



In fashion



Above: Stanley Covington Jr. talks to a model during a fashion show of the letter carrier's clothes designs (top and below).



Though he wears a light blue uniform on a daily basis, **Stanley Covington Jr.** has an eye for fashion. The Long Island Merged Branch 6000 member is a designer who has shown his work during New York Fashion Week nearly a dozen times, most recently on Sept. 10, when his fashion was featured in a showcase for independent designers.

Always an artist, Covington grew up teaching himself drawing and painting. It came naturally to him, though he says his older sister, who “dabbled in art,” gave him pointers. “I also had a flare for dressing well and a rep for being stylish—which I got from my mother, who dressed impeccably,” he said.

Many times, he would think that certain outfits he’d wear would look better if constructed differently, “so I would keep a mental note,” Covington added. “When I hit a mental block in my drawings, I would take a break and sketch out my fashion ideas that I had stored up.”

When he was approached years ago by a fashion marketing organization looking for designers, Covington was intrigued. “I knew I wasn’t a designer, but I sent what I had, which was sketches,” he said, adding, “They approved of my designs and accepted me to be in their up-and-coming designer showcase.”

Because Covington doesn’t sew—as is the case with many clothes designers—he knew he had to find a collaborator who could make his sketches come to life. Seven years ago, the carrier found a partner in a Brooklyn tailor, Moussa Sow, to whom he takes his penciled (and occasionally painted) sketches for Sow’s take on how much fabric is needed.

“I sketch things out with every detail, so he knows exactly what to do,” Covington told *Newsday* in New York. “He’s able to capture clothes from what I draw.”

With these estimates for the amount of fabric needed, the carrier then heads to the Garment District in Manhattan, a hub of fashion manufacturing, textiles and fabrics. “I go to the city on weekends, 38th and 39th Street, to pick out fabrics, buttons, zippers, etc., that I think would work,” Covington said.

He brings them to Sow, who works on turning the designs into wearable clothes. “I go back the next week to see and discuss progress and changes if needed,” Covington said. Designs generally take two to three weeks in total.

Covington named his fashion line “IMOYA,” which stands for “In memory of you always,” in honor of his loved ones—particularly his mother and one of his sisters, who both died in 1997 and who supported his work while encouraging his self-expression. Covington worked through his grief by further exploring his art.

The 19 looks from the men’s and women’s line he showed in September ranged from green sequined shorts to bold painted jackets to frocks with peekaboo cutouts.

The carrier, who has delivered mail for 37 years and is known as “Stan the Mailman,” mostly works on his projects at night. “I am a night owl anyway,” he said.

Covington added that he had even been asked by a judge to display some of his artwork at the state Supreme Court in Mineola—which is on his route—for Black History Month, and created a piece that suited the theme for the exhibition, “Black resistance and resilience.”

Meanwhile, as he told *Newsday*, “There’s a cartoonish element to my drawing.”

Covington explained that fashion design is an extension of his drawing art. “I have to sketch out my designs with details,” he said. “I love clothes and all the levels that comes with it, from formal to urban.”

His favorite fashion designers are Balmain, LaQuan Smith and Giorgio Armani, but “I cannot pinpoint inspiration,” he says. “It comes to me at anytime from anywhere.”

New York Fashion Week is a semi-annual event consisting of multiple runway shows held in Manhattan during a single week in both February and September, corresponding with the following fall or spring fashion seasons. Fashion elites, such as fashion designers, magazine editors and celebrities, descend on the city to check out what the next big fashion trends are and watch for up-and-coming designers.

Covington has been able to show his collections in 11 shows during Fashion Week over the years.

After selecting models at a casting call prior to the event, he fits his looks on them before they strut the catwalk.

“It is very nerve-racking, especially not knowing how everything is going to fall into place,” he said, but the backstage buzz and chaos focuses his attention on what he needs to do.

While he has sold a few pieces online, he doesn’t mass-produce them. Generally, he said, “each piece I’ve designed is for that particular show.”

Covington also occasionally takes commissions. “I am currently designing a wedding dress for my lovely niece,” he said.

Some in his postal world know that he moonlights as a fashion designer



and have encouraged him. “Those close to me have shown excitement for my achievements,” he said. After he was featured in a September article in *Newsday*, “the media coverage has opened the doors to more shows, exposure, opportunities and accolades,” Covington said.

The carrier is using that momentum and doesn’t plan to stop anytime soon, hoping to inspire others through his work. “I would like to see my work, art and fashion in major museums like MoMA [the Museum of Modern Art],” he said. “I’d like to be mainstream like the designers I previously mentioned.

“Designing is my passion,” Covington added. “It is in me.” **PR**



Covington with his sister (r) and niece