

Christiana Lapetina-Johnson Clothing and Accessory Collection





Designer Christiana Lapetina-Johnson (1961-2020) became internationally recognized for her high-end, hand-beaded garments and accessories. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, she began her first job in the apparel industry as a sales associate for Merry Go Round from 1976 to 1978 while attending Oak Park High School. In 1983, she graduated from the University of Missouri, Columbia, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Clothing and Textiles. From 1989 to 1994, she worked for the successful ready-to-wear apparel manufacturing company Other Destination in India as Design Director and National Sales Manager, designing a variety of sportswear that included patchwork jackets featuring prints designed by Lapetina-Johnson.



(LEFT and ABOVE) Christiana Lapetina-Johnson c 1990s
Images courtesy of M. Rivera



LEFT: Christiana Lapetina-Johnson Wearing Sequin Jacket and Dress (Mid-1980s) Image courtesy of M. Rivera

LEFT: Sequin Jacket and Satin Dress (1983) Gift of M. Rivera

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Clothing and Textiles at the University of Missouri, Christiana designed this jacket and dress as part of her award-winning senior collection.



Patchwork-Style Cotton Jacket (1990) Gift of M. Rivera

While working for Other Destination in India, Lapetina-Johnson designed the colorful, bold print of this oversized cotton jacket.



Patchwork-Style Cotton Jacket, Reverse (Early 1990) Gift of M. Rivera



Paper Postcard Featuring Patchwork Jacket Illustration and Christiana's Signature (1990) Courtesy of M. Rivera

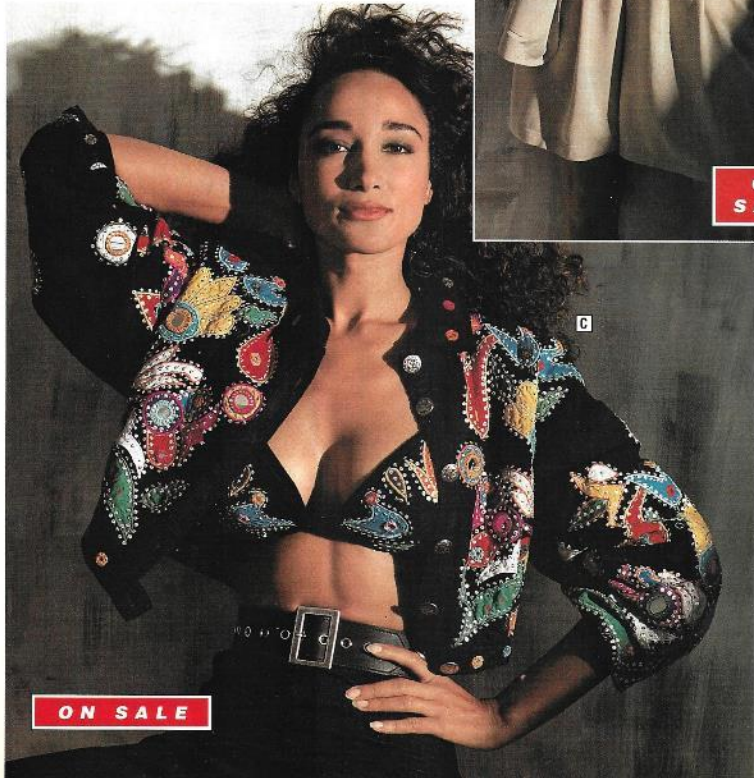
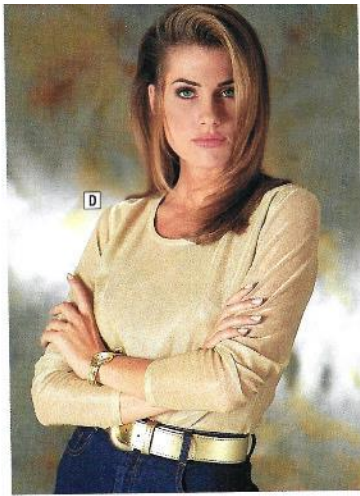
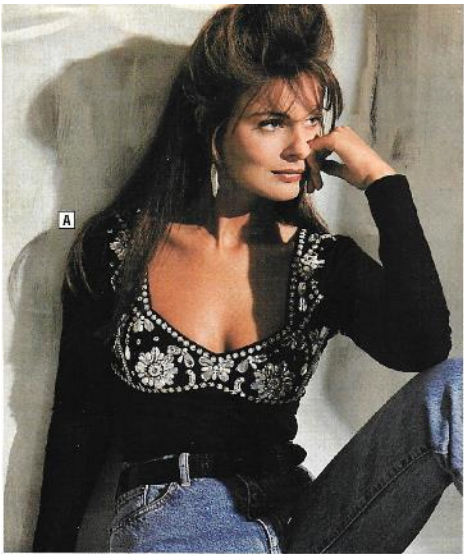
Other Destination's Fall I line presented in 1990 was advertised as "an alternative approach to fashion. Always New. Always Creative. Always Exciting. Always Saleable."



Cotton Jacket and Skirt with Hand-Embroidered Mirrorwork and Sequin Appliqué by Other Destination, Designed by Lapetina-Johnson (1993) Gift of M. Rivera

Indian influences of mirrorwork embroidery and organic shapes abound on this cotton ensemble designed by Lapetina-Johnson for Other Destination. See both the jacket and skirt advertised in Lew Magram catalogs on the following page. Below: Jacket detail of sequins and mirrorwork on birds and flowers.





LEFT: Lew Magram Catalog Page Featuring Cotton Jacket and Bra Top by Other Destination (June/July 1993) Gift of M. Rivera

Lapetina-Johnson applied Indian-inspired mirror work and organic shapes to this cotton jacket. "Appliqués, embroidery, silvery sequins, mirrors and buttons show off our outrageous cropped jacket. Padded shoulders, banded waist, button cuffs. Under it, the adjustable strap bra top. Both in pure cotton. Was \$156. Sale Price: \$129.99."

RIGHT: Lew Magram Catalog Page Featuring Cotton Skirt by Other Destination (Holiday 1992) Gift of M. Rivera

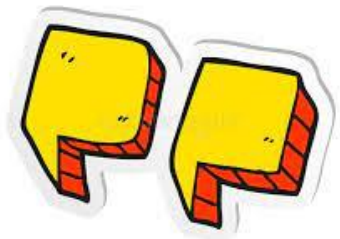
The catalog description for this cotton skirt designed by Lapetina-Johnson states: "Our smashing hand-embroidered full sweep skirt with multi-colored appliques, silvery sequins and small mirrors, elastic drawstring waist. In pure cotton. Was \$199. Sale Price: \$149.88."



After debuting her own successful beaded and patchwork vests, Lapetina-Johnson founded Christiana Enterprises, Inc. in 1994 in Chatsworth, California. The company made a collection of hand-beaded bags, home furnishings, and apparel imported from India. Her niche: vintage-inspired handbags. Before beaded bags became all the rage with couture designers, Lapetina-Johnson pioneered the concept of beaded bags for everyday use, not just for evening and special occasion.

Hand-Embroidered Silk Velvet Pillow (Late 1990s to Early 2000s)
Gift of M. Rivera

Leaves and colorful medallions hint at Indian influences on this hand-embroidered silk velvet pillow. Other home furnishings by Lapetina-Johnson included beaded picture frames, throws, duvet covers, pillow shams, lamp shades, photo albums, and more. *InStyle* Magazine of January 2002 revealed that award-winning actors Steve Martin and Goldie Hawn purchased beaded pictures frames, duvet covers, shams and throws from Lapetina-Johnson's vast collection. Pictured below: Bead detail.



"In 2000, my little handbag business boasted about 1 million [dollars] in annual sales. In a 6-month period, 1 million in sales exploded to 10 million! I held on to this fire-breathing dragon and am still trying to get my feet on the ground."
- Lapetina-Johnson, LinkedIn

Christiana handbags eventually hit record sales world-wide after premiering in Europe in 1997. The quality of her commissioned beadwork was compared to that of other top-name designers like Badgley Mischka, Prada, Fendi, and Valentino. Her collections of beaded bags, pillows, photo frames, albums, throws, lampshades, and clothing were featured in both American and European magazines including *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, *In Style*, *Elle*, *Mademoiselle*, *Modern Bride*, and *Entrepreneur*, and sold in high-end department stores such as Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom's, and Bloomingdales.

Christiana products were also sold in London, Paris, Milan, and Rome, as well as through mail-order catalogs including Sundance, Saks Folio, Holt Renfrew, and Anthropologie, among others. In 2009 she debuted Christiana International with a collection that featured a wide variety of cultural influences from India, South America, Africa, and the American Southwest. "Reinventing her creative soul" once again in 2014, Lapetina-Johnson began the process of creating a new handbag collection utilizing her expertise for unique handwork, pattern and color.



HAND-BEADED VEST AND HANDBAG (2002)

The eight-pointed star features prominently on the front of Lapetina-Johnson's silk vest hand-embroidered in India with thousands of glass seed beads. A matching vintage-style silk handbag with metal frame and chain strap features the same bold, carpet motif.

Sundance Catalog sold Christiana designs like this through mail-order catalogs. One ivory purse was described as the "Belle of the ball" bag: "Our grandmothers carried evening bags like this once (they called them "reticules"), flirtatiously feminine and just big enough for the essentials. Our reproduction Victorian bag with an ornamentally-inspired frame is hand beaded in a floral design with thousands of ivory and pastel glass beads. Silk lined with an inside pocket and silk framed mirror. It's a lovely gift to pass from one generation to the next. \$115."



Sales Postcard of Lapetina-Johnson Beaded Handbag (Late 1990s to Early 2000s) Gift of M. Rivera



Sales Postcard of Lapetina-Johnson Beaded Handbag (Late 1990s to Early 2000s) Gift of M. Rivera



Sales Postcard of Lapetina-Johnson Beaded Handbag (Late 1990s to Early 2000s) Gift of M. Rivera



While the prints take a leaf from traditional chinoiserie . . .



Hand-Beaded Silk Drawstring Crossbody Purse, Made in India (1997) Gift of M. Rivera

Hand-embroidered in India, this beaded 100% silk purse with drawstring closure can be worn across the body as well as over the shoulder and features a small silk-covered mirror tucked within an interior pocket. This particular bag was featured in the February 2007 Special Beauty Issue of *Elle* magazine.

ELLE Magazine Page Featuring Lapetina-Johnson's Crossbody Purse (February 1997) Gift of M. Rivera

The same drawstring purse was featured in the February 1997 issue of *ELLE* Magazine. "While the prints take a look from traditional chinoiserie...strewn across sumptuous silks in Asian-inspired motifs."



LEFT: Cotton Patchwork Crossbody Bag with Sequin Trim and Floral Embroidery (1990s-2000s) Gift of M. Rivera



RIGHT: Hand-beaded Silk Drawstring Handbag with Bead Fringe, Made In India (1990s) Gift of M. Rivera



**Hand-beaded Buckskin Purse
with Fringe (Late 1990s-
2000s) Gift of M. Rivera**





Hand-Beaded Leather Purse Accented with Metal Grommets (2009)
Gift of M. Rivera

Part of the Christiana International collection, this leather purse reveals Native American influences through bright, colorful designs in yellow, orange, red, green and blue.



Hand-Beaded Leather Purse, Back (2009) Gift of M. Rivera

The reverse side of this leather purse includes what may be a Native American symbol for a teepee. Thousands of glass beads on the front and back panels add significant weight to this accessory.