

Behind the Seams: Cynthia Rowley

Inspirational by design

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The Art Institutes have paved the way for many great designers and we have chosen to highlight one of the top female designers and one of the most recognized personalities in fashion - Cynthia Rowley.

Her education began at Arizona State University, from there she went on to The Art Institute of Chicago. During her senior year at AI Chicago, she sold her first collection of 18 pieces to Marshall Fields department store. Upon graduation of the Art Institute in 1983 she moved to New York and continued her education. She attended Parsons School of Design, where she later taught classes, as well as the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Cynthia Rowley was only 7 years old when she designed her first dress. Since then, the Cynthia Rowley collection has grown to include menswear, jeans, eyewear, lingerie, handbags, small leather goods and a fragrance. Her daring and whimsical designs earned her the Perry Ellis award (Council of Fashion Designers of America) for New Fashion Talent in 1994. She then joined forces with the shoe company Keds to design a line in 1998. With her growing success, she has been featured on television stations such as MTV, VH1 and E! She has also been featured in magazines such as Harper's Bazaar, W, Vogue, Elle, and Glamour. She is also frequently showcased in the New York Times for the "unique interior of her homes". In 1999 Rowley and her

best friend Ilene Rosenzweig co-authored a book called Swell: A Girls Guide to the Good Life. It went on to become a best-selling novel as well as inspiring a line of home products. Aside from having her own label, she has also designed a line of concert tour tee-shirts for her friend Bruce Springsteen.

On a personal note, in her spare time Rowley enjoys anything adventurous from skydiving to surfing and she is also a collector of contemporary art.

For her Spring 2008 collection, Rowley was inspired by the '70s in France and is described by Joanna Rodger of Style.com as having a "sporty but stylish tomboy look". The collection includes long, narrow and breezy silk dresses, lean fine knee-length knits that are cinched at the waist. She is wonderful example of how to combine sophistication and a flirty feeling with clothing.

Her ever growing empire is sold in exclusive Cynthia Rowley boutiques in Japan, New York, Los Angeles Chicago, East Hampton as well as online and high end department stores.

Though the Art Institute cannot be credited for all of her successes, it definitely played a large role in where she is today. She is one of the many triumphant stories that the Art Institute has to offer new students and encourage present students to succeed.