

tanya-B

writer Imogen Hayes

Fed up with ill-fitting workout clothing options, yoga teacher, Tanya Boulton and textile designer, Karin Ulmander had a desire to create an imaginative range of yoga apparel. Their mission: a brand that could provide comfortable, light, colourful, sexy clothing for fashion-forward yogis. The result? A new label called Tanya-B.



the first thing that strikes you when looking at Tanya-B's debut range is the colours bouncing off the shelf. "We wanted to avoid the boring 'yoga look'," laugh Tanya and Karin. "If you go into any yoga class you will see a lot of black clothing. We wanted to bring more joy and personality into the practice."

Finishing each others sentences, it is clear the designing duo has a great working relationship. Meeting in a yoga class in early 2009, the two women got talking about the lack of comfortable yet flattering yogawear for women. "There wasn't anything out on the market," laments Tanya. "Everything out there was either extremely sporty or extremely casual." Karin agrees, "When I first started practising yoga I had nothing to wear. Nothing made me feel comfortable."

With previous experience as a textile designer in New York, Karin had the designing know-how, while yoga-teacher Tanya had years of experience on the mat. Coupling their skills, the two got sketching and launched their first collection at the end of 2009.

Debuting with 11 pieces including halter tops, capri pants and yoga basics, the collection is made from bright cotton and spandex fabrics. Created to mould to the body without suffocating it, each garment nurtures versatility and comfort.

"We both had ideas about what we wanted in a design, and at that time we both had other full-time jobs so we would come together after work every night and develop our collection," Karin reminisces. "I drew up a lot of sketches and had help from a designer who sat there and measured everything," adds Tanya.

"We were very rigorous in testing everything," testifies Tanya. "We tried every piece out according to how the muscles respond when we move in yoga and all our clothes have been washed and tumble dried over and over, to make sure they remain colourfast."

It wasn't all smooth sailing though, as communicating with their factory in China created other difficulties aside from a language barrier. "There was a lot of dialogue back and forth with the factory," sighs Karin. "We'd ask for something and get something completely different back, so we had to make sure of what we wanted to ensure quality control. We have to deal with that on a daily basis," she says.

Targeting an Asian and American market, the pair says their clothes are designed for "The active woman who is taking care of herself." However, although they do not

have a children's range, they also have younger generations in mind.

"My son began doing yoga as a young teenager," says Karin. "Now he has so much control over his body and is so focused." Tanya also believes in bringing kids into the yoga classroom saying, "When I was a primary school teacher in L.A. I decided to implement yoga into the classroom with great success. The kids were incredibly enthusiastic and were more interested in learning afterwards."

The pair's enthusiasm for the younger generation has led to plans for a yoga charity for disadvantaged youths. "The main reason behind the charity is the need for yoga to be accessible to youths outside the middle and upper classes," says Tanya. "We want to provide kids with the platform at a young age, so they don't get to 45 and realise they should start doing yoga to reverse all the damage they have done to their bodies."

The brand is achieving this by introducing such ventures as commissioning graffiti artists they know to design yoga mats. "We want to make yoga look cooler," says Tanya.

Aside from yoga mats, the pair have bold ambitions for the future, which include more casual day wear and winter clothes, dance oriented clothes, more colour combinations for their signature tops and a men's line. Planning to sell mainly through their website, Tanya and Karin are excited about growing their boutique business with a yoga-centric focus.

"Yoga is huge and it just keeps growing. We want to reach a larger audience. You don't have to read yoga books or chant Sanskrit to do yoga and we just want to make people look great while they're doing it."

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