

K  CRUSH
AMERICA

SEOUL FASHION
WEEK 2024
SPECIAL EDITION



Steve Lee

MAKING MISTAKES IS NOT A FAILURE;
IT IS A NECESSARY STEP TOWARDS SUCCESS.

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KCRUSH INTERVIEW

WITH WHYSOCEREALZ'S DESIGNER STEVE LEE

Brand Introduction:

Making mistakes is not a failure; it is a necessary step towards success.

We learn from our mistakes and become a better person tomorrow.

So we are bold in our works; we adventure without the fear of making mistakes and we cherish our mistakes for every mistake is one step closer towards perfection.

So hey, Why So Serious? Let's be cerealz!

Interviewee: Steve Lee, Designer

Can you walk me through your background and experience in the fashion industry?

Well, I started a fashion boutique (trend_hunt) where I sold European brands that have not yet been introduced to Korea. I was able to do this because I used to be like a “professional traveler”, haha, who travels A LOT. So I started off as a buyer, and as I was introduced to a lot of unique clothings and with my background for love of fashion, I started to do my own thing, which has become today's “#whysocerealz!”

Do you have a philosophy or story behind your brand name, because it seems to evoke interest and possibly have a hidden story behind it, right ?

There was a period of time when I used to be very edgy and “way too serious”. This was actually the time when I began learning fashion design at KASSA (한국패션봉제아카데미). The angry face logo depicts myself at that time. I mean, my self-esteem was very low that I couldn't accept myself making any mistakes; hence I was extremely stressed all the time and probably had an angry face all the time. So I would comfort myself by saying to myself “hey, why so serious? it's okay to laugh.. it's okay to smile once in a while.. it's okay to make mistakes for every mistake is an opportunity to mature ”. Why so serious, let's be cerealz!

It felt more like watching a musical than just a fashion show. Is there a special reason for presenting such a unique fashion show?

Well, we are really crazy about our shows. Me, my team, models, dancers, and musicians, we all really enjoy every process of preparing for a fashion show. We don't treat it like work, but it's something we do because we love! So, we give it all that we have: our abilities, efforts, money (investment), creativity. I treat Seoul Fashion Week more than a fashion show. I treat it as an event that can gather passionate and talented people together, I treat it as an opportunity to deliver a message to the society and fashion people, I treat it as an opportunity to be creative in all possible ways.



In this year's 2024 F/W Seoul Fashion Week, there was a significant presence of music and dance. It seems you have a great interest in music as well. Do you have any particular music or musicians that inspire you? If so, tell us the reason behind it.

I used to love listening to Techno music and rave like a beast. I used to turn off all the lights in my house, play a techno set from Christian Löffler or Amelie Lens loudly and dance like nobody's watching (which was actually true). Back in the days when I was a buyer, I used to visit Berlin a lot and enjoyed raving at Berghain, but those days are behind me now and I actually don't enjoy listening to music on a daily basis. It hinders me from focusing on work. The only kind of music I listen to today is the worship songs when I drive. I like to sing along while driving. Oh yes and I also play the electric guitar every weekend at church, so I need to listen to the songs I'll be playing each weekend and practice.

This year's 2024 F/W Seoul Fashion Week showcased remarkable performances by the models, including singing, dancing, and acting, which seemed highly professional. I'm curious if you specifically prepared models who excel in these areas for the show, or if you invited professionals from each field to participate.

Since the concept for 24FW was “Friendship”, all the models, musicians, and dancers who participated in the 24FW Seoul Fashion Week were my friends. I have worked with all of them before and I knew what they were good at and how far they can go, their potentials. So I believe that the task was very challenging for each and every one of the models, but I had faith in them that they will give it all they've got to successfully perform on the day of the show. We had 3 official rehearsals where we rented a university gym that had the same size as the actual venue, 1 on 1 zoom meeting with every one of the models, and lots of individual/small group practices (music, dance, acting).



While watching the 2024 F/W Seoul Fashion Week show, it seemed like a lot of time and ideas went into preparing everything from animation to music, dance, acting, and fashion presentation. Could you briefly explain the preparation process?

So it starts with the show choreography 4~5 months prior to the show time. It takes a month to 2 months to finalize the show choreography. While the show choreography is on its way to its final version, castings are done and designing clothes are in progress. Once the show choreography is finalized, we start our rehearsals. We need 3 main rehearsals where all of us meet and run through the whole show. We need a lot of individual practice. We need to read a lot and be familiarized with the show choreography, and I personally need to memorize the 12 pages of show choreography because I need to be prepared to direct the rehearsals. Designing and making clothes usually continues until the day before the show.

How do you balance creativity with commercial viability in your designs?

I try to make clothes that I can sell but also display in fashion shows, which means the design cannot be too crazy but it must be unique.

What is your design process like from concept to completion?

Ah, I love this question. So I read the bible every day. It is my spiritual food, I do not go one day without it. At the end of every Fashion Week, I would ponder “what concept shall I do next?” and go back to the bible readings that I've been doing for the past months. I think I usually come up with two concepts and dig in deeper on each of them and go with the “more fun” one. Once I have the concept, I study about it, and as I study about it, I start writing the scripts for the show choreography, and the work begins.



Could you please share any areas you would like to challenge yourself in the future, not only in fashion but across other fields as well?

I am currently challenging myself in teaching students at a university called SART. It really is quite challenging to me because I did not learn fashion officially as in a university, so to teach the students, I am actually studying textbooks and educating myself first.

What do you usually do in your leisure time? Or do you have any special activities you do to recharge?

Well, it may sound boring, but I actually love to work on weekends or on holidays. The difference is that I work on what I purely want to work on. But other than that, I love to walk. I walk every day. I also love to write on a note my feelings, prayers, and words of encouragement.

What inspired you to pursue a career in fashion design?

I always loved fashion. But I never realized that I could have a career in what I loved until I was in my mid-20s. Back in the days when I was a “professional traveler”, shopping for clothes was my favorite thing to do. I think you realize what you really love when you travel.

Do you have any places where you find inspiration, or perhaps a recommendation for a Korean landmark or cultural spot that you would recommend to K-culture fans worldwide?

Seoul Fashion Week! DDP



Can you discuss some of your recent design projects or collaborations?

In September 2023, we released a shirt and a man-to-man in collaboration with artist Gammanzi.



Please provide words of encouragement to those who dream of becoming fashion designers.

If you consistently pursue what you're passionate about for 1 year... 2 years... 5 years... 10 years... the number of people who appreciate it will grow from 1... to 10... to 100... and so on. Eventually, if you do not give up on what you love and continue with it, you will become an expert in that field, and the number of your followers will increase. However, it takes resources to keep going. It seems wise to put what you love on hold until those resources are available.

How do you approach creating a cohesive collection or line?

I develop all my concepts from the bible.



How do you envision the future of fashion design, and what role do you see yourself playing in it?

I see myself as representing Christianity through fashion.

How do you handle tight deadlines and pressure in the fashion industry?

Every task is accomplishable if broken down into steps.

Can you share your thoughts on sustainability and ethical practices in fashion design?

I think it is a must for present and future brands/designers to pursue sustainable fashion because the earth is actually fading away and the media is taking the matter quite seriously.



Can you share any memorable feedback or success stories from your previous work?

24SS New York Fashion Week. We had only 3 days to rehearse for the show and it involved live music of trumpet, guitar, and drum, dancing, and acting. But we couldn't do anything about it because we were based in Seoul, the show was in New York, we were to arrive in New York 3 days before the show and meet the models and musicians for the first time, but still we wanted to do a crazy, fun show. So I was anxious a lot. "What if we screw up? What if we make a fool of ourselves?" But, miraculously, we had quite an amazing, somewhat impromptu show. Please check out our behind scene at YouTube

https://youtu.be/OF5_kjn1Hmo?si=DaqB7TzDiBd4Ht4

What do you hope to achieve or contribute to the fashion industry in the next few years?

I want to be a leader to the models, my team, students, and customers: a leader who is a servant of

all, a leader who acts in love always, a leader who is very good at his work.

~~~**Jiyoung Lee**

