

Aether p. 42 / Arabeschi di Latte p. 87 / Bernard Lee p. 43 / Carla Fernández p. 46 / Castor p. 47 /
Chezweitz & Roseapple p. 40 / Chikara Ohno p. 56 / Dustdeluxe p. 41 / Floris Hovers p. 64 /
Frauke Stegmann p. 48 / Grandpeople p. 92 / Hironao Tsuboi p. 49 / Ionna Vautrin & Guillaume Delvigne
p. 50 / Jonathan Olivares p. 56 / Judith Seng p. 54 / Karen Ryan p. 57 / Kiel Mead p. 62 /
Lekker p. 85 / Lifegoods p. 58 / Ludovic Balland p. 63 / Marco Dessi p. 52 / Mark Braun p. 66 /
Matti Klenell p. 53 / Miri Uhm p. 68 / MOS Architects p. 69 / Nacho Carbonell p. 44 / Negro p. 73 /
Oded Ezer p. 61 / OKAYstudio p. 74 / Philippe Bestenheider p. 72 / Philippe Nigro p. 70 / RBG6 p. 80 /
Rich, Brilliant, Willing p. 88 / ROOMS p. 82 / Roshi Givechi p. 60 / Simon Hasan p. 86 / Stamen p. 84 /
StokkeAustad p. 83 / Vík Prjónsdóttir p. 90 / Wouter Scheublin p. 91



I.D.40

Still image from an
experimental typography
workshop project, by
Stockholm-based ad agency
RBG6 for Konstfack,
University Collage of
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See p. 80.

miri UHM



Eight years ago, when Korean-born Miri Uhm, 23, arrived in San Francisco to attend high

school, she was shocked by the homelessness she witnessed. "There was such a contrast between rich and poor, and I was really upset by it," she says. Earlier this year, while a fashion student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), Uhm took homelessness as the inspiration for her graduate collection, a series of intricately draped and densely layered looks that create a protective exoskeleton—a portable shelter of sorts. "I wanted to show that a homeless person can find a home in his clothing," Uhm says of her work, which won first prize at SAIC's annual student show and the "Prize for Excellence" at the 2008 New Designer Fashion Grand Prix.

Adhering to a muted palette of grays, golds, and creams (for a "worn-out feel"), Uhm mixed new and used materials (linen, thrift-store sweaters, and cotton, some of it digitally printed to resemble newspaper) to evoke the appearance of bags and blankets and piled-on clothing. (She conducted her research by observing the homeless on the steps of the Chicago Public Library.)

If the collection seems rather conceptual, that was the point. "I wasn't going for pretty or wearable," Uhm says, citing Issey Miyake and Martin Margiela as influences. Uhm, in fact, always begins with a concept: She just finished a postgraduate "Rebirth" series composed entirely of white shirts; upcoming is a collection based on the films of Tim Burton. "I want my designs to be like a diary," she says, "my feelings channeled into clothes."
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Selections from SAIC grad Miri Uhm's womenswear collection inspired by homelessness, presented as part of the school's 2008 Fashion Show

