



# NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Fresh fashion talent from **New York, London, Paris, Milan**

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## The Hot List

Meet the 12 breakout designers from around the globe that you need to know now

By Suzanne Weinstock | December 31, 1969 7:00 p.m.



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### NEW YORK: JONATHAN SIMKhai

Born-and-bred New Yorker Jonathan Simkhai, 25, is all about tomboys with sex appeal. "I design for the girl that's willing to take a risk with untraditional, androgynous pairings. I find something unbelievably and effortlessly sexy about a girl in good menswear," says Simkhai, who debuted his eponymous collection for spring 2011. His cool downtown silhouettes are inspired by both the avant-garde designs of Rick Owens and the classicism of Ralph Lauren.

Photo: courtesy of Jonathan Simkhai

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### NEW YORK: JONATHAN SIMKhai

"Throughout the design process, I kept imagining a girl stuck at a country estate who discovers a trunk of classic, vintage pieces and incorporates them into her life. My girl favors menswear and adds a twist of femininity through 1950s country silhouettes," Simkhai says. He toughened up a classic circle skirt in leather and edged up a striped pencil skirt by layering a cardigan over a leather bra-top.

"Right now I am really inspired by the film *Coco Before Chanel*. Especially the scenes where Coco steals her lovers' or the gardener's clothing and transforms the über-masculine pieces into soft, feminine looks instantly. The way that she carries herself wearing these outfits creates a feeling of confidence and sex appeal that I am drawn to."

Photo: courtesy of Jonathan Simkhai

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### NEW YORK: JUAN CARLOS OBANDO

This summer, 33-year-old Juan Carlos Obando was one of 26 designers accepted into the CFDA. It's just one more piece of validation that this Los Angeles-based Colombian designer is worth sitting up and taking notice of. "I create modern pieces with traditional craftsmanship values," Obando says. Despite traditional craftsmanship, his trademark is inventive and often intricate construction, a quality that would do his inspirations, Cristobal Balenciaga and Undercover's Jun Takahashi, proud.

Photo: courtesy of Juan Carlos Obando

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## NEW YORK: JUAN CARLOS OBANDO

For spring 2011 Obando reached for the stars, pardon the pun. "[My inspiration was] images taken from the Hubble Space Telescope" says Obando, also noting the film *Moon*, directed by Duncan Jones. "Dyeing the fabrics, transforming them" was the most fun part of designing the collection for Obando. The result was psychedelic prints on structured clothing with tough details like exposed zippers and asymmetrical cutouts bordered in crystals.

Photo: courtesy of Juan Carlos Obando

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### NEW YORK: MANDY COON

"My designs are structural yet playful," says 34-year-old Texas native [Mandy Coon](#), who presented her collection at New York Fashion Week for the first time. "I often work with duality—hard and soft, masculine and feminine, et cetera—and I play with texture and mixing unexpected fabrics." Also unexpected was her inspiration: jellyfish!

Photo: courtesy of Mandy Coon

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## NEW YORK: MANDY COON

"I have long been fascinated by these beautiful yet terrifying creatures," Coon says of her spring 2011 inspiration. "They are like beautiful aliens of the sea. The jellyfish studies by photographer Camille Solyagua were also a big inspiration. They are hauntingly gorgeous." That translated to pieces like an ethereal chiffon dress with leather and raw-edged burlap trims and plenty of raw edges and asymmetrical hems that would suit her dream clients Tilda Swinton and Cate Blanchett to a T.

But Coon doesn't take herself as seriously as it might sound. She cites Bernard Wilhelm as a major source of inspiration. "He has so much humor in his designs. It made me realize how important it is to have a sense of humor in your work."

Photo: courtesy of Mandy Coon

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### PARIS: MANISH ARORA

If you don't know his name yet, you certainly know his dresses. At 38 years old, Manish Arora is not new to the fashion industry. The Mumbai-based designer launched his line in India in 1997. But in the past couple of years, celebrities like Katy Perry have made his designs unforgettable. Who wasn't talking about the carousel dress she wore to the MTV Europe Music Awards?

"I love color. The more the better," Arora says about his designs as if that weren't obvious! "In my country, we are exposed to many glittery and colorful things from a very young age. I like to incorporate this sensibility into my designs. I am also very partial to structured futuristic shapes. My creations are usually a synthesis of the two."

Photo: courtesy of Manish Arora

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### PARIS: MANISH ARORA

Spring 2011 is what Arora calls "futuristic baroque." "I was in Japan when I visited an exhibit of Mr. Hiroshi Nagai's artwork from the '60s. The paintings evoked a nostalgic sense of romance in me. At the same time, I was deeply inspired by the decadence of the baroque era. I wanted to incorporate the intricate detailing of the baroque period with futuristic lines to create an illusion."

The over-the-top show brought together talents from many disciplines. "Mr. Hiroshi Nagai for his beautiful paintings, Nicholas Kirkwood for the shoes, Christophe Coppens for the amazing hats, and Marc Chouarain for his unique music. There was a brilliant flow of energy, which was synchronizing with everyone."

Photo: courtesy of Manish Arora

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### PARIS: HAKAAN

There was plenty of speculation about whether Hakaan Yildrim could live up to the hype surrounding his first show in Paris after winning the Andam award for his debut collection in London last season. Yildrim, 38, hails from Istanbul and already has major fans, from photographer Mert Alas, who is now his creative director, to Naomi Campbell, who sat front-row at the show.

Photo: courtesy of Hakaan

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## PARIS: HAKAAN

Yildrim focuses on new forms, new techniques, and new subtle details. "My clothes are about comfort and beauty," he says, which was evident in his sleek black-and-white spring 2011 collection. "I was inspired by architecture and graphic shapes. I also paid close attention to different surface textures, which can be seen through my use of beading and piping this season."

Photo: courtesy of Hakaan

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### **PARIS: PEDRO LOURENCO**

Brazilian wunderkind Pedro Lourenco, 20, has been designing professionally since he was 12. Yes, 12. But he started even earlier. "I will always remember my first private fashion show, at seven years old, in my mother's office, Lourenco says. So it's no wonder his second showing in Paris, which mixed leather with transparent materials, was surrounded by plenty of hype.

Photo: courtesy of Pedro Lourenco

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### PARIS: PEDRO LOURENCO

Lourenco explains his design philosophy as "reconstructing the female shape through graphics and the architecture of clothes." Unlike many designers, he finds himself inspired by history more than the arts. Instead of today's style icons, he would most have loved to dress an icon from an earlier era, *Mona von Bismarck*. Spring 2011's historical reference was "Josephine and the empire line mixed with the construction of baseball clothes," quite different from the draping of *Madame Vionnet*, who he says most inspires his work.

Photo: courtesy of Pedro Lourenco

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### LONDON: HOLLY FULTON

Since launching her line in 2009, Holly Fulton, 32, has become known in London for her graphic prints.

"Through my own line I try to reinterpret a couture aesthetic into contemporary ready-to-wear whilst incorporating my graphic signature and love of materials and surface," the Edinburgh-born designer elaborates. "I believe in sticking true to what you would wear yourself. If you wouldn't wear it, why would anyone else?"

Her influences are clear in her work. "I love and wear a lot of early Moschino. Fashion should be a bit tongue-in-cheek and he got it right for me; Miuccia Prada at both Prada and Miu Miu has been a big influence. The combinations of surface, color, and materials sing to me. Old Hermès prints are moving me right now. The edge of borderline bad taste gets me every time."

Photo: courtesy of Holly Fulton

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### LONDON: HOLLY FULTON

For spring 2011, her first solo show, Fulton imagined a cruise ship full of women inspired by Joan Collins circa 1962 stopping at the very chicest of resorts. "Naturally, they must look their best at all times, so an extensive wardrobe is required to accommodate the heat and hedonism of Monaco, Egypt, Brazil, Hollywood," Fulton says. In essence, it is her view of modernized 1960s cruisewear. She highlights a long, silk Tropicana dress. "I loved drawing this print; it's inspired by a mock Hermès mash-up of animals cavorting inside a souped up Empire State and probably one of my all-time favorites."

Photo: courtesy of Holly Fulton

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### LONDON: MARY KATRANTZOU

"More is never enough!" says 27-year-old Mary Katrantzou of her design philosophy—and critics are fans. This season she was nominated at the British Fashion Awards in the emerging talent category, and Anna dello Russo is an outspoken supporter. She takes inspiration from the entire world of design. "It's design in general and a *je ne sais quoi* quality that makes me want to dissect the design and understand its beauty."

Photo: courtesy of Mary Katrantzou

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## LONDON: MARY KATRANTZOU

This season Katrantzou dissected interiors translating to everything from prints of dining rooms to lampshade-inspired skirts with crinoline underneath. "Initially I was looking at Guy Bourdin photography and how pivotal the rooms were to the aesthetic of the shoot. I wanted to turn that on its head and place the room on the woman instead of the woman in the room. I looked at vintage *Architectural Digests* for inspiration. It was all about interiors this season."

Photo: courtesy of Mary Katrantzou

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### LONDON: KINDER AGGUGINI

If you haven't heard yet, [Kinder Aggugini](#) is about to get a whole lot better known as the first designer in Macy's designer fashion initiative. The 40-year-old Italian ex-punk came to London in the '80s and has worked everywhere from Saville Road to Vivienne Westwood before launching his own line with an aesthetic he calls "Coco Chanel marries Sid Vicious." For [spring 2011](#), he put his own spin on "the metamorphosis of the soul as described in *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, a book by Mungo Park."

Photo: courtesy of Kinder Aggugini

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### LONDON: KINDER AGGUGINI

Always cheeky, Aggugini says the highlight of career was Suzy Menkes telling him his hair was becoming more and more like hers. But on a more serious note, his breath was taken away by the *finale* of his show this season. "As Edita turned around to close the show, something happened and she started walking like a swan, the dress, snake trailing behind her like her shadow, showed off its vivid print in a glorious moment that kept us all in stillness for a few seconds. When Edita walked backstage, we were all silent just looking at the screen, she must have felt like walking on the *Marie Celeste*, than we turned around, looked at her, and started screaming."

Photo: courtesy of Kinder Aggugini

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### MILAN: GABRIELE COLANGELO

Gabriele Colangelo was born into fashion. His parents founded a furrier in Milan in 1971. Two years ago, Alta Roma and *Vogue Italia* highlighted him through the Who's on Next? competition, bringing the 35-year-old's designs to the attention of the fashion community. "The intention is to reinvent classical standard with clean, fresh, and modern perspectives," Colangelo says. "[I design for] a woman who's in search of details and quality, who never exaggerates in her grace and movements; a woman who knows the importance of her role within the society who's absolutely conscious of her personality, culture, and strength."

Photo: courtesy of Gabriele Colangelo

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## MILAN: GABRIELE COLANGELO

"The extreme variety of Wolfgang Tillmans' works, as hybrid result between painting and photography, inspired me for spring-summer collection 2011," Colangelo says. "Expressing the same belief, the spring collection interprets Tillmans' aesthetics by producing new motions and lightness. The surface moves and gets twisted into new draperies, to become 'uncomplicated.' Dresses are thinning into imaginative wings, moved by air."

Photo: courtesy of Gabriele Colangelo

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### MILAN: ANTONIO MARRAS

Antonio Marras is a fashion industry veteran. He grew up in his father's fabric store. In fact, he still lists his profession as "merchant" on his identity card. In 1988, with no design experience, he was swooped up to design a line on behalf of a businessman and later made a brief go at haute couture. The 49-year-old native of Sardinia showed his first ready-to-wear collection in 1999 and took over Kenzo in 2004. But, internationally, many are just beginning to sit up and take notice. His clothes are as romantic and poetic as the way he explains himself: "As Emily Dickinson said, Love is taught by memorial mold. Memories and contrast are the key words of my creative work. Our memories anchor us to our roots—to what we are and to where we come from. There is no future without a past. I am continually inspired by the traditions of my childhood and past that have influenced me. However, I interpret everything through my eyes, as a person who lives in the present. My work always reveals great contrasts, not only between old and new but also between different styles, shapes, and masculine and feminine elements. It's amazing how the result of a combination is never the same as the sum of its parts."

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## MILAN: ANTONIO MARRAS

*Bright Star*, Jane Campion's movie about the doomed romance between John Keats and Fanny Brawne, inspired Marras' spring 2011 collection. "One of my favorite scenes of the movie shows Fanny and her sister releasing a butterfly, so my invitation was a box of butterflies and 40 models walked through clouds of paper butterflies for my finale, wearing outfits reconfigured from old aprons with lace and embroidery," Marras says. He is virtually exploding with inspiration from designers like Rei Kawakubo and Yoji Yamamoto and the arts. "Everything that strikes me, everything I absorb, sooner or later returns to the surface and is transferred into what I do. I have always really loved Anselm Kiefer and Christian Boltanski and their work on historical and individual memory. About 15 years ago I saw, in New York, an exhibition of Boltanski and it blew me away. I think that sometimes there are things that mark and open your mind. Before Boltanski there was Pina Bausch. I had heard of her and went to see her in Sassari: Her way of dancing, so full and direct, sent a lightning bolt through me. I went everywhere where I would get a chance to see her, and the news of her death filled me with a great and lasting sense of grief and loss."

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## MILAN: MARCO DE VINCENZO

After winning last year's Who's on Next award, Marco de Vincenzo, 32, was under the gun to deliver with his third ready-to-wear collection. The Sicilian designer declares his design philosophy is "to go beyond the obvious." "I was influenced by different images from different ages and worlds," de Vincenzo says of this season's showing. "Every time I found a harmony between them and I tried to be able to express and communicate this harmony to the others. An amazing mix."

Photo: courtesy of Marco de Vincenzo

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## MILAN: MARCO DE VINCENZO

De Vincenzo is constantly exploring new designers for inspiration. "I'm really 'omnivore,'" often I fall in love with everything that is different from me, and I discover everyday talents who I didn't know. All I do is buy books and read biographies. John Bates is my last love." Although he finds inspiration everywhere, his dream client continues to perplex him. "I don't have an icon inspiring me. For this reason I am a little bit melancholy. Maybe I would have liked to dress the most beautiful divas of the '50s."

Photo: courtesy of Marco de Vincenzo