

Ivy League grad
bends the
boundaries of
fashion with
recycled
creations



Julia Shapiro of Andover, seen working in her loft-style studio in Lawrence, above and left, is challenging the conventions of mainstream fashion with her designs.

NOTHING GOES UNWORN

Challenging the status quo in the fashion world is one very smart, edgy and radically thinking fashionista from Andover who once wowed the hometown crowd with her bubble skirts at a Keep It

Wild fashion show.

Julia Shapiro was a seventh-grader at Doherty Middle School when she designed the skirts made from bubble wrap for the popular fashion show hosted annually by Andover Youth Services.

Shapiro colorfully lined the skirts, sewed a waistband for each one and asked friends to model them.

The crowd liked the look designed by the tween with a long mohawk and an offbeat fashion sense. Shapiro would take

By JUDY WAKEFIELD • Photos by PAUL BILODEAU

J SHAP fashions



From left, Beanie Baby thigh-high boots, Mickey Mouse hot shorts and a Beanie Baby bustier, all designed by Julia Shapiro.

part in Keep It Wild through high school and says it was a great opportunity to express herself. Now 22, she has continued to pursue that wild side.

She's recently back from crashing New York Fashion Week, where she traveled to get her label, J SHAP, some attention.

Noticed she was, as security officials escorted her along with her crew of models dressed in a variety of her original designs off the grounds at Lincoln Center. Pants made from T-shirts, a coat and shoes crafted from discarded Beanie Babies, and T-shirts embellished with stuffed animals are a sampling of what those flash-mobbing models wore.

Nothing goes to waste when Shapiro gets to work on a piece in her small studio in a rehabbed Lawrence mill on Canal Street. Bags of other people's thrown-out stuff surround her and inspire her.

She designs clothes using donations otherwise headed for Good Will or the trash. In fact, a shout-out on the Andover Mums Facebook page brought her several bags of inventory, including those Beanie Babies that otherwise were headed to the landfill.

"It's the concept of bricolage, which is the creation from available materials married with the punk rock DIY (do it yourself) aesthetic," she says.



From left, a Simpsons leotard, recycled T-shirt slouch pants and a lace-up skater dress, by Julia Shapiro.

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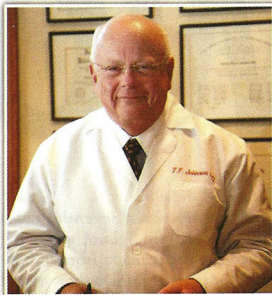
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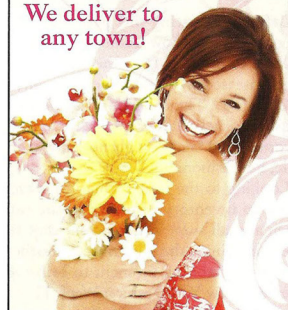


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Fashion designer Julia Shapiro's loft-style studio in Lawrence is filled with reclaimed items she uses to create her clothing and accessories.

CLEANING HOUSE?

If you are cleaning out your closets, attics, garage or any other space, contact Julia Shapiro, who just might work your trash into her designer clothing collection.

She's always hunting for donations of clothes, toys, shoes, fabric, stuffed animals and other items to build her brand. Email jshapworld@gmail.com. Any items she does not use will be given to Good Will. To learn more about Shapiro and her creations, go to www.facebook.com/jshapworld or follow @jshapworld on Instagram.

Vera Wang, Jeremy Scott and other top designers be damned, Shapiro believes. She says the "business of fashion" dictates their designs, which she calls boring and conservative.

The recent graduate of Cornell University in New York doesn't follow the crowd. She sports a large T-shirt from her Aliens collection. Her bleached-blond hair with chrome highlights is pinned into a messy updo.

"Fashion should be treated as an art with individuals having unique opinions, rather than being dictated to or brainwashed by the business of fashion," she says.

Shapiro, the daughter of Ken and Jean Shapiro, grew up on Wildwood Road and graduated from Andover High School in 2010.

"I didn't want to waste my Andover education," she says. "My sister (Clare, 25) went to Cornell and when I found out they had an apparel design major, I went."

A study-abroad option took her to London during her junior year and that's where she says she gained the confidence to launch her brand. She says her unique line of fashions is intended for buyers who want to shake up their wardrobes a bit.

Before graduating this past May, she staged a fashion show featuring her senior collection inspired by a "hermit survivalist obsessed with the impending alien apocalypse." The collection was praised by the Cornell Daily Sun as "the crowd favorite," and "surprisingly not only wearable, but fashionable."

Looking to the future, Shapiro is creating an inventory of pieces so she can open a small store in a city some day. In the meantime, she's planning another attention-grabbing moment to bring to the next New York Fashion Week. **A**

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