

Dressing Up

By Yasmin Tabi

These young fashion designers are making their mark.

Shelli Oh's line of clothing reflects her personality—a fusion of spirituality and fashion. Oh, 27, is a Canadian clothing designer with a background in fashion design and production management. Her clothing line, Harebell, was born on Dec. 24, 1997, in Toronto. Her fashion concept stems from her love for faery lore and ancient mysticism, and her "passion for the connection between the natural world and the magical realm."

Oh explains, "Inspirations come from traditional faery lore and memories of ancient times; that's where the feminine spirit and mysticism of the designs are born. I wish to give glimpses of this magic, and in turn share the energy and joy I experience through it." This ethereal take on clothing has made a favorable impression on the fashion world. Harebell has been received warmly at trade shows in New York as well as in boutiques across Canada and all over the world.

She uses pastel and earth tones that blend together in her pieces, which range from sleeveless tie tops to long skirts. "I like to emphasize texture and delicate details or trimmings to create a balance between sheer rawness and delicacy to evoke an ethereal quality." Oh said she strives to establish a strong sense of femininity with the Harebell line.

Oh runs her business the same way she designs her clothes—reminiscent of her spirituality—but she's aware that it's a business. Her retail clients receive a gift corresponding to the theme of the season, a marketing maneuver she labels as part of the "faery gift campaign."

Unlike many designers, Oh didn't get a big break in the industry. She began as a pattern drafter, then turned to sample sewing, technical design, production assistant, marker maker and grader. Now that she's creating her own designs, she puts in 12- to 18-hour days, shifts broken by her other interests such as yoga, writing and climbing.

Oh's plans for Harebell are ambitious: she'd like to expand into Japan and Europe, using the Internet as her international launching pad. "The Internet is like a passport around the world! It's made international exposure for our company as simple as pushing a button, through our web site." (harebell.com)

School: Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto; bachelor program for fashion design and production management

Shelli never had: Barbies

Celebrities Oh would like to dress: Björk, Madonna, Faye Dunaway, Clare Danes, Katie Holmes, Helena Bonham Carter and Gwyneth Paltrow

In-Store Dreams: Two stores in New York City, one in Los Angeles, one in Henri Bendel (in New York City) and one in Los Angeles.

Advice for world-beating designers: Shelli suggests fashiontech.com, a nonprofit organization that helps find and promote old talent. •

Harebell

