

WWD WEDNESDAY

Sportswear

Plum's the Word

NEW YORK — For holiday, dresses reign supreme in the contemporary market — but forget the sequins and glitz. Instead, designers opt for clean shapes and simple adornments, as in this cotton velvet dress with a silk organza bow from 3.1 Phillip Lim.

Mickey's Magic Kingdom: Drexler Expected to Steer J. Crew to Wall St. Today

By David Moin

NEW YORK — With the wind at its back, J. Crew Group Inc. is set to launch its much-anticipated initial public offering today.

The company planned to issue 18.8 million shares, at \$20 a share, or \$376 million, to pay down its \$352 million in debt and propel further growth. The offering is being led by Goldman, Sachs & Co. and Bear Stearns & Co.

J. Crew Group has been controlled by the private equity firm Texas Pacific Group for the last nine years. With the offering, the company will have 56.9 million shares outstanding, with

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Barneys Flagship Set for S.F.

By David Moin

NEW YORK — Taking a major step forward in national expansion, Barneys New York said Tuesday that it will open a 60,000-square-foot flagship in San Francisco in fall 2007.

The unit will be just off of the busy Union Square retail hub, at 48 Stockton Street.

Barneys for years has scouted sites in San Francisco, where Neiman Marcus, Macy's and Nordstrom have top-performing units and Bloomingdale's will open its largest branch — more than 300,000 square feet — in the fall at 845 Market Street.

Barneys, considering its smaller size among major luxury fashion chains, has been aggressively planning flagships and Co-ops. The strategy has not been interrupted by the proposed sale of Barneys' parent, Jones Apparel Group. "We remain focused on continued expansion of both our flagship and Co-op concepts to further enhance the value of the Barneys brand," Howard Socol, Barneys chairman and chief executive officer, said in a statement.

Barneys operates flagships on Madison Avenue in Manhattan and in Beverly Hills, Chicago and Boston; three regional full-price stores; 10 Co-ops, and 12 outlets, and offers two semi-annual warehouse sales.

The luxury retailer's next flagship is to open at NorthPark Center in Dallas in September. Another will launch in the fall of 2007 in Las Vegas at the Venetian Resort Hotel complex.

Barneys wants to open a flagship on Long Island, N.Y., in the Mall at Oyster Bay, which is being planned by Taubman Centers. However, the project has been stalled for years in the courts because of community and environmental concerns.

Other possibilities for Barneys flagships are: Atlanta, San Diego, Miami, Washington and the Chicago metro area.

The vision is to put up flagships of about 50,000 to 80,000 square feet through 2008 while rolling out Co-ops, which specialize in contemporary sportswear and premium denim. Barneys hopes to grow to at least \$1 billion in sales, more than

doubling its current volume.

"Opening a San Francisco flagship has been an objective of our company ever since Barneys first commenced its expansion outside of New York several years ago," Socol said. "We are thrilled to be able to make that dream a reality in a location in the heart of Union Square. As in the case of our other new flagships, customers visiting the San Francisco location can expect to find an assortment of men's and women's apparel, accessories, shoes and cosmetics reflective of what is carried in our existing flagships."

Barneys in San Francisco will be housed in a site built in 1909 for the former Newman and Levinson department store and last occupied by FAO Schwarz. "Our goal in designing it as a Barneys space is to restore much of what was originally on the facade of the building while supplying additional vertical transportation, including ornamental staircases from floor to floor," Socol said. "Barneys' mantra of 'taste, luxury and humor' will be communicated through the store's interior design and visual display."



Carnival Camaraderie

NEW YORK — A number of decidedly unusual things stood out at last Thursday's carnival-themed runway event held by the year-old design collective Form. For starters, there was someone in a life-size polar bear costume who danced around before the show. There were the tables of unconventional circus grub: vodka-infused lemon gelato and cheese-cake-flavored cotton candy. And then, of course, there were the models, all styled up to costume Cirque du Soleil effect with outrageous hair, makeup, props and accoutrements to match. It was the designers' way of drawing attention to their pre-spring collection.

With the ever-packed fashion week squeezing the smaller designers, Form creative director Jerry Tam decided to stage a show at the start of summer, free from the blink-and-you'll-miss-them schedule of September's fashion calendar.

"During fashion week, everybody's working, nobody really has the time to get excited," explained design director Jamie Rosenthal. "Now, everyone's in their downtime. I don't think people were expecting it, but we want them to get excited, and it's perfect [doing it at this time]."

As for the clothes themselves, the quiet, all-white lineup may have belied the theatrics of the show, but the multiple-strapped frocks and tops — think madman gone scissor-happy in the atelier — certainly kept the garments busy. At times, the effect was summer seductive, as in the pleated cotton jersey skeleton dress or the pleated tank with chiffon straps; other pieces, however, proved more distracting. But while some of the clothes may not have made full sense, the collection was shown, as Tam said, "in an entertaining way."

— Venessa Lau

Jantzen Restyled for Today

By Ross Tucker

NEW YORK — Perry Ellis International has given iconic swimwear line Jantzen a face-lift, the results of which include not only an overhaul of the brand's image, but its design team, as well.

A new ad campaign executed by advertising agency Laspata DeCaro, which has done work for such brands as Blackglama, Sag Harbor and Maidenform, will begin hitting trade publications in July and be one of the most visible examples of what Perry Ellis executives describe as a top-to-bottom retooling of the nearly 100-year-old brand.

Lori Medici, vice president of marketing and communications for Perry Ellis, said the campaign, which features Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue cover model Carolyn Murphy, is targeted at what she calls the "neo-traditional consumer."

"I think in the past, the brand was targeting an age demographic versus broadening our scope to a lifestyle," said Medici.

Charles DeCaro, a principal of Laspata DeCaro, said the goal was to infuse Jantzen with a sense of modern glamour.

"That was sort of our mantra," said DeCaro. "Make it glamorous, but make it today."

DeCaro and Rocco Laspata, the other principal in Laspata DeCaro, turned to the Jantzen archives for inspiration and focused most of their efforts on updating the brand's signature elements. The pair started combing through the archives in December and January.

"When you went through the archives and saw all the movie stars, the high-voltage celebrities who wore the suits...it was so inspirational," said DeCaro. "That was where the campaign was born."

Jantzen's diving-girl logo was one of the first design elements that was addressed, according to Laspata.

"We decided to keep the diving girl," said Laspata. "We thought there was something very cool about her, so we took her shape and worked with it, rounded the shape of it and just modernized it."

After tweaking the logo and other point-of-sale design elements such as hangtags,



Carolyn Murphy in the new Jantzen ad campaign.

they delved into the ad campaign. For this, Laspata said they looked to work off of Jantzen's heritage.

"It had always leaned to the glam side," said Laspata. "There was a chic element to the suits, but we needed to take all that and make it relevant to today's women."

Laspata and DeCaro felt Murphy had the look that conveyed the combination of Forties and Fifties glam and modern sophistication they were after.

The campaign consists of six print ads. The shots won't begin hitting the consumer market until November and December.

PEI bought Jantzen from VF Corp. in March 2002. In August 2003, the company tapped KraftWorks to help reposition the brand as a casual lifestyle label. But more significant investments and operational changes have taken place during the last six months, according to Medici, including a new design team based in Orange County in Southern California and several executive appointments in the company's swimwear business segment. The tab for the new ad campaign has exceeded \$1 million, said Medici.

Medici believes bringing in a new design team has allowed for new trends to be incorporated and has helped reinvigorate the line, which had become "a little flat" between the Eighties and Nineties.

"The brand has always been innovative, but once we acquired the brand, we needed to refocus and decide how we're going to position ourselves as a leader in that arena," said Medici. "We've really sat down and looked at how we're going to re-work this brand."

Fashion Scoops

THE YOHJI FACTOR: Just how much the fashion community admires Yohji Yamamoto became clear on Monday night at a party thrown by the Council of Fashion Designers of America and Le Book. Fashion types such as Jeff Mahshie, Jill Stuart, John Bartlett, Stan Herman and Simon Alcantara tried to outbid each other for one of 15 signed Yamamoto lithographs in a silent auction in aid of the CFDA Fashion Targets Breast Cancer initiative. Others roaming the Puck Building's party space included Betsey Johnson, Carlos Miele, Thakoon Panichgul, Richie Rich, David and Sybil Yurman, Yeohlee Teng, Maria Cornejo and Rafe Totengco. Midway through the evening, the betting was still going strong. "I haven't placed a bet yet; I will wait until the end to get a bargain," said CFDA executive director Steven Kolb. In the end, Joseph Abboud and Cole Haan's Gordon Thompson were among those to walk home with one of the drawings. The event, which also kicked off Le Book's new Connections trade show, raised \$23,100 for FTBC.

AIR BAG: When Chloe Dao won "Project Runway" this past spring, the Houston native couldn't have anticipated how much she'd have to travel as a result. "It's insane; it hasn't stopped," said Dao, who this summer has plans for a trip to New York, two visits to Las Vegas and a stop in Atlanta.

And so, form follows function with Dao's latest design, a carry-on bag for travel. Two versions of "The Chloe Bag" are available. One, a turquoise-and-brown leather bowling style embossed with the words "carry on," sells for \$595. A canvas version sells for \$95. Both will be sold at bravotv.com next month.

BRIGHT BUYS: The fifth-year anniversary party for mega-club Light in Las Vegas brought a little extra celebrity wattage to the retail scene there over the weekend. Jessica Alba, Leonardo DiCaprio, Michelle Rodriguez, Kristen Bell and Mekhi Phifer all found their way to DKNY, which is open until midnight and on sale. "All the girls bought DKNY cozies and the boys bought clothes for themselves and their girlfriends," a spokesperson said. But even in Vegas the Hollywood cream rises to the top. DiCaprio was the only shopper for whom the store shut its doors to the public.

FUTBOL FEVER: Soccer fans celebrate the annual World Cup in different ways, but Colombian accessories designer Nancy Gonzalez took a luxury spin on the tournament, with a keepsake crocodile soccer ball being sold exclusively at Harrods in London. Each of the balls is made from the bellies of eight crocodiles and comes in traditional black and white or in chocolate and tan, finished with a silver plaque. "The timing was perfect," said Santiago Gonzalez, Nancy's son and president of the firm, who was rooting for Team USA. The 20 limited-edition balls, which sell for \$2,740 each, hit Harrods this month and David Beckham already has one. No word on whether he practiced his "Bend It Like Beckham" kicks with it, though.



Betsey Johnson

PHOTO BY STEVE ECKNER