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Fall fashion trends – expert advice from those who know

(ARA) - Looking for insight into what your college student wants to wear to school this fall? Want them to fit in with their peers, but still look respectable? Want to know the secrets to saving a buck?

The Fashion Design and Fashion Merchandising students and instructors at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale offer some advice and insight on fall fashion trends.

"Global cultures influence the colorful mosaic of fall '09, creating a new universal attitude," says Chelsea Rouso, a fashion design instructor at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. "Through a mixture of motifs, layering occurs, allowing for uniqueness and individuality. Deep ethnic colors and patterns are appearing on scarves, skirts and knit dresses worn over leggings or textured tights. These 'boho' looks capture the relaxed approach to the easy-does-it mind-set."

Rouso, who is currently writing a book on fashion forecasting, has more than 20 years experience as a designer and design director in the New York fashion world, including Datiani. As business in the early '90s was changing, she developed the concept for an artisan-inspired collection called Earth Song, clothing with natural and earthy appeal that was sold to stores and catalogs throughout the United States. "I am now committed to 'giving back' through teaching," she says.

Recent graduates of The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale Fashion programs have their own opinions on fall fashion. "College students think about finding themselves," says Karlee Smith, who received a bachelor's of science degree in fashion merchandising and immediately went to work at the VF Corporation in Atlanta, Ga., as Vassarette merchandiser. "In essence, they create their own trends. At least most do who care to be unique. Even if they are on a budget, college students can find affordable clothes and accessories at places like Forever 21, Zara and Express."

Smith's classmate Elana Bloom concurs with making your own fashion statements and that college students care about their clothes. "I do think college students still think about fashion when they dress for class. Although, I do not think fashion is what is determined in their mind when they are shopping for their class attire," she says. Comfort, convenience and chic are ideal for a college student who faces long days schlepping books, laptops, and other college necessities. Let's face it, can a girl walk up three flights of stairs in 4-inch platforms and make it without breaking a sweat or falling?

"Today less is more and being chic is not being bedazzled or wearing ultra tight clothing," Bloom adds. "It is about accessorizing your bamboo cotton sweat outfit. Attraction is all in the hair, makeup and the accessories. Who has time to put together a three-piece outfit at 6 a.m. for an 8 a.m. class? Throw on a comfy cute sweat suit by Pink Lotus or a cotton maxi dress by Lani, Havanas sandals, beaded bracelets, sunnies and a quick blow dry to the hair and you're ready to go."

Rouso agrees that when it comes to accessorizing, students are keen. "They are adding interest to their outfits by using bright pops of color to a neutral palette of black and grey," she says. "From shoes to sweaters or necklaces to handbags, the intense hues are adding color excitement. Crimson red, associated with strength, desire and power is being worn by girls and guys in jackets, bags and accessories."

Jeans – a college fashion staple – are also getting an updated look this season. Rouso continues, "The looks for denim this season include skinny jean silhouettes along with more relaxed shapes that are cinched at the ankle – often tucked into gladiator sandals or boots. Denim is light in color, distressed and embellished with studs and embroideries – a flashback to the '80s."

Bloom also suggests Nordstrom's B.P section and Target as places to find affordable accessories. "Wide headbands or scarves used as headbands, chunky beads and rings, and fun play jewelry embellish any outfit. I also think everyone should accessorize with a nice manicure and pedicure. This always gives a mini makeover."

Both Bloom and Smith share more than their fashionable interests. They were the first two high school teens to win full scholarships in The Art Institutes Passion for Fashion Competition in 2006. They decided that Fort Lauderdale was the shared destination to pursue their design and merchandising goals. They met for the first time in New York at the scholarship presentation and have been making news ever since.

Smith is originally from Simi Valley, Calif., and a graduate of South Forsyth High School, in Cumming, Ga. Bloom, of Boca Raton, Fla., is a graduate of Alexander W. Dreyfoos Jr. School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, Fla.

To learn more about The Art Institutes schools, visit www.artinstitutes.edu/nz.

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