

VIVIAN INFANTINO
EMERGING TALENT

COOL SHADES

Burak Uyan has the fashion world buzzing about his colorful, architectural styles.

BY JOCELYN ANDERSON

Burak Uyan works from a studio in Paris' historic Marais district, steps away from Place des Vosges and several of the city's museums. So it's no surprise that the 32-year-old designer has found inspiration in architecture and color for his namesake footwear collection, which debuted for spring '11.

"I am surrounded all the time by architecture in Paris. It's the first thing that appeals to me," said Uyan. "I adopted it immediately in some cut-out elements and in some of the shoe construction. Of course, it changes every season, and I mix it up with other themes."

And while still architectural, his spring '12 line is clearly influenced by specific bright colors. The shades come from Indonesian butterflies, which Uyan purchased and then sent to his suppliers to replicate.

"All the skins are custom-made in the colors of the butterflies: yellows, greens and this very acidic orange," said Uyan. "For me, it was the best way to imitate nature. In the end, it became something very feminine and strong."

It's that creativity that quickly garnered Uyan attention from



Burak Uyan, photographed for FN in his Paris studio this month

buyers, consumers and the media. His booties, heels and sandals, which retail for \$650 to \$1,500, have already secured 55 accounts globally, including Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus and Net-a-porter.com.

"Uyan's designs have an architectural sensibility with the perfect balance of elegance and modernity," said Holli Rogers, buying director at Net-a-porter. "His designs were an instant hit among our customers, and we are excited to be carrying his collection for a second season."

Stylists and celebrities have also taken notice. Supermodel Natalia Vodianova wore Uyan's designs for all her Paris Fashion Week appearances.

And stylist Rachel Zoe called on behalf of client Cameron Diaz, who wore the designer's shoes to the Teen

Choice Awards in August.

"Burak is so incredibly talented," said Zoe. "I love how modern and unique his designs are. You can always count on him for a pair of structural strappy heels or unexpected bright booties."

Uyan isn't new to the fashion industry. A graduate of the Fashion Institute of Vienna, he started in apparel design, first at Alberto Marani in Paris before moving to Givenchy and eventually Giambattista Valli, where he was head designer and in charge of accessories. It was there that he met current business partner Srdjan Prodanovic and realized his love of making shoes.

"I went to the factories and worked with the artisans. That's how I improved my knowledge of footwear and my know-how," said Uyan. "In the last few years there, I developed a passion for shoes, and it became like a drug."

After about five years, Uyan and Prodanovic launched Aperlai in 2009 with Alessandra Lanvin. The two men left the next year to start the Burak Uyan collection.

"I wanted to work on my own [line] because you spend so much energy working for someone else," Uyan said. "I really had to make the move and finally express myself exactly."

The line debuted for spring '11, and before it even hit stores, Uyan was tapped for the New Talents Corner by *Vogue Italia*. The event, which took place in Milan in February, offered exhibition space for the designers and hosted top buyers and the international press.

Rickie De Sole, senior accessories editor at American *Vogue*, is a fan of Uyan's and was in attendance. "He's so smart because there's a consistency in that [the shoes] feel new and fresh, but you can imagine that the customer can get an understanding of who the designer is from season to season," she said. "He's charming himself, but his designs really speak for themselves."

Another exciting moment came when Rodarte's Kate and Laura Mulleavy invited Uyan to design two shoes for their spring '12 runway show at New York Fashion Week — a silver strappy sandal and a navy satin sandal with a bejeweled ankle strap and sculpted heel. Although the shoes were not available for sale, the project was a chance for the designer to be seen in yet another market.

Next, Uyan would like to expand his offering of handbags, which numbers two or three styles each season. He's also thinking about a men's shoe range and a brand-ed boutique in the near future.

And having started in apparel, he doesn't rule it out at some point, but his focus always comes back to shoes, he said.

"There's nothing like seeing women trying on shoes. It's a very nice feeling," said Uyan. "It makes me happy to make women happy."



Two Burak Uyan styles for spring '12