

DIFFA goes back to the drawing board

'Dramatically Different' theme reflects rebuilding year of event
But style mavens Jan Strimble and Steve Kemble keep the glam factor high

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DECISION in DALLAS



BACK to the Drawing Board

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DIFFA Dallas starts over with a new attitude and a new concept — but some experienced talent behind the scenes

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2010 was a strange year for the Dallas chapter of DIFFA, the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS. On the heels of its 25th anniversary blowout, the group decided to bifurcate the main event last year: A collection of soft goods and accessories (pillows, hats, even doghouses) at a bash at Union Station, followed about a month later by the famed Collection, a runway show of denim jackets at a pricey gala to take place at the new Winspear Opera House, hosted by Queen Latifah.

Only Queen Latifah canceled. "We'll reschedule," DIFFA said.

Nothing.
No collection event took place that year, which may have been a good thing. With 2011 here, DIFFA is regrouping.

This is a rebuilding year, for sure, but also one with lots of promise. With co-creative director Jan Strimble back in charge, and Dallas doyen of style Steve Kemble serving as event director of DIFFA 2011 — branded Dramatically Different — there's some starpower behind the scenes. And that promises to make for a spectacular, if unusual, show.

For one thing, the *I* in DIFFA represents a plural word: Industries. It's not just about clothes. Yes, the event will take place at the Anatole; yes, there will be a cocktail reception where attendees can inspect the collection. But there will not be a runway show; instead, a sit-down dinner with live auction. The event used to end there; now it will transition into a lounge where people can enjoy one another and the various other fashion specialties making a contribution, from art to architecture to music.

NOT IN THE EYE! | The Dallas Collection will include some denim jackets and hot models, but co-creative director Jan Strimble and event director Steve Kemble, opposite page, promise even more eye candy from a variety of disciplines.

DIFFA

Hilton Anatole Hotel,
2201 Stemmons Freeway, April 16.
Tables from \$3,000; individual tickets \$300. DIFFADallas.org

It's a great challenge for Strimble, one of the founders of DIFFA who returns to a management role.

"While [the] Dallas Collection is an astounding amount of work and takes a massive coordinated team effort, it's also creatively rewarding because the non-commercial format allows my imagination to go wild," says Strimble. "I have a lot of fun with what I call a 'take no prisoners attitude' towards designing the fashion components: kill them with glamour, seduce them with beauty, rock it out with the unexpected and leave 'em begging for more!"

"I could not be more thrilled to be producing this year's event," adds Kemble. "DIFFA is such an important part of the fight against HIV/AIDS, and I know this fabulous event will bring even more attention and support to a worthy cause."

Strimble sees the change in keeping with the development of AIDS research and treatment over the years, which this summer marks 30 years since its designation as a disease. "DIFFA was on the forefront of funding services to the earliest victims as well as funding prevention education once the disease

was fully understood. As AIDS reaches newer audiences, they are being caught unprepared. DIFFA's stance on prevention education, combined with continued service funding, make it a key combatant in the new war on AIDS," she says.

