

# Fashion finds Kansas City stylish and up-to-date.

words KIMBERLY WINTER STERN

Kansas City's past and not-so-distant history is chockfull of diverse industry pioneers and titans who have helped put this town on the map. Agriculture, livestock, railroad, architecture, arts, business, information technology, education and pharmaceuticals—the list goes on and on.

Savvy fashionistas know you don't have to reach very far back in the KC vaults to find an important figure in turn-of-the-century women's wear. Nell Donnelly Reed was a feisty pioneer in women's ready-to-wear clothing in the 1920s and 30s, designing and selling ruffled dresses to replace the period's ho-hum *de rigueur* cotton dresses. By the 1940s Reed's business, the Donnelly Garment Company, was described as the largest of its kind in the world.

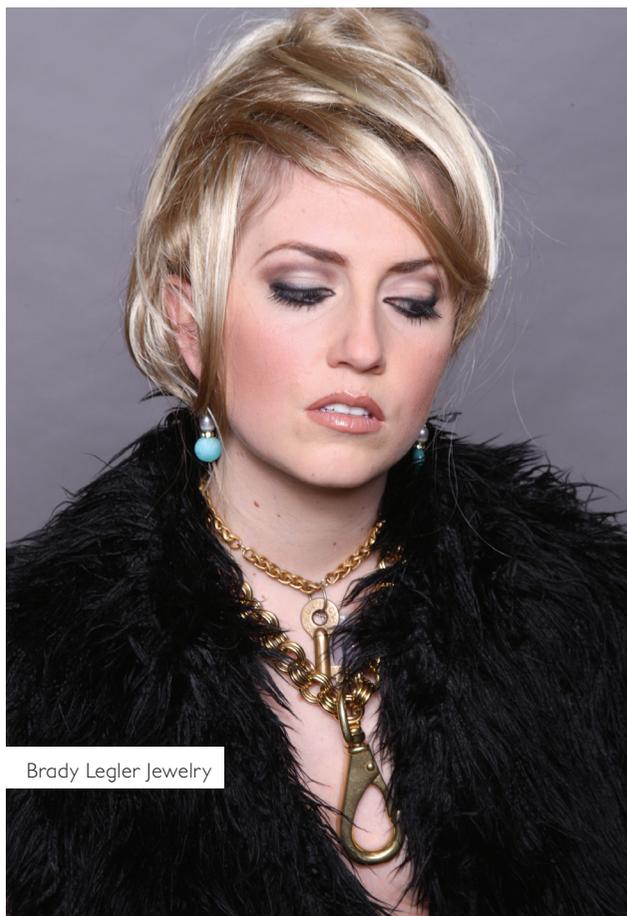
Reed's clothing, manufactured under the Nelly Don label, helped change and challenge the conventional notion of pre-World War I America that well-designed clothing couldn't be sold inexpensively. In 1935 Reed was described by *Fortune* magazine as possibly the most successful businesswoman in the United States—her thriving \$3.5 million business had 1,000 employees and helped make KC a hub in ready-to-wear fashion.

Indeed fashion is part of our current screenplay, with young designers from Kansas City blueprinting what we'll be wearing tomorrow around our necks and on our backs and hanging on the walls of our homes. There are trend-spotting retailers who stock their fashionable shelves with irresistible must-haves and creative producers who capture those stores' ingenuity. There's even a young artist making a colorful connection with one of the world's most highly regarded brands of couture eyewear.

We tip our hats to these innovators ... and Kansas City, we can't wait to see what you have up your fashionable sleeve! ❖

## BRADY LEGLER

This 21-year-old Barstow School graduate and second-year student at the venerable design institution in New York City, Parsons, credits his grandmother, who modeled for the world's first one-name fashion celeb, Chanel, for inspiring him to create jewelry and art. His first pieces of stunning jewelry, executed with craftsmanship that belies his age, were sold in Halls and Leewood's Soho 119 in 2008; Bergdorf Goodman is looking at his Fall 2011 collection for possible inclusion in their flagship store. Majoring in product design at Parsons, Legler's eye-catching jewelry line—which can be summarized as simultaneously quirky, asymmetric and tasteful—is sold at Halls and Adam in New York City's trendy Chelsea district and reflects his grandmother's basis principles of style. "I get personal with each piece I design," says Legler. "My grandmother always said, 'Never blend in, find something you like and add something of yourself to it. Style is not buying designer head-to-toe, style is taking something and making it yours.'" Women who own Brady Legler Jewelry say that his work exudes attitude and elegance. Legler's acrylic and oil paintings are also becoming a hot commodity, with collectors from New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, London and Kansas City purchasing his canvases. This is a young fashion turk to watch, with his star quickly rising in the high-end world of jewelry and art. *For more information visit [www.bradylegler.com](http://www.bradylegler.com).*



Brady Legler Jewelry