

CULTURE CLOTHING

The unconventional is definitely at the heart of the urban Chii Clothing Culture collection, produced by Culture Studio Screen Printing & Embroidery. The Chicago-based decoration house specializes in allover and discharge printing, and processes including foil and texture inks. In January 2005, Rich Santo, president of Culture Studio, launched the Chii Clothing Culture line, which showcases all of Culture Studio's specialties and is designed especially for fashion-forward young adults. A self-proclaimed lifestyle line, Chii — pronounced "sh-i" — emphasizes tradition, culture and respect, according to the brand's Web site, chiiclothing.com.

The Don Leon discharge print featured here is one of Chii's most elaborate designs, which took a full day to separate, Santo says. "The intent with [this design] was to mix a chalk sketch top layer with vector colors underneath to make a very dimensional, huge print," he explains. Some of the production challenges included accurately printing over the hoodie's front zipper and pocket seams, as well as achieving good registration with the hood print. After a long day of separations and an 11-step production process, Don Leon is a retail-ready, avant-garde design popular with Chii's following, which is extending to cities beyond Chicago, and also is attracting the attention of several celebrities.

— *Susie McManus*



THE FIRST STEP in this full-front skull design was to print the red wisps around the front of the hoodie, followed by applying the cream base, red, purple, green, jewel tone gold and black plastisol inks. "A few challenges [we encountered while printing the front portion of the design] were printing over the seams, matching a chalk sketch black layer with vector-colored layers for the skull, and getting the red wisp prints to cover the entire garment," Santo says. To get such an accurate print over the hoodie's front zipper and pocket seams, Santo says the production team used a stiffer paddle, and that the discharge or creamy inks shown here are the best for achieving similar results.



HERE IS BOTH an up-close and far-away look at the skull printed twice on the garment's hood — once on each side. "The hood was very challenging to make the triangles of the design line up perfectly so that the nail heads [applied] on the top looked correct," Santo says.

