

BAUBLE HEADS

FOR THEIR NEW JEWELRY COLLECTION, CHRIS BENZ AND LISA SALZER PLAY FINDERS, KEEPERS.
BY ANDREA CUSICK

Great minds think alike, especially when it comes to collaborations. When Chris Benz, the fledgling New York designer who, in just one year, has garnered much praise for his flair for color, met Lisa Salzer, the mind behind the reworked vintage jewelry label, Lulu Frost, it was apparent that the two had plenty in common. Both are in their mid-twenties, on the verge of major success, and, as children of the '80s, they share an unapologetic love of neon.

For their first Lulu Frost for Chris Benz collaboration, created for spring '08, they decide to go to the Carl Schimmel overstock jewelry warehouse in Manhattan. Salzer has long sourced from Schimmel's stock for her line of charm bracelets, wacky earrings, and dangly necklaces, cobbled from oddities like old domino game pieces, shoe buckles, watch fobs, hotel door numbers, and antique keys.

"We've decided that the jewelry will echo the bright colors that are the hallmark of Chris' collection," says Salzer, standing in Schimmel's overstuffed space just weeks before Benz's presentation, her arms already laden with green and yellow beads. Eager to review what she's found so far, she and Benz move on to the next room, where they immediately stumble across a box of neon animal figurines.

"Look at the owl!" shrieks Salzer. "Do you want a blue giraffe?" asks Benz, laughing. "Or a pink elephant? It's good for you and you need it," he advises, with an insistent tug on Salzer's arm.

While proving to be a fun distraction, these aren't the trinkets on their wish list—not this season anyway. "They're a little too Heatherette," jokes Benz.

After hours spent at Carl Schimmel, Benz and Salzer settle upon the materials needed to assemble a collection. They then migrate to Salzer's showroom, where they sit on the floor, pulling together the jewelry by hand. Inspired by African motifs, the results—beaded bracelets in snappy colors—incorporate silk threads and vintage chains.

"The loose threads give the pieces an unfinished ease," Salzer says. "I want to pile on about 10 at a time! The idea of layered pieces came from the many stacked bracelets Chris piles on his wrists."

It's no surprise that the pair is already in discussions about another collaboration, for which, in all likelihood, they'll head back to Schimmel. Salzer most definitely means business there. "I made one mistake," says the owner, Carl Schimmel himself. "When Lisa first came to me, I taught her how to negotiate!"



DIY LISA SALZER SHOWS US HOW TO RECREATE ONE OF HER OFFBEAT BRACELETS, IN JUST 4 EASY STEPS



you will need: needle-nose pliers, an old chain necklace, colored thread, a choice of beads, a lobster clasp, and jump rings.
1. measure chain around your wrist and cut in half with wire cutters.
2. Attach jump ring and lobster clasp to chain, opening ring with pliers.
3. tie string to necklace and thread beads doubling the length of the bracelet to fit wrist.
4. knot string to chain and wear.
FOR FULL INSTRUCTIONS, SEE NYLONMAG.COM

