

Say hello to lolochic

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With fabrics that float and shapes for the everywoman, Tucson fashion designer Loreto Echevarria is not only making a name for herself, she's creating her very own style: 'lolochic'. By Gillian Drummond.

Loreto Echevarria's debut at Tucson Fashion Week. Photo by Jackie Sterna

Loreto Echevarria wears her jewelry like armor. It's a strategy she started some years ago, whenever she was feeling nervous or insecure. She incorporated big, statement pieces of jewelry into her daily look, often cuff bracelets - one on each wrist Coco Chanel style.

"The accessories ended up being a shield. Whenever I was feeling insecure or nervous I had my jewelry. It was like Wonderwoman. The cuffs helped, as if I was going to deflect some negativity or criticism," says Loreto.

Cuffs are part of the 'lolo chic' look. Photo by Jackie Sterna

So it came as no surprise to her followers when cuffs were included in the designs she presented at Tucson Fashion Week last October. Her models strutted down the catwalk at the Fox Theatre with fabric cuffs on their arms, floaty silk tops and dresses, bright colors, leather shorts and pants, even a cape. It was ancient Greece and comic superheroes and rock chick and a little bit of Star Wars all rolled into one. It was Lolo chic - the name she has coined for her fashion design and styling company.

Loreto 'Lolo' Echevarria. Photo by Alaina Brownell Chapin

Lolo, as Loreto is known to her family and friends, wowed at Tucson Fashion Week with a set of designs that were risk-taking. Lolo had taken a risk herself just by applying. A full-time nurse, she has dabbled in fashion since she was a child. She had long been offering styling and wardrobe consultancy to people, and making garments for a select few. Then she attended 2013 Tucson Fashion Week, a showcase of local and national talent. Inspired, Lolo decided to apply for TFW 2014.

Most fashion designers begin with an idea and a sketchbook. Lolo starts with a fabric. "I fall in love with my fabric. The fabric tells me what it wants to be," she says. And then, draping it over a dressmaker's dummy, she begins the process of design.

Her fabric has to not only speak to her, it has to be top-notch in terms of quality. She's usually to be found at a branch of [JoAnn's](#) or at [SAS Fabrics](#), or ordering online from the likes of [Mood Fabrics](#). She favors something "unique", usually silks.

Her floaty fabrics and wide, often square, shapes, are designed for all body shapes and types. Says Lolo: "I think it's flattering on any size. I want to make something a size 2 as well as a 14, 16 or 18 could wear. It's about being comfortable." The leather pants that were part of her collection at Tucson Fashion Week were only leather in the leg; the rest was fabric, not unlike the style of maternity pants. "You can go up 10 or 20 pounds and still fit into them," she says.

Another piece of Lolo's collection for Tucson Fashion Week. Photo by Jackie Sterna

"Lolo is transcending the traditional size market and providing real fashionable garments for all shapes. It's exciting," says Paula Taylor, owner of Tucson Fashion Week and a fashion consultant and author. So there was an element of irony in the fact that, backstage at Tucson Fashion Week, where models had 24" waists, the smallest sizes of Lolo's garments were too big. That's something Lolo would like to rectify if she does TFW again this year. She would love to get "regular women" to model her clothes.

When Jennie Grabel, a non-profit executive and former radio host in Tucson, found herself "in a fashion rut" several years ago, she enlisted the help of Lolo. Not only did Jennie gain styling tips, some new wardrobe staples and a more professional look, she started to enjoy dressing herself again. "Ultimately it took the anxiety and stress out of my daily life. It became fun to put my outfits together," says Jennie, who at the time was making regular public appearances as part of her radio job.

Jennie was a spectator at Tucson Fashion Week on the night Lolo and some other local designers shared the stage with personalities from the TV show *Project Runway*. "I was beyond proud. Watching people live out their dream is just so inspiring. I hope TFW is just a jumping off point for her," says Jennie, who is encouraging her friend to apply to *Project Runway* herself.

A photo from one of Lolo's personal styling shoots. Photo by Alaina Brownell Chapin

Jennie Grabel, one of Lolo's styling clients. Photo by Alaina Brownell Chapin

A client after being styled by Lolo. Photo by Alaina Brownell Chapin

Lolo was set on being a fashion designer even as a small child growing up in the border town of Douglas, Arizona. Her parents discouraged it. "My parents are very supportive of everything [I do] but I think they were discouraging because it was something they didn't understand." She took their advice and got a nursing degree. After graduating, Lolo began taking short contracts as a traveling nurse. The jobs took her to Southern California, New York City and London. The Big Apple bit her hard. She would spend her days off at stores like Prada. She remembers spending one whole day at Tiffany's.

Tragedy struck when her older brother was hit and killed by a car whilst riding his bicycle. She returned to Southern Arizona in 2005 to be with her family, settling in Tucson, marrying (husband Kane Flint plays in several local bands) and having a son. For a long while she was so homesick for New York and London "I couldn't watch Sex and the City because I got depressed." Attending the fashion design program at Tucson Design College (now the Art Institute of Tucson) went a long way to curing her, she says. And "Tucson got a hold of me."

Lolo's shapes are designed to fit all sizes. Photo by Alaina Brownell Chapin

She is still a full-time nurse but feels the fashion world calling and plans big things for 2015: a bigger fashion collection, hopefully a return to Tucson Fashion Week, and an Etsy shop. Her next collection will feature her signature flowing fabrics, and shapes that are adaptable for all sizes. But the added twist will be sci-fi. Lolo is a huge *Star Wars* fan - in inspired her collection for TFW - and says that galaxy far, far away will be influencing her looks even more this year.

We may have to wait until December for the release of *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*, already one of the most highly anticipated movies of the year. Lolo-chic, you can be sure, will be unleashing its force a lot sooner.

The 3 rules for 'lolo-chic':

- 1. "Splurge on the basics and you can be frugal when it comes to buying accessories."**
- 2. "If the [size on the] label bothers you, cut it out."**
- 3. "You'll never know until you try it on."**

* Find Loreto Echevarria at lolo-chic.com

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