

Catch a rising star

by Gillian - Saturday, October 11, 2014

<http://3storymagazine.com/estrella-sevilla/>

Young fashion designer Estrella Sevilla is a woman of surprises, from her fashion to her personal life. During Tucson Fashion Week you can expect yet another twist to her work. By Gillian Drummond.

Estrella's creations will be featured during the Project Runway event at Tucson Fashion Week. Photo by JJonesPhotography

Marilyn Manson and The Backstreet Boys. Alexander McQueen and Valentino. Dead flowers and home-made cranberry cookies. These are a few of fashion designer [Estrella Sevilla's](#) favorite things.

Estrella Sevilla. Photo by [Danni Valdez](#).

She's a young woman of opposites, and of surprises. The purple-haired, purple-lipsticked, mostly black-clad woman stands 6 feet and 2 inches tall and drives a vintage red convertible Mustang. She's also soft-spoken, polite, and eager for us to try her grandmother's home-made (and most excellent) cookies.

One minute she's talking about her piano-playing days, and her love of classical music. Then she visibly melts as she describes meeting her all-time music and style hero, Marilyn Manson. She gave him a dead flower. She is really into dead roses (there's a vase of them on a table in her hallway). But wait... now she's all about The Backstreet Boys, and boy bands in general, and Katy Perry. She says she loves "plastic pop". And then she veers off in another musical direction, talking about the classic rock her parents played when she was growing up, and that she still loves - The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin.

At college, this former engineering student excelled at draping and construction. Photo courtesy of Estrella Sevilla

And then there are her fashion designs. When this writer first came across Estrella, during last year's Tucson Fashion Week, she was at the Tucson Museum of Art putting on a playful, fairytale-like vignette, the models in sheer and white and tulle, sucking on giant lollipops. This year she's changing it up completely, with a collection that will be black and white and simple and gothic.

But, more importantly, her clothes will be taking to Tucson Fashion Week's runway. That Estrella would be asked to be a runway designer, just out of college, speaks volumes about the faith TFW's organizers have in her ability, not to mention her potential.

Photo by JJonesPhotography

"Estrella's unique approach to design and her technical skills make her the perfect fit for Tucson Fashion Week," explains Tucson Fashion Week co-organizer Paula Taylor. Paula describes her as "one of those distinct designers whose growth we look forward to watching."

Estrella (her friends call her Ella) grew up in Sinaloa, Mexico, moving to Monterrey for high school. When she was 15, her parents moved to Mexico City for work. They gave their daughters a choice of moving with them or living together and continuing high school. They chose the latter, and Estrella continued her high school courses in engineering.

Again, the dichotomy. She was an over-achieving and by all accounts conservative kid - someone who looked set to follow in the steps of her civil engineer father. At the same time, she had always indulged an artistic side with summer painting classes and piano instruction. Estrella says she has always been fashion-interested and fashion conscious, and that her teenage years saw her going through punk and Emo stages and periods of dying her hair purple and blue. But rebellion? Never. "After my parents moved to Mexico City, I wanted to keep my parents' trust and that's how it's been since then," she says.

Estrella's fashion influences range from McQueen to Valentino. Image courtesy of Estrella Sevilla

Her college education began as planned. She studied aerospace engineering at the University of Arizona but lasted just one year. She was attending fashion shows and running her own fashion blog, posting her outfits of the day. Fashion, she realized, was her true calling.

With her parents' blessing, she inquired about transferring to art college. But first, on their insistence, she took a summer course in fashion design at Central St. Martins College in London. She was hooked. Soon after, she transferred to the Art Institute of Tucson, where she stood out. "She excelled in draping and construction and understanding the importance of having a strong theme and concept to her collections," says Paula Taylor, who was one of her instructors at the Art Institute.

Estrella's first art college creation, with a bodice made out of duct tape. Photo by Gillian Drummond.

Although fashion design seems like a huge departure for the kid who shone at physics and calculus in high school, Estrella sees parallels. "You have the final product in your mind . You have to figure out how it's going to be constructed. I think [engineering] did help me a lot," she says. It's probably no coincidence that this engineer-in-the-making chose duct tape as the primary material for the first real outfit she created at art college - part of a show they did for Halloween.

For someone with a definite dark side to her personal style and her fashion, it's not a surprise to learn that Halloween is one of her favorite holidays. Last year, she and her sister Maria posed as the twins from *The Shining* for an Art Institute of Tucson Halloween TV show. They stood holding hands, staring, unspeaking - freaking out other participants.

Estrella's work station. Photo by Gillian Drummond

Her design aesthetic has been described as "minimalism with a twist". Photo courtesy of Estrella Sevilla

In the eastside Tucson home she shares with Maria - a house that belongs to their parents - Estrella has created a corner studio in the dining room. Here, on a commercial Brother sewing machine and with a mood board hanging on the wall, she is producing pieces that challenge the status quo.

For example, she loves focusing on the back of a garment - perhaps because not many other people do. "Most garments focus on the front, and for a woman it's because of the chest," she says. With a number of Estrella's pieces, you'll find extra back detail, such as a cut-out of material or a back corset.

With a number of Estrella's pieces you'll find extra back detail (here and on corset below). Photo courtesy of Estrella Sevilla

Says Elizabeth Denneau, owner of the Tucson-based line [Candystrike](#), where Estrella interned: "She's a very humble individual - understated and quiet. She's got a sweet nature to her and she's very inquisitive. There's no ego there. Then she'll do something and you'll be amazed. She's just a really exciting young girl to know."

Photo courtesy of Estrella Sevilla

Photo courtesy of Estrella Sevilla

Elizabeth adds: "I feel like her design aesthetic is minimalism but also with kind of a twist to it. It reminds me of New Goth. She has really clean lines, she has her own unique style. She's ridiculously talented. You will see her in department stores."

Estrella's fashion inspirations are as varied as her other tastes. Top of her list is Alexander McQueen, known for using shock tactics in his creations and his shows. Others include California goth-inspired designer [Rick Owens](#), Brits Gareth Pugh and Stella McCartney, and Valentino, for his "simplicity and elegance".

In the summer Estrella, who graduated two weeks ago, returned to Central St. Martins and to what was once Alexander McQueen's domain, for a 10-week course in innovative pattern cutting. It was intense, but very instructive.

"I realize I know more than I think I know," says Estrella modestly. Her followers and supporters would agree.

*** See Estrella and Candy-Strike at the [Project Runway Showcase](#), Saturday October 18th at Fox Tucson Theatre.**

*** Visit Estrella's website at estrellasevilla.com**

Estrella in her vintage Ford Mustang. Photo by [Danni Valdez](#)

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