

In The Bag

Rochelle Thwaites is a handbag designer living her dream.

BY JENNIFER MAGID

Before starting her own line of bags, called Mimeki, Rochelle Thwaites dreamed of being a handbag designer. Really. “Mimeki was first conceptualized from a dream I had in 2004,” she says. “After thinking long and hard as to whether to pursue this dream, I got on a plane and headed to New York.” When she arrived, Thwaites immersed herself in learning all about the handbag and fashion industry. “It took off from there,” she says.

Thwaites started Mimeki when she was 28. She had been working as an interior designer but didn't feel fulfilled by her career path. “I was looking for something different. The dream I had could not have come at a better time,” she says.

Mimeki is a word from Thwaites's Jamaican heritage that means “I made it.” Mimeki bags come in all shapes and sizes and feature exotic leathers and snakeskin. Thwaites inspects each bag to make sure it is perfect. And there are plenty of tasks that go into being a designer that don't involve designing,

according to Thwaites. “Although I try to get in a couple hours of design each day, the majority of my day consists of dealing with suppliers, manufacturers, and operational needs,” she says.

Thwaites's advice to future designers is simple: “Research, research, and more research. It's imperative that you know every detail of the type of business you want to start.”

All in a Day's Work

“Being able to see your sketches come to life is a great accomplishment for me,” says Rochelle Thwaites. But running a small business also has its challenges. How does Thwaites spend her days?

- Strategizing for product marketing
- Maintaining quality control (making sure the products are made well from quality materials)
- Selling products