

FABRIC PLAYS MAJOR ROLE IN FASHION DESIGNING

By Lisa Peterson
Photos by Dan Eisenhauer

In the world of fashion, a custom-tailored wardrobe isn't just about looking good and making a timeless investment; it's also about the fabric. The difference between natural fibers versus man-made fabric and where the garment is manufactured will determine the final cost.

"The cost, look and feel of clothing will vary depending on the textiles used in the design process," said Anita Kealey, Creative Director of the Institute of Design & Technology of South Dakota in Sioux Falls. Kealey's role at the Institute of Design & Technology is mentoring future designers, opening doors to make the contacts in textile sourcing, and making connections that will help her students get their collections on the runway. Her students experience the apparel design business as they develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Kealey is a Custom Tailors & Designers Association (CTDA) Master Tailor and couture designer with her own collections.

"The use of fine textiles is essential when creating bespoke and couture fashion," she said.

"Bespoke and couture clothing are traditionally cut from a pattern drafted from scratch for the

customer. Designers research to anticipate trends in style and color, and they must be able to predict, forecast and make selections of colors and textiles two to three seasons in advance for collections," Kealey said.

"Twice a year, I travel to New York City and rotate each year between the high-end textile markets in Paris, Montreal and Italy for new colors and trends in textures and fibers," she said.

"Textiles used in fine couture fashion and bespoke tailoring use natural fibers. Investment in the fabric and how and where it is produced is what determines the cost and the life of the garment," said Kealey. Most bespoke tailored and made by hand couture fashions are made in the United States, Savile Row in England, Italy, and France.

"Not all clothing is made to last," said Kealey. "The quality of our clothes is in decline and the culprit is a global fashion system that prioritizes 'fast fashion' production."

Kealey said her creations are enhanced by top-quality, hand-picked, fine fabrics.

"High couture clothing cannot exist without top-quality fabrics." ■

