Match Point

PARIS — Who doesn’t love black and white, especially when it’s translated with Karl Lagerfeld’s chic surety? At Chanel, he romanced the tuxedo with this three-piece stunner: a supple jacket, front-slit skirt and bow-tied blouse. For more, see pages 6 and 7.

Barneys Struts Its Stuff: Boston Flagship Opening Marks New Growth Plan

By David Moin

BOSTON — With confidence and cool, quirky attitude, Barneys New York on Friday is bringing its brand of modern luxury to this city synonymous with the preppy look.

The store opening in the Copley Place complex is Barneys first new flagship since the launch of the Beverly Hills unit in 1993, and is a measure of the retailer’s strategy to grow into a billion-dollar business.

The unit here, which joins Neiman Marcus, Tiffany, Jimmy Choo, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and other retailers at Copley Place, captures the Barneys’
FASHION'S RED CARPET RIDE Under the Celebrity Influence

They have it all; talent, beauty, power, money, an adoring fan base and a team of stylists and assistants dedicated to making them look terrific for any given occasion. They’re today’s celebrities and the influence of their fashion choices extends far beyond the famed Red Carpet. Not so sure you agree? An ever increasing amount of pre-award promos showcases the star-studded color photos of the dailies and gossips, along with a new arsenal of celebrity-oriented magazines, suggest otherwise. Celebrities are transfixed and fashion photography coverage, both during award season as throughout the year. Why all the fuss? Why is it that what the nominees are wearing trumps the actual awards? And more basically, why do we so seem to care?

“It’s all about fantasy and that’s why we care,” considers Joanne Stoner, founder of www.celebrityclothes.com, an online fashion destination. “What the celebrities choose on fashion, they’ve turned a virtual—and literally—spotlight on fashion.”

“Brands certainly get a boost when a celebrity wears one of their products. It makes those brand names more recognizable and real to us,” shares Jodi Bell, manager of Anik Boutique, a collection of high-end emporiums in New York City. “They pioneering role they play in fashion, they have the influence of their fashion choices extends for any given occasion. They’re today’s celebrities and the influence of their fashion choices extends far beyond the famed Red Carpet.”

“In her opinion, that penchant for red carpet wear extends beyond the red carpet.” As a society, we love celebrities and we want to know everything about them.”

When asked if any particular star shone a brighter light on this year’s Red Carpet, Bell from Anik also pointed to Sarah Jessica Parker as a celebrity with a fashion sense that resonates with women. “Sarah Jessica Parker is a fashion icon and has been able to stay ‘in image’ since Sex and the City.” Other celebrity names influencing fashion include Nicole Kidman, Natalie Portman, Halle Berry, Charlize Theron and Queen Latifah.

“Todays celebrity with a fashion sense that resonates with women and they represent the forty-something market. Not even late thirties, but forties.” Bell from Anik also pointed to Sarah Jessica Parker as a celebrity with a fashion sense that resonates with women. “She is a major fashion icon who has been able to stay ‘in image’ since Sex and the City.” Other celebrity names influencing fashion include Nicole Kidman, Natalie Portman, Halle Berry, Charlize Theron and Queen Latifah.

Many fashion pundits were quick to point out that the celebrity fashions displayed on the Red Carpet have an influence on color choices for the coming season. It’s more than a little ironic that red carpet, says, “The Grand staircase at Barneys New York in Boston. For more, see page 8.”

In Brief

● LIM TO HONOR FOUR: Bergdorf Goodman’s women’s wear fashion director Linda Fargo, Elle editor in chief Robert Meyers, Banana Republic design director Deborah Lloyd and Laird’s & Co.’s founder Trey Laird will be honored at The Laboratory Institute of Merchandising, the College for Business and Fashion’s annual gala on May 31. The event, called “Making It,” will be at the Metropolitan Club in Manhattan. “We’re thrilled to honor these four industry leaders,” LIM president Elizabeth S. Marczewski said in a statement. “Our students take inspiration from these honorees every day. They demonstrate what great careers are possible in the business of fashion.”

FASHION

For fall, designers have revived the classic black-and-white combination, giving it a modern twist.

GENERAL

Barneys New York has brought its modern luxury sensibility and quirky approach to Boston.

1 Polo Ralph Lauren has become the official outfitter of Wimbledon through 2007.

2 A raid in the United Kingdom seized hundreds of thousands of dollars of counterfeit Tiffany goods.

5 Michael Michalsky, head designer of Adidas, is leaving the German active-sportswear house, possibly to develop his own brand.

EVE

To Fashion photographer Cotinine Day revisits her famous Kate Moss photo shoot at an exhibition in the Gimpel Fine gallery.

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Barneys on Expansion Tra

Continued from page one

an aesthetic in a retail environment that is anything but predictable and is filled with visual eye candy. “Vivre la difference,” Howard Socol, chairman, chief executive and president, said Monday during a tour of the two-level, 45,000-square-foot store. “We are showing Boston our Barneys assortment.”

Commenting on perceptions or misconceptions about what Bostonians prefer to buy, Socol said, “I don’t think you can categorize Boston. We are going to attract a really fashionable customer, a customer who likes to try new things and who likes a very artful aesthetic. We will tweak collections and learn which are better for this city and other cities, but this is a Barneys presentation.”

The Madison Avenue flagship attracts plenty of Bostonians, so there already is a customer in Beantown, he said. Even more important, Socol said consumers are seeking a retail experience that challenges the status quo and merchandising sameness that plagues malls.

“This is a specialty store,” he said. “We are not trying to be a department store. It’s an edited assortment. Other stores carry many, many more brands than we do. We offer a different and very special experience. We are very interested in architectural design. This is a very open space. You can see every product category.”

Yet it is not uniformly designed, with men’s wear bearing a more woody, clubby feeling, while women’s designer is like a white gallery space.

With any store there is an element of risk, but Barneys’ aggressive expansion plans and long hiatus from opening a flagship have generated great anticipation. “Do we feel confident? Yes,” Socol said. “We’ve had three years of outstanding growth.” He would not disclose the projected sales volume for the Boston store.

Barneys, which Jones Apparel Group bought for $397.3 million in December 2004, operates a fourth flagship on East Oak Street in Chicago, and is planning a string of flagships through 2008 in a quest to double in size. Sites on the drawing board include The Shoppes at The Palazzo, a major upscale project in The Venetian Resort in Las Vegas set to open in fall 2007. Barneys is in talks with Taubman Centers, which plans a mall in Oyster Bay, N.Y., and real estate has been found in San Francisco’s Union Square though no lease has been signed.

In Manhattan, the retailer is said to be scouting for another flagship, possibly in the Meatpacking District or SoHo. A flagship in NorthPark Center in Dallas is set for a fall opening, and Atlanta, San Diego, Miami, Washington and the Chicago metro area have been cited by Barneys officials as potential locations.

Their vision is to roll out flagships through 2008 of at least 50,000 to 80,000 square feet with a full representation of designer and private label merchandise, while continuing to open Barneys Co-op shops. Barneys also operates smaller stores in Manhasset, N.Y.; Chestnut Hill, Mass.; and Seattle, and eight Co-ops around the country. Last year, the chain reported $444.2 million in volume.

The Boston store is a snapshot of the assortment from the retailer’s Madison Avenue flagship because it has about one-fifth the space. “You get a similar Barneys experience,” Socol said. “This is a very good version of Madison Avenue.”

Barneys would not comment on the cost of the store, but it might be in the vicinity of $15 million to $20 million.

The unit here is the smallest of the flagships. Nevertheless, with light pouring in from a 60-foot-wide skylight onto a grand limestone staircase; and aisles of mosaic tiles leading to Barneys’ focused array of classic, advanced and contemporary designers — both established and up and coming — the Boston store captures Barneys essence. It’s distinguished as much by what it has as by what it doesn’t have. There are none of the standard bridge or better labels, street of shops, escalators, or cosmetic spritzers. Instead, it’s all about those signature Barneys New York touches: murals on the walls, purple artwork on cosmetic cases, brass vitrines for an Old World charm, the Co-op, and a tubular Frederic Malle fragrance sniffing “cabine.”

And of course, there are Barneys’ distinctive witty displays of mannequins, sometimes reposed in trees, or suspended a foot in the air by a single cable from the ceiling.

Barneys displays its designer collections in unorthodox ways. Here, Rochas, off a coiled aluminum cable. Below, Martin Grant atop a tree.
“Taste, luxury and humor; that’s our tag line,” Socol said.

Converted from a former food court and movie theater, Barneys in Boston inherited the skylight and 14-foot ceilings, enabling the unorthodox visuals. So much sunlight comes through to the selling floor that Socol is considering coating the glass with a film to soften the lighting. However, the natural light, combined with the wide open, two-story front entrance resembling a glass ship intentionally devoid of display, gives a good view of the staircase and serves as a beacon to shoppers.

Inside, there is extensive sycamore and wenge fixtures and a fireplace in a relatively oversized, 4,500-square-foot shoe department to enhance a feeling of warmth and hominess. Curved Lucite shelving adds a feminine feel to the footwear display, and the staircase is also graceful, gently widening as it descends.

About 60 percent of the store space is devoted to women’s and 40 percent to men’s. On the first floor, there are accessories from Balenciaga, Goyard, Fendi, Azzedine Alaia, Henry Cuir, Marc Jacobs, Miu Miu, Bottega Veneta, and Lanvin among others.

In addition, there are shoes from Prada, Lanvin, Fendi, Christian Louboutin, Jil Sander, Chloe, Dolce & Gabbana and Robert Clergerie; women’s designer apparel from Lanvin, Rochas, Isabel Toledo, Narciso Rodriguez, Marc Jacobs, Comme des Garçons, and Nina Ricci. Other resources to be added in the fall include Jil Sander, Bottega Veneta and Givenchy. There is also Barneys New York private label collection.

The second level houses the men’s and women’s Co-op contemporary departments, including Marc Jacobs, Juicy, DVF and Vince, and jeans resources such as Acne, Tsubi, Radcliffe, as well as Seven For all Mankind and Citizens of Humanity.

Socol described the men’s offering as “democratic” compared with women’s, which is strictly designer.

Some key men’s wear labels are Ermenegildo Zegna, Battistoni, Burberry, John Varvatos, Michael Kors, Paul Smith, Jil Sander, Dolce & Gabbana and Armani Collezioni. The mix of sportswear, furnishings, and tailored looks, ranges from classic layering pieces and traditional items like cashmere sweaters and fine gauge knitwear, to contemporary and advanced Neapolitan suits with narrow lapels and shorter jackets, or unstructured looks. The footwear runs from handmade, artisan shoes to classic Ferragamos and Prada trainers.

In designing the space, there was another priority—keeping the costs down while still creating a luxurious environment.

In the Eighties and early Nineties, Barneys went on an expansion binge without carefully researching markets or controlling expenses and fell into bankruptcy, so it has learned its lesson. Barneys Boston project manager, Lorenzo Vascotto of the New York firm VVA, said cost containment or “value engineering” was used in the planning and construction.

“Barneys went to multiple sources for a lot of different things to drive the numbers down, and we spent a lot of time cherry-picking from different vendors,” including suppliers of mill work and other furnishings, he said. A competitive environment was created among suppliers so Barneys could get the best values, Vascotto said. The retailer is also able to place bigger orders because its once again in expansion mode, and gets better prices. With its staircase and the inclined floors of the former movie theater, “this was a fairly complex project,” Vascotto said.

“The main thing is we tried to create a store that was visual,” said Jeffrey Hutchison, project designer, who also designed Barneys in Tokyo, which is licensed to Isetan. “Nothing is formula driven. Everywhere you turn there is some sort of visual interest, but at the same time you don’t feel lost. It’s very accessible and shopable.”