

September 11, 2012

Fashion Coterie Preview: Ones to Watch

New lines and new directions to look for at the upcoming fair.

COREY'S NEW GAME PLAN

Between adjusting to the aftermath of the Great Recession and the trend for communicating in 140 characters or less, it'd be foolish not to change with the times. Corey Lynn Calter, designer of her namesake contemporary brand based in Los Angeles, certainly got the message.

A dozen years after launching and making a mark with flirtatiously printed silk separates, she's trimming her brand moniker to Corey, altering its aesthetics for a fresh, streamlined look and developing a marketing strategy for social media. These steps, she hopes, will let her seize different opportunities to connect to people in a difficult market.

[RELATED STORY: Spring 2013 Trend: Passion for Patterns >>](#)

"I just saw things were changing," said Calter, 43, who will present her new branding and designs at Coterie. "It's certainly harder. There are fewer stores. Those stores are buying differently....[Social media] can just drive your business in a different way. A few years back, there were a few channels for your buyers to see the line — forget about the customers."

Calter, a graduate of Manhattan's Fashion Institute of Technology, started her career making corsets. She moved to Los Angeles from New York, and turned her home kitchen into a studio, drawing patterns and stitching samples, and launched in spring 2000. Since then, she's grown her \$1,600 investment into a company with 13 employees and annual wholesale revenue expected to exceed \$7 million next year — topping an increase of 25 percent in 2012 from last year, when she recorded 15 percent growth.

While wholesale prices remain the same — between \$68 and \$248 — the design direction is getting an update. Supplementing the popular tapered pants that are further slimmed by seams running down the front and back, Calter added more tailored pieces like blazers, trousers and fitted jumpsuits. Though still a big believer in prints — two standouts are a multicolored hand print and amorphous coral dots printed on silver, evoking Pop Art cowhide — she's integrating more solids, including imperial blue, lime green, peach and pale yolk, for spring. She's veering away from silk, partly because she's tired of its ubiquity in the



A look from Corey, by Corey Lynn Calter.

Photo By Courtesy Photo

market, and because its high cost is eroding profits. Textured fabrics and blends such as linen and dotted swiss cotton have caught her attention instead. She also added cutouts to the front of a cotton-silk sleeveless shirt, and integrated more seaming and self-piping, rather than contrast piping, on a V-neck sundress with a shirttail hem.

“It’s Corey Lynn Calter without a bow,” she said in her office, pointing to a spring inspiration board. “It’ll remain feminine, artistic and creative. The intent is to get more modern, wearable and, in some cases, pared down and simpler.”

The re-branding heralds new projects, like her first foray into footwear via a collaboration with Seychelles. The quartet of wedges and gladiator sandals, whimsically accentuated with candy colors and sassy stripes and priced under \$130, will arrive at stores and e-commerce sites such as Modcloth.com next spring. She’s also in talks for a jewelry collection for spring. Such ventures are expected to elevate the brand, which retails at Anthropologie, American Rag, Amazon.com, By George and Post Alley Boutique, among others.

Leah Segall, co-owner and buyer for Dari, a boutique in Studio City, Calif., is eager to see the new direction. She said Calter’s designs stand out in the contemporary market and sell well because they tend to fit all ages and body types. In particular, the dresses, retailing between \$200 and \$300, are consistent top sellers as well as visual pluses for Dari’s blog and Instagram account.

“People want change with their clothing,” Segall said. “It’s healthy and smart of [Calter] to do that just because you always have to change it up. It gets stale after a while [with] the same body [and] same print.”

Calter is also connecting with emerging designers and artists for new collaborations in apparel and other categories. The pieces will be sold on her Web site. Besides a creative partnership with her husband, artist Glenn Kaino, who’s participated in the Whitney Biennial and represented the U.S. at the Cairo Biennale, she’s recruited photographer Emily Ulmer to snap actress Nora Zehetner for a new social media campaign premiering next spring.

“I’m always looking for different avenues of inspiration and opening up the world of Corey,” Calter said. “I love making clothes. For me, there is more of an opportunity to do more than a collection.”

Also on tap, after the launch of a Web site called Thisiscorey.com in January, she’ll encourage customers to post pictures of themselves wearing clothes from the line. Identified with a hashtag that reads #thisiscorey, the photos will qualify for a monthly contest in which winners get free clothes.

“In this world of everything being condensed and shortened and abbreviated, [Corey] just felt a little familiar,” she said. “It shows familiarity, which is something we want to encourage with social media, and a connection to the brand.”

— Khanh T.L. Tran



Lynn Calter
Photo By Courtesy Photo

NEXT: A.N.D.: Baking the Blues >>

A.N.D.: BAKING THE BLUES

Sean Barron's new denim line, A.N.D. (A New Denim), is sitting out the color war still raging in the fashion jeans market.

"I actually believe there's a bit too much 'trend' in the world of denim these days," said Barron, who also co-owns the Aiko contemporary brand and previously was behind brands including Joie and Katayone Adeli. "There's so much nondenim denim, jeans that aren't really jeans anymore. The customer has bought all her new, cool jeans — prints, florals, colors — and she's telling us that she wants a true jean again."

To address that desire, Barron, in collaboration with his Japanese denim supplier, developed an exclusive process in which jeans will be available in three shades of indigo — dark, medium and light. Instead of the usual washing process, the variations in color are achieved through a heating process that requires no water but simulates degrees of wear.

Launching next week at Coterie with first deliveries set for January, the jeans will be available in five fits with a jacket and a skirt also included in the mix. The dark denim option replicates 50 "wears," the medium 150 and the light 250. Price points, still being set at press time, are expected to average about \$230 at retail, with the most worn denim probably about \$20 higher.



A.N.D. jeans.

Photo By Courtesy Photo

The absence of water is a plus, but it wasn't an objective. "I can't say this was an environment initiative," he said. "To me, it's a true 'jeaner's' perspective on where denim should be right now."

Barron set up A.N.D. as a venture between Aiko, in which he is a partner with Andrew Rosen, as well as other investors. Although he declined to discuss sales projections, he expects distribution to be similar to Aiko's, which is in 15 countries despite the absence of any international distributors.

"We're looking for top-tier accounts," he said. "We're looking for slow growth, one account at a time. In the early phase of the project, I'd like us to be in 100 stores worldwide and then build to 140 or so. Not that volume isn't important, but getting it into the right stores in the beginning and getting good sell-throughs means more."

— **ARNOLD J. KARR**

NEXT: Velvet Angel >>

VELVET ANGEL

Three months after giving birth to her first child, Victoria's Secret model Lily Aldridge is proving that you can have it all.

Already claiming the titles of VS Angel and celebrity rocker wife, the 26-year-old is adding designer to her résumé with the help of California contemporary brand Velvet by Graham & Spencer. She's unveiling her first design collaboration, Lily Aldridge for Velvet, next week at Coterie. The 14-piece capsule collection for spring is the latest step in an eight-year career with the Culver City, Calif.-based company, which, as her longest-standing client, has featured her in more than a dozen ad campaigns.

"I've wanted to do this for so long," Aldridge said, a makeup artist prepping her doe eyes for a photo shoot with Kayt Jones to promote the collaboration at the Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood. "The right opportunity that I was comfortable with never arose."

Practically part of the Velvet family — her 21-year-old sister, Ruby, also models for the company's pricier label, Graham & Spencer — Aldridge felt at ease working with Velvet codesigners Toni Spencer and Jenny Graham. While Velvet previously designed two collections sold at fast-fashion retailer Uniqlo, this is its first venture with an individual.

The company as a whole has sales between \$50 million and \$100 million. It's too early to project how the Aldridge line will do, and the firm will see how it performs at retail before determining whether it will continue.



Lily Aldridge in a look from Lily Aldridge for Velvet.
Photo By Stefanie Keenan

Spencer said she sensed some pressure when presenting the finished items to someone like Aldridge, who has been photographed wearing hip labels such as Rag & Bone, Isabel Marant and Stella McCartney on style blogs. "I don't think I've been as scared," she said.

Graham added that Aldridge has "pretty much always had that boho, rock 'n' roll, cool-girl style. As she became older, she became more elegant."

As a new mother with a curvier but still-lissome figure, Aldridge also became more thoughtful about who would wear her designs: "You have to be accessible to all body types," she said. "It is an eclectic mix. It's not one style."

Laid-back, comfortable and sexy are descriptions she uses to describe the line as well as her personal style, which is enhanced with shopping trips to Barneys New York, Opening Ceremony, Curve, Satine and Saks Fifth Avenue — all of which she sees as potential retailers of the new label. Aligned with Velvet's pricing, the line retails for between \$50 and \$200.

In tribute to her friends and family, Aldridge named every piece in the line after a loved one. A V-neck T-shirt is for her husband, Caleb Followill, from the band Kings of Leon, because of his proclivity for such tops. Her half-sister, former Ralph Lauren model Saffron Aldridge, inspired a slinky tan sweater loosely knitted out of cotton and linen. Fellow VS Angel and Aldridge's best friend and godmother to her daughter, Erin Heatherton, personifies the sex appeal of the leopard-print tank dress ruched on the side. And a strapless maxidress printed with neon pink orchids is christened after her daughter, Dixie.

"It's bright and beautiful and cheery. It makes me smile," Aldridge said. "When I see this, it reminds me of my daughter."

One item that didn't make the cut — a fake fur leopard jacket deemed too stuffy for a warm-weather grouping —

might be resurrected if the collaboration continues for fall. Moreover, a new muse for future collections can be found in her daughter, whose growing wardrobe is filled with baby togs made especially for her by Velvet.

“I think we should do a baby collaboration,” Aldridge said. “As long as it’s stuff I’m proud of, I would love to continue collaborating.”

— **Khanh T.L. Tran**

WWD

Copyright © 2012 Fairchild Fashion Media. All rights reserved.