

## INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN KLOPE, LEAD DESIGNER – PER SE COLLECTION

Susan Klope sold her first design sketches in Toronto at the age of thirteen. By seventeen, her portfolio gained her entree to the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, despite having not finished high school. Eventually, she would go on to work at major fashion houses, including Bill Blass, Oscar de la Renta and as head designer for Elie Tahari. Today, as lead designer for the Per Se Collection at the Connaught Group (creators of the Carlisle Collection), Klope has the opportunity to create smaller, more personalized collections than those she worked on at the big fashion houses. In this role, Klope says she finds inspiration in dealing directly with clients and stylists, whose feedback she incorporates into each new collection she designs. And, it allows her to pursue her passion for working outside what she calls 'arbitrary styling rules' to create the unexpected

**VENÜ Magazine caught up with Susan Klope as she launched her new Spring 2012 line at the Carlisle/Per Se Showroom in Greenwich.**



**VM: Tell us one or two words that sum up the look for spring 2012:**

**SK:** Feminine and confident. It's all about the juxtaposition of soft and hard and the unique way each woman will combine this for her personalized look this Spring.

My collection for Per Se Spring 2012 showcases the underlying strength of being a woman. Instead of thinking of things in terms of masculine and feminine – think hard and soft. The collection showcases the juxtaposition of those two – hard and soft. Just think of nature and how a stone can be hard but it can also be polished, smooth and exquisite in showing the depth of color. This season it will be all about the play of hard and soft and how uniquely each woman will combine this for her personalized look this season. What I love this season is that the defining factor of chic elegance is going to be the woman herself and how she expresses herself and how she feels in her clothing.

**What were your muses this season?**

**Music:** Music was a major part of my drive this season and I found myself listen-

ing to a lot of Adele with songs like "One and Only" and Van Morrison's "That's Entrainment." **Emotion:** For me it seems like people are longing for a softer world that is filled with passion and desire. A world that is more in touch with emotion and that seems to be reflected in the fashion I'm producing and those around me as well. Society seems to think of women as having emotions more on the surface – this is also defining how fashion is evolving right now for that woman! Life has changed and people – including designers are defining things that matter. People are really ready to bring emotions to the surface again in playful and meaningful ways.

**Drawing:** When I'm not designing I'm often sketching large nudes and that's something that empowers me to think of the natural lines of the body. Allowing the body to be what it really

is. Not redefining the body but really going with what the shape of the woman is. I love taking this into my thinking for my designs because I am designing garments that look beautiful on women who are sizes 0 to 18 and I want the cloth to fall just so and the lines of the garment to accentuate the beauty in each woman from thin to curvy. It's an art that I love and it means thinking about every design I make and how it will look and fall on the body in every size.

**Every season you are known for bringing together a new neutral with pops of fresh colors. What's in store this season?**

This season women will love the shots of bright color. Colors that transport emotionally. After a long winter women will be longing for strong colors that speak loud. At the same





time, I made sure to introduce some new neutrals that act as the undercurrents that form the backdrop for all the other colors. Two colors: Sand Dune and Driftwood. Even the names are very evocative. These are baseline colors and they make me think of playing the part of a wall in a museum. The colors are there to really allow the art to speak and make the noise. The bright, delicious colors in the collection get to make the noise this spring and these are edible color names that make you smile even when you just say the name. Mandarin orange, lemonade, raspberry, kiwi – the names will all transport you some place.

**What are the MUST-HAVE pieces from your collection this season?**

Vibrant – the mandarin orange topper is the power shot of color that ever women needs to incorporate into her wardrobe this spring. Hilton – which is an amazing sleeveless dress that introduces a new interpretation of lace that women are going to love. Sloane: Another must-have means for incorporating lace into your spring wardrobe -- this dress is structured lace, which allows women to take on lace in a new way vs. being scared off by the traditional fragile interpretation of the fabric. Paparazzi – a beautiful lace tunic that combines floral lace with black leather delivering a tough yet soft look. Lace going hard and edgy. Citrine: the perfect dress and topper combination. This is open

cotton weave backed with silk organza, which forms the frame of the jacket and gives it the most divine shape. Also, ankle skimming skirts are big this spring: Woodgrain is one in our collection and what I love about it is it has a transparency to it that allows it to flow. Frolic is another and it is wool gauze lining in jersey so the fabric flows the way it wants to. Both are best worn with flats or kitten heel shoes. Color combos – this season I'm loving the Vibrant topper worn with marble and stone-color undercurrents or more casually paired with a dark denim jean.

**What will you be incorporating into your own wardrobe from the collection?**

My shopping list from the Per Se Spring collection is clear. It includes: Vibrant – the jacket I love so much! Valencia – a Jersey dress in mandarin orange. Delicate – a perforated leather jacket to wear with the long Frolic skirt or with jeans. Hilton – lace dress to be paired with the Gold long linen jacket. Focus – a fun fringe skirt in black and white with a pattern that enhances a woman's natural movement. This skirt brings to mind the French Riviera feel. Clambake – the blouse you expect to see on a sexy yet coy French woman who looks effortlessly beautiful. The black chiffon at the neck drapes just as you want it to and once again romances the neckline. Pair this with slim pants that crop at the

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ankle and Voila – a simple elegance!

**What can women expect and plan for when it comes to the accessories for Spring?**

Going into Spring, it will be cloth romancing the neck rather than jewelry. The bracelet and earrings will make their own music the wrist being the main focal point. Charm bracelets and strong oversized watches will be worn loose. Structured handbags will be the go-to for the bold fashion-savvy woman. Shoes are more polished, feminine and defined. We will see pointy toes to elongate the leg and foot. No more heavy footwear or clunky wedges!

**How do you evolve a woman from wearing black and dark colors all winter to move into a Spring wardrobe?**

First I tell her to breathe! Then we talk about how there is a rhythm to fashion. It's an evolution not a revolution. Never stop cold – you start by getting a pop of color and playing it back into your neutrals. Having a stylist at our showroom truly helps women push out of their comfort zone and guides them toward evolving their wardrobe into the pieces that will make them feel and look their very best. The best designers guide you into the next new thing – they don't force you into it. Look at this season as being sent out to recess! Winter was the school time and now you get to play! □