



BUSINESS

Files show months of woe in jobless system



METRO

Activist seeks ramps' replacement



SPORTS

Will Derek Jeter say goodbye to Red Sox fans?

Inspiring creative kids to design — and read

By Cheryl Fenton | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 26, 2014



JAY CALDERIN

Mariolga Pantazopoulos and daughter Sofia at the Fashion Tales workshop at the School of Fashion Design.

Gathered around a spacious design table, a group of young aspiring fashionistas enjoy story time — as do the adults in tow. Today's passage, from Camilla Morton's "Diane von Fürstenberg and the Tale of the Empress's New Clothes" weaves together the lives of an impatient royal and a hopeful young girl.

Once the reading is complete, the discussion begins. What was the Empress feeling? What was the story's theme? Did any descriptive phrases stick in your mind?

Colored pencils, markers, and crayons pick up where the conversation leaves off, as the participants use the fable as inspiration for sketching.

This is Fashion Tales, a pilot program at the School of Fashion Design in the Back Bay. Adults and their style-conscious tweens and teens come together for a three-part series of weekend workshops that spin fashion gold out of fairy tales.

In a room full of dress forms, the class begins an assignment for the DVF story: draw a wrap dress design that captures the story. The allotted time results in a myriad of patterns on paper, from bold purples to dainty poetic cursive.

“The Empress had a lot on her mind,” says a young participant when asked why she designed her dress in a checkerboard of mismatched prints.

Fashion Tales is the brainchild of Jay Calderin, instructor and director of creative marketing at the School for Fashion Design and founder of Boston Fashion Week. The idea was born from his training with Pre-Texts: The Arts Interpret, an arts-literacy program through Harvard University that uses classic literature as a prompt for making art. He hopes to launch the Fashion Tales program this fall.

During Calderin’s workshops, participants use fashion literature sources like Morton’s “Christian Lacroix and the Tale of Sleeping Beauty” and “Manolo Blahnik and the Tale of the Elves and the Shoemaker” as springboards for design exercises. They craft couture collages, fashion their own fairy tales, write haute haiku, and create fashion superheroes with powerful accessories (think Wonder Woman’s Lasso of Truth).

For Calderin, it’s about more than a fun afternoon with your favorite little lady designing pretty clothes.

“I hope Fashion Tales spurs on their love of reading, because that will open doors to anything they can imagine, and more importantly things they can’t imagine,” he says. Another storybook ending he expects: bonding between adults and kids around the creative experience, as well as an appreciation for self-expression through fashion.

“Regardless of whether they go on to a career in fashion, I’d like to see [the young participants] embrace fashion as a tool they can control to gain greater self-awareness and self-esteem, not to mention have a whole lot of fun with,” he says.

With the School of Fashion Design celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, Calderin hopes

Fashion Tales will open up the style world to a new generation of fashionistas.

“We’re finding a younger and younger audience,” he says. Calderin himself studied fashion at the High School of Fashion Design in New York at age14.

“If you’re young, they think you can’t design. We’re here to prove them wrong.”

Cheryl Fenton can be reached at cheryl@cherylfenton.com.