



after graduating from Otis College of Art and Design, Jade Lai couldn't decide which of her several interests best suited her. After a period of freelancing while traveling and living abroad, Lai decided she wanted to become an independent business owner. She soon opened Creatures of Comfort in Los Angeles, a beautiful boutique that stands in a category all its own, unlike anything LA has ever seen.

Lai grew up in Hong Kong and holds a degree in environmental design. This has greatly informed her fashion sense and surfaces in her keen attention to detail, texture and construction. The clothing Lai adores speaks to her talent as an architect and her passion as an artist (she enjoys painting, sculpting, and interior and graphic design). The lines she carries in Creatures of Comfort are refreshingly original, fit for people who care about fashion for reasons beyond its trendiness.

Shoppers will find chiffon tops, bomber jackets and long military coats from Alexandre Herchcovitch and lightweight lapelled corduroy jackets by Eley Kishimoto. There are long, heavily gauged half-sleeve sweaters from English designer Sylvia Melig alongside silkscreened, hand-painted cotton sweatshirts by London-based designer Michelle Lowe-Holder. Lai has suede Adele Clark pumps, whose well crafted and elegant design define the classic heel, as well as items from New Yorker Mary Ping, whose clothing may look plain on the rack, but epitomizes the simplistic must-haves of basic cotton necessities.

Jewelry is available from Florian, the brainchild of an Austrian conceptual design artist who uses plastic and velvet beads. ~~“The velvet ones make you want to reach out and touch them,”~~ Lai says). Creatures of Comfort also carries tote bags, coin purses and duffel bags from Medicom, a Japanese company most famous for its collectable toys. The graphics on each piece, constructed by six artists annually picked by the company, consist of eyeballs, miniature monsters and morphing fingerprints. Items by Jessica Ogden, Lai's favorite, like loose-fitting tanks and those made of recycled quilts, are ideal for those who dress to defy traditional form-hugging attire, and creations by New Zealand designer Karen Walker are flying off the racks.

The secret behind a place that carries hard-to-find labels almost exclusively lies in its owner's steadfast determination to maintain the store's specialty agenda. Lai chooses items through a diligent research and editing process, and routinely makes trips overseas to find premiere lines and new labels.

Stylists, English tourists and New Yorkers regularly frequent the store. The fact that Lai attracts an out-of-town crowd only confirms her notion that her place is distinctly different from anywhere else in LA. It has a very minimalist feel—not like something is missing or Gap-esque, but like simplicity being indulged in, gracefully, by a true artist. Clothing hangs from mobile yellow racks, the wooden hangers spaced so that not one touches the others next to it, allowing space to see any item without having to push aside neighboring pieces. The clean white and grey walls are sparingly dotted with pins from which strings of pearls and shiny beads hang, replacing the usual clutter of framed posters and paintings.

In front of this bland backdrop, the clothing sparkles. People tell Lai that every piece she carries is like its own work of art, and Lai watches as couples browse through the space, the boys just as intrigued by the designs as their girlfriends are.

~~“I want it to be a place where people can come and find things that are special to them,”~~ Lai says.

With so many designers to showcase, Lai may open a second store. She just got back from Paris, where she found a handful of wonderful designers that are launching their first lines, but the store is not big enough to accommodate them all. ~~“I don't want it to get too cluttered,”~~ Lai explains.

Judging from Lai's genuine passion and dedication for her ~~“showcase for the public”~~ (as she humbly calls it), shoppers can count on a consistent flow of new pieces throughout the years to come. It's worth making the trip to see what foreign finds Lai has discovered and selflessly decided to share with the rest of us.

boutiques

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