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Abboud Strikes Deal With Lord & Taylor

By David Moin

Joseph Abboud has become the latest recruit to Lord & Taylor's growing stable of high-profile American design talent.

On Friday, Lord & Taylor said Abboud will assume design responsibility for all of the store's private label men's product, including tailored clothing, sportswear and accessories, confirming a WWD report Wednesday.

The Abboud product will launch in fall 2008 with deliveries beginning in August. In addition, Abboud will be creative director for L&T's men's store.

Lord & Taylor's parent corporation, NRDC Equity Partners Ltd., has most recently taken a majority stake in Peter Som Inc. Earlier, Charles Nolan was named creative director for L&T's Kate Hill bridge private label line. He's re-creating the label, in what could be a precursor to an investment in Nolan's business.

NRDC also has a stake in Cynthia Steffe, who is no longer associated with the label that bears her name but will be providing product for Lord & Taylor, and Bryan Bradley was recently named creative director for Bryan by Bryan Bradley, a contemporary line exclusively for Lord & Taylor arriving in stores this week. Bradley, owner-designer of Tuleh, has no plans to sell a stake in his business.

Also this week, in a different kind of profile-raiser, Lord & Taylor is throwing support behind New Orleans' artist community, which was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. The retailer's Fifth Avenue flagship has converted its 11th floor into the "Kaleidoscope Katrina" gallery, showcasing 12 New Orleans artists through Oct. 8, with a kickoff party on Tuesday evening.

"The idea is to give a voice to these artists and let them have an opportunity to show their work and help people understand what occurred," said Lord & Taylor's senior vice president, Lavelle Olexa, who, for the last several years, has organized exhibits at L&T, ranging from sculptures by Chakaia Booker and Manolo Valdes to paintings by Red Grooms, Thierry Despont, Richard Estes, Larry Rivers and China's Gu Gan and Guo Jin, among others.

The idea for "Kaleidoscope Katrina" came while Olexa was lunching at La Goulue, next to a boisterous crowd. They apologized for the noise and explained they were in town from New Orleans for a Christie's auction, representing the artists and SweetArt Katrina Fund established by the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center to support artists who suffered losses from Katrina. "I was intrigued how devastating it was for these people," Olexa said. A month later, she was flying down to the Big Easy to plan the event.

The participating artists are Sidonie Villere, Jonathan Ferrara, Jeffrey Pitt, Dawn Dedeaux, Luis Cruz Azaceta, Raine Bedsole, Doyle Gertjeansen, Sally Heller, Jeremy Jernegan, George Dunbar, Margaret Evangeline and José-Maria Cundin. Works in the gallery as well as in store windows will be sold to support the artists directly. Lord & Taylor also is making a donation to SweetArt Katrina.