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Making Waves With a Sexy Unisex Line

By AMY M. SPINDLER

MILAN, Italy, Oct. 8 — Because Jean-Paul Gaultier and Giorgio Armani began their careers by designing clothing for men, their women's clothes have always had a seductive androgyny. Now there is Carol Christian Poell.

When Mr. Poell's clothes were first displayed at Ron Herman/Fred Segal Melrose in Los Angeles, Nina Garduno, the store's vice president for men's wear, noticed something exceptional: women were as drawn to the low-slung trousers, tight stretch shirts and tailored jackets as were men. Women wear his clothes now, but Mr. Poell will not present a women's line until next fall. Until then, he has a unisex collection that is sexy for both sexes.

Born in Linz, Austria, Mr. Poell (pronounced poh) is fascinated with innovative fabrics, denim and



Corina Lecca for The New York Times

Carol Christian Poell is known for his rigorous tailoring.

rigorous tailoring — interests he shares with his countryman Helmut Lang. "Anyone today who wants fashion to be modern is working on these same concepts," Mr. Poell said.

By the time he was 15, he was working in his parents' clothing factory, learning the strict rules of making men's clothing. Now he is breaking those rules with deceptively simple, suggestive clothes.

Mr. Poell's clothes are so fitted they tug across the body, making even the leanest form look muscular. Because they are hand-tailored, the clothes give in all the right places. A black leather jacket is lined with cotton Lycra and stretches like skin. A white shirt is pleated, then printed with black so that it ripples and turns white again when the body moves. Even prints like elephant skin or python are sexy. It's steamy stuff.

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