

Class Show Launches to Highlight Contemporary

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — The inaugural Class trade show here sought to create an egalitarian vibe as the backdrop for the contemporary and streetwear looks being shown.

Retail buyers attending the event at the beachside Santa Monica Civic Auditorium also were treated to complimentary manicures, facials, tea and organic bananas.

Jason Bates, the founder of Class, who operates a showroom at the Cooper Design Space and runs the Coconuts and Bananas trade show in Honolulu, acknowledged that traffic was slow, citing late registrations. About 75 percent of the exhibitors registered just three weeks before the show, which ran March 1 to 3.

An estimated 115 vendors were on board, including Diesel, Triple Five Soul and Linda Loudermilk, as well as emerging lines such as Woven and Operations, which was showcasing workwear-inspired coats with contrasting leather collars and waistband belts from its fall lineup. Bender from the U.K. featured a streetwear influence with camouflage-print shirt-dresses and fitted hoodie dresses.

"We wanted it to be relaxed," Bates said. "That was achieved. We can improve each time."

The 150 to 200 retailers included Macy's West, Blue Bee in Santa Barbara, Calif., Villains in San Francisco and Fred Segal Flair in Santa Monica.

"The organizers did a good job of bringing great stores to the show," said Maria McManus, sales and merchandising director of New York-based Edun, who met with representatives of August from Oakland, Calif., Los Angeles' Lisa Kline and Wendy Foster in Santa Barbara. Edun's key fall looks included organic wrap T-shirt dresses, sweater dresses and vests.

Some attendees said the show's wall-less booths and simple clothing racks gave the venue an open, communal feeling reminiscent of the early days at Project, which holds its semiannual events in New York and Las Vegas.

"This could be the next Project," said Marty Bebout, co-owner of Blue Bee, who viewed studded cardigans, twofers sweaters with silk lantern sleeves, gauzy silk polkadot shirts and other items from Quiksilver's young contemporary line.

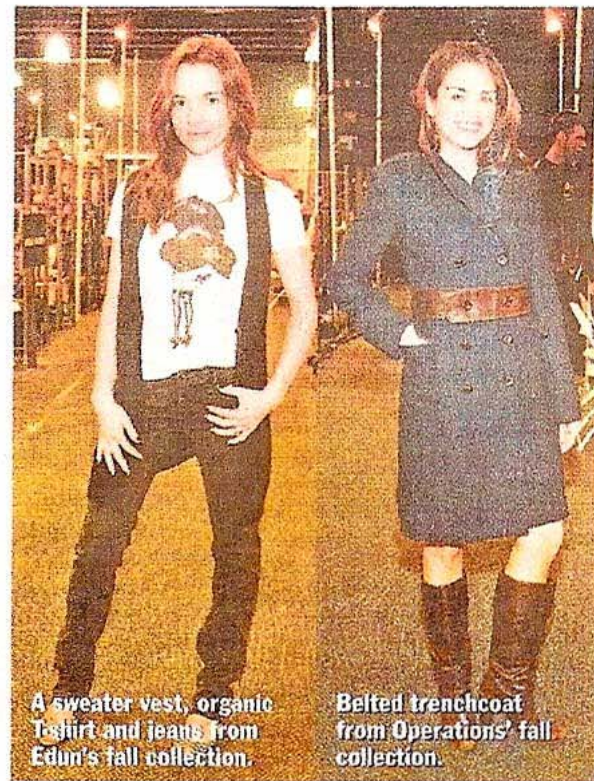
Sprinkled in between the booths were accessories lines such as Milan-based Toy Me, featuring quirky silver pendant necklaces with bustiers and skateboards, wholesale priced from \$50 to \$120; Royal Elastics shoes, and eco-friendly companies selling carbon offsets, or credits, to reduce or remove global warming-causing pollution.

Some vendors were on the same environmentally conscious page. Park City, Utah-based Re:volve Apparel Project creates its ribbed tanks, hoodies and cap-sleeve shirts using recycled plastic bottles and prints colors on them rather than using dyes to save on water waste. Re:volve's plans call for an extension into other categories this year, said co-owner Joe Tomlinson, who was encouraged by the show's feedback.

"The folks coming through have been serious" about buying, Tomlinson said.

Bates said he expects a larger turnout at Class for the show's return Aug. 18 to 20, when buyers can scope out Los Angeles fashions before MAGIC Marketplace starts in Las Vegas.

— Nola Sarkisian-Miller



A sweater vest, organic T-shirt and jeans from Edun's fall collection.

Belted trenchcoat from Operations' fall collection.

THE AMERICANA PHOTO BY TODD WILLIAMSON; CLASS BY TYLER ROYE