



WHAT THE...? JERSEY SHIRT, SIMPLE SKIRT



OPTIC STRETCH DRESS



ANGLIN' POOF STRETCH WOOL DRESS



LIME LIGHT WOOL DRESS



COATED SILK/WOOL/COTTON JACKET, SAUCY STRETCH WOOL SHORTS, OVER & ACROSS CASHMERE SHIRT



ULTRAVIOLET SILK DRESS



UNRUFFLED WOOL/SILK CARDIGAN, A-FRAME WOOL DRESS



BOTH SIDES NOW SILK DRESS

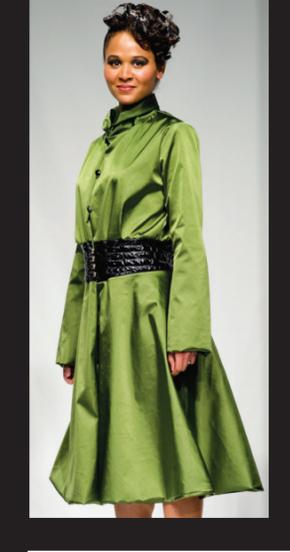
UNRUFFLED WOOL/SILK CARDIGAN, A-FRAME WOOL DRESS

OVER & ACROSS SILK SHIRT, RUFFLEY BITS STRETCH WOOL SKIRT, OBI BELT KENOBI SILK BELT

SUCKER SEASON COTTON SUIT



WHOOSH TYVEK RAINCOAT



HAPPY FROG RAINCOAT



SHAPE IN A DRAPE SHIRT, BUBBLY SILK SKIRT

BOBBY MACS STRETCH LINEN PANTS, BEST WESTERN COTTON SHIRT



MADCAP PLAIDCAP WOOL DRESS

Photography: peter baker studios, Hair: hair of fairfield, Makeup: leslie atiles

www.jenniferbutler.com

INDEPENDENT THREADS

“WHAT GOES ON HERE?”

That’s a question on many people’s minds when they walk into Jennifer Butler’s store on the Post Road in Fairfield. One might spot racks of clothing, a desk full of swatches and a woman on her hands and knees cutting something on the floor, then popping up and fitting someone who just walked out of the dressing room in a half-finished dress.

▶ BRONZE AGE SILK ORGANZA, STRETCH SEQUINED TULLE, STRETCH CHARMEUSE GOWN

The concept of custom-made clothes may seem quite unusual these days, but to many people it still makes the most sense—perfect fit meets great design, form follows function. To Butler, the idea of having 7th Avenue so close to home is the norm. Butler designs, shows and even shoots all her images within a three-block radius. Photographer

Peter Baker’s Studio is around the corner, which came in handy when she showed up for a shoot with a two-foot block of solid ice and a sword as props for a collection; or when she wanted to shoot in the woods behind her house, and Baker instead brought the woods into the studio, via digital composition.

Baker shot Butler’s clothing for a story three years ago, and they have been working together ever since. He introduced her to Michael Burgess of Branded Styles, who for one shoot, took Butler’s suggestion of “I’m thinking sculptural hair, like a Calder on their heads” and made it happen with wired frames that he weaved into the models’ hair. The Fairfield salon Hair, where Butler’s models are styled for her runway shows, turned her sculptural look into a rockabilly coif for one season, and a modern swept roll for this spring.

Makeup artist Leslie Atilies goes beyond just asking for swatches to design a look, and gets a copy of Butler’s show song list for her inspiration. This season, when Butler said she wanted a strong look, “like an alien superhero checking out our planet”,



◀ SHE’S SUCH A STITCH, WOOL SATEEN DRESS

Photography: peter baker studios, Hair: michael burgess of branded styles, Makeup: leslie atiles

HAPPY FROG RUBBERIZED RAINCOAT
WITH QUILTED VINYL BELT



Atilas came through with flying colors—literally—using the blues and strong greens in her collection to make a fearless leader. The Fairfield Theatre Company, where Butler shows twice a year as a fundraiser for the nonprofit theater, is also in walking distance, so come show time, Butler just wheels her racks down the street to present her collections.

“There’s nothing like seeing the whole vision, start to finish, raincoat to suit to evening gown to wedding dress—people leave there knowing my point,” Butler said.

They also leave quite sated, since local restaurants like neighbors Café Lola, The Green House Grill, and Health in a Hurry donate food for the evening.

“This season, I used lots of greens, blues, and plums—cool colors,” Butler continued. “The idea of traditional spring colors seemed wrong to me. I design from the point of view of a working woman, albeit one who spends an inordinate amount of time crouching at hemlines and handling pins. I’m not here to be dull and make basics, but I know everything must function 110 percent. I take that idea and mesh it with design. A woman may not know her raincoat was influenced by the idea of bug exoskeletons and the ominous new Massive Attack CD—she just knows she looks super cool, and is not all wet, so to speak.

“I like to think of myself as a clothing designer, not a fashion designer. Fashion is disposable, but I think of what I do as a body of work that changes, but remains true to the vision: To be spot-on fresh, make your body look fantastic, and be a pleasure to wear. It should be an unconscious effort for the person in the clothes—the effort is mine. Done right, this is a functional art form, but no one ever asked if they could put their Rothko in the washer. I take the work seriously, but I keep it and myself approachable. That’s the great thing about having a working studio as your storefront. I feel very lucky to be able to execute my ideas, and have so many people let me into their lives and into their closets”. □

LIME LIGHT WOOL JERSEY DRESS



A-FRAME GRASS SILK DRESS



Photography: **peter baker studios**, Hair: **michael burgess of branded styles**, Makeup: **leslie atiles**