

TOLONEN

Tolonen clothing and accessories are eye-catching, whimsical, color-drenched creations made of 100% virgin “new” wool felt, gossamer felt and silk. Designed and produced by New York transplant Tiiti Fortelny, Tolonen’s first winter collection debuted in 2001, and featured a line of reversible women’s coats in solid colors. Remembering the harsh winters spent in her native Finland, Fortelny set out to make coats that translated her love of the minimal design aesthetics of both Scandinavia and Japan, but also provided warmth and protection against the blistering cold. The wool felt, which is produced by a hand process that makes it very soft and even in texture, is well-suited for women who like the look of shearling or wool, but not the bulk.

Encouraged by a successful first year and eager to expand her collection, Fortelny, who has an art background in graphic design, illustration and fashion drawing, composed a new series of designs, which eventually became the winter 2002 collection. Drawing inspiration from a childhood spent reveling in the artwork of her grandmother, a landscape artist obsessed with vibrant greens and blues, and her grandfather, a cubist who built dramatic, light-infused architectural models with deep shadows, Fortelny combined the two sensibilities to create a line of coats, jackets, separates and accessories that is unique in its use of form, color and effect. Tolonen’s billowing, 1920’s-inspired car coats feature jagged edges and brilliant stripes of blue and green. The fitted, modern Eskimo coats are saturated in bright, playful colors and are adorned with ribbons across the breast, and can be worn with Tolonen’s matching series of flapper-inspired flower cloche and flower helmet hats. And the comfortable A-line skirts and separate tops are splashed with organic patterns or hand-made beads and flowers.

The first **Tolonen** spring/summer collection, showcased at the esteemed 4th Edition “Workshop New York” trade show in the Chelsea district of Manhattan, features a more subtle, but no less ingenious line of gossamer felt and silk women’s wear. There is a simple, short silk skirt covered with an irregularly shaped, bi-colored gossamer overlay, giving the pristine, delicate skirt a more wild “fur” effect. Tolonen’s line of silky, merino felt separates in bold, splashy colors can be worn together for an evening on the town, or separately, as an added burst of color to a typically white or linen summer wardrobe. And the sleeveless silk blouses and dresses in blue, lavender and champagne, feature gathered tutu sleeves or hand-gathered silk ruffles which give the effect of the soft down of a swan feather.

The entire **Tolonen** collection, which will soon feature men’s outerwear and separates, is currently represented by the Downtown Showroom in Fort Greene, Brooklyn (659 Fulton Street, 718-222-9262). It is available at upscale boutiques in over 20 states in the US and overseas in Austria, Sweden and Japan, and is featured in the gift store at the American Folk Art Museum in Manhattan. Individual pieces from the **Tolonen** collection are currently being showcased in a month-long show at the main branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. Titled “Fashioning Brooklyn,” the exhibit features the work of eight prominent Brooklyn designers, including Ms. Fortelny. The **Tolonen** spring collection will also be featured in the F. I.T. fashion show in May of 2002. Ms. Fortelny currently maintains a studio in the Prospect Heights section of Brooklyn, New York, where she works as head designer. All sewing is done on the premises, with most of the finer detail work done by hand. The **Tolonen** workshop will be relocated to Cobble Hill, Brooklyn sometime later this year.