

## 1. Le Train Bleu



For the past two years, shopping website Le Train Bleu has managed to stock rare pieces of arty, feminine clothing unavailable elsewhere. A favorite of Lucky magazine, the site is named for a Russian ballet which featured costumes by Chanel and sets painted by Picasso. This creative mood suffuses their choices, from new label Bi La Li's draped bubble skirts (pictured) to structured hoodies by Mike and Chris. Le Train Bleu is an essential resource for those seeking to stand out from the H&M crowd.

[www.letrainbleu.com/shop.html](http://www.letrainbleu.com/shop.html)

## 2. Accumulated Structure



American sculptor John Powers employs the timely concept of accumulation in creating his own barren mini-universes. His square and rectangular-based sculptures seem to grow outward from themselves, triggering within us, as noted by architecture blog Tropolism, strong childhood memories of the Death Star or visions of Krypton from the original Superman films. Look for his crystalline and cold, yet somehow comforting work this Fall in New York.

[johnpowers.us](http://johnpowers.us)

## 3. Mythical Environments



L.A.-based creative firm Core, known previously for its print ads, brand launches, websites and animation, ventures into the burgeoning arena of restaurant installations with a piece at Jeffrey Chodorow's new venue Social Hollywood. An hour-long film, projected on a 50-foot glass wall, guides patrons through a fantasy world full of "wolves, owls, and other animals, psychedelic mushrooms, and nymphs in the nude." Other Core clients include Nike, Converse and Karl Lagerfeld.

[www.core11.com/2006/](http://www.core11.com/2006/)

#### 4. Availabot



Add one more device to the recent proliferation of USB accessories. Availabot, created by London firm Schulze & Webb, updates the vintage thumb push puppet for the digital age. The three dimensional figure physically rises and falls, indicating the availability of a chosen IM buddy. Beyond the obvious fun of seeing your “friend” collapse when leaving IM, Availabots are fully customizable; physical characteristics like hairstyle and build can be reflected in the toy. In addition to their unique appearances, they store your IM data, such as screen name and service provider, so you can “give them out like business cards” to your closest contacts.”

[schulzeandwebb.com/2006/availabot/](http://schulzeandwebb.com/2006/availabot/)

#### 5. Social Suicide bespoke commentary



As part of the fashion movement resurrecting humor and intelligence, Britain’s Social Suicide brings to mind the subversive work of Martin Margiela, but uses bespoke suiting as a canvas. Intricately worked optical illusions adorn their suiting, depicting anything from the Queen’s iconic profile rendered in 400 mother of pearl buttons, to the more subtle “shark suit” which features three pink “gill” cutouts under the jacket’s arms.

[www.socialsuicide.co.uk](http://www.socialsuicide.co.uk)

#### 6. Zaha Hadid multimedia



Zaha Hadid’s first architectural triumph, a Hong Kong leisure and recreational center called The Peak, barely hinted at her tremendous ability and potential. Two decades of phenomenal work followed, including projects like the Vitra Fire Station in Weil am Rhein, Germany (pictured) as well as a BMW Plant and the Phaeno Science Center, which culminated in a Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2004. Also celebrated as something of a feminist hero, the Baghdad-born artist is enjoying a retrospective of all her work, from paintings and sketches to urban plans, models and animations at the Guggenheim in New York through October 25.

[www.guggenheim.org/hadid/overview.html](http://www.guggenheim.org/hadid/overview.html)

## 7. Megabrands continue social consciousness

Social consciousness has evolved from a trendy stab at grabbing some attention to a solid business practice as brands like the GAP join the fight against overwhelming global crises like the spread of AIDS. In a partnership with Product (Red), an organization envisioned by U2 front man Bono, the GAP will contribute half of the profits



from its new line to a fund supporting victims of HIV and AIDS in Africa. The Holiday 2006 collection launches in flagship and key stores in the U.S. and U.K. starting in October and features tees and hoodies in both cotton and cashmere, jackets, jeans, bags, belts, caps, scarves, a bracelet, a candle and a book called “Individuals”, which is a compilation of celebrity portraits featured in their various ad campaigns over the years.

[www.gap.com](http://www.gap.com)

## 8. Animal Creator



Judging from the proliferation of artists and fashion designers using animal parts in their work, our new fascination with all that is primal and elemental is undeniable. This month, yet another artist, Nate Hill of New York, joins the current taxidermological fray. His Bible ReWrite project aims to re-create the universe, both through written responses to various sections of the Bible in which Hill inserts himself as the center of attention in place of God, as well as by populating his Earth with new creatures formed from road kill.

At once fascinating, repulsive and fresh, Hill’s mad-scientist amalgamations of birds, deer, snakes, dogs, cats, raccoons and mice serve as a reminder of nature’s original genius while also raising questions regarding the increasing power we have over the earth and its inhabitants.

Those with strong stomachs should review his photo collection of the “new” animals he has created (though it may be best to avoid the rambling megalomaniacal text accompanying it), and which may not be so far away on our genetically engineered trajectory.

[stoproadkill.org](http://stoproadkill.org)

## 9. The design below



[www.coolhunting.com/archives/2006/07/scratchcard\\_wal\\_1.php](http://www.coolhunting.com/archives/2006/07/scratchcard_wal_1.php)

London based interior designer Linda Florence contributes to the current trend for consumer participation with her new line of wallpaper. Florence's work features a layer of scratch-off material that allows you to reveal the design underneath at your own pace. Discovering the pattern and thus completing the decor can take days or years--your choice!

## 10. Smintair brings luxury back to the skies



[smintair.com](http://smintair.com)

Billed as the "world's first smoker's airline," German project SMITAIR aims not only to reintroduce "personal freedom" to the world of commercial air travel by allowing its customers to light up during flights, but also to reinstate the luxury of flying. SMITAIR plans to offer upwards of 70 inches of legroom for each seat as well as an upstairs lounge, "signature recipes created by internationally renowned chefs," model-beautiful flight attendants outfitted in couturier designed uniforms and a range of in-flight technology for passenger entertainment. Set to launch in 2007, SMITAIR (Smoker's International Airways) still has financing and regulation issues to conquer, but if they're successful it will herald a return to the more lavish days of air travel.

## 11. La Garconne



Although finding the trendiest clothing and accessories online has become quite effortless, locating more avant-garde emerging designers or those with a more minimalist aesthetic remains quite a task. Look to new website La Garconne for more refined selections from designers like Lover, Phillip Lim, Development, Loeffler Randall, Repetto, Vivienne Westwood and Clu.

[www.lagarconne.com](http://www.lagarconne.com)

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