CALIFORNIA \$2.99 VOLUME 71, NUMBER 21 MAY 22-28, 2015

INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION Keith Gunning found inspiration in London-based artist Leigh Bowery for a collection made from neoprene, which bowed on the runway at the annual Academy of Art University graduation fashion show, held May 14 in San Francisco. For more from the show, see page 6.

Downtown LA Retail Holds Promise but No Guarantees for Success

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Almost every night, bars and restaurants are hopping in downtown Los Angeles, a once-blighted area that is going through an unparalleled boom, but boutique retailers don't feel like they entirely share in the city's new prosperity.

Earlier this year, a group of boutiques in downtown's historic core neighborhood—Pale Violet, Curio, Haus of Love, and Buttons and Bows, a resale boutique co-owned by Karen Marley, daughter of reggae legend Bob Marleyall shuttered. It gave pause to the momentum that seemed to be driving a high-end boutique retail boom, taking place in a neighborhood that is experiencing a wave of housing construction and debuts of high-end bars and restaurants, such as Redbird, which has received critical praise and attracted gourmands from throughout the region.

There's a growing number of brands and retailers who

■ Downtown LA page 7

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Venue: Bigger Brands, Bigger Venue

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Venue, a trade show that started as a platform for emerging streetwear brands, went on a growth spurt for its May 19-20 run.

The trade show moved to its biggest venue yet in its twoyear history. With 80 booths, the show filled 85 percent of the 60,000-square-foot second-floor events space at The Reef, formerly called the LA Mart, said Miles Canares, Venue's founder. Venue's previous address was the events space at the Cooper Design Space showroom building, where it hosted 50 booths in July.

Previously a trade show for emerging brands, the recent Venue included high-profile labels such as LRG, Diamond Supply Co., Huf, Primitive, Black Scale and Crooks & Castles. Gee Dela Cruz, marketing manager for Los Ange-

⇒ Venue page 5



American Rag's Chinese Fashion Diplomacy

uled to open its first shop in China, and it will be stocked with many of the brands currently sold in American Rag's high-profile shops in Los Angeles and Newport Beach, Calif.

But Mark Werts, American Rag's founder and chief executive officer, thought that there needed to be a deeper fashion exchange between the two nations, which do billions of





Interior of shop-in-shop

Discover something

Warehouse style shopping of dead-stock fabrics with great prices and low

minimums for small manufacturers of

apparel and home décor, exhibit and

DFW features deadstock knits and

woolens, rayon, solids, lace, velvets,

wovens, prints, denims, linens, cottons,

silks, couture, vintage prints, leathers,

set decorators, and costumers.

dollars in trade each year. On May 14, he opened a shopin-shop of Chinese fashion designers at the Los Angeles location of American Rag. The designers range from streetwear labels from Hui by Eran Hui and Goods of Desire to the preppie looks of Taciturnli and the sophisticated contemporary styles of Amanda **Shi**, designed by Werts' Chinese-born wife.

Werts said that he made a gut-based decision—no marketing or focus groups—to

in the aisles

and technical fabrics

make the Chinese shop-in-shop permanent in his La Brea store. His Chinese partners also said that the shop-in-shop will pay dividends over the Pacific. They told him that the Chinese designers' cachet would increase if their local fashion consumers knew that Americans also were buying the designers' styles.

While American Rag's Chinese shop-inshop is decorated with a sense of pop-culture

irony (for example, a seriouslooking black-and-white portrait of Chinese basketball star Yao Ming overlooks the shopin-shop), the American Rag in Shanghai will look very similar to the American Rag store in Los Angeles, including features such as Moroccan tiles and French trel-

The 6,500-square-foot boutique will be located off of Nan Ying Xie Road, which is one of Shanghai's most fashionable streets. The shop is on the street level of a retail center that is the address to other Western brands

and retailers. Werts and his Western partners are minority partners in the venture. Asianbased partners include Peter Caplowe and Richard Hobbs, who also own The Hub, a premium fashion show.

American Rag plans to build other flagships in major Chinese cities and Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in that nation. American Rag opened a store in Bangkok in 2014, is scheduled to open a Jakarta store this spring and remodeled a store in Osaka, Japan, this year.—Andrew Asch

DESIGNER

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Cherokee Acquires Everyday California

Sherman Oaks, Calif.-based Cherokee Global Brands has acquired San Diegobased casual lifestyle brand Everyday Cali-

Everyday California founders Michael Samer and Christopher Lynch will retain ownership of the brand and continue to run the company's flagship store in La Jolla, Calif., selling men's and women's apparel, accessories and footwear through a licensing agreement with Cherokee Global Brands. Samer and Lynch will serve as global brand ambassadors for Everyday California, which becomes part of the Cherokee portfolio of brands, including Cherokee, Carole Little, Tony Hawk Signature Apparel and Hawk Brands, Liz Lange, and Sideout.

'Everyday California's global potential made the acquisition a perfect fit for Cherokee Global Brands," said Henry Stupp, Cherokee's chief executive officer, in a statement. "The brand is more than a state of mind. It's a way of life! Many great active-lifestyle brands have been born in California, and we are confident that together with Mike and Chris we can take an already strong brand and make it even more successful."

Everyday California is part ocean equipment and tour provider and part lifestyle collection. The company offers surfboard, paddleboard, kayak and snorkel rentals as well as guided kayak tours of the La Jolla Ecological Reserve. Its California-sourced womenswear and menswear are sold at the La Jolla store as well as other locations throughout California.

Everyday California will officially launch to the licensing community at the Cherokee Global Brands booth during the June 9–11 run of Licensing Expo in Las Vegas.

"We have been actively working to identify new licensee partners for the brand," Stupp said. "Several licensees have already been identified, and we expect to announce them shortly. In addition, through our global platform and expanded licensing network, we are confident that we shall be able to swiftly secure international partners for Everyday California."—Alison A. Nieder

New WSS Flagship Opens in Historic LA Building

The new flagship for WSS was a real fixerupper, but the end result is a historic showplace for the Los Angeles-headquartered footwear retailer.

More than \$3 million was spent to reno-

vate the Young's Market Company Building, a landmark building that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, On May 14, the company held a grand-opening ceremony for the 24,000-squarefoot building. Among those speaking were Eric Alon, WSS founder; Mark Archer, WSS president; and Gil Cedillo, the Los Angeles city councilman representing the Westlake neighborhood, where the 1924 building is located.

"When you bring these brands into the community, you bring the community into the mainstream," Cedillo said of Westlake, which is home to a significant Central American immigrant population

and borders downtown Los Angeles. WSS offers footwear brands such as Jordan, Nike, Vans, Adidas and Asics. It has 67 locations and 1,300 employees.

WSS maintained a Westlake address at 1600 W. Seventh St. for a decade. It opted to move into Young's Market Building because it needed a bigger space, Archer said.

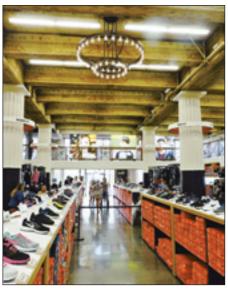
WSS worked with the City of Los Angeles' Office of Historic Resources to renovate and preserve the building, which is characterized by marble columns and terra-cotta friezes. During renovation, WSS still had to contend with fire damage from the 1992 riots. Robert Grosse, WSS's vice president of design and construction, said the retailer pulled together historic ceilings, murals and grillwork with some new features. WSS wanted the original beauty of the building to be revealed in the

"The best design is to let the building speak for itself," Grosse said.

During the grand-opening ceremony, WSS donated \$250,000 to the Los Angeles County Alliance Boys & Girls Clubs.—A.A.



Exterior of WSS flagship, near downtown Los Angeles





Eric Alon, founder of WSS



Gil Cedillo, LA city councilman Mark Archer, president of WSS



American Apparel Files Lawsuit Against Charney for Alleged Breach of 'Standstill Agreement'

By Alison A. Nieder Executive Editor

The fight between **American Apparel** and its founder, Dov Charney, continued with a lawsuit the manufacturer filed on May 15 in the Delaware Court Of Chancery against the ousted chief executive officer, alleging Charney violated a "standstill agreement" he had with

American Apparel.

According to the suit, American Apparel is charging that Charney "refuses to abide by the obligations to which he agreed in a July 9, 2014, nomination, standstill and support agreement entered into by him, the company and hedge fund Standard General L.P."

One of the provisions of the Standstill Agreement prohibits Charney from "instigating, encouraging, joining, acting in concert with or assisting any third party in seeking to remove directors of the company," according to the suit.

Recently, several shareholder complaints have been filed against the company charging violation of federal securities law and breach of fiduciary duties. In a suit filed on April 21, former employees and shareholders Jan Hubner and Eric Ribner said proxy statements sent last April to re-elect American Apparel board members were deceptive because their statements to voters said they supported keeping Charney in his job when in fact they were plotting his ouster.

Charney was suspended by the board after the company's annual shareholder meeting in New York on June 18. Charney then entered into an agreement with Standard General. Following an internal investigation, Charney was terminated from his job on Dec. 16.

A class-action lawsuit filed on April 21 by shareholder and former American Apparel employee Eliana Gil Rodriguez calls for another board-member vote at a special stockholders' meeting, stating that the election of the last board members was illegally obtained and invalid. Rodriguez's suit further states that there was a "poison pill" amended to American Apparel's bylaws that removed stockholders' ability to call a special meeting and nominate new directors of the board.

According to an 8-K form filed on May 18 with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, former American Apparel employee and shareholder Jeffrey Kolb notified the company that at the upcoming 2015 annual meeting he would be nominating two board-member candidates, Adrien Kowalewski and Gene Montesano. Kowalewski is a former American Apparel employee who

had held several positions at the company, including chief financial officer and director. Montesano is co-founder and former owner of **Lucky Brand Dungarees**. (Montesano had been previously proposed as a director by American Apparel lender **Lion Capital**, under its investment agreement, but

his name was later withdrawn.) Kolb also proposed the company adopt a resolution to repeal any changes and provisions to the company bylaws not in effect in the bylaws as of Dec. 22, 2014.

According to American Apparel's latest suit, these actions have been filed by friends of Charney. The company describes these as part of a "legal campaign" launched by Charney, who also filed his own defamation suits against American Apparel and Standard General. Further, the suit charges, Char-

ney's attorney Keith A. Fink has filed several unfair labor practice charges against the company with the National Labor Relations Board and "relentlessly continues to solicit current and former employees to file additional charges against the company."

Fink, a principal partner with **Fink & Steinberg** in Los Angeles, initially filed 12 labor complaints with the NLRB, although six have been dismissed.

Fink disputed American Apparel's suggestion that Charney is behind the other shareholder lawsuits, calling the notion "patronizing to the other shareholders."

"The real question is did the company commit proxy fraud?" he said.

He also took issue with the charge that Charney is behind the employment actions filed by Fink on behalf of other former American Apparel employees.

"The many upper-level management people I represent are proceeding against the company not because of Mr. Charney," he said. "Rather, these long-term employees are proceeding with litigation because current management retaliated against them immediately after filing complaints of harassment, discrimination and unfair employment practices. (Some firings happened within two days of a complaint. Some were a few weeks after)."

Fink said the complaints filed with the NLRB also have nothing to do with Charney, adding that he filed 13 new complaints on May 21.

Charney's efforts are described by American Apparel in the lawsuit as a "scorched-

earth campaign that exceeds all bounds of propriety," charging that he "trespassed on company property, interfered with company conference calls and criticized company employees for the manner in which they handled these calls, demanded employees handle the day-to-day operations of the company in accordance with his instructions, called employees on the telephone demanding company information such as sales reports, and threatened employees who refuse to support his return by taking their photographs and promising to fire them when he returns to power."

The suit further states that Charney has "sabotaged" the company's relationship with suppliers, has interfered with potential financing sources, and "flagrantly and repeatedly made a number of disparaging comments about the company to the press" in violation of the standstill agreement. Moreover, the suit says Charney has participated in employee meetings, "rallying them to circulate flyers touting the fact that 'Dov is fighting in the courts to regain control of the company."

According to the suit, he standstill agreement precludes Charney from serving as a board member, seeking removal of a board member or proposing a nominee for the board—or enlisting anyone else to do so—until after the 2015 annual meeting.

Fink disagreed, saying the standstill agreement does not prevent Charney from returning to the company as CEO.

"Does Mr. Charney want to take back the company? You bet! Does he expect to take back the company? You bet!" he said. "The standstill agreement doesn't prevent his desire or efforts to take back the company. It

does not prevent his return to the company."

One section of the agreement states, "The parties acknowledge and agree that if for any reason any of the provisions of this agreement are not performed in accordance with their specific terms or are otherwise breached, immediate and irreparable harm or injury would be caused for which money damages would not be an adequate remedy. Accordingly, each party agrees that in addition to other remedies the other party shall be entitled to at law or equity, the other party shall be entitled to seek an injunction or injunctions to prevent breaches of this agreement and to enforce specifically the terms and provisions of this agreement exclusively in the court of chancery or other federal or state courts of the state of Delaware.

American Apparel is requesting injunctive relief "prohibiting Mr. Charney from continuing to breach or further breaching the terms of the standstill agreement" as well as "further relief as the court deems just and proper," such as attorneys' fees.

Fink dismissed the suit as a "weak public-relations move" to divert attention from Charney's defamation lawsuits, the arbitration proceeding against American Apparel for breach of Charney's employment contract, "and additional legal actions the company knows are coming down the pike."

The attorney said he expects the company's lawsuit to be dismissed quickly.

"Delaware, like many states, has an anti-SLAPP statute designed to dispose of lawsuits like this," he said.

(A strategic lawsuit against public participation or SLAPP lawsuit is one intended to censor criticism or intimidate a party into abandoning their opposition.)



A recent protest at American Apparel headquarters in downtown Los Angeles

LA City Council Votes to Raise Minimum Wage

Los Angeles City Council members voted in favor of a minimum-wage hike from its current \$9 per hour to \$15 per hour by 2020.

The next step is for the City Attorney's Office to draft an ordinance that will need to be approved by the council.

If approved, the increases would be made incrementally beginning next year. Small businesses with less than 25 employees would be exempt until 2021. A proposal on paid time off has been put on hold for now.

Since Mayor Eric Garcetti first proposed raising the city's minimum wage last year, the issue has drawn sharp criticism among the apparel-manufacturing community. The recent City Council vote exceeds Garcetti's original proposal of raising the wage to \$13.25. Over the last year, there has been a national push to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. San Francisco and Seattle have raised their minimum-wage rates to \$15 per hour. The federal minimum wage currently stands at \$7.25.



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Salon Allure to Expand and Rename Itself Hammock

After five years producing the boutique swim trade event Salon Allure, Rick Fatzinger, the event's managing partner, announced that his team will double the size of the event and rename it Hammock.

"It is Salon Allure Volume Two," Fatzinger said of the show, which takes place at the W South Beach hotel in Miami Beach. "With events, we always like to keep them fresh." He noted that the event's production company will continue to be called Salon

Babalú, a Miami boutique chain, joined Salon Allure as a creative partner to shape the new look and feel of Hammock, Fatzinger said.

The brands exhibiting at Salon Allure will grow from 40 to more than 80. Brands will continue to exhibit in private hotel suites with views of the ocean. The show also will introduce an open-forum space, which will be housed in the W's 4,400-square-foot Great Room space on the hotel's lobby floor.

"The suites are geared toward pre-arranged appointments," Fatzinger said. "For brands looking for more walk-around traffic, we wanted to offer an open-forum space." The Salon Allure production company will offer showroom signs, lighting, fixtures and divider walls for those brands exhibiting in the Great Room.

Buyers will also be able to take the opportunity to view brands in a private suite and check out brands in a conventional tradeshow experience in the Great Room.

During Hammock's first season, it will feature 20 non-apparel brands, including beauty products and accessories such as eyewear. Swimwear brands exhibiting at Hammock will include Mikoh, Luxe by Lisa Vogel, Blue Life, Beach Bunny, Honey Bee Swim and Frankie's Bikinis.

Runway shows planned in Miami

Salon Allure gained note as one of the swim-centric shows surrounding Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Swim. However, Fashion Week Swim's producer, IMG, put its glamorous week of runway shows on hiatus in 2015. Fatzinger declined to comment on whether IMG's news will affect Hammock. However, his events-production company, called SBI, has been working with another events company, LDJ Productions, to organize runway events at the W's Wet Lounge and the ballroom at the 1 Hotel South Beach in Miami Beach.—Andrew Asch

Calendar

May 27

Peru Moda

Jockey Exhibition Centre Lima, Peru Through May 29

June 1

Coast Miami

Through June 2

June 3

"Costume Design Meets the Fashion Business: Designers, Deals and Dynamics.' presented by FGILA and the David C. Copley Center for Costume Design, UCLA Pacific Design Center West Hollywood, Calif.

Dallas Apparel & Accessories Market

Dallas Market Center Dallas

Through June 6

FIG

Fashion Industry Gallery Dallas Through June 5

June 4

"Take It to the Next Level." presented by One Step Retail Solutions

Old Ranch Country Club Seal Beach, Calif.

NAWBO-LA's 29th Leadership & Legacy Awards Luncheon JW Marriott (LA Live) Los Angeles

Black & White Ball, presented by Atlanta Apparel Market **National Jewish Health** Skirball Cultural Center

Los Angeles

June 8

Los Angeles Fashion Market California Market Center

Cooper Design Space The New Mart **Gerry Building** 824 Building Lady Liberty Building Primrose Design Building Academy Awards Building Los Angeles Through June 11

Designers and Agents The New Mart

Los Angeles Through June 10

Select Transit

California Market Center Los Angeles Through June 11

LA Kids' Market California Market Center

Los Angeles Through June 11 **Brand Assembly**

Cooper Design Space

Los Angeles Through June 10

Shape

California Market Center Los Angeles Through June 10

June 9

Licensing Expo Mandalay Bay Las Vegas Through June 11

June 11

AmericasMart

Atlanta Through June 14

June 16 CALA

Fort Mason Center San Francisco Through June 17

June 21

Fashion Market Northern California

San Mateo Event Center San Mateo, Calif. Through June 23

June 23

Active Collective Huntington Beach, Calif. San Mateo, Calif.

June 28

Through June 23

OffPrice

Miami Airport Convention Center Miami Through June 30

June 30

CALA Denver Mart

Denver Through July 1



information, visit ApparelNews.

Submissions to the calendar should be faxed to the Calendar Editor at (213) 623-5707. Please include the event's name, date, time, location, admission price and contact information. The deadline for calendar submissions is the Tuesday prior to Friday publication. Inclusion in the calendar is subject to available space and the judgment of the editorial staff.

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Shippers Ratify Port Workers' Contract

Members of the **Pacific Maritime Association** (PMA), which represents shipping lines and terminal operators, voted to ratify a new five-year contract with the **International Longshore & Warehouse Union**. The contract, which will run through June 30, 2019, now needs to be ratified by the ILWU.

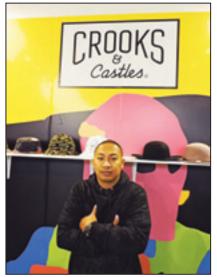
The contract includes an arbitration system designed to "support waterfront stability, capacity growth and productivity," according to a statement released by the PMA, which warns that the West Coast ports are poised to face increased competition with the scheduled opening of the expanded Panama Canal.

Among the provisions in the agreement are changes to the employer-paid healthcare plan to "foster greater efficiency, cost containment and fraud prevention for the long term." The contract also includes wage and pension increases for ILWU members.

"The West Coast ports are an economic engine for the United States, supporting millions of workers and trillions in economic impact," said PMA President and Chief Executive Officer Jim McKenna. "The disruptions that occurred during negotiations, and the inconvenience and hardship created by them, were regrettable. We look forward to building upon the incredible advantages West Coast ports offer and winning back the trust and confidence of the shipping community. This contract provides important tools to accomplish that."

The ILWU ratification vote is expected to be announced May 22.—Alison A. Nieder







ART VENUE: From left, founder Miles Cannares of Venue, Gee Dela Cruz of Crooks & Castles, and Duke and Kiki King of Freelance

Venue Continued from page 1

les—headquartered Crooks, said it was good that high-marquee brands participated in the show and had fostered a community. "I like what [Venue] is doing for all of the brands at the grassroots," he said.

The show also hosted more lifestyle and contemporary brands than it has in the past, including **Matiere**, **Michael Stars**, and **I Love Ugly**, a New Zealand–headquartered lifestyle brand.

Mark Encinias represented premium-denim label **Lee 101** and its action sports-ready sibling brand, **Lee Mercantile Co.**, at Venue. He noted that the streetwear-focused Venue did not seem like an obvious platform for premium denim, but he thought it was a good place to spread the word on Lee.

"It is important that the rest of the indus-

try knows about us," he said. He also noted that many streetwear-focused stores want to diversify their mix of brands.

Other brands made their first appearance at a California trade show at Venue. **Kali Kartel**, a San Juan, Puerto Rico-based brand, wanted to introduce its high-end streetwear brand in California and the U.S. mainland, said Felix Rosado, the brand's sales manager. **Freelance**, a Hawaii-head-quartered brand, made its third appearance at Venue, said Kiki King, a co-owner.

"You can only connect so much on **Instagram** and email. It's not the same as a human connection," she said.

At Venue King networked with owners of other brands and media. **Nyzak**, a downtown Los Angeles clothing brand, also made its trade-show debut at Venue.

Retailers reportedly visiting the show

were Tilly's; Forever 21; Nordstrom Rack; Jimmy Jazz; a New York-head-quartered chain; boutiques such as Attic and P's & Q's from Philadelphia and King & Duck from Scottsdale, Ariz.; and Culture Kings, an Australian retailer.

Canares acknowledged that there were grumblings from exhibitors about low buyer traffic. He said that Venue hopes to build traffic by serving as an alternative show. Instead of running shows during the major seasons for Spring and Fall, Venue will produce shows for the Holiday and Spring II seasons.

The show also hosted an art show featuring the work of Knowledge Bennett, a New York artist, and some produced two industry panels. One panel featured participation of brand chiefs Dennis Calvero of Crooks & Castles, James Bond of Undefeated and Lanie Alabanza of Hellz Bellz.





Academy of Art Honors CFDA, Ryan Roche at Annual Graduation Fashion Show



Jeremy Vu, Lupita

Gyuwon Jeong,

JC Munoz

Ruone Yan

Shuman Yao

Yunseon Kim,



Karina Garcia.

Gisel Ko

Linka Rowland

Dominic Tan

Eleonore Santos.

Gaia Giladi

Livia Bianda

The Council of Fashion Designers of America was honored and designer Ryan Roche received the Distinguished Alumna award on May 14 at the annual Academy of Art University graduation fashion show in San Francisco.

The design school's B.F.A. and M.F.A. graduates showcased their work on the runway, including collaborations between students in the Academy of Art's fashion design, knitwear design, menswear design, technical design and textile design programs.

The show included a capsule collection created by 12 fashion design and textile design students to celebrate the 30th anniversary of BCBG Max Azria's Hervé Léger brand. M.F.A. fashion design student Nina Hui was chosen for the Hervé Léger internship program.

We see our role in these designers' education as going beyond the classroom," said Dr. Elisa Stephens, president of the Academy of Art University. "We are committed to help launch our students' careers and have their collections seen by as many industry professionals as possible.

CFDA Executive Director Lisa Smilor and Senior Manager of Professional Development Sara Kozlowski received the award for Outstanding Contribution to the Fashion Industry and Fashion Education on behalf of the CFDA and awarded scholarship awards to fashion design students Pitzy Villagomez Ortega and Anh Phuong Thy Do.

The winners of the YMA Fashion Scholarship

Fund and the Paris Sister City Scholarship Exchange with Studio Berçot and L'Ecole de la



Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne in Paris were also announced.—Alison A. Nieder













DTLA RETAIL SCENES: From left, the staff of Guerilla Atelier; founder Carl Louisville is pictured at right (photos by Hero Stevenson); the Tanner Goods store on Broadway; Acne Studios and BNKR, which is scheduled to open in late 2015.

Downtown LA Continued from page 1

see opportunity and tough setbacks in one of the fastest-growing neighborhoods in California. Some thrive. Many want to stay in the game in a neighborhood that many believe is on an irreversible path to blossoming.

Cool factor

Alejandro Rodriguez opened a flagship for his independent brand, **Beautiful Fül**, at 107 W. Fifth St. in downtown Los Angeles' Historic Core district in 2013. Earlier this year, almost all of the other high-end businesses closed on his street, which borders the city's Skid Row district.

After Curio, which was a storefront down from Beautiful Fül, shuttered, a dance studio and a high-end convenience store also closed. Rodriguez had the only anchor left on a street that is often traveled by fashionable young people as well as the homeless.

But Rodriguez wouldn't think of moving. Downtown Los Angeles is the only place in the region where he could rent out a 2,200-square-foot space in a historic building for a low price. The area is a small enough pool where an emerging brand such as his can make a statement, he said.

Also, running a shop in this part of town makes a state-

ment. "Downtown Los Angeles is pushing ideas, culture and art. If you are here, it shows people that you are at the fore-front of creative culture," Rodriguez said.

A lot of high-profile brands and retailers are attracted by the urban grit and early-20th-century high-rise buildings that are reminiscent of New York's East Village and Brooklyn, said Jay Luchs, a high-profile real estate broker for **NewmarkGrubbKnightFrank**. "They are vintage looking. They are authentic," Luchs said of the buildings in downtown's Historic Core district. It's a great place to showcase a brand.

Prices for a square foot of retail space in the most popular parts of downtown Los Angeles' Broadway range from \$2 to \$7, Luchs said. It will take time before downtown Los Angeles meets its potential, he said. "It doesn't happen overnight. You'd only go there now if you can handle not having 50 tenants next to you," he said. "It's not too late to be an innovator."

Long revitalization

In recent decades, developers have been renovating historic buildings in Los Angeles and affluent people have started moving in. Los Angeles City Councilman José Hui-

zar helped found the Bringing Back Broadway initiative to help revive the Broadway thoroughfare that traverses the Fashion and Historic Core districts. In December 2013, the first of a new wave of high-end stores opened in downtown Los Angeles' Fashion District and Historic Core District.

Swedish brand **Acne Studios** opened a flagship store at Ninth and Broadway, at the edge of downtown Los Angeles' Fashion District. When the **Ace Hotel** opened a couple of blocks away from Acne, it seemed to confirm that the long-dormant area was burgeoning and the area around the Fashion District was a good investment.

Since then, a number of high-end stores have moved into the Fashion District. French brand **A.P.C.** is scheduled to open a boutique this summer in the Fashion District. New York's **Oak** multi-brand boutique opened across from Ace. Australian retailer **BNKR** is scheduled to open in late 2015 between the Ace and Acne.

It will be BNKR's first store in the United States, and Marco Lebel, the company's chief executive officer for America, was bullish.

"It is the fastest-growing neighborhood in Los Angeles, potentially [in] the country, and we are beyond excited

Downtown LA page 8



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Downtown LA Continued from page 7

to be a part of the Bring Back Broadway movement, which is organically developing daily," Lebel said. "For this reason, DTLA will also act as a strategic marketing vehicle for Australian Fashion Labels Ltd. in showcasing our retail concept to buyers and industry leaders.

Despite the headlines trumpeting highend retailers coming to town, change has come too slowly for some retailers.

Eric Martin owns the Seven Points boutique at the Lady Liberty Building, located at 845 S. Los Angeles St. in the Fashion District. The boutique is housed in a storefront area near his showroom, The Park. He said his neighborhood is not ready for premium contemporary retail, which Seven Points offers.

"Do I think it's a gamble for the next 24 months? Absolutely. There's still not the clientele down here," he said.

Thinking outside the box

Downtown Los Angeles is unique, but shoppers are shoppers, said Kuo Yang, owner of Brigade LA, located at 510 W. Seventh St. For the past four years, he based his success on selling high-profile brands such as Diane von Furstenberg, Marc by Marc Jacobs and Diesel.

"Customers will seek us out for their favorite designers. Brigade provides designer names that put massive dollars in the marketplace," he said.

But running an independent, multi-brand boutique is tough.

"There have been lavoffs and cutbacks. Walk my floor. You'll see that it's

definitely not the inventory I once had," he said. Once more people move into downtown's pricy lofts, he believes that the shop will enjoy more business.

Carl Louisville spent more than a decade serving as the director for the flagship of the Prada fashion house on Rodeo Drive. But a few years ago he invested his life savings in opening a luxe store in what was then a grungy Art District at the edge of Los Angeles. He described it as "luxury in the raw"

and recalled the typical reaction to his idea: 'You're crazy."

OPEN LATE: The No Season boutique

and bar crowd in its downtown Los Angeles

When he opened Guerilla Atelier by selling refined European brands and U.S. designers such as Juliana Cho in a gritty setting, he found success. He said that his sales for the first quarter of 2015 increased 52 percent over last year.

Louisville said boutique retailers go out of business because they don't understand the unique sensibilities of the downtown resident.

"Downtown is not a place for anything that looks remotely like it could be something on the Westside. People are starving for a new experience. It was my intention that you would have a new experience of sight, sound and aromas," he said.

To give people something different, Louisville has hosted art shows from New York artists Knowledge Bennett and Karen Bystedt. He has piped in music from Hôtel Costes, a Paris hotel with a luxe, boutique sensibility. Guerilla Atelier does offer its customers a little taste of the Westside, with its permanent shop-in-shop from the Santa

Monica, Calif.-based shop Ron Robinson.

He said his business did not skip a beat when it moved from Third Street in the Art District to Hewitt Street. "It is what we tried to do without the hoopla," he said. "If highend luxury restaurants can work in downtown Los Angeles, so can high-end luxury retail. This is destination retail."

No Season opened at 110 Winston St. in downtown Los Angeles in November. Emily and Keith Wilson, a brother-and-sister team, chose to stay open relatively late—until 9 p.m.—most nights. They stay open late because their neighborhood is populated by night birds. "It's a lunch, dinner and drinks crowd," Emily Watson said.



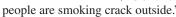
WON'T LEAVE: The high-end neighbors of Beautiful Fül shuttered this year, but Alejandro Rodriguez, the brand's founder, plans for his flagship store to stay in downtown Los Angeles.

Downtown's toughest problem

Another issue frustrating boutique retail in Los Angeles is the district's massive homeless problem. According to media reports, Los Angeles

County's homeless population increased 12 percent this year.

Julia Blake closed down her physical store for Pale Violet on the corner of Seventh and Spring in the Historic Core District in March because there were too many altercations with some Skid Row residents. "When you have young females working by themselves in the store, it's frightening when these aggressive people come in the store," she said. "It's hard to sell a \$150 dress when



Blake, who lives in downtown Los Angeles, reopened Pale Violet as a pure-play e-commerce shop with offices in the Fashion District. "I do think I will have another store in downtown Los Angeles, maybe in five years," she said. "It will take time for it to develop. I love downtown. I live in this community. It was just bad timing for our

Brigham Yen, a real estate broker and editor of the widely read real estate blog "DTLA Rising," said that downtown Los Angeles' homeless problem has kept boutique retail from growing faster.

"It discourages people from wanting to walk in downtown," he said.

It also has pushed retailers to look for alternative spaces in neighborhoods such as South Park and the Financial District, which were built in a way that is less ideal for boutiques and retail, he contends.

'Downtown Los Angeles will be amazing one day and the undisputed commercial hub of the region," he said. "It will take a decade or more to get to that point."

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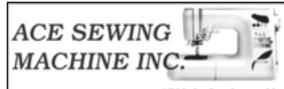
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Messenger Bags

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Fidelity Denim Fifteen Twenty Final Touch Finley Fluff by Acme Fontlab For Love & Liberty Forever Unique Forgotten Grace Fraiche by J Fredd and Basha Free Heart Freeloader Freeway Freida Rothman French Connection Men's & Women's Contemporary Collection Frenzii Frock Shop Funky Yoga Gaucho Sur Generation Love Gentle Fawn George Loves Giles & Brother GLAM Global Green Dragon **Gretty Zueger** Groceries Apparel Guess Belts Gypsy 05 Gypsy 05 SAND Gypsy Souls h.i.p Hair Accessories Hale Bob Halloday Jeans Halo Happy Socks Hard Tail Harvest Haute Hippie Havaiana: Hazel Heart Soul Heather Hidden Heart Hipanema Hourglass Lily Hudson Jeans Hunter Bell Hybrid I Heart UGG Kid's Footwear I.Madeline IDI Idlebird Illia Ilse Iacobsen Ilux Indigenous Industria Candles International Fashions Invisibelt Ivan Grundahl I Brand lack **Jacob Davis** Jacob Davis USA James Jeans James Perse

the New Mart

Janna Conner JET by John Eshaya li Oh Jimmy Taverniti lo & Me Joe Joed Belts Joe's Jeans Men's & Women's loh John Varvatos Bags, Belts & Wallets John Varvatos Men's Key Chains/Cuffs Johnny Was Collection loie Jolie losie Ioules from the UK Jude **JWLA** Karen by Karen Kane Karen Capil Karen Kane Hats, Jewelry, Women Karen Klein Karlita Designs Karma Kreations Kay Celine Kaya Di Koko Kelly Wearstler Kerisma Black Kerisma Knits Kerisma T-Luxe Kersh Kiboots Kid Tails Kissed By A Hippie Kling Knitted Dove/Love Dove **KOA Swim** Kokun Cashmere Koral - Activewear Krazy Larry Kut from the Kloth LA Fine I A Made La Natura LA Soiree Lace & Whiskey Lacoste Footwear Lacoste Footwear Men, Women & Kids Lacoste Handbags Ladission L'AGENCE Lan Jaenicke Lapis LATS Laura J Designs Lavender Brown Leatherrock Leibl '38 LEO & SAGE Letol Level 99 Liberty Garden Libre

Life Is Good

Line Knitwear

Lisa Todd

Lola Jeans

Lori lack

Love + Grace

Lolly

Lost

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Sugar High

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