

# Lauren Henkel

**A RUNNER BY DESIGN**

**Painting, drawing, and snapping photos might not seem the perfect complement to motoring around a track really, really fast—but 30-year-old Rockville Centre native Lauren Henkel believes she's found her true calling in the combination of the two: high-performance shoe design. But, like her love of running, this realization was years in the making.**

A 2004 graduate of NYU with a degree in studio art, Henkel has shown her work—including photographs of Coney Island and a series of provocative paintings depicting 1970s and '80s pop-culture icons like Pee-wee Herman and a Labyrinth-era David Bowie hanging out with young girls—in galleries in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and New Jersey.

Henkel also excelled at soccer and track and field at NYU, where she was a three-time All-American high jumper and set 11 individual and relay-team school records. She was inducted into the NYU Hall of Fame in 2010.

It wasn't until she was 25 and working as an assistant track coach and as the assistant equipment and retail sales manager at her alma mater, however, that she caught the running bug. In 2010, after she'd gotten her masters in sports business from NYU, she dedicated

herself to becoming a competitive 800-meter runner. She joined former Georgetown University coach Frank "Gags" Gagliano's New Jersey-New York Track Club, and fast times followed: She recently ran a 2:09.03 800-meter personal best.

"Then it clicked," she says. "I'd always loved sneakers and had about a million pairs—you could say I was a 'sneaker-head.' I decided to combine the two things I love to do most."

Henkel enrolled in a program at the Fashion Institute of Technology for athletic footwear design. "This allows me to make my art more functional," she says. "A lot of the stuff I've done has been influenced by being around the track, so I thought, 'Why not do something that really applies that?'"

***"I decided to combine the two things I love to do most."***

Henkel's dream is to work for one of the major athletics companies making shoes for serious competitors—like, for instance, a long-jumping shoe that prevents sand from getting in. "I would have killed for a pair of spikes that I didn't have to dump sand out of after every jump," she says. "I think that's something a lot of athletes would appreciate."

Henkel hopes she'll soon show her ideas to Nike or New Balance, but for now she's content to learn. "I took a class on the science of shoemaking that was really cool—the ergonomics of the bone, the way a shoe's structure can affect muscles and tendons," she says. "It's all about perfecting that combination of science and style." In other words, it's a balancing act—and, luckily, Henkel has plenty of experience with that.

She's currently working at NYU and training—"both full time," she says—but she's confident that the juggling will pay off. Henkel will run the Fifth Avenue Mile this fall, and she's looking to qualify for the U.S. Indoor Nationals at 800 meters. "Gags thinks I can run 2:06 or 2:05," she says. "If he thinks so, that's good enough for me."

When she does run that fast, she just might be wearing a pair of Lauren Henkel spikes.



Ronelle Kawanzaruwa



Achilles Hope & Possibility



Jeremy Reiss

