

# CALIFORNIA Apparel News

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## Changes in Store for Dallas' FIG

Dallas' Fashion Industry Gallery (FIG) is expected to have its largest market ever March 30–April 2 since opening in the downtown arts district two years ago, but the contemporary showcase is at a critical stage of growth as it moves to realign its management.

FIG Director Gavin Smith has been promoted to the newly created position of creative director. Elyse Wasserman has taken over management of day-to-day operations as interim director while FIG owner Brook Partners undergoes a search for a new director.

"We're in a classic life cycle right now and talked to Gavin about the role he'd like to play here, and, naturally, the most enjoyable position for him is to focus on the creative aspects of FIG," said John Sughrue, chief executive officer and founder of Dallas-based Brook Partners, which owns FIG.

Smith has been instrumental in attracting big talent to FIG. Nicole Richie recently visited the center for a book signing. And during each market, FIG fetes a guest designer during the opening night party hosted by television personality Mattie Roberts. Past guests have included L.A.-based designers Nony Tochterman of **Petro Zillia**, Michael Cohen of **Michael Stars** and Trina Turk.

As Smith adapts to his new position, Sughrue confirmed that Wasserman is being considered for the director position but said management will conduct an extensive search to explore all options.

Meanwhile, the center, at 1807 Ross Ave., continues to grow. Late last year, popular chef Stephen Pyles opened a restaurant in FIG.

"It's the hottest ticket in Dallas," Sughrue said.

This show features 43 permanent showrooms, or "galleries," as the center's managers call them, along with 75 guest designers, including Janice Levin-Krok of **Poleci**,

who was to be part of a "meet the designer" session on March 30.

New temporary space on the second floor of the center is the home for the new **Shop** trade show featuring a host of local and out-of-town brands, including **True Religion**, **Betsey Johnson**, **Single**, **Linda Loudermilk**, **James Jeans** and others.

Sughrue said FIG has modeled itself after **The New Mart** in Los Angeles and in a lot of ways the center has paralleled its L.A. counterpart, featuring many of the same showrooms while focusing on contemporary lines for men and women.

"You see a "boutique-ing" of America going on right now with boutique hotels, boutique airlines," Sughrue said. "We're part of that, too. People want a better shopping experience and we offer that here at FIG."

The center is part of Dallas' urban renaissance, where loft apartments are cropping up like wildflowers. Brook Partners is building a 22-story residential project called the **Museum Tower** next to the **Nasher Sculpture Centre** and **Morton Meyerson Symphony Center**. Meanwhile, noted Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas is designing a performing arts center nearby. And new entries from **W Hotels** and **Ritz-Carlton** are coming next year.

Sughrue even acknowledged that rival **Fashion Center Dallas** (part of the **Dallas Market Center**) has contributed to Dallas' comeback in fashion and arts.

"It all contributes to a better Dallas," Sughrue said. "Nobody wants to be in a dull town. Maybe, 10 years ago, some would say that about Dallas. But not anymore."

—Robert McAllister