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## Cut to Couture: Designer Colleen Quen's S.F. Loyalty

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In-the-know fashionistas flock to [Colleen Quen's](#) atelier in San Francisco to get fitted for one of her gorgeous dresses. Quen has appeared on "America's Next Top Model" and celebrities like Tyra Banks and Paris Hilton have flaunted her looks, but the humble designer isn't fazed by her rising fame. Here, Quen discusses her loyalty to San Francisco and what it takes to become a fashion designer.

### Who inspired you to become a French couturier and how did you start your couture business?

My mom was my first teacher to help me start exploring my creativity through fabrics, sewing, creating fashion, ceramics, painting and embroidery. This was a good base for me to experiment and to explore all my senses. Later on, after working in a fashion company I quit my position and focused a hundred percent on couture with my mentor Simone Sethna for three years.

It was a great venture to start my own business. I was determined to understand how to properly start a business, to operate and keep production flowing, and marketing my business in a personal but efficient way. This was my baby I was creating for the future of my career. It was unknown territories that I liked diving into ... setting a new path for my dreams and making creations for my clients.

### How is the current SF fashion scene shaping up? Are you seeing a lot of new talent?

It's growing and I'm happy to see emerging designers operating their own businesses. We need more new blood, new energy and new creative design perspectives! We need our city to support, invest and promote our designers so they can maintain their businesses.

### How are we different from other cities in terms of fashion?

We walk our own paths of individuality. We are anti-trend here. That's why I love this city. We are pioneers. San Francisco has so many cool areas to find anti-trend. Just walking to the Mission area, you see locals dressing their own way at the restaurants and cafes. Driving to Haight Street, you will find a bohemian style of locals dressing their own way, hanging out with their friends on the streets. You will not find Burberry scarves. You can dress eclectic, eccentric and/or esoteric.

### What are your bestselling designs right now?

The Barcelona trench coat in denim stretch, my gray wool blouse with the butterfly bib, and the Manhattan dress in denim stretch.

### Any new designs for fashion lovers to look forward to this year?

Silk organza tops and full-legged pants!

### What is your honest advice for aspiring fashion designers?

Be true to your creations and make it happen. Create, explore your creative self ... so that you can bring out the best in yourself and your designs will surely reflect it. Be disciplined. This kind of career makes you devoted -- it's almost like a marriage. It's beautiful to see the rewards when you have worked hard to get where you want to be.

Where do you hang out in the city for inspiration?



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Where do you hang out in the city for inspiration?

SFMOMA, La Boulange, Samovar Tea Lounge, and especially the Japanese Tea Garden. My favorite way to calm my spirit before creating is to have a cup of tea, preferably the finest teas from China. It's almost like treating yourself to a sip of your favorite wine. The preparation of Chinese tea is a ritual for me. It helps me bless my day and my intentions for the day to begin.

Colleen Quen Couture, 7 Heron St.; 415-551-0013

#### Quick Guide to Colleen Quen's Faves:

[San Francisco Museum of Modern Art](#), 151 Third St.; 415-357-4000

[La Boulange](#), 2325 Pine St.; 415-440-0356 (check website for other locations)

[Samovar Tea Lounge](#), 730 Howard St.; 415-227-9400 (check website for other locations)

[Japanese Tea Garden](#), 7 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr.; 415-668-0909

*Photo Courtesy of Wing Shya*



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A San Francisco native, Tami loves to write about dining, fashion, beauty and travel. She has also written for AOL Digital City, Caviar Affair magazine and AOL's When.com.

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