

from page one

VISION

Continued from Page A1

nine, mod era of Twiggy," she added. "I wanted to merge that feminine with the harder edge of the ethnic embroidery."

Immersed in and fascinated by her own artistic process, Ollari has a penchant for sharing what's on her mind — and her drawing table, actual and virtual — on social media. Take her Dakota Maxi Dress. On Instagram, she shared how it sprung into being.

First came gathered images: a picture of Twiggy with a rose in her mouth, of a young Marilyn Monroe in a black swimsuit, close-ups of African headpieces, and many more. Next came a color palette.

At that point, Ollari shared what she wanted for the dress — the feeling, color, prints and bead-

work — with the New Delhi factory with which she works.

"They have an open market where they source things for me and they sent me back 50 swatches, which I narrowed down to 10 to 15," Ollari explained. "Some of the available prints didn't have the colors I wanted. So I gave them the dye colors for each tone — strawberry cream, cornhusk, purple heather, and Marsala — and then they re-colored."

Her social media followers saw it all unfold, right through her CAD (Computer-Aided Design) sketches and accompanying tech pack, a sheet that includes the measurements and other specs on the garment. Next came the development sample from the factory.

This transparent work on the line, which started in January, led to Ollari's big break. It caught the

eye of Gregory Miguel, producer for New York Fashion Week.

"She was very fresh and I love the energy and her collection is very cohesive," Miguel said. "For the Review, you have to be up and coming and emerging and she has a nice following and is really a nice person. All that made it seem like the collection belonged in New York Fashion Week."

Already, Ollari wishes she started creating her own line sooner.

"I'm a little hard on myself," said the soft-spoken designer, "but I'm also glad I waited. I was the quiet one. I listened and gained so much insight on the business in all different areas of fashion, which is helpful to me now."

A 2008 graduate of County College of Morris in Randolph and a 2010 graduate of the Academy of Art University in San

MEAGAN OLLARI GOFUNDME

Meagan Ollari is raising \$25,000 to cover the annual cost of getting her Dragonfly Oasis line into a bicoastal showroom — roughly \$1,000 per month per coast — with the goal of selling her line into the retail venues that can make it successful, www.gofundme.com/dcgjac



BOB KARP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Ollari wears her Tribal print Kami skirt.

Francisco, Ollari spent the last four years, since graduation, designing for private labels and working in showrooms, which sell fashion lines to buyers for various chain stores, boutiques, online retailers, and other venues. The experience exposed her to all facets of the business.

She has designed for such stores as Urban Outfitters, Guess, and Anthropologie. Though it still thrills her to see her designs selling on the racks at Delia's, Forever 21, and other stores, she wants her own label to appear in more upscale venues such as cute boutique shops in the Hamptons, Miami and Los Angeles and on high-end retail websites, including RevolveClothing.com and Shopbop.com.

"They're quality driven," Ollari said, "and they carry an array of the most respected designers and brands in the industry."

It all takes work and a lot of it. At the moment, Ollari said, her family is supportive and she lives with her grandmother. She's covering lots of ground and growing her brand just by using a computer. In addition to her social media accounts, she has a website, www.meaganollari.com, including video and an online store, to showcase her photo shoots, logo, and her first blog interview.

Working with an Indian

factory is key, she said, because the quality is high and the fabrics are amazing. Plus, it cost her \$1,200 to create her whole collection, including beadwork. In Manhattan, the same work costs \$10,000.

"In India, it's a one-stop shop," she said. "You can get everything—your labels, everything. Here in New York, they charge you for the paper pattern and then the sewing, so it's very expensive."

For her next collection, she wants to travel to India so she can see, step by step, how the clothing develops. Ollari loves traveling and has already been to Paris and London for some of her former employers, including PDI Fashion and Two of Us New York.

None of this success surprises Kelly Whalen, assistant professor of visual arts at CCM, who taught Ollari.

"I have goosebumps everywhere over Meagan," Whalen said. "Watching her develop over the years has been so wonderful for me as her professor and a fellow designer. She's very driven but still delightful and wonderful. She hasn't been tainted by the industry."

Whalen recalled that Ollari, when a student, earned the privilege of closing the school's 2008 Spring CCM Fashion Show in her senior year.

Ollari admires some male designers, including Emilio Pucci and Michael Kors, and calls their work amazing. But Donatella Versace, the Italian fashion icon of the Versace Group, is a particular inspiration.

"She's a powerful woman with an empire. She's picked up the slack from her brother, Gianni, and kept the company going and that's very admirable," Ollari said. "She's somebody I look up to. She has a lot of talent but a great work ethic, too. Plus, she's still doing the more affordable Versace for H&M line."

Powerful, sensual women is a theme for Ollari in work and life. The Dragonfly Oasis line features a lot of open backs and open waists because she feels those features are sensual and classy.

"The back of a woman is a flat canvas for me," she said, "so I can really do a lot of detail there and make it intricate and sexy, too."

Ultimately, she said, her goal is to have women feel beautiful in her clothing.

"I want to make them feel confident and powerful," she said. "I want them to feel so amazing in the clothes that I design for them that the feeling shines through in all aspects of their lives. I want to give them that gift."

In that regard, Ollari feels she is her own customer and her own best marketing tool. When she goes out in her own clothes, she said, she is wearing herself.

"People compliment me on what I'm wearing," she said, "and I tell them, 'It's my line.'"

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