

Fashion Conductor

Internationally recognized fashion show and event producer **Lynne Hanzawa O'Neill** brought the knowledge and experience she gained at New York Fashion Week to Hawai'i when she coordinated and led production of the first HONOLULU Fashion Week last year. She's also wrangled shows for such diverse talents as the Rolling Stones, Usher and Kiss. Happily, the Honolulu-born powerhouse will be back to direct the second HONOLULU Fashion Week this year. She and her husband split time between the high-pressure urban lifestyle of New York City and Honolulu.

INTERVIEW BY ROBBIE DINGEMAN

➤➤ **FASHION IS A** prevailing set of trends. The reason it's important is because those trends are linked with what is going on around us. Fashion is a cultural manifestation and doesn't exist in a vacuum. And, not least of all, it's one of an individual's means of self-expression.

"I don't love or hate any trends. I consider them all relevant. Mixing high and low is an all-pervasive trend that has really taken hold and is the way most of us dress today."

➤➤ **DURING THE '80S**, when I was working at Macy's San Francisco producing fashion shows and events, I religiously wore Japanese designers, especially Rei Kawakubo's Comme des Garçons (Lynne's wearing all Comme des Garçons in this picture). People who knew me then probably thought every day was a faux pas.

➤➤ **I'VE ALWAYS ADORED** Rei Kawakubo. She marches to her own drum and I follow ... she's my church. Minimal, simple, black, with a bit of outré.

➤➤ **WHEN I WAS A** technical adviser on HBO's *Sex and the City* episode "The Real Me," Margaret Cho played Lynne, the fashion-show producer, a character inspired by me. I was introduced to Margaret for the first time during a break in filming. Her costume was a black overcoat and scarf and I was wearing head-to-toe Comme des Garçons. She immediately looked at what I was wearing and asked me, "Would you wear what I'm wearing?" I told a little white lie and said yes. Director/producer Michael Patrick King thought a conservatively dressed, potty-mouth version of me would be funnier.

➤➤ **THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE**, the loving support of my husband, Bobby, and the work ethic instilled by my mom and dad keep me grounded. And aloha zen always keeps me centered.

➤➤ **AFTER ALL THESE YEARS**, I still love what I do and find it interesting, inspiring and surprising. I'm grateful every day and never imagined I could have such a fulfilling career in which I've made such deep lifelong connections with so many people.

➤➤ **GET WHATEVER** experience you can by interning, volunteering and taking entry-level positions. Work hard, be humble and don't let your ego get in the way. Be open, flexible, observe and absorb. And always keep your aloha spirit.



PHOTO: ELI SCHMIDT