

L.A.'s New Recruits



Britjeet's leather and rabbit-fur ascot, shearing and leather bag and leather boot cuffs.

Continued from page 7

BRITJEET

Working as a hostess at hot spot Sushi Roku in West Hollywood, Brittney Cade often appeared in her customized rendition of legwarmers: leather or corduroy pant legs, scrunched down over jeans or with a short skirt. When frequent patron Jeet Sohal, owner of the handmade jewelry line Bare, inquired about Cade's unique accessory, a friendship — and partnership — was born.

This fall, the pair's Britjeet label makes its debut with a small collection of luxe accessories cut from soft, lightweight napa leather lined or trimmed in rabbit and kangaroo shearlings. Items, which wholesale from \$98 to \$438, include "ascots" that wrap around the neck and are based on Edwardian fitches; long leather sleeves, some of which feature snaps along the entire length; a fur bag that doubles as a muff, as well as an oversize hobo bag that rests on the hip. And of course there are the sexy "boot cuffs," based on Cade's original creation.

The Britjeet designers may be new to this industry, but they're wise to the harsh reality that their wares could soon be copied. "We considered doing a cheaper line," says Cade, 22. "But we decided to keep the quality really high and luxurious. That's what we want to be known for."

Britjeet is the second line under Sohal's Inspired Design Creations (Bare is her first), which she founded in 2003 "with the sole goal of incubating and launching new products," says Sohal, 25. Her next project? A children's book series for girls.



Brittney Cade and Jeet Sohal

Class Acts

NEW YORK — Could this be what spawned Mr. Trump's idea for "The Apprentice"? For the 11th year in a row, Columbia Business School students and Parsons School of Design undergrads teamed up for the semester-long course, "Design and Marketing of Luxury Goods," sponsored by the Luxury Education Foundation (formerly the Colbert Foundation). The challenge: Create the marketing and product designs for a luxury goods company.

The final project culminated on Tuesday evening at Columbia University where the 43 students, split off into seven teams, faced the subjects of their presentations: chief executive officers and bigwigs from Saks Fifth Avenue, Bernardaud, Graff, Lalique, Hermès, Chanel and Dior. Each team took to the podium, flexed its Power Point muscles and kept cool before an audience packed with peers and industry veterans.

"We want to target young people, especially in the city of New York, and get them interested in retail, in luxury, so they realize that there's much more than just a beautiful product," said Victor M. Luis, president and ceo of Baccarat and member of the LEF advisory board. "In giving them this experience, hopefully they can catch the bug." Baccarat was a participant last year, but opted to sit on the sidelines this time around. However, Luis did say that an idea from last semester's Team Baccarat is currently in the works.

According to Ketty Masonrouge, president of the LEF and adjunct professor at Columbia Business School who's in charge of the course, the point of the project is to make students understand the issues luxury firms face today. "The companies in turn get a sense of what young people — who are, on one hand, very creative and, on the other, the future of these companies — think these companies should be doing," she said.

As for the result, Team Lalique made shot glasses as well as charms for iPods and cell phones. Asked to select one of the company's classic pieces and market it to fashion-hungry 20- to 35-year-olds without changing the actual design, the group produced mini versions of several of Lalique's popular items: Mossi and Bucchantes vases were shrunk down for the bar-friendly set, while the house's signature papillon design (used in necklaces, brooches and the like) became inspiration for playful iPod and cell phone charms. "I have one of those Japanese dolls on my phone, but when I graduate, I would love to have one of these," said Columbia student and Team Lalique member Priyanka Nair.

Team Bernardaud developed a line of hair accessories for the French porcelain manufacturer, while Team Hermès was given perhaps the most grueling challenge: Improve client service for a brand that's already famous for high client satisfaction. Team Graff ventured beyond fine jewelry by designing a coffee table and fish-skin chaise. Unfortunately, the crowd didn't get the connection. "It stems from Laurence



Team Lalique's Mossi shot glass.

Graff's passion for modern art," Graff president Henri Barguirdjian was forced to explain to the confused audience.

Students on the Saks Team were asked to develop a marketing strategy to increase traffic on the department store's contemporary fifth and seventh floors. Their solutions included a VIP shopping club as well as an ad campaign in which keys would be distributed throughout the city, some opening up chests full of prizes for the winning recipients.

And the students behind the Chanel Beauté and Dior challenges all had tea on the brain. Realizing a void in the skin care-focused company, Team Chanel created a body care line based on the house's iconic camellia. The flower, it appears, is a tea plant that has antioxidants and caffeine that fight cellulite. The team's marketing efforts included creating a new breed of camellia named Coco Camélia as well as a pink version of camellia tea. "We'll be the first to bring pink tea to the world," announced Columbia Business student Christina Young, who was clad in pink, naturally.

Team Dior kept with the tea theme, but took a less scientific approach with its "Luck Be a Lady" campaign. To promote the upcoming anniversary of the Lady Dior bag, the team proposed limited-edition keepsakes and a tea party with a twist at which guests would sip not tea, but martini cocktails from their porcelain cups.

When asked if the opposing team's similar tea theme posed a problem, Catherine Kratchman, director of skin care marketing for Chanel Beauté, said, "Ours will be more timeless and elegant, and theirs, louder and fun." Kratchman, however, should be more concerned with her team's awareness of the importance of a brand's logo. When one student took to the stage and placed a Coach shopping bag bedecked in multi-colored Cs on the display table, Kratchman tipped to the front and replaced it with a more appropriate Chanel one.

— Venessa Lau



Team Dior presenting an example of the limited-edition keepsake.