

WWDFAST



RAPID TRANSIT THROUGH THE WORLD OF SPORTSWEAR

PRETTY TOUGH

EUROPE'S TOP
VINTAGE SHOPS

CAT'S MEOW
HOW HELLO KITTY
CONQUERED THE WORLD



RARE FINDS

Retailers set themselves apart from the pack by offering the unusual and unique.

JOHANNESBURG: METROPOLITAIN

If Wilfrid Moulin had not been handed the bottle of Opium perfume he had just purchased for his wife's birthday five years ago in a nondescript brown paper bag, Metropolitain Cosmetics might never have been born.

For the French expatriate, the idea that a prestige fragrance could be sold without any sense of luxury or exclusivity was shocking. He realized that what was missing on the South African beauty

retail scene was "the experience of luxury." Up until then, he notes, "fragrances and cosmetics, both mass market and prestige, were sold side by side in department stores and pharmacies. There was no magic, no creation of desire."

Moulin and his South African wife, Melissa Brown, conceived of a small but glamorous fragrance boutique in Johannesburg's chic Hyde Park mall, where customers would be guaranteed a luxurious experience and the highest level of service. They called the 950-square-foot store Metropolitain, after the florid Art Nouveau Metro stations of Paris.

Metropolitain opened in late 2004 with a range of select fragrances that were unavailable anywhere else—Fifi Chachnil, Chantal Thomass, Lulu Guinness and Serge Lutens among them. It also offered T. LeClerc makeup.

"We progressively realized that we needed more skin care and makeup," says Moulin. Soon, Metropolitain was carrying exclusive brands with cult followings in Europe and the U.S. such as Bergman, Dr. Brandt, Murad, Taliqa, Dr. Sebahg, Smashbox, DuWop and Make Up For Ever, which Moulin had launched in South Africa in 1997. They were a hit. Then StriVectin, the miracle antiwrinkle cream retailing for 1,550 rands, or \$202 at current exchange, a tube, came along and Metropolitain's reputation was sealed as the place to go to for the latest, most coveted and most effective beauty products in the country.

The successful nationwide online mail-order service Moulin established soon afterward increased Metropolitain's reach. Today, Internet sales account for 15 percent of volume.

"I suppose Metropolitain could be considered as the local equivalent of Space NK," Moulin says, referring to the London beauty emporium. "Today we have three boutiques in Johannesburg, a thriving Internet business and more brands coming in, like Stella and Obagi for women, and The Art of Shaving and Zirh for men." —**Bambina Wise**

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL: RECANTO DO ALTO JARDINS

The newest style destination for São Paulo's young women is Recanto do Alto Jardins, or Nook in the Upper Jardins, an L-shaped convergence of fashion shops on a street corner at the hilly summit of the Jardins neighborhood, the city's fashion district.

In April 2007, Garimpo + Fuxique relocated to the Recanto. The shop sells home decor, clothing and accessories, and about half of its stock consists of hanging ceiling lamps, candles and colorful throw pillows. Another 25 percent of the merchandise is jewelry and patchwork handbags made of vintage fabrics, with apparel making up the remaining 25 percent. "Our apparel is geared toward adventurous young women," says store owner Ana Strumpf. Garimpo + Fuxique's 2007 sales were \$600,000.

In December, five lesser-known São Paulo brands opened a string of connected fashion shops right around the corner from Garimpo + Fuxique, creating the long end of the L-shaped Recanto. Of those, the best known are Fabia Bercsek and Do Estilista, the signature collection of Marcelo Sommer. Both designers participate in São Paulo Fashion Week and feature vibrantly colored apparel for 20- to 35-year-old women.

The Recanto unit is Bercsek's first store, and sells unusual items such as a motocross-inspired jacket decorated with zippers (\$450) with a matching miniskirt (\$280), or funky shirtdresses featuring metallic goldfish prints (\$190).

Do Estilista's wares include pink silk dresses with digitally printed horses (\$330) and the brand's horizontally striped polo shirts (\$60) with matching baggy pink cotton trousers (\$330).

Another of the Recanto's monobrand shops, D'Arouche, features mostly black-and-white minimalist-chic casualwear, such as a sleeveless black cotton jersey top with a long fringe falling from the shoulders to the waist (\$160) and a sleeveless white cotton top with an attached silk scarf (\$140). Sarah Jessica Parker wore two of D'Arouche's basic black dresses in the *Sex and the City* movie. Designer Carolina Glidden-Gannon says her line emphasizes a chic, comfortable aesthetic that young women can easily fit into their wardrobes.

The Recanto's fourth shop, Há uma Santa, features women's bohemian-chic apparel, such as a strapless yellow cotton and satin tent dress with large pockets (\$230), or voluminous, sarong-inspired green cotton slacks (\$160). These items sell well, according to co-owner Giovana Gregolino, because they are "comfortable and versatile."

The other Recanto store, Lê Sacs, offers mostly leather handbags. —**Mike Kepp**



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