

Independent Designers Show Off New Fashions



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Designer Andrea Diodati, at Manufacture New York's showcase. *Claudio Papapietro for The Wall Street Journal*

By

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"Sometimes, I wonder if I'm the only one going through these struggles," Kristen Elmer, who started her own Silk & Cyanide fashion line less than a year ago, said. "I won't necessarily know how to do something, so I [Google](#) it and try to figure it out. When Manufacture New York's space opens up, we'll have the ability to access manufacturing [in New York] that's not so overwhelming."

Ms. Elmer is one of the seven designers who showed her work at Manufacture New York's Fashion Week

party on Monday evening at Textile Arts Center in West Village. Sixty designers have already signed up to take advantage of the organization's massive facility in Brooklyn, and roughly 250 attended the party.



Fashion Week is never short on style and sparkling energy, but it does sometimes lack a stage for independent designers to shine, according to Brooklyn Royalty designer Bob Bland, who also founded Manufacture New York.

Designers excitedly discussed their plans for the 20,000-square-foot facility, which is set to open in June.

Lauren Falkowski, who runs her Lolafalk handbag business out of her Brooklyn Heights studio, said her current biggest challenge as an independent designer is finding proper workspace.

"I'm scared to death of being discovered and getting kicked out for using industrial items in an inappropriate space," Ms. Falkowski said. "Working out of a 400-square-foot apartment with two sewing machines and a cutting table is ridiculous."

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Founder Bob Bland *Claudio Papapietro for The Wall Street Journal*

Ms. Falkowski makes her living from leather purses and wallets inspired by Brooklyn Heights and the surrounding pockets. "I'm really inspired by the classically beautiful architecture and the crazy mixes of color I see. For instance, a neutral-colored brownstone with a bright pink door," Ms. Falkowski said.

It follows, she said, that a local studio space is the next step for both design and production of her line. "I have a very strong feeling toward keeping production local, creating jobs in Brooklyn and basically knowing that everything is taking place here."

Ronnie Yoked, who currently runs her Malca BK fashion line out of Brooklyn Fashion League's studio in South Park Slope, said Manufacture New York will enable a community of designers to share resources.

"Fashion tends to be a tight-lipped industry," Ms. Yoked said. "As a new independent designer, it's hard. You want to know a great way to do this, and you don't want to have to fight for it. Manufacture New York can be a space that facilitates the kind of information- and resource-sharing for the greater good."