

Amber Eschrich

A Passion for Fashion

The University of Pittsburgh is a largely science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) school, with most students pursuing degrees and careers within the realm of STEM. Students studying humanities and fine arts, while not as numerous as their peers in STEM, still dot the campus. Pitt boasts an array of classes, from a class on vampires to anatomy. While biology majors study anatomy, these students majoring in the humanities and fine arts study another type of inner working of the human being: the human spirit.

Carrington Bryan is an architecture student at the University of Pittsburgh. A member of the marching band and a friendly face to see around campus, Bryan, like many students at Pitt, has big goals for his future, but he's taking an alternate path: Bryan dreams of pin cushions, velvet, ludicrously sized feather boas, and high-fashion couture. His love of fashion and art has led him to Pitt.

Art has always been with Bryan. He recalls that when he was two years old, he would draw "spider people" with long, stick limbs, and one eye with long eyelashes. His great grandfather also taught him some tricks of the art trade, Bryan recalls, "...I would always go to Jacksonville to visit my great grandpa, he was an artist... and he taught me shading, mainly, that and drawing shoes." He started designing clothes later, around the age of eight. One of the first designs was a sleepwear line that was inspired by fuzzy blue fabric he bought from Walmart.

He knew that he wanted to be involved in the fashion world while watching performances of Diana Ross, Cher, and Dreamgirls. Their heavily sequined outfits, with rhinestones, and

larger-than-life glamour drew Bryan into the world of fashion. “I was just like; I need to be with this the rest of my life,” he said.

Bryan’s main inspirations in his fashion designs is the “groovy” fashion of the late ‘60s and ‘70s seen mostly in show business. Retro-futurism and motifs from the Space Age can also be seen throughout his designs. These influences come to play with the current design he’s working on, which is a Cher inspired gown with a multi-colored tulle boa.

Upon asking about the differences between the fashion of his hometown, Atlanta, and of Pittsburgh, Bryan gave a vivid depiction of Atlanta, where everyone is dressing up to go out, and a larger mix of fashion is seen, business casual, gowns, neon green fur, and body suits. Which, compared to Pittsburgh, where, “... everyone dresses so normally and casual... It’s wild, it’s different.”

Being an architecture major, Bryan takes an interesting approach to the fashion world. It didn’t occur to him that he wanted to pursue fashion until he had already committed to Pitt and decided to study architecture. While it isn’t common for someone who wants to work in the fashion industry to study architecture, Bryan certainly isn’t the first. Former creative director of Louis Vuitton, Virgil Abloh studied architecture, along with Parisian designer, Pierre Balmain. Bryan hopes that studying architecture will give him an edge in the fashion industry. He states, “I feel like architecture is a really unique path to take to fashion, because you learn so many design principles that are really universal and could be applied anywhere.”

Within a historically brutal and subjective field, there are plenty of challenges as a young designer. From appealing to audiences, keeping up with trends, and dealing with competitors, it’s not the easiest career path. But keeping up with trends or pushing against competitors aren’t

Bryan's main concerns. Bryan's biggest concern is not losing himself. "... once you lose that you lose your entire essence. You lose your imagination; you lose your passion," he said. "... I feel like people's biggest weakness is trying to appeal to someone higher up, trying to prove a point."

Bryan is also in the process of starting a fashion club at Pitt. While there is a preexisting fashion club at Pitt, the Fashion Business Association, Bryan is looking to create a less business-oriented club. He hopes to create an environment where people can come in and talk about their personal fashion, what they want to design, and to teach people how to sew. He wants his club to be oriented around exploring and exposing people to fashion. Overall, he hopes to make fashion more accessible. "People need this," Bryan said. "Our world is so bleak, people need color. And the easiest way to do that is to slap some color on their outfits."

Bryan will be making his Pittsburgh fashion debut this April in the Fashion Business Association's spring fashion show, titled "Future Nostalgia." Three of Bryan's designs will be featured in this show.