

stylewatch



Togs founder Tabitha Savoie knows women prefer their sexy clothes to be comfortable, and her dress-length Oka T-shirt of rayon, cotton, and spandex is just that, plus it has adorable button detailing and Savoie's trademark arty touch. Angela Fama Photo.

koolthing

> BY AMY LU

WHAT: Dolce Vita snakeskin Bermuda sandals

WHERE: Eden Fashion Boutique
(104-1042 Hamilton Street)

PRICE TAG: \$135

WHY: Gladiators are the hottest trend in warm-weather footwear. The strappy sandals have been peeping their way back into fashion for the past few years, but it was Balenciaga's knee-high gladiator boots that brought the style back full force. This snakeskin-print pair by Dolce Vita perfectly complements summer's florals, gauzy fabrics, and flirty dresses. Think glam-meets-boho with a bit of '80s luxe. Pair these with denim cutoffs, a sheer peasant-style blouse, big hair, and glossy lips. Save your flip-flops for the beach and strap on a pair of these for your summertime city slicking. Make sure to get a pedicure before you buckle up.



stylenotes

> BY CHARLIE SMITH

Togs' designer transforms easy fabrics into sexy art

◆ Tabitha Savoie started honing her entrepreneurial edge at a very young age. In an interview at her Main Street studio, the fashion designer joked about how she started a newspaper when she was in elementary school. In Grade 4, she launched her first clothing venture. "I used to go to Mariposa and buy T-shirts for \$2.50," she recalled. "I would ask my friends' parents, 'What do you want drawn on it?'...I would do these little artistic works on T-shirts and sell them for \$5."

Today, the 27-year-old Savoie still emblazons art on fashion, but now it's under her indie label Togs, which posts sales in the low six figures. She got her start in 2002 designing fleece leg warmers or "booties" to wear with miniskirts. "I actually designed them like we were going to a New Year's party in Whistler," she said.

From there, Savoie splashed colourful designs on T-shirts for men, catering to the skateboarding crowd. Last fall, she launched a line themed around a dollhouse.

As an artist, she admitted she can get bored easily, which causes her to make abrupt design changes. "To me, every collection is almost like a story I want to tell people," Savoie said.

Her flirty 17-piece spring collection was inspired by a road trip to Missoula, Montana, a college town at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. "The waters were really blue from glaciers, the rocks were really grey, and then you would see these bushes that were bright red or bright yellow," she explained.

Savoie's spring line includes sustainable fabrics—yes, she also runs her vehicle with biodiesel—and lots of bold patterns. She pulled out a Bam Bam T (\$24.50 to \$27) as one example. Ninety-five percent bamboo and five percent spandex, the form-fitting and oh-so-plush top is festooned with bright green bamboo shoots. "It's got a cute little panda on the inside, which says, 'Buy me, buy me,'" Savoie said with a smile. "Bamboo is known for being one of the softest fabrics."

A cowl-necked tank called the Teah (\$27.50 to \$29.50), another bamboo-based garment, features little drawstrings at the sides that allow it to be worn as a top or a sexy, short dress. The drawstrings also create texture in the tummy area. "You don't really have to be this skinny high-fashion model to wear my stuff," she said.

There's also the sexy Jacky dress (\$45 to \$47.50), a 1960s-inspired mod mini that says, "Look at me" with splashy lines and circles. Other pieces, such as the dress-length Oka T (\$37.50 to \$40), are more practical yet retain Savoie's indie pizzazz.

Savoie, who grew up in East Vancouver, comes from humble roots: her mom is a Japanese-born travel agent, and her dad is a guitar-playing labourer. She confessed that in her early days in the business, she sometimes ended up in tears

after being spurned by retailers. Her advice to young designers: "Never give up. You're going to take a beating, so just deal with it. It's not easy."

Her determination has paid off. She said she now loves many aspects of being a fashion designer and entrepreneur, especially travelling to Hong Kong, across Canada, and to the United States on business trips.

Togs is available at Life of Riley (3697 Main Street), Spank (1027 Commercial Drive, 856 Granville Street, and 2082 West 4th Avenue), Dream (311 West Cordova Street), Bodacious (4393 Main Street), and Tutta Mia (1302 Victoria Drive). ◆



Tabitha Savoie, seen in her Bam Bam T, mixes sustainability with a soft, flirty fit.