

{ SHOPPING }

PICASSO WEARS POLYESTER

It's getting hard to tell a boutique from a gallery these days, as art and fashion harmonically converge. Think Murakami bags at MOCA, or indie artists in local stores.

By ERIN MAGNER
Special to *The Times*

FASHION and art have long shared the same orbit, with many designers inspired by artwork and many artists donning designer creations. Increasingly, the two worlds are colliding at the cash register.

It's happening at museums, where we can now pick up debt-inducing handbags along with souvenir posters — think MOCA's Murakami exhibition, which just opened with a boutique devoted to a limited-edition range of the artist's Louis Vuitton accessories. It happened at Italy's Venice Biennale, where Chanel has unveiled plans for "Mobile Art": a touring exhibition of artwork inspired by the house's quilted handbag, slated to launch in 2008.

And it's happening in the shopping districts of L.A., as fashion retailers start using their extra space to stage art exhibitions, with the kinds of launch parties, press releases and detailed program notes you'd find at any gallery. From Wilshire to West Sunset, and beyond, it's not unusual for stores big and small to display, and often sell, \$2,000 paintings alongside \$200 jeans. These exhibitions benefit not only retailers by attracting new customers and creating a sense of atmosphere but also artists, by exposing them to an "out of the box" audience with spending in mind.

"When artists dabble in fashion, it's often seen as selling out," says artist Rebekah Potter, whose work is showing at Cake in Los Feliz. "But showing in the 'comfort zone' of a boutique lets me reach younger people who appreciate creativity yet may be too intimidated to buy art in a gallery."

From the upscale to the offbeat, new in-store galleries pop up all over the city. Here's a guide to some of the best.

Sumi's / Gallery Revisited

By combining two businesses into one space, childhood pals Sumi Siegel and Leora Lutz have created an altar to all things artsy. In front is Sumi's, a warm space filled with handmade accessories and homeware, while the back room



RINGO H.W. CHIU For *The Times*

PURSES AND PAINTINGS: Artworks hang above a rack of clothes, both for sale, at boutique-gallery EM & Co. in Los Angeles.

houses Lutz's Chinatown transplant, Gallery Revisited. Its current exhibition is devoted to graffiti artist P1xnit, whose delicate floral imagery casts street art in a new light. (Until Dec. 1.)

(3204 Sunset Blvd., Silver Lake; [323] 660-0869)

Neiman Marcus

A Calder mobile gracing the valet entrance; a Dubuffet painting beside the Prada concession — these are just a few museum-worthy works from Neiman Marcus' 2,500-piece art collection that are on permanent display in its Beverly Hills outpost.

(9700 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; [310] 550-5900)

EM & Co

Since 2005, the style-savvy have flocked to EM

& Co for an offbeat medley of international labels paired with equally inspired local artwork. The boutique now is featuring Jeff Cahill's visceral, expressionistic paintings and customized Converse sneakers. (Until Dec. 12.)

(7940 W. 3rd St., Los Angeles; [323] 782-8155)

South Coast Plaza

Fashion and art mingle in a different way at South Coast Plaza, where a satellite art gallery sits nestled among the designer dens and department stores. The Orange Lounge, which is part of the Orange County Museum of Art, is dedicated to new media. Now showing are the audiovisual installations of Joseph Grigely, who became deaf as the result of a childhood accident. His art is about the communication barriers he experiences as a deaf person. (Until Jan. 6.)

(3333 Bristol St., Costa Mesa; [800] 782-8888)



Orange County Museum of Art

MUSEUM LITE: South Coast Plaza's Orange Lounge focuses on new media.