

A GUIDE TO CAREERS IN DESIGN



becoming a

FASHION DESIGNER

LISA J. SPRINGSTEEL

744.62
13

› Becoming a FASHION DESIGNER

Lisa J. Springsteel

WILEY

Front Cover Illustration by Izak Zenou
Represented by Trafficnyc.com

Back Cover Photographs and Illustration: (top left) Spring 2010 watercolor handbag painting by Raquel Caruso, (top right) Red Dalilah "2056 Collection" from the Kara Saun 2006 runway presentation, (bottom) Sketch entitled "Romantic Rhythm" by fashion designer Emily Tischler.

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ∞

Copyright ©2013 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, 201-748-6011, fax 201-748-6008, or online at www.wiley.com/go/permissions.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with the respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom.

For general information on our other products and services, or technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at 800-762-2974, outside the United States at 317-572-3993 or fax 317-572-4002.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>.

For more information about Wiley products, visit our Web site at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Springsteel, Lisa J.-

Becoming a fashion designer / Lisa J. Springsteel

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-118-14382-7 (pbk. : alk. paper); 978-1-118-41916-8 (ebk); 978-1-118-42098-0 (ebk); 978-1-118-43373-7 (ebk); 978-1-118-48701-3 (ebk); 978-1-118-48703-7 (ebk)

1. Fashion design—Vocational guidance. I. Title

TT507.S735 2013

746.9'2023—dc23

2012026251

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To all future fashion designers on your
triumphant journey to creative success*

“Good clothes open all doors.”

—THOMAS FULLER

FOREWORD

EMBARKING ON A CAREER IN FASHION DESIGN CAN BE DAUNTING. But if you have a passion and a love of fashion, you should never let anything hold you back. *Becoming a Fashion Designer* is so exhilarating because it details the successes and failures that so many of us in fashion have had to endure to create and maintain our businesses. You can learn as much from someone's mistakes as you can from their triumphs. Our collective experience as designers will likely be the best information you receive. That is why this book will be so important to you.

When I started, there was no formula for success. Now, I see that becoming a designer required not only passion, but also a lot of essential know-how. One of the most significant insights I discovered along the way was that I could manufacture my clothes in New York City's Garment Center. If it hadn't been for the small factories that nurtured me without judgment or minimums, I wouldn't be where I am today. These factories still operate here in New York and can help you get off the ground and guide you through the ups and downs ahead.

Becoming a Fashion Designer is so valuable because it chronicles how we as designers made our big mistakes and where we seized our most vital opportunities. Our stories can help you avoid the setbacks and seize your moment. This book reveals the most imperative lessons for success, including how to survive when things aren't going well and how to behave when they are. In fact, I envy you. I wish I had these insider tips when I was just starting out. But now that you have all the information and resources you need from *Becoming a Fashion Designer*, the pressure is on you to step up and fulfill your dreams. Now it's your turn. Are you ready to become a fashion designer?

Nanette Lepore

PREFACE

AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, I narrowed down my career paths to two possibilities, and interned in both fashion and child psychology to determine which field was the best fit. Although I possessed an extraordinary adoration of children and a knack for helping people, I felt my true passion was in fashion. I did question if having such a specific degree might hinder me if I ever decided at some point in my career that it was just not for me. I remember having a conversation with my grandmother about my concern, and from the next room my grandfather, who had overheard our conversation, said, "Lisa, do you love fashion?" I said, "Oh yes, yes, grandpa, I do." He said, "Then major in fashion. Do what you love." After receiving his straightforward advice, I was further convinced fashion was indeed the right choice for me, and I have never looked back since.

Having had a clearly defined idea of what I wanted to major in during high school allowed me to focus on my fashion program selection. I wound up attending Florida State University, a school whose renowned fashion program ranked fifth in the United States at the time. Part of the curriculum included a mandatory internship, which took place during my senior year of college. I headed off to Neiman Marcus, located in Bal Harbour, an upscale coastal beach village in Miami, Florida. I worked in visual merchandising, and it was exciting to be in such a luxurious environment working for a specialty retailer of that magnitude. I remember consistently getting the urge to sketch concepts that came to me as I sat day after day in that wonderfully inspiring environment. I was surrounded by stunningly gorgeous designer gowns, exquisite visual displays, a clearly affluent clientele, and a beyond talented staff.

Shortly after I graduated from college, I decided to move to New York to pursue my fashion career. I arrived in the summer of 1994, and it was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Over the span of my 20-year fashion career, I have experienced the most exciting and wondrous journey of a lifetime. I have participated in design meetings with Mr. Ralph Lauren, selected fabric for the wardrobes of celebrities attending the Emmy Awards and appearing on the front cover of magazines, worked alongside Sean Combs to globally source all of the luxurious fabrics for his Fall 2008 menswear runway show for Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in New York (while simultaneously being filmed for an MTV documentary), attended star-studded black tie events, and have met many famous fashion insiders. I learned through experience what to do and what not to do in every imaginable situation and became an expert on the ins and outs of the fashion industry. Knowing firsthand how difficult it was to learn the tricks of the trade of fashion, I became passionate about

sharing my knowledge with others who were setting out on the same path. I wanted the information to be presented in an authentic and no-nonsense format, giving aspiring fashion designers an unmistakably solid idea of what the fashion industry is like and what will be expected.

Becoming a Fashion Designer is a dynamic and comprehensive book imparting unprecedented insider tips from top fashion designers, industry insiders and prominent executives, and expert advice on establishing a fashion design career. It will take you step-by-step through the process and will become your go-to reference. Whether you are exploring a career in fashion design or are certain you want to become a designer, you will learn all the information necessary to realize your dream. If you're already working as a fashion designer, but are interested in taking your design career to the next level, or if you're ready to launch your own collection, you will be provided with information to help facilitate your career dreams. Anyone who has ever tried to launch a fashion design career knows how grueling it can be. The fashion industry is a highly prominent field, which creates a decidedly competitive environment that is greatly guarded, secretive, and difficult to infiltrate and navigate. Of the various job opportunities available in the fashion industry, the job of fashion designer ranks as the most popular position, making the competition even stronger. The book pays special attention to this and demonstrates several ways in which an aspiring fashion designer can stand out from the competition.

Chapter 1, "An Introduction to a Career in Fashion Design," provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of a career in fashion design. It defines fashion design and what designers do. Original interviews with legendary fashion designers and executives are presented, in which they discuss their education, apprenticeships, and career rise, and also offer insider advice. Various fashion designers, at all levels, discuss the different tasks they carry out on a daily basis. A history of fashion design is provided, including an extensive account on the founding father of fashion, Charles Frederick Worth and the growth of fashion houses in Paris, highlighting the original couturiers who formed the basis of the fashion industry. The extent of worldwide media coverage and the effect as it relates to fashion design is discussed. This chapter also delves into the magnitude of the fashion industry on a global scale, including statistics as to the number of people working in the fashion industry, both globally and in the United States, as well as the volume of sales that the fashion industry produces. A highlight of this chapter is a detailed description of the inner workings of the fashion industry, from how the industry operates to how to successfully adapt to the work culture. Prominent fashion designers and executives from around the world give invaluable advice specifically geared to an aspiring fashion designer. Unique to most fashion design books is the section on finding balance to live a more stress-free life.

Chapter 2, "The Education for a Fashion Design Career," describes the educational requirements for becoming a fashion designer. College requirements are outlined, including a comparison between a two-year and four-year design degree program. Various fashion designers discuss why they chose the university they attended for their fashion design studies. Interviews with a

fashion design educator, fashion design students, and interns are presented. The importance of interning is highlighted, as well as ways in which one can turn an internship into a permanent job. The benefits of studying abroad are discussed. Postgraduate degree programs and the value of taking continuing education courses are addressed.

Chapter 3, “The Job Market,” walks the reader through the steps needed to determine his or her own individual design specialty. This chapter also describes the various types of jobs available in the fashion design sector, with corresponding job descriptions. Special attention is paid to the importance of personal branding and creating a personal branding statement. This chapter explains how to successfully land a fashion design job, offering guidelines for portfolio development and résumé creation. A variety of professionals in the field discuss what every fashion designer should include in his or her portfolio. The importance of networking and building a business network is detailed. Also provided is an all-inclusive listing of tried-and-true job search methods specific to fashion designers seeking work in the fashion industry. Interview tips and guidelines for negotiating the job offer and securing the ultimate job offer package are revealed. Human resources, employment agency, and fashion design executives advise on the skills they seek when hiring a fashion designer.

Chapter 4, “The Fashion Design Process,” takes the reader through the entire design process on a step-by-step basis, from conceptual development to sample approval through to production hand-off.

Chapter 5, “Launching Your Own Fashion Collection,” presents a thorough description of starting a fashion design business. It offers the reader a true depiction of the intense amount of work and skill required to successfully establish, manage, and grow one’s business. Steps to write a business plan are offered. We learn from various fashion design business owners what was the most challenging aspect of launching their own collection. Types of business ownerships are outlined. Steps to define your brand are discussed. Original interviews with fashion designers are presented. An intellectual property checklist is provided. We will hear from copyright attorneys regarding the best ways for fashion designers to protect their work from unauthorized copying and infringement. Also included is information related to creating an accounting, budgeting, and book-keeping system; hiring employees, contractors, and interns; developing a marketing plan, including a special section on unlocking the keys to a successful public relations strategy, and establishing a sales and order fulfillment strategy. Interviews with a celebrity stylist and television personality, the creator of New York Fashion Week, and a fashion director are included in this chapter.

Chapter 6, “Strategic Business Trends in the Fashion Industry,” provides information regarding the trends toward outsourcing and globalization, as well as the importance and growing awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Examples of innovative fashion company initiatives in CSR are profiled as cases in point. The head of CSR of a clothing company discusses his CSR

program and the importance of incorporating it into his corporate structure. An environmentally friendly apparel company and an accessories company are profiled. We will learn from various designers about the role that sustainable fabrics play in their overall design philosophy, as well as the eco-friendly fabrics they use in their collections.

The Appendix includes an extensive list of resources tailored to a fashion design professional. Included are professional organizations, associations, and councils; fashion industry networking websites, professional networking websites, and social networking websites; professional trade publications; online portfolio websites; color and trend forecasting companies; broadcast and cable television programming, full-feature movies, and documentaries with a fashion theme, as well as a listing of major fashion magazines.

Self-Evaluation: Is Fashion Design for You?

Place a checkmark in the YES or NO columns after each of the following questions to get a sense if fashion design is the right career path for you.

	YES	NO
Do you like to make and wear your own clothes?		
Were you born with a sense of style?		
Are you inspired by the objects, landscapes, pop culture, and people around you?		
Do you have a refined color sense?		
Do you possess an artistic edge?		
Do you pay close attention to every single detail in every design or mock sketch that you create?		
Do you constantly re-sketch your illustrations until you get them just right?		
Do you love reading fashion magazines and have one or more subscriptions that you look forward to receiving each month?		
Do you go to a bookstore or magazine shop just to read through the fashion magazines?		
Do you get excited thinking about designing a fashion collection for an apparel manufacturer or design house?		
Do you dream of launching your own label one day?		
Do design concepts come to you out of the blue, and do you find yourself excited to make them come to life on your sketchpad?		
Can you quote and recite Tim Gunn's hysterically funny one-liners from <i>Project Runway</i> ?		
Do you enter all the fashion design contests that are open to emerging fashion designers?		
Do you have the ability to articulate your design vision, and to engage and influence others to help you carry it out?		
Does multi-tasking like no other, in a high-pressure environment, scare you?		
Are you open to doing administrative tasks in order to pay your dues?		
Would it be unusual for you to be standing amongst hundreds of people on line for an Open See at Henri Bendel in New York?		
Are you considered by your friends, family, and peers to be a trendsetter?		
Do you take criticism well?		
Are you prepared to have your designs critiqued and changed?		
Are you ready, willing, and able to work long hours, including weekends, especially before fashion or market weeks?		
Do you possess both a creative and business mindset?		
Do you truly believe that Anna Wintour should, at the very least, be ruler of the <i>Kingdom of Fashion</i> ?		

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, you just may have found your ideal career fit!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to offer sincere thanks to the fashion designers, costume designers, stylists, and executives, many of whom I know personally, who provided interviews for the book, and in doing so, devoted countless hours of their precious time and showed such care for this project. They include Reem Acra, Dennis Basso, Manolo Blahnik, Guy Bradford, Randolph Duke, Daymond John, Chris Knott, Nanette Lepore, Deborah Lloyd, Fern Mallis, Bibhu Mohapatra, Maggie Norris, Pamella Roland, Ralph Rucci, Peter Som, Anna Sui, Todd Thomas, Zang Toi, Kay Unger, Robert Verdi, Stuart Weitzman, and Stephanie Winston Wolkoff. I would also like to acknowledge their agents, managers, publicists and public relations executives for their support, dedication, and unwavering efforts.

I wish to express tremendous appreciation to the renowned photographers, artists, and illustrators whose visual contributions made this book come to life, including Deborah Anderson, Nigel Barker, Claire Benoist, Fidel Berisha, Ivan Clemente, Joseph Dolderer, Mariah Do Vale, Mark Drew, Jodie Edom, Nicky Emmerson, Yoshikazu Enomoto, Steve Exum, Richard Gleason, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Rick Guidotti, Eka Halim, Bernard Hunt, Joseph Hunwick, Greg Kadel, Anna Kiper, Lennart Knab, Dan and Corina Lecca, Elizabeth Lippman, Adrian Lourie, Giovanni Martins, Anders Overgaard, Michael Roberts, Udo Spreitzenbarth, Hannah Thomson, Maria Valentina, Adam Weiss, and painter Nelson Shanks, for your stunning interpretation. Special thanks to Izak Zenou for providing such strikingly gorgeous and wonderfully eye-catching illustrations, both for the cover and throughout the book. To Izak Zenou's manager, Michelle Edelman of Traffic Creative Management in New York, I am eternally grateful for all that you have done.

I also want to give thanks to all the fashion designers, fashion executives, attorneys, educators, students, freelancers and interns who provided interviews and contributions, and shared their inspirational knowledge, talent, and expertise.

Gracious thanks to my editor, Paul Drougas, for his expertise in leading me through the process, with his calm demeanor and sense of humor always intact. Many thanks to everyone at Wiley who had a hand in the making of this book, including senior production editor Nancy Cintron, marketing manager Penny Makras, copyeditor Devra Kunin from Foxxe Editorial Services, and Mike New. Overwhelming appreciation to my publisher, John Wiley & Sons; it is an honor to be included in your family of authors.

The unconditional support and love of my parents, Warren and Bess, and of my sister, Amy, has been just as priceless to me growing up as it is today. I am eternally indebted to you, and

love all of you so much. I know my grandparents are looking down with such pride and joy. They had a huge presence in my life, and I miss and love them more than words can express. Brayden: there is no greater love.

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672) who, in 1650, became the first female published writer in America, opening the doors and creating a voice for female writers everywhere.

› Becoming a **FASHION DESIGNER**



Illustrated by Izak Zenou
for Lancôme. COURTESY
OF IZAK ZENOU.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD vii

by Nanette Lepore

PREFACE ix

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xv

1 An Introduction to a Career in Fashion Design 1

What Is Fashion Design?	4
What Do Fashion Designers Do?	32
History of Fashion Design: Then and Now	59
The Worldwide Fashion Industry by the Numbers	76
Embracing the World of Fashion	87
Finding Balance	109

2 The Education for a Fashion Design Career 111

Choosing a Collegiate Educational Program	111
Undergraduate Education	112
The Value of Internships	128
Studying Abroad	136
Postgraduate Education	137
Continuing Education	138

3 The Job Market 141

Determining Your Design Specialty	141
Personal Branding	152
Portfolio Development	155
Creating a Résumé that Pops	166
Networking Your Way to a Job Offer	171
Tried-and-True Job Search Strategies	176
Perfecting the Job Interview	180
Negotiating the Job Offer	201

4 The Fashion Design Process 207

Conceptual Development	208
Patternmaking	211
Sample Creation	214
Finalization, Presentation, and Hand-Off	215

5 Launching Your Own Fashion Collection 217

Writing a Business Plan	218
Choosing Type of Ownership	218
Defining Your Brand	223
Protecting Your Designs	231

Creating Accounting, Budgeting, and Bookkeeping Systems	236	Professional Networking Websites	284
Hiring Employees, Contractors, and Interns	237	Social Networking Websites	284
Developing a Marketing Plan	239	Professional Trade Publications	285
Establishing a Sales and Order Fulfillment Strategy	251	Online Portfolio Websites	285
6 Strategic Business Trends in the Fashion Industry	261	Color and Trend Forecasting Companies	286
Outsourcing and Globalization	261	Broadcast and Cable Television Programming with a Fashion Theme	287
Corporate Social Responsibility	262	Full-Feature Movies with a Fashion Theme	288
APPENDIX	281	Documentaries with a Fashion Theme	289
Professional Organizations, Associations, and Councils	281	Major Fashion Magazines	290
Fashion Industry Networking Websites	283	INDEX OF INTERVIEWS	293
		INDEX	295