

F.I.T. student's clothes are for dressing to impress

To Esther Nash, every woman is a princess, a superstar, a V.I.P.

"They just haven't found the right wardrobe yet," Nash says, with her trademark high-pitched laugh, from the display room of her Baby Doll/Sugar Daddy Boutique in Chelsea.

The Villager
FASHION

Fashion Institute of Technology student and designer opened the Seventh Ave. store in August. Dressed in a black-and-silver sequined, skin-tight skirt and halter top – which she designed and sewed herself – Nash explains her fashion philosophy and how, at the age of 18 and only a freshman at design school, she ended up owning her first "club ware" store in Brooklyn. While she is a New Yorker to the core – she was born and raised in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn and attended Manhattan's High School of Art and Design – her approach to fashion is more in tune with South Beach, Miami, than it is Chelsea.

Her clothes are made to be versatile, yet sexy – eye-catching accessories to glamorize the sun-loving, party-going set. For those who don't have time to trot off to the "cabana" between sunbathing and the "awards ceremony," she has created a bikini that, with a quick attachment, becomes an evening dress. And, with another swift detachment, becomes suitably revealing for an evening at the night clubs.

"They zip off. They snap. It's like Transformers," says Nash, a fan of cartoons and sitcoms from the 1980s

and 1970s. "These are clothes for people who want to be seen and remembered. Those who want to make the impression of a lifetime."

Anyone wearing her hot pink, crushed velvet, no-tan-line, thong bikini will most likely make an impression to say the least. Nash's zip-off, snap-on fashions have been a passion of hers since she first started dressing up and designing clothes at the age of four. A long-time fan of "playing dress-up," Nash often went to school wearing kimonos, long gowns and cowboy boots.

"My mom always gave me the freedom to wear whatever I wanted," she says.

She even designed and sewed a sheer, white gown for her senior prom.

Soon after beginning her freshman year at F.I.T., Nash decided she wanted to do more to promote her own designs. With money she saved from modeling and waiting tables at her mother's bar, the Landmark Pub in Park Slope, she opened Baby Doll boutique on Second St. in Brooklyn. A year later she opened her second store, Sugar Daddy, next door. Both stores, a mix of moderately-priced vintage clothes and her own designs, are similar to the Baby Doll/Sugar Daddy in Chelsea. Visitors can request their own music to be played on the store's music system, and Nash is quick to offer free fashion advice. She sells "rock star" and retro clothes, as well as handbags from the '50s through the '90s, and handmade jewelry and purses. She designs swimwear and club clothes for petite and athletic women.

A junior at F.I.T., Nash is now a part-time student in order to make time to manage her three stores. Although she makes clothes for the club scene, Nash, a vegetarian since she was four years old, rarely takes part in traditional nightlife activities.

"I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't even drink coffee," she says.

Her big break came about a year ago after a fashion show at Cheetah, a popular Flatiron District night club. After modeling some of her designs, she was asked by the owner to design outfits for the waitstaff. Her design was a sleek and retro animal print pant suit. She frequently holds fashion shows at hot spots throughout the city, including such clubs as Limelight, Spa and China Club.

Baby Doll/Sugar Daddy Boutique is located at 191 Seventh Ave., between 21st and 22nd Sts. To check out more designs by Nash, go online at www.babydollboutique.com.



Villager photo by Curly Lee

Esther Nash

www.thevillager.com

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