

Hello, Ciao, Hola

I am a multicultural Trilingual Italo-American-Mexican designer. As a self proclaimed social paradox I've found that being in-between multiple cultures will always influence me and my work. I was born in Italy and moved to the United States the year I was born. I lived in San Antonio, Texas up until I graduated High School. However, I spent every single summer in Italy with "Nonna" and my mother's Italian side of the family, completely immersed in Italian culture in Castiglion Fiorentino in the province of Arezzo in Italy. My parents used any other vacation time during the year to take me to Mexico and visit my dad's side of the family in Leon. In my home my parents celebrated speaking multiple languages and always encouraged me to be in touch with all our family culture and heritage. When I was young I took this for granted. My friends spent all summer playing together and regular Sundays with the family and I often wished to do the same because my life always felt unstable compared to everyone else.

Luckily as I matured, my perspective changed as I began to actively practice gratitude. I became fascinated by "the odd one out" as often I never truly fit in. In Italy I was "the American" and in the United States I was "the Italian." After Graduating High School, I moved to Florence where I completed my undergraduate course at Polimoda. Afterwards, I moved Back to the United States to be with my parents at the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic and moved back to Florence to complete the ITS MITA "Bag Industry Under Innovation Quality Excellence" technical course in Scandicci. I interned in Padua, Florence and Prato. Despite the chaos that has been my life, I never allowed it to be my weakness.

If I had to describe myself and my work briefly I'd say: "I am a fashion designer searching for beauty in odd places." Infact, I absolutely found a sort of obsession in subcultures and their relationship to fashion. In other words, the world of mainstream and even luxury fashion had me totally jaded. This was absolutely normal at Polimoda in Florence, Italy as the main thing they pushed was for us to express our personal identities as fashion designers.

My first collection "Anxiety Online" was a men's wear collection that highlighted the beginning of my obsession with sub-culture as my identity as a fashion designer began to develop. Anxiety online brings together the world of

vaporwave and fashion. Yung lean and sad boys influenced what I would imagine the world of a young male obsessed with internet subcultures would look like in garment form. Arizona iced tea, computer graphics, geometric silhouettes, memes and 80s inspired garments all reference vaporwave and merge to create the collection. I imagined what it would be like to be a boy in my current social situation and narrowed my feelings down to 4 keywords: geek, anti-social, digital and geometrical.

After completing the "Anxiety Online" collection I still felt like a huge chunk of my identity was missing in my work. While it was mind opening and genuine fun exploring the masculine side of my creativity, I decided I needed to focus on my experience as a woman in fashion design. My main focus was to express how I was feeling at that moment. My life, the relationship with my body, my thoughts, everything came together to express how I was feeling as a woman in those couple of years. I expressed the good and mostly and honestly, the bad. I wanted to create a collection that could touch other women feeling the way I was. I wanted to reach out to these young women and say "You're not alone!" I decided to digest all the negative emotions I was feeling and process them into something meaningful. In synthesis NYDG embodied a few key words: Feminine Sadness, Digital/Anti-Social, functional and comfort. This, and of course my obsession with sub-culture was the genesis of my second collection "NYDG." N0t Y0ur Dr3am Girl (NYDG) is inspired by Audrey Wollen's "sad girl theory". It challenges the trivialization of young girl's trepidations in society today by welcoming young women to embrace their emotions and providing comfort to their feelings. Work wear is mixed with feminine silhouettes and bold colorful prints to appeal to fellow "anti-socialite" girls and to inspire them to leave their rooms and re-discover the world around them. With the philosophy "I am N0t Y0ur Dream Girl but only my own" this collection strives to push the idea of self acceptance and provide solutions to any girl that may feel hindered by society they feel cannot accept them.

Fast forward to now. Honestly, as much as it is against my positivity and gratitude healing journey to say this, sometimes I absolutely dislike what fashion has become. Especially when thinking about its relationship with the world and pollution. During my course at ITS MITA in Scandicci, Italy I studied about recuperating materials, waste and sustainability in the fashion system. I entered a competition with emphasis on sustainability and bag design and won. This competition proved to be a challenge as it altered my work down to the

design process I had previously developed. I called this project the “Tie Bag”. It all started when I was thinking about perspective and as crazy as it sounds, while having dinner at my parent’s house with a dear friend. To give context: I often found my father’s messy studio repulsive until one day my friend posted photos of it on her instagram. This forced me to see my father’s studio from a different point of view. It was beautiful. In this project I wanted to push myself to see beauty in things I could not. As a self proclaimed social paradox and as someone who suffers from BDD this project was an extension of holding up a mirror and forcing myself to see the beauty in a face and body that I was told my entire life and convinced myself was not beautiful. As a family tradition, I visited all my favorite thrift shops from childhood that I would visit with my father. While visiting them I noticed the large amounts of ties in the accessory section hidden away usually in the corner of all the thrift stores. I impulsively began to choose all the ties that were left behind who screamed to me “I am not wanted anymore! They told me I am ugly, therefore not useful anymore!” I took them in, transformed them and created something I found beautiful, the “Tie Bag”. This was my version of creating a design that gave my message.

“To every messy artist, to every nonconforming face or body, to every entity in nature who is told they are unnatural, to every inanimate object, to every single outcast; if we can transform our mind set and open our minds and therefore, eyes we can see the beauty within and without. It takes positive transformation within our thoughts and creation. And when even that feels like it’s not enough. I hope you know I adore each and everyone of you”.

Out of all my collections and projects this one was the one that pulled my heartstrings the most. As silly as it seems, I still get teary eyed when I read the above message, even if I wrote it myself. I think it’s because I wish I had told myself that before I began healing through the creative process. Right now I am working on exactly this. I have started a new project and extended the “Tie Bag” project through upcycling used garments. I am now developing a collection with completely used and upcycled garments with the same spirit as the “Tie Bag” project.

My experience may not be typical but one thing is for sure. It has always been a true miracle and thus, one of my greatest strengths. I’ve had the fortune of knowing all my cultures intimately through family and travel. I found the

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bright side in my multifaceted life. It has taught me to open up and see the possibility of beauty within almost everything. This mentality has shown me flexibility and to see the world's accepting and sublime qualities. I wouldn't change my life for anything because it has been the greatest adventure I've had the privilege to discover.

I am sincerely excited to see what happens next,
Valentina