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HAUTE COUTURE
SCHOOL OF FASHION ARTS & DESIGN

Joanne Dice

Owner and Creative Director

Haute Couture School of Fashion Arts & Design

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After having successfully operated her own design company for 15 years, owner and creative director Joanne Dice turned all her passion for designing towards a new direction... teaching. She now shares all her experience, passion and intricate knowledge of fashion design, art, sewing and pattern making with students of all ages. We sat down with Joanne to learn more about fashion design.

DABSTER – What is the Haute Couture School of Fashion Arts and Design?

JOANNE DICE – We are the only private fine arts school in Vaughan which specializes in the fashion arts. Our courses are both for hobby and for those looking to pursue a fashion career. We offer fine arts, fashion arts, fashion advertising, fine sewing and cartooning courses, as well, we help students prepare their portfolios and apply to the top universities and colleges for fashion and fine arts programs. We work with the same textbooks universities use, so quite often we can help a student get a job or apprenticeship directly.

DHB – Many high schools offer design courses. What makes your courses different?

JD – Unlike the high schools, all of our teachers are fashion designers with fine arts training, allowing us to take students beyond the basics. In fact, the universities we are trying to get these students into, are where our teachers come from. What we teach 10 and 11 year olds is what the high schools are teach-



ing in grade 11 or 12. They teach you how to read a pattern; we teach you how to create one through drafting. Their fashion courses are basic and don't allow the student to deviate from what they have been taught. We teach them how to think, choose and design. With only 5 to 9 students in each class, we are able to work with each individual one on one. We're here for the students first, and as a business second.

DHB – You offer so many different courses with so many opportunities. How would you describe your students?

JD – We have two types of students, those who want to pursue a career and those who do it for their own personal enjoyment. It is a great form of personal expression for people of any age and experience. I have students as young as 9 and some who have grandchildren much older than that. A few years ago, I had a lady say she wanted to make her daughter's communion gown, and she did. Now she just finished her second gown for her other daughter. I also have a lot of students that are in university, college or have finished design school and come here to learn the things that they don't teach there, such as Couture.

DHB – What is Couture?

JD – Couture is the true and ultimate design art form. It is the old world method of sewing that has been adapted by top designers in the world like Versace and Coco Chanel- only 200 design houses in the world do it. The majority of the garment is made by hand with certain stitches and techniques that take it from regular sewing into Couture, very different than pret à porter. People want to learn it to have an art form under their belt, a means of expression for their personal style and taste. It takes a minimum of 150-200 hours for one garment; it really is a labour of love. They don't teach it in most universities anymore because they are preparing students for industry. But if you want to go into private business, Couture is something you can do which is why we offer the course.

DHB – How would someone know which courses are right for them?

JD – I always sit down and discuss each student's personal goals, I need to know what they want to learn. Then we define a time frame, and provided they come to the classes and do the homework, they always make it. When you complete the program and fulfill all of the set criteria, you receive a certificate, so if you do choose to apply to a university or college, you have proof of your dedication. Within two years you can make some great ready to wear clothes, possibly evening wear as well.

DHB – What advice do you have for someone looking to pursue a fashion career?

JD – Start early and take your time. The sooner you decide that you want to go to college or university for fashion the better. There are often over 1000 applicants for as few as 75 spots at Ryerson and to get in you must have an amazing portfolio and demonstrate that you can design and sew

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well. I would say you need a minimum of 2 years to get the most out of our program and prepare a great portfolio. There is a huge misconception that fashion design is easy, but it's hard to get into a fashion university and it is even harder to stay in. My students are so far ahead that their chances of dropping out are minute- none of my students have dropped out thus far, and they always enter the marketplace after university.

DHB – How can someone who has never picked up a needle and thread get started?

JD – Take a general interest course. Every Tuesday morning from 9:30am-12:30pm we have a general interest class tailored to your needs, you give as much time as you can and learn as much as you want. There's no certificate, but there also is also no pressure and no homework.

COMPANY INFO

- ☞ Evening, Day and Weekend classes
- ☞ General Interest classes Tuesdays 9:30am-12:30pm
- ☞ Fashion Design, Sewing and Pattern Making
- ☞ Pencil Drawing, Pastel, Prisma Colour
- ☞ Specialty sewing courses such as Couture
- ☞ Portfolio Preparation
- ☞ All instructors are fashion designers
- ☞ Exciting fun-packed Summer Half-Day camps for kids
- ☞ Cartooning and Animation classes available