

CLEVER

Mar 2

These LA-Based Labels Are Re-Imagining Women's Workwear



With hashtags like #pantsuitnation and #dresslikeawoman trending, one good thing to come out of very controversial election results is the current dialogue about what it means to be and dress like a woman—specifically what it means to look like a powerful, intelligent, and capable woman. For presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, that meant a pantsuit in every shade the spectrum has to offer, and we've seen many women in turn become inspired by the concept of finding their own uniform (so to speak) to make them feel like Superwoman. This has also been influencing the way designers cultivate new collections. Two newer local labels, [Town Clothes](#) and [Art of the Gentlewoman](#), create clothing that empowers women—from offering stylish workwear options beyond what's traditional to utilizing ethical manufacturing by family-owned businesses and contributing to charitable women's causes.

In creating Town Clothes a few years ago, designer Krista Bachmeier wanted to specifically address issues in the fashion industry that include waste and human rights violation (which often occur in some overseas manufacturing). Her last collection reimagined women's suiting with 70's inspired cropped baby-flares and single-breasted jackets with slightly exaggerated lapels—and the clothing is made with sustainable materials (organic or deadstock fabrics and plant-based dyes as often as possible). While her new spring pieces might be more stereotypically feminine (breezy linen culottes, open-back blouses), Town Clothes' aim to dress the strong-willed, mindful woman is as apparent as ever.

Vastly different in style, Art of the Gentlewoman also wants to offer professional options for confident, successful women. For the brand, that means launching with a mix-and-match 6-piece suit collection. Creators Melissa Martinez-Booth and Melissa Kanarek wanted to bring a fresh feel to the "power suit." The two fashion vets also wanted to make pieces that felt luxurious, but maintained a price point reasonable for a wide range of women.

We got a chance to chat with the ladies behind both lines, and discovered what they wear to feel powerful, how their badass customers drive their brands, and exactly what it means to "dress like a woman."



What's the most powerful thing a woman can wear?

That's easy. Confidence.

How does your brand speak to that idea?

Wearing a suit is incredibly empowering. Especially a well cut one. Fashion is a reflection of the times and we needed to craft go-to pieces that were stylish and wearable for busy women who look great. Guys get to throw on a suit and tie and be meeting ready. The choices for women with our aesthetic were lacking and we wanted to address that through accessible luxury and the concept of capsule buying.



What inspiring woman would you love to dress and what would you put her in?

Only One? The list could go on forever. Patti Smith, Coco Chanel, Katharine Hepburn, Notorious RBG, Viola Davis, Ki Longfellow, Diana Vreeland, Sofia Coppola, Georgia O'Keeffe, Amy Poehler, Cher...we could go on and on. We'd put them in our 6-piece Slouch Suit Launch Collection and they'd all kill it.

Who inspired you to create the brand?

Women who have made their mark and are no longer around as well as women who are doing their thing in the here and now. We both have teenage daughters and it is somewhat of a legacy to pass onto them. To find the thing you love and then work your ass off. We are both pretty determined and surround ourselves with strong, confident women. There is no shortage of inspiration and we are honored when the women we admire put on our clothing to take on their day.

Photos for Town Clothes by [Mattea Perrotta](#), photos for AOTG by [Hailley Howard](#)