



“The Siren of Sahel Shines” ***Discover the New Face of Africa***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Showcasing emerging fashion designers from Africa, France, Morocco and the U.S. **Award-Winning African Fashion Designer to Hold U.S.** **Premiere of “Clara Design” on June 19 in Chicago**

CHICAGO (June 4, 2009) -- Clara Lawson Ames, an award-winning fashion designer from Burkina Faso in West Africa, is bringing her haute couture creations to the United States, and will premiere these designs at “The Siren of Sahel Shines” fashion show on June 19 at the Blackstone Hotel, Chicago. In each of her creations, Ms. Lawson Ames combines the rich fabrics of Vlisco, which utilizes the Dutch wax technique, the Faso Dan Fani fabric, which is unique to the country of Burkina Faso, and silk to produce what she terms, “the new face of Africa.” Beginning with a reception at 5:30 p.m. and following with the fashion show at 7:45 p.m., the event will also feature five emerging fashion designers including Smail Akdim, of Morocco; Imane Ayissi, of Africa and France; Wanda Cobar, Chicago; Amanda Cutting, Chicago; and Martial Tapolo of Africa. Each designer will showcase their own unique designs, for women, men and children.

Ms. Lawson Ames is also the founder and president of the non-profit Association for Supporting the Development of Art Dressing and Textiles, Africa (ASDAVTA). Through this organization, she is bringing a greater awareness and appreciation for African culture and design to the forefront, as well as providing a venue where emerging African fashion designers and textile artisans can showcase their own creations.

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A recipient of the “African Diamond Award,” in South Africa, Ms. Lawson Ames has also been honored with the “Biz Africa Award,” by the World Confederation of Business. The “Biz Africa Award” honors small business owners who have made a significant impact on the international level. She received this recognition for transforming the Faso Dan Fani fabric of Burkina Faso into beautiful designs for the Clara Collection. By using this fabric, Ms. Lawson Ames has made a significant impact on the economic development of Burkina Faso.

For further information on “the Siren of Sahel Shines” fashion show visit www.aclaradesign.com.

Please direct media inquiries to Charla Russell of PRsource at Charla@prourcenow.com or 630.908.0637.

Please contact event producer Melissa Wojcik of Plan Ahead Events of Chicago regarding ticket availability at mwojcik@planaheadevents-naperville.com or 630.995.1941.

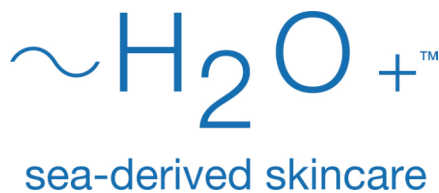
Major sponsors for “The Siren of Sahel Shines”



VLISCO For the last 160 years in the Netherlands, Vlisco has created highly desired textiles that have become part of the vibrant culture of West and Central Africa. Vlisco Wax Hollandaise has become a phenomenon in its own right. From the beginning, Vlisco has created exciting and expressive textiles, which never use ‘cliché African’ imagery.



Elite Chicago, the leading agency in the world of modeling, is responsible for developing the careers of some of the world’s most celebrated beauties including Cindy Crawford, Liya Kebede, and Michelle Monaghan. After a quarter of a century dedicated to impeccable customer service, unsurpassed elegance and overall excellence, Elite Chicago is still the ruling business of glamour in Chicago.



H2O Plus, L.P., headquartered in Chicago, is a leading developer, manufacturer, marketer and distributor of water-based, sea-derived personal care products. Established in 1989 by Cindy Melk, the Company's Founder and Creative Director, H2O Plus has grown from a concept to an internationally recognized brand and company with sales at retail in excess of \$100 million. The Company offers a complete line of highly innovative skincare, spa, bath and shower, and fragrance products and is a recognized global leader in water-based, sea-derived personal care technology.

Discover the New Face of Africa

Ms. Clara Lawson Ames of Clara Design



Clara Lawson Ames

Inspired by her grandmother's passion for turning ordinary fabrics into classy elegant creations, Clara Lawson Ames, of Burkina Faso, West Africa, has built on this legacy of fashion design, and in doing so, has won international acclaim across Africa and abroad. She founded Clara Design in 1989, and is now bringing her haute couture clothing to the United States, through Clara Design, LLC, USA. Ms. Lawson Ames is also the founder and president of the non-profit Association for Supporting the Development of Art Dressing and Textiles, Africa (ASDAVTA). Through this organization, Ms. Lawson Ames is bringing a greater awareness and appreciation for African culture and design to the forefront, as well as providing a venue where emerging African fashion designers and textile artisans can showcase their own creations.

Born in Lome, Togo, Ms. Lawson Ames, studied in France, and received her business management and marketing training in Paris. Her journey to becoming a global businesswoman included working for Air Africa, and Sabena Airlines in international sales before she followed her passion and founded Clara Design. Her success as a renowned fashion designer has earned her the African Diamond Award, "the Oscar of fashion design," in South Africa. Additionally, she was granted the Biz Africa Award, conferred by the World Confederation of Business. This honor recognizes small business owners who have made a significant impact on an international level. Ms. Lawson Ames was recognized for transforming cotton into the beautiful designs that are now part of the Clara Collection.

In each of her haute couture creations, Ms. Lawson Ames combines the rich fabrics of Vlisco, which utilizes the Dutch wax technique; the Faso Dan Fani fabric, which is unique to the country of Burkina Faso, and silk to produce what she terms, "the new face of Africa." By transforming the Faso Dan Fani fabric of Burkina Faso into exquisite designs, Ms. Lawson Ames has made a significant impact on the economic development of Burkina Faso.

Through all of her success, she holds dear the words of her grandmother; "My dear Clara, there is no such thing as an unsightly fabric, or even a striking fabric. Each and every textile has to be worked on and transformed with love. Only then, can you truly appreciate its worth."

Further Information and Resources to Enhance Media Coverage of “The Siren of Sahel Shines”

Smail Akdim

Originally from Rabat, Morocco, Smail Akdim worked for some of the leading designers in Lebanon before launching his own line of haute couture and ready to wear, which brilliantly marries the modernity of the West and the tradition of Morocco. Fascinated with baroque-inspired embroidery, colors and materials, he often incorporates chiffon, satin and lace from Calais, velvet and organza into his designs. Adkim’s style and artistic originality was quickly noticed after his participation in the 2007 Caftan Fashion Show, catapulting this darling of fashion into international recognition.

Imane Ayissi, <http://imane.ayissi.free.fr/>

Imane Ayissi first became interested in fashion in his birthplace of Cameroun, where he made his first garments for his mother and subsequently for one of the largest ateliers in the country. A former ballet dancer and model, he is now dedicated to his work as a couturier and designer. Imane Ayissi’s garments meld African traditions and realities with Western fashion. His collections, often featuring exotic, evocative names, combine craftsmanship, materials and traditional African cuts. Using innovative fabrics with an infusion of typically African-style bricolage or recycling work, references to Parisian haute couture and contemporary creativity, the result is a work-of-art with international appeal. Imane Ayissi is also involved in fashion training projects and the creation of a textile industry designed to help foster economic growth in Africa and, in particular, in the Cameroun.

Wanda Cobar, <http://www.wandacobar.com/>

Wanda Cobar, a Chicago native, began designing in 1998 and has based her life around fashion since that time. Her designs are a variety of funky unique pieces combined with a sexy flair, and she is best known for her thread/yarn weaving technique used on some of her designs. Each piece has a striking personality. Cobar’s pieces can be found at Andersonville Galleria, Galleria1712 and by personal appointment.

Amanda Cutting, <http://www.daleecutting.com/>

Amanda Cutting is a professionally- trained visual artist and self- taught designer who has been active in the Chicago artist/fashion community for over ten years. Since launching her independent label of exquisite club couture in 2005, her future-mod threads have been shaking up runways in and around the Chicagoland area. DaLee Cutting’s designs inspire the edgy and the flirty, to wear their individuality like a badge of honor and grace. She derives her own inspiration from life’s visual and sensory experiences to turn reality into fantasy, that you can put on your body. Some of her newest inventions take the shape and color of the classic “mod” dress to all new levels.

Martial Tapolo, www.martialtapolo.com

Martial Tapolo is a young designer hailing from Cameroun, whose avant garde style mixes

feathers, bark and skins with traditional fabrics such as bamiléké woven cloth and batiks to create thoroughly modern garments. His designs are full of life, mystery and movement.

Suggested Websites

Business Africa – profile of Clara Lawson Ames

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HwgGMFU8Y>

Clara Fashion Show on You Tube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uw_Tett-8k

Website for Clara Design and the “Siren of Sahel Shines” Fashion Show

www.aclaradesign.com

The country of Burkina Faso

www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2834.htm

The Sahel or Sahel Belt

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahel>

Vlisco

www.vlisco.com/home

Elite Model Management

www.elitechicago.com

H2O Plus

www.h2oplus.com

African and European Media Partners

“Siren of Sahel Shines” Fashion Event will be **featured on a 26 minute segment of Planete Mod**, a television show reporting on news within the fashion industry, produced in Paris by Aydenland Productions with 120 million viewers in Europe and Africa.

Brune Magazine

www.brune-lemag.com

TV5 Monde

www.tv5.org

Afrique Passion Magazine

www.afriquepassion.com

Amina Magazine

www.amina-mag.co

Afrique Magazine

www.afriquemagazine.com/home

Uzuri Magazine

<http://uzuri.com/fashion/mode.html>

Burkina Faso TV

BHF Magazine – Contemporary African Lifestyle

www.bhfmagazine.com/www.bhfmagazine.com/