

The Argentina–Austin connection

Sisters bring designs from their home country to local customers

By Courtney Sebesta
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Many women spend their lives obsessing over building a coveted wardrobe. For these fashion lovers, each item in a closet is carefully selected and cared for, often treated as works of art.

Enter Rare Trends, a new way to shop locally, in a global way. It's a shopping experience centered around attention to detail and individuality, bringing apparel from emerging and well-established Argentine designers to the streets of Austin.

Rare Trends began in 2011 as an idea between Argentine sisters Paola Moore and Marina Silver, for different, but united reasons. Each trip back to their home country resulted in unique clothing purchases from favorite designers. Friends loved their never-before-seen pieces and were soon begging the sisters to bring back garments and accessories for them.

Moore and Silver developed a desire to introduce their favorite Argentine designers to a larger audience. Moore, a former marketing executive, was ready to re-enter the working world after staying home with her children. Silver previously worked in the Argentine fashion industry. Opening Rare Trends was a natural progression to afford Austinites with a unique shopping adventure.

Rare Trends operates with a core principle: to feature unique "wearable art" pieces created with intricate details, many of which have been artistically constructed by hand. The company stays true



RALPH BARRERA/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Co-owner Paola Moore displays some of the Argentine fashions available at Rare Trends.

About Austin Fashion Week

Austin Fashion Week is held in various locations around town Aug. 9-18. The event features runway shows showcasing well-known and up-and-coming designers, multiple events and trunk shows at various boutiques and venues around Austin. The week culminates with the Fourth Annual Austin Fashion Awards, honoring the best in the Austin fashion community. For more information, visit www.fashionweekaustin.com.

to a slogan: Wear art. Mass production of garments is frowned upon.

"We definitely believe that the apparel and design industry has veered into the

mass consumer market," Moore explains. "Designers have lost the skill of designing for what they really like. They have to design to cost produce. A lot of designers we bring in still do a lot of handwork and techniques that only they can do."

The sisters travel to Argentina twice a year for the fashion week seasons and hand pick a limited selection from established or emerging designers' collections. Prices range from \$75 to \$555 and fluctuate with the amount of construction work involved.

The current Rare Trends collection features intricate apparel from Tramando, created by well-known Argentine designer Martin Churba. Churba's one-of-a-kind printed fabrics, hand cut, dyed and pleated garments epitomize the Rare Trends

philosophy and mission. Selections by other designers include dresses, skirts and tops in vibrant green, yellow and orange in line with summer trends.

Rare Trends operates by holding trunk shows around town or by appointment at the sisters' South Congress Avenue showroom.

A typical appointment at Rare Trends headquarters starts with a designer walkthrough. The shopper is provided a description of the designer and what he or she is known for, followed by a question and answer session to discuss likes and dislikes to help cultivate an individual fashion identity and obtain feedback for the next trip to Argentina. The designers Moore and Silver work with appreciate knowing what works and doesn't work in the American market.

The sisters also offer top clients a more personalized shopping experience, more than the Q&A. Moore and Silver head to Argentina with information from shoppers gathered by each shopper's particular taste. Once the garments are brought back, there's no obligation to buy, but a discount is offered if the client chooses to purchase.

Moore hopes her clients feel like the work is being done for them so they don't have to "travel to the end of the world" for unique fashion.

"The Rare Trends woman has to be edgy, she has to be bold," Moore says. "She takes fashion into her own way – her own identity – and steps out of the box. She doesn't care what people think about her. She loves herself, and she loves to make a statement," Moore says.

The overwhelming response at a recent trunk show at the W Hotel made it obvious the sisters have a shopping concept that works.

"Austinites are risk takers. They try things they haven't tried before and embrace them," Moore says. "Rare Trends is about letting people define their style and confidence with the way they want to look."

The sisters have big plans for Rare Trends. They would like to expand into local boutiques and include other South American designers (there are talks of including a Brazilian handbag designer and an Ecuadorian knit designer), then eventually designers from all parts of the globe.

Moore is thrilled about Rare Trends' first foray into the summer frenzy of Austin Fashion Week in August. At least two separate runway shows are planned during the Driskill Runway Presentations – Tramando and Allo Martinez – and will feature about 20 looks each.

"I think we're inviting women to empower themselves by wearing something that is rare, that transforms them," Moore says. "We want to represent art from the world, introduce it to the American market."

Find out more about Rare Trends and upcoming trunk shows at www.raretrends.com.

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