## 'Cabaret' and corsets

Whimsical and a little bit naughty, spring show from Austin design guild is irresistible

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Raw edges. Leather. Corsets. Yes, the spring fashion show of the Designers' Guild of Austin last month had a deliciously naughty touch to it - one that left you feeling, at show's end, like the runway parade had gone by too

I could have seen much more of Levi Palmer's "Cabaret"-inspired looks, ranging from drapey swaths of fabric in celadon and ivory to hard-edged leather suits with structured jackets and short skating skirts. Irresistible, too, was the drama with which his models arrived: some playful, channeling Sally Bowles, others stony-faced and goose-stepping in an Axis-meets-aviators kind of

Palmer's label, Leviticus, featured Gothlike garb at the last DGA show; it was exciting to see this young designer branch out into such whimsical looks as suede short-shorts and a bikini adorned with feathers covering the model's unmentionables. Those short-shorts turned up elsewhere, in Brooke Carter's collection, in black and white pindots with a matching halter, and rendered in brown suede with a fur stripe reminiscent of tuxedo pants.

Other recurring themes were corset silhouettes, such as those that opened the show with Judy Masliyah's "Dolls" collection. Masliyah sent corsets out in white eyelet, in dark denim and in pink satin, accenting full skirts in netting or layers of swishy fabric in magentas and golds.

Therapy's Jyl Kutsche fashioned her corsets in leather. She also used leather in inventive oneshouldered tops that strapped across the models' shoulders, evoking toughness and simplicity in a single garment. She added texture after texture with kneelength skirts in burnout velvet and tonal stripes, even weaving in

## **Fashion review**

Barton crafted low-slung silhouettes for both men and women. with over-long belled sleeves that kept those clean lines from getting too boring.

Chovan trained in Paris, and her skill as a couturier is always evident in her clothes. Her wellcut dresses - some with selfbelted wraps of fabric, some with shirring or tuxedo-style ruffles featured the surprise of raw-edged natural cloth mixed in with her trademark black. She used that muslinlike cloth as an underskirt and as a main fabric, accentuating its color with black seams.

Would you wear any of these clothes out? Maybe. Depends on how avant-garde you are. Do we love watching these clothes come out on a runway? Definitely. The Guild is fast becoming a fashion force to monitor in Austin.

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Feminine with a wild side. gowns from Judy Masliyah, top, and Levi Palmer, above and left, bring flowing fabrics to items once reserved for undergarments.





