

Made in Atlanta

A new crop of designers is turning the city into a hothouse for homegrown lines | *By Amy Flurry* |



Tian Justman

The Soignée Newcomer

Tian Justman is the poster girl for Atlanta designers, the gifted artist whose work holds up against the critical eye of national exposure and who also, in industry lingo, “presents well.” Years as a part-time publicist at Saks Fifth Avenue served as training ground for developing her own luxury line. Lithe features, angled beauty and elegant grace certainly add to her allure. This, combined with Justman’s tenacious plans to show in New York’s Fashion Week, truly set her apart. Sadly, Justman had to postpone her spring 2011 debut when, this past fall, she relapsed with leukemia. “This is the fourth time I will have beaten cancer and my hurdles have taught me that the only thing that can stop you from obtaining a goal is giving up,” she says. In the meantime, we couldn’t resist a preview of the ethereal creations that Justman hand-dyed in her Westside studio. “I loved playing with the androgyny of classic shapes and manipulating them with fabric, silhouette and color to create a fresh feeling.” tianjustman.com.



Tamara Bowers and Ray Bergeron

Going Against the Grain

Few would find a stale economy the best time to launch a luxury handbag line, but Tamara Bowers demonstrates true control of craft and confidence in her new venture, BowersBergeron. She has a marketing arsenal that includes a Harvard MBA and 15 years branding/advertising experience for Fortune 500s. But a fortuitous introduction to the custom millwork of Ray Bergeron laid the foundation for their new venture. In December, they launched six architecturally inspired handbag designs, all handcrafted by Bergeron, in varieties of exotic woods, including African wenge, South American rosewood and English sycamore, and with various shapes and veneers. “The entire collection is 100 percent wood-based, allowing for the natural beauty of the wood, the texture, grain and artisanry to be highlighted,” says Bowers. Each bag is signed and sold in limited editions. True collectibles, these sculptural and tactile bags are sure to steal the spotlight. \$2,000-\$6,000, by appointment, 404.630.0063, bowensbergeron.com.



Laurel Wells

Fashion on the Fringe

For seven years, Laurel Wells was a name to watch in Brooklyn’s fashionable Williamsburg neighborhood. She had a clothing line that hung alongside the coolest indie collections at popular boutiques, and in 2007 she signed on as director of apparel at cult brand Hayden-Harnett. This past spring Wells, 31, moved home with her fiancé, who also grew up in Atlanta. “We both agreed that while New York is an excellent place to be cool, Atlanta is a place where you can be truly creative,” says Wells. From her studio in Avondale Estates, she has tried her hand at something new: accessories. In June, Wells launched Laurel Wells Jewelry; her first collection of rayon fringe necklaces and cuffs, punctuated with delicate chains, feathers and loom-beaded medallions. The jewelry reflects a main source of inspiration: Native American artisanry. Up next: “I’ve already started planning for a bridal jewelry collection. I love the idea of dressing up a very simple dress with an extraordinary and transformative necklace.” Necklaces from \$86, laurelwells.com/stockists. ▲

