



Founder Roya Ranjbar

# DEZIGN-ING WOMAN



By Deborah Schapiro, photos by Dan Epstein

No, the title of this article is not a mistake. It is a reference to House of DeZign, a school in Chatham where kids, teens and adults learn how to create their own fashions.

House of DeZign was founded last July by Chatham resident Roya Ranjbar. While not a designer herself, she has extensive experience in the fashion industry, including a seven-year university program and stints at Chanel and Anne Fontaine.

House of DeZign aims to, in Ranjbar's words, "build back skills that have been lost in many fashion schools today." These lost skills include both hand and machine sewing, pattern-making and draping. At the same time, House of DeZign is also a cutting-edge school, using digital design programs and offering lessons in upcycling garments.





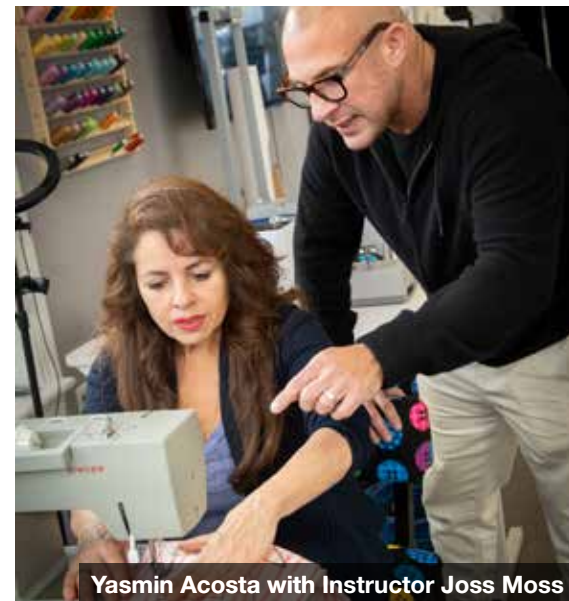
Roya Ranjbar and Instructor Josh Moss



Roya Ranjbar and students



Instructor... and Roya Ranjbar



Yasmin Acosta with Instructor Joss Moss

The school offers beginner, intermediate and advanced classes, as well as summer camps, "Sip & Sew" nights, and bachelorette and birthday party packages. Additionally, Ranjbar has established a partnership with Montclair State University's Department of Art & Design: Students in that department pursuing a BA in Fashion Studies can earn course credit working as House of Dezn interns.

Students at House of Dezn learn to work with a variety of fabrics and other materials to create both garments and accessories. Those who want to go into

the industry are also taught how to create a portfolio and entire collection. Ranjbar notes that only a few of her students plan to go into the fashion industry professionally; most simply love creating and discussing fashion.

When they are not cutting, sewing or draping, House of Dezn students are learning about the history, cultural significance and economic value of the fashion industry. Adds Ranjbar, "We also discuss fashion etiquette, such as why we wear fancy clothes to a wedding."

Regardless of their future plans, students at House of Dezn find a calm, focused and nurturing environment. Ranjbar has cultivated a safe space for kids, teens and adults to express themselves. She says that unlike the cutthroat world of fashion depicted in *Project Runway*, "There is no competition here; everyone's work is great."

**House of Dezn**

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