

# Color, Updated Basics Lead in N.Y.

Exhibitors and attendance both increased at the September trade shows in Manhattan.

## COTERIE

**VENDORS AT THIS** month's Fashion Coterie looked to drum up business against a backdrop that has many retailers facing increasingly cautious consumers. Produced by ENK International, the show closed a three-day run at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center Sept. 20.

A number of show resources have been proactive about trying to get Joanna Victory to carry their lines in I Love Lulu, the store she owns in San Jose, Costa Rica. With a loyal local customer base, she said she tries not to offer American and European brands that can be found at other nearby retailers. She said consumers are more hesitant, spending an average of \$650 per visit compared with \$850 a year ago.

"People are being cautious because of the worldwide [financial] crisis. They are paying attention to what they spend. Before they would just buy," Victory said. "It's been that way for a while. They are being more intelligent than passionate."

A buying team from the members-only flash sale site Ideeli was primarily in search of trends, but they also found vendors were more willing to wheel and deal. "Everyone know flash sales are definitely where the market is going," said Tamara Rosenthal. "There are not a lot of hassles with off-price. You negotiate a price and then it's pretty easy to deal with."

Price is also a priority with shoppers at Violet Clover in Winter Park, Fla., according to owner Katie Morgan. "I can sell anything at \$150. The average price is \$180," she said. "Customers are looking for things under \$200. But if something is incredible, it will sell."

Shoshanna, Joie, Ali Ro and Corey Lynn Calter were among her show favorites. As much as she likes to champion the occasional little-known designer, Morgan said customers are usually more inclined to go with a brand they know even though the quality can often be inferior. "It's kind of like working with the devil a bit. The bigger the company the more they can mass produce so the quality isn't always there," Victory said.

Marilyn Evert and Pat Feighan, owners of Lizzy & Jan, the Chagrin Falls, Ohio, boutique they opened 18 months ago, were intent on finding dresses that retail between \$250 and \$350. "We have a very defined niche," Evert said. "Our store is unique in the area. People will spend if they find the right item. That might be the key to finding customers, offering something they can't find in other places."



**Marimekko was a new resource at the show.**

In addition to checking out the new designers in the TMRW section, the business partners liked the looks of Beatrice Holloway, Nougat London and Single.

Claudine DeSola combed through the show looking for domestic made lines especially from New York to offer at Caravan Stylist Studio, which she will open next month on West 38th Street in Manhattan. Smith, Primary, Dear Creatures, Yoonmi Lee, Groa and Penn & Ink are some of the 15 lines she honed in on. "It is about cutting through all the noise and just building relationships with people and trying to help them grow where they can," she said. "I love living in the U.S. and I feel like we should all try to keep business growing here and that means supporting small businesses."

Tim Chan was also on the hunt for locally made collections for his e-commerce site, Indiestrie.com. With a degree in finance and information systems, he started his career in finance before switching gears. Having pretty much "grown up" in Tyler Productions, the Garment Center patternmaking and sample room that his mother Amy Fong runs with her daughter Nancy, Chan said he has seen domestic manufacturing diminish. Familiar with how his mother helped Proenza Schouler, Rogan, Threeasfour and other labels in their early days, he said, "Without manufacturing in New York, there isn't going to be any place for young talent to go."

A few show resources like Hutch tried to help those in search of domestic made goods by posting a sign that read, "Made in America." Attendees received a "Made In America" list with the names and booth numbers for resources that did just that. Nanette Lepore, which is also known for local production, was one of the busier booths Sept. 19. Elizabeth and James, Hoss-Intropia, Tucker, Velvet and Gryson were also lively that morning.

Marimekko, a newcomer to the show, picked up about 35 accounts, according to account executive Emily Emer. "Most people are surprised that we make apparel. They think we only do home interiors and fabrics," she said. "But we've sold a lot of bags and daytime dresses here."

With a New York showroom that opened earlier this week and a flagship set to bow next month in the Flatiron District, the Helsinki-based brand is about to raise its exposure even more.

— ROSEMARY FEITELBERG