



With rounded patch pockets, the Cicely coat in dove-grey Japanese wool tweed is one of just three signature pieces that form the new Hidden Spectrum fall line. Thank Virginia Woolf, in part, for the androgynous femininity. Colleen Heslin photo.

## koolthing

BY AMY LI

**WEEK:** In these colder weeks with little sun!

**WEEKEND:** The Canadian September

**WEEKEND:** Fashion Week

**PRICE TAG:** \$15

**WEEK:** It's still summer and your thoughts are probably on anything but fall, but the best back-to-school trends have started to trickle into store shelves. Stores often release a few killer pieces early to tempt our fashion-facts buds, and these usually sell fast and furiously. Rubber boots have become a staple for fashionistas and are doing an encore this fall. Check out these styles by Joe Fresh, the latest go-to brand with the perfect touch of hip.

So you can wear them for fashion and function. Rock these with black denim, a plaid work shirt, and a cardigan for your back-to-school debut. They come in black and grey as well as a brown-and-green version.



## stylenotes

BY PATTY JONES

**In new Vancouver line, art and literature fill out Spectrum**

◆ Amy Sky isn't afraid of Virginia Woolf. As epiphanies go, the moment when she began to envision one of the most famous female writers of the 20th century as the muse for her debut clothing collection wasn't too shabby. There she was, reading (once again) Woolf's mega-essay *A Room of One's Own*, just as she was embarking on her own art and fashion atelier. "That moment is really memorable for me," Sky tells the *Straight* one Monday afternoon. The poised 31-year-old is standing in her Main Street studio wearing chopped-off black jeans, a black tank, and vintage burgundy suede Cougar loafers. "I was starting out on something that's kind of a big endeavour."

Before she got the yen to launch Hidden Spectrum—fashion being just one smidgen of said spectrum—she was discovering illustration, painting, printmaking, and video at the then-Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. Fine-arts diploma in pocket, Sky didn't really mean to start sewing costumes for a movie-wardrobe company. "I suddenly just got more interested in making garments," she says.

In short order, Sky was a Vancouver Community College fashion grad, and then a production sewer for local label Mono Clothing. Moving to Dace, she sewed samples and managed production. Then she began patternmaking. "That's where I got really excited about making things."

By November 2008 she was solo, reading Woolf's gender-swapper novel *Orlando: A Biography*, and hitting secondhand stores. "I remember last winter I was totally obsessed with going to thrift stores and finding old men's shirts and wearing those, like oversized, and liking how that felt," she says. "So that androgynous aspect just came into the collection."

Ten months later, "the collection" is a coat, a shirtdress, and a tunic. All have just landed at Gastown's Nouvelle Nouvelle (209 Abbott Street). "It's good to start simple," Sky says, possibly forgetting that her exquisitely designed fall debut is anything but.

Sky has called her inaugural trio Ampersand. In Hidden Spectrum's world—in which Sky besides creating two collections yearly aims to collaborate with other artists on projects from video works to installations—everything is about something. Ampersand, for instance, is about "austere romanticism and androgynous femininity."

Which came first, the ribbon or the top? "I really wanted to use this cotton georgette ribbon, and that's partly why I did the tunic," Sky admits. The black and off-white ribbons that traverse the bell-sleeved, sashed Shinto tunic's bodice and armholes are Japanese imports, as is its robin's-egg-blue chambray shirt-dress (\$164). Let it be said that the Thuja shirtdress (\$188), also robin's-egg chambray, is no man's shirt. It dips in at the waist, and has delicate pleated sleeves and French seams. "I knew from the beginning I was kind of obsessed with the shirtdress," she says. With sweet rounded patch pockets, the Cicely coat (\$315) in dove-grey Japanese wool tweed is storybook girlish.

Outside it's September, but at the industrial cutting table inside Sky's narrow workspace, it's looking a lot like April—well, a darkish April. She's pinning a dress pattern on black and grey fabrics, readying for a photo shoot of her spring line. This time there are five pieces: a jumpsuit, a wrap dress, a silk tank top, a chiffon T-shirt, and a blazer. "There's lots of silk, lots of flowy things," she says, adding with a laugh. "Right now it's looking pretty dark, actually." And she must finish the Nouvelle Nouvelle window display for her fall trunk show. "It will be [local photographer] Colleen Heslin's photographs, and I'm doing a string-art installation." Her boyfriend, Black Mountain keyboardist Jeremy Schmidt, will play records. But she can't help thinking about future collaborative projects. "I think I wouldn't be happy if I wasn't able to dabble in other things. Everything informs everything else, doesn't it?" ◆