

creative workforce fellowship

cwf

featured fellows

Featured Fellow:

Valerie Mayèn
Fashion design and illustration
Owner/designer of Yellowcake-
contemporary clothing company



2010 - Cleveland

Why have you chosen Cuyahoga County as a place to live and work?

I moved to Cleveland in the winter of 2002 to transfer to CIA to finish my undergraduate BFA in illustration and graphic design. Upon completion, I found that there was a bevy of talented underground artists that were off the radar but so creative and I wanted in. I stuck around to do shows and collaborate with Cleveland artists of all stripes. In that time I was also attending part time at Virginia Marti in Lakewood for a second degree in Fashion design. Though I never finished the program, I found that the resources for designers, though spare, were rich and helpful. Cleveland's history of involvement in the garment industry is well versed so there are still remnants of sewing resources here today. I've met with such helpful people in the trade and I am hopeful that the garment industry can grow and thrive here once we get back to our roots as sewing craftsmen. Cuyahoga county is affordable, livable, beautiful and viable. Though it's not New York or Chicago, we have our own perks and advantages of which I am taking full advantage of. Here in Cleveland, I've been able to

secure a more than affordable living space and generous work space, I have a never ending resource of interns from surrounding design schools and I have a solid handful of suppliers and sourcing agents for my technical and business needs. There aren't many designers in the city, if any at all, besides myself-so I plan to stick around as long as I'm needed, and lately, it seems there is a swarm of young designers and students hungry for apprenticeship and design opportunities of which I am happy to provide.

What is your favorite place, event, or "hidden gem" in Cuyahoga County?

My favorite place in Cuyahoga County is Pulaski Square, it's right on the strawbridge plaza that is adjacent to the convocation center building and municipal parking lot on lakeside and e.9th. The square overlooks the Rock hall, the Science center, Browns stadium and the lake. It's a beautiful compilation of all things Cleveland and when the train passes underway, it's so remniscent of city life. I also love Ohio City and Tremont, everything in those neighborhoods are gems-Cookie & a Cupcake, Lilly's Handmade Chocolates, Lolitas, La Bodega, Lava Lounge, the Westside Market, Johnny Mangos, Le Petite Triangle-everything, I love it all-I'm a weekly patron!

Who or what has influenced you locally and elsewhere?

Tom Schorg, the staff at CPAC and Michael Symon. Tom and CPAC have instilled my faith in the city and given me the votes of confidence and support I need as an artist to grow and move forward. They have been readily available to me when I needed and are invaluable to my career as a Cleveland based artist. Also, it was Tom who once told me "live in Cleveland, tour the world" and that statement made so much sense to me and led me to truly see the value and possibility of making it as an artist in Cleveland. Michael Symon is an inspiration and influence because he is a living breathing example of a creative entrepreneur who has remained local and utilizes local resources to grow his brand and business. He is a city champion to me because he is successful, grounded, has solid ethics and creates wonderful award winning restaraunts with fantastic food. He supports the city and its vibrancy and for that I am motivated to do the same!

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How do you generate new ideas?

I try to feed my creativity and ideas by thinking of problems that need solutions. Mainly as they pertain to fashion and accessories, I try to think of practical ideas that will help men and women live simply with clothing that is more functional and smart. For example, simple things like skirts with hidden pockets, belts that are scarf hybrids and wearable storage basically.

What is the hardest part about creating?

The hardest part about creating is finding the time to do it all. There are always new ideas, new techniques and new mediums to explore there is just not enough time to do it all while trying to maintain an income.

What is the best moment you have had creating or presenting your work?

The best moment I've had with my work was when I presented to Tim Gunn, Korto Mommolu and the producers of Project Runway in Chicago last may. It was exhilarating and encouraging. Tim loved my work, thought it was impeccable and had nothing but good things to say about my aesthetic. Korto (last seasons top 3 finalists) even said that she wanted to buy a piece! I also love creating with my interns. I enjoy working with them and feeling that we are both learning and gaining from the other.

How has the Creative Workforce Fellowship affected your career as an artist or your art work?

I cannot even begin to explain how the Creative Workforce Fellowship has affected my career as an artist. I have been able to work only one day a week on non creative work and the rest is all design business. I work 40 plus hours a week on Yellowcake business, sales, marketing and design. I have more time to teach my interns (I have 3 currently and 5 lined up for summer!) I've been able to take my business to the next level by sophisticating things more. I've acquired an accountant and traveled to New Mexico, Atlanta, New York and Philadelphia for trade shows, seminars, classes and supplies. I've been able to design a new collection and sub-line to my current work to broaden my consumer base and price points. Not to mention I've had the opportunity to update my workspace, make it more energy efficient and safer to live in. I've also had the rare chance to be able to invest more time into my health. I exercise more, prepare healthier meals, have dental insurance - the list goes on and on. Basically, without the fellowship, I would still be scraping by at a snails pace, unable to get a foot in the door. Because the city believed in me, and others saw the value in my work-I'm able to make a go of it from here on out. I just can't wait for the next cycle to keep things moving to the next level!

For more information on Valerie, please visit
<http://www.yellowcakeshop.com>

For more information about the Creative Workforce Fellowship or the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, please visit www.cpacbiz.org or contact (216) 575-0331 or info@cpacbiz.org.

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