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# NYFW: Latina Designer Plans to Shake Things Up Next Fall

By Lisa Rogak / Published February 16, 2012 / Fox News Latino



NYFW: Designs by Cenia Paredes

Cenia Paredes is a Latina designer with a specific niche: she designs four different categories of contemporary dresses based on women's most common body types.

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As [Fashion Week](#) New York ends, with all the flurry and focus on 14-year-old size 0 models who sashay unrealistic designs down the catwalk, it's good to know that come next fall, an innovative Latina fashion designer will debut a line at Fashion Week that is guaranteed to shake things up.

Cenia Paredes is a Latina designer with a specific niche: she designs four different categories of contemporary dresses based on women's most common body types, each named after a famous female actress:

The Nicole Fit: For slender women

The Jennifer Fit: For women who are pear-shaped, with larger hips

The Pamela: For women who are bustier

The Marilyn: For women with an hourglass figure.

Paredes grew up in a rural village in the province of Cotui in the [Dominican Republic](#) and started helping out at her mother's dress shop when she was just 11 years old. It was there that the seed for her future business was planted.

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Customers in the shop would watch a dress being fitted for another customer and order their own dress, fully – and erroneously – expecting it to look just as good, even if they had different body types. Cenía relished the challenge, and worked to redesign the dress so it looked good on every woman, regardless of whether she was skinny or curvy.

She left the DR while still in her teens, and moved to the [United States](#) with her mother, who had married an American citizen. Her mother always told Cenía that once they arrived in America, she could go to fashion school – they couldn't afford it in the DR – and pursue her dream of becoming a fashion designer.

She enrolled at the prestigious Fashion Institute of Technology and graduated summa cum laude. She found a job in the fashion district, but always kept her dream of designing her own line as her ultimate goal. She launched CeníaNY, and last year participated in a special workshop for minority entrepreneurs at Macy's in New York. As a result of the program, her dresses will be featured in their stores beginning in June. Today, Cenía Paredes is clearly living her dream.

[Gisele Returns to Catwalk for NYFW](#) **Q:** *How have you been inspired by New York Fashion Week?*

**A:** NYFW has always been an inspiration to me. I think that New York City experiences a kind of magic energy during Fashion Week, and whether or not you're presenting a collection, being a designer here makes you feel that somehow you are part of it. When I was a student at FIT, I would volunteer to be a dresser for the shows at Bryant Park, and I remember I would sigh and say to myself that one day I'd have my own show here. We plan to present for the first time at the September 2012 shows.

**Q:** *How did growing up in the DR influence how you design clothes today in regard to style, color, and each particular article of clothing? Do you use memories from childhood to help inspire you today?*

**A:** Growing up in the DR influenced me in many ways as a designer. For instance, I use cool, vibrant colors that resemble the colors I grew up seeing in my home island. I tend to design body-conscious dresses because women in my island are proud of their curves and love to show them off. I love to design dresses because I grew up surrounded by women who celebrated their femininity and loved to dress up.

### [NYFW: Jonathan Cohen](#)

**Q:** *What's your favorite memory of working alongside your mother in her shop?*

**A:** When my mom was cutting beautiful fabrics on the cutting table, and she would converse about the intricacy of the material, how it would work on a clients' body and how she was going to manage it. I would stand by her side patiently watching her and waiting for her to finish to pick up the scraps to make my own little creations with it.

**Q:** *As a Latina, how have you – and your designs – been greeted by the industry?*

**A:** Positively. I've been told that although my designs possess a clear Latin influence, they have the particularity of being attractive to a wide range of consumers across the spectrum of cultures.

**Q:** *What is the biggest challenge you currently face in bringing your designs to the attention of a wider audience?*

**A:** My biggest challenge is opening more doors and getting more retailers to be receptive to my fit concept and design philosophy.

**Q:** *Do you find that being classified as a Latina has helped or hindered you in the fashion industry in any way?*

### **The Magic Behind the Models at NYFW**

**A:** There has certainly been times when I was told I should change my name to something more mainstream. But I also owe my big break at Macy's in part to being a Latina. I think that more retailers will come to realize the buying power of minorities and more opportunities will open for many of us.

**Q:** *Do you think that mainstream retailers like Macy's, Target and Kohls are finally getting it when it comes to giving Latinas what they really want?*

**A:** Definitely. I think these retailers and many others are looking for ways to woo the Latina consumer.

**Q:** *Where can Fox News Latino readers find your dresses today?*

**A:** Ellen Shein Boutique, Tango Boutique, Elephant Trunk Boutique, Berlin's boutique, [Midnight Velvet](#) ↗, [Monroe and Main](#) ↗ and soon my own website, [CeniaNY](#) ↗.

**Q:** *What is your ultimate dream as a fashion designer?*

**A:** To build a successful business and brand that allows me to continue to work until I grow old in and continue to do what I love to do with all my heart and what I'm most passionate about: Designing.

**Q:** *Anything else you'd like the readers of Fox News Latino to know and realize?*

**A:** That there is nothing we can't achieve if we go for it. Believe in yourselves and never stop dreaming!

*Lisa Rogak is a freelance writer based in Berkeley, Calif.*

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