

Designing fashion for real life, one piece at a time

It sounds like a dream. From women diving into the fashion world and creating their own brands? A few years ago, most of us wouldn't have even entertained the idea. Rivkah Ben-Sorek didn't either, until she took the plunge. And because of that, she's now building a brand from scratch and discovering just how far creativity and determination can take you.



How did you get started in fashion?

Rivkah: I actually studied engineering and worked in that field for a while. But when I became a mom, I realized my clothes just weren't convenient—pumping at work was a struggle. I had ideas for maternity and nursing wear that I wanted to bring to life, but I had no real background in fashion. I knew how to sew a little, but that was about it.

What pushed you to move forward and turn your ideas into a brand?

Rivkah: I discovered the ICA Fashion Design Program and saw that it was exactly what I was looking for: no fluff, just practical skills for starting a brand, both technically and on the business side. It was only a year long, which was perfect compared to a four-year degree, and it gave me incredible value. Plus, it was geared towards beginners, which was exactly what I needed.

Walk me through how the program took you from beginner to fashion designer.

Rivkah: I didn't consider myself a creative person at first. But I learned that creativity doesn't just happen—it's a process. You start small, thinking about who you're designing for, what problems your clothes solve, and what world your designs live in. From there, you gather inspiration, select fabrics, and finally put pen to paper. Seeing my own ideas come to life was amazing.

What did classes look like?

Rivkah: I joined the program remotely, via Zoom. We did a lot of work on Adobe Illustrator. I honestly wouldn't be able to do a thing without it! We really went into all aspects of fashion. Aside from creating the clothes, there are many technical details involved, such as making patterns, communicating with factories, and considering hardware like zippers, buttons, etc. And that's all before even touching the business side, which was fascinating: marketing, pricing, financials—things I wouldn't have even thought about on my own.

How did the program take you from learning to creating?

Rivkah: Two things come to mind. First, with fabrics, the instructors encouraged

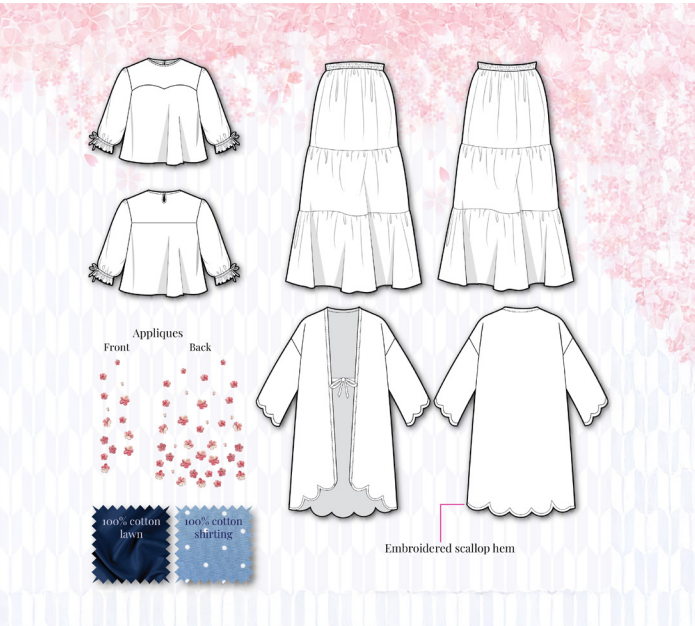
us to visit local fabric stores, feel how fabrics drape, their sheen, texture, and breathability. Second, through our presentations that we worked on throughout the program. I based my portfolio on my plan to create a maternity brand, which helped me translate my vision into a tangible concept and showcase it to the class. It made the idea real.

Any highlights from the program that stand out?

Rivkah: The instructors. They gave personalized feedback and guided me as I figured out what I wanted to focus on. Even after the course, they're still a resource—one recently sent me a fashion trend report, which was incredibly helpful. That support is amazing. »»»



Perennials Fashion fabric board



Perennials Fashion concept sketch

A word with Leah Brisk

Leah graduated the ICA Fasion Design program in 2023 and today works for a successful Jewish women's and teen contemporary brand.

Why did you join the program?

I wanted to turn my passion into a career and spend my days doing something I truly enjoy.

What was a highlight of the program?

The connection with the teachers was really special. There was so much feedback and open communication. They wanted each of us to reach our potential as designers and pushed us to grow.

How did your ICA training help you in your career?

I got a job 10 months into the program, working in the backend office of a women's wear brand, and built myself up to become the founder's right hand. I now get to brainstorm with her, choose fabrics, coordinate with factories, create tech packs, and present the line—supporting her through all the nitty-gritty of launching collections and running the brand.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Honestly, the best part is seeing how thankful people are. It's meaningful to help women in our community dress beautifully. I wasn't sure at first if I wanted to go into fashion; it's not the typical career, and also felt very superficial. But once I got into it, I realized the goal of creating tzniyus clothing that makes women and girls feel good in what they wear is truly impactful. I feel like I'm making a difference.

(continued)

What about your classmates, what are they doing now?

Rivkah: They're all over the fashion world. Some run their own brands, others work for heimish fashion companies, and a few even broke into major labels. One of my classmates actually interned at Oscar de la Renta and then landed a job at Cinq à Sept.

Tell us more about your fashion brand.

Rivkah: I'm deep in the design stages of my maternity and nursing wear brand, Perennials. Right now, I'm working on a mini collection—it's all sketched out, and I'm figuring out fits and fabrics. The next step is hiring a professional pattern maker so I can start creating samples.

Any challenges as you work on the brand?

Rivkah: Not exactly challenges, just complex aspects to figure out. For example, the technical details patterns are tricky to figure out because of the hidden nursing features I'm including. But I have the background to tackle it, thanks to ICA. We went in-depth on creating Tech Packs, which are basically blueprints for manufacturers to bring all the design details to life in the actual garment.

A young and exciting work in progress, perennialsfashion.com is an aesthetic, feminine maternity brand geared toward the expectant or nursing mom, coming soon to your closet. Like Rivkah, all you need is a dream and the ICA knowledge to start your very own clothing line. The next great brand could be yours! ✨

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