

DRESS IN VENICE

Laing's uniforms

There aren't many opportunities for Canadian designers to get mass exposure at home the way it's done in Europe or the United States. There, mass retailers such as Mango, H&M, Topshop, Target and even Wal-Mart collaborate with insider-favourite designers and bring their fashions to a wider audience. (Are you listening, Le Château? Can you hear me now, Smart Set?) Here in Canada, options are limited to borderline-gimmicky promotions like crafting a runway look out of chocolate.

Designer Jeremy Laing seldom says yes to these types of opportunities ("I don't have a lot of time and it's just not in my mandate as a designer") but he made an exception when friends Fritz Helder & the Phantoms came a-calling for their fundraising project Platinum. The glam band enlisted Laing, and nine other Canadian designers, to create a T-shirt based outfit (think concert merch, coolly redux), to benefit ACT, the Aids Committee of Toronto. Laing's contribution is a pair of T-shirt dresses that incorporate the same Swarovski crystal transfers as his fall collection.

Laing also said "si" to dressing the staff of the Canadian Pavilion at this week's Venice Biennale. Three key Laing looks from fall (available at Holt Renfrew later this summer) are being worn by staff there. As to whether the buzz in Italy might confer cachet in Canada, Laing is sanguine: "I don't need to be a household name in that many households."

