

Signs point to Turkey as newest fashion stop

By Shirlee Rose Iken
staff writer

If you can't afford Emanuel Ungaro and Bill Blass is just not your type, you might try Negir, Ahmed Orsan or Atalar.

It won't even cost you the price of an airline or steamship ticket to Turkey, where these master designers ply their trade, since the top Turkish couture can now be found right here in Southfield.

Last June 29, Feryal Obeldi, a Farmington Hills resident, opened the doors to her Unique Boutique where everything, clothing and hand-crafted artifacts are of Turkish origin.

Obeldi herself is included, of course. Born in the southern part of Turkey, in a town called Iskenderun, she grew up in Adana. At age 18, with her parents, she came to Michigan.

"I had already graduated from high school in Turkey, but I did college work here at Eastern Michigan University," she said.

"And it wasn't retailing for fashion merchandising she studied. Obeldi studied English linguistics and journalism.

"I love the English language. If I had stayed in Turkey, I probably would have wound up as an English teacher," she said.

BUT THE dark-haired boutique owner tried other careers. Once she managed a law firm very competently.

"Her husband Michael, also born in Turkey, has close family ties in the clothing business. Both her relatives in Turkey and in America encouraged her to sell the fashion indigenous to her native land.

"The Turks export a lot to Europe, but hardly anything here," she explains. In addition to clothing, Obeldi has displayed around her small Southfield Road boutique, hand-crafted copper and silver plates of various sizes.

"Each is decorated with an intricate design which might be floral, or depict nature, birds or other motifs.

"The plates are hand-done in a trade

handed down from one generation to another," she said. "Now, the young people are getting caught up in high tech trades and the plates are not being made for the first time."

Obeldi says she has been collecting them for a long time. "They can only be found in Turkey, and when I go there, which is often, I try to find more."

"EVERYTHING in my shop is made in Turkey. Both the designs and the materials are Turkish."

Obeldi, who says she has always been determined to be a career woman, is also adept at the homemaking arts.

She cares for her daughter, Georgette Tanya, 2, cooks and keeps house happily.

In the shop she is all businesswoman, explaining that she has exclusive access to several Turkish designers' clothing.

"We carry designs by Negir, Ahmed Orsan, Atalar, Damlia and Idil," she says. "Atalar does suits, wools, and capes. Orsan does wonderful knits, and Negir works in silks and wools."

Obeldi admits her own favorite is Negir.

"She's well known in London where she has a boutique."

High fashion is a big industry in Turkey, Obeldi says. The Turks follow European trends very closely.

To show the Turkish designs to advantage, Obeldi looked through books of high fashion models' pictures, finally choosing Vida Grad, who just happens to be a former Miss Michigan World and Model of the Year as well as a Southfield resident.

OBELDİ agreed to help her neighbors across Southfield Road raise funds to benefit Akiva School.

"From now to Thanksgiving, any patrons who purchase clothing here can make out their check to Akiva and I will donate a percentage to the school," Obeldi says.

On a tour of the boutique she pointed out the fine wool gabardine, the silks, the wool and suede combinations, and the sweaters.

Many have intricate detailing indeed unique in fashion and many use the native angora wool of Turkey called Tilk indigenous to her native land.

Clothing at the Unique Boutique is moderately priced. Buyers are assured of having something very different.

"When my customers get compliments, they bring their friends," said Obeldi.



Feryal Obeldi shows some of the Turkish fashions she imports for her Unique Boutique. Skirts, sweaters, divided skirts, dresses and suits as well as accessories are all from Turkey where the boutique owner was born and grew up. Designs as well as material are all Turkish.

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