

¡Moda Hoy! Latin American and Latinx Fashion Today Audio Tour Transcript | English

Equihua, *Devotion* coat

Learn about the Chicano motifs in Equihua’s *Devotion* coat.

55 seconds

Brenda Equihua identifies as Chicana, a person born in the United States with Mexican heritage. Her mother crossed the border while pregnant, and Equihua was born in California three days later. In her *Devotion* coat, the designer connects the tenderness of a mother with two symbols of Mexican identity: the Virgin of Guadalupe and San Marcos blankets. The Virgin of Guadalupe, known as the mother and protector of Latin Americans, has become inextricably linked to Mexican identity. The plushy texture of this coat is reminiscent of San Marcos blankets, which are a staple of Mexican and Chicano households. For Equihua, they signify comfort, home, and her mother’s embrace. These two symbols resonate strongly with Chicano culture: the blanket with its domestic and private connotations, and the Virgin of Guadalupe, as a religious, social, and political symbol.

Isabel Toledo, Packing skirt with matching black knit top

Discover how the “packing” skirt exemplifies Isabel Toledo’s experimental style and love of dressmaking.

42 seconds

Isabel Toledo was born in Cuba and emigrated to the United States as a child. She began sewing when very young and despite attending both FIT and Parsons, was largely self-taught. Toledo regarded the techniques of dressmaking as the true art form and loved to experiment with shape. She created whimsical and experimental clothes that brought a fresh perspective to American fashion in the 1980s. Toledo favored sculptural shapes and geometric patterns as seen in this skirt, which appears three-dimensional on the body and folds into a compact flat form, earning it the name “Packing skirt.” Isabel Toledo preferred to call herself a seamstress rather than a designer, as she believed seamstresses truly understood the art of dressmaking.

1/8 Takamura x Artesanía Textil Arte-Fer, Cuadro Tlahui blouse

Learn about the collaborative processes to bring the Cuadro Tlahui blouse to life.

1 minute, 5 seconds

Collaborations between urban designers and rural artisans are not always simple. This *Cuadro Tlahui* blouse was co-designed by Guillermo Vargas of the Mexican fashion label 1/8 Takamura and artisan Paula Pérez Vázquez, an embroiderer from the village of Santa Maria Tlahuitoltepec. Over the course of almost two years, Vargas and Pérez Vázquez diligently co-created and produced the *Cuadro Tlahui* blouse, at times shipping pattern pieces back and forth between Mexico City and Oaxaca.

The design combines the square pattern of the *Cuadro* blouse, a staple of the 1/8 Takamura brand, with the iconography of the people of Santa Maria Tlahuitoltepec, which includes the sun, water, mountains, and maguey - a type of agave plant - and are symbolic of the heritage and history of the people of this village. In turn the name of the blouse brings together the identities of the co-designers. The *Cuadro Tlahui* blouse exemplifies how contemporary fashion and indigenous heritage can nurture one another.

Sánchez-Kane, Mamado suit

Discover the role that gender plays in Sánchez-Kane's Mamado suit:

50 seconds

Bárbara Sánchez Kane is known for using fashion to question assumptions about gender. Humorously, she named this outfit the *Mamado* pantsuit, a colloquial word used in Mexico to irreverently refer to a man whose body is muscular. The jacket has lapels that when snapped make the chest look more voluminous, alluding to chiseled pectorals. The shape of the pants resemble muscular legs sculpted as if through heavy weight lifting. In stark contrast, the pink leather is embossed with stylized floral designs inspired by Talavera de Puebla pottery, which is used mostly for tableware and home decor, a nod to feminine domesticity. This suit can be seen as a study in the ambivalence of masculinity, by combining the hyper-masculine bodybuilder's physique with conventional markers of femininity.

Juan de la Paz, *Kallawaya* cape

Discover the political significance of fashion through Juan de la Paz's *Kallawaya* cape

55 seconds

Juan Pereira and Andrés Jordan are the designers behind the Bolivian fashion label, Juan de la Paz. They are committed to working with Indigenous communities to preserve ancestral techniques and bring visibility to artisans. Pereira and Jordan express concern over inequalities faced by Indigenous peoples such as chronic poverty, and lack of access to healthcare, education, and living wages, because more than half of Bolivia's population is Indigenous. Through partnerships such as this, artisan communities improve their economic and social conditions.

Artisans from several communities of the Kallawaya Nation came together to create this cape, each responsible for a different aspect of its manual production. Over six months, they hand sheared wool, used natural dyes and manual weaving techniques, making decisions as a group along the way. To honor this collective endeavor, Juan de la Paz named the cape after the Kallawaya Nation.

Gabriela Hearst, Multicolor crochet dress

Learn about the role of social sustainability in Gabriela Hearst's crochet dress

1 minute, 9 seconds

Gabriela Hearst is deeply committed to sustainability in all its forms. She prioritizes environmental, economic and social initiatives. Her commitment to these principles has led to benchmarks for others in the industry to emulate. This multicolor crochet dress, for example, is from Hearst's spring 2022 collection which spotlighted collaborations and craftsmanship. It was produced by artisans from the Madres & Artesanas Tex cooperative in Bolivia, and represents fashion that embraces social inclusion, integrity of materials, and economic empowerment.

Social sustainability values people. Madres & Artesanas Tex employs over 200 women artisans who specialize in hand knitting techniques. It provides technical training and economic opportunities for women, some of whom have experienced abuse or abandonment. Through this cooperative and other partnerships, Hearst celebrates the skilled work of female artisans while promoting socially equitable design. Gabriela Hearst has said that being able to create beautiful garments that are desirable and empowering is one of her most satisfying personal experiences.

Johanna Ortiz, Black cotton dress

Learn about the craftsmanship behind Johanna Ortiz's black cotton dress.

45 seconds

Johanna Ortiz is one of Colombia's most globally recognized fashion designers. She deliberately chose to base her brand in Cali, Colombia rather than in Paris or New York because she appreciates the talent of her country's seamstresses and artisans, and wishes to remain close to her people. The Balmy Evening dress, with its natural cotton fabric, combination of textures, and tropical motifs was fully made by Colombian hands in Cali. The hand-woven and appliqued raffia embellishments celebrate Latin-American craftsmanship. The raffia threads were applied by in-house embroidery artisans using traditional basketry techniques. The palm motif, which highlights the natural tropical wonders of the region, has become a signature decorative element of Johanna Ortiz.

Carolina Herrera, Shirt dress evening gown

Discover the influences behind Carolina Herrera's shirt-dress evening gown.

43 seconds

Born and raised in Venezuela, Carolina Herrera has been famous for her elegance and style for decades. Even before becoming a fashion designer in the 1980s, during her youth she was one of New York's best-dressed socialites. In interviews, Carolina Herrera recalled the childhood uniforms from her school days in Venezuela as a lasting influence on her style. Over time, Herrera developed a design vocabulary that included polka dots and white button-down shirts. Here, her crisp white shirt becomes a voluminous evening gown. In its understated refinement, notice how this dress brings together Carolina Herrera's sense of personal style and her Latin American upbringing.

Duque, Leather corset and nylon top and leggings

Learn about the inspiration behind Jorge Duque's leather corset and nylon top and leggings

55 seconds

Before becoming a fashion designer, the Colombian designer Jorge Duque studied to be a physical therapist. This background helped him understand human anatomy. He also learned about tools and techniques that strengthen the body. In this outfit, Duque combines his interest in prosthetics and corsetry, with a celebration of Latin American pre-hispanic cultures. The decorations on the upper chest and arms are inspired by the Colombian archeological site of San Agustín. You can see depictions of the megalithic

stone sculptures from this funerary site on the see-through top and leggings. These garments also reference the artwork of the Mexican contemporary artist Dr. Lakra, who drew pre Hispanic motifs, onto the bodies of magazine models as if they were tattoos. Jorge Duque created this outfit because he believes that preHispanic art is still alive in Latin America, and in dialogue with contemporary culture.

LUAR, Taupe and navy nylon dress

Discover how family and belonging are at the heart of LUAR's dress.

1 minute, 12 seconds

Raul Lopez is the designer behind the fashion brand LUAR. His collections often draw from his own experiences as a Dominican-American living in Brooklyn, New York. For this dress, Lopez was inspired by the fashion choices of his relatives who would come to family parties dressed-to-impress in their interpretations of American luxury.

This bodice with its geometric piecework, broad shoulders, and roomy sleeves resembles the nylon tech jackets of the 1980s and '90s, while the silhouette of the skirt echoes the fashionable styles of the era. Taken as a whole, the dress mimics a sporty jacket worn over an evening dress. This emulates the appearance of the designer's aunts, who would arrive at family parties wearing their finest looks covered by whatever outerwear they had available. These are strong memories for Lopez who recalls that what you wore at the family party mattered the most, not what you wore to get there. In many Latin American cultures, how you present yourself to family is connected to the love and respect you have for each other. For Raul Lopez, these personal memories highlight notions of aspiration and belonging in the immigrant experience.

These audio recordings were created for The Museum at FIT's exhibition, *¡Moda Hoy! Latin American and Latinx Fashion Today* (May 31–November 12, 2023). For more information, visit fitnyc.edu/museum.