



FASHION

Sharp-Dressed Brand

Designer Yenting Chen brings his irreverent style to the most staid corner of the industry: menswear design.

BY LUCY LAU // PORTRAIT BY CARLO RICCI

» Designer Yenting Chen’s big break in the fashion world can best be described as an auspicious accident. “I never thought I would have my own label so early into my career,” he says.

Though he enrolled in fashion school in 2006 in his native Taipei with the goal of building his personal wardrobe (“My grandmother used to make clothes and matching backpacks for me throughout my childhood,” he shares), it wasn’t until his third year of studies that he became fascinated with men’s suits. Chen soon began designing his own pieces, drawing inspiration from the classic shapes of London’s Savile Row while incorporating his now-signature pops of whimsy through the use of off-beat colours, textures and patterns.

After relocating to Vancouver in 2010—and, shortly after, to Toronto in 2011 with his partner—Chen completed work on his first post-graduate collection, but he was dismayed to discover that it was not qualified to appear at the trunk show it was initially planned for. (He had produced a fall/winter line; they were looking



Clever Details

Vancouver-based designer Yenting Chen (top) creates a menswear line—under the brand name Duly Equipped—with traditional tailoring methods, including hand-stitching. Each suit can take upwards of a hundred hours to complete.

Duly Equipped suit: Erin Seaman

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for a spring/summer line.) Undeterred—albeit slightly skeptical—Chen decided to send lookbooks to a variety of fashion media instead. Local and international style bloggers from as far away as Germany, Portugal and Greece immediately took notice of the sharp, schoolboy-inspired collection, comprising almost two dozen meticulously handmade pieces. “I thought, maybe I’ve done something good,” he recalls with a laugh.

Chen’s subsequent work—presented under the name Duly Equipped—has been anything but accidental. Now back in Vancouver, the designer continues to combine contemporary influences—from wildlife to classical Chinese art—with traditional tailoring methods, including the careful hand-stitching that makes up 90 percent of each made-to-order garment. As a result, it takes Chen more than a hundred hours to complete a single suit.

It’s this commitment to the integrity of menswear that led judge Yumi Eto of Aritzia to call his designs “irreverent” and “beautifully tailored,” while judge Shannon Wilson, the Kit and Ace founder, notes that his unusual patterns and impeccably constructed silhouettes “speak to the modern gentleman in a completely new way.”

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Playful Designs
Chen’s Spring/Summer 2013 collection (above) took its inspiration from Swinging London in the 1960s; many fabric patterns were custom created from Chen’s own illustrations. His 2015 collection (left) takes its inspiration from “The Four Gentlemen,” a centuries-old subject of Chinese art.

ONE TO WATCH

TRUVELLE Gaby Bayona, creator and director of Truvelle, a bridal design shop, likes to pay it forward. Bayona provides use of extra materials to interns to experiment with, and collaborates with designers of bridal accessories to provide a complete experience for customers. Though she’s just 22 years old, Gaby has been in the bridal business for years: she learned the business quickly, transitioning from working in her mother’s bridal store to designing her own dresses and opening a physical storefront. Truvelle dresses are known for rose-gold sequins, distinct fabrics and high quality at an accessible price point. Judge Yumi Eto praised Truvelle’s “dedication to the vision and consistency of design.” —Patrick Easton



With animals: Matthew Furtado; middle: Trevor Brady; Truvelle: Kristy Ryan