

Classic yet modern style defines Pour Deux, Maternity for Two

by donte livingston

BEFORE THE DAYS of “Destination Maternity” and “Pea in the Pod,” women had to resort to wearing larger-sized regular clothes and mussy maternity apparel. Now, in 2011, with the likelihood of women in the workplace and working up until their due dates, having to wear maternity clothes shouldn’t be show stopping, but show continuing.

Here to acknowledge the new era of maternity apparel is a former NYC designer, Tara Stafford, whose style embodies the spirit of classic and freshly sophisticated pregnancies of our generation. Her brand, “Pour Deux, Maternity for Two,” brings timeless staples to an otherwise time-constrained phase of a woman’s life. The premiere Spring/Summer 2011 line is a contemporary, feminine and chic collection that contains 30 skus of “easy-wear” dresses and separates. Her main goal is to incorporate a stylish silhouette with high quality fabrication expressing the inner radiance and joy of motherhood.

Stafford studied fashion at Savannah College of Art and Design and graduated from Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, now known as Philadelphia University. She worked in Manhattan for 15 years as a knitwear designer in both women’s and men’s wear. Her experience was largely in men’s wear, where she worked as a senior designer of knits and sweaters for the classic American contemporary brands Geoffrey Beene, Liz Claiborne, and Joseph Abboud. She was getting her hands dirty, so to speak,

working with textures, picking yarns, and designing fabrics. She deems men’s wear and maternity the specialty markets... once you’re in them you “know” all the players.

In 2009, Stafford found a retail channel selling candles as a boutique item, using them as a way to establish her brand identity. She believed the most important thing in an expectant mother’s life is the month her baby is due. Each soy-wax candle details the personality characteristics specific to each birth month. Signifying that special time when a woman is preparing for the baby’s arrival, these candles are a great gift for a mommy-to-be. These wonderful dual-wick candles are the perfect keepsake, baby shower, or “just because you’re pregnant” gift for any expecting mommy and family. “During a pregnancy your whole life and focus revolves around the special month you know the baby is due,” says Stafford. Her candles have been wildly successful retailing for only \$28 at high-end boutiques and department stores.

Stafford came up with the name “Pour Deux, Maternity for Two” (French for “for two”) giving her brand a luxury sophisticated flare. The Pour Deux mommy-to-be likes to get dressed showing off her bump, has sophisticated style and buying habits, and lives in a metropolitan or adjacent suburban area. The woman who knows she’s going to look amazing while she’s carrying. Stafford’s merchandise is designed

with the intentions of going from day to night and work to weekend. The clothing leaves an impression on expecting mothers and even non-pregnant women worthy of all belly rubs and brand recognition—like the famous line, “Oh, who are you wearing?”

I met with Stafford right after her photo shoot for the Fall/Winter lookbook.

She was so excited that Pour Deux is showcasing the Fall line via video on the company’s website. She wants to be able to feed the virtual selling market using video captures of the collection for the company’s e-commerce site.

Stafford has a broad view of feminine sensibility and she brings this to the brand. The aesthetic for Pour Deux is a cross between Theory and J. Crew, having that classic appeal with a contemporary twist, perfect for the expecting mom who likes having fun when getting dressed yet does so with savoir-faire. When asked if her personal style influences her designs she answers adamantly “yes, absolutely!” Her style is very modern and classic. She’ll only fill her wardrobe with indispensable pieces

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that are timeless and chic, aiming no lower for her target market.

For the Fall/Winter 2011 collection, there are a lot of fiber blends and usage soft materials. Stafford says the fall collection is very sweater intensive and has a lot of staple looks. Besides the luxurious blends of silk charmeuse with lycra to silk cotton blends, she also adds in cotton with cashmere, too. Stafford travels all over the globe to source her textiles, including Japan, India and Europe. She superimposes her love for creating textiles in their most primitive state sourcing fibers, yarns, and fabrics for both business and pleasure. "The yarns are the basis of controlling the quality and innovation of a new idea," Stafford says. The collection is a mash-up of chic separates, cozy knits, and of course the season's specialty pant. The use of style lines and proportion makes the Fall line look ultra-luxe and contemporary, with surprising details and finishes that give each piece that statement quality.

It has long been a philosophy that after a depression, a baby boom follows times of economic turmoil. With the impending baby boom stemming from the current market, there is no doubt about the longevity of maternity apparel. It is today's niche market where "baby-bump" is the new black and almost every woman is wearing it or perhaps needing to dress it. Far from the days as a fashion embarrassment, maternity wear has been re-modernized for the fashionable women of our times. Stafford felt, while pregnant with her son Jude, "I

shouldn't have to dumb-down my wardrobe just because I'm expecting." This is what motivated her to start Pour Deux, Maternity for Two.

Armanda Texidor, who represents Pour Deux at New View Maternity in NYC, says that Tara is creating her own lane in the market. "Making babies is never going out of fashion," she says. Armanda makes the point that Stafford's line is answering the call for a younger generation of women. She feels the merchandise is well made and finished beautifully, very feminine and modern. She praised Stafford's collection of knits and sweaters calling them fresh and flirty.

Stafford uses a combination of plush high-end materials that well-dressed women die for, with or without the baby bump. "There is still that six-to eight-week time frame after birth," Stafford says, "when a woman still has to accommodate for that bump without the baby. Pour Deux can also pass for normal-sized women's wear, which is a wonderful selling point.

"I never start designing from scratch, I always do loads of research and let that inspire my collections." During her travels, Stafford is always attending the trade shows and making connections with the fabric manufacturers. She is motivated by the enthusiasms about new developments, while she discovers how she'll create beautiful textiles and clothing out of her finds.

With her keen eye for understanding fibers and yarns, she chose the hues for the Spring/Summer collection from a perfect blend of not too lights

and not too darks, just simple and chic. The color harmony stays on trend never becoming tired or lackluster. The knits she uses are also very forgiving in their nature, so they have the ability to grow with you. Her garments are the type of maternity wear that a woman will want to save for another pregnancy, which adds to the value of her merchandise.

"I haven't seen lines like Pour Deux on the market anymore after the recession. The maternity market needs this right now," says Gina Picon of Mommy Chic Maternity, a retailer in Greenwich, Connecticut. Gina has been a big supporter of Maternity for Two. Gina says the line reminds her of a very classic style of maternity that hasn't been seen on the market in a while. The customer in her location will receive the collection really well with their New England savvy and sailor-classic style. She remembers when there were other brands on the market, like Chaiken and Liz Lange and feels the maternity market now needs someone with a fresh sense of sophistication and style. Her favorite pieces from the Spring/Summer collection are the silk cotton tunic, knit Henley dress, an open-front belted vest, and the bermuda twill short—certainly staples for the season. Gina also asserted one of the many accolades that resonates for Pour Deux: "the fabrics are above par. Not cheap looking at all." she says.

There are many hidden techniques found within Pour Deux's merchandise. Beside's Stafford's ability to make them plush and chic, she also has a great hand for controlling knits. She employs some trapunto techniques for Spring/Summer to give her merchandise that "je ne sais quoi" (a French expression for frankly "that oomph"). Her merchandise is beautifully constructed with skilled workmanship that is evident in each piece. The garments are manufac-

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tured mainly in the U.S.A., and some outsourced production is done in China.

Suzi Jacobson, from Mama Sooze Maternity in Chicago, spoke highly of Pour Deux. "When I first saw the spring collection, I thought it was very timeless and unique." Suzi sees an increase of new stores opening which, in her opinion, is a sign that the economy is doing well. She is elated to see a line with so much potential and feels that Pour Deux stands out among the other brands she carries. She believes the line will be well received on its own. She also stated that times had reverted back to brands not even putting "maternity" on garment labels for fear that merchandise wouldn't sell.

There is something notably sellable about her classic pieces, whether it's a simple flirty knit blouse or a relaxed casual pant. They are so special because of their transitional properties. Being able to wear the same piece in a plethora of different looks is surely how

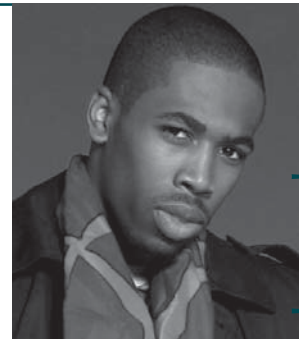
you get your money's worth; women need mileage from maternity. The merchandise is reasonably priced, with garments from the Spring/Summer collection ranging between \$69-\$148 retail.

I asked Stafford where Pour Deux, Maternity for Two would be in the next five years. She plans to delve into multiple categories like accessories, lounge-wear, and sleepwear. She also plans on selling internationally and even though there aren't any future storefronts in the works, she definitely plans on being sold in more boutiques and departments stores nationwide.

From embryo to epidural, every mommy-to-be should want to flaunt her bun in the oven. As long as she has an "easy-to-wear" ensemble and quality fabric that's fit to feel, she'll enjoy letting everyone touch her baby bump.

The new maternity classic, Pour Deux, Maternity for Two is the latest sure-fire fashion for the stylish and

elegant mommy-to-be. See for yourself, check out www.MaternityforTwo.com, and buyers get ready to purchase items from the Fall/Winter collection available in stores beginning March 2011. 360



about the author

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