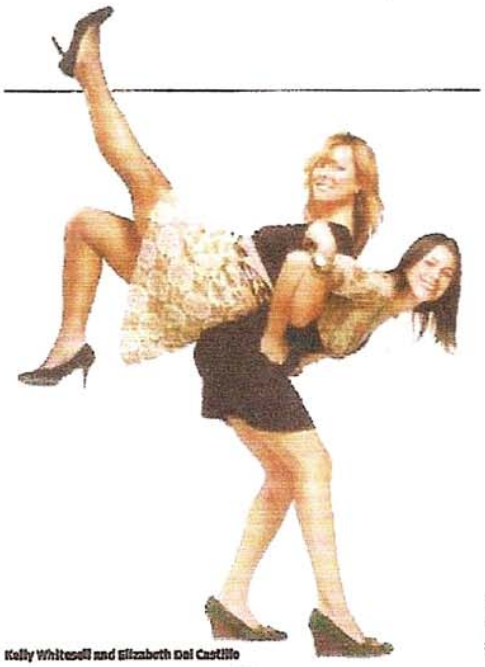
Accessories



Kelly Whitesell and Elizabeth Del Castillo

JILL ALBERTS | American politics teacher turned jewelry designer Jill Alberts threads twinkly faceted gold beads into mesh and delicate lace patterns that appear to unravel at the edges. Though she also scavenges the good parts from vintage to create pretty/tough one-of-a-kind pieces, her ruffly lariats, double-helix earrings, and spiderweb bracelets are most distinctive. **LA** | Chicago Designer Shop at Marshall Field's, Helen Yi, Material Possessions

LEE ALLISON | Novelty ties used to be tacky polyester things with drawings of pizza or scenes from Star Wars on them, and that was fine, because novelty ties were solely for that one wacky guy in sales. Then the dot-com revolution made it OK for management to be goofy, so now there are things like Lee Allison's finely crafted ties with skull and cigar motifs rendered in custom-woven silk from England—simultaneously whimsical and elitist. Allison also makes vests and shirts in more sober designs. **LA** | Apartment No. 9, Shirts on Sheffield, Tessuti, Truefitt & Hill, W Hotel Gift Shop

GILLION CARRARA | As a professor at the School of the Art Institute and director of its Fashion Resource Center, Carrara has been grooming young designers for almost 20 years. Her own jewelry designs are simple architectural forms that let the materials—silver or bronze adorned with burnished horn, bone, briar root, and ebony—speak for themselves in classic modernist style. **KS** | Hejfina

MERA NAAM | April Krieger, who grew up near Devon Avenue, collects vintage beads and semiprecious stones for her Indian-inspired jewelry line: a chain of black onyx and wooden beads is anchored by a cameo of the elephant god Ganesh, cloisonne beads dangle from a delicate gold chain that rests on the collarbone, and ornate round earrings drip with freshwater pearls. **HK** | Exhibit, Silver Moon

BOCUE | The proportions of Theresa Buffo's colorful, geometric handmade bags are a little off by design: an asymmetrical elongated crescent gives way to a blocky trunk, a dainty fold-over flap protects a wide mouth, perky handles perch on exaggerated saddle shapes. They're made primarily from the kind of sturdy but forgiving leather that looks better the more it gets beat up, though velvet, corduroy, and chenille make guest appearances. **LA** | Chicago Designer Shop at Marshall Field's, Shebang, Spare Parts

TOKI COLLECTION | Tonia Kim got her law degree three years ago from Chicago-Kent, but instead of practicing law she makes feather-light chains of finely ribbed links that burst with happy bundles of semiprecious stones. Berries on a vine, waterfalls, roots, and other organic shapes influence her cascading necklaces and chandelier earrings, which have a disheveled, almost tangled-looking softness. **LA** | P.45

ESKELL | An Eskell garment might contain a scrap from an Andersonville thrift store, a strip of a 1920s kimono, or a lacy tablecloth from Kelly Whitesell's grandmother's dining room table. Whitesell and her design-

ing partner, Elizabeth Del Castillo, have both been collecting bits and pieces of material for years, not quite knowing where they'd end up. Now they integrate them into their designs, which mold a boho-ethnic aesthetic into sleek, sexy silhouettes. They cut designs out of patterned fabrics and lay them over contrasting material: on one straight miniskirt, tie-dyed blue satin peeks out like the sky between the scalloped, cloudlike edges of a rose-and-white tapestry. Delicate lace forms billowy sleeves and crocheted trim becomes a neckline on a dress with alternating panels of Ultrasuede and what Whitesell and Del Castillo call "imitation kimono" material they picked up at Jo-Ann Fabrics.

High school acquaintances in Gary, Indiana, the women became good friends while studying fashion design at Indiana University. Del Castillo came to Chicago and last year Whitesell returned from New York, where she got an associate's degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology, so they could partner up. They now have their own Lincoln Park boutique, which also features lines by other up-and-coming designers. **HK** | Eskell

ORLANDO ESPINOZA | Orlando Espinoza likes to see women slim, elegant, a bit formal, and in muted colors, especially black. Though many of his designs seem prim from a distance, up close you can see that he's kind of a perv: a modest long-sleeved top with a rounded ruched panel has a teeny slit at the sternum; a flat-front skirt cut on the bias gathers slightly at the coochie; a tank dress looks rather conventional from the front, but the back is open down to there. **LA** | Chicago Designer Shop at Marshall Field's, Jake

SHANE GABIER | Shane Gabier has always taken a pointedly contemporary approach to designing his meticulously constructed garments. But his fall line, with its massive blanketlike wraps in saturated burnt sienna and vibrant pinks, was inspired by a visit to the Field Museum's Native American collections.

Shane Gabier

"Looking at what was here before Chicago made me reexamine what's been left behind," he says. His upcoming spring collection evokes Edwardian parlor games, but with an unexpectedly voluptuous slant. Gabier's blossoming ornamental sensibility is manifest in details like pictures of cut-jet bracelets printed on the cuffs of a blouse or the dark cotton gauze delineating a seam. Prim pin tucks cascade down the bodice of a dress unanchored by a traditional yoke, and a sinuous arch of sateen frames the shoulder blades on a jacket, creating clefts that invite one to slip a hand inside. **KS** | P.45

JACKIE KILMER | The spheres of fashion design and catfishing intersect at exactly one point: Jackie Kilmer, the designer also known as Mississippi

Jackie Hurt. She was an early adopter of the vintage reconstruction aesthetic—at one point she called herself Dirdy Bunnie and worked in torn-up sweaters and kids' sheets. As popular taste caught up with the trend, Kilmer bailed on it, moving back to her hometown of Omaha for eight months to listen to folk, blues, and the Beach Boys and to catch catfish. "I caught and killed my birthday dinner," she says proudly. Returning to Chicago, she found the demand for her sweaters as high as ever, but began working instead in a style that lifts elements from further back in time. "I'm making skirts, woolen knickers, chaps made from sweaters," she says. "I'm messing around with old-man flannels, the real crusty kind from the 70s. They're real itchy and hard to work with." There are also gunless cowhide holsters (Kilmer's best-selling item) and cowhide cuffs that look like insane-asylum restraints. **MR** | Una Mae's Freak Boutique

Lara Miller

LARA MILLER | Each piece in Miller's knitwear line can be entered from multiple openings, giving a simple pullover numerous fits and looks. The Chicago-born designer likes to play with "the way geometric forms are transformed by the body," but she also harbors larger ambitions. "If I can get people to think differently about something as regimented as how they get into their clothes," she says, "maybe they can open up

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