

Fashion Forward

A Compilation of Stories Based on
Fashion in New York City

By Michaela Zee

Mark Zunino: Beauty and the Beads

By Michaela Zee



Photo by Michaela Zee

“So much of what we do is psychological,” Mark Zunino says. Bridal Reflections, an NYC-based bridal store, blares John Legend’s “Who Do You Think We Are” as Zunino sits on a pearl gray sofa. Across the room, female clients on pedestals marvel at their accentuated forms confined under their bridal gowns, an array of similar white garments hanging on racks beside them. “You have to really get inside the head of the people you’re working with, and the bottom line is you have to make money. You have to make people happy with what you’re creating.”

Los Angeles based designer Mark Zunino is acclaimed for his form-fitting garments, particularly in bridal and eveningwear. Many of these pieces consist of intricate beadwork hand sewn by Zunino and others.

The time frame of beading these garments can range from 400 hours to several months depending on the expense and deadlines. His clientele consists of socialites and Hollywood celebrities including Angelina Jolie, Julia Roberts and Scarlett Johansson.

Zunino grew up in San Francisco, CA. His exposure to fashion initially occurred at Pepperdine University in Malibu. “Our student body was the girl who changed three times a day,” Zunino chuckles. “Fashion was a huge part of what was happening there.” The cultural diversity on campus provoked Zunino’s fashion awareness on a more global scale, especially towards new traditions. He acknowledges, however, that fashion is a commonality amongst everyone in society, regardless of one’s ethnicity.



Photo by Michaela Zee

While studying architecture at Pepperdine University, Zunino received the opportunity to work alongside fashion designer Nolan Miller on “Dynasty,” an ‘80s prime time soap opera. This was Zunino’s first introduction to the fashion industry, and the show won an Emmy for outstanding costume design for a series in 1984. Zunino devoted himself to the fashion world after the Emmy win, and eventually launched his own fashion line in 1998.

“I think that’s the difference with me as a designer,” Zunino says. “I started in film and television, so you had a script and a character and you have parameters to design within. That’s why with what I do—designing for people privately as well as bridal—it’s basically the same thing. I design for the person I’m working with.”

Zunino draws inspiration from the personality and desires of his clients when styling them. The responses on his social media pages, such as his Instagram and Facebook, also provide feedback on his latest styles and his customer’s current design interests. Each day at Mark Zunino Atelier consists of a combination of appointments with both regular and new clients. Most clients collaborate with Zunino during the creative process and express their desires for their piece.

“We strive to always provide an elevated, yet casual atmosphere,” Zunino’s assistant Breanna Rae Murillo says. “Mark prefers that his employees express their own style rather than enforce a dress code, which is what I feel makes us unique and personable.” The business focuses solely on the satisfaction and approval of its customers, while also providing comfort during their visits.

Zunino then searches for fabrics and designs that resemble his client’s preferences, as well as those that could embody the characteristics of this individual. “They come to me when they can’t find what they’re looking for,” Zunino says. Celebrity clients such as Elizabeth Taylor and Sophia Loren were muses to Zunino, and enhanced his expertise of how to coordinate fabrics and colors with the theme of the event. “[Taylor and Loren] would explain to me if you’re wearing rubies, wear white. There was always a balance of something.”

Zunino released his Spring 2020 collection on February 27 during New York Fashion Week. The color palette for his eveningwear consisted of deep jewel tones, such as candy apple red and burnt orange, that complement various skin tones. Most of the designs were made for celebrities for specific events, such as Ming-Na Wen’s gown at the 72nd Annual Tony Awards in 2018. Having these dresses photographed on social media led to an upsurge of requests from clients.

“To this day, everybody loves [Wen’s] dress. Brides want it in white. That piece was chosen from the outcry of everybody having seen it and wanting it.” For his bridal wear collection, Zunino focused on a trend that surfaced these past few years: bridal pants. “It’s been fun, especially for the girls that have a big tulle ball gown over it for the ceremony,” Zunino says. “Then by the end of the night when you’re dancing, you just have this little strapless catsuit on.”

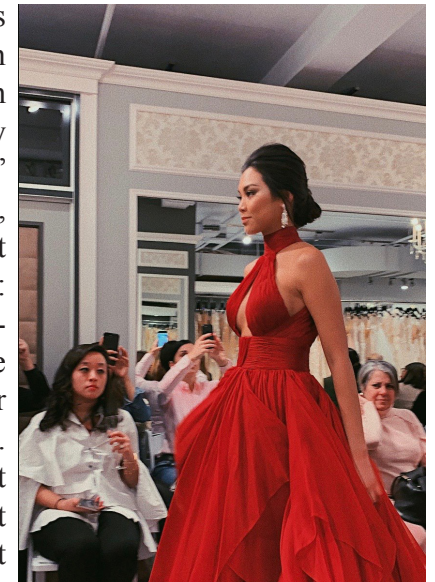


Photo by Michaela Zee

Zunino’s shop in Los Angeles focuses on creating a new collection for every spring season, as well as keeping a fresh wardrobe for his approximate 15 core clients. He views the collaborations with his private clients as an opportunity and advantage in building the next trend. “Basically they are creating fashion,” Zunino says. “They were pieces that the bridal world hadn’t seen. It was putting us at the forefront—on the edge of what was next to come in the bridal world.”

We Are Gathered Here Today to Mourn Fashion

Daniel Silverstein, the designer behind sustainable fashion brand Zero Waste Daniel, proclaims that fashion is “dead” during New York Fashion Week.

By Michaela Zee

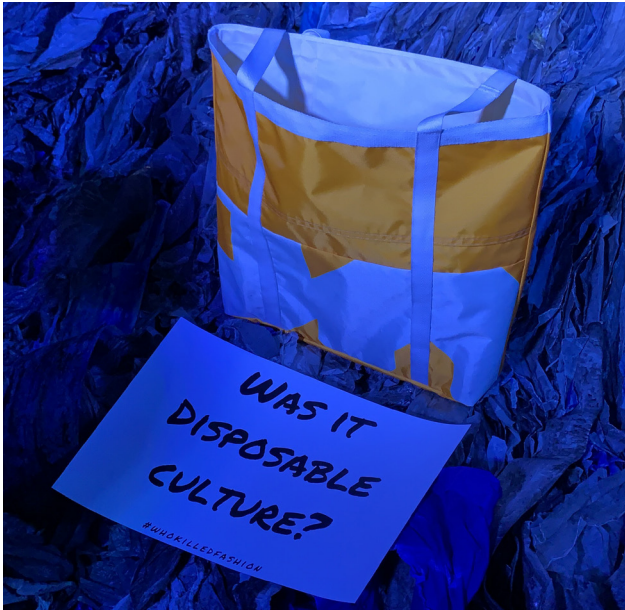


Photo by Michaela Zee

“We are gathered here today to mourn the death of fashion. Who killed fashion?” Sustainable designer Daniel Silverstein “asked” during his Fall 2020 New York Fashion Week show. He answered:

“It was greed. Greed killed fashion. Our sweet, beautiful, unassuming industry. What once was a way of expressing ourselves, a tradition of craftsmanship, and a visual, cultural identifier is now dead.”

Daniel Silverstein, also known as Zero Waste Daniel, is no stranger to addressing the harmful effects of fast fashion in creative ways. For his Fall 2020 show in NYC, he decided to transform the theme, the “Death of Fashion,” into a satire entitled “Sustainable Fashion is Hilarious.”

Unlike a typical runway format, the models were immersed in a hilarious performance piece at Arcadia Earth — an interactive exhibition in NoHo about planet Earth what causes its suffering of climate change, including a chandelier of littered glass bottles (which was cool in a “the Earth is dying” kinda way).

While navigating through 15 different rooms, guests got to witness several comedic skits — from fake funerals to global warming dance parties — that emphasized Silverstein’s dark, yet important message: fashion is killing the environment and itself.

During “Sustainable Fashion is Hilarious,” models carried signs or performed skits that captured Silverstein’s environmental messages about fashion’s demise. From “Was It Disposable Culture?” to “Was It the Rise of Social Media?,” these simple questions within the maze-like interior almost felt like a murder mystery or “whodunit” special; the audience had to ponder which suspect destroyed fashion.

For the Zero Waste Daniel collection itself, Silverstein sewed on various embellishments on top of black and light gray sweat-shirts, including dinosaur patches and a bouquet of flowers along with the phrase, “Sorry About Fashion.” These ensembles consisted of recycled materials that were pieced together to fabricate graphic patches and other textiles, some of which even created a mosaic-esque art piece.

Along with his latest collection, Silverstein displayed pieces from past seasons as well to show just how sustainable he truly is. In one room, two models mourned the “death” of a neon orange parka made from upcycled tents of the NYC Department of Sanitation. The last season jacket was laid across a wooden crate reminiscent of a coffin, while the models hovered over the outfit and wept in an overly dramatic manner (R.I.P.).

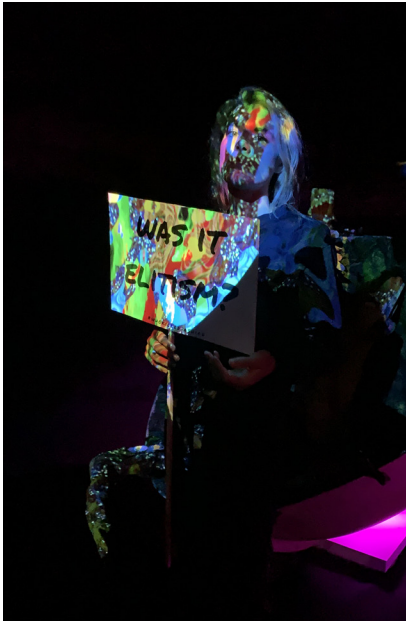


Photo by Michaela Zee

Jokes aside, Silverstein claimed that “greed” is what killed fashion in the end, most likely hinting at the industry’s incentive for increases in revenue rather than creativity. As a fashion designer, Daniel Silverstein combined both his designs and the destruction of fashion consumption into one empowering performance. It’s time to change (and sustain) fashion.

For the finale of the Zero Waste Daniel 2020 fashion show, Silverstein himself presented a “eulogy” dedicated to fashion. Wearing a denim jacket embellished with heart-shaped Earth patches, Silverstein grieved over former fads and fast fashion brands.

“We mourn the death of Bebe and Wet Seal,” Silverstein said in a sarcastic tone. “We mourn the death of Charlotte Russe, and of slap bracelets, and of carrying a chihuahua as an accessory.”



Photo by Michaela Zee

Cloak & Dagger Won't Stab a Dagger Through Your Heart

The chic store in the East Village is an indie dream.

By Michaela Zee

While strolling down 9th Street in the East Village, a quaint, pale pink store emerges with a witty fold-out sign that reads, “Bring on Spring: dresses to torture your Ex.” Cloak & Dagger, located at 334 E 9th St., is a boutique that houses an array of feminine apparel, including floral dresses, corduroy jumpers, and sheer blouses. Unlike the grimy surroundings of its neighboring properties, Cloak & Dagger is reminiscent of a Parisian storefront along the streets of Le Marais.

When I entered the boutique, a sales clerk immediately greeted me and announced that Cloak & Dagger was having a “20% off all outerwear” sale. Despite its minuscule interior, the white walls and open-concept furniture design made the store spacious and inviting. Each rack contained at least two of the same garments, which allowed browsing to flow with ease since the racks weren’t cramped with clothing.

Cloak & Dagger sells a mixture of coveted brands — Capulet, Wrangler, and Lee — as well as vintage pieces. Most of the retail pieces are a minimum of \$100, which is quite a steep price range. The Capulet Lexi Ruffle Wrap top, for example, was an astounding price of \$124. This sheer, pink blouse with ruffled sleeves barely covers an individual’s midriff, and seemed excessive for that amount of money.

However, Cloak & Dagger's selection of vintage items will please any shopper who enjoys wearing antiquated designs from the past decades. From fur coats to cable knit sweaters with graphic embroideries, Cloak & Dagger contains a diverse assemblage of vintage clothes. As soon as I selected a burnt orange corduroy jumper with tortoise shell buttons (\$110), the sales clerk jumped from the front desk and asked, "Would you like me to start you a dressing room?" Even though she was the only salesperson working at Cloak & Dagger, she was devoted to assisting each customer that entered the boutique.

My vintage jumper was awaiting me in a chic fitting room with pineapple wallpaper and a rustic mirror. A white chair with an ornate frame was in the corner beside the mirror, as well as bronze coat hangers with lion emblems. Although the compact frame of the fitting room was a tad claustrophobic and made it difficult to slip into the jumper, the charming decorum compensated for the size. The baggy silhouette of the vintage jumper did not suit my tiny figure, making me look more like an elf at Santa's Workshop, but the quality itself appeared durable.

Despite the unsuccessful outcome of the vintage jumper, Cloak & Dagger is an alluring, bohemian experience with ensembles that will truly make your ex envious.



Photo by Michaela Zee

Maegan Hayward Does 'Art Through Vintage'

The owner of East Village Vintage Collective talks about her love of vintage and dealing with the coronavirus as a local retailer in NYC.

By Michaela Zee



Photo by Michaela Zee

While isolating herself in her East Village apartment, Maegan Hayward recalled an ensemble she wore in the '90s that was supposedly for her school homecoming; in reality, she used the dance as an excuse to purchase a new outfit.

"I wore a crushed velvet Betsey Johnson dress with platform shoes, and then a choker that had a cameo hanging from it. And I remember a few years back when all of sudden, people started walking into the store and wearing that and I was like, 'It's official, I'm old,'" Hayward explained over the phone. "It's still weird to watch [trends] come back around. But I think that's one of the cool things about vintage, and watching what eras become popular again."

As the co-founder and owner of East Village Vintage Collective (EVVC), located at 545 E 12th St., Hayward has curated her love of vintage fashion and pop culture into one cohesive storefront stocked with women's, men's and kid's clothes and accessories (plus toys and housewares). She opened her brick-and-mortar store in 2015 with the intention of owning a business that offers affordable vintage in the exorbitant environment of New York City retail.

"I've always been into thrifting and vintage my whole life," she said. "I love that every piece is different, and the treasure hunting of it, and finding something so unique and hard-to-find."

Born-and-raised in Florida, Hayward considers her father her main influence for her passion of thrift-shopping. The pair would frequent flea markets together when she was a child, with her father constantly "picking treasures out of the trash." This continual exposure to antiquated items motivated Hayward to sell vintage pieces of her own on Ebay. Eventually, these online sales funded a portion of her move to New York City in 2004.

"I saw the movie *Desperately Seeking Susan*, and it always made me want to move to [New York]," Hayward said. "There's a vintage store [*Love Saves the Day*] in that movie that was actually very inspiring to me, and was still open here when I moved here. I always loved the feeling that that store had, and the feeling the East Village had — it felt like a real neighborhood."

Before opening East Village Vintage Collective in 2015, Hayward worked within multiple departments in the entertainment industry, including post-production sound and advertising.

Although she viewed this as a "side career," she ended up working within film and television for over a decade in New York City, but still sustained her devotion towards vintage fashion through her first online business, Red's Vintage Threads.

In the eclectic, hipster neighborhood of the East Village, Hayward lived directly above a vacant storefront for over a year. Unfulfilled by her current job, she decided to take the plunge and develop a pop-up store with friends and fellow vintage sellers, including Melanie Ön and Claire Marston (thus the term, "collective"). Although several of these co-founders eventually went on to pursue other obligations, Hayward had one ambition in mind for her career: She reached out to her landlord to make East Village Vintage Collective a permanent residence.

For the past five years, Hayward has been the multitasker and driving force behind this vintage boutique. From photographing items for their online platform to sourcing new pieces for the store, Hayward's routine is always unpredictable. "A typical day is that there's no typical day," Hayward chuckled.

Everyday, a plethora of customers and potential sellers enter EVVC; some come to shop, while others simply have conversations with Hayward and her employees. Hayward even considers EVVC the "neighborhood therapist" or a "bar with no alcohol."

"I think what [EVVC] does is bring a fun, curated collection of vintage to shoppers for an affordable price, and keeps merchandise turning over quickly so there is always something new to see," said Alex Carpenter, Hayward's business partner and companion. "We live in the neighborhood and want all small businesses to thrive so that the East Village stays being the neighborhood we love."

Besides her enthusiasm towards secondhand fashion, Hayward also collaborates with local artists and musicians, including selling their merchandise or displaying their work within the boutique.

“I’ve always been a big fan of art and music, so we try to incorporate those things into the store whenever we can,” she said.

Hayward enjoys supporting the arts through various mediums, and even co-hosts a YouTube show with Alex Carpenter called, Vintage Fashion Advice You’re Welcome (#VFAYW).

“Maegan is inspiring to me all the time in the way she so adeptly turns her great ideas into reality,” Carpenter said. “I love the challenge of editing together all the crazy ideas that get thrown out there, like making a time machine animation, or having someone shrink down and drive off in a pink Barbie convertible.”

For EVVC’s latest project, entitled Art Through Vintage, Hayward sends vintage garments from the store to local artists, where they embellish their signature mark onto the fabric. These customized pieces are then auctioned off on Ebay, with proceeds split 50-50 between the two entities.

“[EVVC] gave me free rein to do whatever I wanted to [their] shoes. I figured we’re all New Yorkers so the coffee cup just seemed to make sense,” said artist Elizabeth Saloka (a.k.a Betty Rubble) about her first collaboration for Art Through Vintage. “I have [also] spoken with them about collaborating on a line [of] Pop Art can purses.”

Last January, Hayward announced the expansion of EVVC by unveiling a second location in the Murray Hill neighborhood of Jacksonville, Florida.

“Part of why we did that is so that we could see family more often, but also travel up-and-down the east coast and find more affordable treasures and stick with the philosophy — which is to have a more affordable vintage store,” she said.

However, in these unprecedented times due to the coronavirus, East Village Vintage Collective has halted to a temporary standstill in the past few months. In March, Hayward was forced to close both her New York and Florida locations due to lockdowns on “non-essential” businesses. As a local retail owner, Hayward’s storefronts are her primary source of income, making it a daunting time for her when it comes to rent payments and other finances.

“When you have a business in New York City, a lot of the time you’re not focusing so much on your online sales necessarily — you have a lot of foot traffic coming through,” she explained. “It’s hard to stay afloat. You know, you’re working hard for very little and when something like this happens, everyone’s scrambling.”

Hayward still lives directly above EVVC, allowing her to check-in on the store and its neighboring retail properties. As a member of the Local Merchants Association, she has attempted to seek out information about financial aid for local businesses, including grants versus loans.



Screenshot of EVVC's Instagram profile.

“A lot of what they’ve offered in New York so far to small businesses has just been a loan, and nobody wants to take out a loan — especially in this current state of the economy,” she said. “But I also don’t want to not pay my rent and screw my landlords at either location.”

Carpenter also remarked that these “financial relief programs are still a total mess,” and are contributing to the “continued uncertainty of everything.”

Although Hayward cannot welcome customers at this time, she still updates the store’s website and Instagram profile in hopes of alleviating her stress about revenue. However, her online sales are not as consistent in comparison to her storefront sales.

“What would be nice of Instagram to do right now for small businesses is to make everybody who is a small business have the ‘swipe-up’ feature,” Hayward explained. The “swipe-up” feature directs viewers to the user’s desired link they’ve attached to their Instagram story, such as their store website. This tool is only offered to profiles with more than 10,000 followers, though, which for local stores like EVVC — which only has approximately 5,800 followers — can be difficult to achieve.

“The easier you can make it for somebody to buy something, the more likely they are to buy it,” she continued. “A lot of shopping when it comes to clothes is about more of an impulse.”

The uncertainties about the COVID-19 crisis and the state of retail lingers, and yet Hayward is maintaining an optimistic outlook. She is veering her energy towards her collaborations, like Art Through Vintage, to support herself and local NYC artists, as well as updating her inventory for her vintage store. In the end, Hayward is determined to keep East Village Vintage Collective afloat.

“I’m trying to think about the future,” she said. “You know, everybody’s dealing with the fact that we feel like we’re in the middle of a sci-fi movie. Who’d ever thought that this is something that would happen here? Let’s just hope that out of all the craziness comes some kind of good changes, even if it takes a while.”



OFF-BROADWAY

A modern rendition of iconic Broadway duos outside of the theatre and onto the streets of New York City.

Photography: Fabian Anthony Luna

Styling: Michaela Zee

Text: Michaela Zee

BEETLEJUICE

THE WHOLE "BEING DEAD THING"

Michaela as Beetlejuice and Brendan as Lydia Deetz.

Michaela wears dress **Maje**
Shoes **Prada**

Brendan wears shirt **Calvin Klein**
Jeans **H&M**
Belt **Cole Haan**
Shoes **Aldo**

SAY MY NAME

The dead and living experience both the strange and unusual within the imaginative world of Tim Burton. Based on the 2019 musical, *Beetlejuice*, currently playing at the Winter Garden Theatre.

Michaela wears dress **Maje**
Shoes **Prada**

Brendan wears shirt **Calvin Klein**
Jeans **H&M**
Belt **Cole Haan**
Shoes **Aldo**



HADESTOWN

WAIT FOR ME

Michaela as Eurydice and Brendan as Orpheus.

Michaela wears dress **Urban Outfitters**
Vest **Yves Saint Laurent**
Shoes **Chloé**
Scarf **Hermès**
Bralette **Urban Outfitters**

Brendan wears shirt **J. Crew**
Pants **Calvin Klein**
Shoes **Kenneth Cole**
Suspenders **Etsy**



ROAD TO HELL

A Greek tragedy of two lovers, torn by doubt during their endeavors into the underworld. Based on the 2019 Tony Award-winning musical, *Hadestown*, currently playing at the Walter Kerr Theatre.

Michaela wears dress **Urban Outfitters**
Vest **Yves Saint Laurent**
Shoes **Chloé**
Scarf **Hermès**
Bralette **Urban Outfitters**

Brendan wears shirt **J. Crew**
Pants **Calvin Klein**
Shoes **Kenneth Cole**
Suspenders **Etsy**

