

CRITICAL SHOPPER

Enduring but Confusing at Barneys



Yana Paskova for The New York Times

By JON CARAMANICA
Published: November 22, 2011

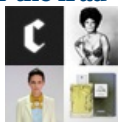
POP quiz: who's more stylish, Usher or Cuba Gooding Jr.?

Related

The Perfect Stocking Stuffer: A Chocolate Lady Gaga Shoe (November 22, 2011)

The Collection: A New Fashion App for the iPad

A one-stop destination for Times fashion coverage and the latest from the runways.



Download It From the App Store

Follow Us on Twitter

Follow @NYTimesfashion for fashion, beauty and lifestyle news and headlines.



Enlarge This Image



Yana Paskova for The New York Times

to distract him as you try on Stone Island coats.

Into this mush walked Usher (looking lumpy, it must be said), who was quickly surrounded by a constellation of sales associates, following him from rack to rack as he selected things to take home.

Only Barneys New York holds the answers to such esoterica. It's the level playing field of fashion, appealing to magnates and celebrities and tourists alike, a brand that, for all its overreaching of recent years, remains remarkably durable.

Under the guidance of the chief executive, Mark Lee, who was hired last year, Barneys is updating its men's-wear offerings, hoping to restore its place of privilege for emerging designers and styles, beginning with the redesigned Co-Op.

The old Co-Op was the Grand Central Terminal of aspirational retail, a scrum of high and low, luxe and ham-handed hip. It was as close as Barneys got to a glam shopping experience, and it could be blinding.

But there's little remarkable about the new Co-Op space, wide and long and inconsistently lighted, with stomach-level racks stuffed full of clothes that, from afar, look half black. Colors appear like oxygen tanks on icy mountaintops, badly needed and hard to come by.

- RECOMMEND TWITTER LINKEDIN SIGN IN TO E-MAIL PRINT SINGLE PAGE REPRINTS SHARE

From ALEXANDER PAYNE Director of SIDEWAYS

Login to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com

Log In With Facebook

What's Popular Now

Send In the Clueless



'Eat More Kale' T-Shirts Challenged by Chick-fil-A



J.CREW advertisement featuring a woman in a red coat and hat, with 'SHOP JCREW.COM >' button.

Today's Headlines Daily E-Mail



Sign up for a roundup of the day's top stories, sent every morning.

Sign Up

MOST E-MAILED

MOST VIEWED



1. OP-ED COLUMNIST Send in the Clueless



2. GRADING THE DIGITAL SCHOOL Online Learning, Personalized



3. OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR Bring Health Care Home

4. THE STONE And the Limits of Neuroscience

was excited to see sweat pants in a range of materials, from Alexander Wang's black leather to Opening Ceremony's heavy rustic wool. For real sweating, those pants.

In places, the Co-Op is still the store's nexus of forward thinking: killer Junya Watanabe Comme des Garçons pieces, including a raspy brown argyle shirt with blue sleeves (\$915); a long, rumpled horror-film-worthy black coat by Silent by Damir Doma (\$1,340), or an appealingly slouchy alpaca sweater by Patrik Ervell (\$350).

Now on the eighth floor, the Co-Op has never felt less connected to the rest of the store. Step down onto the untrammelled seventh floor, with its green cashmere Regent sport coats (\$3,095), seas of Incotex trousers and a tribute display to Gianni Agnelli's favorite suit, and it feels as if you've left a messy attic for the part of the house father frequents.

On 6, it's where father's cooler brother hangs out, maybe in the Etro purple, yellow and brown gingham blazer (\$1,450), the purple Valentini corduroys, or the rich brown Armani sport coat (\$1,395) that, over a series of visits to the store, earned its way into my closet.

Those floors, 6 and 7, are unambiguous. The Co-Op is supposed to be similarly certain, but it isn't. Instead, the store's third and fourth floors are its secret weapons, its progressive soul on display without youth-baiting baggage.

On 4, newish lines were impressive, especially Inis Meain, with its inventive Donegal sweaters, or Scout Original, with its bold Cowichan caricatures (\$1,250). In the corner, a glut of John Varvatos looked like an old man still dressing in leather and wet with Grecian Formula. In another, oodles of James Perse hung like limp rags.

Downstairs on 3, a beige Duckie Brown cashmere coat — belted, not buttoned — was erotically soft (\$4,225). It would have looked phenomenal with the nuclear fallout boots (color: "dirty black") by Alexandre Plokhov (\$1,395), or over the beige and white shawl V-neck sweater by Alexander McQueen (\$795). Off on one side were Raf Simons, Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten: in a dream world, this is usually what I'm dressed in.

Just downstairs, on the shiny glass-and-metal second floor, with its Italian designers and a sense of recklessness in the air, things got tough on the eyes once again; a whole column could be devoted to the glittering fuchsia mock-neck by Prada (\$860), a refugee from a costumer's closet. Better was the ground floor, with the promising collection by Piombo, one of the store's latest additions, especially the burnt red pants, or the beefy green car coat (\$1,095). (Best to ignore the casual-wear from brands that should stick to suits — denim from Kiton and Brioni, say.)

1 | 2 | [NEXT PAGE »](#)

A version of this review appeared in print on November 24, 2011, on page E4 of the New York edition with the headline: Enduring but Confusing.

- SIGN IN TO E-MAIL
- PRINT
- SINGLE PAGE
- REPRINTS



The finest journalism in Texas? The New York Times – Save 50% on home delivery plus FREE All Digital Access.

#### SPONSORED HEADLINES

[What's This?](#)

Brides.com  
**First Look: Lauren Bush's Wedding Dress**


Vanity Fair  
**Royal Watch: Middleton Milestones! Kate Mulls Baby Names Whilst Pippa's "Not Wife Material"**

Vogue  
**Western Union: Lauren Bush and David Lauren's Wedding**

#### Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

- Fashion and Apparel
- Shopping and Retail
- Barneys New York

#### ART AND THE LIMITS OF NEUROSCIENCE

- OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR  
[Why School Choice Fails](#)
-  Astronomers Find Biggest Black Holes Yet
- PUNCHED OUT  
Derek Boogaard: [Blood on the Ice](#)
- OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR  
[What Gingrich Didn't Learn in Congo](#)
- PUNCHED OUT  
Derek Boogaard: [A Boy Learns to Brawl](#)
- PUNCHED OUT  
Derek Boogaard: [A Brain 'Going Bad'](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

[Show My Recommendations](#)



### Announcing Win-a-Trip 2012

ALSO IN OPINION »

- [Video: Win-a-Trip 2012](#)
- [Kristof: Gifts that say you care](#)

**nytimes.com**

OPINION

#### ADVERTISEMENTS



T Magazine: The Holiday Issue

**50% OFF HOME DELIVERY**  
+ FREE ALL DIGITAL ACCESS  
[SUBSCRIBE NOW ▶](#) **The New York Times**

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

### **Jos A Bank Joseph Suits**

Shop The Expert In Men's Apparel  
1/2 Off Everything! Sale Ends 12/6  
[www.JosBank.com](http://www.JosBank.com)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

### **Winter Work Coats Sale**

Up To 70% Off Winter Work Coats

Shop Online Now and Save!

[www.SierraTradingPost.com](http://www.SierraTradingPost.com)

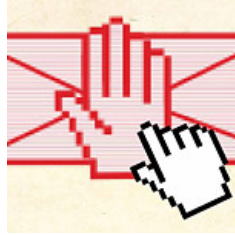
#### INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

SCIENCE »



Fertile Ground in Africa for Science to Take Root

OPINION »



Room for Debate: Should Workplaces Ban E-Mails?

BUSINESS »



Wal-Mart Debate Rages in India

ARTS »



The South Reinterprets Its 'Lost Cause'

OPINION »

### **Borderlines: A Few Salient Points**

Every panhandle tells a story — especially where European colonialism is involved.

ARTS »



Chipper Remnants of a Life Turned Sour

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Autos](#) | [Site Map](#)

© 2011 The New York Times Company | [Privacy](#) | [Your Ad Choices](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Terms of Sale](#) | [Corrections](#) |  [RSS](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Advertise](#)