THE FASHION MACHINE

Fashion designers cannot work in isolation. You may be an excellent designer, but you may not be able to style those clothes to their best potential or you may not be confident selling them to buyers. A designer needs the support of various satellite industries, such as stylists, public relations (PR), journalists, photographers, selling agents, merchandisers, show producers and illustrators, in order to be truly successful.

There is much more involved than just talent when choosing a career in fashion – it's mainly hard work! In this chapter you get the chance to learn from the experiences of people working at all levels and in different areas of the fashion industry. They are all cogs in the fashion machine.



Independent ready-to-wear designer

Marios Schwab

What is your job title?

Designer.

Please describe your job

I create clothes for women.

Who else have you worked for?

Some of the labels I've worked for are Kim Jones, Clements Ribeiro, Jonathan Saunders and Edwin Jeans.

What was your career path to your current job?

I started studying when I was 15 in Austria, went for my BA to ESMOD in Berlin and finally did my MA at Central St Martins [in London]. Since then I have designed for a few labels based in London, Paris and Tokyo and then started my own label.

What do you do on an average day?

I do lots of paperwork, make a few phone calls to do with production and a little bit of design.

What are your normal working hours?

9am to 8pm.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

You must be very focused and well organised.

How creative a job do you have?

It has been very creative so far.

What kind of team do you work with?

The team consists of 11 people – some of them are students that are doing a work placement and the rest are people I have worked with since the beginning.

What is the best bit about your job?

The reward after such hard work.

And the worst?

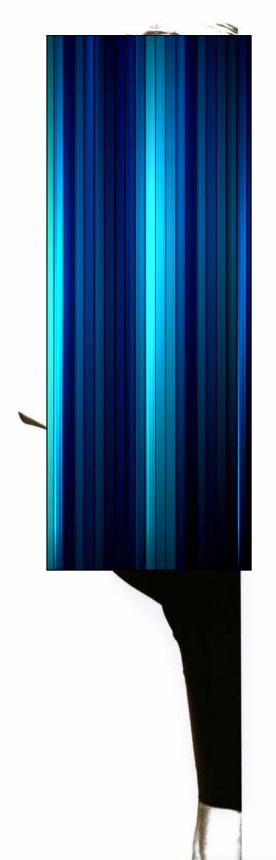
There's no time to play around.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Be honest with yourself and plan ahead.

There's no time to play around.

Dress by Marios Schwab. (Photographer: Mariano Vivanco)



Independent ready-to-wear designers

Meadham & Kirchhoff (Edward Meadham & Ben Kirchhoff)

Please describe your job.

We design clothes, make samples, organise production and sometimes get involved with consultancy design work or other creative projects.

Who else have you worked for?

We have just finished designing a range for British high-street retailer TopMan. We have also worked with the label Unconditional and Ed's worked with Courtney Love and Kylie Minogue.

What was your career path to your current job?

School, then struggle and then an urge to change the world.

What do you do on an average day?

Work.

What are your normal working hours?

9am to 12 midnight.

What are the essential qualities required for your job?

Determination and a certain amount of self-belief and self-expression, fearlessness and organisation.

How creative a job do you have?

The creative part is fairly small. Most of what we do is administration, meetings and general organising.

What kind of team do you work with?

There's the two of us, plus a small team of regular students and assistants, one manufacturing plant, a couple of outworkers and a stylist.

What is the best bit about your job?

The small creative amount of work you get to do, the initial research and design process.

And the worst?

All the paper work, the bank, the worry, the worry...

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Get ready for a tough ride.

Get ready for a tough ride.

Benjamin Kirchhoff Autumn/Winter 2004/05. (Photographer: Claire Robertson)



Independent ready-to-wear designers

Boudicca (Zowie Broach & Brian Kirkby)

What is your job title?

There are no titles at Boudicca per se. There is advantage and disadvantage to this. Boudicca is a life, a passion, a need for exchange and development, demand and failure and exhilaration. A discovery, a search and translation of a new language.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

Those that are like-minded or believe in a difference.

What do you do on an average day?

Hold a business together, find space for thoughts and reading, watching, breathing, examination of everything that makes up the world that we exist within.

What are your normal working hours?

This obviously depends on how close we are to a show. Normal hours would be 9.30am to 7.30pm, but this is rare for a few weeks a season. The rest is what it takes to get the work to the level that we require. To remain professional and on time; you can often be controlled by these demands on yourself.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Inspiration, desire, vision, loyalty, intelligence and motivation.

How creative a job do you have?

Our lives only exist to find creative questions and answer them.

What kind of team do you work with?

From four to 40.

What is the best bit about your job?

That it challenges everything else and ourselves everyday.

What motivates you from season to season?

The adoration and total respect for knowledge and its power. The craving to understand how an idea can find its true perfect place in our world.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Advice is only what you feel in your heart and that is often dangerous to follow – but never to be ignored.

Our lives only exist to find creative questions and answer them.

Ready-to-wear designer

Jamie O'Hare

What is your job title?

Head designer, See by Chloé.

Please describe your job.

I'm in charge of designing Chloé's younger line, See – a collection, which while keeping the spirit of feminine, relaxed and beautiful clothes, has its own personal identity.

Who else have you worked for?

MaxMara/Sportmax, English Eccentrics, Oasis, Ben de Lisi, Bruce Oldfield, Philip Treacy and Vivienne Westwood.

What was your career path to your current job?

A BA and then an MA in Fashion Design.

What do you do on an average day?

Anything – from sketching to fittings, meetings about the collections or research.

What are your normal working hours?

9:30am to 9 or 10pm.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Creativity, energy and a thick skin.

How creative a job do you have?

It has to be creative to be different to the other brands.

What kind of team do you work with?

Three people work with me in Paris on design and image, and six people are based in Italy overseeing the construction and production of the clothes.

What is the best bit about your job?

Doing what I've always wanted to do.

Creativity, energy and a thick skin.



See by Chloé.

The knitwear designer

Winni Lok



What is your job title?

Knitwear Designer and Head of Knitwear at Whistles.

Please describe your job.

I produce four collections per year: two for my women's label and two for my men's label. These are normally showcased during London Fashion Week.

At the beginning of each season, I will review all the new shade cards that have been sent to me by the yarn companies. At the same time, I will begin research, which comprises of gathering inspiration from various sources. This will be reflected in ideas as to what types of yarn I would like to use, textures, hand-finishing (if any). I will design and begin swatching and experimenting.

I make all the first hand-knit pieces myself and the machine pieces have to be designed in advance and sent to the manufacturers. I will also have meetings with my sales agent at the beginning of each season, to brief him of ideas going forward. I will also have meetings with my PR to take them through the previous collection. There is a lot of liaising between people and organising, as everything tends to happen at the same time... Normally, I will also be organising my production at the same time - always a joy!

At Whistles, my job involves organising the department, which is a huge part of the Whistles' business. We work with factories in the Far East. As the collection is designed in a series of different stories, we have strict deadlines as to when these designs have to arrive in the Far East, otherwise they will be late for selection meetings, etc.

My designs for Whistles have to be very considered in terms of detailing and finishes. so serious thought has to be applied to these areas - this could include beadwork, printing, stitch, trims, etc., and it is important for me to liaise closely with my design director. Whistles is very product-based, which means that even though we have to be trend-led, we do not have to be a complete slave to trends going forward, as other high-street brands are. This means that we have a lot more leeway with the design of the end product.

Winni Lok Autumn/Winter 2006–2007. (Photographer: Matt Buck/Stylist: Grace Woodward /Model: Jolyon @ Storm Models)

My job also involves a lot of meetings about trade, yarn suppliers, fittings. We are constantly reviewing the collection, as we are (obviously) heavily influenced by what is happening in retail.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

I have also worked for on a freelance basis: Hussein Chalayan, Marcus Constable, Montana, Aquascutum (recently) and currently, I am working for Whistles as their Head of Knitwear.

What was your career path to your current job?

BTEC at Bourneville Art College, a BA at Liverpool John Moores University and an MA at Central St Martins, London, UK.

What do you do on an average day?

Working on my own label, no two days are ever the same. For example, recently, I have been busy organising my production for both men's and women's collections (which includes getting all the yarns, trims, any finishes that were used on that collection) to my manufacturers, which is based in the UK. At the same time I had to think about and make my collections for Fashion Week.

As a lot of my work is produced organically and three-dimensionally on a stand, it means that the garments are very much about my own 'handwriting', as they develop and evolve whilst I am knitting the fabric. Therefore, most of my days will involve making the pieces.

Also recently I've been working for Aquascutum, so that involved meetings, sourcing yarn, making of garments, organising, fittings, and remakes – all fitting around your own label.

I also work four days a week at Whistles. My average day normally begins by checking emails that will have arrived from the Far East. These need to be addressed straight away due to the time difference, and because the lead-times with the factories are so tight, we need to provide any information as soon as possible to prevent delays in production, sampling, etc. I then discuss with my assistant the aim for the day. At the moment we are very busy getting AW 06 collection together, so our days are

normally very frenetic!

My days are also broken up by meetings, reviewing the collection and/or fittings, then I try and squeeze some design work in when I can.

What are your normal working hours?

There are no normal working hours when you have your own label! The days can be very, very lengthy, but the upside is there is no one to time check you when you do have a lie-in!

For Whistles, the hours are 9.30am to 5.30pm.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Vision, tenacity, perseverance, focus, the sheer love of doing your job and complete dedication. At Whistles, you need energy, to be a strong communicator, the ability and an eye to appreciate small details, being super-organised, the ability to work in a team, good time management.

What kind of wage can someone command in your job?

Let's just say, when it's good, it can be very, very good, when it is bad it can be very, very bad! At Whistles, it's enough to keep me in Miu Miu shoes for a season!

How creative a job do you have?

Very creative... I consider doing my own label to be very much a cathartic exercise whereby it is almost like a visual diary that represents what is going on in your personal life or in your thoughts. Therefore, the real talent is to translate these visions into the real, and something that is wearable, but exciting. Your ability as a designer lies in the drawing together of inspirations into the creation of something original that others will appreciate, and in the long term, the real creativity lies in being able to produce things that sell and/or are desired.

My job at Whistles is obviously creatively led. However, the difference between working here and working for myself is that at Whistles, you are really a stylist. My job is to pull together many looks and ideas from other designers and the high street, to create something new. It is essential to have a great eye for detail.

What kind of team do you work with?

I have an assistant, production manager, a selling agent and a PR – quite a close team, but without one, the others would not work.

At Whistles I have an assistant who works solely with me and then a further assistant who helps generally with CAD work. I also have a product development manager, who will track samples, production, etc., and who also does costings for me. Finally, I have a technical person, who will toile patterns, etc.

What is the best part of your job?

The beginning when you are putting 'pen to paper', so to speak – this can be a tricky time as well, but it is the most fulfilling time, as you are making the first marks that set the tone for the rest of the collection, so this is a time of experimenting and nurture.

At Whistles, it's working as part of a team.

And the worst?

The long, stressful hours depending on other people.

At Whistles, working as part of a team!

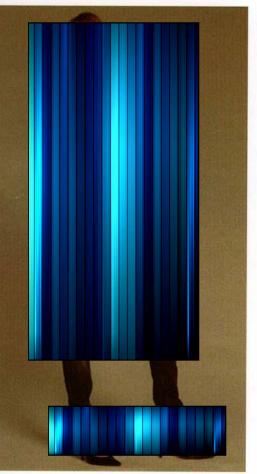
Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Think long and hard as it can take a lot of determination to carry on. Make sure you have some money to support yourself and remember that it is not going to happen overnight... It can take up to five years for your label to establish itself!

Working in this area of the industry [for Whistles] is invaluable and will give you serious credentials on your CV, so is definitely worth pursuing. However, the creativity aspect may not be as fulfilling as some would wish. Therefore, to have – or to have had – your fingers in both pies is the best option.

The streetwear designer

Michele Manz



Converse by John Varvatos Autumn/Winter 2006.

What is your job title?

Womenswear Design Director for Converse by John Varvatos.

Please describe your job.

I've been invited to build a womenswear team for Converse by John Varvatos to launch their new designer streetwear clothing brand. For this season I have worked mainly on creating the branding and image, which will set the standard for future collections. I have set up the technical system for working as well as establishing an archive, none of which were in place.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

Previously I was head designer of Alberta Ferretti for over five years in Italy and the Creative Director of Womenswear for John Varvatos in New York.

What was your career path to your current job?

I was at the Royal College of Art when I was offered a job by Alberta Ferretti. My move to John Varvatos happened because I was contacted by a fashion agent. Most recently, John Varvatos asked me to head up the women's line on his behalf for Converse.

What do you do on an average day?

Unfortunately, there is no average day for me. In general, if I am in Hong Kong I will be working with factories on fittings and production issues. In New York I tend to sketch, research, put technical packages together, work with PR and Sales.

What are your normal working hours?

Because we are launching a new line my working hours are ridiculous... In general, 9am to past midnight, seven days a week!

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Total belief and conviction in the product you are working on. Good vision. Being decisive and not being afraid to take risks. Good management of time and people. A real interest in fashion, film, sport and music, both past and present... All of which are very relevant within our product.

What kind of wage can someone command in your job?

America rewards designers more then Europe and offers better bonus packages. You can expect to earn a handsome six-figure sum.

How creative a job do you have?

Very creative... because I make it that way.

What kind of team do you work with?

I have a fantastic senior designer, a design associate, a technical designer, a production assistant and an intern.

What is the best bit about your job?

Being able to design clothes I have never been able to find anywhere else and travelling to various places, such as Seattle, LA, London, Paris, Amsterdam and Tokyo in search of new inspiration.

And the worst?

Six months of lost social life!

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Make sure you know what is going on in fashion past and present... I like people that are informed. I want to see designers that are creative, but relevant to a modern woman's wardrobe.

The buyer

Yeda Yun

What is your job title?

Miu Miu RTW Merchandising Manager, Uomo&Donna.

Please describe your job.

I'm responsible for RTW (ready-to-wear) buying for our flagship stores and concessions worldwide except the USA.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

I have worked for the fashion emporium Browns on South Molton Street in London as a senior buyer for seven years. During this time I was in charge of more creative and avant-garde collections, such as Comme des Garçons, Martin Margiela, etc.

What was your career path to your current job?

I studied in Paris and came to London to study photography, then by accident fell in to a buying job at Browns - very lucky!

What do you do on an average day?

Out of buying season my days start by dealing with emails, checking the sales of the stores and analysis. As I cannot be in every store all the time it is very important to check the sales reports on a daily basis. Then I will organise stock transfer or reorder accordingly per each area (Europe, Asia Pacific, Japan). At the beginning of the season, I will prepare a presentation for each store. We also organise staff uniforms, sales preparation, etc.

What are your normal working hours?

Usually from 9am until 7pm, but during the buying season 9am until anytime at night that you finish, and often we work at the weekends.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

The most important thing is having a very good eye. When you see the collection for the first time, if you don't have a 'gut feeling' leave your job and do something else. You also need very good business sense - you are spending someone else's money and they want a good profit in return. You should be able to balance your creativity and commercial sense.

How creative a job do you have?

Working with a mono brand is less creative than working in a multi-brand store. With a mono brand, you follow the company's creative direction (for us, of course, it is from Miuccia Prada), and the design or visual department is more creative than the buying department. You can express more of your own style with a multi-brand store because you are buying the collection with your own vision.

What kind of team do you work with?

The merchandising team work between the design office and the buying office and they organise our customer services, the production team, the retail operation team and the commercial team.

What is the best part about your job?

You are always stimulated by lots of beautiful things.

And the worst?

You can't do anything during buying season because it completely takes over your life.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

If you are offered a position, even as an intern - take it. Work hard because people will always remember you and there aren't enough good people around!

Vice President of a large fashion company

Caroline Weller

What is your job title?

Vice President of Women's Design, Express, USA.

Please describe your job.

I head up the women's design team. Three design directors and a team of ten other designers report in to me. My job is to come up with exciting, new fashion stories for five different 'lifestyle' zones of the store every month. I make sure that all the different elements of designing a collection (colour, fabric, print, fit, silhouette) come together in a cohesive, understandable and exciting fashion story for our customers that has a distinctive Express handwriting.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

Karen Millen in the UK, J.Crew, Club Monaco, Calvin Klein in New York,

What was your career path to your current job?

Hard work, ambition and a sense of humour.

What do you do on an average day?

Every day is different, depending on where we are with a collection. It might be working on colours, pulling together a concept or going through sketches with my team. There's a lot of presentation involved, selling our ideas and concepts to merchants and the company president, which takes a lot of preparation.

What are your normal working hours?

10 to 12 hours a day.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

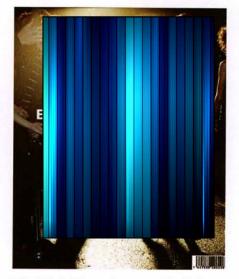
Vision, flexibility, resilience.

What kind of wage can someone command in your job?

Depends on the size of the company, but somewhere between \$200 and 400K.

How creative a job do you have?

Very, but within the guardrails of what's applicable for the customer.



What kind of team do you work with?

In the New York design studio there are about 13 designers, a fabric and yarn department, CAD and graphic department, product development and fit technicians, totalling about 50 people. A separate department of merchandisers and production is based in Ohio.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Be prepared to work really hard, develop a thick skin and a sense of humour. Also, it's a really small world so be aware that your reputation, good or bad, spreads really fast.

What is the best bit about your job?

The camaraderie with my team. Being able to make a living doing something I always wanted to do.

Work really hard, develop a thick skin and a sense of humour.

Express Autumn/Winter 2006. (Photographer: Max Vadukul)

The selling agent

Nancy Stannard

What is your job title?

Partner and Company Director of David Weston Represents, a fashion sales and marketing agency.

Please describe your job.

Selling and marketing designer and fashion clothing to department stores and boutiques worldwide.

Who are your clients and who else have you worked for?

Y-3, Moncler, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Ally Capellino, Winni Lok, Fiorucci, Red or Dead and many more over 20 years.

What was your career path to your current job?

I have always loved fashion and London nightlife and trained as a hairdresser and make-up artist. I worked in department stores selling cosmetics. Because I was such a clubber, I wanted an 'easy' job close to where I lived in the West End. In 1985 I joined a fashionable hairdressing chain to sell their products at wholesale. I became bored with cosmetics and saw a job for a Fashion Showroom Sales Manager advertised in Drapers Record, which I got. It was just clothing, not fashion, but it got me into the wholesale business. When I saw that Fiorucci were advertising for sales agents I went for that. I worked for Fiorucci, UK, for four years. From there I went to work for Wayne Hemingway, then Ally Capellino. After my daughter was born in 1996, it was increasingly difficult to work for someone else, with a lot of travelling, so I set up as an agent working from home. Around 2001 or 2002, David Weston and I merged our businesses together and now have a growing, reputable agency.

What do you do on an average day?

There is no average day. I am typing this from Milan. Last week I was in Paris. David is in New York. We present collections to buyers, write orders, work on sales distribution strategies, liaise with press offices. We can be a designer's right-hand man or simply the one who sells for them. We work at trade fairs, do store visits and staff training, chase debt, pack boxes... It's endless.

What are your normal working hours?

For eight to nine months of the year we could easily work ten-hour days, six days a week. Trade fairs are four days over a weekend of 9.30am to 7pm, then client dinners. For two to three months it can be 10am to 5pm. I often check emails at midnight.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Having an eye for commercial fashion and to understand how retailing works. Likeability helps in any job.

How creative a job do you have?

It's as creative as you want it to be. My partner and I liaise with the designers from the concept of the collection. You have to be able to put outfits together in a commercial way for the buyer to see how it can also work in their store.

What kind of team do you work with?

We are just two partners, with a team of sales people and an office junior. Sales people can be seasonal as the actual selling periods are usually January to March and July to October.

What is the best part about your job?

Beautiful products, travelling and meeting creative people.

And the worst?

Travelling, which always seems to involve 4am alarm calls and working weekends during selling seasons.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Forget it if you are a frustrated designer. It is a sales job. Learn about retail first as many of the same rules apply.

Public Relations (PR)

Alistair Scott

What is your job title?

Associate Director.

Please describe your job.

I am responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of Flax PR, a small lifestyle PR agency. I work with two teams, one for homes/interiors and another for fashion.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

Current clients include John Lewis and Laura Ashley, through to Toast, Jenny Packham, Egg and Ally Capellino. My past clients include Donna Karan, Agent Provocateur, Fake London, Net-a-Porter.com and River Island.

What was your career path to your current job?

Following my degree, I did an MA in Fashion Journalism. Immediately after this, I went to work for Lynne Franks PR, which was about ten years ago. I have since worked for a number of agencies and also in-house at Whistles.

What do you do on an average day?

There isn't really an average day. I know at some point I will talk to clients, have client meetings, meet with the teams for a daily update, look at new editorial coverage, talk to press about story ideas and look at the teams' weekly plans to ensure priorities are being carried out, etc.

What are your normal working hours?

9.00ish to 6.00ish. I don't like working late, but quite often do some work at the weekend.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Strong organisational and communication skills. Being able to recognise a story and sell it to the press. In an agency, the ability to juggle priorities is vital. Self-motivation. Ability to get on well with people, as you are in constant contact with the press/clients.

How creative a job do you have?

It depends upon you and your clients. At the most basic level, every PR needs to be creative in that they have to think of story ideas and ways to communicate them.

With some clients you get to work with them on their collections, to make sure they are relevant for the press, pulling together creative teams to work on look books, brochures, visual material. Advising on overall brand identity.

What kind of team do you work with?

I have six people reporting to me. I then report directly to the agency's owner.

What is the best part of your job?

Seeing the impact your work can have on a client's business.

And the worst?

Clients that won't listen. They think they know better than you, even though they are employing you for your expertise.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Work experience is vital and be prepared to look enthusiastic even if some of the tasks are pretty mundane.

The fashion editor

Kay Barron

What is your job title?

Editor-in-chief and founder of Rag.

Please describe your job.

I am overseeing everything, from the editorial side to the design and development of the paper. I am also holding the purse strings and trying to work within a budget.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

I was a staff writer at *The Face* magazine, then worked as a freelancer for *Vogue*, the *Times* and various other publications.

What was your career path to your current job?

The usual, I suppose: Central St Martins degree in Fashion Communication. On the basis of my degree project I got the job at *The Face*. When *The Face* closed I became a freelancer – being published in a national magazine each month really fattened up my Book. Then after months of starvation and misery I decided to set up my own project.

What do you do on an average day?

Write too many emails, ignore too many phone calls, edit articles that have been commissioned and advise the writers how things can be improved. Liaise with the design team to check on progress (usually slow on all sides). Try to write my own pieces, but turn off the computer in frustration.

What are your normal working hours?

At the moment (one week until deadline) 10am until 4am! Not healthy and really starting to show on me.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Patience, organisation, people skills, the ability to run on little sleep and little money. Having the ability to persuade other people to do things for you for nothing and in very little time.

What kind of wage can someone command in your job?

Probably lots and lots, but I prefer not to think about it as I am not commanding lots and lots. Or even a little.

How creative a job do you have?

I am surrounded by creatives and the project is very creative. But I can be writing articles for half a day and then writing a business plan for the rest.

What kind of team do you work with?

There's me, two art directors, a designer, a fashion editor, lots of contributors who are writing/subbing/styling/shooting/illustrating, etc. The immediate group is small and I find it works better that way.

What is the best bit about your job?

Getting in some genius bits of writing or styling and photography, which restores my faith that the UK isn't overrun by Sunday Supplement writers/stylists/photographers, who are so inoffensive that they say nothing in 1,000 words. Also, working with friends, although that can be touch and go sometimes.

And the worst?

Finding out a week before deadline that we can't have certain images and we then have two pages to fill with... something. In other words, people letting us down. It happens too regularly and is really frustrating.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

If you want to write, write all the time. It is the only way to improve. Keep approaching magazines with ideas and articles. Wear them down with persistence. Knock on doors and remember that people will always let you down.



Rag magazine, edited by Kay Barron.

The fashion illustrator

Richard Gray

Please describe your job.

I am commissioned to create fashion illustrations according to the client's creative brief. The client can vary, from editorial - magazines and books - or could be a couture, prêt-à-porter or high-street designer. I am expected to create a rough/line illustration initially, to showcase my ideas and in response to what I have been asked to do. If everyone involved is happy with this, I will then complete the finished artwork, all within a set time and deadline.

Who are your clients and/or who have you worked for?

The designers/clients I have worked for include: Alexander McQueen, Givenchy, Agent Provocateur, Vivienne Westwood, Miguel Adrover, Julien MacDonald, Kylie Minogue and William Baker, Boudicca, Oasis, Printemps. Editorially, I have worked for Voque Pelle, for Anna Piaggi's D.P. pages for Vogue Italia, V magazine, Madame Figaro, Flaunt, The Observer magazine, Vogue Gioiello, Los Angeles Times magazine, Sleek, The Independent on Saturday magazine, Mixte, lo Donna, Jalouse (USA), Entertainment Weekly, amongst many others.

What was your career path to your current job for?

I studied my degree in Fashion Design at Middlesex University, UK. During this period, I was entered for an illustration competition in Italy celebrating the great fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez. I didn't win, but I came fourth, and was invited to go to Milan to meet Anna Piaggi of Voque Italia. From this meeting I was asked to create illustrations for her D.P. pages in Voque Italia, and also for Vanity magazine. On graduating, these first commissions made it much easier to get other people to see my portfolio, and I pursued my interest in fashion illustration as a career from then on.

What do you do on an average day?

Each day can vary so much from the next, depending on the turnaround of deadlines and the amount of time between them. I could be researching ideas, creating initial concept sketches, or creating final artwork.

What are your normal working hours?

My average working day is probably between 12 and 15 hours, due to the turnaround of work for deadlines. It can, however, be much less than that, and occasionally be much more, and it isn't unknown to work right through the night if necessary to get work completed to deadline. The flipside of this is that you can potentially also get several days off in a row if you are between commissions. Unless you have determinedly structured your life to be this way, the demands of the job means that it is unlikely to ever be 9 to 5, Monday to Friday.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Creativity, the ability to understand a client's creative brief and what they are trying to achieve from your work, and the limitations or expectations of work created towards specific markets. Discipline to make sure that work is done to deadline, even if it means late nights. The ability to sometimes think outside the brief. and to make sure that your personality still comes through in your work - the reason why you have been approached in the first place.

How creative a job do you have?

Very creative indeed. It's the whole reason a client will come to you.

What kind of team do you work with?

I do not have any team at all, there is nothing to delegate. Any ideas have to be drawn by me, and painting is done by myself. The nearest it comes to teamwork is obviously when the client gets in touch and they will be in contact with my agent, and I will then be given the creative brief by the art director of the client.

What is the best bit about your job?

The best part of my job is the unpredictability of the working year. The surprise and delight when designers or magazines you admire ask you to work with them, and the variation in commissions from one to the next. I think it helps that I have not restricted my career to one single style, so I have a lot of variety in what I am asked to do.

And the worst?

It sometimes feels like there are not enough hours in the day, but apart from that there is nothing to complain about.

Any advice you would give to someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

I think illustration is a career that can be very fulfilling, but like all freelance careers there are no guarantees. Not all people will like what you do, as any art and illustration is such a subjective form, so don't be put off if you find your work is not to everyone's tastes, but always listen to constructive criticism and know when to ignore it. Most of all, as important as it is to be creative, it is important to be reliable. The client wants the work done with as little fuss as possible. Everyone is busy, multitasking, with a million problems to solve everyday. If you make their life that little bit easier by completing your work for them to deadline, completely answering their creative brief, they are more likely to come back to you again.

> 'Plans for a Woman', fashion illustration by Richard Gray for Boudicca.



The stylist

Grace Woodward

What is your job title?

Stylist/Fashion consultant.

Please describe your job.

'The girl with the clothes' is what one male photographic assistant was heard to call me. It about sums up how other people view stylists. It is a relatively new job category, catering to the rise in marketing and the celebrity, but the reason why I started was because I believe what we wear tells a story about us. Like any story this can be fiction or fact and the reason why we put clothes on in the first place is not to cover our modesty, but to easily communicate ideas about ourselves. I do turn up with the clothes, but this is preceded by weeks sometimes months - of thought, research and meetings. Frequently stylists work on instinct. Being a cultural sponge, most stylists will not just be able to answer, 'Do I look good in this?' or 'What's hot for next season?', but be able to proffer knowledge on architecture, art, film, design, history, travel - and even football and politics. Stylists create the 'style' and so in a multitude of situations they will be guiding the hair and make-up artists, and even the photographer and the models' poses and attitudes.

Who have you worked for?

I work on a freelance basis, represented by my agent ESP. I consult and style many different brands, from New Look, their in-store and advertising images, to the Dove campaign for Real Beauty. Editorially, I work for many publications in and out of the UK, including the Sunday Times Style and Tank.

What was your career path to your current job?

I studied Art Foundation at Camberwell, specialising in Textiles, and then in pursuit of a more business-based angle went to the London College of Fashion to graduate in BA Fashion Promotion. Soon after, I landed a job at Agent Provocateur where I stayed for four years. leaving to become a stylist and to pursue more writing.

What do you do on an average day?

Research online and read as much as possible. or shoot.

What are your normal working hours?

As long as I can keep my eyes open.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

To be able to see the possibilities in everything, to be inquisitive, to be very thick-skinned and to have strong arms.

How creative a job do you have?

If you work solely for commercial magazines, having to keep a fair amount of your advertisers happy can limit your creativity, but on the whole it's very creative - when you are actually working. In London, I think it is widely believed that poverty equals creativity. I'm not so sure about that.

What kind of team do you work with?

Putting a photo shoot together can mean having anything up to 50 people working on it - set designers, prop stylists, hair and make-up teams, models, photographers and teams of assistants for all of these. Most of which are indispensable.

What is the best bit about your job?

Getting the damn stuff out of my head! People saying that they had seen it, still remembered it and like it.

And the worst?

Returning all the stuff.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

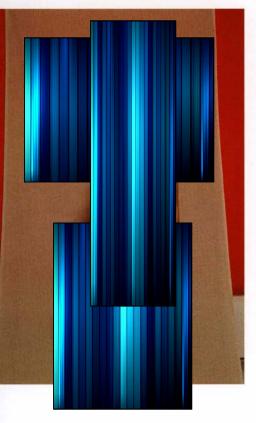
Assist someone good and have some money behind you, preferably a lot.

> Winni Lok Autumn/Winter 2006-2007. (Photographer: Matt Buck / Stylist: Grace Woodward / Model: Jolyon @ Storm Models)



The stylist and photographer

Ruud Van Der Peijl



Mickey M, 2005. (Photographer and stylist: Ruud Van Der Peijl. Credit: www.rudeportraitsof

state.com)

What is your job title?

Stylist/photographer. I used to call it 'style and image-maker', but people do not understand that – you have to be clear about what you do.

Please describe your job.

As a stylist, I am hired by magazines, designers, brands, advertising agencies, etc. to visually present their products, in advertising, shows, films (commercials), billboards, etc. This can go as far as creating images for brands or concepts for campaigns and shows, but I also put garments together to fit an outfit and find the right accessories to go with it. As a photographer, I make portraits in a personal way (art) and sometimes work for a magazine or newspaper.

Who are your clients/who else have you worked for?

As a stylist: G-star, Diesel, Casio, Evisu, Nike, Phillips, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Panasonic, etc.

As a photographer: various Dutch magazines and newspapers.

What was your career path to your current job?

Secondary school, Art Academy (fashion), fashion designer, stylist, photographer.

What do you do on an average day?

I have no average days, every day is different as I work freelance for various clients. For instance, today, I am sort of free as I worked all weekend [it is Monday], but I still have to return styling items to shops and do my bills and emails, etc.

What are your normal working hours?

Also, there are no usual working hours.

What are the essential qualities needed for your job?

Creativity, personality, organisation (I am not organised), intuition and good people skills, a team player.

How creative a job do you have?

Very creative.

What kind of team do you work with?

It depends on the job. I always like to work with an assistant, so a minimum of two people, but, for instance, in a commercial photo shoot, I work with art directors, models, hair and make-up artists, set designers and assistants.

What is the best bit about your job?

Making things work visually, the teamwork, the magic... the money.

And the worst?

The fake people, sometimes waiting a long time and long days.

Any advice you would give someone wanting to get a job in your area of fashion?

Start working, preferably after a suitable education (although that's not necessary) as an assistant, and build your own portfolio (you cannot do without one – it is a visual job!) by collaborating with starting models, photographers, etc. Don't be choosy about jobs or money, do every job you can possibly get as well as non-paying jobs and you will find your way in the fashion jungle.

Internships

Whether you intend to set up your own label or work for a company, it is a good idea to try to complete an internship, also called a 'work placement', 'work experience' or a 'stage' in French, with a fashion company.

Completing one or more internships will introduce you to the fashion industry. You will gain a better understanding of how a fashion company works, and it will ultimately help you to be more professional. Internships count as experience and can be included on your CV.

This kind of work placement is usually unpaid, but they may pay travel or lunch. Newer companies are more likely to take you on as they will be keen for an extra pair of (free) helping hands, especially before the fashion shows. You may be lucky enough to be designing, pattern cutting or sewing, but be prepared to make the tea and run errands. You will gain knowledge by just being around the studio.

An internship can last a few weeks or up to a year. The benefits of doing a longer work placement is continuity. You will have a broader insight into the workings of a fashion company and you will probably also be trusted with more responsibility.

Make yourself indispensable. It is not unheard of for a company to eventually hire someone who has been on an (unpaid) internship. You will also make essential contacts. The fashion industry in each fashion capital is quite small, so the old adage of 'It's not what you know, but who you know' is quite true.

Approach companies by sending them a letter, a copy of your CV and possibly some examples of your work. Try to find out beforehand the name of the person within the company that deals with work placements so that anything you send can get to the right person and follow this up with a phone call. You will hopefully be invited to interview where you will have the opportunity to show your work and sell yourself as an enthusiastic and reliable individual.

If at first you don't succeed, don't give up! You will probably have to contact many companies just to get one positive result.