

EXPOSED ZIPPERS

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GABBY SABHARWAL, DESIGNER, GIEJO



Fashion publicist-turned-swimsuit designer Gabby Sabharwal is the creative force behind women's swimwear line Giejo. Spurred by her frustration at the lack of fashion-forward prints and cuts at a wallet-friendly price point, the New York native set her sights on sewing and design, tapped into her relationships with designers, trendsetters and editors, and founded Giejo in 2011. While still holding down her full-time job as a publicist, Sabharwal recently debuted a small range of ready-to-wear and accessories for Spring '14, cut from the same waterproof materials as her flattering, multi-functional swimwear.

What does “giejo” mean?

When I was younger, my mom called me Giejo. It all started because my brother had a hard time pronouncing my name and called me something to this effect. It just kind of stuck. I really attribute my sense of style to my mom and in a way named the collection in honor of her.

What inspired your own swimwear line?

Everything that is missing in the swim market. I tried to address everything that I felt was missing from the market that my friends and I were looking for, because honestly, the giejo girl is all of my girlfriends and me. We wanted swim that was fashion-forward and that would make us stand out on the beach.

I was also trying to think of packing—the giejo girl is always on the go and trying to think of ways to simplify her wardrobe without sacrificing style.

I also wanted to challenge the way bikinis are presented by stores. Girls today do not wear head-to-toe designer and usually wear a mix of high and low, so why don't we have that option with our swim? I used to always mix and match the bikinis I had in my closet, but sometimes they didn't feel quite right together. With my swim, you can take your favorite silhouettes from your collection at home and update them with a few simple styles from giejo to entirely make them your own. Another important aspect in my collection was to create multiple looks with a limited amount of pieces. This stems from my original design inspiration and the ability to mix and match prints. I love the idea of having options because not only can you get multiple wears out of say, three pieces, you can also make something your own. You are not committed to a suit that is shown to you in the store. This really allows my client to create her own style, another key element to the giejo girl.

I also wanted to create a collection that was smart for sunbathing and that girls would feel comfortable in. With my suits, all of the straps are removable so you can sunbathe easier without having to worry about tying up your top and having anything fall out. They also have underwire for extra support for those with a bigger bust line and for those of us who are not as blessed; the underwire actually does a nice job of adding a little shape. I was never into suits that are over the top or just too flashy. I feel like we are over the days of sparkles, rhinestones and all of the extra stuff.

How many collections a year do you create?

I produce two collections a year—Resort/Spring, which drops at the end of October and lives until April, and then Summer, which delivers at the end of April and lives for the rest of the year. I also create three exclusive deliveries for Barneys—which is totally separate from my line.

What happens during the fall season?

I finally have a little time to breathe—but always designing!

If there were something you could design for winter months, what would it be?

The perfect cashmere and knit sweater and beanies.

Do you design your own prints?

The collection is actually sourced from dead-stock fabric, which means that I go to old warehouses on the east coast and dig through rolls of vintage fabric. Then, I put the different prints together. This is great because not only is it better for the environment, but makes the suits really special and exclusive because once a fabric runs out, there are no more pieces made.

One-pieces have become very trendy this summer – do you think there's a trend toward modesty recently?

Aside from having retro flavor, which is a really strong trend we have been seeing the past couple of seasons, I think there is something really timeless about a one-piece suit. They are sexy, but in a very sensual way in that they accentuate a woman's figure without being overly sexy.

How does working in public relations affect you as a designer?

They really go hand-in-hand. PR really gave me a great foundation and the relationships I have made have been priceless. I really don't think any if this would have ever been possible without it and it may have been the best thing I could have ever done; it prepared me for this role, to start my own company.

Which job takes up more time? Do you prefer to work on one over the other when you want to have a relaxing day?

I work 24/7, but I love it! They are both very important to me and I give them 100 percent.

Do you have a favorite vacation spot in the summer?

I love to go to my parents' homes on St. Thomas and St. John. They have some of the best beaches there! It's the only place I can really disconnect.

What's your favorite type of swimsuit?

My favorite type of suit is one that makes you feel and look good! Of course, I love all of my giejo pieces—they are all my babies! But, I think it really depends on what mood I am in—if I want to really stand out, I would wear the butterfly bandeau with the high-waist bottom. If I'm feeling more sweet, I would wear the mixed boy's brief and the floral bra top. That is what I love about this collection—there are such a variety of looks one can achieve from just a couple of pieces that no matter who you are that day, you can dress with confidence!