

her beginnings

I grew up in Highland Park and from a very young age was fascinated with clothes and fashions—always wanting to pull things apart, make from scratch, create create, create. Perhaps it is in my DNA; my Nana was excellent with needles and although I never quite mastered crocheting or mending garments like she did, I think the sense of creating something from scratch or breathing new life into a garment wore off on me!

I started designing while in high school, left Pittsburgh to “do my time” in the fashion industry in NYC via my education at New York University, and launched a womenswear line in 2002, “Julia DiNardo.” I started Neighbor Teaze almost on accident; it was a fun idea that had popped into my head on a train ride back to NYC from Pittsburgh. I was feeling nostalgic for my hometown and I thought it would make a nice holiday gift item during my winter trunk show at Sugar Boutique in 2005. At the time I had no experience with t-shirts, graphics, screenprinting, etc. Thanks to the support of Sugar Boutique and the lovely guys at Commonwealth Press, Neighbor Teaze got off the ground and I sold out of the first two styles (Lawrenceville and South Side) that weekend. The tees were such an unexpected overnight success that I eventually decided to fold the womenswear line and just focus on the tees for my design. Nowadays I balance Neighbor Teaze alongside teaching at NYU, my website FashionPulseDaily.com, as well as other fashion-related freelance and marketing work.

the product:

What’s really unique about the Neighbor Teaze brand is that, more than anything else, it tells a local story, reveals history, involves a community, and cares about its place on this earth. I love when people buy their tees for themselves or other Pittsburgh “expats,” as if to know what the tee really means is a special secret shared only by those who have lived in and love Pittsburgh. The tees I use are organic cotton with recycled fibers and environmentally friendly dyes, and all are printed locally. These elements are way too important to surpass and really make the tee what it is. In addition to being a nice quality tee to the touch, it also is doing a little extra for the environment and supporting local businesses. I mention this because it is part of the brand’s mission, as well as the price. Understanding this gives a better sense of appreciation for the product — it’s more than just a t-shirt.

the process

The concepts for the tees are hashed out over time, and unlike other design ventures I’ve been a part of, Neighbor Teaze is different in the sense that the Neighbor Teaze team takes great care in researching historic dates, events, facts, and trying to best tie it all together in five words or less! It’s definitely a challenge when there are so many great things to say about a neighborhood and you have to whittle it down to just a few words.

We are also working to expand the line with a new t-shirt color; it’s a lighter grey than what is usually used and will be reserved for exclusive, limited edition and “suburb” tees. We’ve offered some fun items with the Neighbor Teaze graphics and slogans, such as organic tote bags, sweatshirts, long sleeves, and even holiday ornaments! I think that a lot of people smile when they read the slogans and want to share it with others, so we’ll continue to work to do that with the addition of new neighborhoods and products.

where to buy it:

Neighbor Teaze are available at the following retail locations: CoCo’s Cupcake Café (Shadyside), Heinz History Center, Jupe Boutique (Southside), Maggie & Stella’s Cards & Gifts (Oakland), Spoiled Chics (Sewickley), Sugar Boutique (Lawrenceville), The Mattress Factory, and The Picket Fence (Shadyside). In addition, we are very, very excited for the launch of the Strip District tee, debuting on April 18th at our table at the brand new Pittsburgh Flea. It’s been a long-time coming, and we also worked on a video project to get some excitement and further interest going about the Strip (check juliadinardo.com for the video).

