



COMMERCIAL REALESTATE

By LOIS WEISS

AS RETAILERS small and large stumble during the recession, lingerie stores are busting out all over.

Led by the opening of Victoria's Secret new pink marble palace at the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 58th Street, and Pink Slip's dreamy new digs at Grand Central Terminal, the category is turning out to be one of retail's bright spots.

Last year, Sugar Cookies opened in Chelsea at 203 W. 19th St., while Journelle has a niche in the Union Square area at 3 E. 17th St.

Intimacy is now at 1252 Madison Ave. and is "actively and aggressively" seeking additional space on the Upper East Side through Kim Mogull and Stacey Kelz of Mogull Realty.

"The nationwide company is doing fabulously," said Mogull.

Meanwhile, LaPerla has several shops around town, including its anchor at 803 Madison Ave., while Bra Smyth can be found on the East Side at 905 Madison Ave. and on the West Side at 2177 Broadway.

Eres has both swimwear and underwear at 621 Madison Ave. and at 98 Wooster St. in Soho. The tiny Brazen Lingerie has a following in the Inwood area at 253 Dyckman St.

Edgy Agent Provocateur will be placed in Soho at 133 Mercer St., while Kiki de Montparnasse is nearby at 79 Greene St. and Jean Yu is at 37 Crosby St.

La Petite Coquette has been a staple for many years at 51 University Pl. while Azaleas holds down the East Village at 223 E. 10th St., and Laina Jane at 45 Christopher St. anchors the West Village.

Orchard Corset Discounts has its well-known discount shop at 157 Orchard St. Mixona is in Nolita at 262 Mott St., with Coqueta in the same neighborhood at 215 Mulberry St. and Only Hearts at 230 Mott St. Only Hearts also has a store on the Upper West Side at 386 Columbus Ave.



Lingerie building a solid foundation in an uncertain retail environment

NOT FLIMSY

Town Shop has been in business since 1888 and is now located on the Upper West Side at 2273 Broadway.

The Upper East Side is filled with "L's," starting with Linda's Lingerie at 825 Lexington Ave.; Lingerie on Lex nearby at 831 Lexington Ave.; Lingerie & Company at 1217 Third Ave. and Livi's Lingerie farther uptown at 1456 Third Ave.

Plus, there are also numerous Victoria's Secret shops all over town.

Last year, however, Catriona MacKechnie closed her Meatpacking District shop on W. 14th St. and in April the Dutch brand Marlies Dekkers shut down at the indoor Plaza, where foot traffic is sparse. That label is now seeking space in Soho. Britney Spears has been wearing its sexy stuff on her "Circus" concert tour.

"That's another segment that continues to grow despite the challenging landscape," said Faith Hope Consolo, chairman of Prudential Douglas Elliman's retail division, noting consumers are beginning to charge back to stores but are going back in with value in mind. "And someone can spend \$50 to \$60 on lingerie and have a good experience."

Pink Slip doubled in size in Grand Central Terminal and, while the deal was signed more than a year ago, sales have been gangbusters since the Mother's Day opening. The store went from a tiny 337 square feet to 773 feet and, according to owner Margo Andros, was doing \$3,000 a foot in its previous incarnation.

"[Pink Slip] relocated to a bigger store because her business was enormous, and she couldn't do any more business in her old space,"

said Michael Ewing, a partner with Williams Jackson Ewing, which is consulting again on the improving the retail picture at Grand Central. The store was designed by the well-known TPG Architects, whose clients include H&M and Calvin Klein Underwear.

"We probably have more men than most lingerie stores because they commute and they get gifts," said Andros. "The women can go into the dressing room and literally take a time out. It had to feel comfortable."

The store is also benefiting from the half-million people a day commuting through the train station.

"The malls are more destination oriented so they are hurt the most," said Ewing. Sales at Grand Central average \$1,800 a foot, he said, with most rents at \$200 to \$300 a foot — which can go higher depending on size and location.

Victoria's Secret's new digs are part of the company's new \$200 million capital program toward opening new stores — including Bath & Body Works — and upgrading existing stores. Despite a decline of 3 percent in net store sales, its Internet sales rose 9 percent.

In its recently published annual report, CEO Les Wexner in a letter to investors said, "For Victoria's Secret, the core of the brand is bras and panties. We see clear opportunities for substantial growth in these categories — by focusing on newness and innovation, expanding into under-penetrated market segments and refining our strategy."

The company has also hit a hot pocket with its Pink brand targeted to teens and last year purchased the Canadian teen lingerie company, La Senza.

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