

Industry Insight: extended

Mena Lombard, fashion designer, extended interview

Mena's interview appears in abridged form in Chapter 2, page 61.

How did you get involved in fashion?

It was later in life. I was born in Uruguay in South America and it didn't seem realistic to study fashion so I worked in business. When my daughter was born, I decided to start over. I have always known how to sew: my grandmother does, my mother does. I studied in Florida, then in Milan.

When was your first fashion show?

When I launched my brand two years ago at LA Fashion Week, it was in the Union Station building and there was a super-long runway. Every brand had their own slot. Magazines, media and press were there. Before the show we had fittings and walk sessions to choose models.

Did you go through a selection process to show in LA and did you get publicity from the event?

There is an application process. It's time-consuming. Media reach out to your PR person asking more about the designer, asking for more pictures. I was reviewed by *Women's Wear Daily* and *Vogue China*.

Do you show at other fashion weeks?

We are probably going to show at Miami Fashion Week. People show at different fashion weeks. The press is usually the same but not the buyers. It's good to spread your brand in different markets.

How often do you show?

My goal is once a year. It's almost impossible because it's so expensive. The first time I took out a loan. You want your name out, you want people to know what you stand for; the collection comes to life on the catwalk. You're telling a story and it's so powerful. It's very meaningful for a designer to show in a big fashion show. Those minutes of show make everything worthwhile.

Could you have established your business without catwalk shows?

You can make it without showing but it helps, it helps to have critics. It is good to know what the business wants. I don't sell from the catwalk, that happens from the showroom, but the show gets the buyers to the showroom.