



SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

BROOKLYN BELLES VENA CAVA DESIGN FOR THE OLD-FASHIONED FUTURIST

BY ERIN SKRYPEK

Question: What do you get when two young, L.A.-born Brooklynites with degrees from Parsons and a serious penchant for vintage collide? Answer: Vena Cava.

Mixing Brooklyn-style crunch of the earth with some old-school elegance (think Audrey Hepburn; think belle époque mid-nettes; think art deco detailing,) Vena Cava's lovely little dresses have swiftly blossomed into desirable commodities. It's all the more remarkable because co-designers Sophie Buhai and Lisa Mayock only just stepped into the fashion game a couple of years ago. Almost right off the bat, they earned props from *Vogue* and won a grant from UPS to sponsor their Spring/Summer 2006 fashion show. Following a well-received runway presentation of their Fall/Winter 2007 collection during New York's Fashion Week, *Mean* swooped in to question the promising debs.

How did you two meet?

We met on a blind "friend date" in L.A. the summer before we both left for Parsons. Neither of us knew anyone going to Parsons, so a mutual friend set us up. We had spaghetti and then went to a thrift store.



We still remember everything the other person was wearing—and we immediately shifted the meeting to a thrifting session. I guess you could say we were destined to be fashion soul mates!

How are your aesthetic approaches to design different—or are they?

We do have different aesthetics but we have a similar taste. Sophie is more elegant and minimal-leaning. Lisa is more drawn to louder things. Lisa usually says "More!" and Sophie says "Less!" It's a nice dynamic because our clothes end up somewhere in the middle.

Who do you design for?

The Vena Cava woman is old-fashioned



but at the same time has a hidden futuristic quality. She drinks gimlets and Lillet, takes road trips to New Mexico, reads Hemingway and Didion, plays cards and listens to Nick Cave and Haitian drumming. She watches lots of Altman movies; has a job; does yoga; cooks pork chops; wanders through antique shops and visits museums. We never think of the woman we design for as being of a certain age, which we think is the main difference between our clothes and some of the new-young designer collections out there. You don't need the body of a 20-year-old to wear our things and it's something we both take great pride in. Our mothers own many Vena Cava pieces and wear them beautifully.



Where's fashion going this summer?

Towards more color! We're so excited about being able to find bright, colorful things instead of having to make them for ourselves.

What usually inspires your collections?

It's very organic, but usually whatever we've been reading or researching on our own; a movie we've seen; something we've encountered in our private lives that's too good to let go of.

Your next step—shoes or accessories?

Hopefully lingerie. And menswear has been on our back burner for a while now. We'd love to make men's shirts that you can barbecue in. ■■■

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