

ON THE RISE

DORA ABODI

Written by LYNN FURGE Photographed by BÁLINT TRUNKÓ

Only one year out of university, Dora Abodi garnered the coveted Best Designer of 2010 title at the Hungarian Fashion Awards. She unveiled her full collection in New York, where a throng of stylists gazed upon her quirky little “plastic jacket” and leggy mini dresses.

Abodi approaches fashion in a nostalgic way, looking towards heroes in history, literature, music, and movies for inspiration. Fall/Winter 2010 is a modern homage to David Bowie in his Ziggy Stardust days, alongside references to the lost city of Atlantis. Utilizing images of fish scales, underwater plants and submarine windows on minimalist silhouettes, the collection is a direct reference to the underwater world’s moving, secret, changing depths. If given just a verbal description, the collection might seem bizarre and costume-like. However, a quick glance by an appreciator of original style will see the designs of a star in the making.

“My parents are fine artists,” explains the soft-natured Abodi from her Budapest studio, “so I always had the tools to draw from childhood. I started to make fashion designs very early on. I became interested in literature and history in my teen years, but when I was 18 I had to select what to continue on in my studies. For some reason law appealed to me, but fashion still pumped through my veins and I knew I had to make a switch. I went to the French MODART International Fashion Academy where by the last year in class my passion turned into an actual clothing label.”

The switch was a perfect decision. Her first collection (done while still at university) had fashion staples such as the little black dress and tailored trousers, but with just enough difference to make her work stand out. Huge envelope pockets on a silk sheath was a favorite. The drop-crotch jodhpurs with a slouchy turtleneck announced a fashion forward trend that editors would take note of the following season, as presented by established fashion houses. Season two for Spring 2010 was full of cool quilted patchwork pants, short shorts and dresses that had a bit of old world culture.

“I think there is such an open-minded attitude with both the Hungarian fashion and the local craftsmanship. I like to transform old techniques from folk embroidery and the shapes in Hungarian costumes, emphasize the shoulders and turn a classic reference into something modern.”

Given all of the artistic and nomadic references for Spring 2010, this sets the young designer in a perfect direction.

When starting the brand, Abodi went to Italy

and bought loads of fabrics and was absolutely mad about the possibilities she was discovering outside of the confines of Budapest. The label evolved out of the fabric options she had never seen before.

“I wanted to buy EVERYTHING! With the second collection I was cleverer and made sketches first, chose the colors and types of fabrics I wanted. I always try to use multiple types of silk. I adore it. Satin, museline. I think it wears very well on a women’s body.”

But again it’s the mixing of old classics like the silk or merino wool with new more unusual textiles, such as treated leather or plastics, that sets her designs apart.

“I am always looking for very cool plastics because that helps me with embellishments and creating specific desired silhouettes. I like to use materials that are not always meant for clothes, the green iridescent fabric on the jacket that the New York public seemed to love was decorative (interior) fabric but cut the right way. It made a really fun piece.”

That technique, coupled with her love for big stones and bold accessories, adds an eclectic touch of unique hand-craftsmanship to even the smallest detail.

Abodi’s ambition and high standards make the Dora Abodi label one of the few new companies that produces a full fashion range including garments, handbags, footwear, accessories and jewelry. However, it is less the business of the label, and more the woman behind it, that makes her creations a pleasure to wear.

In a crowd of people, the words I heard describing her most often were “nice” and “genius”. She giggles with her admirers, knowing that women just really want to look fashionable and current; like they’ve put some thought into getting ready. Dora Abodi makes this easy for them, and it is rare to find pieces that are unique but not couture.

During one of our meetings she had the most charming little crown of baubles on her head: half headband, half Juliet seeking Romeo. When I inquired, she said she dreamt about it, woke up in the middle of the night, and had to sew.

“I am really a shoe and handbag addict. I thought that if no one loved my bags and shoes I would at least make them for myself. It is important to make accessories for a line, because each additional piece encapsulates the entire idea. Even a headband can draw the whole look together. It seemed like an obvious choice for me. Of course there is the challenge of having to make a whole collection

of bags and then do the same with shoes. If you are going to sell something you cannot just have one option. I also customize many things with my manufacturers to get the right shapes and textures. But the overall vision is what is most important to me and that means making a full collection from head to toe.”

Being new on the global fashion scene has kept Abodi traveling, which opens her eyes to new techniques and new inspirations.

“Oooh, there is Paris and New York. I have equal love for both. I am always happy when I come back from New York and I cannot put my finger on exactly why, but I do know I love it. It is like an accelerator for me. Barcelona is a favorite city for all of the color and architecture. It is a very happy city. I love the nostalgia of the city that I was born in, Kolozsvár, and Budapest is of course a big big influence to me, but I feel travel is important to stay relevant and current. I need to understand all types of women. I would like to go to Tokyo. They say Japanese and Hungarian sentiment is very similar. The Japanese have complicated, traditional and sensitive souls just like Hungarians. So I am drawn to go and will definitely explore next.”

Yet it is the little nuances only in Abodi’s head that make the label so special. Fall 2010 has oceanic metallics, and a dress with molded hips and shoulders reminiscent of a Miró sculpture that’s bedazzled with huge ceramic and plastic gemstones. It is a clear stunner appropriate for any of the young celebrity set who have the legs to rock it. Being a full fashion house, this season Abodi also offers pert little flats with shark fin details, iridescent handbags, and a jewel-encrusted eye patch that stands as proof to her whimsical imaginative undertones. Whimsy aside, the use of shiny laminated museline, extra-fine merino wool and dip-dyed pearls add luxe elements to the overall collection.

Even while people were praising her fall presentation, the designer was watching the women, taking notes, and thinking ahead to spring.

“For the new collection, after being in business for a year, having so many fittings and much more experience in what the customer wears, I am heading more towards femininity. I have always been into making very womanly things where I can capture the essence and charm. The feminine wiles, so to speak. The foundation will be those classic pieces with the old Hollywood sex appeal of Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner, but of course that is just a nuance. I will be distorting or transforming the silhouette to make it very me and not so traditional. At the end of the day it is really about the current woman!”

Styling: ORSI PINCEL & DORA ABODI

Makeup: RENÁTA VÖRÖS

Hair: ILDIKÓ TÓTH

Models: ANNA JÚLIA & DOREEN

from Artmodels Budapest

