# Raul Lopez reclaims Christopher Street’s legacy with bold fashion in Luar’s latest collection



Walking down Christopher Street in New York City’s West Village today, one encounters an array of upscale dining and refined brownstones, a far cry from the street's past. Raul Lopez, the Dominican-born, Brooklyn-raised designer behind the fashion label Luar, recalls a very different Christopher Street from his youth. Known in earlier decades as "gay Times Square," the area was a haven for New York’s LGBTQ+ community, especially Black, brown, Asian, and white individuals seeking connection amid loneliness or homelessness.

Lopez remembers the struggle of his formative years, when flamboyant fashion was unsafe to wear openly in Brooklyn. To access the creative freedom found on Christopher Street, he would buy used and vintage clothing from Domsey’s, a large warehouse, then sneak onto the subway to change before arriving at the vibrant street. The area was alive with the energy of communal belonging, with ballroom music pumping from nightclubs, steaming dumplings served from local Chinese restaurants, and a gritty undercurrent marked by homelessness and sex work. This environment of contrast—beauty and hardship—deeply influenced his future work.

It was also on Christopher Street that Lopez met Shayne Oliver, with whom he launched the streetwear brand Hood By Air in 2006 before striking out on his own to found Luar in 2010. Luar's ethos embraces the outsider experience, particularly focusing on people of colour, queer youth, and those who have felt marginalised, addressing both the joyous and painful aspects without sanitisation.

Lopez's recent Fall/Winter 2025 collection, showcased at New York Fashion Week in February, epitomises this mission. Titled "El Pato," the collection reclaims a derogatory gay slur from his youth, transforming it into a celebration marked by bold silhouettes, sculptural shapes, and club-kid aesthetics including chalky-white eyeshadow and flamboyant feathers. Lopez stated, “‘It was such a nasty word and I wanted to reclaim it, and take that era of my life and bring it into a beautiful light instead of keeping it in such a dark place.”

The designer's work resonates within the fashion world, attracting high-profile fans like Beyoncé and Rihanna, along with cult admiration in New York’s Downtown fashion scene. His bag named Ana—after his mother—has become a coveted symbol among insiders. Lopez, who has won a CFDA award, maintains a down-to-earth approach to his growing success. At Luar’s studio in the Financial District, he works closely with his small team, describing the office environment as a “high school” where camaraderie and teamwork prevail.

Lopez draws creative inspiration from observing everyday people on the streets and public transit, as well as from visits to the Dominican Republic. His creative process often involves emotional moments of clarity; for "El Pato," he recalled waking at 4 a.m., spontaneously writing a poem that shaped the collection's thematic core. “When I do get the idea, that’s how it does happen. I’m like, boom, this is it,” he said. Despite his self-confessed poor sleep habits, he channels his restless energy into his designs.

When hiring, Lopez prioritises candidates who bring positive energy, determination, and authentic knowledge of fashion beyond social media trends. He shared, “I love a POC space. Or just people who feel energetic, good vibes, and are determined to work. And love fashion—not like, ‘I love fashion because I see it on Instagram.’ You have to be very knowledgeable.”

Among Luar’s latest offerings are backpacks, shoes, bandanas, and innovative hats paired with glasses. Lopez also introduced a new bag named Yahaira, after his drag alter ego and a common Dominican name representing a chic, confident woman with an assertive style. He described Yahaira as “the girl who dates the drug dealer and makes him buy her expensive bags...She won’t care too much about where her dress came from, but her shoes and her bags have to be expensive.”

Lopez’s fashion label continues to bridge the past and present, celebrating a historically significant community and transforming personal and collective histories into bold, expressive designs. The Coveteur is reporting from inside Luar’s creative headquarters, offering insight into the designer’s journey and the cultural weight embedded in his work.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/stonewall-inn-christopher-park/> - This source provides detailed information about the Stonewall Inn and Christopher Park, highlighting their significance in the LGBTQ+ rights movement, including the 1969 Stonewall Uprising and the establishment of the Stonewall National Monument.
* <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/greenwich-village-waterfront/> - This article discusses the history of the Greenwich Village waterfront, including the Christopher Street Pier, as a gathering place for the LGBTQ+ community, particularly queer youth of color, and its role in the community's history.
* <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/2021/06/02/boston-globe-lgbt/> - This piece explores the history of LGBTQ+ spaces in New York City, including the Stonewall Inn and the surrounding area, emphasizing their importance in the LGBTQ+ rights movement and community.
* <https://www.thecut.com/2018/09/raul-lopez-of-luar-on-making-powerful-gender-fluid-clothes.html> - This interview with Raul Lopez, the founder of Luar, delves into his background, including his upbringing in a Dominican household and his experiences in the LGBTQ+ community, providing insight into his personal journey and the influences behind his fashion label.
* <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/2021/06/02/boston-globe-lgbt/> - This article discusses the history of LGBTQ+ spaces in New York City, including the Stonewall Inn and the surrounding area, emphasizing their importance in the LGBTQ+ rights movement and community.
* <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/2021/06/02/boston-globe-lgbt/> - This article discusses the history of LGBTQ+ spaces in New York City, including the Stonewall Inn and the surrounding area, emphasizing their importance in the LGBTQ+ rights movement and community.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiXkFVX3lxTE9wSFdHc0hNS19NX2FNc3lQNFJpZXVZVm4yY1BqLU1xMThoSzU2VnJMWnNsQjIzdG5oTUI2SmZkdXhQTmVGbGNtZEd2bjRtZHpwaGhaWnV5QmhyN1NvNFE?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data