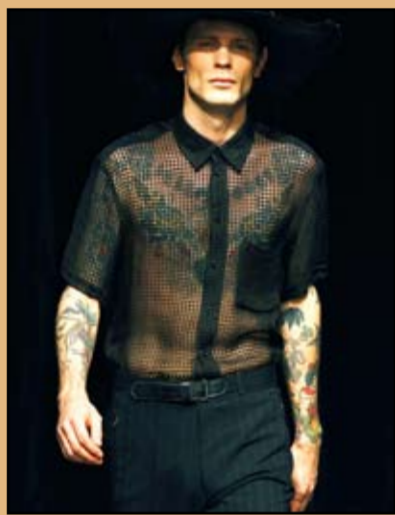


# New, edgy Australian designers lure global interest

Industry outlook positive after financial crisis, analysts say

BY BELINDA GOLDSMITH  
REUTERS, SYDNEY



Models display outfits by designers Camilla and Marc, right, and labels Lucette, above, and Zambesi, top and second from top, at Australian Fashion Week 2010. PHOTOS: EPA AND AFP

Australia's fashion industry is putting on the glitz for its major annual show this week with prospects brighter after the financial crisis and rising global interest in a new guard of Down Under designers.

Last year's Rosemount Australian Fashion Week was 15 percent smaller than the previous year with only 41 shows, which mirrored similar cuts at shows in the major fashion capitals of London, Paris, New York and Milan.

But Daniel Hill, general manager of event organizer IMG Fashion Australia, said interest had picked up this year with more than 60 shows scheduled between Monday and Friday and over 165 registered international buyers and media, up from 134 last year.

International buyers attending Australia's 15th annual fashion week includes Selfridges and Net-A-Porter from the UK, Fred Segal and Urban Outfitters from the US, and a significant increase in interest from Japan.

"Last year was tough around the world but Australian designers are pretty resilient and this year is looking really positive with a strong schedule," Hill told said.

"Australia is seen as a market that can provide something different to international buyers and, while we have the established names, we also have the new guard, like Dion Lee, Konstantina Mittas, and Romance Was Born, which are targets for buyers coming here."

The 2010 fashion week got off to an early start when designer Carla Zampatti opened up her Sydney mansion last week to show her new spring/summer 2010/2011 collection of sleek, fitted suits, crisp shirts, and taffeta and organza eveningwear.

Zampatti is not the only high profile designer opting to do her own show outside fashion week or invest in showing at New York or London fashion weeks instead which get greater coverage. Other notable absentees this year are Sass and Bide, Wayne Cooper, Bowie, Willow and Collette Dinnigan.

## LOCAL EXPOSURE

But many local designers believe it is as important to focus on their own backyard and Australia as the overseas market.

"Show in New York, show in London and all of that, but support the industry — because that's the message we should be putting out there," a spokesman for Australian designer Jayson Brunson said in a recent article.

Australian Fashion Week officially kicked off on Monday with a show by Australian fashion doyenne Lisa Ho whose dresses have been worn by the likes of Ivanka Trump and singer Delta Goodrem.

Other established designers showing during the week include Jayson Brunson, Camilla and Marc, Alex Perry, Zimmerman and Ksubi whose show will close the week.

For up-and-coming, edgier Australian and New Zealand labels like Romance Was Born, Therese Rawsthorne, Friedrich Gray and Stolen Girlfriends Club, the event is a good platform for international exposure as well as generating local publicity.

A report by retail analyst IBISWorld Australia, released to coincide with the Australian Fashion Week, said local players needed to think globally and focus on new markets to survive.

IBISWorld Australia's General Manager Robert Bryant said Australian fashion has a reputation globally for quality and innovative design, particularly at the top end, but the luxury market was seen declining 2.4 percent this financial year.

Profits in Australia's domestic clothing retail industry remain flat with revenue expected to nudge up 1.3 percent to US\$11.91 billion this financial year but with conditions improving and revenue forecast to rise to US\$13.9 billion by 2015.

"With brands such as Willow and Sass & Bide already well established overseas, we believe more entrepreneurial local designers will begin to carve names for themselves in foreign markets — and they'll head for new frontiers," Bryant said in a report.

"Many Australian labels have cracked the UK and New Zealand, but innovative designers with a fresh take are looking to strike now, before boom times, into emerging fashion markets such as Indonesia, India and China."



[ SOCIETY ]

## Shanghai tries untangling mangled (but fun) English

The city's Commission for the Management of Language Use's mission is to get rid of Chinglish, which irks fans of China's linguistic maladaptations

BY ANDREW JACOBS

NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, SHANGHAI

For English speakers with subpar Chinese skills, daily life in China offers a confounding array of choices. At banks, there are machines for "cash withdrawing" and "cash recycling." The menus of local restaurants might present such delectables as "fried enema," "monolithic tree mushroom stem squid" and a mysterious thirst-quencher known as "The Jew's Ear Juice."

Those who have had a bit too much monolithic tree mushroom stem squid could find themselves requiring roomier attire: extra-large sizes sometimes come in "fatso" or "lard bucket" categories. These and other fashions can be had at the clothing chain known as Scat.

Go ahead and snicker, although by last Saturday's opening of the Expo 2010 in Shanghai, which is expected to draw more than 70 million visitors over its six-month run, these and other uniquely Chinese maladaptations of the English language were supposed to have been largely excised.

Well, that at least is what the Shanghai Commission for the Management of Language Use has been trying to accomplish during the past two years.

Fortified by an army of 600 volunteers and a politburo of adroit English speakers, the commission has fixed more than 10,000 public signs (farewell "Teliot" and "urine district"), rewritten English-language historical placards and helped hundreds of restaurants recast offerings.

The campaign is partly modeled on Beijing's

herculean effort to clean up English signage for the 2008 Summer Olympics, which led to the replacement of 400,000 street signs, 1,300 restaurant menus and such exemplars of impropriety as the Dongda Anus Hospital — now known as the Dongda Proctology Hospital. Gone, too, is Racist Park, a cultural attraction that has since been rechristened Minorities Park.

"The purpose of signage is to be useful, not to be amusing," said Zhao Huimin (趙惠民), the former Chinese ambassador to the US who, as director general of the capital's Foreign Affairs Office, has been leading the fight for linguistic standardization and sobriety.

But while the war on mangled English may be considered a signature achievement of government officials, aficionados of what is known as Chinglish are wringing their hands in despair.

Oliver Lutz Radtke, a former German radio reporter who may well be the world's foremost authority on Chinglish, said he believed that China should embrace the fanciful melding of English and Chinese as the hallmark of a dynamic, living language. As he sees it, Chinglish is an endangered species that deserves preservation.

"If you standardize all these signs, you not only take away the little giggle you get while strolling in the park but you lose a window into the Chinese mind," said Radtke, who is the author of a pair of picture books that feature goggle-worthy Chinglish signs in their natural habitat.

Let anyone think it is all about laughs, Radtke is pursuing a doctorate in Chinglish at the University of Heidelberg.



An oddly worded English sign in a Beijing park. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Still, the enemies of Chinglish say the laughter it elicits is humiliating. Wang Xiaoming (王晓明), an English scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, painfully recalls the guffaws that erupted among her foreign-born colleagues as they flipped through a photographic collection of poorly written signs. "They didn't mean to insult me, but I couldn't help but feel uncomfortable," said Wang, who has since become one of Beijing's leading Chinglish slayers.

Those who study the roots of Chinglish say many examples can be traced to laziness and a flawed but wildly popular translation software. Victor Mair, a professor of Chinese at the University of Pennsylvania, said the computerized dictionary, Jingshan Ciba, had led to sexually oriented vulgarities identifying dried produce in Chinese supermarkets and the regrettable "fried enema" menu selection that

should have been rendered as "fried sausage."

Although improved translation software and a growing zeal for grammatically unassailable English has slowed the output of new Chinglishisms, Mair said he still received about five new examples a day from people who knew he was good at deciphering what went wrong. "If someone would pay me to do it, I'd spend my life studying these things," he said.

Among those getting paid to wrestle with Chinglish is Jeffrey Yao, an English translator and teacher at the Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation in Shanghai who is leading the citywide sign exorcism. But even as he eradicates the most egregious examples by government fiat — businesses dare not ignore the commission's suggested fixes — he has mixed feelings, noting that although some Chinglish phrases sound awkward to Western ears, they can be refreshingly lyrical.

"Some of it tends to be expressive, even elegant," he said, shuffling through an online catalog of signs that were submitted by the volunteers who prowled Shanghai with digital cameras. "They provide a window into how we Chinese think about language."

He offered the following example: While park signs in the West exhort people to "Keep Off the Grass," Chinese versions tend to anthropomorphize nature as a way to gently engage the stomping masses. Hence, such admonishments as "The Little Grass Is Sleeping. Please Don't Disturb It" or "Don't Hurt Me. I Am Afraid of Pain."

Yao read off the Chinese equivalents as if savoring a Shakespearean sonnet. "How lovely," he said with a sigh.

He pointed out that this linguistic mentality helped create such expressions as "long time no see," a word-for-word translation of a Chinese expression that became a mainstay of spoken English.

But Yao, who spent nearly two decades working as a translator in Canada, has his limits. To highlight the point, he showed a sign from a local park designed to provide visitors with the ground rules for entry, which include prohibitions on washing, "scavenging," clothes drying and public defecation, all of it rendered in unintelligible — and in the case of the last item — rather salty English.

The sign ended with this humdinger: "Because if the tourist does not obey the staff to manage or contrary holds. Does, all consequences are proud."

Even though he had had the sign corrected recently, Yao could not help but shake his head in disgust at the memory. And he was irritated to find that a raft of troublesome sign verbiage had slipped past the commission as the expo approached, including a cafeteria sign that read, "The tableware reclaims a place." (Translation: drop off dirty dishes here.)

"Some Chinglish expressions are nice, but we are not translating literature here," he said. "I want to see people nodding that they understand the message on these signs. I don't want to see them laughing."