

FRONT ROW

Caravan Halts at Stylish Oasis

By ERIC WILSON
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FOR a year, Claudine Gumbel operated a store called Caravan from a 24-foot Winnebago, which her husband drove around Manhattan on weekends, much like an ice cream man who forsook Popsicles and Drumsticks for Jak & Rae camisoles and Penguin polo shirts. Caravan could be in the meatpacking district on Saturday and on the Upper West Side on Sunday, but then again, you never really knew where to go when a craving for a pair of Genetic Denim jeans struck.



Greg Scaffidi for The New York Times

Claudine Gumbel, whose shop is on Great Jones Street.

Last month, Ms. Gumbel opened a more traditional store, the kind that sits still, at 2 Great Jones Street near Broadway. It has more room for the work of independent designers on the fashion insider grapevine: new wave printed chiffon dresses from Sue Stemp, a cute seersucker jacket with pouf sleeves from Erotokritos and hip halters assembled from vibrant scarves by the Los Angeles label Ynnub (Bunny spelled backwards).

For men there is the usual assortment of innocuous stuff from Modern Amusement, but also some alluring T-shirts from plugged-in labels like Lincoln Mayne and Striker.

"We want this to be a mix of new designers that are not at Intermix or Scoop or Barneys now, but that maybe will be someday," Ms. Gumbel said.

One other thing a shopworn shopper will not find anywhere else is the designer Natasha Ulyanov, who moved her business into the store. Ms. Ulyanov had approached Ms. Gumbel, who is also a founder of the fashion publicity company Think PR, to represent her, but Ms. Gumbel was concerned that the designer did not have any retail clients. She proposed a solution.

Samples of Ms. Ulyanov's unadorned silk evening wear now hang in jewel tones along a wall of Caravan (about \$800 for a dress) and can be customized by the house seamstresses, who will also tailor other garments sold there.

The chairs and tables are also, as retailers say, "on wheels." Ms. Gumbel invited Greg Finney, a founder of the online art and furniture store 2Modern (www.2modern.com), to consider Caravan its New York showroom in exchange for decorating. Gus Modern light boxes and stainless steel cubes and Blue Dot bent plywood seats, which are for sale on the floor, will change with the fashions each season.