

# West Third Street Keeps Independent Flavor

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

**Kate Spade Saturday**, the younger concept collection from New York brand **Kate Spade**, just recently opened a store on Los Angeles' West Third Street, generally considered to be a thoroughfare of independent boutiques.

The brand is a division of fashion juggernaut **Fifth & Pacific Companies**, formerly **Liz Claiborne**, but there has not been a land rush for the thoroughfare's storefronts quite yet. While prominent boutique companies **Alexis Bittar** and **Trina Turk** maintain boutiques on the road, West Third Street remains an island of independence surrounded by national and international nameplates at nearby places such as **The Grove**, the **Beverly Center** and **Robertson Boulevard**.

Jay Luchs, executive vice president of **Newmark Grubb Knight Frank**, a global real estate-services firm, said he is in talks with a couple of prominent boutique companies to open shops on West Third Street, but he believes the place will keep its independent flavor. "It's an alternative to Melrose," Luchs said. One reason why it should stay independent is the

➔ West Third Street page 11

spaces are typically smaller than what national retailers desire. Luchs also forecast that the street's prices will remain reasonable. The average is \$4 to \$4.50 per square foot. Influential indies such as **Satine** started on West Third Street and continue to attract fashion-savvy people to the street. And the street is still home to concept retailers, new multi-line stores and niche boutiques, such as men's store **Wittmore**, suiting shop **Duncan Quinn** and eco-fashion boutique **Show Pony**. Trade show **Liberty Fairs** runs a space for pop-up shops at 8366½ W. Third St. Los Angeles-area eco-denim brand **Tortoise** is opening a pop-up shop there on Sept. 29.

Melissa Richardson Akkaway, owner of West Third Street boutique **Beckley**, said independent retailers such as herself are attracted to the vibrant nature of the street.

"It's really alive," she said of West Third. "It creates a reason for people to park their cars and shop."

## Polkadots & Moonbeams

Wendy Freedman was one of West Third Street's pioneers, having opened the **Polkadots & Moonbeams** boutique in 1982. But she recently moved the shop to 8361 W. Third St., which is at the intersection with Kings Road. The move was made to take possession of a corner space with superior foot traffic and to take advantage of a better lease, according to Freedman.

One of the best-selling items at **Polkadots & Moonbeams** is a green dress from U.K. brand **Ted Baker**. It retails for \$295. "The colors and the shape are top notch," she said of the fitted dress. "The peplum doesn't stick out too much. It's done right."

Veronica M's palazzo pants also sell well, Freedman said. It retails for \$72 and above. "She knows how to make a fit for every woman," she said.

The **Bailey 44 Hacker jacket** is another big seller. Retailing for \$328, the jacket mixes the silhouette of a



Ted Baker at Polkadots & Moonbeams





peacoat and a tuxedo. The jacket's front buttons up similar to a peacoat, and the hem is reminiscent of a dashing tuxedo. The juxtaposition of twill and vegan-leather materials give the jacket a compelling mix of looks.

➡ West Third Street page 12

## Wittmore

Wittmore moved onto West Third Street this summer as a pop-up shop. Owner Paul Witt tested his men's retail merchandise at a space at 8366 ½ W. Third St., leased by fashion trade show Liberty Fairs. Los Angeles eco-denim brand Tortoise Jeans is scheduled to move into the space Sept. 29. Wittmore put down permanent stakes on the street Sept. 1 at 8236 W. Third St., which was formerly occupied by the boutique Ethel.

One top-selling item at Wittmore is a tailored sweatshirt by Ian Vellardi, which bears the letters USA. The French-terry sweatshirt retails for \$145. "People love the fact that it is made in the USA," Witt said. "People love the fact that it is an '80s-style sweatshirt, it is fitted and short, and it has a thumb hole in the cuff."

A polar fleece jacket by Toronto company Creep by Hiroshi Awai is popular for its unique material. "It's Muppet-y," Witt said of the unique look, which he thought was similar to one of Jim Henson's Muppet characters. "It is soft and fuzzy." But the inside of the jacket is lined with a perforated Dri-fit fabric, which gives the jacket an airy and light feel. It retails for \$296.

T-shirts by the Jungmaven brand have been selling briskly, Witt said. "It's the core basic we didn't have here," he said. The crew neck retails for \$38. The "Pocket T" retails for \$42.

The T-shirts are made out of a hemp blend. Label founder Rob Jungmann has made a career of advocating Congress to legalize hemp farming in the United States. Hemp is currently grown overseas.

Super-slim fitted cargo pants by Gant Rugger have been big sellers at Wittmore. They retail for \$175. "The pockets lay flat," Witt said. Unlike many cargo pants, the pockets don't pop out, which gives them a unique and stylish look.



Gant Rugger at Wittmore



Luzer Twersky of Duncan Quinn

## Duncan Quinn

The name Luzer Twersky has a literary feel to it, but Twersky serves as operations director for Duncan Quinn, the Saville Row-inspired boutique that maintains a shop at 8234 W. Third St.

The label's custom-made suits start retailing at \$2,500 and go

➡ West Third Street continued on next page

up past \$50,000, Twersky said. He noted that suits are made by well-compensated artisans. "People might wear jeans and T-shirts every day, but a man needs a suit. The ones with taste and means come here," he said. Also look out for the Duncan Quinn ties featuring graphics of guns wielded by action-movie heroes such as James Bond and Dirty Harry. They retail for \$185.

## Show Pony

Since 2012, Show Pony has focused on selling

eco fashion lines mostly headquartered in the Pacific Northwest.

Selling briskly is the long cloak hoodie from **Prairie Underground**. It retails for \$264. The fitted coat is made out of organic cotton, said Greg Laversey, the boutique's co-owner. Stephanie Hara, the second co-owner, said almost anything in the **Prairie Underground** line sells well. "This line has built a fanatical following for its phenomenal marriage of edgy, urban style, high functionality, and unwavering quality," she said.



Prairie Underground at Show Pony

The **Modaspla** "Fiji" dress is another big seller. "We can't keep this in stock," Hara said of the dress, which retails for \$198. "It fits beautifully with the shirring at the waist, front welt pockets and hem, which goes to the knees."

The "Ireland" faux-fur vest by the **Velvet by Graham and Spencer** label is moving briskly. It retails for \$198. It looks like it was made for carnivores, but it was manufactured using faux fur and faux suede, Laversey said.

### Beckley

**Beckley** started business on Melrose Avenue in 2008 but moved to West Third Street in November 2012. The multi-line store sells everything from denim to cocktail dresses, said owner Melissa Richardson Akkaway.

The top-selling jeans are the "Rocket" jeans by **Citizens of Humanity**. The jeans retail for \$209. It fits a lot of body types and also offers a high waist—an alternative from the low-waist

style that has been popular, Richardson Akkaway said.

The "Kingston" dress from **Opening Ceremony** has been commanding attention at **Beckley**. It retails for \$455. "Its black-and-white print is very on trend," she said. The dress's circle ring zip pull also makes it unique.

House brand **Beckley** by **Melissa** produced the top-selling cardigan-style navy-blue leather jacket. It retails for \$595. Richardson Akkaway introduced it in spring 2013 and repeated it in fall because it sold so well. "It's timeless," she said. Navy is on trend. It can be worn in a cool Southern California night or used in layering for much cooler weather in the northeast. ●



Beckley by Melissa at Beckley

For an extended look at *What's Checking on West Third Street*, see [ApparelNews.net](http://ApparelNews.net).