



VANESSA FROEHLING, LEFT, AUDITIONING FOR FASHIONXT IN JULY

PHOTO COURTESY JEFF WONG

DENIM AND THE CITY

Vanessa Froehling takes her street-wear line to Portland's FashionNXT runway week

Local designer Vanessa Froehling has denim on the brain. Stonewashed, herringbone print, chambray, stretch and black denim, to be sure.

In her home studio, Froehling flips through hangers of designs, including sailor-style high-waisted women's shorts, a men's blazer and a women's jumpsuit.

"It's something that's in everyone's closet and it will never go out of style," says Froehling of the French-born fabric (denim's etymology comes from "de Nîmes," the French town where Levis Strauss first procured the tough cotton twill for your 501s). But, she adds, "people are stuck on what denim can do."

The line is called Carpe Denim and it's Froehling's entry into FashionNXT (self-described as "Portland's Official Fashion Week") — not to be confused with Portland Fashion Week —

develop the marketability and cohesion of her line.

Over the past year, she took their advice to heart and decided she would try out again, this time with a denim ready-to-wear line, a departure from the couture gowns that have distinguished her style. She took inspiration from the city — recalling watching the denizens of Portland walk by, falling in love with their street-wear style — and the layers of people, buildings and traffic.

Eight jean looks — five for women and three for men — will walk the runway, but rest assured, this will be no orgy of Canadian tuxedos. Although denim is the common thread, the designs feature smart juxtapositions against black leather and a colorful textile that looks like a cross between gas puddles and graffiti.

The self-taught designer has also developed several innovative details: a woman's denim peplum jacket that unzips at the waist,

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three days and nights of runway shows in early October. She will present Carpe Denim in the UpNXT competition, the "emerging designers accelerator," alongside four other Pacific Northwest designers the evening of Oct. 5.

The fashion week has a cozy relationship with *Project Runway*, the fashion-designer reality show running since 2004, and, in fact, two of the judges assessing the competition are Seth Aaron (winner of *Project Runway* season 7) and Michelle Lesniak (winner of season 11).

In 2015, Froehling applied to both Portland Fashion Week and FashionNXT, but was only accepted by the former that time. She says auditioning in front of the FashionNXT judges was intimidating.

"My nerves were like, 'What do I do with my hands?'" Froehling says, shaking her hands by her sides and laughing. The judges were tough, she recalls, and they recommended that she

transforming it into a more casual cropped jacket; women's stretch leather pants that zip open at the knee, a nod to ripped jeans; and a men's chambray shirt with the illusion of a double collar creating a fresh origami effect.

This summer, the judges welcomed Froehling on the FashionNXT train.

Froehling says one judge told her that she's the first designer to return the following year to try out again after being rejected.

"It's the highest fashion production in Oregon," she says.

The winner will be announced at the after-party Oct. 5, and the prize package secures a spot for the designer in the main runway show in 2017 and includes business mentorships, feature stories in *Portland Monthly* and *Portland Mercury*, and a strategic marketing course at Portland Fashion Institute. ■

Look for photos of Froehling's Carpe Denim line from the runway on the Eugene Weekly blog after Oct. 5; the designs are under quarantine until after the runway show.

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BLAIR WITCH (DIG) (R) 11:40, 2:00, 4:20, 7:55, 10:25	MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN (DIG) (PG-13) 12:20, 2:20, 7:00, 8:30
BRIDGET JONES'S BABY (DIG) (R) 7:05, 10:00	PETE'S DRAGON (DIG) (PG) 11:10, 1:45, 4:25
DEEPWATER HORIZON (DIG) (PG-13) 11:00, 1:55, 4:40, 7:30, 10:20	THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS (DIG) (PG) 11:15, 1:40, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30
DON'T BREATHE (DIG) (R) 12:10, 2:40, 5:10, 7:50, 10:10	SNOWDEN (DIG) (R) 7:05, 10:10
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