

## Prisoner designs enter fashion world

### Story Highlights

Prison inmates design clothes for new shop in German capital  
Portion of profits go to prisoner rights organizations  
Clothes include tag include prisoner's name and sentence  
Products include design by inmate on death row in Texas, U.S.

A new company in Germany is trying to break into the fashion business selling stylish clothes designed and produced by prison inmates.



Amnesty International.

A company that utilizes the skills of prison inmates has just opened its first store in Berlin. "We want to have basic, durable, timeless, beautiful clothes," said Stephan, one of the company founders.

Many of the clothes, cooking aprons and even stainless steel food trays offered in the Berlin store were either designed or manufactured in jails, but not just German ones.

One design shows a female comic figure that was drawn by a man sitting on death row in Texas.

Stephan said part of the proceeds from sales go to organizations that support prisoners' rights and better conditions for inmates, like

But in some cases, money goes directly to the inmates that designed certain pieces. "In the case of the female cartoon figure, this man was almost granted a stay from execution because of the design he did for us but in the end unfortunately the appeals court ruled against him."

The clothes offered at the shop also tell the story of the inmates that designed individual pieces. A small text inside the item lays out the prisoner's story, including the name, where he is in jail and how long the term will be.

Some of the clothes are manufactured at a corrections facility in Halle, near Leipzig, in Eastern Germany.

Prisoners sew cooking aprons in a jail workshop for several hours a day. "It's wonderful, at least it takes your mind off jail for a little while," says Mario Hildebrand, who is serving a 20 month term in Halle.

"We can really identify with this label," he said. "We are the prisoners and without us this label would not be possible, so we do take some pride in making these clothes."

However, Mario said he would not wear the clothes himself: "Look, I am a prisoner, and I'm really not proud of it. It isn't something I want to be parading around."

But others seem to be catching the fever. Stephan said the company wants to start selling in the United States.

"We've had people from New York, Chicago and Los Angeles ask about our label," he said in an interview in the flagship store in Berlin.

Stephan said he hopes socially responsible clothes will also make for a good business for the company.