



Everything Jersey

## At 13, ElleryJane Ring has designs on a fashion-forward future

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Tony Kurdzuk/The Star-Ledger

Tony Kurdzuk/The Star-Ledger Above, ElleryJane Ring, 13, right, of Linden designed a dress that has become a part of a recent holiday/resort collection of tween designer Sally Miller, left. Right, Katy Mangarella, 11, of Milltown models the lace dress inspired by ElleryJane's design.

ElleryJane Ring loves to shop, browsing the racks to see what strikes her fancy.

In October, the 13-year-old will be able to go to Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom and find a dress with her name on it — literally.

"People are actually going to be able to go to the store and see it, try it on and buy it — my dress!" ElleryJane shrieked when she learned that a dress based on a design she created has been snapped up by the three department store giants.

The Linden teen's design was one of the first-place winners in the Top Designer contest, organized last November by tween designer Sally Miller.

The dress — ivory lace, with a black lining and ruffle detail — will be part of Miller's holiday/resort collection slated to arrive in stores in October. It will be named "ElleryJane" and is expected to retail for about \$80.

Miller brought ElleryJane's winning sketch to Market Week in Manhattan, where designers worldwide show their collections to buyers, and shared it with representatives of the three retailers.

"They were so excited by the story" of the contest, Miller said. "I took the sketch with me to all of my appointments."

Miller's clothes, for girls sizes 7 to 16, are sold at Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom, and online at neimanmarcus.com, as well as at Miller's shop in Milltown.

ElleryJane's winning design was one of about 75 sketches submitted to Miller's Top Designer contest, in which tweens and teens vied for a chance to have their creations featured in one of her seasonal lines. The other first-place winning entry was designed by Gabrielle Rosenthal, 12, Sarah Liebau, 11, and Anna Minalchina, 12, all of Highland Park and who entered the contest as a group. Their design may be used in her spring 2011 collection, Miller said.

"It is incredibly difficult to just do a design and get them into stores like this," Miller said.

The silhouette of ElleryJane's sketch was particularly attractive, Miller said. "It's strong and simple, but it has a feminine component that makes it sweet for girls."

The designer, who lives in Milltown, is known for her trendy yet sophisticated looks that reflect a young approach. "It has to be age-appropriate," she said of her designs, one of which was worn by Sasha Obama, the president's 9-year-old daughter, to a White House function last year.

Miller tweaked ElleryJane's original design a bit, changing the colors from pink and black to ivory and black, making the ruffle a bit smaller and adding shoulder straps. "I really loved how she had it," Miller adds of the look in ElleryJane's sketch. "But in children's wear, you need to have a strap."

She adds, "I really love the bodice."

"This was the inspiration," Miller explains of ElleryJane's design. "I told all of the girls that it wasn't necessarily going to be exactly like the sketch," if their design was selected to be in a collection.

"I love how you got the ruffles and how you got the buttons," ElleryJane told Miller upon seeing the revised version of the dress. "That's really what I was going for. I like the combination of cream and black — it's very sophisticated."

"This is why I do what I do, to be able to share, and give back and empower girls," said Miller, who shared the design adjustments with ElleryJane when she invited the teen to her boutique to tell her about it being purchased by the three retailers.

"To have someone wear the dress is incredible," said Jaimie Ring, ElleryJane's mother. "Every cousin will have to get the dress for Christmas, and we'll have to take a picture."

fashionable past

ElleryJane, who was wearing a kelly-green belted sleeveless dress with gold peep-toe gold metallic flats, and carrying a pink-and-white Betsey Johnson shoulder bag festooned with roses, said she has been well-schooled in fashion — and believes it's in her DNA.

During the late 1960s, her late maternal grandmother was a merchandiser for Peter Pan swimwear, owned by Leo Gore, the father of singer Leslie Gore.

"My mother used to run in 5-inch stiletto heels to get the train to the city," Jaimie Ring said of her mother, Ellen Rodger. "Oleg Cassini used to design for them (Peter Pan) and my mother said he used to like for her to sit at her feet as he sketched."

Ring recalled her mother telling her how Cassini always changed the color of his hair. "If he had mauve hair that day, he would have on a mauve suit and a big mauve ring," she said.

"She also met Calvin Klein when he was a kid," Ring said. "She had lots of great stories."

"Fashion is in my blood, I guess," ElleryJane said.

The eighth grader, who is home-schooled and has been sketching styles since she was 4, already has one great fashion story of her own to tell — but hopes there will be more. The teen said she's trying to learn all she can about the industry to figure out her future in fashion.

At 9, she started taking pre-college classes at Parsons the New School for Design and she is doing the same now at the Fashion Institute of Technology, both in Manhattan.

"I don't want to just focus on drawing the clothes," ElleryJane said, adding that other courses she has taken include color, merchandising and jewelry design. She also has attended sewing programs at Fabricland in North Plainfield.

But her latest accomplishment has given her the biggest boost: "To know someone in the fashion industry liked my drawing ... I feel like I can actually do this," ElleryJane said.

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