



Patrick St. Clair



# *Foray into Fashion*

Patrick St. Clair takes on the New York design world while completing a degree in fashion

Text by MIGNON A. GOULD

**P**atrick St. Clair is cultivating a burgeoning fashion career while still a Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts student at Arizona State

University. The 29-year-old landed an enviable position with world-renowned fashion designer Zang Toi, who has dressed notable figures such as Melinda Gates, Eva Longoria and Patti LaBelle.

A transfer industrial design student from Brigham Young University, St. Clair did not initially pursue fashion, but when he discovered ASU had a fashion design program, he set out to learn more. That's when he met Dennita Sewell,

professor of practice in fashion at ASU.

"We hit it off and I decided it was the direction I wanted to go," St. Clair says. "It was kind of serendipitous, where I came to ASU for something else and found out they were starting a fashion program."

## **GRADE-A DESIGNER**

Growing up in Layton, Utah, St. Clair often went skiing and snowboarding. While searching for outerwear, he was inspired out of curiosity to take a sewing class at BYU. "I immediately fell in love with it and realized I was good. There was something alluring about fashion and creating things that people would use and wear every day," he explains. St. Clair also preferred working with fabric and softer textiles than with traditional



Patrick St. Clair with Zang Toi in Toi's New York City Lexington Avenue boutique

hard materials in industrial design.

A meaningful project for him was a collaboration between ASU and Phoenix Children's Hospital called Power Play. Students were paired with patients to design superhero costumes. St. Clair's client was Kendrick Taylor, a three-year-old boy battling cancer.

"Taylor was adamant that he wanted to be a super villain named Bat-Ninja. His

mother wanted him to choose a superhero character instead, but he refused. He wanted an all-black costume with wings," St. Clair says. "I decided to give them the best of both worlds by making a reversible costume so he could be a superhero by day and a villain by night."

His dedication and attention to detail made an indelible impression on Sewell. "Patrick is one of those students





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that was doing great work. He had the professionalism, the work ethic and the talent,” she says.

### FASHION NEOPHYTE

St. Clair’s big break came when Sewell invited Toi to speak to students while he was in the Valley for a trunk show. “I liked how he talked about his customers and how he knew them intimately. He was very fun, very outgoing and not standoffish,” St. Clair says.

The designer invited students to a meeting at Saks Fifth Avenue. St. Clair, realizing he had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, asked Toi about interning with his company. The aspiring designer’s tenacity paid off. Toi offered him an internship during New York Fashion Week in fall 2018, which led to a full-time position.

After working with Sewell and a

school counselor, St. Clair devised a plan to take his remaining two classes online. In April 2019 he began his fashion career as Toi’s assistant and boutique manager at his Lexington Avenue store on the Upper East Side. Toi attributes St. Clair’s intelligence, creativity and work ethic as motivation for hiring the college student. “It is very important to groom the students as they are the future of our industry,” he says. “I hope to inspire next-generation student designers to dream big and work hard and smart to turn their dreams into success.”

As for St. Clair’s fashion future, he definitely wants to transition from the business and retail side and start his own label someday. “That’s where my skill set is; it’s what I love the most. I want to design so I can carry out the way I would like to see fashion go.” ♦

LEFT: Kendrick Taylor in his reversable superhero costume designed by Patrick St. Clair. RIGHT: Cream and black heavy satin taffeta seamless architectural bodice and skirt lined with brilliant pink satin by Patrick St. Clair. Originally shown at Uncertainty II: Hues, ASU’s second fashion show, March 30, 2019