



I N • T H E • P R E S S

Print interview and product reviews by
7x7 Magazine - 032009

The Maverick
These days, Allison Dutra's life is a blur of feathers, chains and scraps of fabric. The 27-year-old Mission District artist has spent the past several years developing **KITTIBUMK**, her line of handmade clothing and jewelry intended for (as she puts it) "sweet and tender darlings." After graduating from SF State with a fine arts degree, Dutra began creating amulets and earrings to wear to parties. "Though she has no formal training in fashion, the artist gets along just fine." "I just start building [a garment] until it is what it is. It's not perfect but that's the uniqueness of it. It's not your run-of-the-mill piece of clothing—it's really special."

Dutra's designs are very much like her fine art: a layered collage of organic elements mixed with modern shapes and lines. Her jewelry plays with feathers and chains, giving her 100-percent-recycled, one-of-a-kind creations a whimsical and decadent look.

Kittibumk's spring line can be seen at Saturday's "Urban Without Borders" fashion show on May 7, for which Dutra has big plans.

"I've been teaching designers religiously. Alexander McQueen will make these amazing beaded pieces and earrings, and he'll design the shoes—oh, so, so, so, so mind-blowing." —Caitlyn Suarez

The Risk Taker
With her long, flowing black hair, flawless porcelain skin and impeccably tailored black power suit, it's easy to imagine **Caroline Chu** as a Silicon Valley exec, or as the founder of a luxury skincare and cosmetics company. At 41, the Twin Peaks resident has managed to be both.

After spending nearly 15 years in high tech (her most recent job was creative director for computer-graphics company Nvidia) and sending her daughter off to UCLA, Chu knew she was ripe for a change. "I was 41, and thought, If not now, when?" she says of her decision to start her own business. "So I packed my bags, put everything into storage and traveled for two years around the world to recharge and do my research."

In December of 2007, Chu unveiled a full namesake line, which she developed out of her experiences growing up in Taiwan and traveling to Europe and Asia, where she admits part of her rigorous research involved getting a facial or a massage almost daily. Many of her gorgeously packaged cleansers, toners and masks contain soothing fruit extracts, ginseng and green tea (her mother owned a tea shop in Taiwan) as key ingredients. Since the launch of her website, *carolinechu.com*, she's grown a customer base that extends as far as Australia, the UK and Singapore.

Looking back, what spurred Chu to make the leap from high tech to beauty? "I liked working in technology, but it's not something you can really smell or touch," says Chu, who says she actually enjoyed waking up at 5:30 a.m., before her daily hour-long commute to the South Bay, to get dressed and leisurely apply her makeup. "I want to promote a lifestyle of feeling relaxed each day, even for those times you can't get to the spa or you want to save money and do it at home." —NERISSA PACIO

The Mastermind
With Anandian, founder of the new San Francisco-based menswear line **Obi Wear**, wants his clothing to do more than just help people make more fashion statements. "It's about giving our customers a sense of ownership," says the 31-year-old Anandian, who lives in the Mission. "It's about expressing how you feel about the world and what you'd like it to be." "Wrighter claims for a fashion line, but Anandian, one of Gen Art's Fresh Faces designers for 2008 and a former head for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is making them a reality. In cooperation with his full-commerce line, the MIT graduate has also established the Chu Foundation, which supports nonprofit parenting classes. "On the end of each season, customers get to vote on where half the line's profits go," says Anandian, who founded Chu Wear last fall.

The line of utilitarian jackets, safety pants and vests—all in custom-sport cleverly placed snap closures and removable pockets to give the wearer options, and has already been picked up by four San Francisco stores. But Anandian has grand goals for expanding the brand nationally, and taking a given leadership role in the global fashion community. Already covering that the production of his clothing is child-labor free, Anandian is going all organic next fall and plans to improve factory working conditions in the third-world countries to which Chu sources. "From the beginning, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if there was a brand you could actually trust that was cool and well-designed, but also socially conscious?'" "We like the sound of that." —Lisa Haverens

The Risk Taker

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