



JOHN ECKMIER

BK Phillips apparel, C Label shoes, Electra bike | Jill Aiko Yee apparel, C Label shoes | Elle B See clothing, C Label shoes | Yellow 108 clothing from Bow Tiki boutique, Electra bike

CycleChicRunwayShowMixes Fashion Brands and Bikes

Who: Women on Bicycles SoCal
What: First annual Cycle Chic show — A Celebration of Dressing for the Destination
Where: Promenade Park, Long Beach, Calif.
When: Sept. 14
 The scene: Local bicyclists, advocates and politicians cycled to Long Beach's Promenade Park for the Cycle Chic fashion show — and no one was wearing Lycra shorts or neon yellow vests. That's the goal and theme for show organizer Melissa Balmer and her advocacy group, **Women on Bicycles SoCal**.

The fashion show, themed "Cycle Chic: Past, Present & Future ... A Celebration of Dressing for the Destination," showcased local bicycle lines and fashion boutiques as part of the National Women's Bicycling Summit.

Men's and women's lines from Long Beach dominated the show, including boutiques **B.K. Phillips, Long Beach Trading Co., Academy of Long Beach** and headwear designers **Yellow 108**. Some of the designers specifically produce lines for bicyclists, including **Nona Varnado**, based in New York, and **Riyoko**, based in Canada.

The models, some professional and some volunteers, showed a variety of bicycles from California companies as well as single-speed urban bikes from **Linus** of Los Angeles' Venice neighborhood; electric bikes from **Pedago** of Irvine, Calif.; beach cruisers from **Electra** of San Diego; and **Nirve** of Huntington Beach, Calif.

Balmer aimed to use stylish and fashionable clothing and casual bicycles as a way to encourage more people to get back on bicycles.

"If we can effectively harness the power of style and fashion for communicating our

bike-friendly message for bike advocacy, we can help revolutionize bicycling advocacy in the United States," she said.

Local bicycle advocates agree. "If you can make anything sexy, people will follow it," said Jenn Klausner, executive director of the **Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition**. "[No one should] dictate what [bicyclists] wear. You can wear anything."

Models biked down the runway with work-appropriate slacks and button-down tops from **Banana Republic**, as well as long evening dresses and high heels. Lines such as New York-based **Verspertine** combined recent trends with common bicycle-wear details, such as reflective fabric and back pockets. Verspertine's "Vesp" top features silver lamé fabric and reflective 3M Scotchlite V-neck straps.

Show speakers included Suja Lowenthal, who is vice mayor of Long Beach and an urban planner. Lowenthal spoke about how she bikes in her neighborhood in stilettos and dresses. "Bicycle anthropologist" and author Mikael Colville-Anderson, who trademarked the term "cycle chic," spoke about his Dutch "Cycle Chic" streets style blog has inspired a fashion trend along with a "slow-bicycle" movement for more bike-friendly streets — even in Southern California.

Balmer, who attended the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising** in Orange County, Calif., and has worked as a fit model for **Raj Manufacturing**, notes that even in the United States, bicycles are popping into fashion advertising and retail window displays.

Balmer is planning another fashion show for next May, which is Bike Month.

—Machiko Yasuda



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