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FASHION

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p.100

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Five hot things

CLAUDE L'AMBOISE
Montreal editor

Actress **Karen Racicot** is expressing another aspect of her artistic personality with her line of jewellery (*bijouxbykarenracicot.com*). Handmade and one of a kind, her pieces showcase precious and semi-precious stones set in silver. We love the organic feel of her chunky rings—sculpted, rather than moulded, in precious-metal clay.

Taking vintage to another level, the **Edge** label from Denis Gagnon (*denisgagnon.ca*) transforms thrift shop and army surplus finds into unique pieces that highlight his tailoring skills and quirky style.

Owner Elisabeth Deschamps' French flair is a welcome addition to La Plaza, and one more reason to hit hip-again St-Hubert Street. Her shop, **Crazy Lily** (6300 St-Hubert St., 514-293-4598), is stocked with cool local labels such as Ève Gravel, Bodybag by Jude Clothing and Oöm.

Veja (*veja.fr*), the first brand of fair-trade sneakers and already a hot commodity among left-wing fashionistas, has launched a new model, the *Veja Bota*. Made in Brazil, the eco-conscious shoes use organic and fair-trade cotton and natural latex.

Now on a personal note, I am saying *au revoir* to *FASHION Magazine* after close to five years as Montreal editor. Since the first Montreal issue in September 2001, it has been a pleasure and an honour to cover the city's fashion and style scene. Thank you for your interest, and for making *FASHION* a success in the Montreal market.



BEST IN SHOW

Who's the next big handbag icon? Put your money on Montreal-based **Christopher Kon** (*christopherkon.com*), whose designs have been spotted on Sarah Jessica Parker and are spring's best-sellers at Ogilvy. "We have a presence in over 600 international boutiques, including our new client, Saks," says Christopher Kontogianis, who grew up working at Zenith Handbags, his dad's manufacturing company. For fall, anticipate textured bags with ridges and braided straps.



Notes



NO LOGO

"It's like a minimalist sugar shack with lots of rough wood trim," says Martin Delisle, co-owner of **Blank** (4276 St-Laurent Blvd., 514-849-6053, *wearblank.com*), of his new shop specializing in 100 per cent Quebec-made merchandise. Blank was a wholesaler of logo-free tees until November, when it started selling its own private-label tops and frocks to the public. The latest collection includes canvas bags, polo dresses, low-waisted yoga pants and raglan T-shirts. Plans are being hatched for a second boutique, in the Village, this summer.



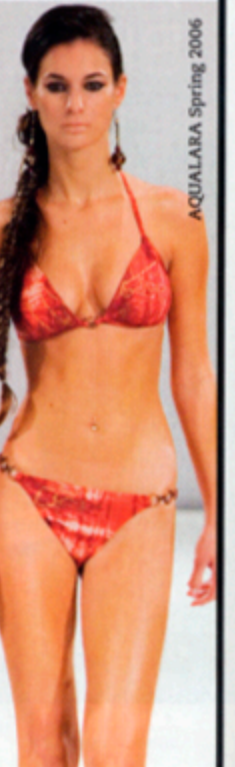
STYLE COUNCIL
Covet (*covetthis.com*), by local designer Tara St. James, answers the call for ethical fashion. "We're a fashionable brand that happens to use sustainable materials," says St. James. To wit: Urban streetwear—cargo skirts, short trenches, hoodies—made from organic cotton, soybean yarn and bamboo. "Bamboo, like linen, is cool to the touch in summer and warm in winter. It's biodegradable and grows easily." At **StyleXchange** (1455 Peel St., 514-282-6500) and **Ima** (24 Prince-Arthur St. W., 514-844-0303).

TOOLS FOR GLOBETROTTERS

The Canadian passport has a way of disappearing inside your handbag. So Rachel Ware, a travel director, decided to do something about it: She launched her line of bright leather travel accessories, **RKW Collection** (from \$25 to \$90, *rkwcollection.com*). "I was never able to find a travel wallet with enough compartments for currency, airline tickets and travel cards," recalls Ware. "And it should stand out!" RKW, which arrived in January, features leather agendas, journals, passport covers, travel wallets with stretchy straps to secure the contents, a handy makeup pouch and a business card holder, all in shades of pink, pale blue, meadow green, red, ivory and black.

BEACH NOTES

After studying psychology at school, Montreal's Reyhan Sofraci made a radical move: She became a bathing suit designer—with no formal training. She turned her "obsession" with swimwear into **Aqualara** (*aqualara.com*), a high-end, made-in-Canada line with themes like Hollywood and retro glam, and fabrics with glazed leather effects and aqua jungle prints. "I want to celebrate the womanly aspects of the body," she explains. From \$165 to \$420, at **Linge Array** (10170 St-Laurent Blvd., 866-434-3111).



AQUALARA Spring 2006