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FASHION FORWARD: CLOTHING WITH A CONSCIENCE

By Denise Johnson

Abi Ferrin began her career by choosing to make her clothing line not just about fashion, but also for a purpose. In doing so, she has shown that contributing to a cause is more than just sending a check to a faceless charity; it is about inspiring countless others to do good.

Her clothing line has a theme: "Fashion with Freedom and Purpose". Her cause: women and children around the world who are oppressed and victimized in some way.

Ferrin developed her clothing line with the intent to dress and empower women. She wanted to increase awareness of global issues by bringing the wearer in direct contact with pieces made by those that needed our assistance. Within a year of developing her line, she won the Texas Next Top Designer award.

In 2006, she collaborated with a non-profit organization in Nepal, Guardian Village Handcrafts. The organization focuses on providing opp-ressed women with training, fair pay, food, and shelter in exchange for their work. Using their talents in creating custom made adornments like buttons, toggles, and hand painted pieces she gives these women a chance to showcase their talent, and take pride in their work.

Ferrin's unique creations are pro-udly worn by young Hollywood celebrities and her clothing has been featured in several magazines such as In Style, People, and US magazines.

The spring 2009 collection, coined "Primavera" after the nickname she gave her cousin Lisa, contains vib-rant colors and shimmering fabric in pinks, peaches, orange, gold, blues, and greens. Notably absent is any sign of black; instead, it is replaced with a deep shade of purple. The pieces were made of flowing chiffon, silk, jacquard, and included metallic threading adding shimmering highlights. Ferrin, taking a cue from the current economic climate, wanted to distract and energize by utilizing bright colors and playful prints.

Working with individual tastes and personalities has allowed Ferrin to take inspiration from women she's met. This individuality is evident in each piece which is named for the woman who inspired her work. Not only do these incredible pieces decorate the wearer, but they also offer an opportunity to help women in less fortunate circumstances.

The spring collection highlighted fitted vests, a hot trend from last season, which continue to dominate the fashion scene. Shorts appear to be a mainstay for high fashion, as featured in Ferrin's collection in varying lengths.

Dresses were the defining focal point, while pants took backstage for spring. One shoulder dresses, another continuing trend, provide a Grecian inspiration. The collection includes some fantasy dresses, as well as a three white silk floor length dresses that could easily be considered for a beach or countryside wedding.

Each piece has an ease about it, making it a plausible go-to item in any women's closet. Some items in the collection are limited, and will be numbered and signed. Prices begin at \$185 and up, and clothing can be purchased at various boutiques nationwide and online at abiferrin.com.

Some highlights of the spring 2009 "Primavera" collection include:

- The Michelle emerald green one shoulder dress with side bow.
- The Shirley blue cover-up in a beautiful chiffon with swirls of emerald, purple, and gold.
- The Luz Delia dress with hand painted flowers and green swirls.
- The Lucy in the Dancing Sun print dress, Abi's declared favorite, one of only 30 that will be made, with hand painted bright colorful swirls.
- The Elissa floor length halter dress, accented with purple at the waist and neck. The lower portion of the dress is hand painted with a colorful garden scene.
- The Maya convertible skirt that can be worn as a short mini, a longer pencil skirt, or as a mini dress.
- The Tracy reversible top.
- The Nikki five way top which can be worn in five different ways.

Trendy enough for celebs, affordable for non-celebs, and wearable for many, Abi Ferrin is a designer to watch.