

## INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

# PLEATS, PLEASE!

Two trained architects take on the world of fashion.

By Bianca Smith | Photography by Katrina Wittkamp

#### ACCESSORY STORY

Milena (left) and Aaron Kim take up fashion design—starting with their classic Pleats handbags—in addition to their work at local architecture firms; from top: the Hexa clutch, Diamond clutch and Hexa cross-body.



#### THE KIMS' HOTS

Creativity, ingenuity, new perspectives, travel, self-discovery, openmindedness, lunch picnics at Millennium Park

#### THE KIMS' NOTS

Unoriginal ideas, routine approaches to life, Chicago winters, laziness

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As professional architects, husband-and-wife duo Milena and Aaron Kim are used to taking every angle into consideration, which helped when it came to designing Pleats (pleatsdesign.com), their brand-new collection of chic geometric handbags.

"You're always thinking about the other faces of every building when you design,"

Aaron says. "You never see it in one manner. We applied the same idea with our first collection." The Argentinian and Italian calf-leather crossbody bags and clutches hold their 3-D form from every angle, just like buildings in a city. The 18K gold pull tags and hardware from South Korea incorporate beveled corners and multiple facets as well. Applying their industry expertise (Aaron from SOM, Milena from Perkins+Will) to work in the field of fashion was a decision years in the making, and took years of observing how women dress all over the globe. As travel enthusiasts, the Kims have plenty of stamps on their passports, and their combined Korean and Serbian roots allow them exposure to a variety of different cultures. "Whether it's Paris or Rome, it took seeing how women address their aesthetic all over the world for us to realize how we can help elevate women's style here," Milena says. Once the duo was able to pinpoint a common denominator, they got to work on creating the collection of high-style, unique, timeless accessories. "Our customers are edgy and confident, and take a little bit of risk to be design leaders," Aaron says. And the people have spoken: Pleats' first installment is flying off the e-shelves, so the Kims have announced plans to create an assortment of larger bags and wristlets in the near future. Happy bagging!

