

FUTURE OF DESIGN



JUST BLOCKS FROM THE HEART OF NEW YORK'S CHILDREN'S WEAR DISTRICT, the industry's future sits dreaming and designing away at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Thanks to the tireless efforts of School of Art & Design acting dean & associate professor Joanne Arbuckle and assistant professor Mickee LaVarway, and to the support of industry champions like retired Knitwaves exec Nartim Israel (who created an FIT scholarship program in 1994), the school's once struggling children's wear design program has succeeded in attracting a growing number of students into its fold. According to LaVarway, since 2001 the program has nearly doubled in size, with 36 students receiving associate's and bachelor's degrees in children's wear design this May. Student trips abroad – funded by FIT's faculty advisory board and generous support from industry members – have also served to stimulate greater interest in the college's children's wear major. Past excursions have included: a jaunt to Paris, France, to tour the Petit Bateau design studio, walk the aisles of the industry trade show La Mode Enfantine and shop some of the city's most exclusive children's boutiques; a trip to Florence, Italy, to attend the famed Pitti Immagine Bimbo fair; and a journey to Oilly's corporate headquarters in Amsterdam to participate in a design internship. Here, 10 members of the children's wear design program's 2005 graduating class – a group poised and ready to carry the torch of the industry's future – reflect on their design influences and philosophies.

Clockwise from top left:
Ikuko Yamaguchi, Nikole
Baguelo, Mafmi Guerrero,
Angela Teng, Nadia
LaChance, Shannon
Maldonado, Monique
Lopez and Rachel Glettrier

Right, top to bottom:
Emily Kolby, Hagit
Weizman

Editor's Note: The FIT faculty advisory board is eager for industry input. For information on how you can get involved in nurturing the next generation of children's wear designers, call Mickee LaVarway at 212.217.7367

"I am very inspired by music and art. I love Andy Warhol... his colors and themes lend themselves well to fashion. With music, it's the hip-hop and R&B style that in

Nicole Bagnuola:

"When I design for kids, I usually look to vintage sources for inspiration. I try to take pieces from the past, bring them up-to-date and give them a street edge."

Rachel Glettner:

"I'd like to see the children's wear industry pay greater attention to fabric – not just related to durability and easy care, but to look, texture and color as well. I think that now, with all of the innovations in technology and the way fabrics are being finished, a lot of stuff – even some cashmeres and suedes – can be thrown right in the wash, which is great for children's clothing. There are some fabrics that have long been taboo in the children's market because they're not practical, but why not use them and push the envelope a bit."

Nicole Bagnuola:

"When I design for kids, I usually look to vintage sources for inspiration. I try to take pieces from the past, bring them up-to-date and give them a street edge."

"A lot of people pull inspiration from Europe because it is typically considered the first in fashion. But I actually draw much of my design inspiration from Asia and Japanese magazines in particular. Asian fashion is very different from that of the States and brings a unique point of view to things."

Hagit Weizman:

"Although there are a lot of designers out there that I admire, I am wary of looking to their work for inspiration because everything will start to look the same. So I try to look at art and other sources not related to fashion so that my inspiration will be true and original."

Isuko Yamaguchi:

"My designs have a very eclectic look to them. I was educated in three different countries – the U.S., New Zealand and Japan – so I combine all of these cultures together when creating my garments."

Shannon Maldonado:

"I think the biggest void out there is in boys'. For them, it's khaki pants and jeans with a woven top or a T-shirt. But boys today want more fashion. They see the guys on MTV and in the magazines and they want to emulate them. They don't want the plain, homogenous look. They want to wear something unique."

Nadia LaChance:

"Participating in the student trip to Amsterdam to visit Cilly really helped to give me a different perspective on things. It reminded me that children's wear is a creative process and not just a money making process. At Cilly it is all about creating something that is unique and celebrates the child, and not simply about how many T-shirts can be sold."

Idalmi Guerrero:

"When it comes to the different elements associated with the design of children's clothing, I think fit is most important. When you see the garment on the child, the first thing you see is the silhouette and how it fits on the body."



Original children's wear designs from Rachel Glettner (left) and Monique Lopez (right)