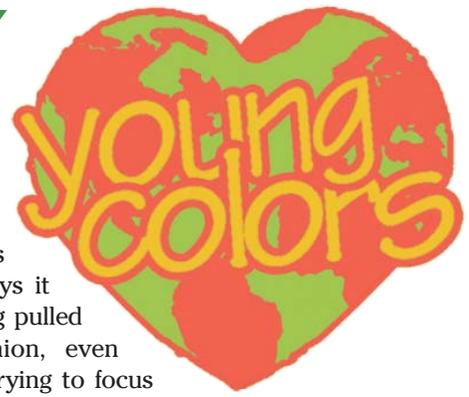


THE COLORSTORY OF YOUNG COLORS



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ll of a sudden, they know...when I'm in my design studio and if the door is closed, everyone knows not to bother me, 'cause it's just comin' - and I can't even write fast enough or draw quick enough - often my inspiration comes from everyday life...”

How many times have you wanted to enter the place where creative people go, where they do their mind-work? That world could seem unapproachable for those on the outside, wondering about the ideas that your marketing agency or your copywriter or your designer emerges with.

Not so with Designer Donna Prescott. She invites you in with her, makes you feel at home - then she works together with you to find a mix of her children's designs that fits your store's personality to perfection. She does this with color stories...and a whole lot more.

“I wish I could have a computer download! I visualize the whole line in my head before it's actually on paper,” she says. “I can see it all and then I take it apart and divvy up the work to eight different workshops in two different countries.”

Donna could do anything she wanted with her life's work. Growing up in North Jersey, her Mom sews all her clothes and teaches her that she doesn't have to stick to the pattern, she could alter it with her own style ideas. “She taught me there were no boundaries on what you can do.” Instead of taking home economics in school, Donna chooses metal and wood shop, and weaving, where “we dyed all our own fabrics, spun sheep's wool on a spinning wheel, learned how to make thread - everything.”

She could pursue athletics - “I graduated from high school with 10 Varsity letters.” She could continue modeling - while earning a behavioral science degree with a business minor in college, “I had a modeling contract and I modeled for different designers at trade shows.” She could teach - “I started my grad school program for education, to work in schools, maybe as a guidance counselor, a coach; I love working with kids.”

Once Donna and Robert Prescott marry, she could say no to traveling - first to Arizona, where Robert earns a master's in international management at Thunderbird, then to Guam, where both work in retail. “I had the most fun buying kid's clothing.” But say no to travel? When her father retires at 50, he takes their sailboat and sails all the islands, from Florida to Venezuela and back again. “I learned about batik fabric; what an awesome fabric for kids. It's just so practical.”

What Donna does do - well, she says it best: “I kept being pulled back in to fashion, even though I wasn't trying to focus on it. The creativity part of me was always there and I was always doing things with it. I just never thought of it as my career.”

No boundaries, indeed. In October of 1997, Robert and Donna Prescott incorporate their very own business, r&d international, inc., where Donna draws from all of her “coulds” to design clothes for children under the Young Colors, Frumpy Rumps and Silly Sarongs brands. She's also breaking out a new brand for tweens called Fancy Threads - “It's more separates, whereas Young Colors is collection-driven,” and is getting ready to re-design Frumpy Rumps - “I'm really excited about the new vision for it.” Donna's lines are known for their bright, fun, vibrant colors - and her pastels are quite popular, too - perhaps because she freshens up one of the colors in her pastel palette every season. “This season it was green apple. It's amazing how much business we do just in pastels. It's become the second side to Young Colors.”

For Donna, the fabric comes first, then the clothes. At the beginning of their entrepreneurship, “We spent a third of the year overseas, a third of the year we were home shipping and a third of the year we were on the road seeing stores,” which leads to the company's relationships with workshops in Indonesia and Peru, creating the batik fabric Donna has fallen in love with. “It's the only fabric that withstands the sun and washing and rain.” Donna





Donna and Robert Prescott

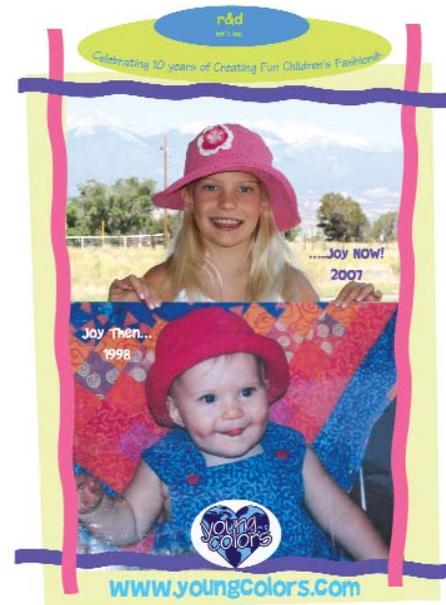
considers the most important part of her design process getting the fabrics right. The Prescotts' goal is to find products that are native to a country that Donna could take and make attractive to the American palette. "Give my customers something unique, in fun colors, amazing quality; then the clothing will come."

Actually, you may already know Robert and Donna Prescott. When they're not overseas, not in markets and at trade shows, not at their home office, recently relocated to Salida, CO, they're out there, visiting retailers with a smaller wanderlust. "We've probably been to 1,000 stores over the last 10 years. Every single store has a different personality. It is truly the person who runs it; their personality comes through the store. You never find two alike." When a designer visits a retailer, sees what works in the store, an understanding is forged that is like no other – "I'm not going to show her product that doesn't work for her. And she thinks, 'You know my store, you've been in it.' It means so much to them."

This brings us to Donna's color stories – and the colors, styles, outfits and accessories that she designs to become part of that color story. "I think it works because you can see how it all comes together. It tells a story." Her signature color story is called Patchwork, which takes a little bit in every color story from that season and puts it into one group. "I think there are some pretty basic styles, things that kids are going to want – they want comfort, something they could get on and off easily. I design my own fabrics because I don't want it to look like anybody else's."

Donna shows one color story at a time to a retailer, points out the features of the garments and encourages them give her their feedback. "Every store can come up with their own look. Just like the stores have their own personalities when you walk into them, what they pick from me can end up being totally different from somebody else. That makes it fun."

Donna's design process illustrates what Robert Prescott calls, "High tech, high touch." To come full circle, during the company's fifth year, Robert and Donna show at their first ENK Children's Club in New York, where Stanley Kaye is Coordinator – the very same Stanley Kaye who coordinates the shows when Donna models there. "I was there long ago as a model and now I'm coming back as a designer presenting my line to my home area."



their 10th anniversary in October. There's a nostalgic poster to commemorate the event, featuring Donna's first Young Colors model, Joy, then and now. Festivities are centered on showcasing their clients, and business associates – definitely "high touch." For Robert and Donna, gathering such a global crowd may need to be "high tech," too. Quite an accomplishment for a girl and her guy, a natural-born designer who never thinks she could make a career from her creativity.

There was a time when r&d international considers making toys as well as children's clothing. They find these sweet wooden puzzles all hand-carved and hand-painted. Once, Donna tries to decipher how the toymakers name their colors. Pointing to a purple piece, she asks them to describe it. "Why, that's purple." Ahhh, and this lavender piece, what do you call this? "That's young purple." And Donna says, "So these are the regular colors and those are the young colors—"

All of a sudden, they know... "We knew, at that moment, the name of the company. It says everything. You know it's for kids and you know it's about color...that's what we are about."

How's that for a color story? Where did the name Frumpy Rumps come from, you ask? Let's just say it's an inside joke – let Robert and Donna tell you about it when they come for a visit.

-written by Janet Gray Muniz 

