

## Top Design

*Three emerging locals. One model. It's dress to impress, Chicago-style.*

BY LEONA LIU



(1) Serpico silk gathered shirt dress, \$380; (2) Dieterbennet wool mélangé cropped tab front jacket, \$415; faille zigzag box pleat pencil skirt, \$335; pima cotton blouse, \$235; (3) Ori'en "Audrey" satin long trench-coat dress, \$350; satin cropped jacket (underneath) \$160.

### 1. SERPICO

Using strong lines and a bold black-and-white palette infused with primary colors, Art Institute of Chicago alum Melissa Serpico evokes a vibrant minimalism reminiscent of a Mondrian painting. "I'm inspired by modern art and architecture, especially Cubist," says the lifelong Chicagoan, 31, a former graphic designer who launched her women's sportswear line last fall.

## 2. DIETERBENNET

Take talent; multiply by two. Dieter Kirkwood, 29, and Bennett Cousins, 28, married their creative visions when a Columbia College prof noticed the duo's strikingly compatible design styles. Stressing impeccable tailoring and clean, unfettered shapes, their women's daywear line recalls Narciso Rodriguez. Says Cousins: "Our clothes have a quiet luxury—hidden subtleties like dart manipulation, that no one but the wearer notices."

*Find DieterBennet at Jake, 939 N. Rush, 312-664-5553 and other locations*

## 3. ORI'EN

Hong Kong import Cyndi Chan recoils from the avant-garde in an industry that typically applauds it. "I'm inspired by Old World glamour—cultural icons like Katherine Hepburn," says Chan, 31, whose ready-to-wear collection was picked up by Macy's State Street for fall. "My style is classic iconic chic with a contemporary twist."

*Find Ori'en at Malabar, 1880 N. Damen Ave., 773-321-6685; Casa de Soul, 1919 W. Division St., 773-252-2520; Macy's State Street, 111 N. State St., 312-781-1000*

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOSIE MINER; HAIR: JOSEPH BARTUCCI FOR SALON BUZZ; MAKE-UP: ALFRED LESTER/FORD CHICAGO

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