

ZENSATIONS

MAGAZINE

INSPIRING THROUGH
FASHION AND FILM

Lauren JW Grant
Innovative
Jewelry Designer
to the Stars

**Venus
Williams**
Tennis Icon
Entrepreneur
Author!

Author of
Modeling Bible

**Vaiiva
Tuckuviene**

“The Road to
Modeling Success”

Ger Ger
World Renowned
Artist & Photographer



Festival for the
independent
minded
filmmakers

Photography: Viktorija Pashuta
Design: Tatiana Shabelnik
Jewelry: T & R Accessories
Shoes: John Fluevog
MUA's: Lupe Moreno, Aurora Galarza
Hair Stylist: Carina Tafuly, Bethy Mireles
Model: Anna Asia
Photographer's Assistant: Kristina



TATIANA

SHABELNIK

A JOURNEY FULFILLED

How far West can you go? My journey to the West started with my huge curiosity about what ‘The West,’ or Western culture, meant for someone born in the Soviet Union under the Communist regime. When I was a child, we had little to no information about what life in ‘The West’ was like. Every country and political system has pluses and minuses, and I can honestly say that I feel blessed that I was born in the Soviet Union because I received an excellent education. Our culture was very rich, but economically speaking, it was not the best situation. That did, however, make us stronger, and we appreciated more of what we did have. For those of us who grew up in the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, traveling to ‘The West’ wasn’t easy (if not impossible). I knew that I needed to become fluent in English, so while I was a student at the Library School at the Belarusian University of Culture, I turned the study of English into my passion. The process of learning a foreign language was fascinating to me. I attended many events where I could meet people from Western Europe, England and the United States. It was my German, Dutch, and American friends that helped me believe that visiting ‘The West,’ one day, was attainable.

“... when people ask me about my philosophy, I express it in two simple words, ‘Dream Big!’ If you have dreams and you really want to accomplish them, there is no reason why you can’t.”

In 1992, I was invited by the Rotarians from the Netherlands to spend my summer as a Rotary youth exchange student. The Rotarians took the initiative and organized my trip. I managed to get a visa for West Germany, and my host family helped me get to Holland



Photography, MUA & Hair: Maksim Leonov
Design: Tatiana Shabelnik
Model: Tatiana Shabelnik

from there. What stayed with me and guided me through many years to come was the phrase my host said to me. With a fearless attitude, he told me, “There is no word for ‘impossible’ in my dictionary.” So when people ask me about my philosophy, I express it in two simple words, ‘Dream Big!’ If you have dreams and you really want to accomplish them, there is no reason why you can’t.

When I look back at my life, it was my dreams that kept me moving West. I wanted to get a graduate school education either in the UK or the United States. It took me less than a year to get two USIA (IREX) scholarships and to reach the United States! Upon arriving to the U.S., my American journey started in the Deep South...in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It took me three years of graduate school at LSU, four years of working as a librarian and web manager for the Michigan Technological University, and then my life took me even further West to my dreamland of palm trees and the Pacific Ocean. Even as a child, I dreamt of palm trees and a warm climate. And today, I can say that I’ve spent the past fifteen years in sunny Los Angeles!

I feel that I have accomplished so many goals and dreams in my life...and yet, I haven’t even mentioned the word “fashion.” My other childhood dream was connected to fashion. I never talked about it until three years ago, when I decided at the age of 44 that it was time to start; better late than never. In fact, when I was 16, my original plan had been to attend Vitebsk Technological University to get my degree in fashion design. But God had a different path for me, and I followed it. As I look at where I am now, I believe things happen to people at the right time, and the right people come into your life also at just the right time. I do not regret that my fashion training didn’t begin when I was 16. If you have a passion or a talent for something, you will be able to realize it at any age. I recall two students that were determined to receive their degrees back when I was working as an evening librarian at the reference desk of Rio Hondo College’s Library. These students were both in their 60s and didn’t worry about their age; that was inspiring to me.

Recently, I came across a video on Youtube called, “Monolog,” created by a well-known Belorussian fashion designer. I was very touched by what he said. The key message was that the most difficult thing in life is to live simply; to live without expectations from

yourself, from others, or from the world. Instead of trying to be someone or prove something, the key is to just be ourselves and live with the talents that God gave us. I, myself, did not have any formal education in fashion design; I consider myself a raw artist. I grew up with a physicist mom who was immensely talented in all forms of arts and crafts. She is the one who inspired me; the one that I got my skills and talent from.

“The key message was that the most difficult thing in life is to live simply; to live without expectations from yourself, from others, or from the world.”

A very common question I get from the media is where my inspiration for bold colors comes from. It is certainly connected with my life in the Soviet Union, and my love for arts in different forms. I not only started drawing and painting at a very young age, I also sketched outfits, and learned how to knit from my grandmother. When I was about 6 or 7 years old, I remember taking a Christmas card and drawing an identical color copy of it. Later on, when I was about 15 years old, I started attending an art studio in Minsk. I attended this studio for three years. I painted with water color, and drew portraits of human bodies using pencils. I was fascinated with color and the meaning of color in different cultures. I’m not interested in “safe” in my color choices. My signature use of orange reflects enthusiasm, warmth, and happiness, while capturing a sense of energy and cheerfulness. As a Soviet immigrant, I can say that my selection of colors embodies the qualities of risk-taking, physical confidence, vivacious competition, and independence.

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The inspiration for my latest collection came from the Elefantasia Charitable Project. On March 19, 2015, I showcased my Fall/Winter 2015 Collection with Style

Photography: Tatiana Shabelnik
Fashion Designer: Tatiana Shabelnik
Model: Jordan Anthony Swain
Creative Director: Jordan Anthony Swain





TATIANA SHABELNIK

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Fashion Week in Los Angeles. Ava J. Holmes, producer of Elephantasia, was also at Style Fashion, and asked me to contribute a design to the project. The Elephantasia Project is a collaborative effort between thirteen different international designers in hopes of raising awareness and funds to protect African elephants. I designed my dress for the Elephantasia show in May 2015, and decided that my new collection would be based on the same theme; animals and nature. As a part of my latest collection, I made dresses with prints of trees, birds, and insects. The name I chose for the signature dress I designed is the 'monkey dress.' I was born in the Year of the Monkey, and this year, 2016, is my year. Both of my 'elephant' and 'monkey' dresses were hand-painted by a very talented Belarusian batik painter, Zina Fediunina. I am very proud of Ava's work; the Elephantasia

Project was recently covered by the UK VOGUE and by the New York Times. I showcased my latest collection at L.A. Fashion Week with ARTR HEARTS Fashion, as well as, at Runway Dubai.

“Fashion and glamour unite all cultures and races.”

The name of my line is “CONTRAST.” I consider myself a child of the world as I have friends from all over. I design for different cultures, races, and nationalities. Fashion and glamour unite all cultures and races. I always make sure that I represent all races and nationalities through my models on world runways as well as fashion editorials. I continue working with natural fibers such as silks and chiffons; I love the flow and feel of light fabrics. It is also a reflection of freedom for me. In my work, I have tried to contrast contemporary Los Angeles glitz and glamour with a vivid ancestral past in rural Belarus. My heritage culture is very important to me. As you look at my designs, you will see that they are rooted in the styles of Belorussian folk dresses from my youth with a modern twist. I provide a cosmopolitan, playful blend of colors and textures inspired by my fearless personality. As a

longtime Rotarian, my collection also takes inspiration from the contrast of poverty and wealth in the world, and the psychological power of vibrant clothing during tough political, social, and economic times. This



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global inspiration is also reflected in the details and craftsmanship of my designs. When people wear my clothes, I hope they will feel a connection with people everywhere; that we are all citizens of the world. I feel that I belong to the category, as Franca Sozzani called it, “Globalallure.” She has said, “The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.” I agree with that. I want my admirers to feel unique, independent, and free from any limitations dictated by the customs of different countries. I want them to make a statement when they wear my clothing and jewelry. I am working on building my brand, doing everything myself with a very limited budget, and putting endless hours after my full-time job at the college. Even though it is very busy now, I think it is important to enjoy the moment, enjoy the process of creating art. I am not in a rush for millions, as a true artist enjoys art more than dollar signs.

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