we dress everyone on the *Today* show. I am on the Democratic National Committee and have had some introductions that way. I was really excited when I dressed Tipper Gore for the gala the night before the presidential election. Tipper's assistant called and asked to come to the showroom with her and their entourage, including the secret service. We wound up doing the inaugural gown, as well, and her mother-of-the-bride dress for her daughter Karenna's wedding. I've also dressed Hillary

Clinton. Oprah's stylist called me up for one of our red velvet embroidered pants for the cover of her *O*, the Oprah magazine, holiday issue.

***In addition, your designs have been featured on the actresses starring in television programs including Gossip Girl, The Sopranos, Ugly Betty, Pushing Daisies, 30 Rock, Two and a Half Men, Today, Sex and the City, Tim Gunn's Guide to Style, and Dancing with the Stars. Do you have established relationships with stylists who personally request your clothing for TV show placement?***

› Yes. We get calls from the stylists who request clothing for the television shows they work for, and we loan out pieces from our collection. We are not vigilant about it and can certainly grow that aspect of our business.

Fall 2012 Kay Unger Sequin Shift Dresses. PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
STYLEEXPO, 2012.



***What did it mean to you to be inducted into the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)?***

› There was an organization called Designers of America that Stan Herman, Liz Claiborne, Art Ortenberg, a few other designers and I started that eventually grew into the CFDA. It's a real honor to be a member, as it's a great organization. They do things that mean something, and they really help a lot of people in becoming a fashion designer.

***You serve on the board of directors of your alma mater, Parsons The New School for Design. You have been a longstanding member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, of which you also served as the first woman board member. Your passion for women's causes led to you becoming a board and founding member of The Committee of 200, an organization that advances women's leadership in business, and the Women's Campaign Forum (WCF), an organization dedicated to advancing the political participation and leadership of women who support reproductive health choices for all. Please describe what led you to pursue philanthropic efforts for these organizations.***

› My family taught me when I was young. For some reason, I have always liked helping and got a tremendous amount of pleasure out of running fund-raisers. I think a lot of it comes from your upbringing.

***How do you achieve balance between your career and personal life?***

› It's hard. The hardest part is doing this and trying to have a personal relationship. You need a partner

who feels great about themselves, and they must be passionate about what they do in their life. If he doesn't respect the passion I have, then it doesn't work. You do not want a needy partner.

***Do you have a favorite quote?***

› "Friendship with oneself is all important because without it, one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world." — Eleanor Roosevelt.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› A perfect workday for me is a day when it is not daylight savings time and it stays light longer, and when I've managed to get to bed early enough the night before that I can wake up early, like 5:00 or 5:30 am. I do Pilates with a trainer in my home in Soho and make myself breakfast or meet someone for a quick breakfast. I am happiest when I am able to come to work fully prepared for whatever it is that I want to do, and things are more on schedule. I happen to love a day working with buyers, and I love the days when I am doing a personal appearance. I love when I can leave at a decent hour and then meet friends or family for a fun, late dinner or show or movie screening. My perfect weekend day is getting up early and walking around the city. I love going to Noho and the West Village and, if I do go uptown, Central Park, the museums, and Madison Avenue. I also like entertaining a lot.

## Embracing the World of Fashion

Karl Lagerfeld once said, “Fashion is ephemeral, dangerous and unfair.” It takes a certain personality to be able to survive and thrive in the fashion industry. The most accomplished people who work in fashion adapt to change, are politically savvy, work hard, dress the part, possess a passion for what they do, and, as Sir Winston Churchill once said, “Never never never give up.” While some things can be learned, you’ll be on the right track if these traits are already a part of your persona. If they aren’t integral to how you operate, quickly jump on the bandwagon to incorporate them into your everyday work ethic, because they are the key to helping you excel and rise to the top of your fashion game. You can spend your days wishing the industry functioned differently or wondering why the people aren’t a little more tame or sane, but at the end of the day, this is quite simply the way the industry ticks. The following are techniques that will help you fit into the inner workings of the world of fashion:

**Thrive in a fast-paced environment.** Just as quickly as styles go in and out of fashion, so does the tempo of everyday work life. It’s fast and furious, and you have to roll with the punches to keep up. Things get done at supersonic speed, especially during crunch times, such as market or fashion week. Some people get thrown by the pace, but you will be expected to work effectively under these conditions. This means time managing like there’s no tomorrow, taking initiative, and making quick decisions without much contemplation, question asking, or hand holding. You’ll need to multitask under strict deadlines, troubleshoot hard-to-solve issues, and tap into resources without delay, all on a moment’s notice. Your tenacity will be tested over and over again, which may become overwhelming. However, this will likely wind up becoming a confidence booster, setting a foundation for your future success.

**Always pitch in, with a wink and a smile.** Enough emphasis cannot be placed on the importance of doing whatever it takes to get the job done. Nike’s tag line, “*Just do it*,” fits perfectly into this scenario. I know that being a team player sounds cliché, but it has and always will be highly regarded and expected. If everyone is under the gun prepping for the fashion show, and your manager asks you to make 100 color copies of a look, jump right in and help out. When company-wide lay-offs are happening en masse, you may just be spared a termination if you continuously pitched in, with a “can-do,” positive attitude.



Chado Ralph Rucci Fall/Winter 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. Barguzine Sable Coat, Black Leather Shell and Black Cashmere Skirt. PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.





Autumn/Winter 2012 New Choiceez Collection.  
PRODUCTION: MERLIN PENGEL AT BLACK PEPPER,  
AMSTERDAM. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: BARBRA OLIEMANS.  
MODEL: NATASHA ROGER FROM D&A MODEL  
MANAGEMENT. PHOTOGRAPHER: GIOVANNI MARTINS.

**Acclimate to the corporate culture.** Work cultures vary from company to company and job to job. Equally important to fulfilling your job responsibilities is the notion of fitting into the corporate work environment. Patrick Montana and Bruce Charnov define corporate culture in their book, *Management*, as “the character of an organization since it embodies the vision of the company’s founders. It is the total sum of the values, customs, traditions and meanings that make a company unique.” The corporate culture is usually dictated by company history, brand heritage, and senior management, with the expectation that employees will follow certain standards of behavior and organizational norms. It includes aspects of work life such as how meetings are conducted, how coworkers communicate with each other, and the expectations of employees (e.g., volunteering). An easy way to adapt to the corporate culture is to look around and observe how people function in various circumstances, and mimic their behavior. Do most people leave at 6:00 pm, or do they stay later? You can also pick up on the sense of the work culture from reading the employee manual (if available),

perusing the company website, studying the tone of marketing materials, and asking the advice of your colleagues.

**Remain curious.** Being inquisitive about virtually everything enables you to learn more, which can help you progress faster in your career. When you’re curious, you tend to encounter new experiences that stimulate your mind and keep you motivated. Curiosity feeds one’s inner creativity, a crucial trait in fashion design positions. It drives you to dig deeper and stretch your mind.

**Have *Bon Chic, Bon Genre*.** Literally translated, it means “good style, good attitude,” and it is a French phrase used primarily on the streets of Paris. Style, to me, is not just how you look and how you dress, but how you live. Style defines your own, unique lifestyle, and when you incorporate an all-encompassing sense of style into your attitude—how you work, how you live and how you treat others—you create a positive aura around you, which can be wonderfully invigorating.

**Bottom-line it.** When it comes to communicating with your colleagues, higher-ups, and executive management, it is best to be concise and to the point, unless an explicitly detailed explanation is required or specifically requested. This is true when it comes to both verbal and written communications. Get your point across as quickly as possible when giving design presentations and compiling spreadsheets, documents, and e-mails. Think through how you want to articulate your talking points (the main points of what you are communicating). Given the quick pace of this



Epic editorial for Master's of Art degree at the London College of Fashion. STYLIST: JASON PATRICK CARVALHO. MODEL: IGNAS JUKSEVICIUS FOR M+P MODELS. PHOTOGRAPHER: GIOVANNI MARTINS.

industry, you'll find people are more concerned with the bottom line (the "what") and less interested in the precise details (the "how").

**Possess grace under pressure.** Do you have a tendency to have a meltdown every time the going gets tough? Pressure comes in many forms, from finalizing the collection to dressing a celebrity for an awards show with very little lead time. It's how you handle it that makes all the difference. When those stress-inducing, anxiety-filled moments creep up on you, just breathe! If you are not naturally good at reacting in this way, it is worth your time to practice so it becomes habitual. The key is to try to avoid what I call "crisis overload." Additionally, in a world where short deadlines are king, preparation and speedy decision making without much contemplation are the secrets to maintaining resiliency. You'll especially find this helpful during the 11th hour of trying to finalize a project, when papers are flying, people are running around frantically, and everyone is under the gun.

**Communicate your point of view.** You will often be asked your opinion about a certain silhouette, color-way, look, fabric, advertisement, or design. If you are unsure or otherwise ambiguous and answer with a neither-here-nor-there, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure," it will not allow your supervisor and colleagues to develop a trust in your competence, understanding of the brand image, and most importantly, your personal aesthetic. Confidently expressing your perspective on things is a truly good thing in the fashion world.

Illustrated by Izak Zenou for Henri Bendel.  
COURTESY OF IZAK ZENOU.



## AUTHOR'S INSIGHT

While working for a runway designer in New York, part of my job was to fulfill special client orders. One particularly hectic day, our celebrity relations manager came rushing into my office, and shouted, "We need to select her fabric for the awards show and we only have one day to get the dress made!" He was in such a frenzy that he forgot to mention the important details: who the dress was for and why it was needed. An immediate calm came over me, and I serenely asked, "For whom and for what?" Within 10 minutes, I had selected a super-gorgeous deep sapphire blue silk crinkle chiffon fabric for Terri Hatcher's gown for the Emmy Awards. Various discussions ensued and he came back into my office, now slightly calmer, and indicated that the fabric was perfect, but that the color needed to be sky blue. With my innate sense of color intact, I insisted that it remain sapphire blue. The media praised Ms. Hatcher's gown choice that evening, and I remained true to my personal aesthetic.



Autumn/Winter 2012 Emma Griffiths Collection. STYLIST: RACHEL ANTHONY GREEN. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: NEIL GOGOI. MODEL: SKYE VICTORIA. PHOTOGRAPHER: GIOVANNI MARTINS.

**Lead.** In every field and industry today, leadership continues to be one of the most sought-after qualities of an employee. By taking charge, recommending solutions to challenges your department faces, and implementing new procedures that improve work-flow efficiency, you'll come out the front-runner and will impress those around you, allowing people to see they can count on you to produce at an above-and-beyond level.

**Rely on your sense of humor.** If you can laugh when things get insane, you'll be far better off than your catastrophe-seeking counterparts. Scientific studies have shown that laughter has many health benefits, including lowering our blood pressure and boosting our immune system, which leads to an ability to think more clearly. Being able to laugh under a high degree of stress allows you to focus on the big picture with a more lighthearted approach and, in turn, to problem-solve better.

**Be a self-promoter.** Don't be afraid to let others know just how fabulous you are, but do so in carefully measured doses. After all, who really wants to be around people who are constantly boasting about how well-received their fashion illustration was or how elated they were that their design concept was

implemented? However, in any competitive environment, it is imperative to make your accomplishments known to the people who can make a difference in your career progression.

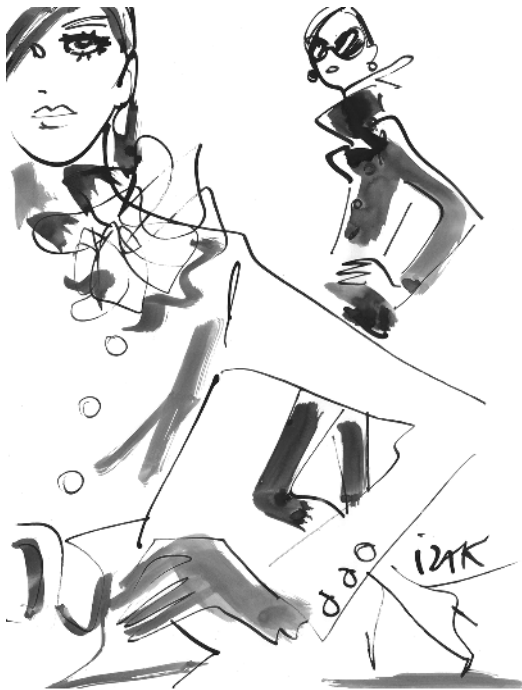
**Don't take things personally.** Take an assortment of people, with an array of personalities, coming from a variety of backgrounds, and put them all together in a high-pressure environment, and

Chado Ralph Rucci Fall/Winter 2012 Ready-to-Wear Collection. Black Silk Velvet Leopard and Leather Coat. PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN AND CORINA LECCA. COURTESY OF CHADO RALPH RUCCI.

you have the recipe for potentially bad behavior. Unless it becomes a habit, try to let it go and take it for what it is worth, which is basically a misdirected lash-out.

**Live, breathe, eat, sleep and think fashion relentlessly.** Through the thick and the thin and the ups and the downs, the people who choose to let fashion encompass their everyday mode of thinking tend to be the most successful. It is crucial to stay current with industry trends by reading fashion magazines, books, newspapers, and fashion-related websites. You should also watch award shows, paying close attention to what and who the celebrities are wearing, especially if your company dressed one of the presenters, nominees, or attendees. Be cognizant of what is going on around you. Look at the visual displays of store windows to stay aware of up-and-coming fashion designers and trends.

Many specialty stores such as New York-based Barneys, Bergdorf Goodman, Henri Bendel, and Saks Fifth Avenue; Dallas, Texas-based Neiman Marcus; London-based Harrods and Selfridges; Paris-based Galeries Lafayette; Galleria Department Store in Seoul, Korea; and Siam



Paragon in Bangkok, Thailand, are known for their on-trend store displays and merchandise. Research their online websites and visit the actual stores if you are near any of these epicenters. Subscribe to international trend reports, read about the latest trends in trade publications, and review the various runway reports. Be aware of current events and various economic and political events across the world, as they have an influence on fashion trends. Attend fashion trade shows showing the latest in fabric trends and designs. It is important to possess explicit insight into the fashion world, on both a domestic and global scale. See the Appendix for a complete list of fashion resources.

**Figure things out autonomously.** Overall, there is a “*baptism by fire*” approach in the

Illustrated by Izak Zenou, Personal Collection, 2011.  
COURTESY OF IZAK ZENOU.

fashion industry. Working in fashion design, usually entails very little orientation or training, with an inherent expectation that you will complete your tasks on your own, ask few questions, and teach yourself the tricks of the trade. And yes, that does mean through trial-and-error. Some companies, however, do provide on-the-job training and/or orientation sessions, especially if you are working for a large corporation (such as Ralph Lauren Corporation or Limited Brands, most famous for its Victoria's Secret brand) or for a retailer in an executive training program (e.g., a buyer, planner, or merchandiser at Macy's). However, as a general rule, there is an expectation that you will tap into the proper resources and do your best to get your tasks done on your own.

**Shift gears on a dime.** The fashion industry naturally breeds a constantly changing environment, and it is important to be amenable to these changes. Very often, you will be asked to drop everything in order to help out on a task that takes precedence. Don't think twice about it; the ability to switch gears is just a natural part of the design process. People like to work with people who are flexible, people who say, "Sure—no problem" when asked to do a task.

## *An Interview with Pamela Roland, Fashion Designer*



Fashion designer Pamela DeVos of Pamella Roland.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: NIGEL BARKER, 2011.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

➤ I wouldn't say when I was young I knew I wanted to be a fashion designer, but fashion was always an interest of mine. I was voted "Best Dressed"

in high school. I would love to sit and watch my mother get ready. My mother always had great taste and beautiful clothes and she had the most gorgeous swing coats in the 1960s. I started working at a clothing store during high school and throughout my college years. During college, I was in an art program, but my father had pushed me to study business, which I did. When I reached my forties, I always thought I was missing something by not being in fashion. It was something I always wanted to do, and I knew I needed to make the jump, which I did.

***Prior to launching your collection, you worked in marketing and public relations. Had you gained any fashion design experience prior to launching your label?***

➤ I started in public relations and marketing for my family's business, which gave me the confidence and guts to launch my own collection. However, I did not have any fashion design experience prior to launching my own label.





Spring 2012 Pamella Roland Runway Collection.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: NIGEL BARKER, 2011.

***In just your second year of operation, you received the 2003 Gold Coast Award, and in 2010, you were inducted into the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA). Most fashion designers are unable to rise to this level of success in such a short period of time. What was it like to receive these honors?***

› I will never forget when we won the Gold Coast Award. I screamed so loudly when I found out. The same holds true with the CFDA award. It meant a lot to me to be inducted. I was so thrilled and so excited to be a part of this group because you know you've made it with your peers once you are inducted.

***How does the design process begin for you? Do you begin with a theme or some form of inspiration, a silhouette, or a recently discovered can't-live-without fabric?***



Fashion designer Pamella DeVos of Pamella Roland.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: NIGEL BARKER, 2011.

› Most of the time, it starts with fabric (what we are known for), and I really love the fabric selection process. And then I work from there.

***Being able to obtain a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. How did this come about?***

› Actress Megan Mullally wore one of our black lace dresses when she was starring in the hit television show *Will and Grace* (her stylist requested it). Actress Kim Cattrall was up for an Emmy and we just had a fashion show the day before, when her stylist, (who was in attendance at our show) requested it. The Emmys were the very next day. You never know if the actress is actually going to wear the dress, and I started screaming when I saw Kim walking the red carpet wearing my dress. She



Fashion Designer Pamela DeVos of Pamela Roland.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: NIGEL BARKER, 2011.

really worked that dress, and the next day it was in magazines all around the world. It was incredible publicity for us.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of your brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

➤ It plays a big part. I was urged by my daughters to get involved. I am getting better at Twitter, and we know it is very important and it is getting even more important. In fact, I was not aware that Carrie Ann Inaba, the judge on the ABC television show *Dancing with the Stars* was wearing one of my dresses on the show until she tweeted it to me. It was so incredible to have found out that way. We also have a Facebook page. My good friend, fashion photographer Nigel Barker got me started on creating a blog and pushed me into various social media outlets as well.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own collection?***

➤ You have to really love it passionately and live it and breathe it. You have to go into it because it is something that you love. Don't go into it because you want to be famous, because that is really difficult. Sometimes the younger designers come in and think they can be famous overnight; it's very unrealistic. You better love it and you better know that it can be 24/7. You get zero sleep during fashion week. You work during the night, and you are on the phone with media even when you are at home. If you are going for the glamour of it, you are not going to make it.

Spring 2012 Pamela Roland Advertising Campaign.  
PHOTOGRAPHER: NIGEL BARKER, 2011.



***You are known for playing a major role in every facet of your business, from design to final approvals to hiring staff to public relations. How do you manage this process with such limited time on your hands?***

› I need to learn to let go a little bit. I am kind of a control freak—after all, my name is on the door. But I am getting better. It's hard to have that trust, which is why I have a hand in everything. I fire quicker than I used to, if I know someone is just not working.

***You run your own fashion design firm and are married with three children—certainly an inspiration to people everywhere. How do you balance it all?***

› In the very beginning, it was not easy. I was constantly working. But my husband and I have an agreement that when he is traveling, I stay home, and vice versa, so either one of us is always with our children. But now our kids are 25, 21, and 15, so it's much easier.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› We have a summer home in Northern Michigan and I love it up there. There is nothing better than a beautiful summer day on Lake Michigan. We have a boat, and we love to have friends and family around. It is absolutely one of the most beautiful places in the world. It was recently voted #1 spot in the world by *Good Morning America*.

## ***An Interview with Deborah Lloyd, Chief Creative Officer and President of Kate Spade New York***



Deborah Lloyd, chief creative officer and president of Kate Spade New York. PHOTOGRAPHER: ANDERS OVERGAARD. COURTESY OF KATE SPADE NEW YORK.

***Was there a pivotal moment in your childhood, upbringing, or at some point in your life that led you to pursue a career in fashion design?***

› I was always intrigued by clothes and national costume, and it really crystallized when I was sixteen years old during high school.

***What university did you attend for your fashion design program?***

› In order to qualify in the United Kingdom, you have to do a foundation course. I did my foundation course at Plymouth College of Art and Design in Plymouth, England, which was a year's study in everything from design to graphics, sculpture, and photography, so that you could really decide what path to take. Even though I knew it was

fashion, I still had to go through it. I then earned a bachelor's degree in fashion design from the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design. Then I earned a two years' master's degree in fashion design at the Royal College of Art in London, in which I graduated with distinction.

***Please describe some of the positions you held leading up to your current role as chief creative officer and president of Kate Spade New York.***

➤ My first job out of college was with Byblos, which was the hottest brand at the time. I was invited to be the assistant to the designer in Italy. My second job was with Daniel Hester in Paris, and my third job was with Kenzo in Paris. After that, I went to Aquascutum, the British brand, and then I had my big break at Burberry in London. After Burberry, I moved to America and became the creative director at Banana Republic.

***Since your arrival at Kate Spade New York, the transition has been seamless. How did you prepare for your current position?***

➤ All of the past brands I've worked on have had a very strong brand message. I cut my teeth at Burberry and always went to brands where I thought something big was going to happen. In preparation for this role, I pooled together my experiences from Burberry where I learned about brand building and brand message, and from Banana Republic, where I learned how to lead a team to get everyone on the same page. The amount of work needed to make it a seamless transition was a huge undertaking.

***What is your design philosophy?***

➤ Do what you love. This has always worked for me.

Fall 2012 Kate Spade New York collection illustrated by Deborah Lloyd. COURTESY OF KATE SPADE NEW YORK.

***How does the design process begin for you?***

***Do you begin with a theme or some form of inspiration, a silhouette, or a recently discovered can't-live-without fabric?***

➤ Each season can be slightly different. It can be a color I keep seeing, a silhouette I have seen or the most gorgeous pair of leather gloves I picked up at a flea market. So many things can spark off inspiration: a story, a film, a book. It's important to have an open mind, and these things come to you. It's hard to pinpoint how it happens, as it's more organic rather than structured, but you then have to put the structure into it. The ideas can come from anywhere.



***Being able to obtain a celebrity clientele is the highlight of any fashion designer's career. How did this generally come about for the company?***

› As we launched apparel, it became much more obvious to people what our brand was about. From Beyoncé to Eva Longoria and Anne Hathaway, we've been fortunate to dress a lot of celebrities. Our first celebrity face for our campaign was Bryce Dallas Howard (Ron Howard's daughter). She was an amazing brand fan. The day we contacted her she had just received a shipment of Kate Spade china for her home. Usually it comes about when stylists approach us. They like what they see in our collections, and they find the perfect things for their clients.

***What role does social media play in the promotion of the Kate Spade New York brand and in staying close to your customer base?***

› It's been huge and we've received so many accolades this year in terms of social media. I work with an amazing team that are of a certain age, and it is so natural for them and they love it. We have an amazing dialogue with our customer base, which allows us to keep really close to them. I went on a trip to Sonoma and we got so many comments about my trip, all in the Kate Spade spirit. They love the interaction and they certainly tell us what they think about things.

***What advice would you give an aspiring fashion designer trying to launch his or her own collection?***

› Stay true to yourself and own your own look and stay constant. That is what I've learned by building brands. You have to figure out how you can cut through and be different from everyone else and stick to it.

Holiday 2011 Kate Spade New York Bow Bridge Little Kennedy Bag. COURTESY OF KATE SPADE NEW YORK.

***Your company blog, "Behind the Curtain" is fantastic! It really enables people to get a behind-the-scenes feel for what you do every day and gives the public a true sense of what inspires you. Describe how it came into being and what prompted you to implement it.***

› It started with a section on our blog which was about the things we love. People would come back to us with comments regarding the things they loved, and a dialogue began. We began posting about things going on in the office, whether it was about somebody's birthday or a trip I was taking to Rwanda. It gives them the inside scoop and people love it. We get a huge reaction when we share what we are doing.

***What is your favorite quote?***

› "Live colorfully." I love color. I love wearing color. I love living in color.

***Describe the ultimate perfect day for you.***

› I love when I have a blank canvas right at the beginning of the collection. When I'm traveling abroad and going to places I have never been, these things will inspire a brand-new collection. My perfect day would have something to do with travel and inspiration.





## What Advice Would You Give to an Aspiring Fashion Designer?

➤ Go for it! Be bold in your choices and with your decisions. All of the people that I really admire in this business have boldly pursued their chosen direction. Stay optimistic. The key thing to understand in fashion is that sometimes you will be required to fail numerous times in order to succeed. More pragmatic advice is to choose the right environment in which to study and work.

*Kinga Malisz, Womenswear Designer, Prêt-à-porter, Nina Ricci, Paris, France*

➤ Experience is essential. Internships teach you many aspects of the process from the basics of how a design office works, to the practicalities and realities of production. It is essential that you make the most of these experiences and be as pro-active as possible (there is nothing that reflects worse on an intern than if they shrug off tasks they are asked to take care of, even if they are menial and feel be-

low you). The better the impression you make, the quicker you can jump-start your career. For instance, I have had great interns that I haven't had a position for to hire full-time, but have managed to get them placed in positions in which they are now thriving. Remember, the fashion industry is a very small world and everyone knows everyone or someone that knows someone. You have to show you understand the aesthetic and soul of a brand and designer.

*Ben Stubbington, Design Director, Theory, New York, New York, USA*

➤ To become a fashion designer, one should be humble and patient. Our profession is based on talent, but foremost on experience. One should have the ability to articulate and express their vision. One must understand the evolution of trends, the nature of fabrics and proportions, bestsellers and key items. Be open to learning new techniques, while learning from mistakes. Accept leadership, direction, and learn key fundamental skills from an experienced designer and follow their guidance. I often compare a fashion designer's growth to a young actor who gets feedback from the director and learns their profession on the stage, judged immediately by the audience. This experience forms character. Be open to a different perspective, always try to push yourself to the next level, be your own motivator, and believe in yourself. Don't allow boundaries or fear to limit your ability to comprehend and aesthetically be able to conceptualize trends and fashion needs.

*Bernd Kroeber, Design Director, BCBG Max Azria Group, Los Angeles, California, USA*

➤ Knowledge is the most powerful tool, and then comes a willingness to learn. It is important to be curious—watch movies, read books, observe people on the streets. It is so crucial to really love what you do because it is a tough business, especially at the beginning of your career. It is important that you



Spring/Summer 2012 sketch  
by Ben Stubbington. COURTESY  
OF BEN STUBBINGTON.



Sketch entitled, "Romantic Rhythm" by fashion designer Emily Tischler. This collection captures the romance and rhythm of downtown New York City. COURTESY OF EMILY TISCHLER.

have confidence in your abilities, but at the same time, you should be humble and receptive so you can learn from any situation.

*Pamela Costantini, Junior Footwear Designer, Roberto Cavalli, Bologna, Italy*

› The most important advice I could pass on to an aspiring fashion designer is to shoot for the stars when starting out in your career by going to the most high-end company you can. Do not settle at the start of your career for the position that pays the most. Instead, strive for the job that is going to teach you and push you the most. Study abroad. Seeing the world gives you richer inspiration to pull from and trains your mind to be open to new ideas. Tell everyone your goals and ambitions. Stay away from people that don't believe in you. Be inspired by authentic ideas, not other people's work. Always

stay hands-on with your product. Continue to go back to school even after graduating. Never stop improving your skills.

*Emily Tischler, Designer, Catherine Malandrino, New York, New York, USA*

› The first piece of advice I would give is to be humble. You will have a lot to learn. Work overtime. Do things nobody wants to do. Smile and try to learn something from everyone in the office. Looking for a job is a job in itself! Create a résumé that makes you stand out from the crowd. Put your best sketches in your portfolio; an image is worth a thousand words. Learn how to use LinkedIn to get in touch personally with people you wouldn't have the chance to know in other ways.

*Arianna Mereu, Freelance Fashion Designer, Max Mara Fashion Group, Reggio Emilia, Italy*

### *What Advice Would You Give to an Aspiring Fashion Designer? (Continued)*

› When launching your own collection, be careful what you spend and partner with a smart business person. Developing your social skills, friendships, and relationships with key editors and store executives are essential for making it in the business. It is helpful if you can figure out an underserved part of the marketplace. Build your brand on one set idea and slowly expand from there, never losing sight of your own original voice.

*Kym Canter, Creative Director, L-attitude, LLC, New York, New York, USA*

› Don't be snobby about a particular position, just get in and start working. Impress people and build your network. Like anything, you have to put in the years before you can begin designing a collection. Do anything that is asked of you the best you can do it. Take pride in each task.

*Ryan Clements, Design Consultant, Belstaff, New York, New York, USA*

› Never forget why you decided to pursue a fashion design career. You need to have at least two skills in hand to support your career. For example, you need to understand the basic fashion business theories to support your design skills and run your fashion business, and you need to take a communications course to know how to sell your brand. Purely studying fashion design is not enough in today's market!

*Jessica Chuan, Fashion Designer, Ghim Li Global, Singapore*

› The fashion industry is not a 9–5 business and many think it's purely glamorous, but it involves more hard work than you can imagine. Never give up!

*Reem Alasadi, Designer/Director, The House of Reem, London, England, United Kingdom and Tokyo, Japan.*

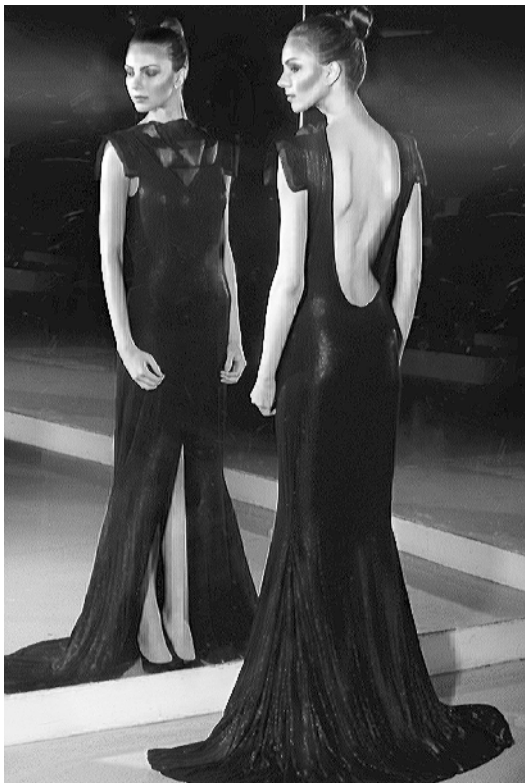
› The most important thing is to have passion and a love for what you do. Do not waste your time with a job and a team who cannot teach you with

passion. Traveling is very important. Always keep your eyes open and look around your environment and observe. Remember to learn more languages because the fashion field is full of people from different parts of the world and it is important to be able to communicate with them on their level and to learn different cultures and traditions.

*Annalisa Caricato, Freelance Accessories Designer, Guess Europe, Neuchatel, Switzerland*



"Twisted Oliver" from the Reem Alasadi 2012 Collection shown during Japan Fashion Week, 2011. Dress: Silk with acid drips. Leather gilet with knit sleeves. Hat: Oliver tweed. PHOTOGRAPHER: YOSHIKAZU ENOMOTO.



Autumn/Winter 2012 Tina Lobondi Collection. Designer: Tina Lobondi. MAKE-UP ARTIST: TAMARA TOTT. MODEL: VIKTORIA PRICOVA. PHOTOGRAPHER: MARIAH DO VALE.

› Be ready to lose sleep and work hard! A business plan will take you a long way when launching your own collection. You will need it for sponsorship or for a bank that might be able to give you financial support. When times are hard, surround yourself with people that will push you forward, boost your mood, and make you laugh. Good energy is more important than we think.

*Tina Lobondi, Founder/CEO, Tina Lobondi Collection, London, England, United Kingdom*

› Start developing your aesthetic early. Begin with one design at a time and do not let yourself get overwhelmed with the idea of developing an entire collection.

*Shari Seidlitz-McCandlish, Creative Director/Owner, Geoni Studios, Los Angeles, California, USA*

› The advice I would give to an aspiring fashion designer is to persevere. Have your vision and stick with it. It is very easy to get sidetracked in this business. There are so many options, inspirations, and avenues out in the world that sometimes you begin to question your own ideas and creations. It is very important to choose your road and maintain your vision. Trust your gut. There will be endless amounts of decisions to make throughout your journey. There will be a lot of people giving you their opinions. You will make mistakes, and you will learn. Stay on course, and you will eventually achieve your vision.

*Laura Dotolo, Principal, clutchbags.com, New York, New York, USA*

› Take risks, have passion in everything you do, have creative curiosity, and be prepared to work hard to achieve your vision. Don't ever give up, but do, however, learn to take feedback—good, bad, or indifferent. Learn to process the feedback into a learning that leads to success.

*Noreen Naz Naroo-Pucci, Senior Creative Director of Apparel, Under Armour, Baltimore, Maryland, USA*

› Before even thinking about a career in fashion design, it is important to understand that good old-fashioned hard work makes up around 90 percent of the work week. Days are long, and without ambition and a thirst for seeing a product develop from 2D to 3D, the world of design is best left alone. Understanding yourself and what you can offer to a brand is key, as is behaving with integrity and wanting to learn and develop so that you can grow and work to the best of your ability. Professional behavior and keeping a smile on your face, even during difficult times, will benefit you in the long run. Above all, remain true to yourself and trust your instincts, because fashion design is ever-changing.

*Paul Austin, Menswear Designer, Gieves & Hawkes, London, England, United Kingdom*

### What Advice Would You Give to an Aspiring Fashion Designer? (Continued)



Fall/Winter 2003 Fila Core Collection presentation board by Noreen Naz Naroo-Pucci.  
COURTESY OF NOREEN NAZ NAROO-PUCCI ON BEHALF OF FILA.

» I would tell an aspiring designer to intern in the area of design where they think they'd like to work. The fashion industry has so many different areas and positions to explore, and the responsibilities can vary greatly from one company to the next. It can be quite eye opening to get a taste of what you *think* you want to do. You may be

surprised to find yourself working in a niche of fashion that you may not have even been aware of. Also, don't forget that this is still a business and you need to sell the product in order to be successful.

*Nicolette Dennis, Sweater Designer, Minnie Rose, New York, New York, USA*



› I was sketching glamorous models well before I learned how to write an essay. I always say it's in my blood, part of my DNA, but it takes more than that to become a fashion designer. To know how to analyze and understand your market, to learn how raw materials are made, how to treat and manipulate them in order to create something not only unique, but also practical and cost efficient. The fashion industry is one of the most competitive industries out there, and designers must be aggressive and passionate in order to make a difference. They should be able to access many different resources in order to keep their creativity fresh and on target. Make life their inspirational playground, finding the next "it" item while playing with technology or enjoying a movie, a ballet, or a concert and then be able to interpret their vision into something wearable. One of the most important tools to be successful in any business is to believe in yourself, to believe in your dreams and fight for them. I can recall during my last year of design school how many people told me I was not going to find a job in such a competitive industry. I got tired of getting so much negative feedback about my career choice, and

I told my friends and family, "Tomorrow I will be working for my dream designer, Oscar de la Renta," and they laughed. But I called Oscar de la Renta's showroom and the next day I started the internship there that changed my life.

*Betsy Carlo, Design Director, Girls, Squeeze Jeans, New York, New York, USA*

› Being successful in the fashion industry means finding the right opportunity, and sometimes that means having to be patient. As glamorous as it sounds, it is an extremely hard profession filled with many obstacles and challenges. It is a career as well as a business, and in any business, one needs to develop a thick skin to survive. Many doors will open and many will close, but always remember to be true to yourself, your design aesthetic, and your love of this art. I would tell an aspiring fashion designer to never give up on their dreams no matter what anyone tells you. Aspire to be the greatest at your craft. Being successful will ultimately be determined by you; your diligence, willingness, and motivation will carry you far.

*Emileny Gonzalez, Technical Designer, Imports International, Allendale, New Jersey, USA*



Back to School 2010 Photo Shoot, Squeeze Jeans. PHOTOGRAPHER: LENNART KNAB. COURTESY OF SQUEEZE JEANS.

### *What Advice Would You Give to an Aspiring Fashion Designer? (Continued)*

➤ Fashion is a business. Art and creativity are key elements to fashion, but so is understanding that these products get manufactured at certain costs and sold at certain prices. Every successful designer has to work with production, sales, and merchandising; it is not just about creating. If a designer understands the industry of production and retail, it can shape and change the manner in which they design and develop in order to create very real, relevant, and saleable work. Another very important piece of advice is to change with the times. For example, a designer who sketches by hand, but has not yet been introduced to CAD, will become outdated with time, so it is important to keep up with the ever-changing technologies.

**Alicia Fazio, Managing Partner, fourthFLOOR Fashion, New York, New York, USA**

➤ On your rise to conquer fashion stardom, far beyond amazing talent and drive, you must acquire your own unique design work philosophy and ethic and use it as a compass throughout your career to guide you. My design philosophy trifecta consists of faith, excellence, and giving 200 percent effort. As an aspiring fashion designer, you have to look at what you've done today, this week, this month, and this year to set you on your path. For me, in high school, action meant booking the job to design and make the cheerleading uniforms my senior year and sewing every day after school so I could sell my clothes to my classmates. In college, action meant jumping on a train to Soho and selling my designs to boutiques. After college, action meant designing mini-collections each season and motivating my photographer, makeup artist, and hair stylist friends to produce awe-inspiring test shoots, and throwing renegade fashion shows on the steps of Bryant Park in New York. My line appeared in magazines, and soon stylists were using my designs for album covers and shoots for their celebrity artists, which, along with a great deal of faith and many answered prayers,

is how I landed my dream career in Hollywood. There are so many avenues today for aspiring designers to gain experience, exposure, and success; use them all, have faith, take action, and when the doors of the fashion world open, you'll be ready to walk right through. Design everything with excellence and integrity. Whether it's a job that will gain you huge exposure or a job that will end in obscurity, every job deserves to be entered into with the same excitement, enthusiasm, hustle, and inspired forethought. As you navigate through your design path, create solid business relationships with everyone



Red Dalilah "2056 Collection" from the Kara Saun 2006 runway presentation. COURTESY OF KARA SAUN.

who crosses your path. If you give at this level, it will take your fashion career to greater heights.

*Kara Saun, Fashion/Costume Designer, Kara Saun, Los Angeles, California, USA*

› Be strategic. Know who you are as a designer and determine your career path before you apply for your first internship. Identify potential employers and their competitors. Create a strategic plan of companies you will apply to, and tailor your cover letter, résumé, and portfolio to the company's aesthetic. Utilize your existing network to leverage new contacts in a desired place of employment. Build and maintain relationships with fellow students, coworkers, and managers. Always be willing to help anyone in your network who asks, and expect nothing in return. Complete at least one internship and maximize your experience. Learn everything you can, and make as many connections as possible. The most sought-after and successful designers are those who don't complain, work well with others, and focus on doing the work. Don't change jobs every year. Learn to stay in one place for a minimum of three to five years. This will make you more desirable in the long run and provide you with more options when you are ready to make a change. Be humble. No matter how talented you are, remain teachable and listen to others. Express gratitude to those around you.

*Dione Katelhut, Executive Director, The Fit, Portland, Oregon, USA*

› Have patience, be humble, and take criticism well. There's always room for improvement, and you're going to be learning something new when you are open to receiving feedback.

*April Oh, Design Director, Line & Dot, Vernon, California, USA*

› Fashion designing demands creativity, hard work, and an innate ability to define and identify yourself through your work. A passion for fashion

trends, both old and new, coupled with a strong theoretical and practical understanding of clothing is essential. Every designer, whether working for their own label or for a brand, needs to be a self-starter. As a designer, always keep a few tools handy—pencils, markers, sketch pens, erasers, scissors, a sketch pad for quick fashion illustrations, a research journal for collecting anything and everything that inspires you, and a good digital camera. Having a pictorial interpretation of your goals in front of you helps you to stay focused and motivated. The struggle is monumental, but the satisfaction you derive when a design comes out just the way you envisioned it is ample reward. Above all, work hard, follow your passion, and keep your eye on the goal at all times. Dream big and start each day with a healthy dose of inspiration.

*Supriya Ghurye, Fashion Designer, Fuel4Fashion, Bangalore, India*

› Be patient, have perseverance, take in what happens in the culture of everyday life, have a critical and constructive mind in order to improve yourself and your work, keep an archive of everything you like, be concise, direct, and as precise as possible when you transmit a thought or an idea, and create an emotion and a philosophy in everything that you design.

*Nuncia Ammirata, Freelance Fashion Designer, Florence, Italy*

› Whether you work for a company or have your own line, you need to know who you are appealing to, and you have to position yourself in the right marketplace. Be a goal-setter and learn from your own mistakes. Be progressive and always remind yourself why you are doing this and stick to your vision. Work with other people if possible to bounce off ideas among the group.

*Aram Lee, Creative Director, Kooba, New York, New York, USA*

### What Advice Would You Give to an Aspiring Fashion Designer? (Continued)



Study of Formation #1, Fall 2011, by Aram Lee. COURTESY OF ARAM LEE.

› As an aspiring fashion designer, you really need to know the strength of your brand. I always encourage the designer to focus on the quality of the pieces rather than the quantity of the collection. I recommend a designer to use a certain element repeatedly in the collection. It can be a pattern, a small detail, or a specific color combination. This way, not only will the audience see a cohesive collection, but this may also help you to develop the gimmick of your brand (think about the red plastic tag of the Prada *Linea Rossa* line). Also, you have to know your target market. If you target the wrong market, you will not be able to create a fan base. Finally, make sure you have wearable pieces

in your collection. You can have some statement pieces to show your craftsmanship, but if you have no wearable pieces to back up your collection, you may lose a lot of money, and chances are you may not be able to create your next collection.

**Marcus Kan, Fashion Director, Ukamaku, Toronto, Canada**

› When starting out, you may have a limited budget for everything, but you still have to maximize opportunities for publicity at fashion events and to show your product to the press, as well as collaborating with fashion stylists who dress the celebrities. Don't forget you are designing for your customer, not for yourself. Marketing is as important as your product. Try to participate in fashion competitions, as it forces you to design with an aim in mind. You will not only need creativity, but resilience and an entrepreneurial drive.

**Zuzana Kralova, Creative Director, Kralova Design, Madrid, Spain, and Prague, Czech Republic**

› Capitalize on your ability to be a designer who understands the commercial aspect of fashion, while keeping true to your creative self. The most extravagant and conceptual design may be beautiful in presentation, but may not generate the volume needed to be successful in the sales reports. Become an expert in your area. Research, practice, ask questions, and remain curious. The more you know, the more people will recognize your potential and trust your point of view. Never stop growing, have fun, and keep an open mind.

**Raquel Caruso, Design Director, Steve Madden, New York, New York, USA**

› Observation, patience, and good research is the key to the design process. Don't be obsessed with fashion; instead, get inspired by other things such as art, music, film, and books. Designing can be done alone, but finalizing is a collaborative effort. Educate yourself by listening to others, and be a team player





Spring 2010 watercolor handbag painting by Raquel Caruso. COURTESY OF RAQUEL CARUSO.

if you want to grow in your career. Enjoy what you create. Keep yourself updated with new techniques. Visit fabric fairs and shops. The most important thing is to trust and love your work.

**Tugce Ozocak, Designer, Beymen, Istanbul, Turkey**

› Learn the business side of your industry, as it is important to understand how the business operates from a product development, sourcing, and costing perspective. Learn how to make your designs commercial. Understand your target consumer and their product expectations. How is your product positioned in the market, including price point? Who is your competition? Learn to sketch with accuracy and speed. Know your target distribution and what they expect from supply partners.

**Michael Beckwith, Founder, Encore Jobz, Blufton, South Carolina, USA**

› The best advice I received was from an influential college professor during a project critique. She told

the class to always be ready to defend your designs. This still applies to me every day. As a designer you will have to present and explain your concepts and designs to numerous people to make them believe and be part of your vision. You must be ready to answer any questions and make others understand your point of view and aesthetic. A fashion designer must be able to clearly communicate ideas to various people, including the design team so they can execute the designs, the production team who will make them into real garments, the sales team who will sell the product, and the customers who will buy it.

**Connie Byun, Women's Outerwear Designer, Outerwear Company, New York, New York, USA**

› Stay true to your vision, but also stay informed of the trends, economy, and pop culture. Work in the industry for three to four years with another company before launching your own collection (learn before it's your money on the line). Be prepared for how costly a fashion business is to start. Get a plan of action in mind, but don't be afraid to go off the beaten path. Fashion is about change, and there's no reason your process needs to be formulaic. Get a foothold in the marketplace and grow from there. Start small, think big.

**Rachel Rose, Owner/Designer, Rachel Rose Designs, Brooklyn, New York, USA**

› Be open-minded with a humble attitude, and show desire and willingness to learn in every situation. For example, your boss may send you to pick up samples or ask you to make copies. While not glamorous, it's important to learn about every part of the process. Do your best not to take criticism personally. Criticism is always a part of the job, and it doesn't mean other people don't like you. At the same time, you need to have your own point of view when doing your job. Present yourself with confidence when your boss gives you an assignment, and ask for guidance when you are unsure of next steps.

**Mina Cha, Accessory Design Manager, Milly, New York, New York, USA**



*What Advice Would You Give to an Aspiring Fashion Designer? (Continued)*

90 degree silk top from the “Square Collection” by Rachel Rose. PHOTOGRAPHER: CLAIRE BENOIST, 2011.

➤ Go to fashion school and get industry experience. Intern or work in the fashion business as much as possible during college. Hands-on experience and making personal connections is invaluable. Try to experience working for companies with different business models, as you may find that you enjoy working for a small, emerging designer label or prefer a fast-paced corporate environment. The more you know about sales, marketing, and the entire business, the better. Get inspired! Travel as much as you can, and don't forget about cultivating your own sense of style.

*Sue Stemp, Designer/Owner, Sue Stemp, Los Angeles, California, USA*

➤ Everything starts by having a dream, a passion, and a goal. Talent is a good ingredient, but it takes more than just talent to make it as a designer. You have to stand for your dreams, no matter what people say or think about you, your work, or your vision. The challenge is to find ways to integrate your own signature into the work opportunities you get.

Remember to stay humble. Don't focus too much on the superficial side, the prestige, what others say or do. Take every opportunity to develop your skills, to learn about the world and about yourself. And mostly, live for your passion!

*Halewijn Bulckaen, Print Designer, H&M, Stockholm, Sweden*

➤ Shoes and bags are accessories and therefore must be utilitarian, as well as compelling. No matter what your point of view on fashion, the product must be well made for the asking price, and you, as a designer, must understand the manufacturing process used to make your product. You should be knowledgeable about materials and components. You should be able to write all the specifications for your product and give all the measurements. Drawing skills are a plus, but today, computers can achieve a more neutral form of sketch and can be a better way to begin the process. All your designs should fit today's lifestyle and be relevant in today's context. You are designing for life, not a film.

*Jamie Lawenda, Vice President of Design, 2568 Shoes/Sendra Boots, New York, New York, USA*

➤ Brace yourself for high stress and late nights. You may find your work will consume 80 percent of your life. Make it work for you and find a good support system.

*Jenny Lew, Freelance Handbags/Accessories Designer, New York, New York, USA*

➤ Be patient, persistent, and stay humble. It is also very important to observe and absorb information from designers that surround you and, in turn, develop your own skills based on their successes or by avoiding their mistakes.

*Stella Vakirli, Vice President of Men's Outerwear, Weatherproof, New York, New York, USA*

➤ Be true to who you are as a designer and always be open to learning.

*Leila Tadros, Freelance Design Director, various companies, New York, New York, and San Francisco, California, USA*

› As a designer, you must learn to deliver your creativity and aesthetics into a successful product that fits your target market and your business model. The product should always be aligned with the values of the company.

*Monet Lugo, Senior Fashion Designer, Guess, Los Angeles, California, USA*

› You will need all your strengths and passion to succeed. Be ready to compromise. It is a very personal path you are taking. It is essential to have a network, as you never know who will give you your next job. It is important for a fashion designer to communicate well and to succeed in expressing designs in a clear and simple way. Learn to be patient.

*Amélia Teniere Buchot, Head Designer, Inditex, Barcelona, Spain*

## Finding Balance

The demands of working in the fashion industry can take a toll on even the most unflustered designer. Since the fashion industry is especially high-pressure, being able to find a sense of calm in the rush-rush pace can sometimes be tricky. Being able to maintain balance in your daily routine makes all the difference in the world to help you keep your creative energy flowing, keep your stress level in check, and keep you positive and happy. Whether that means taking an early morning yoga class, strolling through the park after work, reading a book while drinking your favorite iced-coffee, or setting aside time to quiet your mind, it's a good idea to find a plan that works for you, specifically one that can easily become a part of your everyday routine.

When you live your life in balance, I believe you can succeed at anything you set your mind to, whether it means becoming a creative director for your favorite couture label or taking the plunge to launch your own eponymous collection.



Illustrated by Izak Zenou for Henri Bendel.  
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