



SHOP CRAWL BY ROSALIND CUMMINGS-YEATES

Frank Lloyd Wright and Ernest Hemingway may draw flocks of visitors to the quiet, tree lined streets of Oak Park but when it comes to fashion, funky boutiques Takara and E'Stylo prove to be the real crowd pleasers.

TAKARA

123 N. Marion St.; (708) 445-7511



With butter-colored walls, marble counter, hardwood floors and an airy, sun-lit space, Takara's new location underscores the shop's focus on natural fibers and nature-based colors. An Oak Park fixture since 2003, designer Takara owned two stores, Willow and Takara, both on artsy Harrison Street, until her April 2007 move to roomier digs in downtown Oak Park. "Our objective is to offer simply delicious clothing, accessories and footwear that will help redefine style," said Takara. "The style here is casual chic, with non-conformist clothing that dances around a woman's body."

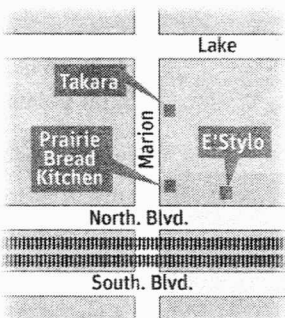
A white cotton embroidered dress for \$129 grazes an iridescent white rayon layered, tie front-top with black buttons and piping for \$149. Black linen pants for \$132 command a whole corner while a Lara Miller, slate-colored, multi-wear, knit tunic of bamboo and spandex sways in the window for \$389. Huge raffia totes for \$98, resemble bright hula skirts in yellow, orange, wine and green, and they rub against Takara's own bamboo bracelets for \$15.

Hours: Thursday-Tuesday, 10:30-7 p.m.; closed on Wednesdays

E'STYLO

1024 N. Blvd.; (708) 524-9004

Stilo means style in Spanish and this colorful emporium boasts oodles of it. From the chartreuse and violet walls, to the clusters of sexy, statement pieces, to the energized mix of R&B and hip-hop that floats through the intimate store, E'Stylo provides a singular shopping experience. "Our motto is dress to express, not impress," said owner Teresa



Lugo. "We provide contemporary clothes with a funky twist." Lugo opened her first store, La Femmena consignment shop, in River Forest 11 years ago. When she moved it to Oak Park, she noticed groups of teen girls who would pass the store by. Lugo decided to address their fashion interests with E'Stylo, which she opened next door to La Femmena. "We started our focus on teens but it has developed into women over 40 who have phenomenal bodies and disposable incomes," she said. "Now we specialize in mother-daughter teams."

Eye-popping garments fill the

boutique, including a Pucci-patterned, vibrant purple, red and turquoise tunic/mini dress adorned with a metal and turquoise emblem at the center of a plunging neckline from LA label Sky for \$220. A mustard, cropped and pleated, cotton poncho top by Kass Designs for \$78 stands out, as well as an olive jersey dress with crisp brown and green plaid puff sleeves, Peter Pan collar and bubble hem in a \$88 copyrighted design by Colombiana label Nuvula.

Hours: Monday-Saturday, 11-7 p.m., closed on Sunday

PRAIRIE BREAD KITCHEN

103 N. Marion St.; (708) 445-7511

Grab some fortification for your fashion search in this quaint eatery. Try zesty gazpacho soup in a breadbasket, a cranberry/white chocolate cookie and a mandarin orange and passion fruit smoothie.

Hours: Sunday 9-3:30 p.m., Monday-Friday 6:30-7 p.m., Saturday 7-5:30 p.m.



Takara Gudell holds two bright raffia totes (\$98) that look a little like hula skirts at her store Takara, a small boutique in Oak Park.

BRIAN KERSEY/SUN-TIMES