

East Meets West

NEW YORK — Editors are already buzzing about Burkman Bros., a new label launching for spring with a line of youthful, vintage-like casualwear with touches of the Orient. Part of the interest lies in the likable creators, Doug and Ben Burkman.

"We really like fashion, but we're guys," said Doug Burkman. "This is fashion for guys."

The brothers (one year apart) hail originally from Toronto, and their tastes are informed by their extensive travels, much of which they do as freelance fabric designers. They personally developed all of the patterns and fabrics for the collection with mills in Asia. Poplin checks and madras plaids prevail, and the entire collection—made in India—is prewashed and wrinkled.

Both brothers spent several years designing men's wear for Gap, where they developed their keen sense of classic American casualwear. The overall Burkman Bros. aesthetic, which is outdoorsy and preppy, has broad appeal. Oxford-lined shorts are expected to be the brand's signature. Beachy trousers get the full lining too.

Bergdorf Goodman Men has picked up the line for spring, and the brothers say Fred Segal has verbally committed.

A particularly well-traveled or well-read individual might recognize the collection's more exotic details. For example, an embroidered, D-ring belt may be a preppy staple, but the embroidery looks more Nepal than Nantucket.

"The details punctuate the travel aspect," said Ben Burkman. Labeling reinforces that concept. Hangtags feature an image of a Ghurka with "Brothers" written in Hindi, and hang by a string bracelet. But witty touches steer the concept away from serious, multicultural study. Care labels are in Japanese, and some garments have fictitious name tags sewn inside to imply previous ownership.

All hardware is matte and black for a vintage appearance. A work shirt has 20 such buttons, including those on the epaulets and the roll-up sleeve tabs. T-shirts feature cracked graphics, such as a tiger, that seem both vintage and Asian. —JEAN SCHEIDNES



Ben and Doug Burkman



Looks from the Burkman Bros. line

