

DRESSED 101

Educational Materials for DRESSED Documentary

Introduction

DRESSED was filmed from April 2007 to September 2011. It encompasses the journey of designer, Nary Manivong, as he attempts to self-finance the show of his collection for fashion week in New York. The collection shown in the film is Spring 2008, with updates showing his collections Fall 2008, Spring and Fall 2009 and NAHM Fall 2010, with his new design partner Alexandria Hilfiger.

It is very important to us as filmmakers to show an accurate depiction of the fashion industry. As many television shows have brought fashion to the masses, the journey of a designer to self-finance and information about “after the sample collection” has never been addressed in detail.

In DRESSED, we tell the story of what it is like for a young designer with limited or no resources to pursue his dream in fashion. For aspiring fashion students, it is important to understand what undertaking a career in the industry really takes with time, commitment and financing. We hope that DRESSED and these materials will help fuel the dreams of many. By providing thought provoking questions and industry information, our mission is to support students of fashion in making intelligent and informed choices moving forward.

Included in these materials are:

- Introduction, Synopsis, About the Producers and Director’s Statement
- About Nary Manivong
- Discussion Starters after viewing DRESSED
- Exercises and Research Paper Topics
- About Loas
- About The Garment Center in New York City
- Homelessness in The United States
- A word from our Experts

These materials are designed for use in the all levels of educational study.

We wish you tremendous success in your fashion careers!

Synopsis

The documentary DRESSED is the inspiring story of self-taught clothing designer Nary Manivong, who defied the odds of a broken childhood and homelessness to pursue his ultimate dream, a showing his collection at New York's Fashion Week. Nary's story shows the strength of the human spirit as he navigates through one of the toughest businesses to achieve his goal and the one that brings him hope in the face of personal hardships. This is a truly inspiring story that unfolds against a backdrop of the fashion industry in New York.

Woven within his story are accounts and commentary from leading fashion industry experts, celebrities, and designers who relate their own perspective about the fashion industry. Industry experts include Mickey Boardman, Paper Magazine; Simon Collins, Dean of Fashion at Parsons, The New School for Design; Simon Doonan, Author and Creative Ambassador-at-Large at Barney's, NYC; George Furlan, Fashion Industry Consultant; Mary Gehlhar, Author "The Fashion Designer's Survival Guide"; Margaret Hayes, President, the Fashion Group International, Nanette Lepore, Designer, Fern Mallis, Consultant and creator of New York Fashion Week; Robert Verdi, Celebrity Fashion Stylist and Lynn Yeager, legendary fashion writer.

DRESSED was filmed in New York City, New York and Columbus, Ohio.

David Swajeski Director's Statement

I've always been drawn to stories about people who rise above their circumstances and do extraordinary things regardless of the odds. We all have our own journey through life. We all have talents and gifts but also limitations, obstacles and challenges to overcome. What makes one person succeed while someone equally as talented with more resources fail? Sometimes it comes down to the fabric of an individual's spirit, but more specifically an individual's belief, passion and dedication to follow one's dream.

I first met Nary Manivong, the subject of our film DRESSED in 2007. I was directing a commercial in Cincinnati Ohio and had just started prep on a new documentary. During a break in filming the commercial, I spoke with the stylist on the shoot about the documentary I was starting. Her response; "I think I have a better story for you". That stylist was Laura Baciu, a good friend from Columbus, Ohio, who produced Nary's first fashion show when (unknown to her) he was a homeless teenager. Laura, a member of Fashion Group International, joined the production team as Consulting Producer.

Back in New York, Laura introduced me to Nary. I was immediately drawn to his spirit, honesty and sincerity. His story was inspiring and there was one common theme to his tale, everything he accomplished was a result of an unwavering belief that he would succeed. I wanted to find out more about how someone who was homeless as a teenager , with no training or support would even dream to become a fashion designer in one of the most competitive industries in the US. His determination, spirit, his unique life story and his chosen profession I believed would make an amazing film. Nary agreed to start filming and one week later we began. I've always been fascinated by the fashion industry.

I did research on the industry as a whole and watched films on the subject. Most films about fashion are shown from the point of view of a big brand, an established designer or a fashion icon. I wanted to look at the industry from the perspective of a young designer, a designer who had no resources, just a dream, a passion and a belief.

To set a context of the fashion industry to the story I decided to set up two story lines in the film. One, Nary's story and the second, commentary from industry experts. Executive Producer Maryanne Grisz a fashion show producer and adjunct Instructor at Parsons, The New School for Design and Laura Baciú pulled together a cast that included Simon Collins, Simon Doonan, Lynn Yaeger, Mickey Boardman and Nanette Lapore.

We began filming as Nary set out to fulfill his dream of creating his own clothing line for Fashion Week in New York City. Against amazing odds with no financial backing, just \$ 5,168.00, saved by working odd jobs, Nary began his journey. A handwritten note that he keeps in his pocket with the word "Believe" became his inspiration to continue through all the setbacks he experienced.

The exciting aspect of a documentary is that when you start filming you really have no idea where the story will go. It's a unique peek into a person's life and an industry, seen from a perspective one rarely gets the opportunity to see.

Our main hope is that this story touches the audiences as it has us.

David Swajeski
Biography
Producer, Director and Editor

Director David Swajeski is a producer and director of documentaries, commercials, videos and online content. He is founder and director of the New York creative production firm Onerock Moving Pictures and co-founder and Creative Director of the advertising/design firm, Location 8.

David has produced projects ranging from advertising campaigns, broadcast television projects and documentary films. He has directed projects for some of the world's most influential companies and institutions including BMW, Fila Sports USA, DuPont, JP Morgan Chase, Presidents' Student Service Awards, Pep Boys, Benjamin Moore, Ronald McDonald House, The Jefferson Awards, Gore-Tex, The Nemours Foundation and Mercedes Benz. During his professional career he has produced over 300 productions and his work has been featured in the New York Festivals, Chicago International Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, Savannah International Film Festival, Sonoma International Film Festival, Columbus International Festivals and Singapore International Fashion Film Festival.

Maryanne Grisz
Biography

Executive Producer, Producer of Marketing and Distribution

Maryanne Grisz is a producer specializing in art, film, music and fashion and directs global ventures from concept to completion. Her most recent project is Executive Producer of the documentary DRESSED, the story of Laotian/American designer, Nary Manivong, who grew up homeless in Columbus, Ohio as he follows his dream to show his collection at New York's Fashion Week. Maryanne is a partner at Onerock Moving Pictures and also serves as Producer of Marketing and Distribution for DRESSED. She is developing new projects and scripts.

Maryanne has produced fashion shows and press events during Fashion Weeks in Milan and Paris, in the gaming industry, with publications, retailers and charities. Other productions in art and design include Gregory Colbert's "Ashes and Snow" at the Nomadic Museum on Pier 54, NYC; launching of the international design contest "Design Against Fur" co-sponsored by The Humane Society of the United States and Bellerive-Aga Khan Foundation in Switzerland, now in 6 countries and The Ghetto Film School Benefit in New York.

Maryanne served as Director of Development for The Philadelphia Music Alliance and CFO for Ana Martins Public Relations and Showroom in New York City, a company specializing in the luxury market and holding global distribution for jewelry brands.

She is an adjunct instructor at Parsons, The New School for Design and other schools in New York City. She is a member and Co-Chair for Career Day for The Fashion Group International.

Maryanne is currently writing a book on the topic of "Self Marketing your Film" and advising other filmmakers.

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Class Discussion Starters after viewing DRESSED

- Why is fashion an art and why is it a science? How does Nary approach fashion in the film?
- What does it mean to “find your voice”? What was Nary’s voice in design?
- What types of prints were prominent in Nary’s collection?
- How did Nary do his research? Would you do it any differently?
- How did Nary finance his collection? What items were donated?
- What would you do if you had to finance your own collection? What ways of financing are available via social media today?
- Would you try and show your first collection at Fashion Week in New York? Why or why not?
- What elements do you need to be a successful designer?
- What is the “American Dream”? Do you think that Nary has achieved it?
- What do you think Nary gained from his experience of being homeless?
- What is the role of “teacher” in the school system today? What role do teachers play in Nary’s life? In yours?
- What personal qualities does Nary possess that helped him cope with his circumstance of being homeless?
- What inspires you?

- Where do you find your strength?
- What role models do you have? What have they taught you and why?
- What are the steps in making a fashion collection? How long does it take Nary for each of those steps?
- What is a model casting? Who are the current top models?
- What is a fashion show? What is a “Presentation” fashion show? What is the difference?
- Who is your favorite “Expert” in the film? Why? What information did you find most valuable?
- What is Vogue Magazine? Why is it important to Nary?
- What did fashion do for Nary? Why did he pursue it?
- Do you think that Nary could succeed in any other industry? Why or why not? What other industry?
- What is a factory in the Garment Center? What jobs are performed there?
- How does the information in DRESSED about the industry differ from information about fashion in reality TV?
- How did Nary use fashion as a “Disguise”? Why?
- What is your story? How does Nary’s story influence you?
- What are the stages in the design process?
- Why is knowledge of the “business” an important element for the designer?
- Why is it hard to penetrate the market for a new designer?

- What did Nary say “being on the street” taught him? Do you think he could have learned this any other way?
- What elements go into the cost of a fashion show?
- How did Nary find his venue? What other resources are available to find a location for a fashion show?
- What did the visit to Columbus tell you about Nary and his past? Did this surprise you?
- How was Pila’s experience different than Nary’s? Or was it?

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Exercises and Research Paper Topics

These questions and topics may apply to many classes, but below is a listing of more focused areas of interest when utilizing these materials.

H=History
G=Geography
S=Social Studies
A=Art
M=Math
GEN=General Studies
FH=Fashion History
CE=Current Events
MM=Marketing/Merchandising
D=Design

- What is the history of fashion in Laos? How does it parallel the United States – or does it? H, G, S, GEN, FH, CE, MM, D
- What is the history of New York and how was the Garment Center created? H, G, S, GEN, FH, CE, D
- What was the Triangle Fire? How did it influence the Garment Center today? H, G, S, GEN, FH, CE, D
- Who was David Dubinsky? Why is he an important person in the history of the US Garment Center? H, FH, GEN, D
- What union governs the Garment Center Workers today? S, H, GEN, FH, D
- How many workers presently produce garments in New York? CE, G, S, CE, MM, D
- What is a “Showroom”? CE, FH, CE, MM, D

- How many designers currently show at Fashion Week in New York City? What is the schedule? Where is it found and how do you begin to become part of the week? FH, G, CE, MM, D, CE
- Why would you not show at Fashion Week? What are the pros and cons if you are embarking on your first collection? MM, FH, CE, D
- What are the pros and cons to producing your samples and ultimately your collection New York? Or locally in your city? What resources are available in your city to produce garments? G, S, CE, FH, MM, MATH, D
- How do you price a garment? Create a simple garment and research the main costs of fabric, buttons, zippers and other elements. S, CE, FH, MM, MATH, D
- What manufactured textiles are being produced today? Where is technology most advanced? G, FH, CE, MM, S, D
- What silhouettes are current? What is your prediction in the next year? Next 5 years? FH, S, MM, CE, D
- Who do you think the target market is for DRESSED? Why? Who is the secondary market for DRESSED? How do you reach them? G, SS, GEN, CE, MM, D
- What resources are available today to finance your collection? What is a factor? S, M, GEN, FH, MM, D
- What other films are available to discuss the fashion industry? What do they say that may be valuable to your education? A, GEN, FH, CE, MM, D
- What multi-media trends are most successful in Fashion Marketing? Why? How do you track it? FH, GEN, CE, MM, D
- What is the state of immigration today? Are there resources available to pursue a career in fashion? Where do you find them? H, G, S, GEN, CE, D
- What are the important fashion industry publications? What information do they provide? GEN, FH, CE, MM, D
- How is the changing “shopping” behavior of consumers affecting the retail industry? Who are the retail leaders, why? FH, CE, MM, D

- How do you discover new designers? Who are the most successful “New” names today? A, GEN, FH, CE, MM, D
- What social media sites around fashion are the most influential today? Why? GEN, CE, MM, D
- Is fashion design an art? How? A, GEN, FH, CE, D
- What is networking and why is it important? S, GEN, CE, MM, D
- Who are the designers that you believe are most successful? How do you define success? FH, A, MM, D, CE
- What is the state of homeless children in the United States today? What organizations in your community address this situation? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- What is a day like for a homeless teenager? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- Do the public schools systems in the United States have a federal support for homeless students? What kind? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- How does the statistics for homelessness in the United States compare to the statistics worldwide? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- What countries have the highest population of homelessness? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- Who are popular media personalities who have had homelessness in their background? How did they achieve their success? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- How many homeless in the United States are immigrants? Are there resources available to them? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- What is considered “poor” in the United States? H, G, S, GEN, CE
- Where is Loas? What is the Fashion Community like there? H, G, S, GEN, CE, FH
- Are there fashion communities in “Poverty” nations? Where? H, G, S, GEN, CE, FH