

...is flat

astrakhan—both featured in his fall collection. He also goes to PV to be surprised. “There’s always a new kid who does things in a different way,” says Gn, whose clients have come to expect couture-level detailing from his ready-to-wear. “My goal is to do something that cannot be reproduced within 48 hours.”

For Irish designer **Sharon Wauchob**, fabric development is a means of communicating a closer connection with her clients. “The benefit is not only that it’s photographically valid, but it’s also valid to the person who’s wearing it, because it’s tactile,” says the designer, who works with Euro fabric mills Solstiss and Forster Rohner to modify their lace to her specifications.

Wauchob’s garments have always been discreetly and delicately embroidered in ways that show a true designer touch, from tracery atop lace to finely edged scalloped hems. Now she’s becoming even more attentive, focusing her energies on the final feel of her fabrics. “Finishings on garments are hugely important; that’s the separation between luxury [and everything else]. Finishings are becoming the new embroidery.”

Conceiving four collections per year means that part of her studio is always working on fabrication. “The process is ongoing—maybe hourly, not daily; with some of the suppliers, you need to constantly keep moving it along,” she says. In other cases, her atelier completes the final details in-house, such as the waves of hand-stitched metallic thread dappled on suede skirts from her fall collection.

This level of commitment is echoed by Dutch designer **Iris van Herpen**, who says development of her exceedingly original materials cannot be squeezed into seasonal deadlines—especially when she is collaborating with institutions like CERN (a Swiss particle physics laboratory) or U.S. tech institute MIT. She also works regularly with Toronto architect Philip Beesley; the pair met at the 2010 Venice Biennale, where one of his responsive sculptures attracted van Herpen’s attention.

Together, they have conceived tulip-shaped peaked forms clustered on a waffle fabric atop leather—which emerged from the bodices of short black dresses in her fall ’15 collection—and a dimensional transparent foam-like fabric composed of thermal-formed acrylic. The latter was used for the two dresses that closed van Herpen’s spring ’15 show; its radiant halo-like hovering shapes floated up from the shoulders of the models.

During our interview, she mentions that Beesley had paid her a visit from Toronto earlier that day, which happened to be her birthday. “He made a beautiful material; it’s really lightweight, see-through, three-dimensional and all handmade, and it just looks like it’s from another planet. I have a feeling we will work with it for an upcoming collection, but I have no words for it,” she says, clearly excited. “I told him this was the best present ever.” —AMY VERNER



I **F SWEDISH AUTHOR**, Fortune 500 business consultant and overall retail oracle Stefan Engeseth has his way, it won’t be long before we’re sewing our own clothes...sort of. His big idea: IKEA could produce composite clothing parts for consumers to take home and assemble themselves, similar to its Billy bookshelves and Malm bed frames. “Designers are too emotional; they don’t give enough thought to function,” says Engeseth. Plus, consumers getting involved in making their own clothes would offer a sense of pride, not to mention individuality—even as they sport a mass-market label.

While IKEA has no plans to expand into clothing at the moment, with Google declaring 2015 “the year of DIY prom” and YouTube tutorials fuelling a renaissance in knitting and weaving, it’s not hard to imagine, say, the Kjole dress or Skjorta shirt becoming a thing. “If not IKEA, someone else will do it,” says Engeseth. If he’s right, flat-pack fashion wouldn’t be the first of his predictions to come true: his books have foretold at-home Coca-Cola faucets (yes, these exist) and, back in 1999, widespread cellphone use. “People always think I’m crazy. And then it happens.” —MICHELLE HIGGINS

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