

FRESH FACES on the retail landscape

Yes, the recession has taken something of a retail toll, but in certain Manhattan neighborhoods, you'd never suspect there is any problem renting stores and boutiques. Along Columbus Avenue, for example, according to the Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District (which promotes the stretch between West 67th and West 82nd Streets), five new businesses opened in recent months—three fashion boutiques and two gourmet shops. Retail-rental diva Faith Hope Consolo, Chairman, Retail Leasing, Marketing, and Sales Division of Prudential Douglas Elliman, notes, "Since the beginning of the summer, there has been more than a renewed interest in the New York retail landscape, particularly among international retailers. Most recognize that now is their shoppportunity to position themselves in the best commercial corridors, and with an advantageous deal." But, it's not only foreign-bred brands that are sealing and signing Gotham leases—in the next few months, also look for boutiques from premier designers like Devi Kroell and the redoubtable Isaac Mizrahi. A few other special shops new to the city are profiled here. **By Ruth J. Katz**



VINCE

Fashion with a Downtown Flair

The edgy brand Vince made a splash earlier this year when it opened its first Gotham boutique in the Meatpacking District. It was such a hit, a second store just opened last month in SoHo. A fave of Hollywood heavy-hitters, the line is epitomized by casual style with a twist. Madonna chose a Vince satin bomber jacket to wear in her cover shot for her *American Life* album, and Kate Hudson, Renée Zellweger, and Cate Blanchett are all fans. Classic, luxe items, like parkas, hoodies, sweats, T-shirts, tanks, and sweaters (for reasonable prices) are produced in fine, rich fabrics (lots of cashmere), and are all designed with intricate details—something that gives a classic that certain *je ne sais quoi* that sets it apart from ho-hum separates and casual wear.

The backgrounds of the troika team behind the label boast of credentials that read like retail-royalty: Rea Laccone helped establish the highly regarded Laundry by Shelli Segal, among other accomplishments; Christopher LaPolice spent years as a store manager for Lord & Taylor, and worked in very senior positions at Bloomingdale's, Max Studio, and Elie Tahari; head designer Micheline Ip plied her talent at Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein before becoming the director of the women's design department at Banana Republic.

VINCE

16 Prince Street (Elizabeth/Mott Streets); 212-343-1945; vince.com



F. P. JOURNE

Timing is Everything

F. P. JOURNE

721 Madison Avenue (63rd/64th Streets); fpjourne.com

Watch collectors are very serious about their time-keeping mechanisms; they are committed aficionados who always want the "next thing." Well, the next prestige watch is about to land in Midtown: Collectors are all going to be tick-tockingly thrilled to know that F. P. Journe will be opening its newest boutique in November.

Francois-Paul Journe has been a watchmaker for most of his 50-some years; his eponymous label's output—unlike more established, ultra-prestige brands in the world of *haute horlogerie*, like say, the esteemed Patek Philippe, which produces some 38,000 timepieces a year (a number which is considered very small in watch production)—is, in comparison, infinitesimal, maybe a thousand pieces annually. The company's motto, visible on its watches, is *invenit et fecit*, "invented and made." Journe's watches are stylish and purposeful, and over the scant ten years the firm has been in business, it has garnered many prizes, not the least of which was recognition this past summer by the *Robb Report* in its "Best of the Best" issue, in which Journe's "Répétition Souveraine" (\$165,000) was singled out.

The company has opened six boutiques since 2003—in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Boca Raton, Geneva, Paris, and Beijing (opening as we speak)...and now, New York.



ZILLI

Men's Wear Worth the Wait

Although Zilli is sold in over 30 countries and has 36 boutiques around the world (even in, we are not joshing, Yekaterinburg, Russia and Astana, Kazakhstan), and even though it's been around since the early 1980s, it has not had a boutique here in the States! (In fact, the brand's first boutique opened in London in 1982.) So, the Big Apple is finally getting its due, as Zilli opens its 37th store, slated to unlock the door later this month. A world-wide leader in hand-sewn ties, and also in the fine art of fashioning garments from unusual and tricky skins (like crocodile and peccary), Zilli creates luxury sportswear, formal wear, and accessories (cufflinks, sunglasses, shoes, small leather goods). When the brand was created, most men's wear was highly tailored, so Zilli offered and continues to produce a refreshingly casual-looking alternative, yet one that was (and is) still elegant and exquisitely fashioned.

The shop will have an Art Deco feel, with the company's signature deep-toned mahogany wood, glimmering gold-veined marble, and creamy leather accents. Expect real hands-on service and style.



ZILLI

The Four Seasons Hotel, 57 East 57th Street (Madison/Park Avenues); 212-207-4028; zilli.fr