

PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER

It's kind of limiting to even put Matrushka Construction in this boutique section, as the project is way more than just a shop (although there is a really great shop on Fountain Avenue in Los Angeles called Matrushka that carries Matrushka Construction apparel). The clothing that the shop carries consists of individual hand-sewn and silk-screened pieces created by artists. Prices on the pieces are set for good measure, designated "for everyone to enjoy," as the people at Matrushka say. The boutique even offers custom tailoring and special-order items.

Where this all gets particularly unique is in Matrushka's interaction with the public. In regular "T-Construction performances," a customer can order a T-shirt and watch Matrushka seamstresses take the shirt from concept through construction to completion in front of their eyes. These people bridge the gap between small-scale garment factory labor and performance art.

Claiming to be "inspired by the utility and function of the Russian Constructivist movement," Matrushka creates "fashion for the Masses." Seriously. It sounds like some sort of gimmick, but the product is what makes it work. Creating women's wear of a variety of types—from tops to skirts to jackets—Matrushka is not merely a socio-political art project. The clothes are amazing, and the fact that you're getting one-of-a-kind pieces makes it that much sweeter.

Founded in early 2003 by Beth Ann Whittaker and Laura S. Howe, Matrushka Construction began with the premise that fashion should fit individual sensibilities. Most people who are into fashion can understand that. What better way to achieve this than to make individualized pieces, often allowing the customer to watch the clothes being constructed.

Taking the interaction between construction and consumption even further, Whittaker and Howe have come up with a concept for location-specific fashion creation. With the "Made In..." project, the two designers seek out local fabrics, styles and influences from a specific location—the specialized culture of fashion of a given place—and create individual pieces based upon all of these factors. Who comes up with this stuff? Absolute genius.

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