



'The beauty spectrum is changing,' says model Desiree Kuenkele, with Seams Legit's Lillie Ledwell.

PHOTO COURTESY MELISSA MANKINS / PAPER MOON PHOTO STUDIO



EFW production team Laura Lee Laroux, Mac Goodwin and Mitra Chester.



Model fitting at Paper Moon Photo Studio April 15

PHOTOS COURTESY CLAIRE FLINT LAST / PAPER MOON PHOTO STUDIO

Sew you want to be a designer?

DIY is so chic right now. Whether it's taking community sewing classes or getting a degree in apparel design, the Willamette Valley has options for you.

- The Redoux Parlour in the Whit offers classes for several different skill levels, from basic stitches to pattern design to construction. Sessions run for four weeks on Wednesday evenings (\$70). The next sessions start May 8. They also offer internships. For more info, visit redouxparlour.com.
- Deluxe on Willamette hosts custom internships and apprenticeships, which can focus on construction, design, merchandising or marketing. For more info, call 541-686-0205 or email info@deluxefashionshop.com
- The UO Craft Center at the EMU has classes for sewing, knitting, felting, silk painting, silkscreen printmaking and jewelry-making year round. Visit craftcenter.uoregon.edu for details and registration.
- OSU's School of Design and Human Environment — featuring a program in apparel design — was named one of the Top 20 Fashion Schools in the nation by Fashionista.com alongside Parsons The New School for Design and the Fashion Institute of Technology. The college also offers programs in textiles and merchandising management. Visit wkly.ws/1gi for more information.
- LCC offers career training in fashion design with six different levels of coursework including body measurement, patternmaking and creative design implementation. Visit wkly.ws/1gh for details.

"You have to be pretty confident to get in front of a camera with a pair of underwear on," she says.

For the designers of Seams Legit, Courtney Wade and Lillie Ledwell, the choice to represent more average body types is very intentional. "We're both curvy women," Wade says. "I like to work with curvy shapes." The pinup-inspired Seams Legit features everything from lingerie and swimwear to evening gowns for the avant-garde runway show at The Shedd. Wade and Ledwell point out that there are some practical reasons for designers to make smaller sizes — they use less fabric and designing for smaller bodies without curves is simpler.

"It is very easy to make something for a size 2," Wade says. "It's much more complicated to make something that's going to fit somebody with all different shapes. Every size 8 does not look the same."

"It's not just straight up and down," Ledwell adds.

"That's what is great about Eugene — the models here are all shapes and sizes," Wade says. She adds that a few models were insecure, saying, "My boobs aren't perfect — I breastfed." Wade, who recently had a baby, laughs. "I've been breastfeeding. I get this!" She says, "I don't need someone who's small so my stuff looks good no matter what. I don't care if you've had a baby — I can make something look great on you."

The Models

Desiree Kuenkele looks like a woman straight out of a *Mad Men*-era Coca Cola advertisement: Her pin-curl hair is a Lucille Ball-red, her wide smile is

framed by cherry rouge lips and her figure is reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe. Until she came to Eugene, however, she never thought modeling was an option. At 26, Kuenkele says, "I feel like I'm too old, too short and too fat. You know, *technically*." Kuenkele is originally from Indiana, where she studied fashion merchandising at Ball State University. When it came to the local fashion shows there, she did hair and makeup but never modeled. "I just didn't even think it was a possibility. For the runway shows ... everyone was super tiny. No one was even making clothes for any other size than 2," she says. "Here, they want curvy girls instead of being like 'Oh, nothing will fit you.'"

Kuenkele will be modeling the designs of Seams Legit, So Fresh, Freudian Slip and VaVaVie. She is perhaps most excited to walk the runway in a design by VaVaVie, which is inspired by a peacock with emerald green velvet shorts complete with tail and a corset bedazzled with jewels. When asked if she's nervous as a first-time model to walk down the runway in underwear, Kuenkele shakes her head. "I feel more comfortable naked than I do in clothes," she says. She explains that it's all about confidence and letting go of your fears, and she points to her parents for her self-esteem. "They would compliment not only how pretty I am but my character."

Whereas Kuenkele is 1950s glam, Dory Lou is earthy punk: She wears angular tortoise shell glasses, her septum is pierced with a simple silver hoop and her chestnut brown hair has been shaved close to her head except for a modest Mohawk. This is Lou's

second year with EFW and she originally got involved in modeling over a year ago when she saw a Craigslist ad posted by Jennifer Brown, whom she will be modeling for this year in addition to Seams Legit, Spandex Body and Sparkle Glitter Glow. But Lou, who is the mother of a 10-year-old, never aspired to be a model while growing up in California. "I grew up as a beautiful young lady with a horrible body image," she says. "When I was 24, I moved to Eugene, and the body image in Eugene is so much more accepting and the men are different about it. The men don't objectify women like they do in California and I feel like that's really helped."

Lou says that local designers have helped her feel comfortable and valued in her own body as well. "Designers were really excited about my body. I had a lot of them approach me, 'Would you please model this?'" she says. "I was really surprised because I'm not tall and skinny. I'm short and stocky and full of curves." Lou would like to see more womanly bodies on the runway and she thinks part of that responsibility falls on fuller-figured women. "If the only people who are going to put their bodies out there are stick figures — these skinny, skinny girls — then that's what we're going to think is a beautiful body. So more of us wonderfully voluptuous, round, soft women need to put our bodies out there and be like, 'No. *This* is woman.'" ■

Eugene Fashion Week kicks off with the swimsuit and lingerie show 10 pm Wednesday, May 1, at Oak Street Speakeasy; \$10. The Shedd will host the ready-to-wear show 8 pm Friday, May 3, and the avant-garde show 8 pm Saturday, May 4; \$12 adv., \$15 door. Visit eugenefashionweek.com for more information.