



Keith Nishida Oral History Interview, May 20, 2014

Title

“DAMchic and the Culture of Fashion at OSU”

Date

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Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Nishida discusses his upbringing in Los Angeles, his college experience at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, and the genesis of his love of fashion, beginning with an influential trip to Italy. From there he details his experiences in the fashion industry, his decision to pursue doctoral candidacy at OSU and the difficult transition that he encountered upon arriving in Corvallis during the winter of 2010.

Much of the interview is devoted to Nishida's recounting of the history of *DAMchic* magazine, including its conception as a class project during the summer of 2012, its growth into a student-run organization, details of the magazine's production from issue to issue, and Nishida's hopes for the future of the magazine and the organization. Other topics discussed include the fashion community at OSU, the development of Nishida's own sense of style and Nishida's aspirations upon departing from OSU.

Interviewee

Keith Nishida

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/nishida/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay Keith, if you would please introduce yourself, your name and today's date and our location.

Keith Nishida: Sure. Today is May 20th and my name is Keith Nishida—oh, Keith Harumasa Nishida, if you need to know, and location undisclosed—no I don't know what to call this room but it's beautiful. It's—we're in the library.

CP: Great. Well we're going to talk a lot about *DAMchic* magazine, which you had an instrumental role in getting going, but before that we'll talk a little bit about sort of pre-OSU for you. If you can tell us a little about your upbringing in Hawaii?

KN: Sure. I like to consider Hawaii as my second home. It's, you know what they say, home is where your heart is and part of my heart is definitely in Hawaii because of that. I consider Hawaii as where I've rebranded myself. I became the person that I am now in a lot of ways. This is pre-high school. So I went—I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, and my parents were common immigrants in the eighties, emigrated from Japan and they, we moved around a little bit in Southern California area, but when it came to college I didn't, I applied to all the UC's, University of California regions, but just like my friends I grew up with, and most of them went to UCLA, UC Riverside, UC Berkley, but I wanted to venture. I really wanted to venture and move somewhere else and take the opportunity and so I applied to out of state colleges and Hawaii seemed nice. Hawaii seemed like a really good place because we used to take family vacations out there and so I ended up going to the University of Hawaii-Manoa and fast-forward a little we now have a house out there and again, Hawaii is such a special place for me, so I'm a little bit of Californian, a little bit of Hawaii and starting to be a little bit of Oregonian too, in a lot of ways. I'm wanting to compost. I think that's rule number one of being an Oregonian in some ways.

But anyway, yeah, so I went to school. I went to school in Hawaii at the University of Hawaii and I studied psychology and I started off as a pre-med, so a lot of Asian immigrants they want their kids to be a doctor or they want them to be an engineer or a lawyer. So my parents are no different, so I went into pre-med and the first three years of my college experience was in pre-med taking organic chemistry, physics and all those of the hard sciences, so to speak, and I didn't do so well because my heart wasn't in it and I ended up going to Italy. I begged my parents to take me to Italy for a study abroad experience, so I went to Italy and then that really opened my eyes to a lot of things, including how organic the Italians dress. Sensual might be a word that I would describe. Not overtly sexual, but very sensual and most times age appropriate, but just got a little bit of an appeal to that. And I was just enamored by all the fashion, all the fashions that I saw in Italy when I was studying abroad there. I absorbed all that culture and came back to Hawaii and then realized I want to do something that makes me happy and I knew that I was a creative person, in some way, shape or form, so I started taking classes in art, in fashion, and fashion just stuck with me. And I—my introductory fashion course teacher, Abby Christi who is actually a graduate of Oregon State University, Abby Christi, she really kind of was a pivotal person in the early years of my—latter years of my college experience, but in the earlier years of my exploring what fashion is or why I love it or how I respond to it.

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And so that was kind of the start of my love for fashion and it's one of those things where once you are attracted to something you find your niche that you just skyrocket. Of course you need the fuel, right? The people who light the fire under you, but I think it's one of those things where you find something, you're just like a jet, you're just skyrocketing through. Fashion was that for me.

And so because of my parents, respectfully I decided not to major in fashion but decided to go with my second love, which is psychology and the studying about human beings. A little bit of sociology, though mostly psychology, how people work, and so I studied psychology and minored in fashion merchandising and one of the—another pivotal moment in my college experience was serving as the show director, fashion show director for the senior fashion show at UH Manoa. And Abby Christi, speaking of which, was the person who kind of nudged me and said "hey, do you have any interest in doing this?" and I said "I don't know what that's about, but sure, it has anything to do with fashion, I'm in." and she said "well if you're going to do it, you should apply to be the director." And so I almost didn't have a choice. If I'm going to be in that class and if I'm going to work in that fashion show, she said "you better be the director." And that kind of set the tone for me, to say okay, I need to lead this. Even though I'm a psychology major and I just started this program,

I'm going to be a leader. And I had the opportunity to serve as that, as the fashion director, or the show director my senior year and that really set the tone for the rest of my time in the fashion industry there on after. I knew that I was interested in promoting fashion in some way and I knew that I wanted to work with people and the actual fashion and I like to put on a show. As far as I remember my parents have said that, say "oh yeah, since you've been able to walk you were doing the moonwalk in front of the TV." So apparently I was the youngest showman ever, but so kind of snowballing off of that, I knew that I wanted to put on a show and some way, shape or form, so they all kind of came together with that one experience and I wanted to carry that on thereafter.

And then I—after the University of Hawaii I moved to California and while I was working on my masters I was working in the industry during the day and a lot of students who end up going into merchandising as a major or minor, somewhere they're taught that their only option is being a buyer. A buyer or a merchandiser, 'cause that's their major. So I was in the mentality, so okay, okay, well my minor is in merchandising so I better find a job in buying. So my first gig in the industry was at BCBGMAXAZRIA and I was in the factory division, which is basically the outlets, all the outlet BCBG stores. So I got to work with the head buyer, under her, and kind of learn some of the ropes of the industry from the buying and allocation perspective, and I tell my students this, but it's a lot of numbers. It's much like being an accountant. You need to be exceptional in Excel sheets, 'cause that's what you'll be seeing every day. So maybe on occasion you'll be able to maybe clean out the closet or be able to fool around and pick a color or two, who knows, but really it's down to seniority a lot, so when you're just starting in the buying aspect of it, you'll be looking at Excel sheets and numbers day in, day out.

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And yeah, I wasn't really, that really wasn't what I meant—wasn't meant to be doing. And so I quickly changed routes and decided okay, I want to do something a little more fun, in other words. And so I decided that, you know I was like what do I want to do? Okay, maybe I want to work with design. And so I worked in a small print studio in LA, print as in prints on a textile piece, and learned about product development. And that was fun, but the company folded and so I had to find another job and then I started doing some freelance visual merchandising work. So basically putting together exhibits—or not exhibits but displays. So I did, I mainly did special events in Beverly Hills for non-profit organizations during the holiday seasons. And that got me into my next kind of line of gigs in marketing and public relations, which I didn't really think about when I was at the University of Hawaii, but it all kind of came together again in that aspect of showmanship and about promoting fashion and being able to work with the products and the people behind the products. Through marketing and public relations and being able to promote a brand or a line of clothing. So I got experience in event production and public relations, pitching, pitching stories and working with wardrobe stylists for TV shows or movies, working with editors at magazines and supplying them with our products in hopes that they would feature them, so basically the product placement and also celebrity endorsements and all that fun stuff.

And so I kind of landed, I just kind of fell into it, but in retrospect it all kind of makes sense that all the things that I really was starting to cultivate my senior year at University of Hawaii kind of came back full circle and it helped me in the long run for that one of the last industry jobs that I had. But my old boss, when I was in marketing public relations, she had said that "you're too young to manage anybody but you're too old to be in the industry." And I also kind of, you know, being in the circuit I realized that you have to look a certain way when you're in fashion PR. You have to act a certain way and I wasn't sure if I was it, was fit for it. Even though a lot of things that I was doing came naturally to me, I'm not sure if I look the part. And you know looks is unfortunately a big part of the fashion industry. That's kind of a big duh moment. So I took my boss's sentiments to heart and realized okay, maybe this isn't my calling. Maybe there's something else out there for me. So she said you should probably stick to going to school. That's what she said.

So that kind of led me to applying to a PhD program, giving me an excuse to stay in school, which a lot of people tend to do when they apply for grad schools. It's like oh, I don't know what to do; I don't want to face the real world. I'll just apply to grad school and buy myself a couple years. And so, I had other reasons, but that was one of many reasons why I decided to apply and further my own education. And so, truth be told, I only applied to one school here at Oregon State University, and I was blessed enough to be accepted into the human behavior in the newer environment program and was taken under the wings of my advisor to this day, Leslie Burns, who is an expert on consumer behavior, amongst other things. And once I got here and I was given the opportunity to be a graduate teaching assistant, I kind of realized this

might be my calling, is to help support—not be in the industry but be a part of the industry by helping nurture the future of the industry, if that makes sense.

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So I think it's my birth calling if you, in Japanese it's called *tensei*, it's almost like a heavenly, god-given career or your occupation so to speak, that's what *tensei* is. So I feel like I'm in the right place, in the right field. It doesn't come easy. If it was easy then there wouldn't be sense in doing it, but it's a great challenge to teach and be an educator but it's also so much fun to be able to teach what I love, which is fashion, and so that kind of leads me to where I am right now.

CP: Why OSU? It was the one place you applied, what attracted you to Oregon State?

KN: That's a good question. I have to think about that. Why Oregon State. Oh, okay, wow, this is, wow, this is going to expose how rudimentary my thought process was. My goodness. I was looking for grad schools to apply for and I think I Googled fashion grad programs, honestly, and then there was a search engine that was specifically for fashion programs around the nation and I realized that oh, there's a couple doctorate programs in all the west coast. Maybe kind of innately I wasn't ready to move anywhere else, I don't know. Possibly it's just my mind maybe went to there. So I looked, started narrowing down my options to west coast schools and there are very few. There are very few fashion programs or fashion apparel and textile related programs at universities that do offer doctoral programs, and so that further narrowed down my options and I think I started looking into each of the programs and something resonated to me. I think, you know to be honest, it—the support that Oregon State University provides to graduate students I think was a huge draw for me, in the form of assistantships. Not that all the other schools didn't offer it, but that was a big component for me; how am I going to finance this? And that little bit I was smart about, thinking okay, how am I going to. I want to go, but how am I going to finance all of this? So Oregon State University and the formerly department of design and human environment offering assistantships I think was a big draw for me. Additionally, the fact that—so there are two emphasis to what we call, what now is the School of Design and Human Environment, two major schemes of expertise or emphasis in our program. One is functional design and the other is consumer behavior. So these are what we're known for as a program and there are subsets underneath that, but I think the consumer behavior emphasis I was drawn into because of my background in psychology and trying to fuse my two interests, my two loves in fashion and psychology, putting it together I realized oh, that's consumer behavior. It's just an emphasis; the focus is on apparel products. So I think that was another huge reason why I realized okay, Oregon State University's program might be a good fit for me based on my educational background and my interests. They seem to match together. So I lucked out. I really did. I feel very lucky to be given the opportunity.

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CP: How was the adjustment for you to come into a small college town?

KN: Oh my goodness. How much time do we have? Oh my gosh. Oy. It was rough, with a capital R. Having moved from Los Angeles and before that Hawaii, Honolulu Hawaii, and the weather difference. I mean stark difference in climate, first of all, and I moved here in January. I deferred for Fall but I came in Winter of 2010, oh gosh, that's so long ago. So when I got here to Corvallis I packed all my bags and shoved it into my Prius and I drove up, drove up the coast to Corvallis and oh my goodness, I cried the whole first week that I was here. It was January, worst ever rain, you name it, it was just quite literally raining on my parade and I called my mom and said "I don't know what I did, but is it too late to back out of this?" and she said "no, you better stay." So it was a huge adjustment in terms of the climate, but to me also the demographic. My surrounding was a huge, huge adjustment for me, and there's a sense of isolation that I felt when I first moved here that there weren't as many people who looked like me on campus or off campus, more so off campus. And I tell people that when I came to campus I realized oh my goodness, I don't see anybody that looks like me, and so I started looking around and I started looking around and then I went to the library and then oh wow, there are people who look like me. So I was like "oh, the library is where people like me congregate, apparently." And so you know, that's a joke of course, but you know the truth was not too far from it and even between the couple years that I've been here at Oregon State, I see a huge difference or I know quite a dramatic difference in the number of—at the level of diversity on campus and I think that's a great sign. Something must be going on, something good's going on in that we're attracting a lot of different students from different walks of life and I think compared to that dreadful winter of 2010 when I arrived at Oregon State, this institution is a much more comfortable place, at least for me it is, than when I just got here. And I have been blessed to have met one of my mentors, Dr. Sandy Tsuneyoshi and she used to work for the Intercultural

Student Services on campus, which is on, what building is that? Intercultural Student Services is on the first floor of the administrative building?

CP: Kerr.

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KN: Kerr building. And I was roaming around campus and of course alone and almost desperate, desperate to find people that are friendly enough to engage in conversation. I was just kind of moseying around and I hit Kerr and I looked inside and through the window there was this lady who was motioning this. She was saying come here, come here. I must have looked like a lost puppy and hungry and lost and desperate puppy, because she invited me to come into the office, to the Intercultural Student Services Center, and then she said "are you okay? Are you lost?" and those kind words really changed the mood and quite frankly my experience here, in terms of how welcome I felt on this campus and she really opened a lot of doors for me in terms of not just mentoring me on how I see myself in a, what's the word, WDI? I'm not sure. White dominant institution? I think that might be a word. Anywho, to be a student of color in—at a campus that is predominately white, and so it was a lot of this inter—a lot of coaching on interpersonal communication skills, even at this level, but also about the self and I think it was really important to me too. I started doing, I started sitting on panels on campus and talking about the intersections of identities, which I talk about in my fashion clubs, about the difference between race, ethnicity, nationality, how these concepts might be different or they are different and how this relates to studies about target market and along the line about product concepts of design, product development, marketing, everything that fashion students should really be cognizant about. And 'cause we do live in a diverse world and with that there are different needs, different wants in terms of the products that we consume and the people that we serve or people that we market to. So it was important for me to kind of explore that side that I never had to even think about when I was living in Los Angeles or in Honolulu, 'cause Honolulu, right, Japanese-American is the majority. Or Asian Americans are the majority in that state.

So it was a rude awakening in some ways. I was like oh my goodness, this is reality. This is reality and I need to learn how to live in it. So coming to Oregon State was, has been truly an education, not the education that I've received with the design and human environment program, not just that, which is immense, but also outside of it in terms of my life and the opportunities of meeting amazing people like Sandy Tsuneyoshi who has given me so many opportunities to explore my options and think critically about oneself and others and how to live my life in the most positive and productive way. That has been so educational and meaningful to me. So I've been very blessed.

CP: On the topic of community, I wonder what you discovered about the community of students and your colleagues here who take fashion seriously or style seriously and want to pursue that. Is part of their career—how would you characterize that group?

KN: How do I characterize that group? Nuts? No. Passionate, right? These people, it's so hard to character—you know peg them down into one thing or the other, 'cause that's the fun part is that they, we all come from different backgrounds, different upbringings, different educational levels, different age groups, different generational cohorts, you name it, it's very diverse within this kind of microcosm of people who are interested in fashion, I think. And that's fine to me, I don't know if I can characterize it using any words other than real. You're going to see something very similar in the industry; it's just under a safer environment called a university.

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And I think that's...hmm, I never thought of it that way, I guess, to be honest, like how would I characterize these people, if that's the question that you're asking. If you would reiterate that.

CP: Well, for me it's been interesting in preparing for this interview to think about this school and it's tradition as a land grant university, sewing and 4-H were a big part of that for quite a long time, kind of the practical application inside of the land grant mission, and—

KN: quote unquote "ag-sci."

CP: Yeah, we're moving into a more modern conception of that, but it's sort of an extension of that I think. And when you think about OSU, fashion is certainly not the first thing you think of, but it is actually, it seems to me, a pretty large community of people that are very interested in this and pursuing it vigorously; multiple fashion shows going on and the magazine that we'll talk about here in a second. It's a very vibrant community, it seems to me.

KN: Right, right. Now I see where you're going with this. Yeah, you're totally right. When you think of Oregon or when you think of the Northwest, when you think of Oregon State, fashion may not be the first thing that comes to mind and if you ask the students, that may be also true, that in their mind, as attendees of Oregon State, fashion might not be the first thing that comes to mind or what we're known for, but there's definitely a force on campus that are studying some form of fashion, whether it be apparel design or the business side of it, merchandising or textile science, the history of apparel, and then those who are just purely interested but majoring in communications or women's studies or biology. I think that's the power of fashion, in a way, that no matter where you are it touches each one of us, our daily lives. Sometimes I joke that men feel like they're exempt from fashion, it's like "oh, I don't do fashion, I don't know anything about fashion and I don't participate in it," but actually they do, right? They may not have style, that is not, they may not have style but they are participating in the fashion system, adopting clothing that was designed, intentionally designed for consumption. They may not have been the first target market for the—a shirt or a sweater or something like that, but nonetheless, they are still participating in fashion. Sometimes that gets me going when some men, and some women, feel like they're exempt from fashion. It's like oh, yeah. I mean it's fine if they're not interested in it, but they do, it's wrong, I think it's incorrect that they feel that they don't participate in fashion, I think.

So, the point being that this concept of fashion touches all of us no matter where we are in this nation, in Oregon, at Oregon State, and I think that resonates to this thread of interest that we see amongst the students and faculty and staff that draws the attention to all the fashion shows on campus and all the other happenings, all the other things that are associated with either our fashion program or something related to that, and just draw people's attention. And I think also media in some ways, it's somewhat not related, but media has an effect, like *Project Runway*, one of the first things that people ask me when they realize that I study fashion, it's like "do you watch *Project Runway*?" It's like, no, I do not have cable; I do not have time to watch *Project Runway*. But you know that, it's a point of reference for a lot of people to say "oh yeah, that TV show, right? Fashion: *Project Runway*."

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So I think that's interesting that it's become, there are a lot more shows that are geared around the fashion industry or something related to fashion and you watch the news and there might be news things about what people are wearing, and most certainly on the web. Major news hubs have some form of lifestyle or style, fashion divisions attached to the greater kind of media hub. So I think it's inevitable that you kind of run into something related to fashion in media nowadays and it's a surge of interest, not just—on a global scale I think. It most certainly affects the way that people feel about fashion.

CP: How have you developed your sense of style? You mentioned Italy was something that sort of got you going, I suppose, but it—

KN: What style? My sense of style?

CP: Well, yeah.

KN: Anything that...

CP: I presume that you have a certain eye for things that you like or don't like. How did that come about or have there been designers who have been important to you in terms of developing that sense? Or experiences similar to going to Italy and seeing how the Italians were dressed?

KN: Yes. Some, it's like oh my goodness, that sensibility that they have in dressing; flattering, it's flattering to their body, and some are flashier than others. Like any country, there are people who are—like to dress very outlandishly, and then there are those who are more on the other side of the spectrum. I find, I've found from my experience that the Italians dress very modestly in some aspect. It's not this like gregarious piles upon piles and piles of textiles and layers and whatnot. It seemed very organic, if you want to call it, for my eye. And again, flattering to their body and dressing

for their body. And I think I've emulated that in my own style in a lot of ways. Fit is important to me but also concepts of color and fabric that complements who I am and what I—my skin tone or my body shape or my body type and I tend to dress simpler and this is kind of, some people would debate that if you're, if you work in the fashion industry or if you teach fashion that you should dress fashionably, and most certainly teaching fashion, from my—it's a lot of pressure to have to, you know that pressure of upholding your image or how you dress and everything like that. But people who work in higher education know that we're not made of money, honey, right? So I do have a budget and I recycle a lot of things, I wear things that I've had since fifteen years ago and I'll bring it back and I'll wear it with something new, you know, mix things together, and you know it may not be "on trend," but again, it's sensible fashion, sensible styling and it fits my body and it's complementary to my personality or how I want to emulate myself and to the public and I think that's kind of a complex way of saying what my style is. It's a mishmash of a lot of things but it's simple and not always on trend or fashionable. So, I don't know if that answered your question, but.

CP: Yeah. Let's talk about the magazine. *DAMchic*, how did it start, what's the genesis of this project?

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KN: The genesis of the project. I've got to start by saying that *DAMchic* has really attracted a lot of attention since its inception in September 2012, which hasn't been a long time, but with between then and now a lot of people, editors and just random people and the general public have shown interest in what we do at *DAMchic* magazine and what it's about or how it got started and where it's going in the future or who's involved or what did we do, what do we produce, how do we do it, right? It's like a magic show, like how do you do it? People have shown so much interest in what we do and I find that to be so fascinating. It goes back to people, more and more people being interested in the concept of fashion. And I just love it. I just love the fact that we are gaining momentum and continuously attracting people's attention and asking, having them ask questions, continue to ask them, like "oh my goodness, what's involved, what does it entail?" or where do we come from and all this, all these questions, and I think just the details.

It started off with a course that I taught summer of 2012, I taught a course. It was special topics course, so we never offered it before, and I'm kind of adventurous in that way, that during the summer I love to pitch new courses that are not ever offered in the curriculum but something that students, and I've heard the students saying "oh, I'm interested in going into this field or I want to have a career in that or I'm interested in this aspect of the fashion industry." So the years that I've been teaching here as a GTA, I hear things. And I just simply put those in motion in the position that I am, I'm fortunately afforded the opportunity to pitch a course, come up with a curriculum and then implement it. And so, three years ago I taught visual merchandising, which was another course, but then in 2012 I offered styling, fashion styling, because I think, I believe that not only designers but virtually anybody in the industry should know a thing or two about what—how things should be coordinated, basic concepts about balance and weight and color theory, aesthetic, fabric, lots of these topics, how those kind of come together and I wanted to package that through the concept of fashion styling. And I knew that maybe some of the design students, especially, would be able to learn a few tricks and be able to implement that when they are designing something, or when they're putting on a show. And so that was kind of the base. I heard some things that students wanted to do with their career and I thought okay, well let's explore it together. Let's explore it together and then we'll see how this course goes.

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And so that summer I taught it. It was a four week course and in that four weeks, aside from the lectures and in-class activities and whatnot, one of the—it was a project, so it was a very project-based, student-centered course, student-centered and project-centered, project-based course and the final project for the fashion styling course was one of two things. I gave them an option. Either make a sixteen month calendar and incorporate the concepts of styling that I taught into creating a sixteen month calendar of garments and images, and they have to have their own models and they have to stage each month, the background and the clothing that they featured, they most certainly have to style them appropriately, they have to have a theme. So that was one option for them. I like to give my students options and not corner them. But so that was option one, to make a sixteen month calendar, or they can make a mock fashion magazine. And so it's clearly, there was a huge difference in time commitment, which is my bad, to say okay, these were not equally weighed in terms of options. You want this or you want THIS.

And so the other option that I gave them for their final project was the mock fashion magazine, which obviously they took. So my students took that option and then we, the next couple weeks I think, we officially started the second week of summer school, so within the last three weeks of the summer course, we hammered down a lot of the details and I gave them some guidelines or expectations, say you have to do two main fashion features, you have to also do a street style blog kind of entry. So go out there, see what real people are wearing out in the street, document it and then interview them; "what are you wearing, why did you chose what you wear, what is your style, what is your personal style like," just like you're interviewing me, "what is your personal style like, what were you inspired by," ask them questions on their clothing choice, their styling choice. And so I had them do that and some other content that I had—general contents that I wanted them to hit for this mock magazine and so one of the—I had them do a decade-inspired fashion shoot, which I think they chose the sixties or something like that.

But anyhow, so that's, that was sort of the start of the concept of a student-run magazine, just in the context of a final project for my styling class, and I gave the students a choice to say okay what do you want to call this magazine? And so they came—that was homework—and they came up with all these ideas and we did process of elimination, "oh no, that sounds like something else," or people might interpret that differently or wrong or something like that. And lo and behold we all mutually agreed, the students kind of mutually agreed upon calling their mock, their final project, their mock magazine *DAMchic*. DAM is like the beaver dam and then chic is a word for stylish or having of, fashionable, you know, a spirit, that's chic. So, which some people mispronounce as chick. So it's *DAMchick*. So we still need to, maybe we still need to do some outreach to the general public to say C-H-I-C is chic, not chick or anything else.

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Anyway, that's another to-do list for us, but so that was the start of *DAMchic* magazine, and once the course ended for the final day on their finals, instead of having a final exam I had the final project done and do an evaluation and whatnot and we're kind of thinking okay, so what are we going to do with this. You put all this energy into it; let's share it with our friends and family. So like normal millennials do, they put it up onto the web and we decided, you know the best, probably, way, was to make a page or a Facebook page and include the link of the hosting, where we published it online, and put it right there and have people just share the link of the Facebook page to all our friends and family. And people loved it. It was just showered with positive encouragements, encouraging words and positive remarks about "my goodness, I can't believe this is a final project," and "it looks so real, it looks like a real fashion magazine," and then we're like "oh, you know that's sort of what we were going for, so mission accomplished in terms of creating a mock fashion magazine," and I think that was a very critical moment for us to really take it to the next level. If we didn't expose our self in the way we did, through Facebook and in an online setting as a zine, as an online magazine, I don't think we would have been able to build enough caché to take it to the next step, which was to—our journey towards becoming a student-sponsored organization on campus.

Between the end of summer and the end of Fall term of that year, there was a lull and nothing happened. Nothing came about *DAMchic*. The page was still up and people were—they stopped talking about it. They knew it existed, the friends and family, but it was still a final project for a summer course that they took with me. Fair enough, but I knew that there was something there and when I dream I like to dream big, and I thought okay no, there's something here. The students worked really hard on it and the final product looked far more amazing than what I've expected for a project that they only had three weeks, two and a half, two weeks maybe, to work on. It's quite amazing the energy that they put into it, the passion that they put into it. So I thought okay, let's not let this die just yet. Let's see where we can take it. So I wanted to, I decided okay I want to found this magazine officially. I want to do it and I want this to be an opportunity for OSU students to use it as a platform to learn about styling and learn about how to put together a magazine, how to publish, how to do a photo shoot, how to work with models, how to work with photographers and most importantly learn, explore who they are and what their potentials are outside of the classroom setting.

And so I knew that this would be a great platform for students to kind of grow out of and experience whatever they take out of it and model their—the rest of their career around possibly, to say, you know it could be a process of elimination to say you know I tried a little bit of photography but I realized that's really not my forte after doing it a little with *DAMchic*, or I did a little bit of editing or working as an editor but it's not quite what I want to do. So let it be a process of—an agent of a process of elimination. That's still great. I wanted *DAMchic* to be all that for these students. So I asked, I approached two students from the summer course who assumed the position of Editor in Chief and Creative Director and I told

them do you want to keep on assuming those roles and help me build the student sponsored organization and build this organization and really do this magazine seriously?

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And they agreed and so, my gosh, humble beginnings, that was Winter, right around wintertime when the three of us met and we hammered down the details about how we're going to go about recruiting and how we're going to structure this organization called *DAMchic* magazine and whether it was even feasible to be a student-sponsored organization and how we're going to fund ourselves and how we're going to run these fashion photo shoots and where are we going to get these resources and this was a lengthy conversation and we had our first informational meeting out to the public that we are interested in forming this organization called *DAMchic* and actually we had our informational meeting here at the library. And we packed the house. We had a room and we ran out of chairs. There were people standing and I was just so proud. I was like oh my, yes, this is proof. This is proof that there is something worthy that can and will happen to this, to *DAMchic* magazine.

And so that was kind of our humble beginnings and we went from the three of us to twenty-eight staff members, so we like to say from eight of the original eight students who worked on the first unofficial issue for the summer course. We went from eight to twenty-eight in less than a year that spring and, well the rest is history. No, but the rest is oral history. Yeah, so we grew exponentially and that's—we are, if I may say, we are entering our second anniversary since our inception or since we've been established unofficially since September 2012, which I think is the *DAMchic*'s birthday, birth month. And we are officially a student-sponsored organization now. It was not easy. It was not an easy journey but we are happily now a student-sponsored organization under the School of Design and Human Environment. And this magazine wouldn't be possible without all the manpower or the womanpower that goes into day in, day out, the planning and the execution and the post-production, which is not always the fun part, of editing the photos from the raw images so they're usable for the magazine, putting in the wording and formatting the wording so it doesn't look—it looks just right.

And all the resources that we're afforded because we're in the context of a university; a photo studio, photo studios on campus, plenty of places, plenty of interesting places that we can use as a backdrop for a photo shoot on campus and also off campus and the amount of talent here on this campus is just tremendous. And I feel we haven't really fully tapped into it and I'm so excited for that and for the future, because, I mean they're, we're cultivating this culture of...is that weird, to say we're cultivating a culture of talent here on campus? I don't know, I don't want to sound presumptuous but I think *DAMchic* offers the opportunity to cultivate the talent that students have and then put it into a tangible finished product. And it's not just about the product, but really the people skills. Working with each other, that's another talent, right? That's definitely another type of talent that we don't necessarily teach or learn in the class setting.

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So I feel very fortunate that *DAMchic* does afford the environment to cultivate student talent and the people skills that they're going to need in order to succeed in a very, I don't know the right word, can I say volatile? yeah, a very competitive industry that they are looking forward to getting into. And if I can just add one more thing, that the testament to how much of an impact *DAMchic* magazine is really making; one of our latest issues reached over half a million viewers. Half a million views, actually. For a school student-run, student-produced magazine, fashion magazine—fashion and lifestyle magazine—half a million views. I mean wow, the sheer amount of exposure that this is really incurring. And these viewers, people who are viewing these magazines; not just in Corvallis, not just in Oregon, not even just in the United States. We're talking global. We have viewers in India, China, I'm not sure if we have any in Antarctica yet, but we're working on it. But definitely multi-continent, multi-continental readership. Amazing. Amazing, the global scale, yeah.

CP: I think, for me anyway, what I'm responding to when I look at the magazine is how professional it seems. It doesn't seem like a student project at all. It seems like something that's clean and produced by people who know what they're doing. I wonder if you can give us a sense of how it all comes together. I mean, I assume that students are doing most of the work, you're providing a little bit of input here and there?

KN: I like to think I'm putting the input that is making a difference in the content and the finished product. Nowadays I mostly give advice as a faculty advisor, co-faculty advisor and the founder of *DAMchic*. My role has changed more

from technical side and helping out and directing with the execution of the magazine and more into helping provide a vision, helping the students structure the vision of this organization and helping them build the infrastructure in order to sustain our existence on campus and that sort of—that is what I've been advising more on. And also some interpersonal and leadership skills that a lot of students, they'll run into issues. After a while, peer-to-peer, there's a lot of things that can happen and so I provide advice in that aspect of how to mitigate, mitigate conflict. So conflict resolution issues and leadership skills and things like that. So that's sort of, these are topics that I mostly advise them on. In terms of the technical side of producing the magazine, 99%, I'd say nearly 100% student-conceived, student-planned. All of it, that's their doing.

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That's our students' creative thinking skills and just the way—it's their work, really, from start to finish. Every year it's increasingly become so, and in some aspects it's a relief for me because I don't need to hold their hands. They just, they do their homework. They look at sources of inspiration on their own. They are resourceful in what they can get their hands on. They're also thinking critically about what is a real—what do these magazine do, what are they doing that we're not doing, that maybe we can emulate or we can mimic. So a lot of the things that you see in *DAMchic* is a product of live and learn. They're really living and they're learning real-time from the world and they each kind of bring their interpretations and it all kind of gets, it all culminates into what you see, which is our issues. So I can't even put into words how proud I am that it's their work and it, you know from your perspective, and to many of our readership, it's near professional level work. It's just, I don't know how else to put it but that's just really what my sentiments is, that it's just remarkable that we have students who are just able to do so, able to produce such high-quality, level work. High level of work that can be mistaken as a professional magazine; a for-profit magazine. If you see it on the stands, people wouldn't flinch. Again, I think it's the amount of talent that we have. The talent base that we have on campus, and we're just repackaging it in the form of a magazine. And so, very blessed. Very blessed to have access to the talent, I think. That's really where the success of *DAMchic* stems from.

CP: What lies ahead for the project?

KN: What lies ahead for the project? Well, it started off as a project, right? I think of it as its own entity. It's an organization. If it wanted to go pro, I think it can. What lies ahead? Funny you ask that, because I'm trying to schedule a meeting before some of our executive staff members graduate this year, and saying "hold on." I wanted to sit down with some of our current executive members and our future executive staff members and I want to have my co-adviser, who's taking over for me, and for all of us to sit together and revise our bylaws, since we've grown exponentially since when we wrote the bylaws as an organization, so that's step one. I think that's number one, is that we need to revise our bylaws as an organization because we've outgrown a lot of them since we first drafted that, so that is first on the to-do list, at least from my perspective. What lies ahead, other than that, I always thought that *DAMchic* magazine had a commercial value to it. Potential to be able to feature local commerce and what I mean by that is Corvallis retailers in downtown Corvallis who might be in need of extra exposure to reach out the college demographic, being able to be that catalyst for economic growth for local businesses but also in the Northwestern region of the United States. I'm thinking big right here. Giving, maybe giving an up and coming fashion designer in Vancouver, Washington or Seattle or somewhere in Washington state, not even in Oregon, or even in Oregon, an up and coming designer or a talent of sort and being able to feature the next generation of America's fashion designers that come from the Northwest. I mean how exciting would that be to be one of the first people to really give—shed some light on Northwest talent, Northwestern talent. I think I see potential in *DAMchic* being that catalyst, that Northwestern talent, can really utilize to launch their career and their status and of course for the students as well. I hope that it continuously—stays one of the goals for *DAMchic* to be able to translate from a student-based organization and this experience on campus into an actual job once they graduate. I think this conversion is really important and also builds caché, builds credibility for our—not just for *DAMchic* magazine, but for Oregon State University, who really sets our—educates these kids.

I think anything and everything that we can do to build that credibility as an organization, I think is the future for us. So again, being that platform, that extra catalyst for exposure for Corvallis based or Northwestern based businesses, retailers, services and whatnot, talent, that's one way for us. Also I would love to see more industry professionals collaborate with us, and we do some outreach. We do some outreach but I think we can get more of the industry's professionals to shed some of their knowledge and enrich the experience for our staff members. I always wanted to see *DAMchic* host like a

Ted Talk. That would be fun. *DAMchic* Ted Talk, Ted-X: *DAMchic*. I don't know, we'll work on the marketing. But the point being that hosting a social but also educational event like that, that'd be amazing. That checks a lot of things in terms of what I see as the vision originally and to this day I see as the vision of *DAMchic*. Not only for the students, educating for the stu—giving them the platform in a Ted Talk, *DAMchic* Ted Talk, educating the campus community, but also our surrounding community too. I think wouldn't that be amazing, and using *DAMchic* as the, again, the catalyst to do good for others. I think that would be amazing. I hope that's the future for us. So many things. I wouldn't be able to stop listing things that I want for the future of *DAMchic* and the students involved and I think that's also exciting, don't you think?

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CP: Absolutely. You mentioned that *DAMchic* will soon have a new faculty advisor. What's next up for you?

KN: I wish I knew the answer to that. I'm actively looking for opportunities right now. I'm going to stay on as founder until I die. No one can take that title from me, mwuahaha! But I'm proud to stay on as the founder but won't be able to as faculty advisor since my contract as GTA ends in June of this year. I'll still be on campus and I have my dissertation research to finish. I am applying for positions as an assistant professor in and around the United States. You know, it's kind of cliché, but the world is my oyster, or my shrimp, or my whatever it is. You can tell I'm hungry. But that's—I'm in a transitional period and it's also exciting and frightening, but at least I know that *DAMchic*'s in good hands. I know that the students are going to be self-driven and they'll run it and then my co-adviser will be there to catch them when they fall, but otherwise I know that it's in good hands. At least for the next year. And that's one thing off my chest at least, right? I'm actually, quite frankly, excited to see it from a distance. Because of my involvement, I kind of, sometimes I joke that it's my baby, it's my baby and it's very hard to let go of your baby sometimes, and being critical about it, every move that it makes and it's been a lesson for me on many occasions, to just breathe and let the cards fall as they may and let it do, take its course and do its thing and let *DAMchic* and the students do what they think is the best decision, aside from what I think. That's been a lesson for me, to be able to let go and it's great, because I really do need to let it go now. So now I'm a lot more excited about where it's going to go in the next year, the next five years, the next ten years, the next how many years to come and it's always been my dream to come back to Oregon State and see where this organization is going to be like years from now, and be surprised and everything, and be genuinely excited, like the first time we created the magazine back in 2012. So I'm looking forward to watching my baby grow from a distance. But as for me, I don't know. We'll see where I end up, but hopefully I'll get employed and be able to find new ways, new ways in which I can contribute to student learning and their personal—student's personal development, their professional development. Yeah, I have ideas, I have lots of ideas and I can't wait to implement them.

CP: Great. Well I want to thank you for sharing this insight into clearly a vibrant corner of our university.

KN: Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity.

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