Feeling Slouchy

With cold weather comes the need to get cozy, and what better way than with layer upon layer of fall’s boyish basics. Here, Assembly’s merino wool overcoat and pants; Jonathan Simkhai’s polyester and rayon jacket, and Shades of Grey by Micah Cohen’s cotton and polyester shirt. Pretty Loafers shoes. For slouchy layers on the fall runways, see wwd.com/fashion-news.
Armani Group settles with tax authorities

Giorgio Armani is the latest Italian fashion company to settle with the Italian Revenue Agency. Currently, Bulgari, Giorgio Armani, and Luxottica all opted for a settlement to avoid going to trial.

Twenty years ago, it was extremely common for Italian fashion groups to create subsidiaries abroad for a more favorable tax regime. However, these subsidiaries are not only operative, but also feature an international strategy management and an effective board of directors.

In the last five years, the tax agency has tightened the belt, and fashion companies risk being audited by any agency’s audit, which can seriously damage their image. He added, referring to the numerous settlements made by Italian fashion firms.

Armani has settled tax disputes with the Italian authorities in the past. The designer made two settlements in 1996 because of tax mistakes, one of which resulted from an Italian tax police. This resulted from a major probe into the Guardia di Finanza, Italy’s fiscal police, part of the Clean Hands action.

Without the scandal, Walmex would have pressed ahead with plans to open 500 to 600 stores a year in the region, analysts noted.

“Basically, they have a 15 percent potential revenue increase,” said Mexico City-based senior retail analyst, who requested anonymity. “In the last analyst preview, they provided data, about increasing retail space 5 percent this year. In past years, however, they would talk about an 8 to 10 percent expansion.

“They showed us maps where about the stores would be, but this year there were no maps.”

According to Sanchez, Walmex will assess the number of stores that would be able to open in each country. aquillio Sanchez Viguez, Walmex’s regional corporate affairs director, revealed to WWD.

He said Guatemala and Costa Rica, where the discounters operate seven and six stores, respectively, could be on the list in 2013, but not Nicaragua, home of Walmex supermarkets, with the format possibly making a long-planned arrival in Nicaragua as well.

Walmex sells a range of private and multi-branded unisex children’s clothing brands such as Simply Basics, Carter’s, Oshkosh and Children’s Place. It operates 670 stores in the region, 40 percent of which are hypermarkets and 60 percent smaller foodstuff and discount retailers.

Sanchez said Walmex will continue to strengthen its lead in Central America, where it has 20 hypermarkets.

Walmex’s fortune could improve this year if consumer spending rebounds in the second half on the back of a series of structural reforms expected to boost economic growth.

Net operating profit could jump 1.5 percent, while same-store sales on a group level could rise 1 percent after falling by an equal percentage last year.

In Mexico, Walmex operates 243 megastores as well as Suburbia, mainly a mass-market clothing chain, and Rodolfo Acosta, president and CEO, has cut 10 percent of the hypermarket chain.

Walmex has said this year’s capex will go toward improving logistics, bolstering operating efficiencies and group synergies.

Hernandez said the company should focus more on boosting discounts and promotions and less on e-commerce, since key rivals can compete on price. Crucially, Walmex must increase same-store operating profit margins. Profit margins were split in half during the last recession.

Like other analysts, Hernandez recently cut Walmex’s investment grade to BB+ from Baa3.

Marisol Huerta, an analyst with Banorte bank, added Walmex must streamline management or lose its market lead to competitors.

Alejandro Marcos of Intercam brokerage added, “Clearly their strategy is not working. If you don’t have same-store sales growth in a growing economy, that’s a problem.”

MEXICO CITY — Wal-Mart Stores Inc.’s Walmex subsidiary could open 35 stores in Central America this year to offset sluggish growth in Mexico, where the 2012 bribery scandal stalled a breakneck expansion.

Walmex, as the Mexican and Central American unit of the world’s largest retailer is known, will invest $1.1 billion to bolster its Central American retail space by nearly 7 percent compared with 5 percent in Mexico — a scenario which was a target growth band had been more strongly focused on Mexico.

“We could very well open 30 to 35 stores, but the number will depend on permits we are able to get in each country.” Aquillio Sanchez Viguez, Walmex’s regional corporate affairs director, revealed to WWD.

He said Guatemala and Costa Rica, where the discounters operate seven and six stores, respectively, could be on the list in 2013, but not Nicaragua, home of Walmex supermarkets, with the format possibly making a long-planned arrival in Nicaragua as well.

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I wasn’t a designer, but I could tell generally what could sell and what didn’t sell.”

SIDNEY KIMMEL

THE QUIET GIANT’S S

I started Jones in January of 1970. It was a division of W.R. Grace. I agreed to work for John Meyer of Norwich. He had sold his company to W.R. Grace. They had two bad years in a row and didn’t know what to do with it. They hired me to fix John Meyer, and I agreed to work there, with the provision that they would allow me to set up a separate label, which I called Jones New York, with the idea that if they ever sold the business, I’d have first crack at it. Five years later, they came to me and said, “We want out of the apparel business, it’s too risky.” They gave it to us. We had no money. My partner at the time was a guy named Jerry Rubin. We each put in about $8,000. We were doing about $100 million and pledged all receivables, and we managed to keep it alive.

In 1983, Jerry heard as a sideline I was going to make a movie. He was an accountant and he depended on me. He was an old-time employee of W.R. Grace and he engineered the deal out. Rubin didn’t have the confidence that I could continue to run the company, and he was afraid I would take my eye off the ball and make movies. My first movie, “Blame It on Rio,” was a hit, and I figured I was in the wrong business. Jerry said he wanted $9 million for his half of the [Jones] business. I didn’t have the $8 million, but my factors lent me the $9 million to buy him out. I haven’t seen him since. It was a dream of mine to own my own business.

WWW: Talk about the early days of Building the business.
S.K.: When I started the company, I knew that I had to get a niche, so I wouldn’t have a lot of competition. I’d look at certain lines like Cacharel. They were not edgy, but a little bit removed from dumb clothes. As a matter of fact, I took my first ad out in April 1970 in the New York Times Sunday Magazine section. The line I used was “Jones New York, No Wonder Everyone’s Trying to Keep Up With Us.” I hadn’t shipped my first product yet. It was April, and I wasn’t shipping my first line until May or June, and people were calling me up and saying, “Boy, you’ve got chutzpah.”

I learned after three or four seasons we were cutting our clothes a little too close to the body for the American woman. The French woman at that time was way ahead of the American customer. The American woman had an average size of 10 or 12, and in Europe, the average size was a 2 or a 4. So we would ship clothes and we would get calls. I remember the first line that we shipped. I got a call from a buyer at Bonwit Teller at the time, who said, “Your clothes are too tight. I want to reorder 36 pieces, but I want to reorder them all in larger sizes.” It took me two or three years to catch on that I had to ease up on my fit. If you ease up on your fit too much, it becomes dum, sloppy. I learned how to ease up on a little bit, and our sales doubled. I was attracting more customers. I was offering a slightly more generous fit. I was appealing to a mother and a daughter.

CHASING THE CAREER WOMAN
WWW: Did you ride the wave of the growth of the working woman?
S.K.: That’s who I was catering to. The girl who was going to work. If a woman has good taste, she can go into Target and come out looking pretty cool. But a lot of women don’t have good taste. They depend on the label. That’s why the success of the designer label.
Most designers don’t make their money in the designer garment, they make it in worldwide licenses, for beauty, shoes.

**WWD:** We’ve seen a lot of companies grow up with their customer; and then they fail to attract younger customers.

**S.K.** The trick as a merchandiser is to stay one step ahead of the game. I made adjustments every year based on what sold and what didn’t sell. And it got to the point where I realized that I developed an aptitude for how to edit clothes. I wasn’t a designer, but I could tell generally what could sell and what didn’t sell. I knew what colors to stay away from. Certain colors were always marked down, like brown and green. Maybe today it’s different. Sixty percent of our sales were black and another 20 percent were white, and then we’d have some seasonal fashion colors.

**WWD:** Did you find that not having a recognizable designer name was a detriment? Nowadays, so many better sportswear brands are named after designers —

Michael Michael Kors, Lauren Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Vince Camuto.

**S.K.** Jones was not an asset name. Jones was a generic name. It worked for me for 40 years. When I started, I had an advantage that no longer exists: I had 3,000 mom-and-pop shops around the country. Freestanding stores, sole proprietors. I had a road force of 30-odd people. One of my saddest days was when I realized stores were shrinking and being eaten up by other people, and I had to fire 32 of my close, wonderful guys. People would come into New York and buy that way.

**BREAKING OUT OF THE PACK**

**WWD:** Did you build your business on mom-and-pops, or department stores in those days?

**S.K.** A combination. I had a few early admirers. Guys like Marvin Traub, Frank Doroff, Michael Gould, the late Kal Rutttenstein. I had no idea how successful I was going to be. It was very competitive. In my building alone, 1141 Broadway, we counted at least 30 competitors in my niche, which

**WWD:** Any difficult periods? S.K. In 1987, I ran into a snag and things weren’t going well, and Jones had hit a bull. We were having problems with Gloria Vanderbilt, Evan-Picone, Jones Sport and Giraffe. I had a Black Friday. We had 3,000 employees, and one Friday I had to fire 1,000 of them to survive. That was it, 1987. We spread ourselves too thin, too many labels. At that time, I had about 18 brands. But in 1991, four years later, I went public. After I reduced the company by one-third, I found out I was doing better with fewer employees.

**WWD:** What were you looking to achieve by going public?

**S.K.** I was looking to take some money out of the company. I remember the day I went public. Merrill Lynch handed me the offer. I went down the line, just for starters. I remember thinking back when I was a kid, “If I had $25,000, I would be blessed.”

**WWD:** What labels did you acquire over the years?

**S.K.** I acquired Anne Klein, Kasper, came along with that deal. Gloria Vanderbilt. One day I got a call from a buyer from Bloomingdale’s named Leonard Rosenberg, who was married to Colombe Nicholas, who ran Donn. I liked Donn for a few years. Bernard Arnault [CEO of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton] is in the States and we walked over to the store together, and he looked at my Donn pieces and said, “These are great.”

**WWD:** We paid $25,000, and I would be blessed.

**WWD:** What did labels like Ann Klein and Saks Fifth Avenue do for you?

**S.K.** They were a way to get an entry into specialty stores. At that time, it was a way to get into the “snob” stores.

**WWD:** How did losing the Lauren Ralph Lauren license affect the company?

**S.K.** First of all, we lost about $50 million in sales and profits. That hurt badly. It gave me the opportunity to start our own label, which we called Jones Signature. We picked up some of the skills that I had, the kind of business that I had a very good relationship with Ralph. I always admired him and we always got along well. I recognized why he wanted to take his label back. He hired Jacki because I refused to make his ceo. People on my board

back to you in two weeks.” We were growing. I had 49 or 51 stores up and over 50 million in sales. We went public in May of 1991, by then, that’s where the stock grew, our profits, our business. We hit $75 million in 2005. We dipped as low as $3.3 billion and now we’re at $5.7 billion.

**WWD:** Do you think the company took its eye off the ball when it bought Nine West?

**S.K.** That was one of my better moves, I thought that I was making a business overnight. I took a lot of heat when I bought Nine West. Even today, I think most of the people on my board, was against my doing it (and didn’t think I put me out of my contract). We settled. Initially he wanted to double the royalty to 14 percent, and I said, “Are you kidding?” I would have stayed with him at 14 percent, and all I had to do was raise the price a couple of bucks and I would have covered it. But a week or two later, he realized that he really wanted his label back.

**WWD:** Jacki Nemeyer had been president and chief operating officer of Jones, and ceo and president of Jones’s better apparel group before joining Ralph Lauren Corp. Tell me about her?

**S.K.** Terrific woman. The mistake was not making her my successor. I was persuaded to bring in Peter Bonepart, a very articulate, good-looking guy who wasn’t a CEO and it was a mistake. I made a lot of mistakes. I pleaded with Wes [Card] to take the job. The only way Peter ever made [as CEO] was buying Barneys. We paid $973.1 million and sold it for $67 million.

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Ralph Lauren and Sidney Kimmel in 1998.

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Ralph Lauren and Sidney Kimmel in 1998.
We couldn't do that because we didn't have the benefit of that designer label. I used to tell them also, it's better to make a profit on $8 billion than to lose money on $4 billion.

I would have reengineered the lines [and brought the price down] to compete with the large box stores. When you manufacture your garments, and sell Bloomingdale's and they have to take their markup, you end up not being able to compete with the people who sell direct. So that's a challenge. H&M and Zara are putting stuff at retail that cost me more than that to make it before I even sold it to Bloomingdale's.

WWD: Do you think Jones missed out on international opportunities?

S.K.: Nobody was interested in Jones [overseas]. They were interested in designer labels. The only ones doing well overseas are the shoes. Nine West, Kurt Geiger and Stuart Weitzman.

WWD: Were there any business opportunities that crossed your desk that you turned down and regretted?

S.K.: Michael Kors, when he was doing $5 million a year, came in to talk to me, and I regret not signing him up. I don't have any regrets, I'm such a lucky guy.

WWD: Do you still feel emotionally attached to Jones?

S.K.: I wouldn't be able to sleep at night if I did. I had to become less emotional about the whole thing. I saw the thing sliding. The guy who's buying the company never even called me. When you print that, he'll call me the next day. But I'll be, "Leave me alone, it's too late."

WWD: Have you been in a department store lately and looked at the Jones department?

S.K.: No, I don't want to see them anymore. I would go in there and get sick from what I saw.

WWD: Do you go into the stores?

Where do you shop? And what companies do you admire?


I admire Ralph, of course. I admire Michael Kors, although his big thrust is building accessories. Armani, of course. I think Tom Ford is one of the better ones. If I was still in business today, I'd persuade Tom to let me do his lower-price women's line.

THE FUTURE OF JONES

WWD: Are you happy with the Sycamore people? And what do you think of selling the company for $15 a share? What do you think they'll do with the company?

S.K.: I never met them. I was hoping we could get more than $15 a share. Not because of me, but because of the other shareholders. I had virtually sold all of my stock. I've now sold 99 percent of my stock. It was the best price we could get. I voted yes. Because if we didn't get $15, two years later, we would have gotten $10. If I felt it was going in the right direction... It meant nothing to me financially. It was my baby. You don't want to see it die on the vine.

Wes is walking away with a big parachute. So is Richard. I own less than 100,000 shares. I think they'll hold on to Jones and Nine West. I think their eye is on growing Stuart Weitzman [Weitzman became an independent company earlier this month when chairman Stuart Weitzman and ceo Wayne Kulkin became partners with Sycamore, which has been a very good acquisition for us. Stuart [Weitzman] is a great merchandiser and knows how to make a shoe. I hope they hold onto the Jones business. I hope it doesn't go the way of Liz Claiborne. I would hate it [if it landed in J.C. Penney], but who knows what Sycamore has in mind for it?

WWD: What do you think your legacy will be when it comes to Jones?

S.K.: They'll probably forget all about me. It's one of those labels that's around and then gone. I don't know what will happen with Jones. I don't know what Sycamore will do with Jones.

WWD: When you retired as CEO, were there regrets or were you happy to be done?

S.K.: I was happy to spend more time with my family. I didn't want that way. It's not easy to build a $5 billion business from scratch. It took a lot of hard work.
Kimmel’s Hollywood Connection

(Continued from page 7) into the spring of 2015. And I’m prepping another movie that we start shooting in New York in June called “Sleeping With Other People.” It’s a light comedy with Jason Sudeikis and Alison Brie.

I also say [on the cast] depending on the partners. I sometimes do it alone, and sometimes with a partner. Sometimes it’s Tim, sometimes it’s Mark, or, I know, me, and I will become a partner.

**WW:** Are there other honchos from Seventh Avenue who made the switch to the film industry? **S.K.:** If you go back 150 years, Louis B. Mayer was from fashion, Sam Goldwyn was from fashion, and Adolph Zukor. All these guys started out in New York in the fashion business and then discovered talkies. Bob Evans made a couple of films with Harry Brown from Sunset Sound Studios. Max Raab did “A Clockwork Orange.”

**WW:** How many movies will you do a year? **S.K.:** One year I did six, and one year I did none, and I average two or three a year. I have got 10 things [we’re working on at once]. It’s very difficult, sometimes we’re interested in a project, and the next thing I know, Fox came in and swooped it up and paid a higher price. I didn’t bid the studios. They’re working with other people’s money. I’m working with my own money.

**WW:** Are there a lot of people like you out in Hollywood? **S.K.:** Fewer and fewer because it’s very hard to make a lot of money to be independent producer. I need the studios to distribute my movies. It’s a difficult balance. You need to market a film, otherwise it gets lost. It’s quite a challenge to be profitable in the post-production when you consider that 60 to 70 percent of the movies that are made in America are out of recoup their investment. You look for one good one that will cover the losses on two or three others.

I’ll do a movie for $5 million or $10 million for $40 million. It depends what the bottom-line risk is. How much I get invested, how much I get out of tax rebates. Sometimes if you have a very good script, you can get an actor to play for virtually nothing. Matthew McConaughey did “Dallas Buyers Club” at $5 million, because he needed to work for scale. Now he can command whatever he wants on the next movie.

**WW:** Is Sidney Kimmel Entertainament profitable? **S.K.:** No, it’s not profitable, which is why I’m selling. Eventually it will get sold, so it will recoup a good part of what I’ve invested in the library of old movies. Movies have ongoing value as a business of TV around the world.

**WW:** Which movie do you love the most of what you’ve done? **S.K.:** I’d have to say “9 1/2 Weeks,” because it was such a great experience. “The Lincoln Lawyer” and “The Place Beyond the Pines” are two that I’m really proud of, they spend a fortune on the players. Once I was thinking of buying the Sixers. When I saw this contract, I saw that if I buy this team I’d have to give Allen [Geery] as a one-year option contract, I’m going to pass.

**WW:** Do either Caroline or you have children? **S.K.:** Neither one of us has kids. She changed my life. With Caroline, we haven’t had a day of stress in 15 years. I met her at a black-tie event. I was with René [Rowan] and she was with a couple of girlfriends. [Later] I was sitting in the office of Ronald Perelman and he’s always talking about girls [and asked him], “Do you know a girl named Caroline Tose?” He gave me Caroline’s number. She had just gotten divorced and was living in New York. I called her up for a date. I asked, “Why don’t we have dinner one night?” She said, “How about tonight?” and I knew she was the girl for me. We’ve never been apart in 15 years.

**WW:** Who have been your favorite directors to work with? **S.K.:** I’ve had several good ones. Stanley Donen did “Charade,” on Rio,” Adrien Lyne did “9 1/2 Weeks,” Marc Forster did “The Kite Runner,” Pasquale Bianco did “United 93.”

**WW:** Would you consider producing TV shows? **S.K.:** We’re getting into TV now. We just optioned a true story that happened in Philadelphia. Two young Jewish girls working as reporters. They wrote a book, “Busted,” which is about police corruption in Philadelphia. It would be a series. [As far as TV] it’s less risky, and if you hit one you can make a lot of money.

**PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES**

**WW:** Why did you focus on cancer charities and performing arts? **S.K.:** My closest friend lost a daughter to cancer. We ran around the country looking for hope, and he ended up in San Diego at a little clinic there. They told me he had experimental things that might work. He got better. I gave him the clinic initial $5 million to jump-start that thing. She eventually died, but that gave me a lead. Harry Connick visited her in the hospital and he remembered it because he was a favorite of hers. It just compelled me to do something with cancer research. I knew that eventually the two major thrusts of my charity were going to be cancer and cardiac.

**WW:** Why do you think you’re the biggest individual donor to cancer research? **S.K.:** I’ve been told that I’m the country’s largest individual donor to cancer research. I think that somebody that will top me someday. I’d like to see Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos write a check for $6 billion.

**WW:** Do you think they are close to finding a cure for cancer? **S.K.:** I don’t think there will ever be a cure. Hopefully one day it will become a controllable chronic disease. There are certainly advances and strides. They’ve done wonderful things.

**WW:** How much money have you given to charity so far? **S.K.:** I’ve given $700 million and there will be more. When I pass away, all that money goes to charity. Except what I leave for my wife.

**WW:** Why did you decide to donate to the performing arts in Philadelphia? **S.K.:** I have a Philadelphia, and Ed Rendell, who was then mayor; is a close friend of mine. I got a call there, and he asked me what I could do for Philadelphia. He said they’re planning something on Broad Street and they want to make it the opera for Pennsylvania. And that’s when we came up with the idea of building a major opera, the Kimmel Center. The Philadelphia Orchestra is there. The Kimmel Center controls the Academy of Music and the Merriam Theater. Our new building has great acoustics; they have an arts Scholars Program. I’m sure my wife will continue with it long after I’m gone. We get about 100 applications a year from students who want to go into their first love, possibly pick 15 of the most promising submissions and we give them $200,000. It costs me about $4 million a year. They come to me, we have a dinner and they are working doctors: I’m giving the students a jump-start. They have no money and they need to buy equipment. I’m giving $100,000 a year for two years. I’ve been doing it for 17 years. We have about 270 doctors. The lead brain surgeon at UCLA is a woman named Linda Liau, she was one of the first recipients of the Kimmel Center grants. She saved my friend’s life.

**WW:** Do you get a lot of people soliciting donations? **S.K.:** Everyone who is known to be charitable gets letters. Everybody is asking. I get letters from across the world. There are some people who don’t give a penny and give it to me and say they’re not a proponent of inherited wealth.

**MALIBU LIFESTYLE**

**WW:** Tell me about your lifestyle? **S.K.:** I love this house. I’m in this house eight days. I took it in by itself within five minutes. It took me about two weeks to negotiate. I bought it for $10 million. I want to keep it. I gave that money to any lawyer. ‘“Please can you leave the pictures and I’ll pay you for them?” It was 25 years of his guests on “The Tonight Show.” She wouldn’t leave them. My wife decorated this house. She could have been a great stylist.

Out here you don’t get dressed up. She got me involved in the gym. I do cardio and I do weights. I have a trainer. We’re living the good life here. I can afford it and why not? I used to play schoolyard basketball. I used to play hockey. I know, not everybody. We use Michael Caine very well. I’ve done two or three movies with Michael. He has a beautiful wife, Shakira.

**WW:** Are you digitally savvy? **S.K.:** I don’t do e-mail to this day. I have a secretary who does e-mail, and I have a wife who does e-mail. I don’t even carry a cell phone. I carry a cell phone, but it was it was cumbersome. I

**WW:** Do you travel to Europe frequently? **S.K.:** The only place I really enjoy going is Paris. I go once a year. I have my own plane. I don’t like to travel as much as I used to. You get a little bit complacent when you have a place like this. We’ll do weekends in Vegas. It’s 50 minutes away by plane. We just came back from Aspen for 10 days. My wife is a great skier.

**WW:** What type of artwork do you like to collect? **S.K.:** I collect good stuff. I don’t buy cheap art. I’d rather buy one good piece than five little pieces just to hang on the wall. I used to be an active collector. I don’t have enough wall space. It’s all glass. There are two Picassos, there’s a Giacometti sculpture, I have a Henry Moore sculpture. The Man Ray artwork. I was a bit of an impressionist. I like Impressionist, Matisse, Picasso, I love Giacometti. When you buy art, you buy art. It’s like having a driver. There’s a Rodin of three men. Most of the art I bought before I met Caroline. We have some pieces being sold in May in Christie’s. I was able to rescue it. It came out of the apartment in Beverly Hills. I’m selling a Léger. I have a New York home near Central Park South. If it wasn’t for the weather I’d spend more time in New York. We used to go to the South of France twice a year. I look back here [on the oceanfront property], and it’s the South of France to me.
Dubai Event Takes a Local Designer Focus

By RITU UPADHYAY

DUBAI — While most of Dubai’s malls are filled with international brands, some retailers here have taken a gamble on local designers — and realized a payoff.

Consider the Dubai Shoe District, the world’s largest shoe store, launched last year at Dubai Mall by the Chalhoub Group: It counts Jordanian footwear brand Aennis Eunis as one of its top sellers.

“The community of shoe lovers is here to discover,” the store’s general manager Rania Marrj told a panel discussion at the third edition of Fashion Forward, an event that showcases the work of promising designers based in the Middle East. “We are happy to offer a platform to the emerging designers both regionally and internationally.”

Fern Mallis, the originator of New York Fashion Week and an industry consultant, shared her experience creating a platform for New York’s design community. “Dubai is in the right place at the right time. The Middle East is one of the fashion industry’s most vibrant markets,” she said. “A third of the world’s couture clients come from the Middle East. The world’s top fashion brands are not only courting you, they are here.”

Still, local designers will face the same challenges their peers in New York did two decades ago: attracting potential buyers and an audience to support them, Mallis said.

In Dubai, regional brands have taken a backseat to international names. Fashion Forward aims to help designers streamline their offerings to better appeal to local and international buyers. Styled after traditional fashion weeks, the event includes three days of couture and ready-to-wear shows, an exhibition space featuring regional accessories brands and a series of lectures.

Bong Guerrero, founder and chief executive officer of Fashion Forward, said the event is a way to respond to the needs of the design community. “A lot of designers here start off very ‘mom-and-pop’, working out of small studios and apartments with one or two tailors. They need financial support,” he said.

This season organizers partnered with Eureeca.com to launch crowdsourced capital for the designers.

Accessory designer Roula Ghlayini of Pouppee Couture was the first to successfully use the service. Since January, she has raised more than $100,000 via the site, exceeding her investment goal.

The designer, whose bags are hand-crafted in Beirut, was featured in British Vogue as one of the hottest 100 bags last year. Despite the media attention, she lacked the funds to fully develop the proper marketing material to attract an array of buyers. “I was very focused on product development,” she said. The Emperor 1668 — designed by three brothers of Iranian origin: Babak, Farhan and Haman Golkar — was another breakout brand at the event. The trio began with a line of tailored men’s wear and last year added women’s rtw. Now that their clothes are selling strongly at Saks Fifth Avenue and Galeries Lafayette in Dubai, they are poised to take their brand to a global market, partnering with Marvin Traub and Associates for representation in New York showrooms.

“There is a lot of caution from brands born from here, when you are not showing in Paris and Milan or part of that clique. But we are very proudly a brand born from Dubai, and soon it will have its own power,” said Babak Golkar.

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Worker Strike Spreads to Jiangxi

By LARA FARRAR

SHANGHAI — A strike involving tens of thousands of workers at factories of one of the world’s largest sneaker producers in the southern Chinese city of Dongguan has now spilled over into manufacturing facilities located in another province.

At least 2,000 workers in Jiangxi, a province in north central China, are striking at a factory operated by the Taiwanese-owned Yue Yuan Holdings Ltd, which makes shoes for a number of global brands, including Adidas AG and Nike Inc. Lin Dong, an employee of the Shenzhen-based labor rights nongovernmental organization Spring Breeze, said the workers in Jiangxi decided to protest to “support their colleagues in Dongguan.”

It continues to appear there is no immediate end in sight to the protests, which began in early April at Yue Yuan’s Dongguan factory over employee benefits. The protests, initially small, escalated last week to what some labor rights organizations estimate to be at least some 40,000 workers. Yue Yuan has not responded to repeated interview requests.

Adidas said it is continuing to monitor the situation. A Nike spokesman said the company is continuing to monitor the dialogue between factory management and the workers, as well as production at the factory [in Dongguan].”

Labor rights groups say this is one of the largest worker protests in recent Chinese history.

When reached by phone, some employees declined to speak to foreign reporters out of concern their communication was being monitored by the government. The Hong Kong-based China Labor Bulletin said there continues to be a heavy police presence in Dongguan and that some employees have been detained. Mass protests are illegal in China, while labor unions not sanctioned by the government are also forbidden.

Late on Friday, the government-backed Guangdong Provincial Federation of Trade Unions said on its micro blog account that it has sent staff to Dongguan to engage in the negotiation process between Yue Yuan and employees.

While the scale of the protests in Dongguan, and now in Jiangxi as well, is perhaps unprecedented, they are not a new phenomenon here. Increasingly, blue-collar workers have been showing a willingness to stand up for their rights — whether it be higher wages or safer workplaces. According to China Labor Bulletin, the number of worker protests in China this year is up by a third.

The Yue Yuan employees say the company has been shortchanging them by failing to make adequate payments to their social insurance accounts. According to the state-run CCTV news agency, the strike has exposed loopholes in the country’s social security scheme, as well as the growing pressure on manufacturers to keep up with rising labor costs. CCTV said in a report that Yue Yuan is offering cash rewards to try to lure employees back to work.

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Fashion Jewelry and Accessories in Individual Showrooms

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Unabashed Glamour

IT STARTED WITH a postcard class: “Introduction to Interior Design.” In the early Nineties, Jay Jeffers, unhappy with his advertising career track, decided to make a change. “I was just flipping through a course schedule for an extension program through [the University of California] Berkeley,” says Jeffers. “I was going to take a painting class, but [Interior Design] was available and starting the next week, so I took it. I was like, ‘This is cool.’” Two decades later, that introductory course led Jeffers to his own independent design firm, Jeffers Design Group, a stand-alone home-goods store, Cavalier, and now, a coffee-table book, “Collected Cool,” from Rizzoli. “I’ve photographed these projects, I’ve put them online. I have a portfolio, but I had never really looked at it all together,” says Jeffers of the book, his first. “I never really looked at it that way. One day we had it all spread out over a table, and the writer, Alisa Carroll, looked at me and was like, ‘Holy s--t. You’ve done a lot of work.’” The 231-page image-heavy book, which includes a foreword by fellow interior designer Jamie Drake, categorizes Jeffers’ work into thematic chapters, such as “Unabashed Glamour” and “Bold Beposk.” The title itself, “Collected Cool,” refers to the underlying theme of all of the designs. “It’s things that have been collected over time,” he explains. “I feel that’s what gives soul to a house. I’m not one for minimalism. I want something that feels lived in. I don’t want a chair that you can’t sit in or that’s made out of uncomfortable plastic. I’m more about living in your house and enjoying your house — it’s a living, breathing entity.”

Alongside the envy-inducing interior design shots are quirky quips that give the reader an insight into Jeffers’ quick-witted mind. “Though it looks petite, this curved settee easily accommodates two perfect for cozying up to your neighbor at a sexy dinner party,” he writes of a lounge chair. Elsewhere, he describes a hand-hammered aluminum bar cart as “utterly 007-worthy (the Roger Moore Bond, naturally).”

The Jeffers Design Group will be celebrating its 15th anniversary in July, but Jeffers still recalls his first independent project — a 4,000-square-foot home in San Francisco. “I was terrified and excited,” he says. “I was so focused on every detail. Sometimes I was on the job site at 7 a.m., because I’d wake up in the middle of the night, like, ‘Oh my god, did I measure that thing right?’”

Now equipped with a full staff, Jeffers finds himself taking the backseat on more and more projects. “You definitely have to let some things go because the projects are bigger,” he explains. “I’m not a micromanager. I’m more, ‘Figure it out, show me, and don’t be upset if I edit.’ But it was a learning experience for me to let go.”

Jeffers has also had to learn to let go when it comes to the ultimate collaborator — the client. “I’m very much from the school of ‘It’s a project,’” he says. “‘When I’m done, I walk away from it and my clients have to live there. So, I want it to reflect who they are and who they are as people. The only real struggle is when there are family heirlooms that really don’t go with what’s going on. So then, it’s like, ‘OK, those can go in the guest room.’” — LAUREN MCCARTHY

Movie Club

ON THE SECOND NIGHT of the Tribeca Film Festival, a dinner was held at Donna Karan’s Urban Zen Foundation in the West Village. Whoopi Goldberg, “The View” cohost, was first to walk in the door clad in a cape-style jacket. “I am always punctual. I don’t like being late,” she quips. “If I can be early in, I can be early out.” Goldberg was more than making an appearance. She is a film-festival juror this year, and the dinner on Thursday night, in partnership with the luxury watch company IWC Schaffhausen, was to bestow a $25,000 cash award — and watch, naturally — to a promising young filmmaker.

Amid the string of promotional events and parties that take place one right after the other, sometimes even simultaneously, during this festival, the dinner was a chance to pay tribute to a good cause and witness the next generation of film talent. The theme of the night was “For the Love of Cinema.” Goldberg was joined by other movie fans, like New York Knick (at least for the time being) Carmelo Anthony, who dwarfed her in their pictures together; and Susan Sarandon, Arnie Hammer, Karolina Kurkova, Adria Arjila, Elettra Rossellini Wiedemann, Anton Yelchin, Patrick Stewart, Heather Graham, James Marsden, Dev Patel and Olivia Palermo. “I think music, cinema, fashion, they’re creative arts. You just get lost in the moment and when something feels authentic and real in beautiful film, it moves you.” Karen Elson said.

Before dinner, singer Estelle reflected on being surrounded in a room of legendary actors — in particular Robert De Niro. “I met his wife, so my life is made. I’m pretty much good for the rest of my life,” she said referring to Grace Hightower.

On stage, she tried to a joke the mostly still crowd to shimmy a little — Kurkova gamely swayed her hips and clapped along, albeit at a distance, while Stewart’s wife Sunny Ozell was breaking it down on the dance floor and almost succeeded in getting the actor to join in. As soon as the four-song set was finished, true to her “early in, early out” philosophy, Goldberg gave the singer a hug and swooped down the stairs, cape flying out behind her.

— KRISTEN TAUSER
FASHION SCRAPS

FRIENDS IN FILM: Coach Inc. is the latest firm to partner with the Tribeca Film Festival, which runs through Sunday. Today, Coach will launch the collaboration by cohosting the Women in Film Brunch. In addition, the leather goods house is supporting the Nora Ephron Prize, which was created last year in honor of the late filmmaker and writer and features a $25,000 award for a writer or director whose distinctive voice embodies that of Ephron.

“The new relationship between TCF and Coach reflects our shared commitment to the cultural vibrancy of New York City and how it translates and shines beyond our borders,” said Stephanie Stahl, Coach’s executive vice president of marketing and strategy. — MARC KARIMZADEH

ARRIVING IN CHINA: Ann Demeulemeester has opened its first freestanding store on Mainland China. The retail space, located in the I·Dea Mall in central Shanghai, officially opened on Thursday night. The 947-square-foot unit is operated by the Hong Kong-based fashion retailer I.T Ltd., which has carried Ann Demeulemeester in its multibrand stores for a number of years.

Founding designer Ann Demeulemeester was on site for the opening, yet mainly in the background after handing over the creative director reins for the brand to Schaulin Meunier, an alumni of Maison Martin Margiela who has worked on Demeulemeester’s men’s wear since 2010. The celebration of the store opening included a demure presentation of the brand’s spring collection.

“This is a very energetic brand, and for fashion brands, it is really an interesting moment,” Meunier said. “China is going towards a more designer approach. We are really a designer brand, and we think the Chinese market is ready for this. That is a rising market, and it is important.”

Ann Demeulemeester also has retail locations in Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo. — LARA FARRAR

ADAM AT THE ART GALLERY: While it might seem that Maroon 5 front man Adam Levine, the lauded pop-culture collaborator with Knart, is a newcomer to fashion designing, he actually knew his way around a shoulder pad. His father, Fred Levine, owns a Southern California-based specialty store chain called M. Fredric and used to put the rocker to work. “I did work there in the warehouse,” the younger Levine recalled at a launch party for his women’s line at Ace Gallery in Beverly Hills on Thursday. “Back in the day when shoulder pads were in, I hanged them up on hooks behind the doors. He also played his guitar to entertain coworkers, who were astounded when the boss was on the way. ‘I’d never hide from my father,’” he said.

Levine and his collection were on full display at the Ace, displaying a piece of performance art. At one point in the evening, he was posing as guests stripped to their skivvies in front of a rack placed in the middle of the gallery and tried on kimono- and mire-embroidered bustiers, straw fedoras and other items. The festive looks fit right in with what women donned at last week’s Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, which Levine attended for the first time. “That was a good thing,” he said of the clothes being worn. “It’s like Levine will find himself wearing the line to go to the bar and smoke a cigarette. His style isRx—。“That’s all for me,” he said. — KHANN T.L. TRAN

MEMO PAD

STATE OF THE NEWSPAPER: Newspaper publishers were able to cobble together increases in circulation last year, according to the Newspaper Association of America, which released 2013 data on the business. In a press release entitled “Building a Business Model Evolving, Circulation Revenue Rising,” the NAA said circulation revenue for U.S. newspapers recorded the second consecutive year of growth, rising 3.7 percent to $10.87 billion in 2013. Circulation was lifted by a 4.7 percent rise in digital-only revenue and a 106 percent expansion of print and digital bundled circulation. But with many companies shifting to all-access packages, those increases came at the expense of print-only subscriptions, from home delivery and single-copy sales, which dropped 20 percent.

Total revenue slid 2.6 percent to $37.59 billion from $39.6 billion in 2012. By category, $23.57 billion came from advertising across all platforms, $10.87 billion from circulation and $3.15 billion from new and other sources.

The revenue loss, which was 1.5 percent, was weighed down by an 8.6 percent decline in print revenue, which totaled $17.2 billion. Those declines in print ads were partially due to drops in retail and national ads, which fell 8 percent, and classified advertising, which contracted 10.5 percent. Also pulling down ad revenue was niche and non-daily publishing, which experienced a 5.8 percent dip in revenues to $1.45 billion.

On the bright side, direct marketing sales increased 7.1 percent to $4.9 billion, as digital advertising eked out a 1.5 percent increase to $3.42 billion. About 24 percent of the growth came from advertising that appeared only in newspapers’ digital platforms, not in their print editions. New and other revenue, which accounted for just over 8 percent of total newspaper media revenue, included income from royalties, licensing and event marketing sales. Within that category, e-commerce continued to struggle, with revenues slipping 4 percent. — ALEXANDRA STEIGRAD

COLD FRONT: Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts is doing an encore for Louis Vuitton and will front the fall’s campaign. The Belgian actor and Kim Jones, men’s studio and style director at Vuitton, traveled to Ecuador last week to shoot a campaign with Peter Lindbergh the lensman. This a travel pro Jones posted some images on his Instagram account of the rugged and frosty island nation. — MILES SOCHA

JUST ADD WATER: After 13 years as senior editor of the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue, Diane Smith has seen her share of risqué swimwear; pristine beaches and brochure-worthy swimming pools. She’s quietly returned to the surf, so to speak, with the launch of the Diane Smith Swim a la Mode, Keep Chic on the Beach blog. While bikinis and maillots are her specialty, Smith is also sizing up some winterwear, resort, swimwear and whatever else strikes her fancy. — ROXY FEINBERG

ADVERTISER NEWS:

“Swim’s gingham bikini, Toss Designs’ striped travel bag and the Four Seasons Hotel in St. George’s Moorish Castle and the Tagus river. “We are really isolating ourselves there,” she said of the country. “I could seriously live there,“居 said of the Portugal property overlooking St. George’s Moorish Castle and the Tagus river. “It’s really isolating some of my favorite things.”

That includes an at-lunch-with series featuring pals such as model0s Lawrence D. Smith, who was also an executive producer of the 50th anniversary edition of the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue, knows of what she speaks. By her own estimates, she eyeballed 2,000 swimsuits each year at SI. Industry insiders have encouraged her to put her knowledge to use. After serving as executive producer of the book “Sports Illustrated Swimsuit 50 Years of Beautiful,” Smith left Time Inc. last year.

At this stage, there is no financial arrangement with any of the brands or companies that she features, though she does hope to get sponsors eventually.

“Right now it’s just a labor of love,” Smith said. — ROYREN FEINBERG

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Dior Homme Presents Line in China

By LARA FARRAR

SHANGHAI — As a testament to the growing sophistication as well as purchasing power of male consumers in China, Dior Homme showcased its collection to more than 700 guests on Friday night in a newly opened museum alongside the Huangpu, a river that cuts through the heart of this city of more than 20 million. It was the second time the brand has shown in Asia.

“It’s too bad you’re doing this again here in Shanghai makes me very happy and satisfied.” Kris Van Assche, creative director of Dior Homme, said during an interview before the presentation of the brand’s winter collection. “It proves Dior Homme is doing very well here. Obviously this is a strong market.”

Earlier this month, Christian Dior held its first haute couture show in Hong Kong.

Last spring, Dior Homme staged its first runway show outside of Paris, in Beijing. Friday’s event took place in the Long Museum, which has a stark interior of concrete walls, high ceilings and cavernous spaces reminiscent of the inside of a hull of a ship. Chinese models as well as models flown in from abroad showcased the collection on a two-tiered runway wrapping around a towering concrete wall.

The show ended with models lined up on an elevated runway against the wall, which was illuminated by digitally projected wall-paper of flowers, which are an inherent part of Dior’s DNA. Guests received small bouquets of lily of the valley, which was Christian Dior’s favorite flower:

“I would say tonight visually will be more spectacular.” Van Assche said of the Shanghai show compared with others the brand has done. “In Paris we really wanted to focus on the clothes because it is so much about details. I did not want any distraction for the Parisian show. But bringing the same collection here today allows for the incorporation of a more visual effect.”

VIP guests included a number of regional celebrities, including Park Hae-jin, a Korean model and actor; Mark Chao Yu-tsing, a Taiwanese actor, and Anna Wang, a Chinese model. Gesaffelstein, a French electron artist and DJ, performed at an after party also held in the Long Museum.

Rubenstein Lands Role With Fine Jewelry Firm

By MARC KARIMZADEH

NEW YORK — Hal Rubenstein is adding fine jewelry to his repertoire, as his contract as editor at large with InStyle magazine expires at the end of the month.

Effective May 1, he will become global style director at Gabriel & Co., the New York-based fine jewelry brand. The writer, magazine editor and author, who also launched into fashion via HSN last fall, will work with Gabriel & Co.’s designer and senior vice president Dominick Gabrielli and chief creative officer Berna Gabrielli to curate several style initiatives.

Gabriel & Co. is Hal Rubenstein & Associates first fine jewelry partner. The collaboration will formally launch at the JCK show in Las Vegas May 29, when Rubenstein is expected to make personal appearances and speaking engagements on the brand’s behalf.

Gabriel & Co. will mark its 25th anniversary this fall, and Rubenstein is expected to bring his insights into female shoppers, gathered from nearly two decades at InStyle magazine.

“Everybody knows I love jewelry,” Rubenstein said, adding he plans to help the brand establish a clearly defined and focused identity across all collections, including bridal jewelry.

Rubenstein’s philosophy on jewelry is very specific.

“I don’t understand fine jewelry, when people buy it to put it in a vault, and only take it out for special occasions,” he said. “I think you should wear your best jewelry every day.

“Jewelry is so much about emotion,” he added. “It’s about stories and memories. Every ring of mine has a tale. Jewelry reminds me of all the best moments of life.”

Rubenstein continues to wear many hats, including his first gig as executive fashion director role at WWD MAGIC and producer of special events for the American Express Centurion Card. Meanwhile, he said he hopes not to renew his contract with InStyle although he still plans to write, mainly for his own Web site. Halrubenstein.com is slated to launch at the end of this month. He is also working on a book on “great moments in romance,” to be published by HarperCollins in fall 2015.

Airoldi Tapped for Benetton

MILAN — Edizione Sri, Benetton Group’s parent holding company, said that its board would, on May 8, nominate Marco Airoldi as chief executive officer.

Following the reorganization of Edizione in three new areas — managing brands, manufacturing and real estate — which takes effect Jan. 1, Airoldi will become CEO of the Benetton Group.

As senior partner and managing director of Boston Consulting, Airoldi worked with the Benetton Group to define the three-year plan to restructure the company’s operations. It was approved last November.

From 1996 to 2000, Airoldi was Italian operations director and general director of international activities at Autogrill, which is under the Edizione umbrella.

— ALESSANDRA TURRA

Dsquared2 Show Closes Shanghai Fashion Week

SHANGHAI — Dsquared2 designer duo Dean and Dan Caten made their runway debut in China as the closing act for this year’s Shanghai Fashion Week. The Canadian twins showcased their fall collection on Thursday evening, the final night of this city’s annual fashion week. On Wednesday, they celebrated the grand opening of their third store in Shanghai, located in the newly opened IAPM shopping mall.

Dsquared2’s participation in Shanghai Fashion Week was nothing short of calculated. The brand has been embroiled in an ongoing lawsuit here against a domestic company that registered its trademark (without the “2”) and has been opening counterfeit stores and selling counterfeit products for nearly half a decade. As a result, according to the designers, there has been widespread confusion about the authenticity of their brand. While a court in Hangzhou, a city near Shanghai, granted Dsquared2 the rights to legally distribute its brand here earlier this year, despite an application to trademark the brand in 2005, the Caten brothers said the situation is still not completely resolved and also has impeded their expansion plans in China.

“It is just a mess,” Dean said on Wednesday during an interview in their suite at the Mandarin Oriental in Shanghai’s Pudong district. “We need to let [Chinese consumers] know that we are the real McCoy, and we don’t want them to feel like they are getting ripped off. We are doing everything possible to clear this up.

The two said the trademark issue has been a “shaming” issue for Dsquared2’s business on the mainland. They said they were invited by local government officials in Shanghai to showcase their collection here asр part of a greater effort to educate the market about who Dsquared2 really is.

“There has been a little bit of confusion,” Dan said. “We are here to straighten that confusion out.”

Prior to landing in Shanghai, the twins were in Hong Kong to celebrate the opening of a new store in the IFC Mall. In China, additional openings are slated in Chengdu and Chongqing this year.