**[Students set sights on conquering fashion world through self-made brands](http://spartandaily.com/85451/students-set-sights-on-conquering-fashion-world-through-self-made-brands)**

by [Camille Nguyen](http://spartandaily.com/author/camille) Oct 10, 2012 6:28 pm

Between juggling work, relationships, a social life and school, being a college student tests time management — especially for young entrepreneurs.

For seniors Francesca Mateo, and Cutum and Art Derecho, the term “busy” can be considered an understatement as they develop, design and market their clothing lines Empire in the Air and Faded Friday.

Launched in 2009, Empire in the Air was originally conceptualized by Mateo, a global studies major, after coming up with a “save the world plan” when she was 14-years-old.

“I told myself that I would learn how to design T-shirts and then use those profits for people in need,” she said, adding that she decided on the name Empire in the Air because of the people who told her to focus on reality instead of pursuing such an ambitious dream.

Partnered with the Filipino nonprofit organization [Project PEARLS](http://www.projectpearls.org/), which was founded by her mother Melissa Villa, Mateo said  she wanted to create a brand that was inspired by the people who benefited from the work of the charity.

“Twenty percent of the profit (of every shirt sold) goes to Project PEARLS,” she said, going on to say that the money raised would be used to buy books, school supplies and other educational materials for children in the Ulingan slum in Tondo, Manila.

Mateo said that her designs for Empire in the Air are primarily influenced by contemporary street wear and that she has implemented many of the style's unique elements into her designs through pops of color, in black and white schemes and disjointed geometric shapes used to make her graphics.

“I wanted to be sure that when I released my stuff and you looked at it you’ll be able to know right away that it’s (Empire in the Air) not by just looking at the logo,” she said, stating that she studied clothes from popular street brands to learn how to create a distinguishing flair to her designs.

However according to Cutum Derecho, a senior business marketing major and co-founder of the clothing line Faded Friday, a brand’s success does not only depend on the distinctiveness of its designs, but how shoppers will react to its items.

“I really don’t like speaking on what our products represent because ultimately I want our consumer to interpret, translate and come to a conclusion of our products for themselves,” he said.

Acting as the director of marketing and logistics for the brand, Cutum said the idea of Faded Friday began to take shape after he and his younger brother, Art, visited New York last year.

“After that experience of seeing multiple store fronts and brands coming out of New York we posed a question to ourselves, ‘Why can’t we do it here in our hometown where we were born and raised?’” he said.

According to Art, the primary designer behind the brand, Faded Friday has two meanings.

“‘Faded’ means something nostalgic,” he said, commenting that items seen as “faded” may be seen as old and expendable, but to others these things hold sentimental value.  “And ‘Friday’ is kind of like that ‘Thank God it’s Friday,’ (mentality).”

Currently, the Derecho brothers are preparing for tomorrow’s Faded Friday launch party, which they said has had them running on little sleep and obscene amounts of coffee every day in an attempt to balance event planning and midterms.

Faded Friday will be launching tomorrow at Santa Teresa BBQ & Grill from 6:30 to 10:00 p.m.  To learn more about Faded Friday, click [here](http://www.fadedfriday.com/).

To learn more about Empire in the Air, click [here](http://empireintheair.com/).

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