

Proven Items Sell Best At Fashion Industry Gallery

By Holly Haber

DALLAS — Specialty stores cherry-picked the summer market at Fashion Industry Gallery for novelty looks, layering pieces, shorts and artisan jewelry.

The downtown fashion venue specializes in contemporary and bridge fashion and accessories.

“People are going with what they know sells for them,” said Brian Sylvester, manager of t.s.s. Terry Sahagen Sales, which shows lines such as Milly and Tracy Reese. “They aren’t taking any risk right now.”

Suzanne Collier, whose namesake showroom had a good response to promotionally priced dresses by Donna Degnan, said, “Buyers are more price-conscious and looking for items. Most of the people who were here said they were having a pretty decent January.”

FIG director Shelli Mers said the January market was a “positive surprise.”

“Everyone has been holding their breath in the industry, and we were able to remain steady and even with January 2008 market in terms of buyer attendance,” Mers said. “The presence of new stores and the expansion of our regular stores to second and third locations is a positive and important sign that our retailers and showroom owners are able to thrive in spite of the negative news that is currently dominating our industry.”

John Maguire, dress buyer for Houston-based Tootsies, which also has stores in Atlanta and Dallas, said, “January has been better after three months of hell, but that’s not to say we’re rocking. I’m encouraged about spring because we’ve got more options — the maxi is full tilt, and there are cute little cotton dresses and prints. I’m not cutting back in dresses because I think they will still be good.”

Maguire shopped primarily for May and June deliveries but also reserved money to pick up “fun finds” for spring. He found plenty to like at Sky, which featured halter jersey dresses tricked up with jewels, metal hardware and woven leather.

“I’m looking for anything that’s happening and sexy and Indian-inspired,” he said, picking up a burnt orange and leopard print jersey halter maxi dress with a metallic gold passementerie empire waist. “This is an incredible value at \$70.”

Shannon Moore, buyer for The Shak, a contemporary boutique at Stanley Korshak in Dallas, said, “I noticed a lot of vendors were lowering their price points, which is nice. I want to do my trusty lines that I know will perform. Rachel Pally was probably my favorite with bright colors and some cute prints. It’s so easy to sell and great for all sizes, as well. I also liked an Aztec print that Corey Lynn Calter did on a couple of pieces, which were a good price point of \$100 to \$300 retail.”

Elizabeth Serrato, owner of Eliza Page, a designer jewelry store in downtown Austin, Tex., said, “We’re just trying to be cautious and be good business managers. What we’re seeing is people are purchasing lower-priced items, but our sales increased last year.”

To meet that need, Serrato picked up Marcia Moran’s bright gold necklaces and hoops retailing for \$50 to \$60. She also invested in higher-priced goods, such as Renee Garvy’s deerskin rings accented with sterling and diamonds, and colorful retro necklaces by Gerard Yosca.

“Gerard has price points for everyone, and it is so timeless that you will have it forever and pass it down,” she said.

Pamela Cott had her eye on Seventies-inspired summer clothing for her store, Pamela’s, in Coppell, Tex., outside Dallas.

Creme Fraiche’s fitted plaid Western shirt with mother-of-pearl snaps fit the bill. Cott also picked up layering tanks and T-shirts by Testament, Amanda Sterrett’s gold filigree hoop earrings and Mystique’s flat sandals with abalone and turquoise stones.