

# WWD TUESDAY

Ready-to-Wear/Textiles



## Buyers Narrow Focus, Rein In Orders at FIG

By Holly Haber

**DALLAS** — With lighter budgets and sharp editing, buyers shopped the fall market at Fashion Industry Gallery for eye-catching fashion and statement pieces.

The show, which specializes in contemporary, bridge and accessories, ran March 12 to 14. Highlights included an appearance by Corey Lynn Calter and the addition of several intriguing resources to the Shop temporary show, such as Linda Loudermilk's fashions in sustainable fabrics, Mima jewelry, Dekkori shoe accessories and Henri Lou jewelry.

"There weren't as many buyers, but if you have unique enough product and the price is right, the buyers are putting their dollars into things that are really special," said Monica Barthelotti, owner of Aqua showroom. "Orders are definitely smaller, but they are buying a lot smarter."

Although the region has been relatively resilient during the economic downturn, Shelli Mers, FIG director, said, "While some showrooms experienced a strong market, many feel that the buyers are being very cautious and will most likely be spending their fall dollars at the June market."

Judy Hart, buyer and manager of Elegant Rags, a bridge shop in Perrysburg, Ohio, said, "It's about accessories and items, things that look fresh and new. Our

business is steady, not great, but very steady."

She believes her customers will go for Identitee shirts printed with lyrics by popular musicians and Brightly Twisted tie-dyed scarves.

Tiffany Robinson, contemporary and bridge buyer for Barbara Jean in Little Rock, Ark., ordered Donna Degnan's belted dress in a giant purple and black houndstooth ponte and other knit items. The designer was offering \$10 off per style on orders placed by March 23.

"Business has been OK — up and down," Robinson said. "We're not pulling back on contemporary, but we are doing less designer. We started reallocating dollars 18 months ago because we were marking down more of our designer merchandise."

Diane Newberry, the lingerie and handbag buyer at Julian Gold in San Antonio, placed an order for Elaine Turner handbags in anticipation of opening an in-store shop for the Houston designer.

"Elaine Turner's price points are so great, and it has quality and sits well next to Valentino or Burberry or Michael Kors," Newberry said.

Among her picks were a black patent Kelly bag with jewels, a quilted patent teal clutch with a gold frame and a dark leopard-print patent tote. The collection wholesales from \$65 to \$158. Newberry also planned to pick up Sequoia's colorful leather bucket bags.



FIG's "FIGlet" interns dressed in Corey Lynn Calter dresses.

Vickey Hoffman, owner of J. Hoffman in Lubbock, Tex., was pleased to see clean, sleek feminine looks for fall, but planned to wait until May or June to write most of her orders.

"We'll continue to buy closer in," she said. "It helps us bring fresh merchandise into the store. I'm going to watch my prices, and we're looking for great detail on clothing that can add value to our customers."

Hoffman was enthusiastic about Trina Turk's exclusive prints and Eliza J's mosaic-print dresses and thought she would probably pick up knitwear by Isabel Lu, including a gray sweater with pearl embroidery.