vary from ladylike to funky to minimalist, but the younger set are feeling rock-chic right now and are likely to be dressed in, say, a Junya Watanabe jumper with an Alexander Wang tee (see the pop band 2NE1). According to Chung, women in their 40s are suddenly more fashion-forward and are known by the nickname "ruby" (for refreshed, uncommon, beautiful, and young). You know a ruby by her Thakoon dress, Zanotti pumps, and Balmain double-breasted jacket.

For American designers, a good thing about South Korea is that buyers order clothes that take greater fashion risks. "They're looking for pieces where I am really pressing the idea of me further," Sternberg says. "They go to a crazier place." Agrees Altuzarra, "It's definitely a very editorial buy." For Sozzani, a good thing about South Korea is that the women are interested in modern fashion but have not lost their traditional soul. On a recent trip, she wandered through the stores where monks shop, and later attended a traditional religious ceremony featuring beautiful robes and sashes and chogoris, bolero-like blouses. "Then, of course, they take everything off and wear Chanel," she says. "They are very rooted in the past, but they shift, and they do it naturally."—**ROBERT SULLIVAN**





BEST FOOT FORWARD RIGHT: ARFANGO'S ALBERTO MORETTI. BELOW: PATENT LEATHER–AND–SILK HEELS, $675; ARFANGO.COM.

Trailblazing Saddles

Pioneer of polished chic, Dooney & Bourke trots back into season.

Sometimes the perfect thing is right under your nose. Case in point: the all-American brand Dooney & Bourke, with its Italian-crafted, seventies-feel Alto bags, updated for spring. It's their discreet brass hardware and vegetable-dyed Florentine vachetta leather that not only celebrate the brand's preppy, equestrian roots but fall in line with today's desire for luxurious functionality. Céline's Phoebe Philo doesn't have the last word on that; Dooney & Bourke has conceived effortless, practical styles for the past quarter century—without weighty price tags (theirs start at $275). "People are buying things that remind them of better times," says president Peter Dooney of his company's stealthy post-recession return to the limelight. "They want quality that's not overstated."—**ESTHER ADAMS**



BUCKLED UP THE BUBBLE CROSS-BODY FROM SPRING'S ALTO COLLECTION, $395; DOONEY.COM.

ON HIGH

"My idea was to do something very sophisticated and chic but with respect—like beautiful lingerie for the foot," Alberto Moretti says, describing the hand-stitched footwear he creates for Arfango, the family-owned Florentine company he now runs. And indeed, his silk and tulle confections, featuring splashes of snakeskin and satin that drape from an ankle strap only to disappear under a sole, are as elegant as boudoir slippers, though they are clearly intended for evenings out on the town. (It's the second women's collection for Arfango, previously renowned for its driving shoes.) So confident is Moretti that these fluttery fantasias will hit their mark that he has emblazoned legends on the silvery soles of each pair: SMILING, POSITIVE, AND SEXY on one shoe and IF YOU DON'T SMILE, IF YOU'RE NOT POSITIVE, IT DOESN'T MATTER: YOU MUST BE SEXY on the other. Arfango entertains custom orders, though none could be as fraught with potential consequence as one Moretti describes with a grin: "I did my wife's shoes for our wedding—without seeing her dress! Luckily, she liked them."—**LYNN YAEGER** *view >402*

FRANCO PAGETTI. Still lifes: LIAM GOODMAN.