

RONROBINSON



YEARS

Thank you for the time... .

I wrote this magazine of memories under pressure! Not so much the typical pressure to get something done as much as the pressure of remembering everything for the last 40 years. That and, of course, the persistence of Karen Meena along with so many other friends, vendors and employees who urged me to write down the stories we've experienced through the decades. There was a need to share these stories with readers who will simply enjoy them and others who will remember that they were a part of this time. It's about time.

I am so fortunate to have many loyal customers, many of whom have grown up with me. To each of you, I am sincerely thankful, appreciative and grateful. These stories are recounted here for the fun of sharing the incredible moments that we have experienced. And, of course, every time one story comes out, another is recalled.

There are also the personal stories from the many partnerships that have contributed to our success. The RON ROBINSON team that works together each day as well as the many loyal and supportive vendors, mentors and friends. This is one way I hope to say thank you.

Deeply important to me is to provide this collection of stories for my family. My son, Max, has grown into a man who I admire and who gives me great pride. And to my dear Stacy who has improved my life and made time more relevant and cherished.

To each of you who read this, I share these stories and I hope you will enjoy them.

Make the time!

XXXX



*Much love
Ron*

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His creativity mixed with business acumen and eye for detail are unparalleled and I couldn't be prouder to see him reach this milestone.

I first met Ron at a business meeting. I was DVP at the Broadway Department stores and was quite serious about my work. So, when a mutual friend suggested that Ron ask me on a date, his response was "Are you kidding? That women eats nails for breakfast and spits them out for lunch!" After meeting me socially, he changed his tune and decided that I had "warm blood running though my veins after all!" Ron then proceeded to claim that he'd just have to marry me and have a baby with me in order to convince me to take a cut in salary and come work for him. OK, so it was true!

The working partnership between Ron and I created a wonderful balance of yin and yang: his street-wise, smart approach to retail combined with my corporate view, his eye for detail juxtaposed with the way I look at the big picture and his passion for fashion paired with my level head for success. For all these reasons and more, we have had a wonderful partnership -- as life partners and business partners -- for the last 26 years. As Ron is celebrating his 40th year in business, I feel like a relative newcomer! But I know working together has resulted in something pretty special, different than if we had each done it on our own.

I'll never forget when I first went into the trade shows with Ron. Hey, I married the guy so obviously I think he's pretty special, but the love and

STACY ROBINSON

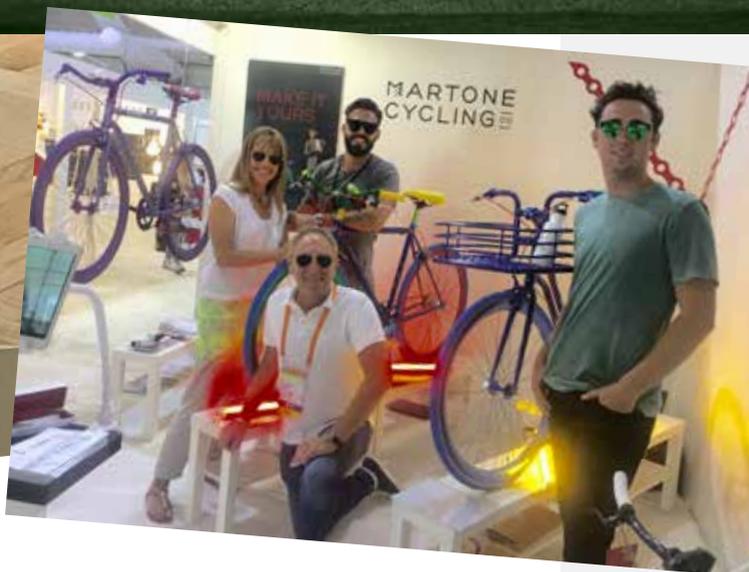
respect the vendors have for him was truly unique. His creativity mixed with business acumen and eye for detail are unparalleled and I couldn't be prouder to see him reach this milestone.

One of my favorite memories is a meeting we held, one day at our home. I was literally there to serve lunch, acting more as Ron's wife than his business partner. Ron had developed a fragrance named IF that we were selling in our store and wholesaling to a couple of stores like Henri Ben-del's and Barney's. He started working to turn the fragrance oil into an Eau DeParfum and arranged a meeting with our internal team and PR to present the results. Much to my surprise, he presented an entire line, complete with a new fine fragrance and eight candle and diffuser scents. I was totally blown away as was everyone else! The fragrances and packaging went on to win the FIFI award for fragrances and several packaging and design awards.

What impressed me the most was that all of Ron's years of experience in the beauty industry and merchandising culminated in the creation of his brand Apothia and from the aromatics to the way the packaging displayed on the shelf, there was not a detail missed. We now distribute the brand internationally and I still love the fragrances above and beyond all other lines. Ron is truly the 'Sultan of Scent,' so named by the LA Times in their article about Apothia.

Ron's a passionate guy and a little bit crazy at times, but that's what takes him out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary. Congratulations Ronney for all that you have achieved and the impact you have made in the world of specialty retailing! And thank you for the impact you have made in my life.

xoxo Your wife and Vice President
Stacy





“

When you're married to your business partner people assume you go home and talk about work. I have often had employees feel like they don't need to tell both of us something because, they assume, of course we will tell each other.

Guess what? **WRONG!!**

- Stacy Robinson

When we came home after work ,when Max was growing up, it was about us as a family, not about work. Of course the business was a big part of our lives, but since we both worked a lot, we tried to focus on Max when we were at home. Max will be the first to tell you that he didn't always appreciate that individual focus!

Max was a serious athlete and Ron and I always scratched our heads because that was so unlike either of us. But we grew to love sports through watching Max. When Max was a teenager, we came to consider baseball his "job." He played year round and we never really had him work at the store, nor did he

seem very interested. Other than a few days a year before Christmas, making up gift boxes, he never spent a day on the sales floor.

As the children's wear buyer for 15 years, it felt kind of strange for Max to wear clothes from any store but ours. God forbid someone commented on his clothes and I would have to say they were from another store! I'll never forget one time we took him with us to a trade show in San Francisco. He literally begged me to be able to shop at the Gap. I finally relented and other than athletic clothes, he finally had a shopping experience outside of Ron Robinson. I know, you're really feeling sorry for him, right? It wasn't

really until he went to college that he finally began to understand the world of fashion and style in which he grew up. Attending the University of Boulder in Colorado, he was surrounded by flannel plaids and polo shirts.

When Max finished business school at Boulder, he went traveling for a while and we decided to meet for a family trip, celebrating his graduation. We had business in Switzerland and Italy, so like so many of our trips through the years, including Ron and my honeymoon, we decided to incorporate a vacation in between work. Max was coming from Bali so I told him he could just meet us in Italy for vacation, spending more time in Bali while we did our work in Switzerland. We were there doing a PR launch for Apothia wholesale. Much to my surprise, Max said no, he wanted to be there for the business part of the trip. He met us in Switzerland and, after some vacation time in Positano, came with us to meet with the Missoni group in Milan for whom we were producing a co-branded candle project.

Of course, since he had just graduated, there was a lot of discussion about what he was going to do regarding work during that trip. He kept saying he wanted to come to work with us, and both Ron and I were surprised, and kept telling him that no, he should go follow his own interest and work for someone else. Ron, in particular, didn't want to be the one to be in a position of directing Max. Instead, he just wanted to be Max's dad and encourage him to find his own career path.

Well, Max was so involved and obviously interested in our meetings during that trip, that he eventually convinced us to give him an opportunity to work with us as a trial. One of his most convincing arguments was that we weren't spring chickens, and if he decid-

ed later he wanted to learn our business, it might be too late!

So we came up with a very glamorous position for him. We needed someone to do shipping as we were going into the holiday season with no one in that position. The plan was he would do shipping through Christmas and then hire someone to replace himself and train them.

Well I guess even though, as a child, he didn't seem to be listening to our business discussions, somehow a few things sunk in anyway. He proceeded to teach me how much someone can learn about our business by doing shipping. He would notice when we were selling increased numbers in a product because of the amount of units being shipped. He analyzed how we were shipping incoming and outgoing at a time the freight companies were completely changing how they charged due to internet sales. For example, the shipping manager before him totally didn't get it and cost our company thousands of dollars in increased shipping expense.

Through changes Max made, he saved us over \$50k in a year. It became very clear what a difference it could make having someone with critical thinking skills and who really cared about the business.

We laugh about the lesson in personnel since it took Max about six months to replace himself. There were people who didn't show up for interviews, or even once someone who was hired who didn't show up for his first day on the job. It was a crash course into the world of staffing!

It was such a joy to work with Max and have him involved, that we agreed ok, you want to work with us, you got it. So I put together an accelerated training program. After working in shipping, Max became an assistant buyer to Karen Meena in men's. He went to the men's buying market so he could experience the beginning of the process as well as every step until ultimately going to the store to see the merchandise hit the floor, be merchandised and hopefully sold to the customer.

After a year in buying, he went to help manage our Santa Monica Flagship. Max was concerned about going into the store because he wasn't sure if he would be successful at selling.

Six months later, he was the highest volume sales person in the month of December for as long as I have records on my computer – at least 15 years. Needless to say, Max has done very well.

Working with family, of course has its challenges, but for both Ron and me it has been such a wonderful experience seeing Max's work ethic, ability to take on new responsibilities and be successful. It is a different experience to see your child as a professional. You see abilities that you might not have recognized as a parent.

The best thing about working with Max, whether he continues in our business or not, we both have so much confidence in his ability to be successful in the world.





“MAN, THIS GUY IS A LEGEND!”

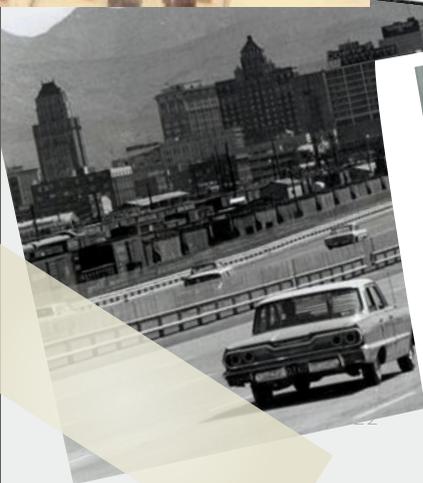
Growing up, I knew my dad as just that, my dad: an athletics coach, life lesson teacher and best friend. Not until I began walking trade shows with him did I see the business side and the respect he received in the industry. We couldn't make it through a show without being approached numerous times so people could praise his work. One time, someone even stopped him to have their picture taken with him. It made me realize, “Man, this guy is a legend!” His relentlessness to carry the newest, coolest product is unparalleled and is engraved in his ethos. He is an innovator, a curator and a presentation perfectionist.

He pushes me to think outside the box, whether it is buying product or problem solving.

**HE IS ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR AND FINDING
NEW WAYS TO PRESENT SOMETHING
AND INSPIRE OUR CUSTOMER.**

MAX ROBINSON

**THIS IS MY STORY
∞ I'M STICKING TO IT**





CITY OF ANGELS

The first Robinson in my family arrived in the United States from Alsace Lorraine to Virginia around 1800.

My father Richard was born in Montreal, Canada. His parents, Hannah and Howard had moved to Canada to open a men's store along with my uncle in 1913. The stores proved to be very popular. But, after the great depression and the war, my father moved to the US in search of a better life. My grandfather had told him that he had some good friends in El Paso, Texas and he should meet them. He did, and he also met my mother, Ruth Rosenberg, and made his home and started a family there.

I was born in 1949 in El Paso, Texas. It was a good place to grow up, with my parents and three brothers. It had a comfortable feel, like a solid, small town with a population of about 500,000 people. As a child, I didn't even think about the differences between a big city and a small town but, as I grew, I realized my town's limits, culturally and progressively.

I was raised with apparel retailing in my blood. Not only did my father come from a retailing background, also my maternal grandparents, Sam and Olga Rosenberg, operated American Dry Goods Company in our home town of El Paso. And my mother and her brother, my uncle, Norman Ross owned a very successful fashion maternity group of stores called Maternity Modes. Some of my earliest memories are of playing among the wares and the small upstairs office at my grandfather's shop.

As a teen, I continued to play around at retail, mostly with my good friend Lenny Fagelman. Lenny and I were business partners and compatriots. And, like most males in their late teens, we had a desire to meet girls. On one hot June day in El Paso, Lenny and I decided that we might just set up a lemonade stand and see what happened. The heat reached 95-100 and girls must need some ice-cold refreshment, I surmised, and I was correct.



Lenny's father owned Mac's

Deli, the best, and only deli in town. That's one of the places we'd go to get underage beer, though, of course, Lenny's dad didn't know. But Mac's also had fabulous Pastrami and I loved to the split pea soup. To this day, I am still looking for a match for that soup.

Lenny and I used his father's and my family's business sense to also put together more money making opportunities. In high school we installed 8 track stereos in cars. That was big money. I think we charged \$95 at the time. The bonus was we were able to test drive the coolest cars after working on them. After all, we had to be sure the units worked properly, so a road test was in order. The best place to test them out, we found, was "The Charcoaler," El Paso's top burger drive in, where we could show off our work, be seen in a hot car and look for girls.

In February 1968, Lenny and I also developed and operated the lightshow for The Buffalo Springfield when they came to town. Our production was a mix of old 8mm home films, a strobe and an overhead projector with colored water on it. It was an amazing night. I don't think we got paid for that, but it significantly elevated our cool factor.

In late 68, Lenny went to Los Angeles and began working for Fred Segal. He scored the job because his sister was married to Fred at the time. Those were the days, remember, before cell phones, texts and email. When Lenny moved to L.A., our communication consisted of hand written, mailed letters and the occasional phone call on the then standard oval princess phone. I wanted to come out for the sum-

mer between semesters at UTEP (University of Texas at El Paso) and, though Lenny couldn't promise me a job, he said I could stay with him and that's all I needed to hear.

Before actually taking the plunge and moving out to L.A. for the summer, I was preparing properly, writing letters to Lenny back and forth, confirming my arrival, cementing my plans. This was the summer after my first year in college and I got on the airplane having paid for everything myself. There was no extra money from my parents. I had to rely on myself.

That trip was my first flight into Los Angeles. I arrived at night and the view over the city was expansive darkness between beautiful glittering lights for miles and miles. It was an impressive sight, I clearly remember my first thoughts of likening it to glowing jewel box. Symbolically Los Angeles has become my jewel box!

My arrival into Los Angeles, however, wasn't without its challenges. When I landed at LAX, I had Lenny's phone number with me. I knew he lived on Norton Street but I had never bothered to write down the street address as Lenny was supposed to pick me up. I called Lenny when I got in, but there was no answer. After waiting for hours, I finally decided to take a cab to his house, or, at least, to his street.

Since I knew the name of the street, I figured it would at least get me close. Remember, I was coming from a city where there would only have been one Norton Street, not four of them as in Los Angeles. The cab driver asked me which Norton. I shrugged and said, "I don't know. The one near Fred Segal or West Hollywood," trying to think of areas that I had been told about. Thankfully, this gave the driver the idea of the area of town and we ended up on Norton St, near Fairfax, at around one a.m. The cab let me off on the curb and there I was, looking around for a car, for something that I would recognize as Lenny's, thinking I'd find him that way. But, turns out, Lenny not only did not pick me up, he forgot about me entirely. And I haven't forgotten, to this day, to remind him about that! I also learned my first lesson about L.A. It's much bigger than I thought.



American Dry Goods
Sam Rosenberg - Grandfather



"Jinger Jar"



Vol. 1

NEW YEAR'S NUMBER, 1919

No. 1



WELL, Boys, here we all are. — The entire staff of the Robinson Institution, and I want to say that this is a pretty "Live" looking bunch of boys, and I am certainly proud of the "Line Up!"

When I look back just 5½ short years ago, and realize that my whole staff was just one man, and my whole stock about 90 suits, and then look at our stores today stretching from Montreal to Vancouver, and doing the largest business of any shops in the towns they are located in, I cannot help but feel proud of our achievements.

I fully realize that every one of you have helped me to whatever success I have attained in the retail clothing field in Canada, and I want to take this occasion to thank you all for your loyalty to Robinson Methods and Robinson Institutional Standards.

We're only started on the road to big things, boys, and it is by co-operation and working together for a common cause that we will be able to build this Robinson business in the next 5 years to five times the size it is now.

As I look in the faces displayed before me, I recognize one quality in every face. That is determination. This quality, with energy behind it, will accomplish anything.

Now, boys, let's all put our shoulders to the wheel for the coming year, and each do his part to make this the biggest year in the history of the business.

I want you each one to feel that the business is yours, as well as mine, and every effort you make to build it, is building a future for yourselves as well as for the Robinson Shops.

M.B. Robinson

In this issue you get acquainted with one another. Introducing—The famous Color Brothers.—A Fisher of minnows.—A man who sleeps with little Camphor. Dave—the optimist—Hull tactics—and One Bon Garcon.



the City of the Good CLOTHING SALESMEN



HOWARD W. ROBINSON,
Manager.

Mr. Howard son has recently happy father - told on the quiet has made a great in Howard. In we have heard, handle bottles, v at night, and b classic features ing men, daughter, and of on ticular.

nto and the Three 'Ems

of Yonge and Shuter Streets, in the Ryrie Building with other Robinson Stores in the last 3 years, under a strong floor staff, it has made other branches clothing men have expressed the opinion that our the handsomest exclusive men's clothing shop in countenances below bears out this opinion, and main in such a still pool as Toronto. acceptable gifts for 'Em's.

Sells 'Em.

Sells 'Em.



Mike Stopeck.



Stone, the 'Patlo'

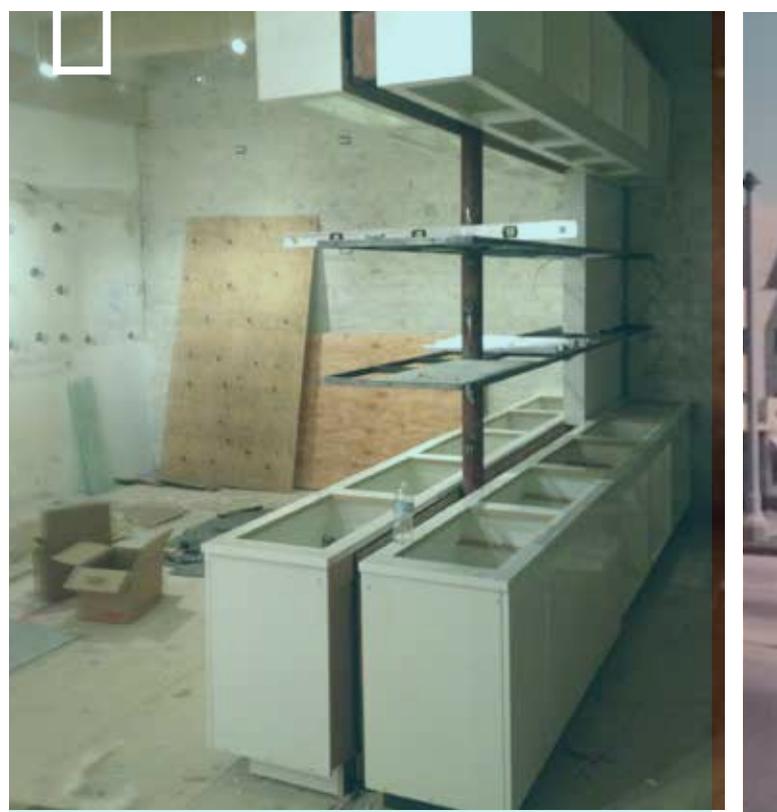
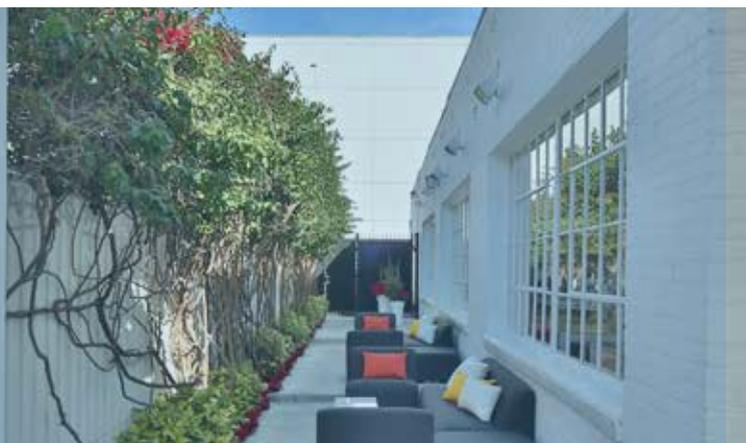
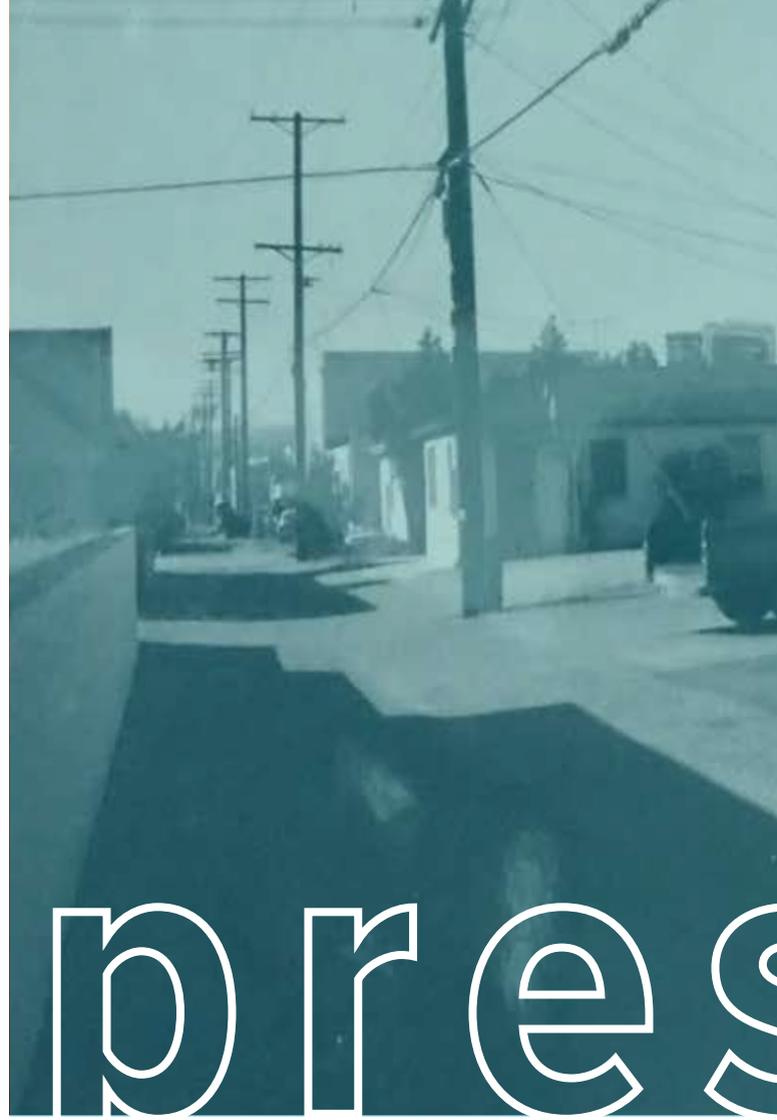
Luckily, a man was coming home from an evening out. He asked what I was doing, standing there on the street with a suitcase. I told him I was looking for Lenny Fagelman. No recognition. But the guy did offer me his sofa for the night. I was very concerned, really scared, but I figured the man seemed like an OK guy and, though my heart was pounding, and I didn't sleep at all that night, at least I was inside

As soon as there was daylight, having not been murdered or abused in my sleep, I got up, left a thank you note, and carrying my luggage with me and I made my way to Fred Segal. That was the first time I walked into Fred Segal. Turns out, the store wasn't actually all that far from where I was, maybe 20 blocks. I felt lucky and relieved. When I found Lenny at the store, I asked my good, but less than reliable, friend where the hell he was and why he wasn't there at the airport. He said he was partying that night and he simply forgot. Those were the days of sex, drugs and rock and roll so his excuse fell into that category.

Lenny took one look at me, dressed in period appropriate clothing of college boy from El Paso. I was very confident that my Ivy League look was cool, Bass Wejuns, Levis and a button down collar Gant shirt. "No, no, no!" Lenny declared. He tied a silk scarf around my neck and changed what I was wearing. I had to look the part to stay in LA and El Paso attire would never be accepted. With my updated style, I was ready to take on LA. Or, maybe, it was ready to take me on.

I met Fred but he wouldn't hire me that summer because I was Lenny's friend. He said he had a policy where he didn't want things to get too chummy between employees. But I needed income as I was funding this trip myself. My first job in L.A. was packing cassette tapes at a manufacturing company. My next job was at Mattson's Men's Store on the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Wilcox. Gary and Don Mattson gave me a shot and I did very well. I will always remember them and that opportunity.

After that first summer, I went back to El Paso, attended another year at UTEP and came back to Los Angeles permanently after my sophomore year. I then landed a job at Fred Segal. By that point, Fred had realized that I was honest, straightforward and hardworking. I started at the original store he had on Santa Monica Blvd and Crescent Heights but, then after about a year, he moved me to the Melrose store and I continued to take on additional responsibility in his company.





sent







DO HE WE

ARE YOU?

In my life I have learned from the best and the brightest. I have involved myself deeply and with passion. I followed when necessary, but mostly I have led. There have been many successes and, of course, there have also been disappointments. Throughout my career, I have been fortunate enough to meet some of my closest friends. At times, I have been disillusioned with the dynamics of business relationships but I have taken the good with the bad and used my experiences and challenges to create growth.

Let me first put some context around the timing of the opening of my own business.

In 1978, Star Wars and Saturday Night Fever were selling out the box office, punk and disco were breaking through big time. The Rolling Stones released Some Girls, their biggest album in six years, although they had already been playing music for 16 years. Bruce Springsteen dropped the now classic Darkness on the Edge of Town and I went and borrowed \$10,000 from Don Wallin, the Manager at Security Pacific National Bank, in order to fund the opening of my own store at the Fred Segal location on Melrose Avenue. I was excited. I was young. I was eager, and admittedly a bit frightened. I signed a lease with Mr. Fred Segal and he became my landlord and no longer my employer or a retailer at the location. Ron Robinson was now one of the pioneer retailers at Melrose and Crescent Heights.

At that point, I had already worked for Fred for nearly 10 years, starting as a sales person in 1969. Through the years, I grew with his company and became a sales manager, buyer and vice president. In the later years, I made or was involved in many of the decisions that built the Fred Segal brand during a key time period in its development. In addition to the requirement of management and buying, I was responsible for producing and selling the wholesale apparel branded Fred Segal Designs. I introduced beauty products to our customers for the first time in the mid 70's.

Segal had assembled a talented group whose hard work had ushered in tremendous growth for his name-sake brand. He was, naturally, interested in continuing to utilize these talented people by offering a more permanent position, otherwise the attrition would have been hard to replace. He offered up leasing space from him and becoming the "owner of your own business at the center." With that, in 1978, Ron Robinson, and selected others at various times, became the actual retailers at that iconic location and Fred Segal became the landlord.

By the time I opened my own store at the Melrose and Crescent Heights location, my creative and innovative input up to that point had been attributed directly to Fred Segal, the brand. Often times I was asked by customers if I was Fred Segal or related to him as I was always on the sales floor and was intimately involved in the promotion of the brand. That connection continued with me and my business long after I opened at the Melrose location. Today, as I flip through old magazines and newspapers with stories about opening the innovative cosmetics and beauty areas or the development of the kids shop or the home accessories and gift areas, it's clear that the credit even then was given to Fred Segal in the press rather than Ron Robinson. It had been a natural connection for people and it was, in a large part, engineered that way by Fred Segal.

The agreement I initially signed with Fred expected that I continue to build the Fred Segal brand, with Segal branded bags and messaging, even though I used my own initiative, creativity, employed my own staff, paid the rent and took our own risks. There was a value to have that relationship but, over time, the personal control by Fred, himself, beyond the agreement, became challenging and uncomfortable. At the time, I was thrilled to build my own business in the fashion apparel world, a world that I knew and enjoyed. Over the years, I added several new categories of business that hadn't been available at the Fred Segal location previously and I was pleased to watch them grow. Although there



were unique and difficult requirements in the original agreement that I signed, I signed it with no regrets and I have learned a valuable lesson from all of it.

When the lease agreement was up for renewal, however, I did challenge several of the more unbearable points of the original agreement. It was clear to me that after many years I needed to create a stronger identity for our own Ron Robinson brand, apart and/or in addition to the Fred Segal moniker as the overwhelming control that Segal was expecting only provided more value to the FS brand and little to our own.



From the mid 80s, I moved forward, transitioning our brand to Ron Robinson at Fred Segal and eventually to Ron Robinson. I am settled with the past following my departure from Fred's control. I take responsibility for my actions, even signing a lease with one sided inclusions. I am proud of the hard work and dedication I've put into growing my own brand then and now.

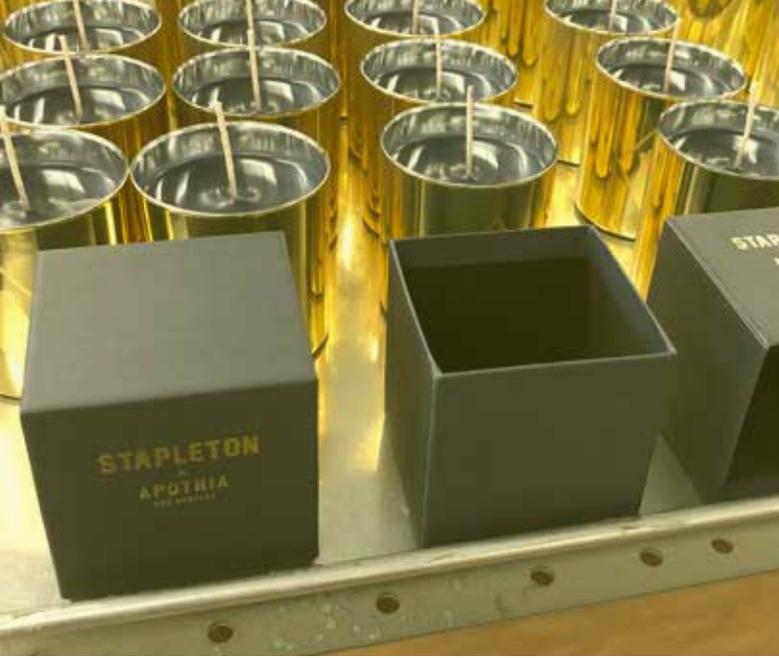
I wasn't alone in building the Fred Segal brand. I worked with others who were and are superstars in retailing. I gained respect and an education from them and others I had the privilege to work with. When I first began to work with Fred, it was Ron Ross, Ron Herman and myself that were the buying and management team. Yes, there were three Rons. Imagine how that was when someone called the store for the buyer. It began with "I want to speak to the buyer."

“WHICH BUYER?” “RON.” “WHICH RON?” “RON THE BUYER.”



It was like the comedy bit "Who's on First." Ron Ross was a general manager and buyer for fine menswear. Ron Herman had women stores and closed them to bring his talents to work for Fred. I was responsible for the jeans and sportswear buying and management of the store. As we each transitioned to build our own brands, Ron Ross opened his own store not affiliated with Fred Segal. Ron Herman owned his own store at the Melrose location, opened in Brentwood and stopped promoting the Fred Segal brand completely early on, dropping that brand and only using his own. Eventually, we all branched out to do our business independent of the Fred Segal branding. Even with that, often still today, our businesses are still referred to by some as Fred Segal. All of us had contributed to and were, in part, responsible for the meteoric growth of the Fred Segal brand.

Lessons learned from Fred, have taught me how to live and work and, also, what not to repeat. I made a commitment to myself about how I choose to live and run my business as well as how we deal with others in business, vendors and customers. I know there are people who helped me out along the way and I will never forget them. I want to pass that help forward. All these lessons, those more glorious and wonderful and some more challenging and stressful, through the years, have provided me the ability and desire to grow to the brand Ron Robinson as it exists today.



BEHIND THE SC





Our very first cash register at the melseose store



TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

I love to learn something new every day but, most importantly, I try to remember what I've learned. At times, that includes things I could have done better. Thankfully, I've been able to achieve better each and every time.

OK, almost every time.

When I first opened the store, it was up to me, and only me, to run all the clerical, operational, bookkeeping, buying and merchandising. I filled all of those positions in addition to selling and cleaning. I imagine that's how it is for most beginning entrepreneurs. I began each morning by unpacking boxes, pricing the items, merchandizing the product on the shelves, taking care of the customer, vacuuming, cleaning and locking up. Each night at home, I'd do the accounting, prepare the checks for vendors and then start the process over again the next day. Fortunately, our success over the years has allowed my business to grow and I ended up today with many talented people to do many of the jobs.

Back in 1978, the first Ron Robinson team consisted of Sam Roberts, Constance Marchetti and Sandra Garcia, a super threesome. It's grown throughout the years to 50 or more employees at any given time and season. One of the biggest challenges is creating a team that truly cares. That concern is, of course, not unique to our business and is on the minds of all my peers. Finding the right team is about who they are inside, what kind of direction, accomplishments and skills they have gathered while growing up, their hopes and dreams today and how they want to express themselves and continue their growth. It's a balance of letting each employee's unique personality and energy shine through while never giving up on the Ron Robinson structure, focus and direction, delivering the experience and quality we expect and keeping our business



running properly. Everybody has their own lives and issues, their own dynamics, their own auditions to make and garage band tours (hey, it's LA!) so the process of training and retraining is always in motion. We are never finished.

As for retail sales, too often in today's world, "salespeople" are regarded as either aggressively preying on customers or invisible, leaving the lost customer trying to find someone to help. We approach this differently. I let our team know that, in my world, we don't sell something for the mere sake of selling it or for the price it costs. It must be about what product works best for that customer. If that is foremost in the mind, if the staff has found out what works for the client, then they will likely sell the product, or more likely the customer will want to buy it. The staff member becomes a facilitator, someone with exceptional knowledge of the product, helping the customer make the right choice, knowing all the merchandise and being able to provide the narrative or story about what the product is all about. We need to lead the client through our products and highlight those things that fit their needs. Our staff should be client coaches and guides.



With fashion apparel, or in any of our product categories, our store is often bringing in merchandise that is at the leading edge or slightly ahead of the trend. We are that guide to the near future, letting the customer know why they're switching to bellbottoms or back to straight legs or how to tell a guy that pink is in vogue. Our sales team must be informed. They need to believe in the product and be confident in what they know and how they express themselves. Often, we must educate the consumer. Although we have many clients who are leaders in fashion, there are many who are seeing an item for the first time and need to have an opportunity to understand the new direction before they dive into it. A change in fashion is rarely going to happen overnight, but what remains steady is our consistency and desire to promote what is fresh and innovative.



There are only a handful of products that I have seen where it happened "overnight." For us, one of them was Hard Candy nail polish in 1995. Hard Candy was started by a young couple, in their early twenties at the time, Dineh Mohajer and Ben Einstein. They brought super brightly-colored nail polish in unexpected colors, something completely new to the market. The colors were what today's market would be called disruptive. To us and our customers it's just too cool. As if the colors weren't a strong enough selling point, the Hard Candy bottles had these little decorative, collective rings around the bottle tops. They just flew off the shelves right away.

I remember that when our son Max was three years old, the girls in our shop would paint his fingernails and toenails in these bright colors. They were very proud of themselves and he sported it well.



We have also experienced an “overnight” sensation that then became an overnight disappearance of a product. I’ll explain. We called it a Duck Duck, but that was our play on its brand name. People eventually referred to them and their copycat versions as “hover boards.” I found our very high-end version very early on and stuck with our affectionate name rather than a generic title and we developed ourselves as the place selling the best version and selling it exclusively. We were totally alone in selling them for many months and they took off within weeks because my staff learned how to ride them and would zoom around, carrying boxes or moving through the store. Of course, we know now that six or seven months later, inferior versions by different companies flooded the market and had batteries that would cause major fireworks, to put it mildly. Ours luckily did not do that but, of course, after that news, all the products developed a bad reputation. OK, so we don’t always get to reap the long-term rewards of being first. This was too bad because, until the news about batteries on similar products, we couldn’t keep our exclusive and benign version in stock. You can hardly sell something with a “don’t worry, this one doesn’t explode” sticker.

Most products, though, have a growth that takes some time. But that doesn’t mean there can’t be huge success nevertheless. One such product was a perfume we were exclusive on called “Child.” It’s such a big, unique, bold floral scent. It didn’t take off immediately, but we kept at

it, over the years selling one bottle then another to our amazing customer base, our early adopters and celebrities. Once it hit, it hit big. Our efforts early on and for many years propelled the fragrance into long-term success. Each product has its timeline and trajectory and requires its own life in the store.

There are so many other elements in the running of a store. Vendor relationships are a very big part. It’s important for us to build and maintain a good standing with our vendors. Being on time or ahead of time with payments is of utmost importance. It’s about creating a relationship with the vendor, presenting their product in a way that’s respectful and getting their brand to mesh with Ron Robinson brand. Too often I have seen retailers who consider vendors as competitors instead of allies. Everyone is in this business to build a successful business and there must be an alliance between retailer and vendor for that to happen.

Stacy and I always just assume people pay their vendors, but some of the stories we hear and the incidents that I have experienced from the wholesale side of the business are shocking, especially when big name retailers are not paying their vendors for three to six months, sometimes more. When a store treats the vendor community fairly and honestly, they know it and the good word gets out. We make every effort to treat vendors with respect and build trust. It works both ways too, of course. I need to

know that my vendor isn't selling at another price point or to the competing store down the street.

Every brand, be it cosmetics, womenswear, kids wear, menswear or home design products has a unique narrative, an inspiration, a reason why we chose them and a story about why they were created. But none of these products can literally speak for themselves. They don't have the ability to tell their own story. They require our team to learn the narratives and share those stories with our customers. We must be able to discuss with the customer, the product story, the background and then our thinking as to why we carry the product. Our effort is to speak to customers in an honest manner about why this product is unique and different. There's no standard operating procedure for this engagement. It will happen organically with each customer. That's where the customer, either subconsciously or consciously, becomes connected to our experience. The training of the team has to be consistent. Vendors teach our staff and our staff teaches each other so that we can always provide the best information. I can't tell you the number of times a salesperson has said how much they love working with us because they are encouraged to be themselves.

At the same time, training does not always go perfectly. Karen Meena once came to me, understandably frustrated, and asked just how many times she'd have to keep emphasizing a point to a sales team member. The answer is "Until they get it" because we just can't accept anything less. She knew this answer, we all do, but needed to vent and have support. If only it was as simple as saying something once, but we all need each other's positive support and reassurance to keep us on goal. In fact, at staff meetings we cover the topics and repeat as needed.

Bringing originality to the market is another essential part of our business. I am often asked how we find new product. We discover it through friends, online, at trade shows, in store, on holiday, at a bar, from the newspaper and the list goes on and on. In the early days, I even placed orders for products shown to me in the parking lot of the Melrose store. As a matter of fact, in the late 70s, I viewed and purchased Quiksilver out of the trunk of the reps' car. (Funny side note, that representative, Tom

Holbrook, later became an executive VP of Quik). Back then, we'd also often take expensive trips to Japan and Europe, walking the trade shows and finding treasures to order and bring back. In today's market, by the time you return, some company has often already copied it, produced the copy and sold it. Things work very differently now, much quicker. The digital age is terrific, but it creates different challenges.

One thing that has remained constant each day in the store is the visual presentation of the merchandise, which helps the customer to understand and feel comfortable with a new product. Vendors have grown to trust us because we really care about their product and how it's presented in our store. Good presentation is intended to attract interest and to stimulate, making a customer inquisitive about an offering. There is the first step in education about the new items. This comes directly from the buying staff to the sales staff, helping the sales team relate to the essence of the product and how it may best be presented. Karen Meena and Walter Giedroc have become masters in our store presentation, very often adding their own signature in the form of quirkiness and humor.

Also important is the packaging of the merchandise. We have always gift wrapped at no charge but as competition rose, we had to create an even more dramatic presentation for some of our customers. We created a great following for exceptional gifts with our entertainment clients. They want the gifts they give to stand out and we want the same. So, years ago, I challenged the team to create our version of a gift basket, minus the actual woven straw basket. That look was too traditional for us and we needed something more modern and powerful. We have a beautiful custom gift box, and then the thought of taking our box, opening it and literally building a presentation into the open box. Sometimes these presentations grew to be two feet tall. Walter Giedroc has since elevated the concept to an art form, training many of our staff to create incredibly exciting gift presentations. For kids, they may include a stuffed animal wearing an outfit, surrounded by accessories and other fashion garments, everything is carefully engineered to fit and stay upright, then hugged with cellophane and our red ribbon: glorious!





THE TEAM MELROSE 2014



OLD WORLD VALUES
NEW WORLD VISION



MY CUSTOMER DESERVES IT.
MY VENDORS DESERVE IT.
MY EMPLOYEES DESERVE IT.
WE ALL DESERVE IT.

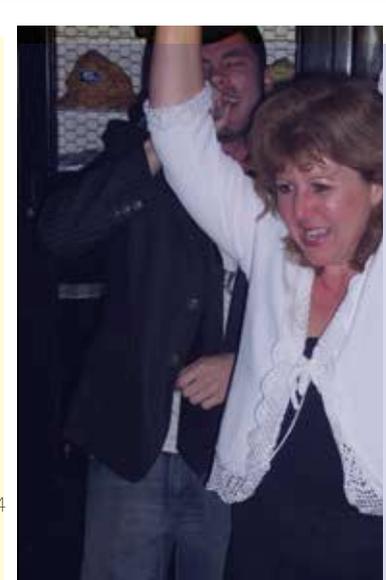
In this business and in most business, you think you've seen it all but you will still often be surprised. It happens with staff and it happens with customers, it also happens with nature or the facility. Each day brings its set of challenges that wear on the mind and the stress level. The air conditioning will go out when it's the hottest day. Or there's a black-out on a day that you're super busy store has to be cleared out because it's simply too dark. The web has introduced a whole new set of challenges to the brick and mortar retail world. We have to be ready each day to see what's in store for us.

There's a book by Malcolm Gladwell called the Outlier. In it, he seeks to pinpoint the time it takes for mastery in a field. He speaks of 10,000 hours of practice. If that's the case, many of our team have reached a certain level of expertise after four to five years. If I multiply my many years by the more than eight hours a day, seven days a week, I am in it well over 120,000 hours. By this accounting, I should be an expert at least ten or twelve things by now. But I am proud of the expertise I've managed to learn and I enjoy sharing it as well. This business is changing each day, bringing new ideas to market and new challenges to bear. I am always pondering the best way to approach the client each day, especially in light of what is going on in our society and our culture and how larger world issues affect each one of us. I think about how to measure those issues and we need to adjust accordingly.

The way we work with the challenges has evolved as well. When I was just starting out, there were so many make or break moments every day. Early on, even the smallest thing

can hurt the business. I had to deal with some really difficult vendors, some staff, even a landlord and sometimes a customer. But, after I was able to take a breath and realize that we have been fortunate over the years, that our business had grown, that we got over an initial hump, but we still cannot take our focus off the track. With that, I made a vow to myself that I had to keep those sorts of people out of my business circle as best as possible. You must try to get rid of the schnooks. I choose to work with honorable people who care and understand that what we do is as much for them as for ourselves. Respect is necessary. Our business has grown enough now that I can make an effort to skip a bad individual and be able to go on to the next one that makes life a little more pleasant.

There is a motto that I created years ago. It is so close to my heart that I even wrote it on the entry to our Melrose store: "Old World Values and New World Vision." Today, some disgusting comments are being thrown around by those considered to be leaders. It's done so often that's its becoming accepted behavior. I feel it is elementary to treat people with dignity. My customer deserves it. My vendors deserve it. My employees deserve it. We all deserve it. As humans, we may slip occasionally, but that should be the exception. I want those I associate with to show respect in what we do, in how we present our products and ourselves, to have a sense of humor, to take our product and our endeavors seriously, but to not always take ourselves too seriously. These values will always inspire our vision and our ability to be progressive, forward thinking, innovative and creative.



RON ROBINSON

LIFESTYLE CONCEPT STORE

Men Women Kids

Sportswear

Jewelry Beauty Gift Pool Accessories Home Decor





**WOW
MOMENT**



IT WAS A





CS — BB

IN JAPAN

In 1981, I went to a dinner party with friends here in Los Angeles. Three of the guests were Japanese men about the same age as me. That was the night I met Ruki Matsumoto, who was in the apparel business; Kio Kanno, who worked for Ruki; and Agee Yamata, a macrobiotic chef.

We hit it off at dinner and, that week, the three men visited my store. There was a connection and a budding friendship began, a meeting of the minds. While I was showing them through my Melrose store, I noticed Ruki had an interesting device on his belt with earphones attached to it. I asked what that was as I had never seen this before. He took the earphones off, and put them over my ears. The sound that came out was extraordinary, it was a WOW moment! It turned out that was the very first Sony Walkman, which, at that point, had only been released in Japan.

He then took the Walkman off his belt and handed it over to me as a gift. I ended up being one of the first people in Los Angeles with a Walkman. That year began a wonderful and longtime relationship with Ruki, a relationship that I have kept with his family and his wife and his children to this day even though Ruki, himself, passed away a few years ago. It was also the beginning of an amazing relationship with Agee Yamada, the chef/owner of Mominoki House Restaurant in Tokyo.

A year after meeting them all, I went to Japan for the first time. When the Japanese connect with you, they are the kindest hosts you could ever ask for. Ruki made sure that I was never alone while I was in Japan. He would assign himself or, later, his son or daughter to accompany me and show me around. I came to Ruki's office knowing he had a fashion apparel business called Bat-Su, but it was more than that. Including his larger company, LAFA, (Laboratory All Fashion Arts), he owned and operated 400 vertical production stores with a wide variety of labels, each with several stores. In addition to the fashion business, Ruki loved art, sculpture and posters. He collected art from the 1900s to the 1940s Deco, Nouveau including paintings, posters and bronze sculptures. Here was a young man, my age, so grounded and accomplished, so able to communicate philosophically and creatively. It was a wonderful enlightening friendship that I deeply cherished.

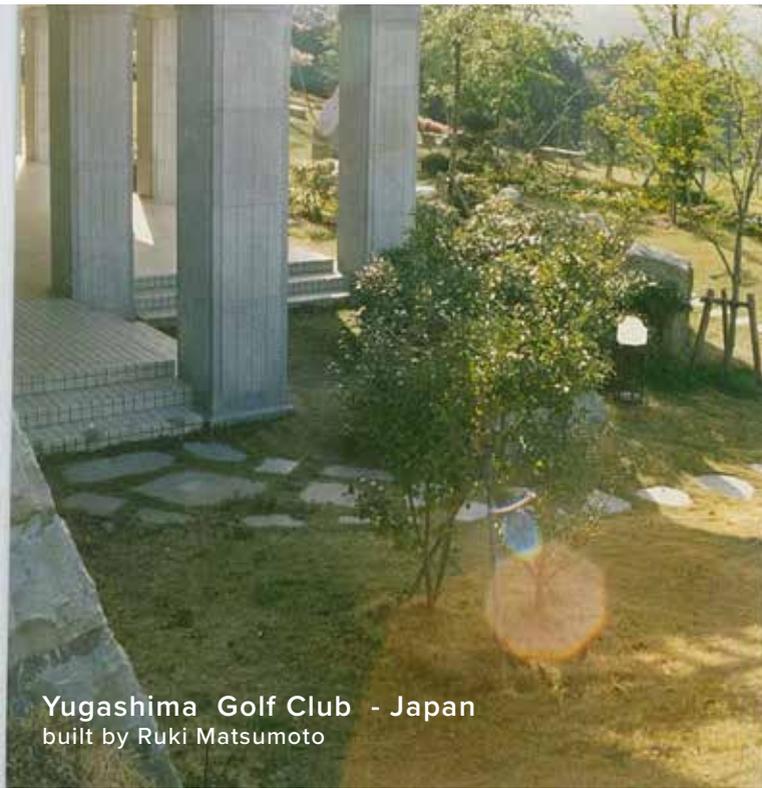
I don't know if you've ever had the experience when you travel to a place for the first time and feel like you had been there before, that it was so familiar in a deep spiritual way. In Tokyo, that's how I felt when walking the streets and visiting the gardens. It was like I had been there in another life. I wanted to soak it all in, to explore the gardens and the corners of the city in solitude. I felt so at ease in the community. Back then, I always stayed at the New Otani Hotel and I made sure to take the subway everywhere, to be among the people. I'd walk out of the hotel to the subway entrance each day and there was a very small noodle shop down the street on the corner, no Americans there, only working-class Japanese. I'd frequent there every morning. I even became familiar to the man who made the soup, each day and year after year, still the only American in his noodle shop. One day, the police actually came in and asked me to come outside, questioned me because I was an outlier, seemingly an American who wasn't in the right spot. There was a police box a few yards away. They asked where I was staying and let me go. I had no problem with this sort of an experience. It was all part of learning about the culture. They must have

thought I was spying on the noodle man.

On one visit, Ruki thought it would be great to visit a typical Japanese Ryokan, situated in a hilly forest. It's like a hotel, living in a large room where we took all our meals and slept on a tatami mat. Wearing a comfortable Yukata, a cotton robe, we would talk and take walks in the forest, and soak in natural mineral spring water, an incredible spa-like experience that brings you in touch with nature and yourself. Ruki and I stayed there and talked about everything from the war between our countries through to the present day. Those and many other talks cemented our connection, one that crossed the Pacific back and forth.

Ruki and I also took the opportunity to work together whenever possible. In 1982, I opened our children's store, which I called Life Size. It was one of the first contemporary fashion children stores in the country and it was imperative that I find unique items. One of the brands that Ruki developed was called Mini Bat-su, wonderful fashion clothing for boys and girls at about \$150 to \$300+ in US dollars at that time. It was beautifully made with amazing fabrics, casual and directional. There were pieces that would really stand out from anything else on the market, no way that anyone would have anything remotely similar. At the time, that was really expensive for kids wear. I knew it was risky, and I was amazed at how they sold. I reordered more! I also brought in the men's Bat-Su. Ruki explained to me the meaning of the the brand. He would say in his Japanese English "no good company," and he would then hold up his fingers, crossed like an X. He would always tell me that he wanted to think of his company as second best, not quite good enough, as he put it, "It always makes me strive to be better."

I remember one day, Ruki called me. He said he was coming to LA and asked me to take him to golf courses. Though Ruki played golf, he wasn't coming for that reason. He only wanted me to drive him around the courses on an electric cart so he could videotape the golf courses. He was making a golf course in Japan and wanted some reference. He comes to town with his suitcase and a video camera on his shoulder. My job, other than just being part of the crazy process, was to go up to the front desk at these various golf courses and convince them to allow me and these silly Japanese guys to rent a golf cart so we could sit and video the place. Of course, none initially wanted to allow this, but eventually I succeeded in cajoling them. We even took the drive out to Palm Springs to video the best golf courses there. We did this for two days and then, when going to the airport for his



Yugashima Golf Club - Japan
built by Ruki Matsumoto



flight home, Ruki hands me the Sony Betamax in the blue hard case. This was a very rare commodity in those days.

There were always new experiences with Ruki. A couple of years later, Ruki invited Stacy and me to Japan to experience the opening of his new golf resort, Yugashima. He developed it near the base of Mount Fuji. Some of the large rocks on the property's landscape had actually blown from Mount Fuji during an eruption centuries earlier. As is the tradition to mark a formal opening in Japan, Ruki employed the centuries old "kagami biraki" ceremony that includes the opening of a wooden cask of sake. You are to break the top cover with a wooden mallet and then scoop out the sake with wooden ladles and pass it around for everyone to enjoy. I was given the honor of breaking the casket of sake! The club lodge contained about a dozen guest rooms, each room containing an original oil painting by Joan Miro'. It was such an exclusive experience and only one of many. We were also asked to play golf, but only once. They had to repair the course after our play as we are clearly not golfers.

My experiences in Japan continued for many years and with many people, all eventually connected in one way or another. One of those was Valerie Adams, a stylist who would come into my store often. In about 1984, she and I created a company named Melrose Group and we made outrageous kids' cloth-



ing. In our collection were satin brocade jackets as well as casual plaid flannels that we then garment dyed and screen printed over the fabric. They were outrageous and they sold well. In 1985, I was working in Los Angeles with Valerie, reviewing our new designs for the season. She knew that I had been going to Japan often. Before a scheduled trip, she asked me to deliver some knit caps that she had handmade for Stevie Wonder. He was on tour, playing and recording in Japan. Valerie's husband Calvin was Stevie's brother, thus the connec-



THE JAPANESE PART OF MY JOURNEY HAS BEEN ONE OF MY MOST ENRICHING AND REWARDING.



there was really nothing to do but wait and hope. There were 80 eyeballs on me and things were very tense and incredibly stressful for a while but, finally, albeit a lot of sweat later, in comes Stevie Wonder. We sat and had a delicious dinner. The week prior to my arrival, Stevie had been playing the Tokyo Dome for four sold out nights and several people at the restaurant had been in the audience. As you can imagine, people in the restaurant were amazed at this opportunity to connect with the musical legend up close. About 45 minutes into dinner, his road manager, Abdul, comes through the doors, bringing in his synthesizer. I asked him, "Stevie! What's happening? You don't have to sing for your supper!" But that didn't stop him. He played for 45 minutes. People were in tears. This was up close and a personal show. When I returned to LA and told Valerie what had happened, she said that Stevie is like that, a consummate entertainer and very open and generous. What an experience.

tion. "Of course! No problem," I said, and, right from the plane, I dropped my bags at the hotel and I walked into the studio that Stevie Wonder was recording in. It was my first time meeting Stevie Wonder and, somehow, I remember taking a deep breath, sucking up my anxiousness and asking Stevie out to dinner. And he accepted! As he was a vegetarian, it was a perfect match for me to take him to my friend Agee Yamada, the macrobiotic chef who owns and operates a restaurant called Mominoki House in Harajuku.

We set up a date, two days later, packing the small restaurant full to the brim with maybe 40 or more people. Agee closed the restaurant to the public and we had our friends only. Everyone was there on time, but there was no Stevie. And here I am, the schmuck who invited Stevie Wonder to dinner! With no cell phones in those days,

It just seemed that I was connected to Japan, the culture, the style, the food, the warmth of the people. And the bonds continued. In about 1989, a Japanese fellow walked into the Melrose store and became a customer that I happened to start to speaking with. He spoke beautiful English and said he lived in Japan and I told him about my experiences, my friends and how much I loved the country. He was in town working, but I don't remember having asked him further details. We have many in the entertainment business and when they are in our store, typically they prefer no fawning. They want to just be themselves. This handsome gentleman was

very down-to-earth. We got along well, and he asked if I would call him when I was next in Japan. His name was Ken Takakura. Thinking nothing of it, I got to Japan, and I called my new acquaintance, Ken. He said he'd meet me at the hotel. He called my room from the desk when he arrived, and I came down the elevator. When the elevator door opened, there stood Ken in a baseball cap and sunglasses, carrying a wrapped present for me. But behind him were a large crowd of people. He bowed slightly as a greeting and I walked out of the elevator car to him, he handed me the gift as a way of greeting and welcome. Of course, I saw that everyone was staring at him, taking photos. He had been in Los Angeles doing a movie named Black Rain with Michael Douglas and, it turned out, he was eventually described to me as important and huge "like the Paul Newman of Japan". He even had a car model named after him! I would visit him on various occasions and receive a beautiful holiday card each year. We remained connected until his death.

Woven throughout my experiences in Japan was always my relationship with Ruki and his family. Back in LA, about 1990/91, I got a call from Ruki. He said he wanted his 18-year-old son, Ruki, Jr., to come and experience the United States. Ruki asked if I would help him and could he work for me? I was honored to take the lead on that. I had just bought a property along the Venice Canals, which I was eventually going to develop as my home. At that time, it was a 500 square-foot wooden cottage, nice but certainly not elegant. I had plans to build the home we live in today, but with needed plans and permits, it would be over a year until I could start on it. So I let Ruki, Jr. stay there on his own and I even gave him a car to use. I handed him the keys, explained how to get to our office and asked if he needed anything. In his confident way, he said, "No." I knew he was tired from his trip, but I was remiss to ask him anything else. Did he know how to drive? How about a stick shift Volvo? Had he ever driven in US on the right side of the road? And so many other things that should have been addressed. But Ruki Jr. told me that he was fine.

Inwardly, my thoughts were driven by the memory of my father and how he would have treated me in this situation. How would he have wanted me to be treated by someone that he was trusting to provide me with a mature, professional, growth experience. I hadn't any children of my own yet, but I knew my dad was the type to put me into a situation, new or not, give me the direction and expect that I'd be fine. Kind of sink or swim. So that was my model. I will now suggest not trying this method ever.

I was at work the next day waiting and waiting for Ruki, Jr. to arrive. He was very late and I was worried. Finally, he shows up at the office. I asked him what in the world took so long, did he have any problem? I'll never forget it. He answered, casually and with a slight grin,

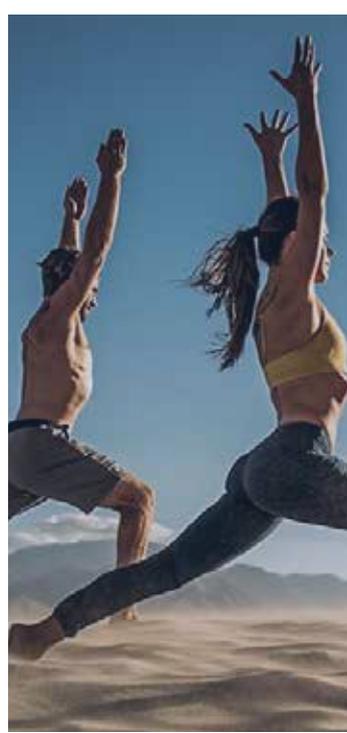
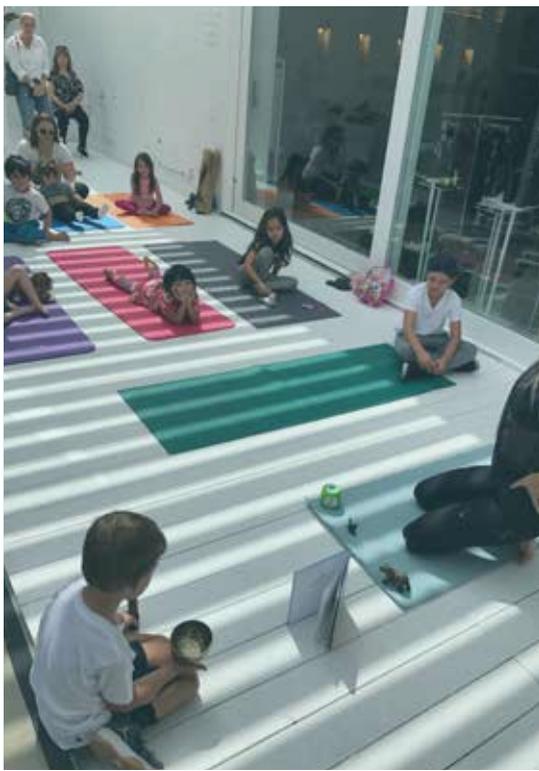
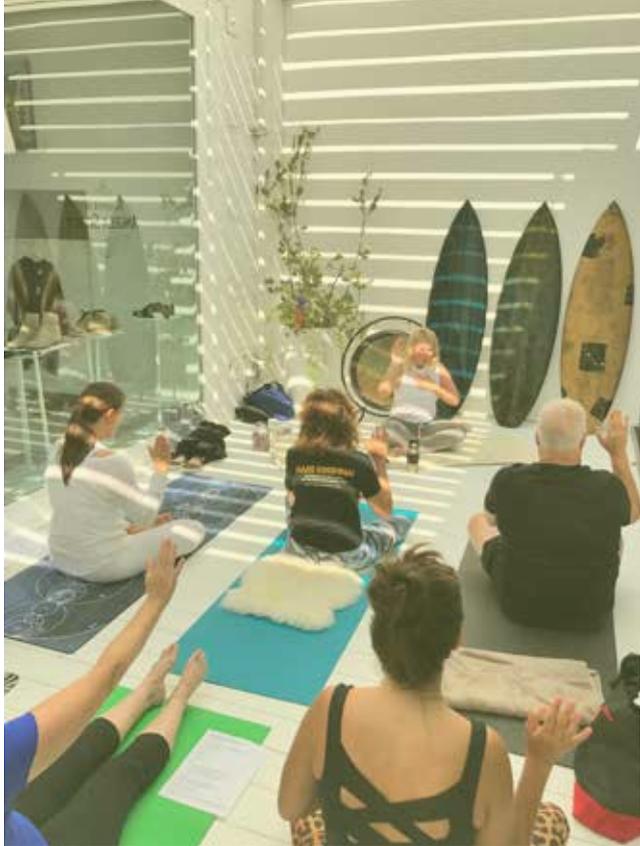
"After the car accident, I had no problems at all." Oh no! Thankfully, he was all right and the car was fine. But I promised Ruki, Jr. that, when the time ever came, I would never treat his son the way I had treated him!

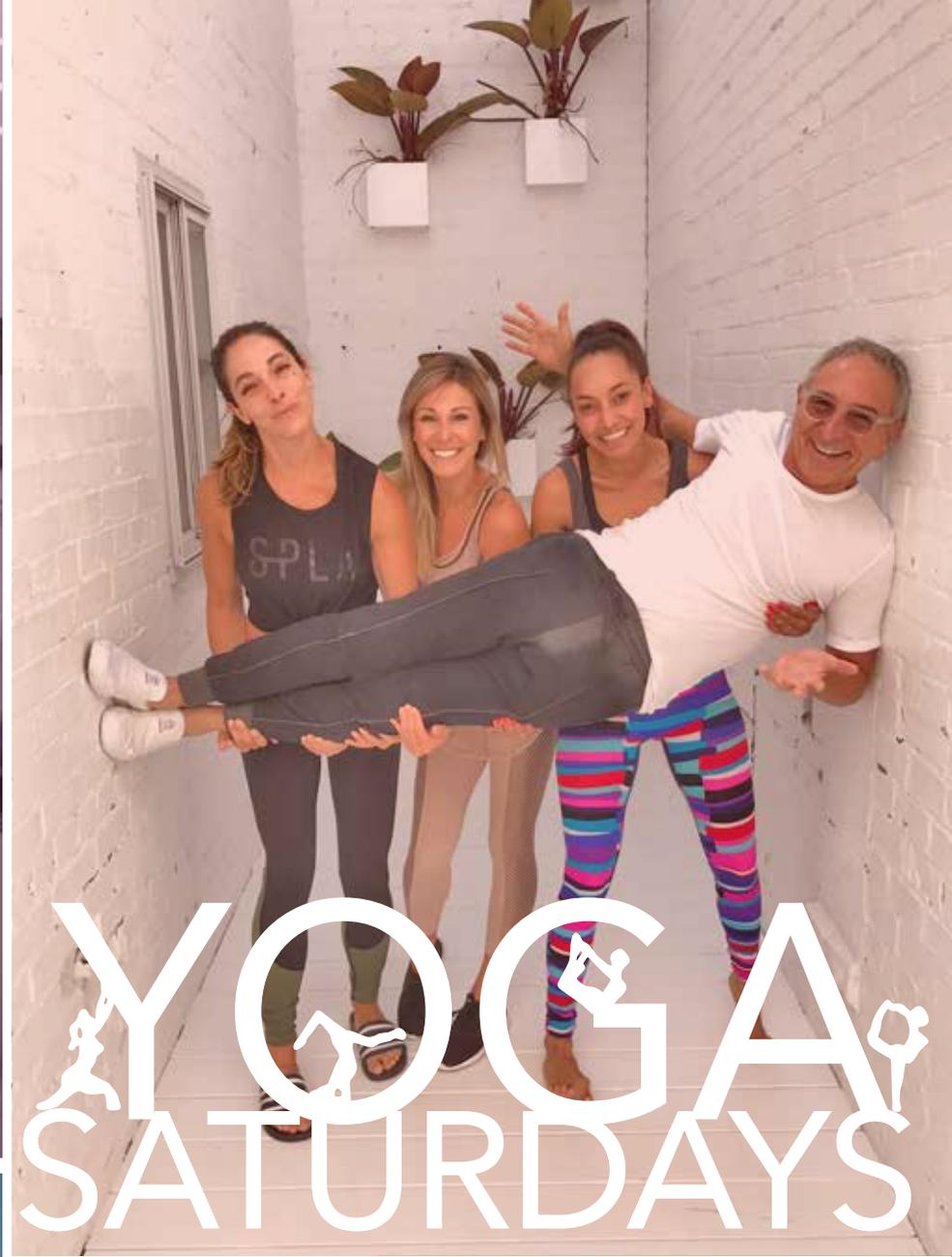
That was just the beginning of Ruki, Jr. entering the life journey. After Apothia did so well with our hero fragrance IF in the United States, in 2000/01, I took it to Japan to open trade with stores there. Japanese people aren't usually going to buy and wear fragrance I was told. They mostly purchased it as gifts. I felt sure that what I had with IF was different. I also knew that I wasn't targeting sales to a traditional woman. I needed the right audience and the right people to make this happen successfully. My customer was a more hip, a younger fashion customer, who enjoyed engaging in contemporary lifestyle. Over the course of that year I had placed Apothia fragrances and IF eau de parfum in several of the top stores and they were selling the product and reordered it. The business was taking off, and it was difficult for both our company and the stores in Japan to continue to have to replenish the product directly from Los Angeles as there were Japanese labeling requirements. I needed someone in Japan to fulfill the orders, so I asked Ruki, Jr. to help me find a good distributor. Ruki knows a good opportunity when he sees it. Today, Ruki, Jr. is set up with his sister Miko, her husband and his brother-in-law Mineki, running a company named Apothia Japan. They, in turn, connected and invested behind a wonderfully bright and talented young man, Reijin Fukao to deliver strategy and sales. Reijin and his colleague Atsunori Maeda have been an incredible driving force for Apothia fragrance product in Japan and have built the business into one of the the top boutique fragrance products in Japan.

The Japanese part of my journey has been one of my most enriching and rewarding. It has shaped me and my business and given me some of my most fulfilling experiences. Meeting the most amazing people and growing immensely from the understanding and relationship with these beautiful people and their amazing culture.



rumiko, ruki , MOMA curators





LAUNCHING A NEW BRAND





IN A NEW WAY

The creation of IF, the signature fragrance of the Apothia brand, is a tale of intertwined events and personal connections, winding their way in and around my life and career, landing me exactly where I needed to be. It's a good story to share especially as it begins with a pretty girl and culminates in the launch of a hit fragrance. That can never be a bad combination.

THE EXCLUSIVE LAUNCH AND GROWTH OF A FRAGRANCE

In 1990, I was in Apothia, the cosmetic department of my store on Melrose, and in walks an attractive woman: blonde, big eyelashes, a former Playmate named Susan Owens. She tells me that she has been making a fragrance in the kitchen of her home. It was a uniquely different fragrance, a big floral, romantic and bold. It stood apart from the typical fragrances of the day. Susan called her perfume "Child" and I bought her entire production. At the beginning, that wasn't much, but, as the years went on, I continued to buy all that she could make. We carried the fragrance exclusively for many years and built a tremendous following for it, one bottle at a time. As Susan wasn't prepared to market the fragrance, it was incumbent upon us to do so.





We'd introduce it to each customer who came in and explain its uniqueness. It was a very underground offering, unavailable elsewhere. Our clients had to have a level of confidence in us to adopt it. Ultimately, it would sell if the customers liked how the fragrance developed on their skin. Over time, our Apothia team got it out to countless customers and several of our celebrity clientele. One step led to another.

There's a turning point where a product is in enough hands or, in this case, on their skin, and it just evolves and begins to take on a life of its own. Sure enough, that point came one day, in about 1997. There was an interview published with a very famous Beverly Hills 90210 actress, Jennie Garth. The interviewer from INstyle magazine asked Jennie about the fragrance she was wearing and the actress said that it was one she bought at my store. She also said, "Every time I wear it, my boyfriend goes wild." That was all it took. People from across the nation started calling our store to buy it.

have an extra income opportunity. In retrospect, how naïve I was about the ease of developing a site and selling on the web. But, thank goodness I had taken that beginning step when I did. Since I was exclusive with Child, our phone was ringing off the hook from the INstyle article. We had staff stationed at the phone. But, I was now also able to sell additionally over the website. This took some pressure off our staff in store and increased access to our store and its products.

During the influx of Child fragrance sales, I stopped and reflected. It occurred to me that the customers who were purchasing the product wanted their boyfriends to go wild just like Jenny Garth's and they were buying a fragrance from her recommendation only. But, they had never smelled it. The rational retailer in me figured that, surely, if I sold 100 bottles -- and the customer didn't know what it smelled like and couldn't try it in advance-- that I was going

"EVERY TIME I WEAR IT, MY BOYFRIEND GOES WILD."

- JENNIE GARTH

As luck would have it, about a year earlier, I had started an online presence, ronrobinson.com. It was the early days of the internet and, at the time, there wasn't a successful business model for selling online. There were a lot of companies that were going up and then going down, but I was told that, still, it was necessary to have a presence online. Though it was risky, I invested the time and money to get our website started. I thought that if it worked, it might be an easy way to sell product and I wouldn't need to build out another store with fixtures, inventory and staff. Someone could just pick up the order off the screen, I imagined, and we would

to get 100 partially used bottles returned. But, when the dust settled, we'd sold many 100s of bottles, and we only got back a small number of pieces, literally a handful, if that. It was amazing. The key to this success was that somebody the customer respected had talked about it honestly, given their endorsement and said it was sexy. That was a big impression. But also, it was a unique fragrance that wasn't available anywhere, their found secret fragrance, and of course it smelled beautiful on them. I was intrigued about the options this experience provided. The whole thing really got me thinking.



THE PROCESS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IF FRAGRANCE

In 1998, I thought about the positioning that we had with so many new fragrance customers on our website, as well as those who routinely came into our store. I always wanted to have a fragrance that was our signature scent. It occurred to me that the advent of the internet would allow us to connect with all our customers across the country who loved fragrance. The internet became quite an asset. I came up with the bare bones of an idea. It needed to be fleshed out, but the idea was exciting and driving me forward.

Knowing that, at some point, our customers were going to look for the next cool fragrance, we needed to keep this customer happy and be sure we had what he or she wanted next.

Fragrance notes have trends and I had, at my disposal, an interested group who had connected with us by purchasing fragrance. First, I needed to see where our customer base came from.

BEING A VISUAL PERSON, I HAD A MAP MADE WITH PUSHPINS NOTING THE STATE IN WHICH OUR FRAGRANCE CUSTOMER RESIDED.



It was amazing to see their locations laid out. From that group, I chose 100 people randomly, but proportionally, based on location. There were also celebrity clients from our store that I asked personally to be a part of my new project. Drew Barrymore said yes as well as Jennifer Garner, Macy Gray and Lilla Ford. They were all agreeable and interested. Then, an email was created for the project and sent to the selected customers, inviting them to be a part of our exclusive group that would help to create our signature fragrance. I added that if they said yes, they should keep it a secret until we completed the project. This was by design. Within days of receiving responses, we also got emails from some of the sisters, cousins, mothers or daughters of those invited, saying, "I know I am not supposed to know, but do you think I could be a part of this too?" The excitement was palpable.

Within days, we had 100 yes replies to our "secret" and unique fragrance group. It reminded me of a time when I was a kid and, on one of my favorite TV shows was an interactive part, creating a special club like experience. A secret code word was given out on another show, and if you heard it used and called in, you became part of the "club," which I liked, and evidently, so do others.

I organized a team of talented people to help with this project. In addition to our goal of creating a signature fragrance, I repeated one important mantra to each of our talented team. We must enjoy, be happy and smile through this project. Not a lot to ask, it may sound funny, but I have done many projects that are stressful and difficult, and I wanted to have one that was simply fun. This was going to be it.

Our development team consisted of Sarah Horowitz, who had worked for me previously in our Apothia store. Sarah, a trained perfumer, had

already made custom fragrances for individuals as well as starting her own brand. Karen Meena, our fashion director and buyer, contributed direction of trend and sales. She brought the fashion into the fragrance. I added a clinical psychologist Dr. Andrew Ehrlich, who I had known since we both were children, growing up in El Paso. Andy works with major companies to identify how to communicate effectively with their intended customers. He explained the importance of developing questions that elicit pure, honest answers for good data. Michael Goldman was responsible for directing the development of our first web presence and he was also able to think outside of the box, imagine and apply unique ideas. Sharon Orr, our office manager, who doesn't miss a detail, was responsible for keeping everything organized, maintaining schedules and notes on process and timing.

To begin, I gave Sarah direction with several different fragrance genres. After that, our creative team selected three of them from a large group. Those would be our starting point. We packaged them into small perfume vials, 100 of each, marked only A, B and C and sent them out.

We sent these first three samples out to our 100 Internet Fragrance Team, a working name that we called the selected members, asking them to try the samples alone or layered. Then they would go to their computers, type in the secret code they were given and enter a special section of our website to answer about 17-20 questions about their experience.

Of course, we needed to know which fragrance they liked the best and their second choice. We also needed to understand the deeper part of their fragrance selection, what drove their desire for one fragrance over another. It was essential to clearly understand what people mean when announcing they like fresh, floral or spicy, as each means different things to each person.

In order to better qualify answers, we asked questions like “what scent they remember the most,” not a perfume but an experience. Some options were the scent of a bakery at dawn, an ocean breeze at sunset or the scent of your lover. Having an element of fun in the questions and answers was important. Another question was about vacation spots -- mountain, beach or desert -- or what types of foods they enjoyed most -- fruits, meats, deserts, vegetables. Each of these, and other questions, helped provide insight into subjective answers, better defining each person’s version of a fresh, floral or spicy fragrance. From this, we would create the next round of samples to be developed and then deliver those to the members of the fragrance team for evaluation and response. No one had ever created a fragrance in this manner before. I haven’t known anyone to have done it since.

After we started, I felt the energy, we were on to something very special. W magazine wanted to document and write the story about this project. We gave them the exclusive in return for a complete story of our process. Over the course of eight months, Rose Apodaca Jones sat with us at our meetings and she wrote the story.

At that time the internet was new territory. We were communicating without seeing each other, without looking into each other’s eyes, without anyone filtering their responses before giving them. We would ask some open-ended questions like what the participant envisioned wearing with the fragrance and we would receive some deeply thoughtful replies and some that were a bit intimate. Those testing the fragrance were creating these diary type entries where they could be as open as they wanted. Maybe a participant would say something like wearing this fragrance made her feel like the heroine in an Ayn Rand novel. Or she’d admit to revealing information, like where she would apply the fragrance on her body. Maybe she’d say that she would wear that deep plunging

neckline on a sexy black dress, along with planned movements and a hopeful outcome. And here we are, in Los Angeles, sitting around a table, reading their journals out loud. We would read and process all the data and we would decide what direction to go in for the next round. That’s the moment that science turned into art. Then, a new group of three samples would be sent out yet again. The process took a full eight and a half months.

After our last submission of samples, we had 80% agreement on one fragrance. When that happened, I said, “Bottle it!” Anytime we get eight out of 10 women to agree on the same thing, we must have a winner.

I was driving home one evening, imagining a name for this fragrance and, playing with some of the words we were throwing around at work, I came up with IF. The name was mysterious, simple and has infinite possibilities, it was becoming what you want to be. IF you used it then...just imagine.

In 2001, I first bottled IF in a roll-on applicator, pure oil format. I wanted to put our resources into the quality of the contents of the product and make the bottling unique and simple.

Of course, we gifted each of the participants with the first bottles that were produced and each of these 100 women felt they were part of the creation. I received many thank you letters and amazing emails.

After bottling it, I put it on my counter in the store. I handwrote a note, asking customers to try our new signature fragrance. I knew we didn’t cut any corners and that this was a high quality fragrance. The 100 women also told their friends and they bought the fragrance, too. Then, about a month after I set it out on our counter, I got an inquiry from Henri Bendel’s buyer in New York City. I loved that store and always visited it when in NYC. I told their buyer

I CAME UP WITH THE NAME **IF**. THE NAME WAS MYSTERIOUS AND HAS INFINITE POSSIBILITIES, IT WAS BECOMING WHAT YOU WANT TO BE.

IF YOU USED IT THEN....IMAGINE.

BUILDING THE APOTHIA BRAND FURTHER

Soon after the original IF roll on had found its success, I knew there was growth opportunity. I wanted to add ancillaries, lotion and wash, and make an IF Eau de Parfum. I connected with a talented creative designer Gary McNatton. With Gary, I developed eight candles that went on to win Interior Scent of the Year. We also made hand washes that won several global design awards, including best packaging design. Those accolades and the customer response on the quality propelled the whole Apothia brand further. Today we have about 70 fine stores carrying Apothia in the US and distribution in Scandinavia and Northern Europe, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Our biggest foreign market, however, is Japan.





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HAWAII



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NEW YORK



BELLAGIO TUTTO



LAGUNA BEACH

around



CHINA



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TEXAS



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HONG KONG



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ROCK

CULTURE

Ron Robinson Inc. and Apothia fragrance collection have collaborated with some of the most interesting and exciting characters on earth. That's true in more ways than one as some of our partners are just that – characters -- fictional characters to be more specific. To celebrate Nickelodeon's 30th anniversary, we created product for cartoon giants SpongeBob SquarePants, The Rugrats and Ren and Stimpy, teaming up with the famed New York retailer named "Story." Our millennial customers have grown up with these programs, so we were honored when Nickelodeon and Story approached us to be the LA platform. We even made a signature Apothia candle for Nickelodeon and it was a hit.



It didn't stop at wild animated heroes. We also had the pleasure of working with Mattel's iconic Barbie. One of our longtime customers, Elizabeth Spencer, worked for Mattel as marketing director for the Barbie brand. She and I were speaking when she was in shopping for her children. This sharing of ideas led to a larger conversation about a new, contemporary positioning of Barbie, fashionable, as the cool LA girl. I suggested that we do this through art, we connect Barbie with some of the famous Los Angeles contemporary artists, and they could each do their own, artistic interpretation of Barbie. That started the juices flowing. Months later, Elizabeth comes back and says the art thing was really resonating. She then explained to me that Andy Warhol once did a Barbie painting and Mattel owns it. She contacted the Warhol Foundation and proposed they take it one step further, collab-

IT WAS AS
UNIQUE
AND COOL
AS COULD BE.

orate on a piece representing Barbie as Andy Warhol. It was as unique and cool as could be.

For our part, we were asked to create some Barbie as Warhol products. No pencils and mugs, but premium and lux level fashion apparel and home accessories. We did a leather bag with Barbie x Warhol graphics, leggings with Barbie x Warhol prints all over them, silk scarves, all these very limited-edition products, some items we only made 10 pieces, some we made 100. We then did an exclusive Barbie design for an Apothia vessel. All these products, along with the limited edition doll of Barbie as Andy Warhol, launched at our flagship in Santa Monica. The store was decorated





from outside and in by the Mattel team and the event drew 300 plus people, including the executives at Mattel, the director and team from the Warhol Foundation in NYC and our super customers. The limited-edition Barbie as Warhol doll literally sold out in a few minutes. The Mattel team had told me it would happen and they were spot on.

It's these types of partnerships and collaborations that help us express our own creativity and provide a fashionable platform for our partners. Also, as a tribute to our favorite people, both real and imaginary, and their contribution to our lives. We live in the world of pop culture and we celebrate that!

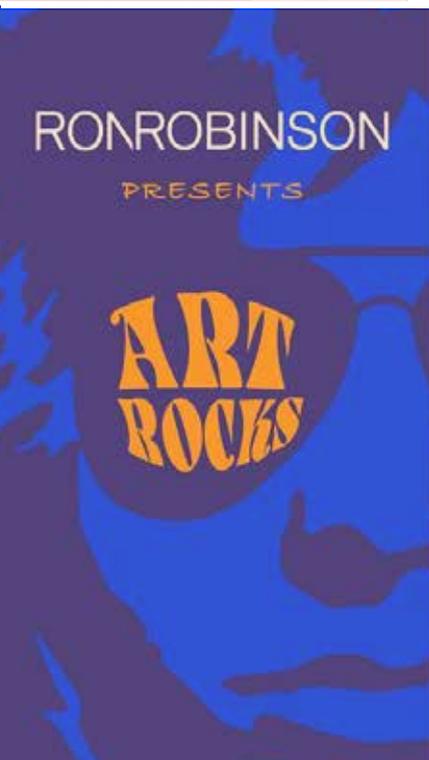
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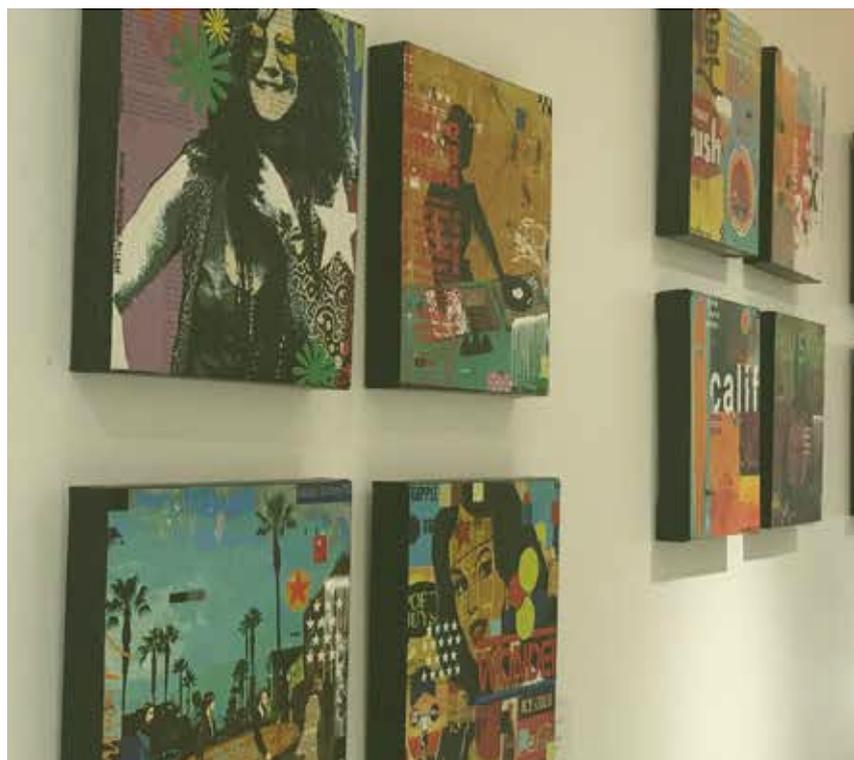


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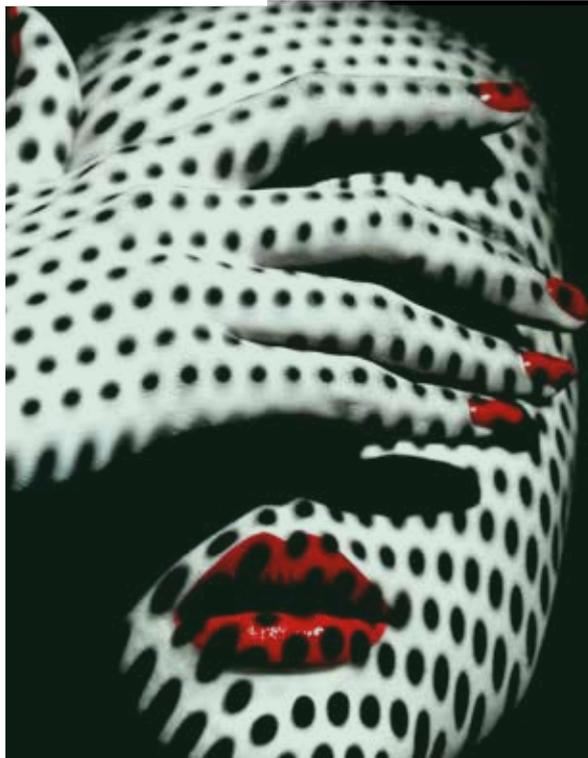




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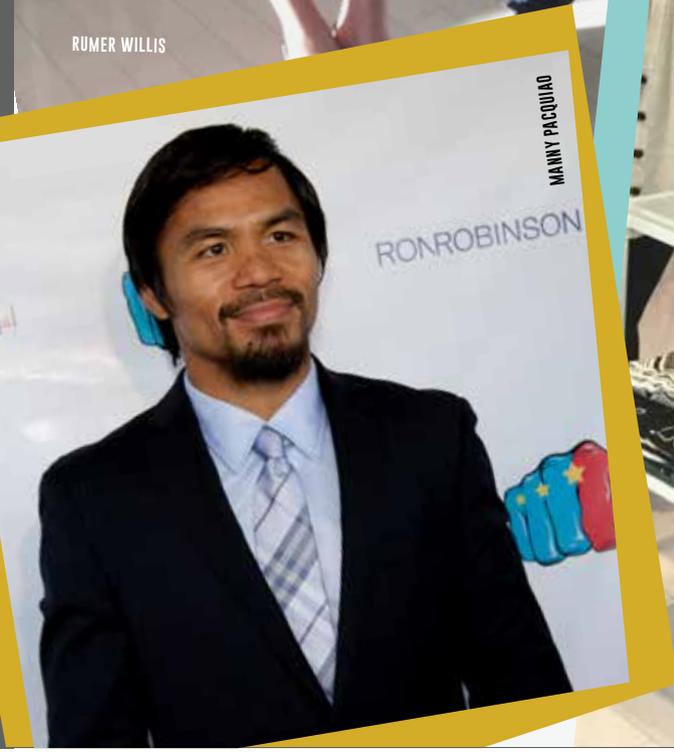
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STAR

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We were always protective of our celebrity clientele. In the early 2000s, the era of “celebrity sells,” with starlet shopping habits strewn across the covers of every newsstand, we got beat up a lot in the press. The editors wanted us to name names. They wanted to know what was spent. They wanted to secretly provide staff with phones to call in when stars visited the store. None of that was our style. Never has been.

To combat all of the prying and spying, we adopted a policy where we’d call celebrities and ask permission to tell the press. The A List stars generally said yes but they never wanted to disclose what they spent, understandably. Madonna, for instance,



ANGELA LINZALL

bought a holiday present for Dave Letterman's new baby, filling a stroller to the top with product. She said she was fine with us reporting that to the press but, again, didn't want the cost of her purchase open to the public. Some things need to be kept private between a public figure and a retailer that they respect and trust.

Being mindful of celebrities as people gained us many more friends than enemies, of that I can assure you. I remember so many of them like Janice Joplin in her brightly hand-painted Porsche with depictions of floating eyes, mushrooms and skulls. That old car that was so often parked outside later auctioned off for \$1.76 million. Elton John frequently came into the Fred Segal store when I managed it. I never saw him without his hat. Those early years also garnered patronage from Bob Dylan. He had a 1970 convertible MG that obviously needed its starter fixed. Once, when he was in the shop, he had to leave it running in the parking lot. You could do things like that back then.

Some celebrities actually worked for us before they were famous. Rita Wilson, Tom Hanks' wife, was once a sales associate at our Melrose store. She was a

young, attractive, aspiring actor and was, therefore, a bit distracted trying to get her film career off the ground. We ended up having to let her go and, although we parted as friends, she came back in, years later, as a customer in our Santa Monica kids store. My wife Stacy was working that day. As they chatted, Rita noticed Stacy's wedding ring and asked about the designer. Stacy told her that her husband, Ron Robinson, had had designed it and had it custom made. Rita said, "Oh, I know Ron, he fired me!" Stacy was caught off guard, taken aback, but immediately assured her that I was now a much nicer guy! The next day I happened to be in the store and Rita was there again. I went up to Rita, welcomed and hugged her and said, "You know, it all worked out fine. You did ok for yourself," and we had a really good chuckle.

Our history happens to often be interwoven with the film and music industry, from providing gift baskets for the studios to catering to the needs of high profile clients.

After opening the store in 1978, Kenny Rogers was my first big client. It was a moment that I recall always, even now forty years later. At the time, he was a huge star, with a top selling album, song and a hit movie "The Gambler." Kenny came in with his wife and I was unpacking boxes of new items from Britannia Sportswear. At the time, Britannia had become a 300 million dollar company. In those years, that was bigger than the Levi Strauss company.

I had all the boxes open, pulling products from their plastic bags and handing them to Kenny in the dressing room. Mr. Rogers chose piece after piece. I remember my heart racing. I had taken on the risk and the debt of opening a store and I was so excited to have such a sale with a celebrity. It's not that I hadn't seen a celebrity before, of course I had, but here, in my new store, and actually purchasing, wow. We rapidly went through nearly every style of top and bottom and the stack got large. He then said that he was done and told me to triple the order and send one set to one of his houses and a duplicate set to another. He would take one set home with him. I held it together, my heart pounding and the memory of all of that stuck through to today. I guess being a merchant, your first big sale is like many other first big things in life.

We continue to attract the city's most talked about people. We've had Oprah, Billy Crystal, Bruce Springsteen, Richard Starky (Ringo Starr), Paul McCartney, Dolly Parton, Kevin Costner, Jay Z, Ice Cube, Jessi-

ca Biel, Cindy Crawford, Madonna, Lady Gaga, Michael Stipe (R.E.M), Robert Downey Jr. , Jennifer Garner, Drew Barrymore, Robin Williams, Harrison Ford, Steven Tyler, Paris Hilton, Lionel Richie, Nicole Richie, Christina Aguilera, Demi Moore, Jennifer Lopez, Reese Witherspoon, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Nadja Swarovski, Frankie Valle, Whoopi Goldberg, Kim Kardashian, Charles Fleisher, Candace Bergen, Jane Fonda, Bridgett Fonda, Eric Stoltz, Gene Simmons, Richard Simmons, Katy Sagal, Melanie Griffith, Kobi Bryant, Shaquille Oneil, Emma Roberts, Julia Roberts, Bruce Willis, Mick Jagger, Rumer, Scout, Tallulah Willis, Billie Lourd, Demi Moore, Robert De Niro, Michelle Pfeiffer, Debra Messing and so many more who, over the many years, we count as clients and friends.

It often crosses a barrier. Once, in London, I was killing time, looking for something interesting to do in the evening. In the hotel lobby, I noticed two hot girls asking directions from the concierge. I figured they must be going somewhere cool so I went to the same concierge and said, "Tell me where they're going. I want to go there, too." It turns out, Phil Collins was playing the Royal Albert Hall. The concierge told me there was no use going as the concert was sold out.

But I knew better than to give up on a great night out. There were throngs of people trying to get in, of course, but I was able to bypass it all. I went to the back, knocked on the door and, when it was answered, I handed my business card to someone at a door, asked that they give it to Phil or his wife Jill. In less than five minutes, I was escorted in. It was an exceptional experience.

These friendships are as valued and pure as the relationship we often develop with all of our loyal clientele. They look to us for the newest and the latest and the mutual respect is something that we cherish.

THESE FRIENDSHIPS ARE AS VALUED AND PURE AS THE RELATIONSHIP WE OFTEN DEVELOP WITH ALL OF OUR LOYAL CLIENTELE.











LOVELY ROSITA

Our company has been privileged to have done many wonderful collaborations, putting our vision and energy to work with some of the most creative talent out there. Through our Apothia fragrance division, we've also done some very exciting collaborations. We've made a fragrance for the creative and cool fashion company Imogene and Willie of Nashville. We just finished a fragrance for Grammy winning country singer Chris Stapleton. We've even done one for Mattel's Barbie along with 12 other fashion items. But, in 2011, we started meetings and eventually had the honor of creating five home fragrances for none other than the historic Italian fashion house Missoni Home. Most thrilling, I met and worked directly with the matriarch of the family, Rosita Missoni.





The project developed after many years carrying the luxurious Missoni Home beach towels, throws and pillows. We still have them all to this day. Through our relationship with the brand, I met one of the head designers of Missoni Home and Rosita Missoni's niece, Ms. Wanda Jelmini. Over the years, Wanda had been to our store and admired what we did. We shared a great mutual respect.

I remember during one of our regular, seasonal meetings with the sales manager at the time, Chris Philips, I mentioned that the collection was fine, but our customers would really like to see something additional from the Missoni brand. I saw they had some decorative candles, but they were very expensive. I didn't think they were very saleable, and, most critically, they didn't offer any fragrant candles. Flippantly, or not, I said that we could make an exceptional collection for Missoni Home through our Apothia brand. The comment didn't seem to fall on deaf ears. Some time passed and there was communication about this topic every once in a while, with what clearly felt like increased interest on their end. Comments kept up, but no formal request or decision ever followed. I was very excited, but I was frustrated about the amount of time that had passed without even a chance to meet for a yay or nay. I wanted to make a presentation, to find out if we would really be able to work together or if I should forget about it. I finally pushed the question and told them that I'd come to Milan, meet their team and present my ideas. I packed my fragrances and had my presentation ready. I arrived at the Missoni studio. It's just north of Milan in a charming area called Golasecca, not far from Lago Maggiore Italy at the base of the Italian Alps Upon entering the showroom, to my complete surprise, already spread out on the countertop sat my Apothia candles and outer boxes, each wrapped in a unique Missoni print. I realized that development ideas were further than what I'd ever imagined. They were deep into working on the idea before I arrived, already figuring out how to Missoni-ize my existing product!

Rosita Missoni, at the time, was just turning 80, with the energy and brightness of someone half that age. I freely admit that one of the highlights of my career was being in the room with this icon. At that moment, it really didn't matter to me if we ending up doing the fragrance work or not. It was as though I met a fashion goddess, and I was complete and satisfied with just that. But it got better!

Rosita's family had been knitters for generations. She met her husband Ottavio, an Olympic athlete, they married and founded their upscale knitwear company in 1953. Rosita and I sat and talked for nearly three hours on our first meeting. I explained my thoughts on our fragrances and how I approach fragrance development and Wanda chimed in, kindly telling Rosita, "If you do work with anyone, work with Ron as he is a Craftsman." Rosita admitted to me that she almost skeptical about development of fragrance because she respected it so much. She said she was "frightened of fragrance." By that comment, she was saying that fragrance was so important to her and it was so important to get it right.

My presentation to Wanda, Rosita and about four other executives from the company was a bit frightening to me. As I explained it all, there were poker faces on everybody. I didn't know if I was understood, disliked, boring or what, so I finally asked what they would like to do. The faces were serious. They were actually absorbing my comments and deeply involved in what to do design wise, with the fragrance and the packaging presentation

. Rosita told me that she wanted to represent four elements, that of Earth, Fire, Water and Air, but the Italian versions, of course. Missoni designs and patterns, Rosita explained, were often nature in the abstract. The sharpness of the zig-zag could be fire, wavy graphics could be water, etc. She went on to say that she wanted a signature fragrance to represent her. I thought to myself, "Imagine that. I was just asked to make a signature fragrance by Rosita Missoni. Well, Well Ron, you have arrived today."

All fragrance that I have done is a creation that begins with an experience, a story, a narrative that is then transformed into a fragrance. I asked for some prompts, an experience that would help describe something worthy of a signature fragrance. We talked about what it would be from her perspective, from her heart and mind. I asked her to describe what she felt close to when she thought of a Missoni signature fragrance. She answered: "One of my children has built a home closet, lined it in white Italian Cedar and when I go there, I love that scent." I said to myself, "The Missonis don't build closets. It has to be more of a wardrobe." I imagined the closet from *Sex and the City*, one where you would go with you girlfriends, sit and count shoes and bags. I started to imagine the fragrance in this white cedar room. It must have a beautiful Italian leather sofa in it. On the table or counter in the room sits a full bowl stacked with Italian blood Tarocco oranges, an inviting area where friends sit and sip hearty, flavorful espresso. She loved it and that became the fragrance.

I took just over a year to get these custom vessels made. While having the containers sampled, multiple times, we continued work on the fragrance development. Rosita has an exceptional fragrance intellect. For one of the fragrances, she directed, "I want you to use, for Earth, a flower called *Helichrysum*." She told me it's the first thing you smell when you get off the plane in Genoa. You can't doubt Rosita Missoni. She's incredibly knowledgeable about fragrance and makes it a point to study it. She visits the famous Chelsea Flower Show in London each year and knows plants and flowers by both their Latin and common names. I had to tell Rosita that, though *Helichrysum* fragrance was familiar to her, I couldn't place it and, unfortunately, I hadn't been to Genoa. A few weeks later, back home from Milan, I received this Fed Ex package and, inside it, there's a brown paper sack.

On the sack, a note said, "Stick your whole head in it!" Inside the bag was a handful of *Helichrysum* plants. I knew what she really meant. She didn't want me to try to smell just the flower head but also the stem, as much of the fragrance from this flower comes from the tall, thin woody stem. It was similar to what I'd call a hill or straw flower, stemmy with a small daffodil-like flower.



The quality expected from our work was just what one would think of from Missoni and I was hell bent on delivering better. We finally had the fragrances nailed down and I was very proud of that work, but getting each of the colors right on the patterns for the five glass containers, the four earth elements and one signature pattern was another story. I originally asked for some Pantones to match. In actuality, there were more than 17 different colors in one pattern alone. Several of the colors looked similar, but were actually each a different shade. I needed accurate colors. Missoni provided me printouts, but without any references of Pantone or similar color codes, too much was left to interpretation, too many opinions on the color. We lost one or two decorative glass printers going through the process in order to get it right. I also suggested that we metallicize the inside of the candle with silver or gold to emulate the threads of the lurex so often found in their fabrics. I opened up some spaces in the patterns to reveal the metallic shining through the opening of the colors. It gave amazing depth in the look. Getting the colors correctly matched continued to be a challenge, so finally I asked the Missoni team to print off actual colors of what was acceptable and sign off on it. We got a copy and they kept one. This was now the reference and we matched each color visually. That finally got us aligned, but we still had some challenges in approvals as I shared the samples in digital photos through emails.

Each time I would receive a new sample of the decorated glass vessel from the manufacturer, I would take a photo of the detail and email it to them. At one point, I felt we

were really there, but they surprised me by responding that, the fourth color down is supposed to be Chalk White, not Optic White. It looked right on to me, and others on our team. It seemed to match the master sheet perfectly. I explained that they were likely seeing my photo on their computer screen in Milan differently than it showed on my screen in Los Angeles, but they would have none of that. They said, "We are Missoni. This is Optic White and we want Chalk White!" So that was that. They carry that torch so well and, to me, it was OK to be held to their higher standard. I wanted to meet that challenge and did.

I also suggested that we should maintain their classic packaging from all their other items, their beautiful carton with a black bottom and their iconic reddish/brown leather color top. I mocked one up and just wanted it to simply read: Missoni Home by Apothia. It worked beautifully and that's how it read on every carton. We launched in January of 2014 at Maison & Objet in Paris. We made it all in LA, and shipped to their facilities in Italy. In our agreement, we would be able to sell to the stores that stocked Apothia and they sold at the stores that were Missoni accounts. The project went through the end of 2016, selling out of several tens of thousands of units worldwide. At that point, the Missoni fashion division signed a perfume and fragrance license with a major worldwide brand. That company felt our candles were an infringement on their license and the collaboration ended with all units sold and a demand existing for more. But it was a wonderful, memorable, fulfilling professional experience of which we are incredibly proud.





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FASHION'S NIGHT OUT

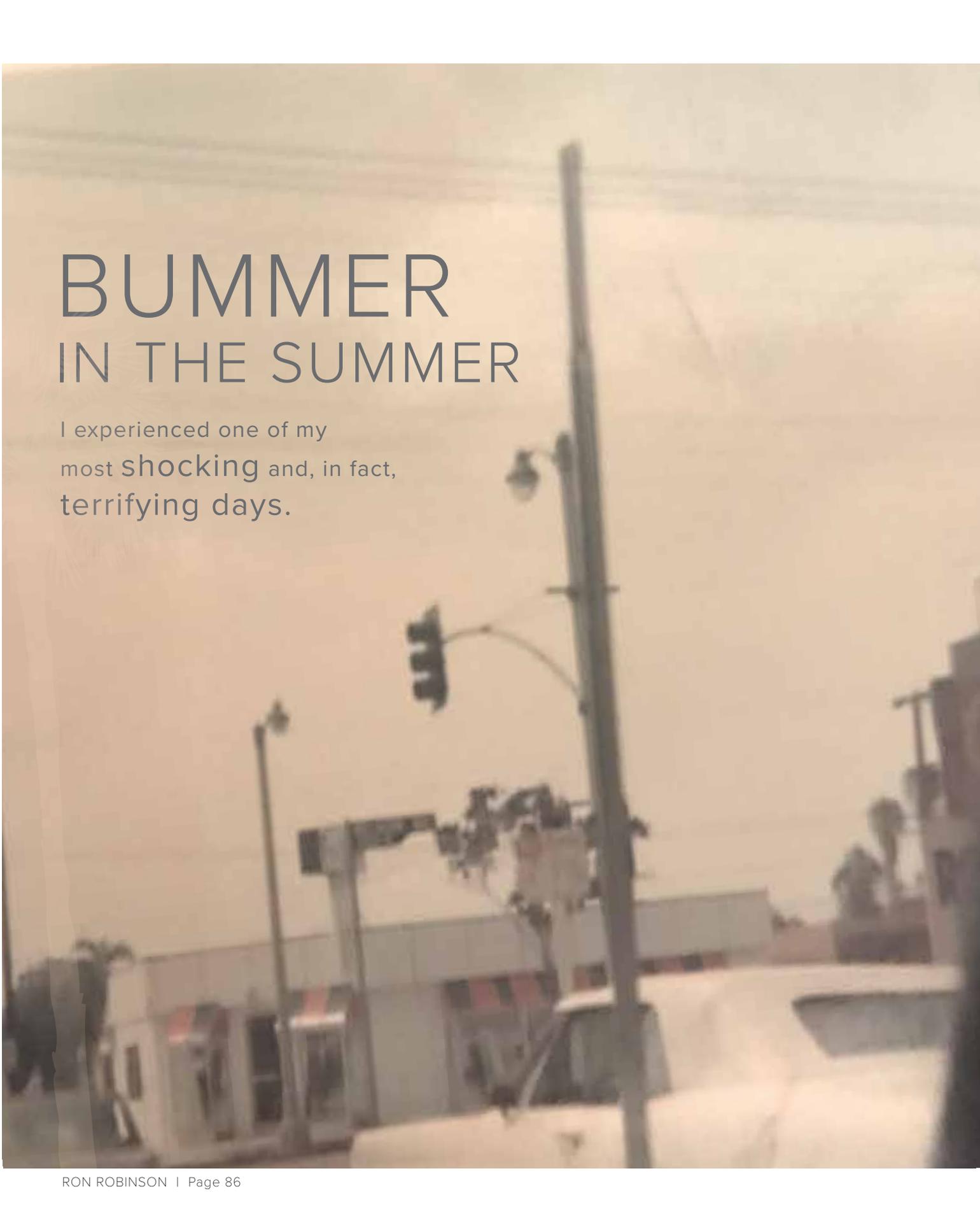
FASHION'S NIGHT OUT T

JOIN EDITORS, STARS, MODELS, FASHI
FOR FASHION'S MOST ICONIC EXTRA

DATE SEPT.6.2012 | TIME 6P-10P

PLACE RONROBINSON | Fred Segal

ENJOY & CELEBRATE FASHION'S BIGGEST NIGHT WITH
DIABOLO, & MAURO'S CAFÉ, SHOPPING, MINGLING
MUSICIANS, LA TASTEMAKERS, AND

A photograph of a street scene, likely in a city, featuring a traffic light and a building. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent circular graphic that contains the text. The overall tone is somewhat muted and hazy.

BUMMER IN THE SUMMER

I experienced one of my
most **shocking** and, in fact,
terrifying days.



As a manager for Fred Segal Melrose in the late 70's, I experienced one of my most shocking and, in fact, terrifying days. On a Saturday, our busiest day, one of our sales people told me her customer wanted to speak with me. She brought him over. He was wearing the new clothes he had tried on, with his own clothes over his arm. As he lifted the clothes, he showed me the gun in his hand. The message takes just a moment to register fully. My heart pounded as he told me to give him the money from the register. I remained very steady and totally aware of the situation and in control. Yes, internally I was concerned and nervous, but I was able to stay calm, and with my wits about me, I complied with his request. I didn't think about the money or my future, my goals or what I was hoping to achieve for myself. None of that went through my mind. My only concern was how to be a leader in that moment and make sure that no one would be hurt. I walked with him. The gun was pressed to my side, shifting sometimes to my back. We moved together from register to register, emptying the contents into his bag. I was sending eye signals to other staff to vacate the store. I communicated with the robber to remain calm, assuring him that he was getting what he wanted. The intruder then demanded that I get my car keys and drive him. In my mind that just wasn't going to happen. No way was I getting into a car with him and, most importantly, with his gun.

I made him an offer.

“I'll give you the car keys.”

He rejected that. He insisted that I drive. I told him, “No. You take it. I won't call police. Take the car. You can drive away.”

I was firm. I told him I had a meeting that evening with Fred so I couldn't go with him. I have no idea where I pulled that statement. I must have thought that would convince him? Of course, he told me he didn't care. He didn't want to debate it and started to become nervous about what to do next. We were at the front door. My colleagues had emptied the store and locked it, leaving the keys in the lock. I opened the door, offered him the keys to the car and pointed to its location. Instead, he ran and I quickly locked the door behind him and crouched down, in case he turned to shoot.

Frantically, Fred arrived later. I knew he would be upset and concerned, and I was right. His question was how much the guy got. It wasn't until later that I realized that the one thing he never asked was if everyone was OK, or if I was OK. I knew I performed well, that everyone was safe. It would have felt good if there were some positive recognition from my boss.

That night at home, it hit me, as I finished a well-deserved bottle of scotch with my coworker and friend Ellis Toney. The realization of how a small slip, even an accidental move, could have caused a shot and a completely different outcome. It was amazing to me how I maintained an appearance of calm and confident at the time. At the time, all I could think about were the people involved, the lives, the fear, the concern. I always took my job responsibilities seriously. This has been a story that I have only told my staff on occasion, reminding them to never count money in the open, to never discuss money when out with their friends. One never knows what will be overheard what will stimulate someone to act in this way.



THEN, IN 2008, THE RECESSION HIT.



RETAIL

NO SALE

The first decade of the new century was interesting. From 2002-2007 we had a lot of fun. It was truly spectacular from a business point of view. In fact, from the year I began, in 1978 all the way to 2008, I increased sales every year. We went through riots, floods, fires, all sorts of natural and violent experiences, but there was always growth.

This was one of the most devastating, emotionally draining events in my entire career. To lose 25% to 30% of your business is breathtaking, demoralizing, stressful, anxiety producing and depressing. We had a team of 50 to 70 people and I felt they were family, that they were my responsibility. At first, I thought it was just something to weather. I felt we'd been hit with hard times before and come through and maintained. Except, this time, sales continued to drop and snowball. We didn't know where the bottom would be. I couldn't understand what I'd done wrong, how I was running my business so poorly. I had always built the business on the premise that we had a strong base, one that, regardless of the risk I took with product and regardless of any other issues, we would maintain that base and be protected. But, of course, this was much bigger than me. It was something I had no control over.

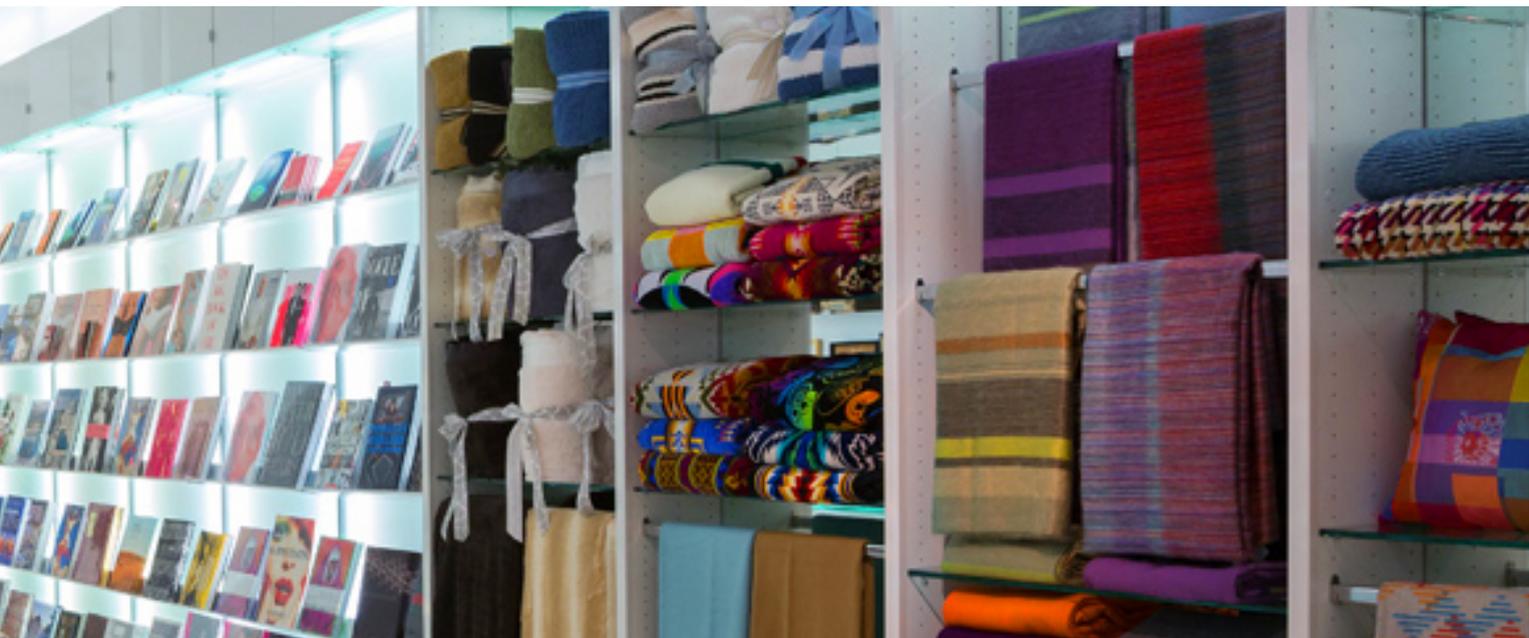
I had to go to the doctor, in tears, thinking about our business and all these people that I work with. I took it very personally at first. Thankfully, my ability to suck it up and go forward soon kicked in, and our work to offset the losses began. One of the things that keeps us separate from other retailers is that we always pay our bills and we like to pay them on time. When we go to market, we often get the brands based on our good reputation. But, suddenly, the income was cut off and money was still owed. We called all our product vendors, one by one, and got tremendous support from all of them. Obviously, we were in this together. Stacy and I put in personal money to prop up the company. We worked together with every single one of our side vendors, phone and credit card companies, trash pickup, literally every service and support vendor to arrange payment.

And through this pain, there was a learning experience. It's shocking to realize how, over time, you become unaware of the excesses that you're able to cut. You always think you know but it takes something like 2008 to make you really see what is needed and what's superfluous.

With regard to our staff, we didn't want to fire anyone, so we cut our own salaries and we asked others to help. The choice was either eliminating positions or everyone takes a cut across the board. I am proud to say that every single person said they'd take a cut so we didn't actively let anyone go because of the recession. Other stores limited their staff, but our approach was that we would win the customer by continuing to provide good service. They wouldn't be getting this elsewhere. We continued to offer that customer experience even though it was more expensive. Because that is what our consumer responds to.

Things turned around slower than they had hit. When 2008 landed, things didn't ever seem like they'd stop. By late 2009, fortunately, it all started to level off and, then in 2010/11, we started to feel that there would be a growth ahead for us. By 2016/2017, we experienced similar volume levels as pre-recession, but this time around, we had a leaner, better machine in place.

Fashion retail owes some of the inspiration of this comeback to Anna Wintour and Vogue Magazine. As I have often said, the fashion industry and consumerism generally is influenced and often driven by the news, experiences and trends happening in the world around them. There were so many people and companies hurt by the great recession. At the same time, we happened to have a customer base that was still working, many with good jobs. Though many of our clients could not shop, and might not have been out of money, we were all surrounded, daily, by the horrible news and people being hit hard with the recession. Rightfully so, it simply became unfashionable to shop. Vogue's Fashion's Night Out really helped to jump-start things. It was a very creative move, becoming a reason for hundreds of people to go out shopping. After all the difficult years, it felt really good. It was revitalizing to see people gathering and enjoying the retail experience again. We had the Los Angeles Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, support our event in our shop that night. It was the start of a transition that was slow and incremental, but it was in the right direction. Once again, we survived with dignity and grace and are better because of it.



INNOVATORS & CREATIVES

Over the years I have developed friendships with wonderful, bright, creative people that have inspired me. I am delighted to introduce you to some of them.

KAREN ALWEIL

I met Karen when she was in high school. Even at such an early age, she was already a motivated entrepreneur. Karen is yet another person in my professional life who exudes boundless energy and creative ideas.

In the early 90s, Karen opened The Karen Alweil Studio in the LA Mart where, to this day, she represents design and lifestyle goods. Her business has grown to include another permanent studio in the AmericaMart of Atlanta as well as trade show exhibits around the country. Her studio is also involved in brand consulting, networking, merchandising and product development. Karen's nonstop work ethic and creative mind have also helped to launch Neal's Yard Remedies, made her co-owner of Twenty Gauge Furniture and founder of Sisters of Los Angeles memorabilia brand.

Karen is one of the people who gives me energy and inspires my business.

KAREN IS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHO CAN TAKE AN IDEA FROM THE GROUND UP, PULL IT OFF AND MAKE IT SUCCEED.





“

HE'S WORKED HIS
ASS OFF, AND
HE LOVES IT

KAREN ALWEIL

“It wasn't as though I woke up and decided that I was an entrepreneur,” remembers Karen Alweil, but at age 13, when she designed Splash, a series of splatter paint T-shirts, she aimed for the top, riding the bus with her wares to Ron Robinson at Fred Segal.

“He treated me like a professional,” she remembers. Ron “recognized that I'd found my way there, and he was going to support that.” The t-shirts made the cut.

Respecting her determination, Ron took on a mentor role. “He was always very protective of me, but he also made sure that I was doing everything right,” Karen recalls. “He wanted to make sure I paid my dues.”

At age 14, the industry veteran went to work for a rep, a job that included helping Ron when he visited the showroom. Then, and in the decades that followed, Ron “always treated me like I had something to offer, too, which I appreciated. Our relationship has been reciprocal and we have always supported each other.”

Now the owner of Karen Alweil Studio, a national sales agency based in the L.A. Mart, Karen represents a wide range of innovative brands. Ron has “been a very important customer of mine, but that was always secondary to our friendship,” she says. “We have a great chemistry and there’s just a connection. We have always had a familial tie. My mom and sister are very involved in the showroom, so he knows them extremely well, and it’s the same with all of us. When my dad passed away, Stacy and Ron were there for me. When I had a baby, there was a huge present of baby clothes waiting for me at home. They’re just family.”

Karen has known Stacy since their childhood summer camp days and notes that she is “one of the smartest people I know,” commenting that “Ron and Stacy make an incredible team. For someone as strong-willed as Ron, he has really embraced her brains and ability to run the business systematically,” says Karen. “Stacy has business savvy because she has that experience.” It’s done “with love, you know.”

Similarly, Ron provides assistance with the “physically and mentally exhausting” demands of the biannual trade shows that both Karen and he attend. “The shows kill you. You’re extorted the entire time,” Karen explains. “So Ron’s really gone out of his way to just help me set up, to ask, ‘Are you okay?’”

Inevitably, such trying times have evolved into hilarious memories. One year, Karen was giv-

en a rare opportunity to participate in a New York trade show, but it required overnighing her entire booth from San Francisco, where she was just wrapping up another show: an effort both daunting and expensive. Others in the industry warned that it would be nearly impossible to get the union in New York to take on this job, and that she should be prepared to offer them anything.

Karen got on a pay phone at the Moscone Center with the union freight supervisor on the east coast. Hoping that a bawdy sense of humor would get the tough guy on the opposite side of the continent to laugh and give her a deal, she jokingly suggested an off-color reward for his help.

“Ron was right next to me when I was on that phone call,” Alweil recalls, laughing, “and to this day he will not let me live it down! He’ll say, ‘What did you think was going to happen?!’ I knew I would never see that person, I knew it was just a phone call. I just thought if I was funny he would do me a favor.”

These days, vendors often ask Karen for the favor of an introduction, begging, “Can I join you on the night you have dinner with Ron Robinson?” she notes. “And I say no. I would never, ever do that to him. I just want him to enjoy his dinner and to have time to relax after a frantic day at the shows.”

At this point in his career, Karen wants Ron “to enjoy how far he has come and how well-respected he is in his industry. He should feel great about his place in this community. He is a true merchant: He has a deep understanding of how to treat customers, and is such an incredible host. He’s worked his ass off, and he loves it.”



Brixton



GARY MCNATTON

I met Gary McNatton about 30 years ago when he owned a showroom in the Mart. He carried beautiful design items that were perfect for our home store including this amazing line of candles called Mottura. We bought the line and the scents were fantastic. Some of them, Grass, Heaven and Earth, were particularly special. Gary eventually sold the candle line to the Fisher family who famously own Gap and Banana Republic. At that time, the Fishers wanted to start a home fragrance product line. For about 13 years, Gary, became the first creative director for Gap and Banana Republic fragrance product. He began by developing that project for them by including his celebrated Grass, Heaven and Earth scents. After many years there, he left and opened his own company in Marin, California.

I contacted Gary right around that time. I was interested in further developing items for my new fragrance “IF,” which had taken off as a pure oil roll on. I wanted to make it into an eau de parfum. The fragrance was selling well so I asked Gary to review it and help me add ancillaries. He said he would but that he needed to try it first. Trying it, he told me, included sleeping with it. That would be one of his gauges of its quality. After that ultimate test, if Gary liked it, he said he’d help. I thought it was funny, but he was really serious. The next morning, he called me and said, “I slept with it last night and it was great!” What a relief for me.

We started working together and, immediately, it felt like we were brothers. Gary’s schedule took him to so many places, as did mine, so we would meet all over the world. Whenever our paths crossed, we’d continue to keep this project moving forward. Stacy must have wondered about us because she just kept hearing from me that I was off to meet Gary somewhere.

It all became so much bigger than just a development of perfume. We ultimately created new packaging and candles for an Apothia home collection as well. When we were finally ready to present the finished work to Stacy, we eagerly anticipated her reaction. She said, “You guys have got something here!” And we knew we did.

After completion, we submitted the candles to the fragrance foundation and we won Interior Scent of the Year. This is even more astounding considering we were up against the likes of Bottega Veneta, Bond No. 9 and Crabtree & Evelyn. Our friendship and working relationship was solidified. It’s yet another example of a business relationship that became much more, a byproduct that I honor and that became extraordinarily special. One that continues forever.



The Fragrance Foundation
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The Group Awarded a 2018-2019 100% Award to the Winner Best Exhibition of the Year Category

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HE'S GOT THE BIGGEST HEART,
AND IS ONE OF THE COOLEST
PEOPLE I'VE EVER MET.

GARY MCNATTON

More than three decades ago, Gary McNatton created a dramatic Los Angeles showroom for his brand, Mottura, a destination for sleek design products. Ron was a familiar face and a loyal customer, but it was Ron's destruction—or rather the reconstruction—of product that impressed Gary when he was first invited to Ron's home.

“I remember sitting in his house and he had all this broken blue and white dinnerware. I believe Ron said simply, ‘I'm tiling a wall,’” Gary recalls. Using the half set of Villeroy & Boch wedding china that Robinson had been awarded in his divorce, “he broke it and created a backsplash with it. And that just stuck: How clever, how wonderful! He's taking

something that was once beautiful that turned ugly, and then he's making it beautiful again. And I loved that about him. I totally connected with him and we became friends."

Always one to follow a creative tangent, when Gary wanted a signature fragrance for Mottura, he designed it himself, developing a scent that he jokes "would bring people in from outside, pulling them into my evil clutches and holding them there."

But fragrance got its clutches into Gary too, inspiring him to study perfumery in the South of France and to form his brand, Through Smoke Creative. Gary's award-winning scent went on to become part of permanent collections in museums such as New York's Museum of Modern

lifestyle stores Hudson/Grace. "He would add a rhinestone or bead to a product's packaging and I would not. He understands trend better; he understands what is fashionable and knows his customer," he notes.

Using that wealth of experience, "Sometimes Ron tries to defy gravity. Sometimes he succeeds. And sometimes he doesn't. He doesn't take 'no' easily. And he'll rephrase the question to trick you," Gary says with a chuckle, "into thinking it's a different question, but it's not. He has that ability to see things from a very different point of view and I think that's an incredible gift," he adds.

"I have an enormous, enormous respect for the man," says Gary. Ron "has always said that we

SOMETIMES RON TRIES TO DEFY GRAVITY. SOMETIMES HE SUCCEEDS. AND SOMETIMES HE DOESN'T. HE DOESN'T TAKE 'NO' EASILY.

-GARY MCNATTON

Art and San Francisco's MOMA. The fragrance collection was so high-profile that it drew the attention of Gap, Inc., which bought the Moturra brand and hired McNatton as its fragrance designer for Banana Republic, Old Navy, and Gap, where he created iconic scents such as Heaven, Grass and Dream.

After a decade, Gary left Gap to reopen Through Smoke Creative. He and Ron, who "also loved fragrance, body care products, lotions, and color," reunited to develop a collection of fragrances and candles for Ron's hugely successful Apothia line.

Though the men collaborated on Apothia's packaging, "our aesthetics are very different," says Gary, who co-founded home and garden

are brothers and I truly believe that he is." Gary and Ron's wife Stacy and son Max "have known each other forever, adore each other, and share lots of ideas and happy times together," he says. "I also admired his love for his parents and how he was so generous to them in their lifetime."

Gary surmises that, "I guess, for who he is, what he's accomplished, that you would think he would be some hard-ass corporate individual, and he's just the opposite. He's got the biggest heart, and is one of the coolest people I've ever met."

Ron "taught me all that," says Gary. "I love it and I try to practice it every day."

GREG BUCHBINDER

I became aware of Emeco, many, many years ago, through the sheer appreciation of their simple, quality chairs. I was then fortunate enough to meet Greg Buchbinder, who is Emeco's director, shortly afterwards.

When Stacy and I were first dating, some 29 years ago, I was helping her decorate her apartment and I bought her some classic, iconic Emeco Navy chairs for her dining room. They provided that perfect modern, industrial & classic look. A few years later and, still enamored with the look of their product, I was at ICFF, (International Contemporary Furniture Fair) a luxury furniture show. Naturally, I approached the Emeco booth, went up and introduced myself to Greg and I told him the story of buying the chairs for Stacy. And that was the start of my relationship with Greg.

But it was more than just business that attracted me to further engage with Greg. We started sharing personal stories and I learned how he and his father had kept the original, for the most part "hand-made" aluminum, furniture-making heritage alive. He shared that wonderful design and business mind of his. Naturally we ended up buying chairs for our store but, mostly, the relationship developed from our personal friendship and camaraderie including our families, our design and business thoughts and what makes everything of relevance to our consumers.

We have shared so many stories throughout the years, including collaborations on our store layout. Greg's many alliances with world talents like Philippe Starck, Jasper Morrison, Norman Foster and Frank Gehry are really over the top. Greg rolls everything into a new world architecture and his design mind has an attractive brilliance that really works.

I fondly remember the time Greg told me he was in need of a place to meet with Phillippe Stark. I instantly offered up my store office as a convenient spot. Greg had all of the design samples shipped in to review with Starck, and on the day, we waited anxiously for Phillippe to arrive. I was very excited to meet him and asked Greg what kind of a car we should be watching for. Greg told me that the thing about Phillippe is, he doesn't like to drive. Even in Los Angeles, home of one person per car, Starck always has a driver. So we're waiting and watching when, finally Phillippe Starck arrives, driving by himself, in a luxurious, brand new convertible Bentley. Obviously, Greg and I were very surprised. Greg said, to Phillippe, "I thought you don't ever drive?" Starck replied that he had seen the Bentley earlier that day, loved it, had to have it, purchased it on the spot and, therefore, drove it to our store, but did so by following his driver who was in another car directly ahead of him. It was kind of like Phillippe Starck had his own, personal, live GPS. It's a classic story that's become a shared part of business and personal relationship.





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AND IN THE END MAKE SURE
THAT WHATEVER WE ARE
PRODUCING IS BEAUTIFUL

GREGG BUCHBINDER

“I know nothing about the fashion business. I’m in the furniture business,” states Gregg Buchbinder, CEO of Emeco, whose chairs and tables define eco-sustainable design. But upon meeting Ron at a trade show, Gregg found him “so interesting and personable that we hit it off great.” An invitation to visit Ron and his family at home in Venice led to a valued friendship and a professional exchange of ideas that bridges the men’s individual talents.

“He has used our chairs in his retail stores,” says Gregg, because “our environmental message resonated with Ron and was something he thought would interest his clientele.” And as Gregg developed Emeco House, in Venice Beach, an event and exhibition studio combined with residential space, Ron was very helpful. “Ron, from his perspective, ed-

ucated me on what people care about when they come into a retail location,” says Gregg. “He’s very knowledgeable about how to achieve something that is going to make people feel good.”

This thoroughness encouraged Gregg to know all the materials that go into every Emeco chair, and each step of the manufacturing process. “And in the end make sure that whatever we are producing is beautiful,” he explains. “Ron has the ability to present things in the most beautiful way. And when you learn more about them, they’re even more beautiful.”

Recalling the early days of Fred Segal, Gregg says, “The experience I had going to the store on Melrose, when Ron was driving that, was incredible.” His opinion of the brand’s current incarnation, with Ron out of the equation, is unvarnished: “If you strip away all the heart and soul, and just present product, that’s what’s left. They did a great job of surgically removing everything that created passion.” Encountering a Fred Segal outpost at LAX, Gregg saw “just a tchotchke store. It could have been 7-Eleven.”

In contrast, “When I go over to Ron Robinson Santa Monica, he’s obsessed with detail,” Gregg notes. “He not only curates it, but he’s on the floor selling it. Ron is so passionate about everything he does, that he keeps his hands in everything in a very valuable way.”

Gregg explains, “People want to connect with other people; people want an authentic experience. And I think Ron provides that,” he says. “It’s so much more than just a store that’s selling products. It’s someone who’s got passion, who educates you. If I’m buying a gift, and I want something unique and special, that has some meaning to it, there’s no place better to go than Ron Robinson.”

And there’s no better person to go to than Ron. Gregg recounts working on a documentary film project with designer Philippe Starck that ran into logistical problems involving where to shoot. “Ron arranged the location, set up the venue at his store, and had the chairs delivered to his office. He is such a giving and kind person. It wasn’t about anything other than helping me, making things easy, and making Philippe Starck feel comfortable,” he recalls.

“That’s one of the things that always resonates,” Gregg says. “I wish I was half as kind and generous as Ron is. He’s sincere, real. I’m very fortunate to have him as a friend.”

ameco



KEN HERTZ

I like to say I married into my relationship with Ken Hertz. My wife and he went to summer camp together for years and their families knew each other very well. The first time we met, I was able to say hello and then Ken pretty much took over for the rest of the evening. I was taking a breath for him, he didn't stop but he had so much to say and he was so incredibly interesting.

Ken is a futurist, a thinker and a doer. He loves to get involved in new, exciting technology and products and personally reviews, choosing those of the finest quality. He has this combination of boundless energy and brilliance, seeing what something looks like today but also what it will become tomorrow.

In addition to being a senior partner at Hertz, Lichtenstein and Young, a law firm representing talent and new media companies, Ken produces TED talks and has launched a highly successful brand building company called memBrain. He is also deeply involved with an innovative carry-on luggage brand named G-RO that we were one of the first to carry. Crowd funding to reach the necessary \$5000 for the brand's start ended up raising 5 million dollars so, once again, Ken had his finger on the pulse.

We have met at different times, have had breakfasts together and Ken would bring these bags of products. We'd discuss products and how we could collaborate, a discussion that has led to several product launches, art exhibitions and events.

HIS LIMITLESS ENTHUSIASM, KNOWLEDGE AND TALENT ARE ALWAYS AN INSPIRATION TO ME.



ILES FORMULA
HAIRCARE





“

THAT IS RON'S GIFT, AND RON HAS TURNED THAT GIFT INTO AN ART, AND A BUSINESS

KEN HERTZ

“I am a geek. Ron appreciates that, but he is much more,” says Ken Hertz, who in addition to his modest self-appellation is also a Senior Partner at Hertz Lichtenstein & Young LLP in Beverly Hills, and one of The Hollywood Reporter's top 100 Power Lawyers 2017. “Ron is a curator of geeks, gadgets, gizmos, garments, and just groovy gear,” Ken observes. “He is a big kid, and I feel younger just being able to play in his sandbox.”

Ken, in fact, was just a kid himself when he and his sister attended the same summer camp as the young girl who would later become “Ron's amazing wife, Stacy. Over the years, we have all stayed in touch, and so when Stacy married Ron, he became family,” says Ken.

The two men easily bonded over a shared

“curiosity for all things innovative,” explains Ken, who hosts TEDxHollywood. Ken describes himself as a man with “no shortage of opinions, so I visit Ron’s stores whenever I can” to talk over everything from current events to business perspectives.

Ken and his law firm partners specialize in representing new sports and entertainment media companies, as well as luminary talent including Annie Leibovitz, Keith Richards, Gwen Stefani, and not only Will Smith but Jada, Willow, and Jaden for good measure. He is also a principal in memBrain, an entertainment marketing and strategy consulting firm which counts McDonald’s, Hasbro, and Logitech as clients.

That synergy of celebrity and high-profile business pursuits has become another commonality between Ken and Ron, and “over the years, I have connected him with clients, partnerships, products, and promotions,” says Ken. Shared

meals provide new opportunities for discussion, and the two “can usually be found in the corner of social events, conspiring and exchanging our latest inspirations and discoveries.”

Stating that Ron is “one of the smartest, kindest, most curious and imaginative people I have ever known,” Ken notes that “Ron ‘gets it’ sooner than everyone else, and he has an enthusiasm that is infectious.”

In “a world that has gotten so connected that everyone seems to know about everything sooner than anyone else, Ron spots the stuff that matters, and Ron understands why,” says Ken. “That is Ron’s gift, and Ron has turned that gift into an art, and a business.”



KELLY NYLAND



I met Kelly in the mid 2000s when she was the marketing director of the French electronics company, Parrot. The company deals in sound for auto and home, GPS and drones and sells worldwide. Kelly and I were first brought together because of the Philippe Starck speakers that were produced by Parrot. It was a sleek tower speaker with a sound that seemed to resonate through the air rather than just project. The design was incredible and the quality equal, so, of course, we carried it in our store.

Because of this, I was fortunate enough to work together with Kelly and her incredible energy, realizing her extraordinary thinking outside of the box. It's these kinds of people that are attractive to me, people with

whom I can share creative ideas and thoughts.

Thereafter, Kelly was hired by an innovative startup company in Colorado called Sphero. They created a spherical robot that was fully mobile and directed by an app. The user could plan and set a whole series of turns and moves for it, offering a kind of junior level version of coding. The company landed the Star Wars Sphero, which ended up as the prototype for BB8! It was this amazing toy that everyone enjoyed. Kelly was responsible for the marketing it and when we saw it at the Consumer Electronics Show in 2011 and, of course, carried it in our stores.

Kelly's next placement furthered her talents. She began to work for Snap-



chat. She was in charge of the Snapchat “Spectacles,” these cool looking sunglasses that would capture video and upload it to social media. The marketing for Spectacles was one of the most interesting and inventive marketing ideas, and an incredible success. They would only be sold at a giant yellow kiosk that would pop up in different parts of the country, in a park or at a mall, and one would have to follow a countdown on an app to find where the kiosks would appear next. Initially we were the only retail store that was selected to have a kiosk as a location. The kiosk itself weighed about a ton, literally, and was brought in, along with guards that protected it all night. Once the kiosk was in place, Snapchat would put out a pin dot on the map of the app. By 10:15 in the morning, you could see people walking around the street, trying to find this kiosk. Eventually they figured it out and with well over 200 people wrapped through the store and around the block for hours, they sent 60 people at the end of the line home as there wouldn’t be enough spectacles in the machine for the people in line.

After this, Kelly and Snapchat allowed me to hold a VIP event. This was a private showing where you could buy from this kiosk and we had customers like Billy Crystal and representatives from David Geffen’s office lined up to purchase. Each person in line could only buy two units each and, even with it being a VIP event, we had a line out the door. This was just the tip of Kelly’s ingenious talent and energy.

Associating with people who think creatively is a blessing. Kelly is one of those people, just incredibly innovative. Kelly recently opened up her own business, an online flower subscription service for your office or home, called Petalfox.com She created it, fleshed it out and is now growing it, yet another one of her new, imaginative endeavors.







“

WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CURATE MORE INSPIRED SPACES, ESPECIALLY THE SPACES IN WHICH WE DREAM, MAKE AND DO

KELLY NYLAND

“Ron got everything first, whether it was a celebrity shoe or some cool kids’ accessory,” says Kelly Nyland. “He knew where to place a bet. He knew when to take a chance.”

That makes him a fitting complement to Kelly, who has launched more than 120 consumer products: about 70 physical creations, and approximately 50 virtual, including apps, games and other digital experiences. “I’ve led product development design and creative services, and I’ve run most of the brands I’ve worked for on a global scale,” she notes. Negotiating international deals with Apple as a vendor to their stores worldwide, throughout her career Kelly has launched brands in 40 physical countries and for 70 nations online.

“Product development, retail and tech innovation consumer products: that’s really my sweet spot.”

Kelly met Ron when she worked at the revolutionary French wireless products manufacturer, Parrot; Ron was one of the first to sell the company's sculptural speakers, which had been codesigned with Philippe Starck.

Seeing how Ron displayed and merchandised the speakers at the Melrose location, "I remember feeling that this product had completely achieved chic, celebrity status," Kelly says. "One of the only other stores selling this product successfully was Colette in Paris; only a handful of luxury concept retailers could do this product justice and present it in a way that encouraged the other hundreds of points of sale to adopt the product and to sell it."

Ron's store was a prime venue, therefore, to showcase Parrot's groundbreaking AR.Drone, which entered the market in 2010, about 18 months before the competition. "Ron was always focused on selling whatever was new in the industry," Kelly observes. "It just made sense."

Kelly next applied her talents to digital consumer manufacturer Sphero, where she was Senior VP of Marketing and Creative Services. Her love for product development, creative design and global marketing launches led to partnering with Disney and Lucasfilm to present the BB-8 droid toy inspired by Star Wars: The Force Awakens. Once again, Ron was able to offer clients the newest experience: a robot companion.

Collaboration continued when Kelly headed Marketing and Brands for Spectacles, the Snapchat glasses with a camera inside: "We were rolling this product out through secret scavenger hunts, featuring 100 vending machines over 100 days throughout the United States," she says. Asking Ron to participate, Kelly acknowledged that "He really had to take a bet on something he had never seen. We couldn't show him the product. We couldn't show him the vending machine."

Of course, Ron rolled the dice. "There were lines out the door, and numerous celebrities showed up because they feel really comfortable at Ron's

store," says Kelly.

As Kelly and Ron's paths continued to cross, a friendship developed, and Kelly often relied on Ron for professional perspective. "He doesn't presume anything; he just offers wisdom. It's always very encouraging," she states.

Kelly recalls an occasion when both happened to be in New York, and Ron was working on a fragrance collaboration with Missoni. "I will never forget looking at all those product samples in that hotel room and just going through each scent," says Kelly. "I remember magic delight in his eyes and in his voice as he talked about how excited he was that Rosita Missoni had agreed to work with him. Yet he still knew that he had to get the price point right and get the story for each scent," she notes. "This made such an impression on me. I think it signified that this friendship that Ron and I had built together over the years was reciprocated in a way that was outside of our day-to-day business."

Kelly currently oversees her own business, Petalfox, which combines technology and beauty through an online flower subscription which ships petite, French-inspired flower arrangements to customers each week. "We believe that there is an opportunity to curate more inspired spaces, especially the spaces in which we dream, make and do," says Kelly.

Dream, make, and do is a good summation of the creative energy that Kelly and Ron both share. "Creativity is built in to Ron's way of curating products and telling stories. Any item, brand or business that he features in the store, he must be able to tell the story," she explains.

"Ron leaves an impression," says Kelly. "A lot of it is wrapped up in masculine elegance. He's the type of person who always seems like he's quietly in the know."

**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, RETAIL AND TECH
INNOVATION CONSUMER PRODUCTS:
THAT'S REALLY MY SWEET SPOT**



RUBEN OJEDA

I began working with Architect Ruben Ojeda in the very early 1980s. We were first introduced by my dear friend and customer, Laurie Levinson (now Butler).

Laurie knew Ruben through the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SciArc) where he had been a TA and she had been a student. Laurie graduated and went to work with the iconic American architect Philip Johnson. I originally needed help with a staircase handrail at the store. Laurie worked on it with me and then introduced me to Ruben. I then teamed up with Ruben for a renovation of the Apothia store on Melrose and a residence I owned in Santa Monica. Ruben and I worked together so well that I have since built or remodeled four stores and three homes with him.

Once you have an opportunity to experience genuine creative energy on a collaborative project, it can't be duplicated, and a bond formed. Ruben and I communicate freely, exchange ideas, sometimes disagreeing only to find the best result. We share the goal of succeeding in a plan that will be stable and functional, standing the test of time while also wowing the audience. It all serves as more evidence of how "work" can be both fulfilling and fun.

HIS COLLABORATION ON THESE PROJECTS AND OTHERS CONTACTS HAVE BEEN INVALUABLE TO CONTINUED EXPANSION.



Words cannot express how grateful we are to you for taking a chance on us 13 years ago. From all of us at Retro Brand, thank you so much. Congratulations on all of your successes over the years, you are a true icon.

All The Best,
Marc Herman

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL
1971 EUROPEAN TOUR

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MANCHESTER, AMSTERDAM, FRANKFURT, BERLIN,
KAMPAKUS, COPENHAGEN, STOCKHOLM, ANTWERP, LONDON

THE ORIGINAL
RETRO BRAND
SINCE  1962



“

WE THINK ALIKE. IT'S A
BUILDING OF INGREDIENTS
THAT MAKES THINGS WORK

RUBEN S. OJEDA

“There were certain things Ron accomplished with the city that I didn't think were possible,” says architect Ruben S. Ojeda, describing the building of Ron and Stacy's Venice, California home.

“The lots on the Venice Canals are very narrow, but Ron started a rapport with the building department supervisor; they worked out a terminology that permitted a variance to build a stairway up to the property line. I don't think I could've gotten the building official to allow that, but Ron got it done,” laughs Ruben. “In fact I think he still stays in touch with that official. Ron's so personable that he maintains relationships.”

Ruben's rapport with Ron has spanned thirty years, three houses and four stores, and “Ron's become a friend. Our sons were born

two weeks apart. We're of a similar age. It's a brotherly working relationship. My career started off with him; I'd just gotten out of school and I was teaching at Otis Parsons," remembers Ruben.

At the start of each project, Ron gathers images from his travels, places that he'd like integrated into the blueprints. Ruben interpreted Ron's admiration of Florentine arches via a vaulted bedroom in a Santa Monica remodel, and when Ron wanted to reference Italian architecture in the Venice house, Ruben featured an entryway rotunda. "Ron understands the spatial elements," says Ruben. "Whether it's his home or his company, Ron prioritizes design. I wish all my clients were like that. I really enjoy the outcomes."

Process can be challenging, however. What started as the remodeling of StylObjects became a gargantuan undertaking when Ron and Stacy decided to vastly expand the Melrose store's square footage, Ruben recalls. "Melrose is a quagmire of structures, because the retail spaces began as a series of small houses and stores."

The problems inspired creative solutions, however. Ruben disguised two columns by integrating them into shelf supports; the design worked so well that it also became a fixture at the flagship.

"Perfect lighting is an integral goal for Ron," says Ruben. When Ron wanted to display merchandise without shadows falling on the products, the two men composed a "vertical lightbox" with a curved trim that shielded the lights.

"The display case has a sensual quality; it's illuminated from the front to create a glow around the merchandise. This is why he's the ideal client: he wants to make spaces as beautiful as possible," says Ruben, "though it is hard for the staff to change the lightbulbs."

As a result of this attention to environment, Ruben notes that "the flagship is a reflection of how Ron treats clients: "Every time we're in the store dealing with design questions, Ron has eyes in the back of his head for any customer who needs assistance. He's made his stores an experience, a destination."

After three decades, "We think alike. It's a building of in-



redients that makes things work. For the flagship, Ron told me what he wanted, and I created the design in an architectural program that renders perspective views; after we agreed on the final product, Ron worked with the builder to execute it. The idea from my mind goes to his mind, and is further developed by the contractor,” explains Ruben. “Ron’s the ultimate collaborator.”

In architectural school, “one of my first instructors was talking about design and he told us, ‘Design your life,’” recalls Ruben. “Well, Ron is the epitome of that to me. He’s focused on how he wants to present himself, his store, and his products, and I think that’s what’s led to his success.”

“WELL, RON IS THE EPITOME OF THAT TO ME. HE’S FOCUSED ON HOW HE WANTS TO PRESENT HIMSELF, HIS STORE, AND HIS PRODUCTS,



AARON, JAMI & KLAUS

Kiehl's began life in 1851 as John Kiehl's homeopathic pharmacy, located on 13th and 3rd in the East Village of New York City. In 1921, the pharmacy was purchased by Russian immigrant Irving Morse and taken over in the 60s by Irving's son, Aaron Morse. Aaron had studied pharmacology at Columbia University and was a former WWII pilot. He took Kiehl's to the brand we know and love today and I am proud to have been the first in California to carry it.

I met Aaron in the early 1980s. I just walked into that century-old pharmacy, introduced myself and told him that I wanted to carry his products. This pharmacy was an amazing, vintage place that, after you had entered into the main room, you had to walk through an opening in a wall to a wonderful large open space filled with the antithesis of vintage! The space next to the main room held these bright yellow and red Lamborghinis, a Ferrari and an acrobatic airplane, a gorgeous collection of beautiful shiny things with Kiehl's products sitting on top of them all.

This scene served as my introduction to the mind of Aaron Morse. If you're lucky, you meet a handful of people in your lifetime who are as eccentric and as brilliant as Aaron, full of passion and love. I remember once, Aaron walked out of the back to meet with me and there were different colored lipsticks all over his face, this six foot tall, manly guy with lipstick all over his face. His excuse? "Oh, we're developing a new lipstick," he said, "And I always test them out."

I was intrigued, as you can imagine, so shortly after meeting Aaron, I invited him to come visit me when he was next in Los Angeles. It was the early 80s and he drove up in a 70s convertible Cadillac with one of the first cell phones in it, the size of a brick, I remember. That was the height of technology at the time. We made our arrangements and I became the first boutique to carry his product in California. I remember the Kiehl's labels were made on a mimeograph machine at the time, one of those barreled, hand cranked early photocopiers with the purple blue ink. Aaron explained that the packing was informative, but inconsequential



to the quality of the product that he produced. He claimed everything you paid for was inside the bottle, not decorating it.

Aaron had established a Kiehl's counter at Neiman Marcus in Beverly Hills. He told me that if I was ever out of product, I could call Jose at Neimans and he'd check to see if he had it in stock and we would be able to satisfy our customer more quickly. I thought that could never work out, but boy was I ever wrong. We ended up building this amazing relationship with Neiman Marcus through Jose. If we didn't have a particular Kiehl's product, we could call over to Neiman Marcus, get it and then deliver it directly to the customer. Jose, in turn, called our store in case he was out of a product. That's what Aaron wanted for his customer, how far he would go for customer service and that was only one of the early lessons he taught me.

There are very few people that, in my life, have truly served as mentors. Aaron is one of them.

He and I would spend time just talking over coffee. He would often bring along his lovely daughter, Jami. Jami was a fitness instructor at the time. He always told me she was "brains and brawn." She went to train the Austrian Olympic ski team where she met and eventually married Olympic champion, Klaus Heidegger. Jami and Klaus soon got involved in Kiehl's and, after Aaron passed away, they took the company to another level, eventually selling it to L'Oréal in 2000.

About two years ago, Jami and Klaus created luxury skincare line Retrouve and Ron Robinson Inc. stores launched it in Los Angeles and Santa Monica. To develop it, Jami used one of the very same chemists they'd always trusted at Kiehl's. One of the keys behind Jami's success is what she learned from her father, Aaron Morse: his focus on his work, the way he made a difference, the way he accepted nothing less than exceptional quality.

HE WAS PURE OF CHARACTER, TRANSPARENT AND BELIEVED IN WHAT HE DID. I SEE THAT ENERGY IN JAMI, THE WAY SHE LIVES HER LIFE AND THE WORK SHE AND KLAUS DO.



RON WAS THE FIRST IN LOS ANGELES TO DARE TO COMMIT FULLY TO THE BRAND. AND THERE WAS NO STOPPING RON OR KIEHL'S FROM THEN ON. RON GAVE US OUR FIRST REAL LEG UP IN L.A.

“

RON “CAN’T REALLY BE COPIED,” SAYS JAMI. “LIKE MY DAD, HE IS GOING TO SHOOT FROM THE HEART AND NOT NECESSARILY MAKE THE EASY CHOICE.

JAMI MORSE HEIDEGGER

Jami Morse Heidegger was a student at Beverly Hills High and already a devoted Fred Segal customer when she first came to know Ron Robinson in the late 1970s. Getting a hands-on education, she would frequently accompany her father, Aaron Morse, on business meetings to promote their company, Kiehl’s, which had been purchased in 1921 from founder John Kiehl by Aaron’s father, Irving Morse. “When Ron and Dad decided to partner to sell Kiehl’s at Fred Segal, it was because my father trusted Ron as a man of his word, and believed in his integrity,” she remembers. And because she was “born into the family business, we were always ‘on the job,’ and every experience was a learning opportunity according to the Morse grail.”

Jami learned well, and was then often at Fred Segal, “going through the stock, answering

questions from Kiehl's customers, and thanking everyone for their hard work on behalf of our company." The tutelage at her father's side inspired and motivated her: After her Harvard studies and years spent in Austria with husband Klaus Heidegger, she returned to the States and went on to head Kiehl's in 1988. But back in her days as a typical teenager, Jami was occasionally lured from her labors by the wonders of Fred Segal: "I was eager to slip away to shop," she confesses.

Flattered by the attentions of the "impossibly hip and chic sales staff," the young girl checked out delicious candles in novel flavors, perused the gift section, and settled in at her favorite department, the curated selection of books. "It was like unwrapping presents under the Christmas tree when piece by piece the exciting new shops were added."

Jami notes that her father, who propelled the brand to international notice, "was supremely confident in his products, even in the day when few people had heard of Kiehl's. He was a fascinating, profound and complicated man, so even when we had no money to speak of, he would not compromise his standards" even if it meant turning away big business opportunities. "Ron was one of the main forces propelling the eventual indomitable march of Kiehl's," she says. "Ron not only had a clientele of Hollywood cognoscenti, but he also had their eye, interest and their trust too. When Ron spoke, people listened!"

When Jami married Klaus Heidegger, the couple loved "visiting Ron and Stacy and spending time at the store, eating, walking around and talking shop." So much so, that in 1991, their daughter Nicoletta's first outing was a "pilgrimage" to the Melrose Fred Segal store, with grandfather Aaron filming the child in her mother's arms. And Jami could now indulge her "newest passion – raiding the fashion-forward designer baby and kids' clothes selections that Stacy so brilliantly pioneered."

Jami "was always fascinated by the incredible

collection of mystical and marvelous potions that Ron and Stacy seemed to find from all over the globe. They were usually the first in town to discover the newest 'next best thing,' and that was when I realized that Ron truly was a cult guru—a pure arbiter of the zeitgeist," she notes.

"Ron was the first in Los Angeles to dare to commit fully to the brand. And there was no stopping Ron or Kiehl's from then on. Ron gave us our first real leg up in L.A., Hollywood and the film industry, and for this I am forever grateful," Jami says, adding that "we chose to debut our new skincare line, Retrouvé, with Ron and Stacy, as an homage to the past and to recreate the magic for a new generation."

Ron "can't really be copied," says Jami. "Like my dad, he is going to shoot from the heart and not necessarily make the easy choice." He personifies "that willingness to go with your gut, to take chances and not just do but also be the refreshingly unexpected."



TUTU DU MONDE



THE SHAHS

I met the Shahs -- Raj, Akhil and Amit Shah-- through Michael Alesko in the late 80s. He was developing a product line called International News, which the Shahs owned and I carried in my store. I did amazingly well with it, I might add. The Shahs were not new to the apparel industry, already seeing huge success with their initial brand, Shah Safari. This was a line of madras shirts that became incredibly popular, even worn by Michael J. Fox in 1985's iconic Back to the Future film. By way of a small digression, during the time period where I was doing so well with International News, I had already started a kids fashion apparel department in the store. We presented fashion that wasn't the norm. Typical kids stores were offering onesies with stitched teddy bears but we stocked children's black leather motorcycle jackets. There was no concept of cool clothing for kids, no way for fashion-conscious parents to dress their kids similarly to how they'd dress themselves. So I looked at International News, and other brands and their cool styles and I had an idea.

I asked The Shah brothers to do a kids line based on their adult product. They said they would do it on one condition: if I ran the children's side of the company. They said they would commit to making the samples if I took care of directing the division. I thought it was an interesting challenge and, as I had already done a bit of wholesale management, development and sales, with a line I did earlier called Fred Segal Designs, I dove right in.

We took the samples to the New York Kids Show, my very first trade show with the brand. Right out of the gate, we did one million in sales. Remember, this was in the late 80s so you can triple that number to equate what that would be in sales today. The Shahs and Alesko were, of course, thrilled. It was a fantastic success. With that, they came back and asked me to be the national sales manager for the International News men's line as well. I agreed.

Directing sales for International News men's line was an amazing challenge with many benefits like meeting retailers from across the states. That included one special retailer, in particular. You see, the Shahs wanted Interna-

tional News men to get placed in the Broadway Department stores. That meant they'd have to go Stacy Fischer, who is now my wife, but was then the divisional vice president of Broadway. It was my introduction to Stacy and I owe that to the Shahs.

I'm very close with Raj and am fascinated by how he operates. He and his brothers are a perfect team. Raj has a 360° scope of what's going on, as seen from above. Amit is the financial mind of the team and Ahkil's specialty is marketing and sales. Raj takes it all and puts the pieces together, but they all work together in such a creative and harmonious unit.

Raj has, throughout the years, hit on sensational new ideas. The most recent is his patented fabric treatment incorporated into an apparel line called Aply. The line employs this process on fabric where the wearer can spill coffee, wine, juice, mustard, etc. and it comes right off. It's 100% cotton and it feels and wears like cotton but has this amazing uniqueness giving it the ability to breathe, while not holding on to scent or odor. There is also less washing needed and less drying time required. They have tested it on athletes and they've found no odor and no

perspiration residue left. The side effect is that it's an environmentally friendly product that can now be put to use in workwear and other industries.

I have even sold an Aply shirt to a special, long-time customer named Billy Crystal. He gave it as a gift to his son-in-law. I demonstrated it in the store by putting cranberry juice on it and actually drinking it off the fabric, no stain and a fun example, too. Each holiday, my family takes a beach vacation, usually in Mexico. We love these getaways. I saw Billy and his family at the airport in Mexico. We were all returning to Los Angeles. He called me over to say hello and show me a special video he had on his phone. It was his son in law wearing the Aply tee shirt, making playful fun of the no stain feature. While on the beach, he used the t-shirt to hold some Guacamole and scooped it off with chips. Worked just fine. The Shah ingenuity knows no bounds!

Together, the Shah brothers possess an amazing imagination and energy like the Ever-Ready bunny on steroids. Once they get excited, there's no stopping them. It's exhilarating and a bit exhausting to watch them but it's so invigorating.

I COUNT THEM, AND SO MANY OF THE PEOPLE MENTIONED ON THESE PAGES, AS TRUE FRIENDS AND ADVISORS.





“

RON IS JUST A SPECTACULAR HUMAN BEING. IT'S WONDERFUL TO HAVE SOMEBODY LIKE THAT IN YOUR LIFE.

THE SHAHS

“He’s like a 20 year old who just fell in love for the first time,” says Raj Shah, describing Ron’s passion for his store’s products. “And since you’re his best friend, he wants you to meet his girlfriend. It’s the twinkle in his eye and in his voice that you feel; he’s full of passion and excitement about showcasing in the store, and the stories behind the brands,” Raj says. “That adds to the experience for anyone.”

Raj Shah and his brothers, Amit Shah and Akhil Shah, founded their corporation, Shah Safari--the name referencing their Kenyan upbringing--in 1975. Uncannily prescient about every trend, the Shah brothers launched the

must-have '80s clothing brand International News in 1983 with Mike Alesko, and first met Ron in 1984 to discuss him carrying the apparel's inaugural line.

The clothing became a celebrity and cultural phenomenon—Michael J. Fox is wearing a Shah Safari shirt in *Back to the Future*—so two years later, Ron suggested an International News Kids brand, and worked with the Shahs to design and market the streetwise wear that revolutionized children's clothing. Ron was then asked to be the kids and menswear national sales manager, and it is at this point in the story that Amit suggests with a wink that the Shahs had a role in Ron and Stacy falling in love:

"International News can claim to be the match-maker," Amit states. The couple met when Ron agreed to get the Shahs' apparel into the Broadway, where Stacy was an executive, and "I would resist all markdown requests and make Ron's life miserable when he tried to sell to Stacy," says Amit. "What Amit is saying," Raj jokes, "is that we will give you something much more valuable than a markdown: we will give you Ron!" And while Amit adds with a laugh that, "We're in the clothing business; we stretch the truth a bit," the results are self-evident: Time spent together fostered the Robinson romance.

The friendship between the Shah family and the Robinson family blossomed too over the years, even as Ron's businesses expanded exponentially, and the Shah brothers' international corporation grew to produce dozens of successful brands. "We've maintained our friendship for a long time," says Raj. "Ron is very warm, very loving, very kind. He always expresses that to you when you see him. He always tells me, 'Please, say hello to the other brothers; give my love to your family.'"

Amit notes that that the family feeling extends to the workplace as well: "I have tremendous respect for him regarding the brilliant team of people he has—a group of people who have been with him for a long time," observes Amit. "And again, that requires that really good, human side

to you. To be able to nurture, to let people grow with you, to have a company where people want to be with you."

Recalling the classic play *Death of a Salesman*, Amit states that "We are living in the era of 'death of retail' as we've known it. But it is people like Ron Robinson and Stacy, and his team, who are going to save the industry from the complete demise of the independent creative, fun retail experience."

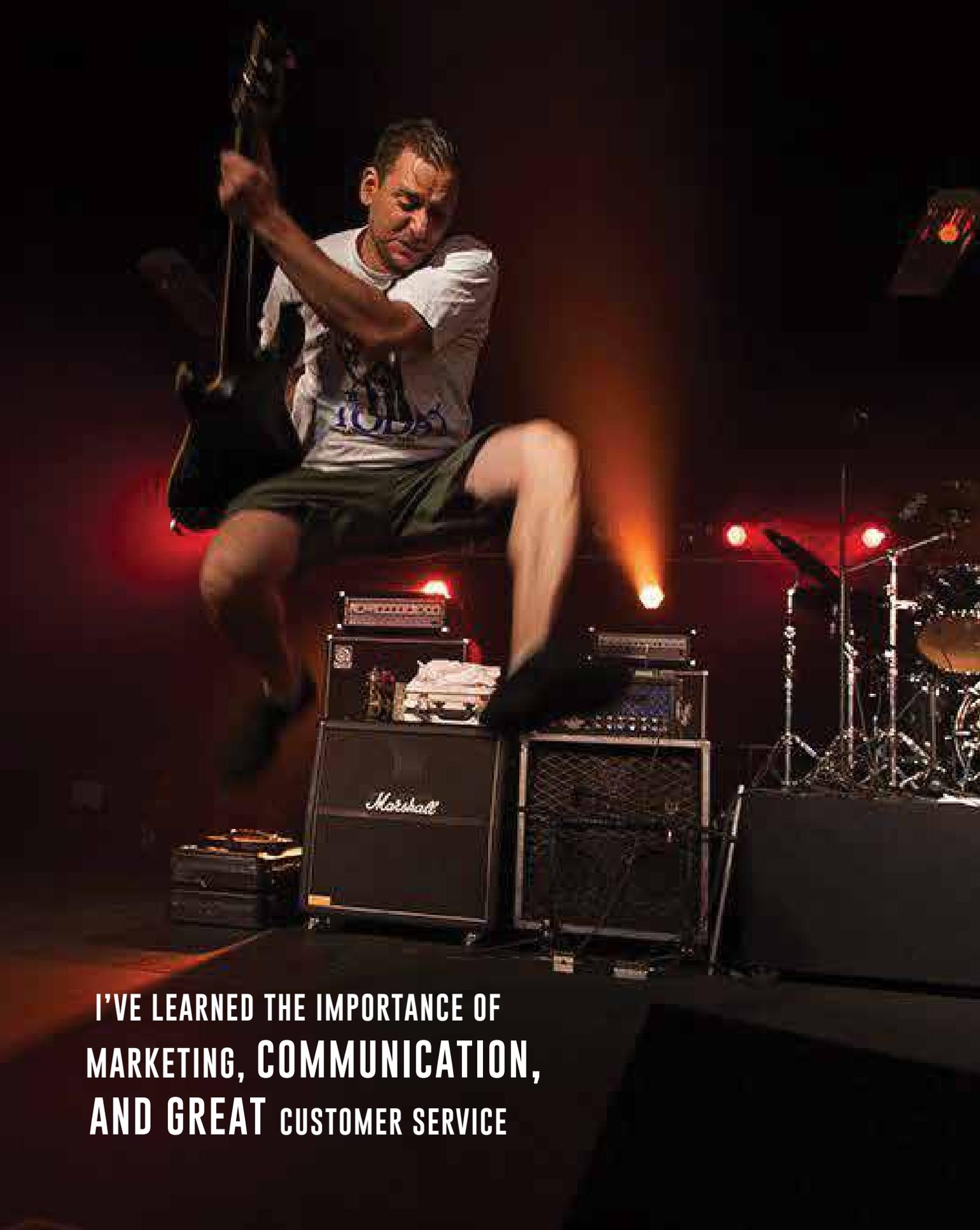
Raj attributes that to Ron's "ability to seek out unique products, and be one of the first to identify a trend. What has set him apart is that keen eye that adds to the experience." When a customer enters the Ron Robinson store, "you immediately feel this is going to be much more than just a shopping experience," he says.

"Ron imparted in us what retail takes: The product we design must have the retail environment to match," says Amit. "Ron always viewed design without a price. He first viewed the product, he felt it, he reviewed the inputs, he marked the stitches, and then he put the price. Ron knows the back alleys of Paris and Florence, the sushi places in Tokyo—he's never afraid to experience something new, and he allows his customers that same opportunity."

"I might see him for the first time in months, and as he shows me around the store, he's like a child who loves what he is doing and is good at what he's doing," says Raj. In "an industry, a business, that is not stress-free, Ron is just a spectacular human being. It's wonderful to have somebody like that in your life."

ONWARD ∞ UPWARD

Many of our past staff have gone on to find their own success, and given their impact on Ron Robinson it's exciting for me to shine the light on them.



**I'VE LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF
MARKETING, COMMUNICATION,
AND GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE**



“

I APPRECIATED RON'S DRIVE AND VISION, AND I LIKED TO THINK THAT MAYBE HE SAW A BIT OF HIMSELF IN ME.

ANDREW KLINE

“I have learned a lot from Ron over the years,” says Andrew Kline. “The importance of personal relationships, the importance of being a leader and not a follower of trends, and the most paramount: the importance of always following your dreams.”

A longtime stronghold in the hardcore music scene, Andrew continues to push his talents, taking on vocals for the first time with his newest grouping, Berthold City, formed last year. Every song on the straight edge band's debut, *Moment of Truth*, was written by Andrew. Building on his guitar work with bands *Strife* and *World Be Free*, he continues a discography beginning in 1991 that has influenced a generation of musicians.

Growing up in Thousand Oaks, California, Andrew's intense interest in skateboarding led to an exposure to punk and hardcore that began to define Andrew's musical focus. Soon music



became his obsession, and in his early teens, he took up the guitar, and with local friends equally vested in west coast hardcore, formed Strife.

Touring with Strife extensively in the '90s, Andrew began producing hip hop at the turn of the millennium, as well as co-creating World Be Free “to bring fun back into hardcore.” Andrew co-founded Cross My Heart and Hope to Die, a music and art collective, in 2012, and established his own independent label, WAR Records, three years ago, featuring his work as well as promoting rising bands such as Louisville-based Miracle Drug, and Philly outfit Fixation.

When he was just starting out, Andrew worked at a small skateboard shop that had stores near his home in Thousand Oaks and in Santa Monica. Learning about an opening for a cashier at the Ron Robinson at Fred Segal on Melrose, he decided to check it out even though “I heard whispers and rumors that Ron was set in his ways and was very particular about how he wanted his stores to run. I knew that a lot of the other employees got a bit nervous when Ron was around. I didn’t know what to expect when I met him,” he remembers.

His first day on the job, his birthday, Andrew faced the man himself. “We immediately hit it off when we finally did meet,” he recalls. “I appreciated Ron’s drive and vision, and I liked to think that maybe he saw a bit of himself in me.”

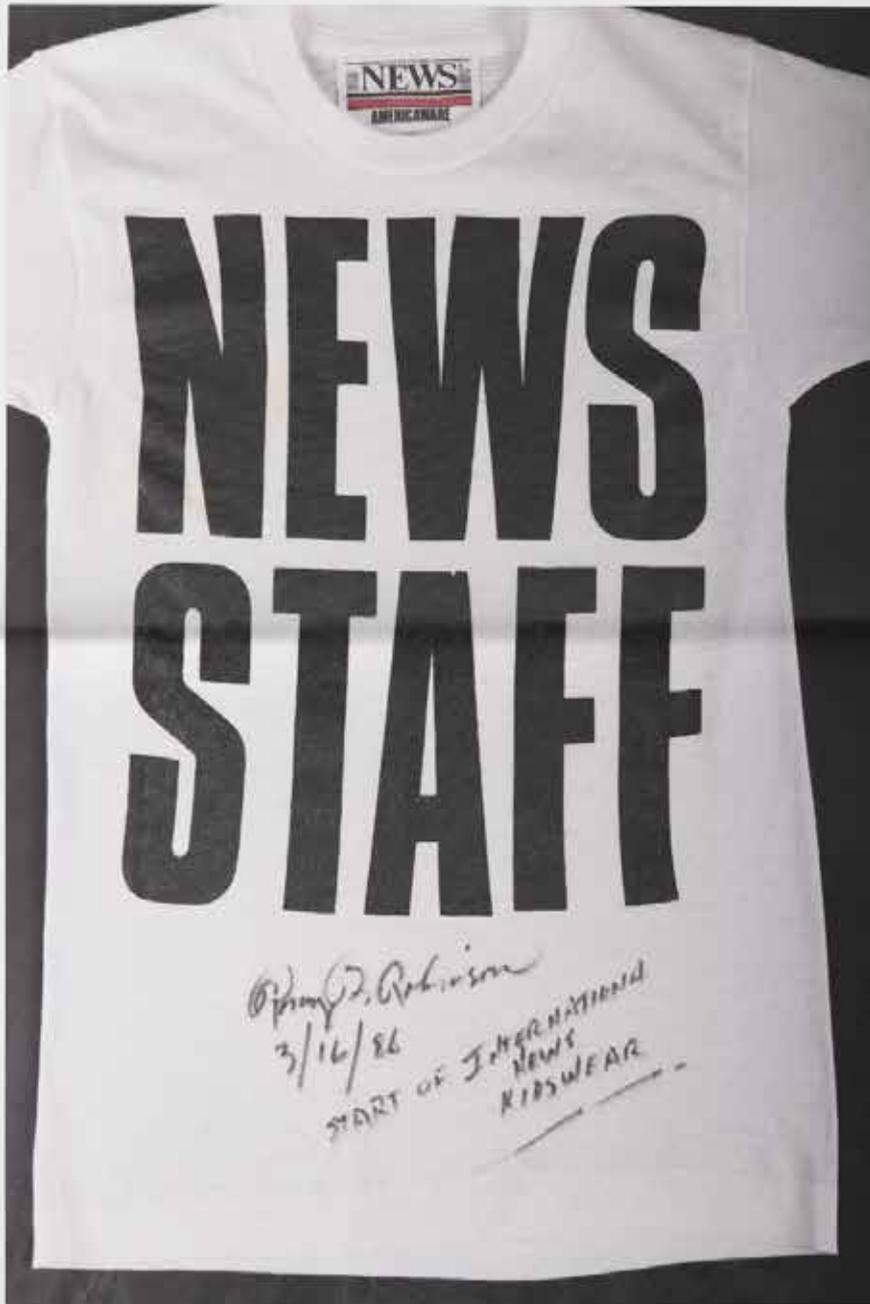


Over the next few years Andrew worked his way up to manager and assistant buyer at Ron Robinson, while continuing to pursue his recording career. In fact, he was so successful at learning the retail trade, that when he left Ron Robinson, it was to open his own boutique with locations in Westlake Village and Ventura.

Andrew continues to be at home in different worlds, running his label and creating music while also prospering in real estate as an agent at the Sherman Oaks office of Pacific Union International.

“I apply a lot of what I learned from my experience in retail and from working with Ron when interacting with my clients in real estate. I’ve learned the importance of marketing, communication, and great customer service,” explains Andrew. Whether singing and playing guitar on stage or negotiating for his clients in the business world, “I always strive to perform at the highest level.”

StyledForever



SHAH SAFARI.

ZEBRA CLUB

MECCA ably



“

I LOVED WATCHING KIDS GO FROM A BELLY BUMP TO WALKING AND WAVING AND SAYING MY NAME.

ASHLEY GUTIERREZ



Back when Ashley Gutierrez was a 17-year-old Melrose regular, she was “so in awe of all those goodies,” that merely browsing and buying from Ron Robinson was insufficient. Ashley wanted to work there.

“I walked up to Karen Meena, my coffee in hand, and before I could finish asking if they were hiring, Karen said, ‘No! Come back when

you're old enough to work,'" Ashley remembers. "So I did. Every day. For a month. Until she finally broke down and hired me on a trial basis. Retail hazing at its finest."

Currently Managing Director of Haus of Gaga, Lady Gaga's personal creative team, Ashley progressed to the directorial position last year, after beginning as her personal assistant five years ago.

Lady Gaga "helps the world and her fans embrace being themselves, instead of being scared to be different," notes Ashley. "My experience with Ron, a unique businessman, made working for her an easy transition."

she's prouder of an elaborate gift basket she created recently on Lady Gaga's behalf, or the latest snapshots of her French bulldog, Bocce, wearing designer hats at the Ron Robinson flagship.

In her tenure in Life Size, "I loved watching kids go from a belly bump to walking and waving and saying my name. Parents dropped by like they were visiting a cousin. I had people I saw every week," she says.

"Max was just a kid when I left, and now can up-sell me," Ashley exclaims with retail insider's admiration. "He's the perfect combination of Ron and Stacy. He'll deliver the truth, but with a flip,

"MY EXPERIENCE WITH RON, A UNIQUE BUSINESSMAN, MADE WORKING FOR HER (LADY GAGA) AN EASY TRANSITION."

-ASHLEY GUTIERREZ

Ashley remains a frequent shopper at Ron Robinson, but never with more intensity than at the holidays. "If a gift is from Gaga, people expect something different," she explains. "I have to crack the code of Christmas."

Recipients "include everyone from Gaga's mom and dad to people like Elton John who can buy themselves anything," Ashley says. But Ron Robinson "always has the right combination: practical but never thought of before, or out of this world but with a not-out-of-this-world price tag."

During her four years in the children's department, Ashley's inventive merchandising was second only to her creative gift baskets: "It's fun. When it's for a shower we'd fold the clothing to make it look like a baby," she explains.

"Since then, I've elevated my skills." As she swipes through photos, it's a toss-up whether

because he's got Ron's flare."

In her rare free time, Ashley still enjoys strolling through Ron Robinson and "getting lost in all the treasures. I love the store and I love everyone there. After all, it's where I grew up," Ashley reflects.

Though Ashley's work takes her around the globe—she reminisced in part by text from the Venice Film Festival—she still feels like part of the Ron Robinson family.

In fact, when Ashley recalls her dad bringing Tito's Tacos for everyone during working hours—well over a decade ago—she muses to herself, "I don't know how to say that without getting us in trouble," before laughing and realizing that she's long out of danger, quipping, "I'm gonna get docked that pay."

LIKE A CHILD MEETING
WILLY WONKA
FOR THE FIRST TIME





“

HE CAME OUT TO CHECK ON ME AND SUPPORT MY DREAMS. THAT MADE AN IMPACT ON ME FOR THE REST OF MY JOURNEY.

JEN DITCHIK

“Like a child meeting Willy Wonka for the first time” is how Jen Ditchik describes herself at age 21 when she interviewed for a job with Ron in 1992. “My first impression of Ron was intimidation, fear, and curiosity. He was a retail icon and I was being accepted into this fabulous world,” she says, recalling the Ron Robinson at Fred Segal store. Jen was hired as a sales manager at the modern-day Chocolate Factory, and Ron’s high standards became lessons in creating retail magic. “He was tough,” she admits, “but I wanted to make an impact; I wanted to impress this creative wizard.”

And she did. So much so that two years later, when Jen decided to leave Los Angeles and move to New York to explore an advertising career, “Ron and Stacy tried to get me to stay,” she remembers. Her experience working at Ron

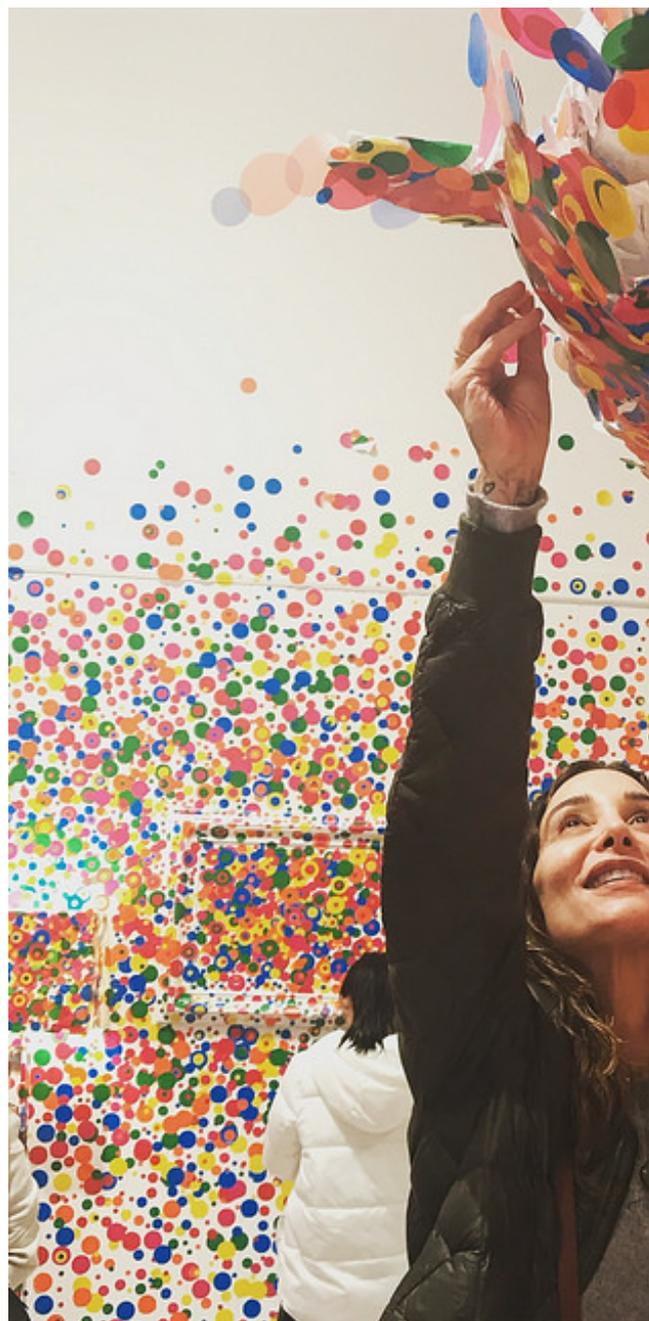
Robinson had been incredibly valuable, “but I knew that I had to see what was out there in the world of marketing. It was not easy choice,” she says, “but Ron’s drive inspired me to take a leap.”

Jen made the transition to the Big Apple, but out of town was not out of mind. Ron continued to keep in touch and even to visit Jen when he was in New York. “I’ll never forget him coming to see me on one of his trips back east,” says Jen. “He came out to check on me and support my dreams. That made an impact on me for the rest of my journey.”

Looking back, Jen notes that Ron’s “belief in my ability to lead at a young age gave me the confidence to explore my passions early on while figuring a career path,” and Ron’s “marketing skills were an inspiration that led me to pursue a career in creative advertising.” Jen went on to work in entertainment marketing at The Cimarron Group, 20th Century Fox, and Sony Pictures Entertainment. Currently she serves as Senior Vice President of Creative Advertising at Eclipse, an advertising agency grounded in the entertainment industry, where she directs theatrical print and brand creative from conceptualization to completion.

Both entertainment marketing and luxury retail are about creating an emotion, transporting the viewers’ minds to other—often imaginary--places. Even the works of art that Jen paints seek to create “a specific narrative of suspended existence between dream state and reality.” And Jen notes that Ron “has a unique ability to spot product for a particular hip and creative clientele,” adding that “his creativity and vision for authentic uniqueness make him an outlier in the retail business.”

So maybe Jen’s vision of Ron as Willy Wonka, who sang of “a world of pure imagination,” remains relevant after all these years. Lauding Ron’s “huge heart,” Jen says that in the years she worked with Ron, he taught her that “passion and authenticity are key to success.” And that is sweet success, indeed.



SO MAYBE JEN’S VISION OF RON AS WILLY WONKA, WHO SANG OF “A WORLD OF PURE IMAGINATION,” REMAINS RELEVANT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. LAUDING RON’S “HUGE HEART,”





**THIS WAS L.A. I
THOUGHT ALL JOB
INTERVIEWS WERE
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“

ANYWAY, I GOT THE PART EVEN
THOUGH I DIDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH
VERY WELL. RON KNEW TALENT AND
TOOK A CHANCE ON ME.

GLADYS TAMEZ

“My father was a hat collector all his life,” relates Gladys Tamez. Inspired also by the bullfighters in her family—their *trajes de luces* as well as the women who wore *montera* caps as fashion—and emulating her elegant mother, a Lancôme model in the '60s, Gladys was seemingly predestined to make the world more glamorous.

Originally from the city of Reynosa, in Tamaulipas, Mexico, Gladys had just moved to Los Angeles and was shopping with a friend in Apothia when “Ron talked to us about the products and asked if we wanted to audition for a job,” she recalls.

“This was L.A. I thought all job interviews were called auditions,” says Gladys. “Anyway, I got the part even though I didn't speak English very well. Ron knew talent and took a chance on me.”



Starting in Apothia beauty, she then worked as a sales associate in the kids' department, where, according to fellow Ron Robinson alumnus Ashley Gutierrez, "Gladys was the ringleader of the cool kids."

During those five years, Gladys "learned a lot about running my own business from Ron. I learned that attention to detail, a deep knowledge about my products, the importance of presentation and, most importantly, the people I work with, make a business successful," she explains.

She transitioned from Ron Robinson to design a clothing line in 2004, but five years later, while vacationing in Vitoria, Spain, Gladys had a serendipitous encounter with a family of fourth-generation haberdashers who create ceremonial headpieces for Catholic clerics. "I fell in love with hats. Magic, you know? Everything changed."

Returning home to the U.S., she shuttered her clothing company and devoted three years to learning traditional millinery. Only once she had mastered the techniques herself did she found Gladys Tamez Millinery, dedicated to cultivating "a reputation as a heritage brand known for cutting-edge design, handmade quality and timeless elegance with a global clientele of hat aficionados."

At the Los Angeles atelier, Gladys Tamez Millinery hats are elaborately folded and blocked by hand in mediums such as long-staple rabbit felt and panama straw: materials that will retain their shape and sheen. She presents two seasons per year, with themes that create an emotional aesthetic for the wearer.

The hats became a mainstay of the

fashionable set. Her inaugural star was Johnny Depp, who sent her a poem in gratitude for the bolero she presented him on a film set; when he received the 2012 MTV Generation Award, he topped his look with a Gladys Tamez fedora.

Other performers such as Florence Welch and Beyoncé —her backup dancers wore Gladys Tamez Millinery during the 2016 Superbowl performance—soon followed, sporting the hats both onstage and at leisure.

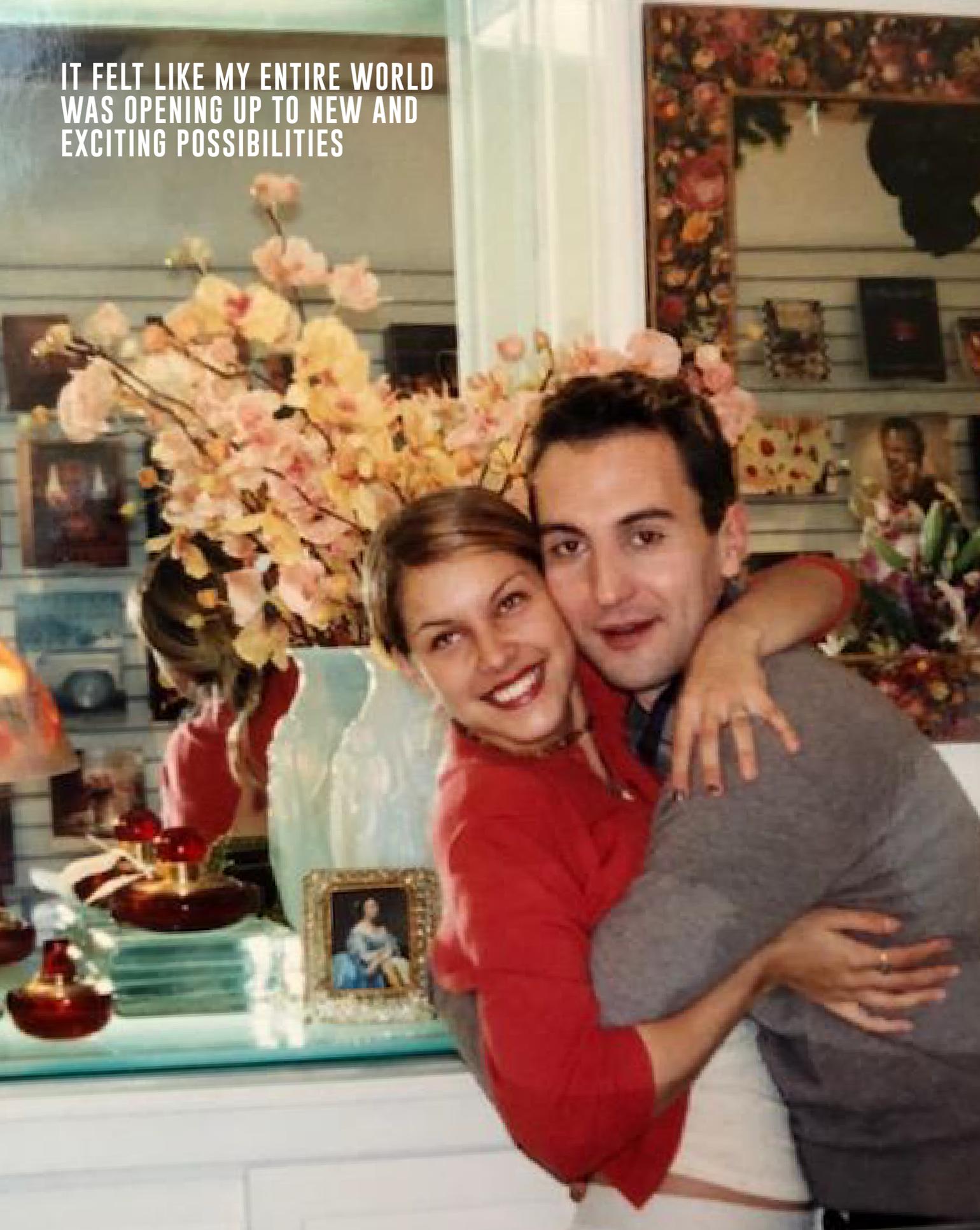
In a notable claim to fame, a Gladys Tamez design was rechristened "Lady Joanne" after Lady Gaga wore the style prominently on the cover of her 2016 album "Joanne." The singer commissioned the '70s-style wide-brimmed hat in pink, with additional changes to the shape and ribbon, to echo the last decade in the life of her aunt, who inspired the music.

Looking back, Gladys remembers that "when I started my brand, Ron was supportive, curious and encouraging, and that meant a lot to me."

She notes that "Ron cares passionately about the products he chooses to sell and how they connect with his clients. He builds trust by having the best quality, fresh designers and a sense of the new."

It's no surprise, then, that Gladys' creations are now among the expertly curated items on display at Ron Robinson. As much art as artisanal, Gladys Tamez Millinery hats are sculpture. They are, as Gladys' father would appreciate, hats for collectors.

IT FELT LIKE MY ENTIRE WORLD
WAS OPENING UP TO NEW AND
EXCITING POSSIBILITIES





“

RON SET THE BAR EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH. HE DEMANDED EXCELLENCE IN EVERYTHING, RIGHT DOWN TO A STACK OF PERFECTLY FOLDED SHIRTS

LAUREN SILVERS

“It’s for Madonna,’ Ron said, looking me straight in the eye. He opened a box to reveal a large photo album bound in black stingray; the roman cross on its cover was burnished to a jeweled sheen. ‘You have all day to wrap this, and there’s one thing you need to know: It has to be perfect.’ With a glint in his eye, he smiled and left me to my own devices. I may have used 40 yards of paper that day, but I got it perfect.”

Lauren Silvers’ first job offer, as a holiday gift wrapper for Ron Robinson, had thrilled her: “It felt like my entire world was opening up to new and exciting possibilities,” she exclaims. “There was only one problem: I was 15.”

Too young for a driver's license, Lauren "decided to be firm: I told my parents that this was the opportunity of a lifetime and that I'd be taking the car with my learner's permit. I showed my father that I knew all the rules of the road, and that I could handle the Toyota Camry just fine. They weren't happy about it, but being the laissez-faire parents they were, they couldn't suddenly attempt to enforce limits," she notes.

"I took the car without asking and drove for the first time, alone, over Laurel Canyon. When I arrived at my new job on a balmy December morning, the store was bustling with music and fashionable people. To my chagrin, Ron led me out of the store and across the alley. My heart fell. We walked into a windowless office, and he sat me down in front of some boxes. 'Here are 25 tape measures for Warner Bros. executives,' Ron said. 'I need them wrapped perfectly.'"

Establishing flawless wrapping technique through Valentine's Day, Lauren was offered a sales position that summer. But her first customer left her "puzzled that some random punk with a cross branded on the back of his head could afford to spend \$100 on t-shirts. At the end of the day, the other employees gushed that they were jealous I got to help Billy Idol. Suddenly everything clicked!"

Looking back, though, what stands out most to Lauren is not the frequent celebrity encounters, but the Saturday team meetings that took place before the store opened. "I always witnessed a few sardonic complaints, plaintive yawns, remarks that the coffee hadn't kicked in yet," recalls Lauren. "However, any negativity dissipated as Ron's energy filled the room. One by one, we all perked up no matter what was ailing or preoccupying us. Ron's excitement was contagious. Then he set us free to do our jobs, aligned around the common purpose of delighting the customer."

As Lauren's first boss, "Ron set the bar exceptionally high. He demanded excellence in everything, right down to a stack of perfectly folded shirts," she says. "I didn't know it at the time, but I was innately primed to respond to these demands. Knowing little about the retail world, I just tried to absorb as much as possible."



**RON SET THE BAR
EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH.**



Lauren's professional and philanthropic accomplishments evidence how far she has taken that early instruction. She holds the position of Senior Lead Consultant in Global Sales Enablement at LinkedIn, as well as serving as a founding board member of Edgar Miller Legacy in Chicago, which celebrates the artist's creative genius and hand-wrought homes.

"My passion is helping organizations and the individuals who populate them grow," says Lauren. "From my business development experience building an agency in New York City, to my time as a professor at The University of Chicago teaching critical thinking to some of the world's brightest minds, to partnering with high-growth companies to achieve their productivity goals, I love empowering others to surpass their potential," she explains.

"Ron taught me everything I know about sales, and for that I'm eternally grateful, as I've made over half my career on it! He's the person who drove home that sales is about helping people achieve what they want and be who they want to be. This other-centered thinking has inspired virtually everything I put my mind to in my life," Lauren states. "It's a value I hold dear and that I learned exclusively from Ron. Everything he taught me has led me to be what I am today."







“

RON ALWAYS WENT WITH HIS GUT,
WITHOUT HAVING TO LOOK AROUND
AND SEE WHAT EVERYONE ELSE IS
DOING.

LORI GOLDSTEIN

“You just go where life takes you,” says Lori Goldstein, whose careers as a stylist, author, designer and QVC personality have taken her worldwide.

“Being an outsider in Ohio growing up, I thought, I will not be normal and I will not give in!” says Lori. Fresh from Cincinnati in 1976, Lori was shopping at Fred Segal when she experienced an epiphany: “Oh my God. I’m going to work here.”

Hired for denim sales, after three months Lori was asked to accompany Ron and Fred on buying trips. “My taste was appreciated, and it was amazing,” she says.

When business took them to New York City, “The second I saw that skyline, I knew I was going to move there. It was everything I craved and didn’t even know I was craving.”

She prepared to leave L.A. “Ron said, ‘You’ll be back,’” Lori recalls tenderly. “Well, I’ve been in New York for 40 years. I think I’m staying for a while.”

Surrounded by the New York fashion industry, Lori began styling; but her life changed forever when Rolling Stone photojournalist Annie Leibovitz asked Lori to style a shoot with performance artist Ann Magnuson, their first of dozens of collaborations for Vanity Fair. “I was just going for it. There’s a fearlessness in me when it comes to fashion,” Lori says.

High-concept sessions such as the American Express Portraits campaign, or iconic VF covers—Demi Moore heavy with child, or Michael Jackson dancing en pointe—required Lori to come prepared with endless options. “I dig; it’s a treasure hunt,” she says. “Annie never allowed anybody to say ‘no,’ so that’s where those great pictures come from.”

In their two decades together, Lori “learned with Annie that the clothes can be secondary; it’s important to not get in the way of the photograph.”

By the early ‘90s, however, Lori was eager to focus on the clothing. Introduced through their mutual agent, photographer Steven Meisel asked Lori to style for Vogue Italia.

“It was everything I’d ever imagined as a kid: pulling fashion from wherever I wanted and just having amazing fun expressing my passion for clothes and beautiful things,” Lori says. Her aesthetic was soon in demand by visionaries such as Herb Ritts, and she dressed zeitgeists like Rihanna and styled advertising layouts for haute houses including Versace, Hermes, and Dolce & Gabbana.

“In my fashion world, I was one of the first people to break up runway looks. Print and sunflowers and stripes and everything together! I was the rebel!”

When Lori celebrated turning 50, it was time to conquer a new challenge: the other side of the lens. “I knew I had to face that fear,” she says. “And then I got this offer from QVC!”

Lori discovered that she was not, in fact, camera shy. “Why did I wait so long?” she laughs.

Lori creates her line, LOGO, for “all sizes, all financial brackets. This woman has always wanted to look fabulous and have permission to be herself,” she says.

As she dedicated her talents to designing, Lori wrote *Style is Instinct*, her “love letter to styling, and my goodbye to styling.” The sumptuous coffee table book was launched at Tiffany & Co. on Fifth Avenue, “and I just knew that I wanted to debut it with Ron in L.A.,” Lori states.

“I reached out, and Ron said, ‘Absolutely!’” Lori remembers. “We had this great book signing and then went out to dinner and we reminisced. It reminded me what a beautiful person he is. I’m proud and happy that he now also has his own store with his own name. I love that.”

Reflecting on their earliest days together, Lori remarks, “Ron always went with his gut, without having to look around and see what everyone else is doing.” Observing him back then, “I didn’t know what was to come,” she says, “but that’s who I am, too.”

LORI DISCOVERED THAT SHE WAS NOT,
IN FACT, CAMERA SHY. "WHY DID I
WAIT SO LONG?" SHE LAUGHS.







“

I HAVE STOOD IN AWE OF THE WORLDS THAT RON CREATES, THE BRANDS HE DISCOVERS AND LAUNCHES...

SARAH HOROWITZ

“To set the scene, it’s the fall of 1994; I’ve just landed in Los Angeles from the East Coast with all of my belongings, including a tool box from Sears containing hundreds of tiny bottles filled with essential and fragrance oils, and I have founded my business, Creative Scentualization, Inc, the day I arrived. My vision: to create custom fragrances for clients using a process of conversation, meditation and experimentation. And where else better than L.A. for such a dream?

“Upon arriving, everyone who heard that I created custom perfume had two words for me: Fred Segal. What they meant was Apothia by Ron Robinson, the place for anything and everything innovative, fabulous, and high-end in beauty. I immediately scheduled an appointment with the owner to meet and discuss my vision for perfumery in L.A.

“I met with Ron, and with all the chutzpa a 24 year old could muster, told him how it would really benefit him if he gave me 300 square feet of his store to create a blending bar. He

asked how much I would charge for these custom fragrances, and I said, thinking I was really reaching high, ‘around \$75?’ To his credit, he kept a straight face while calculating what his square footage cost against how many bottles I could make per client per day, and offered me a part-time job working at Apothia for around \$8.25 an hour. He said I could be his ‘fragrance expert’ and I was thrilled! And then—and this is what sealed my love and respect for Ron in the years to come—he allowed me to convince him to come into the parking lot and let me make a custom scent for him from the trunk of my Volkswagen. To this day I think about that and smile; I had no idea who he was, and really, the fact that he indulged me shows the creative seeker that he is, and why he always finds the new, the unique, the one of a kind. It’s because Ron is curious, he loves the process of discovery, and he’s willing to give someone young and per-

“Ron proposed we work with his 100 most fragrance-enthusiastic customers, and invite them to participate on a top-secret project. Of course, by telling them it was top secret, he hoped they would share with all their friends—these were real life friends, before Facebook! I developed a questionnaire for the clients, we mailed it out, and based on their feedback, with Karen Meena, we created five different scents at my fragrance organ,” Sarah’s wooden case housing more than a hundred fragrance oils.

“I made each sample by hand, and we sent off the packages with another questionnaire pertaining to the fragrances. They emailed back their responses--thus the name of the scent Internet Fragrance, or IF—and based on this feedback I crafted three more scents, and repeat. The votes came back, and the winner became IF. It was truly a collaboration. And I still have the

HE’S WILLING TO GIVE SOMEONE YOUNG AND PERHAPS CRAZY A CHANCE. IT WAS THE BEST EDUCATION I COULD HAVE EVER ASKED FOR IN THE REALM OF NICHE BEAUTY

haps crazy a chance. It was the best education I could have ever asked for in the realm of niche beauty,” says Sarah.

Now the founder of Sarah Horowitz Parfums, which combines Sarah’s own lines, private labels and custom fragrances commanding upwards of \$1000, she recalls that “Ron ordered my very first ready-to-wear collection when it launched in 1998, with me handcrafting it one bottle at a time, in ridiculously labor-intensive packaging, and gave me a platform for exposure and to grow.”

But it was the creation of Ron’s first signature fragrance, IF, that Sarah says is “Truly the most incredible opportunity he gave me. Ron had an idea at the dawning of the internet. An idea that we could create a fragrance literally by the people, for the people.

privilege to blend this scent by hand, albeit now in much larger batches. Today, it is still one of his top selling fragrances, born from the imagination of Ron Robinson.

“I have stood in awe of the worlds that Ron creates, the brands he discovers and launches, and his flagship store in Santa Monica that truly captures the essence of the California lifestyle,” Sarah states.

“Over the last two decades Ron and Stacy have always been there to support me as an artist, a perfumer, a businesswoman, and a friend. I have launched most of my fragrances at Apothia, a venue most can only dream of. To say that I am grateful doesn’t really come close. I am blessed. And I look forward to all that is to come.”



“

WE WERE ARE
ALWAYS ON THE
VIP LIST BECAUSE
WE WORKED FOR
RON ROBINSON

ROBYN
HALPERN

“We were are always on the VIP list because we worked for Ron Robinson,” remembers Robyn Halpern.

One day, “Ron told us that we were going to shut our doors early. So at 6 o’clock we closed, and in walked Phil Collins! In 1982 he was big stuff, so we were all freaking out. It was him, his wife, his kids, and some of the band members. We loaded them up with lots of clothes, it was a great big sale, and then he invited all of us to watch Genesis make an MTV music video!”

At the private event, “There were only about 20 of us in the audience at this live concert being videotaped for MTV. I thought it was so cool, but even more exciting was the fact that they had been there in the store, and we helped them. That was so fun.”

Ron had hired Robyn “instantly” the previous

summer for the Britannia department. “We were one of the few stores to offer instant alterations,” she observes. “Back then, all the jeans were bootcut, and we were able to make them super narrow—you almost couldn’t get them over your foot.”

Members of bands like Broken English and Venice “were always inviting us to shows. We all became groupies because when a small band would come in to get their tight pants or their rockabilly clothes, we would get invited to the Troubadour or Madame Wong’s or Club Lingerie,” says Robyn.

When Charles Bronson walked in with a denim wish, Robyn took his measurements for jeans, then couldn’t wait to get on the phone: “My father used to watch his movies, and it was so awesome to call him and say, ‘Guess who came in today? And I hemmed his pants!’”

But when heartthrob Jeff Conaway, a star of the series *Taxi* came in, the thrill was all Robyn's: "Taxi was the hottest show on television, and he was so handsome."

A book of client preferences noted that Conaway liked the underwear the store sold, so when new stock came in, Robyn would happily sing out, "I've got to call Jeff!" she recalls delightedly.

"Now remember, this is before text messages, so we had to actually get the celebrities on the phone. I had Jeff's private number to a line in his car, and he would run in and leave his little Mercedes going while he made his purchase. We were so excited whenever he was in the store."

Of course, it wasn't all play. Employees vied strenuously for top numbers. "Scott Weiser was a phenomenal salesperson, and we had a lot of fun competing against each other. We both grew up in the garment industry, and we're still friends today," notes Robyn, whose brother had his own clothing line, and whose mother was a showroom girl.

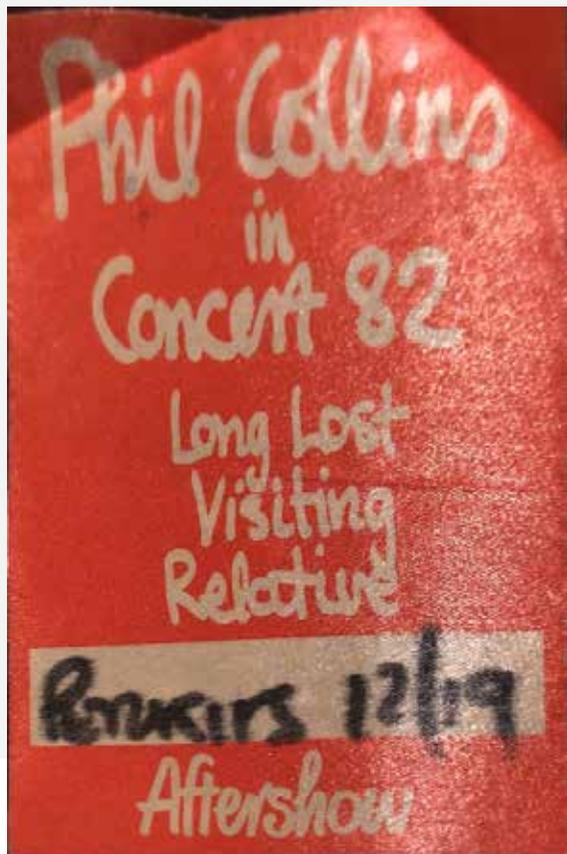
After four years at Melrose, Robyn went to work as a buyer for Ron's friend Barbara Fields, but realizing that sales was her calling, she forged a long career with Body Glove and B.U.M. Equipment.

Robyn left to assist her husband in running his food company, Eggology, and to be home with their young children, but after a decade, she "was itching to get back to the garment industry." Now the National Sales Manager for clothing company Subtle Luxury and its division Pool to Party, she runs the United

States sales with her team, selling to majors and catalogs.

Robyn's mastery harkens back to her teens, when "In my mind I felt like I ran the place because Ron gave us the opportunity to do everything," she explains. "He always made you feel great about what you were doing, even if you were doing something wrong," she adds with a laugh.

"RON TO THIS DAY MAKES ME SMILE," SAYS ROBYN. "HE HAS SUCH A WONDERFUL DISPOSITION." REGARDLESS OF TIME OR DISTANCE, "WE'VE ALWAYS HAD THAT SPECIAL BOND."





THE BIKINI SHOP





“

HELPING CUTE CELEBRITIES
PURCHASE THEIR UNDERWEAR
WASN'T TOO SHABBY

PAT ILLING

“Jack Nicholson walked in with two bodyguards at 7 o'clock, just as we were closing, and said, 'Show me some shirts,'" Pat Illing remembers. "Bowling shirts were popular in the early '90s and I asked if he'd like to try them on. He said, 'Sure,' and just took off his shirt in the middle of the store. His hair looked like in 'The Shining,' sticking straight up."

Pat watched Nicholson "piling, piling, piling up the clothes, and then after he bought them, he sat and talked like we were old friends," she says. "Ron commented later, 'That's so cool that you brought him in,' and I told him, 'I've never met him before in my life!'"

A decade before, Pat's mother "would drive me and my girlfriends from the Valley over Laurel Canyon to Fred Segal Melrose, and

wait in the car while we shopped. I met Ron, and he was always charming,” Pat recalls. “Then a few years later I worked at The Bikini Shop; Ron would order Hawaiian coconut oil from us, and I was so excited when I could deliver the shipments myself and have an ice cream cone from his shop.”

Pat eventually worked for Ron and Stacy, a year she considers her education in “customer service, beautiful displays, loud music and fresh flowers: the ultimate shopping experience,” she says. “It’s a talent to deal with high-end merchandise and that level of client. Schmoozing with customers while they spend money is not easy.”

That said, “Helping cute celebrities purchase their underwear wasn’t too shabby,” she laughs.

“THERE’S NO BETTER FRIEND THAN RON,” PAT PROCLAIMS. “HIS ZEST FOR LIFE, ENDLESS ENERGY AND LOVE OF WHAT HE DOES IS CONTAGIOUS. RON IS A RETAIL ROCK STAR IN MY EYES.”

“Calvin Klein was the brand of the day. We would keep the customer’s size on computer to save them time.” In 1994, “clients thought that was magic.”

A problem came between Luther Vandross and his Calvins, however. “He announced, ‘I just lost a ton of weight,’” Pat relates. “I didn’t even know it was him until he spoke. He was wearing a white suit, tons of gold bracelets and big fat rings. ‘I’m going on tour and I don’t even know what size I am,’” Vandross bemoaned before solving the problem celebrity style: “Just give me one in every size.”

Pat admits that back then, she was “very starstruck,” and she sounds a bit dreamy even now as she describes losing herself in the depths of Kevin Bacon’s “beautiful blue eyes. He’d look right at me, and while I’d be saying, ‘Name,

please,’ I’d just stare into those eyes.”

Saturday might see author Danielle Steel arriving with a motor coach of people for a shopping spree, or fitness gurus Bob Harper and Gunnar Peterson—Pat’s trainer years before Jennifer Lopez and Angelina Jolie—drinking smoothies on the patio. Melrose “was where everybody would meet up. It was like a club,” says Pat.

“Bruce Springsteen was shopping one day, and while we were talking, a friend of his came in and brought me into the conversation.” As the man left, he called out, “Bye, Patti!”

Pat suddenly realized why she’d been included: “He thought I was Bruce’s wife, because our names are similar and we both have red hair.”

In 1995, “I had to leave Ron, to open my own store,” says Pat. The Beverly Hills Bikini Shop, which Pat has owned and run for 23 years, recently celebrated its 50th year in business.

“Ron and I became even better friends after I left, because we could talk shop,” she explains. “Ron’s always the first to suggest ideas and help to figure things out.” In addition, Ron’s Texan heritage bonds them. “My mom was Miss El Paso,” notes Pat, who displays her mother’s beauty pageant bathing suit at The Beverly Hills Bikini Shop.

“There’s no better friend than Ron,” Pat proclaims. “His zest for life, endless energy and love of what he does is contagious. Ron is a retail rock star in my eyes.”



OREN SEGAL

As early as his high school days, Oren Segal was a frequent customer at the men's department of Ron Robinson at Fred Segal. So it was only logical at age 15 for the Los Angeles native to see if he might be able to earn money at the emporium as well as spend it.

Entering the Melrose store one



**I THINK RON SHOULD WRITE A
BOOK ABOUT HOW TO
MERCHANDISE YOUR LIFE.**



day, “I asked if I could work at the store,” Oren remembers. “I was hired! I began as a gift wrapper in the home shop.”

Oren wisely observed the standards and talents of his employer, and recalls that “Ron set a tone,” teaching the young man “how to work with the public. How to be your best in every possible way.”

He applied those lessons when he interned as a college student at the William Morris Agency and then for writer/producer/director Nancy Meyers. Oren also worked as a person-

nelope Ann Miller, Lesley Ann Warren, Taryn Manning, Paz Vega, Milo Addica, and Peter Bogdanovich.

A member of the The Producers Guild of America and the Television Academy, Oren has also produced three films: *Burning Palms*, which was written and directed by Christopher Landon and starred Zoe Saldana; *The Curse of Downers Grove*, the adaptation of the Michael Homburg novel, which starred Bella Heathcote and was directed by Derick Martini; and *#Horror*, directed by Tara Subkoff and starring Chloe Sevigny.

... HE NOTES THAT RON'S EARLY GUIDANCE AT THE MELROSE BOUTIQUE SET "A STANDARD THAT I STILL CARRY WITH ME TODAY."

al assistant to film producer David Friendly, and for television producer and director Gregory Hoblit. After graduating from Loyola Marymount University, he began his formal career at Media Talent Group, where he was soon promoted to manager. Over the course of seven years, he represented top entertainment writers, directors and actors, including Billy Bob Thornton and Angelina Jolie.

In 2011, Oren struck out on his own and established Management Production Entertainment. He now works with numerous actors, writers, and directors, including Paula Patton, Mena Suvari, Jaime King, Isabel Lucas, Pe-

Looking back, Oren considers Ron's influence to have had lasting duration. In fact, he notes that Ron's early guidance at the Melrose boutique set “a standard that I still carry with me today.”

Oren so respects Ron's business acumen that he suggests: “I think Ron should write a book about how to merchandise your life.” He considers Ron to be both “an incredible mentor and friend.” A valuable gift, indeed.



“

WE WORKED HARD,
BUT WE ALWAYS
TALK ABOUT HOW
CRAZY IT WAS, AND
HOW MUCH FUN
WE HAD

SCOTT
WEISER

“Every rock star, movie star was at the store, hanging out, eating, shopping, becoming friendly with the people who worked there,” relates Scott Weiser. “There were also a lot of drugs. This was the ‘80s, when people thought cocaine wasn’t addictive, and that speed was breakfast.”

One busy Saturday morning, “I put a customer in a dressing room. He takes off his pants and throws them over the dressing room door, and fifty Quaaludes went flying across the floor. It’s like a video in my mind: the pills going everywhere and the sales peoples’ eyes wide,

scrambling to avoid a scene in front of the other clients. Then I calmly handed them back to him and said, ‘Here. These fell out of your pocket.’” Age 15, and living at his father’s new swinging bachelor pad in Beverly Hills, Scott had a front row seat to the glamorous side of the wholesale garment trade: “My father and eight of his friends had all built giant clothing companies,” notes Scott, now the Senior Account Executive at Dora L. International. “They would travel the world, party with the people they did business with. You could make a lot of money and it seemed like fun.”

Instructed by his father to get an after-school job, Scott hopped on his moped and found himself at Melrose, asking a salesgirl for the manager. “She points to the top of the stairs and says, ‘That’s the owner right there.’ So I looked up at Ron, and said, ‘I really love the business, and I’m looking for a place I can learn and grow.’ And Ron said, ‘Can you start Monday?’”

Scott quickly became a top seller. “Once the client was in the dressing room and I knew their size, there was no stopping me,” he states. “I loved that job so much I would ditch school to go to work.”

After all, how could the classroom compete with spotting Jimmy Page from Led Zeppelin? “He

Scott.

“We all suspected that there was some romance involved. But the weird thing is that Lionel would come into the store with his wife, and the three of them would talk. Maybe Brenda just wasn’t aware, but it sure seemed strange at the time.”

The unusual happened most days. Kenny Rogers’ manager would “pick out clothing and say, ‘Great. I’ll take three,’” recounts Scott. Rogers “had three homes and wanted the same wardrobe in every house. Sometimes we’d call the manufacturer to get one more medium blue. I thought it was so interesting to be wealthy enough to say, ‘Oh, I want three of everything.’”

After high school, Scott left to work at his father’s corporation, but years later was lured back when Ron formed International News, es-

“EVERY ROCK STAR, MOVIE STAR WAS AT THE STORE, HANGING OUT, EATING, SHOPPING, BECOMING FRIENDLY WITH THE PEOPLE WHO WORKED THERE...”

was one of my heroes,” recalls Scott, adding that celebrities were always part of the scene, whether it was stars of Hollywood’s golden age, like Peter Lawford, or the inspiration for Warren Beatty’s Iothario in Shampoo, Gene Shacove, providing a brush with fame.

Scott remembers that “Lionel Richie came into the store pretty much daily. He had been a Commodore, and then his first solo album sold millions of records. He was all over the radio and he was hot.”

Richie “became very friendly with a girl who worked for Ron. Lionel developed a liking for her, and I think they had a brief affair. Then Lionel hired her to be his wardrobe person on tour and she ended up traveling with him,” recalls

establishing their New York showroom and then Los Angeles showroom as the corporate lead running their West Coast division.

That tenure only confirmed Scott’s observation that “Ron is one of the best merchants who ever existed. He has such a passion for product.”

Noting the interweaving of friends, family and associates in the garment business, “there’s always someone who connects back to Ron,” says Scott. At Melrose, “We worked hard, but we always talk about how crazy it was, and how much fun we had.”



“

MY 13 YEARS
THERE JUST
FLEW BY

RON GOLDSTEIN



“Carrie Fisher came in on Sundays, when she knew I was there, to buy pens,” recalls Ron Goldstein. “All of her writing was done by hand. She would buy really expensive pens, and once they ran out of ink she would throw them away. I told her we sold refills, and she would say, ‘I don’t want to bother.’”



Knowing that Ron was a parent, “She always talked with me, saying things like, ‘My daughter really has a problem: She has me for a mother and she has a gay father. Do you have any suggestions?’ I said “No; I raised two

daughters but I have no suggestions at all in terms of that. My only suggestion is: don't throw away your pens."

A Pratt Institute graduate, Ron worked for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and then iconic architect I.M. Pei, before forming his own successful commercial interiors firm.

"For years I was living the New York life that you were supposed to want: an apartment in the city, a house in the Hamptons. But my life became all work," so Ron and his wife sold everything and spent two years traveling Europe. "Then when our two kids weren't speaking English anymore, we moved to Los Angeles," where Ron became vice president of operations for Judy's, and later established American Rag's home furnishings store. He was hired to manage the Ron Robinson gift store in 1996, then became general manager shortly thereafter.

"They needed someone with grey hair," Ron states. "I was the mature person in the group."

So when Robert Downey Jr. walked in one weekend and inquired about a discount, Ron simply explained that it was not store policy. Downey requested that he call the owner, and, "I think joking, Ron [Robinson] said that if he spent \$15,000, he could get 10 percent off."

Downey proceeded to spend \$15,000 on rings and a suite of metal furniture, then said, "I need it delivered today." Told that no truck was available, Downey was adamant that the delivery be that afternoon.

Ron proposed a solution:

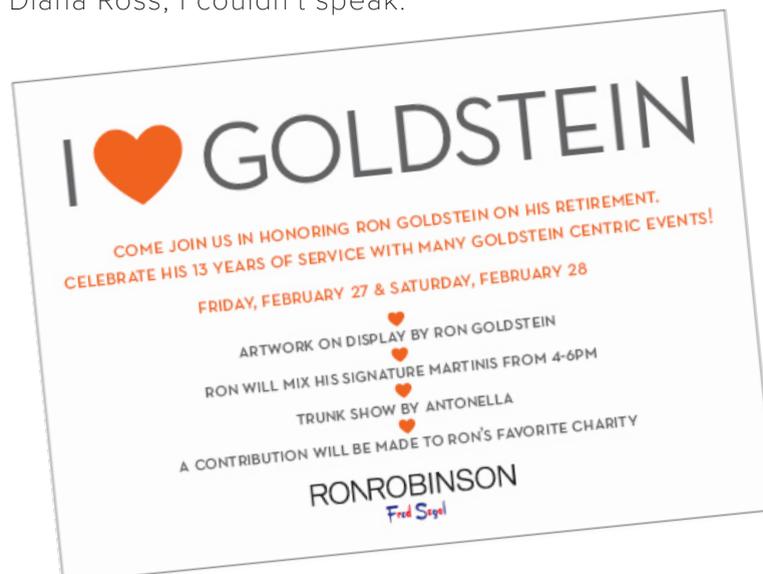
"I said, 'I have a Jeep Cherokee. I think we can fit all the furniture in if you help me load it and the destination's not too far away.' So he and I loaded up the Jeep, I drove it down the street, and we unloaded it, and he was very happy. That's how I spent my Sunday afternoon with Robert Downey Jr."

Ron spent all night with the crew from HBO's En-

tourage, which featured the Melrose store in the first episode's opening sequence. He worked with the show's location designer to arrange the store as filming progressed into the wee hours, then moved to exterior shots of Vince and the gang jumping out of a yellow Hummer in the day. "There must have been 100 people on this set, and dozens of beautifully dressed extras, not to mention a tent across the street with the biggest tables of food I'd ever seen," says Ron, who hosted a viewing party only to clock the scene at just over two minutes. "My friends kept saying, 'That was all night?' But it was a fun experience."

Ron's retirement from the store in 2009 was honored with a party including an exhibition of his pen and ink drawings and wire sculptures. He continues to keep his hand in design through teaching a class or two a week, as he has throughout his career. Currently a Senior Instructor at UCLA in the Architectural Interior Design department's graduate program, Ron has taught for 43 years, and was twice named Teacher of the Year.

Thinking back to his time at Melrose, Ron says, "My 13 years there just flew by." And whether Ron was helping Katie Holmes to evade rabid paparazzi—"we had to sneak her and Suri out the back door"—or (unknowingly) waiting on P. Diddy, "working with celebrities was just part of the job." But was Ron ever even a little star struck? Just once. "When Diana Ross came in, wearing a flowing cape dress and looking like Diana Ross, I couldn't speak."



ALL IN THE FAMILY

Ron Robinson relies on our exceptional staff for their passion and dedication and how they connect with our customers. Here are some of their stories.

DULCE PERLOFF

“February 2, 1998. My first day at Ron Robinson, and I was late! Normally I’m always on time, but there was street cleaning on Kilkea Drive, and I had to park far from the store on Melrose. I was so embarrassed,” recalls Dulce Perloff, who was beginning as an assistant manager in the men’s department.

“February 3, 1998. I was late to my second day at work! I thought I was going to get fired. No excuses, even though I hadn’t realized that there is street cleaning on both Monday and Tuesday. I really was not familiar with the area. Karen Meena kindly gave me one more chance and I was always early after that.”



“

THIS IS WHY
RON IS STILL
HERE. HE
DIDN'T GIVE
UP ON US.”



Dulce's responsibilities at the time included selling, training, and merchandising. "There was so much to learn," she says. "I'd never worked in a place where I had to know the vendor, the designer, the story behind the brand, the fabric, where it's made, washing instructions, the fit and who will look great in it. I thought to myself, 'What did I get myself into?'"

She quickly gleaned that "Ron does not like fingerprints on the mirrors, a messy fold, or for tags on shirts to show," Dulce explains. "I even saw him pick up a Windex bottle and clean the counter. I took the bottle from his hand and told him that I'd do it. I thought, 'This is the man who owns this store and he doesn't mind cleaning.' I knew right then that I would learn a lot from him."

Dulce was a quick study, and because of her computer skills was promoted to Cashier Manager. "After many moons with the company," she is now Senior Manager and is in charge of StylObjects, Ron Robinson's home accoutrements.

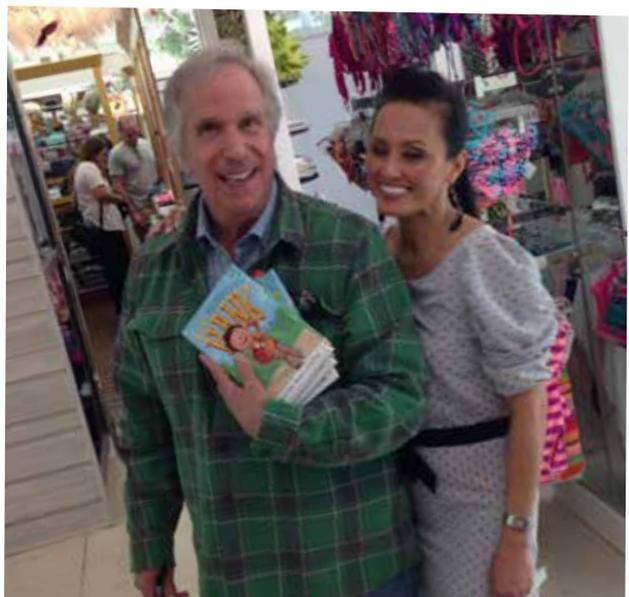
Looking back, she feels that Ron's most important lesson was imparted during a meeting

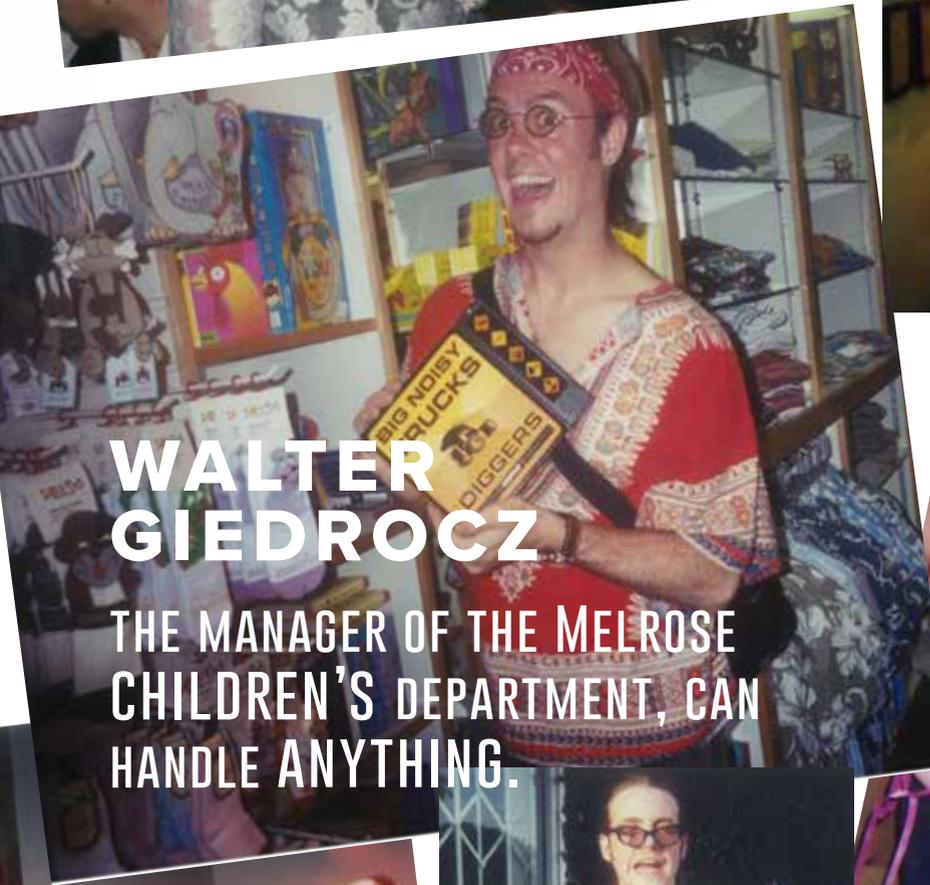
at which he asked employees, "Who is your boss?' We all answered, 'You!'" Dulce remembers. "Ron said, 'No. Your boss is the customer. Who do you think pays your salary?' We've learned to give every client the experience of a lifetime."

Dulce "has helped some clients since they were 13 years old, and now they have their own kids and still shop at the store. But I also hear compliment after compliment from people who are impressed that we remember them even if they've just purchased a gift or two in the past. Ron and Karen have taught us that each person who comes through our door receives everything that Ron Robinson has to offer," she states.

"I feel happy and blessed to have found a company where I am inspired to do better every day," says Dulce.

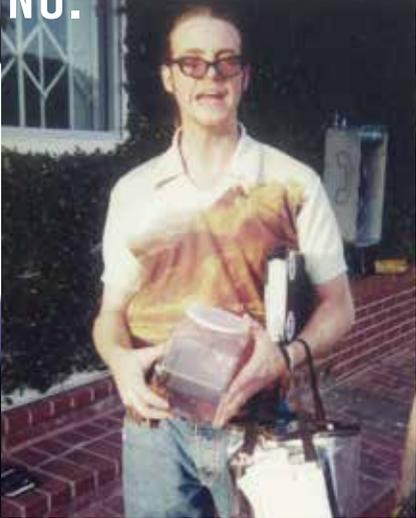
When the economy was down, "We were struggling but Ron didn't give up. I saw companies who let their key people go. But not Ron. He's smart. He knew that clients feel comfortable when they see a familiar face; that's why they continually support us. Ron will not sacrifice giving his client the best that he has to offer, and that includes his staff. This is why Ron is still here. He didn't give up on us."





WALTER GIEDROCZ

THE MANAGER OF THE MELROSE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT, CAN HANDLE ANYTHING.



A kid stuck in a display: “All I saw was feet sticking out, kicking like he was swimming. I walked around holding him up and asking, ‘Whose is this?’”

Negotiating tantrums: “I talk to the child as another human, asking ‘Shall we read a book?’ and they calm down.”

Unattended shoppers: “When the tiny ones start running toward the doors to the parking lot, I go after them!”

A wild bunch: “I get the kids dressed up for a parade in hooded character towels—right now we’ve got a giraffe, a mermaid, a goldfish, and a pirate dog—and I wear one too. Or we sit in canvas teepees and I tell stories. Then I’ll shake the tent and yell, ‘Oh no! Let’s get out of here!’ and all the kids will scream and run out. It just adds a little more fun,” says Walter. “And Karen will laugh, laugh, laugh.”

Walter and Karen Meena had known each other for years when a position opened up at Ron Robinson and she informed him, “We need you here, now.”

As Walter was entering the building for his interview, though, he fell on the steps, scraping his hands. “The patio is always packed with people,” he notes. “But I paid them no mind. I picked myself up, brushed off my clothes, and said to myself, ‘Who cares? I’m getting that job!’”

Hired for men’s sales, Walter quickly showed the right stuff to manage the children’s section. “I guess they liked my energy: every day, nonstop, always on the go!” he says.

In addition, Walter designs a limited line of reconstructed vintage clothing that is sold in Ron Robinson. “I’ll add the arms of one shirt and the collar of another to create something new; kind of switch and swatch,” he explains. “I’m thankful from the bottom of my

heart that Ron and Stacy believed in me.” Having worked 21 years for Ron, Walter describes him as “knowledgeable, caring, humble, and a hard worker. He knows what he wants.”

At Ron Robinson, “We provide a unique level of service,” says Walter. “At other stores, they don’t even talk to me. But when we speak with clients they open up. It’s relaxed; it’s like their home.”

One relaxing evening was a dual birthday celebration for Walter and Ron Goldstein a few years back. “The Robinsons took us out for a really nice dinner,” says Walter.

“But none of us knew that after 10 p.m., the restaurant turned into a nightclub,” Walter explains. “As we’re sitting there, suddenly the lights dimmed, speakers blasted loud music, and pornographic cartoons were projected onto movie screens lowered from the ceiling. Men started dancing on the bar,” he remembers.

“I just thought it was so unexpected and funny to watch everyone’s reaction,” laughs Walter. “It was one of the greatest birthdays I ever had.”

Of course the children’s department can be wild, too. Walter likens his workplace to “a stage; you’re performing. Maybe I’ll walk around with a toy dinosaur swaddled in a baby blanket,” creating a make-believe world where young customers “know that something exciting is going to happen,” says Walter. “And that’s the way I live my life: Being outgoing and memorable! I love it! It’s just natural to me.”



“

THREE HEADS
ARE BETTER
THAN ONE!

KAREN
MEENA

“Three heads are better than one! This is our strength, and our secret weapon!” says Karen Meena, who shares her superpowers with Ron and Stacy as Vice President of Buying and Merchandising in the Ron Robinson universe.

Since joining the team in 1995, Karen has served as a manager, buyer, and fashion director in several departments. Currently Karen buys for men’s, women’s, and accessories, and assists Ron with beauty and home buying. She also works with Ron to organize in-store events.

“I have travelled the world to do my favorite thing: shop!” says Karen, “and I have met and collaborated with amazing people!”

As a buyer, Karen relies “on Ron’s strong relationships with wholesalers, designers, artists, and creatives. So many people come to us for exclusive launches and partnerships.”

Name check? LL Cool J and Jay Z graced Phat Farm launch parties. Ron Robinson buyers flew to London to purchase Ted Baker products directly, ensuring the store would be among the first to offer the brand. And special collaborations continue with RVCA, Billabong, Cotton Cit-

izen and Sol Angeles, to name just a few of the brands that were launched at Ron Robinson. Those personal connections make the difference. “We met with Chad DiNenna, co-founder of Nixon, when he first started, and it’s one of the longest-selling brands we stock,” Karen notes.

“Even in this online shopping age, more designers than ever are asking to collaborate with Ron Robinson as their brick and mortar partner,” says Karen. “Last year we launched Tribe Kelley men’s and women’s collections with co-founders Brian and Brittney Kelley. We were the only retail partner that stocked the collection.”

Store events often feature the famous and glamorous: Dita Von Teese greeting fans who lined up around the block to buy her fragrance, a book signing and Q and A with John Malkovich, or a holiday pop-up shop for Nicole Ritchie’s House of Harlow.

And the crowd can be as famous as the guest of honor. When Laird Hamilton launched his apparel line, Orlando Bloom, Kenny Chesney, Baron Davis, and Sacha Baron Cohen showed up. “Then Oprah walked in to go shopping and lend her support,” remembers Karen.

“Ron always has believed in keeping up with current events, in order to keep on top of trends in culture, which influence fashion, and to communicate intelligently with our jet-setting, well-educated clientele. So many celebrities, designers, producers, agents, artists, musicians and tastemakers have shopped at the stores,” says Karen, but “Ron has taught us to treat every client like a VIP.”

Those very important people return again and again because “Ron pushes the edge of retail and fashion,” credits Karen. “He is a true visionary who continually inspires his team to discover new brands, test marketing options, and create exciting experiences for our clients.”

Even after 40 years, “Ron has maintained a youthful passion for business,” Karen observes. “Ron has always shared stories of how when he started in his teens working for Fred, he would go home every night to dissect the day and find ways he could improve his sales skills and work ethic. Then he built his own stores. I like to share with new staff this wonderful concept: we are building on the work of those who came before us.”

A culmination of that work was the opening of the Ron Robinson Santa Monica flagship store, “a dream come true for us all,” exclaims Karen. It is “Ron’s singular vision honed from his life’s passion.”

This extraordinary “connection to past, present and future gives us all a feeling that we are carrying on work that is important, exciting, interactive and adventurous,” says Karen. “We respect our strong heritage,” she notes, “but are always headed onwards into the future!”





“

MY FIRST IMPRESSION
OF RON WAS
IMPRESSIONABLE

JONATHAN MASH

“Retail is in my blood!” states Jonathan Mash, whose mother created and co-owned multiple locations of Geppetto’s: A Child’s Fantasy in the San Diego area. Of a childhood surrounded by a world of toys and games, Jonathan says with a laugh, “I am Tom Hanks in Big. I grew up in a store; it’s what I know!”



It's no surprise, then, that as an adult, Jonathan's education and career path focused on the retail experience. He attended the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, allowing him to stay in Los Angeles, and then joined the sales and visual display team of Susie Tompkins, co-creator of clothing brands North Face and Esprit. "I've worked for some greats," he comments. When the Esprit brand changed ownership, a friend of Stacy told Jonathan about an opening at Ron Robinson. An interview was arranged.

"My first impression of Ron was impressionable," says Jonathan. "He was engaging me, involving me in what was going on. I liked that, and wanted to be a part of it. I knew that this was where I wanted to work."

Jonathan was hired as a cashier in the men's area of the Melrose location in 1995. He also sells the store's "world-travelled finds" and assists with visuals, including composing window displays. In addition, he is a valued source of encouragement to the retail team: "I'm usually the one asking someone how their family is, or giving someone a hug," he says.

Metaphorically, Jonathan notes that Ron also "embraces his customers as an extension of himself: Creating a memory, telling a great story. He understands concept and lifestyle, especially for Los Angeles."

This translates into "magnificent customer service, a staff who really know the products,

and carefully curated items," says Jonathan.

Observing that "Ron has a sharp sense of what's good," Jonathan delineates that "He is both passionate about what he does, and passionate at what he does. The difference with him is that he pulls you into the conversation, he involves you in thought and spirit."

Jonathan explains that "Ron is eloquent at expressing the senses of touch, sight, smell. And just by being around him, he makes you aware. He has a keen eye and an educated 'nose,'" the perfumery term for exceptional ability.

"We've been global since the launch of Apothia in 2001. We're more than just a store," Jonathan intones. And while lauding each team member's contributions, Jonathan places Ron's astute perception of smell at the core of Apothia's success:

"His olfactory sense knows what works."

THAT TALENT IS OMNIPRESENT. "HE NEVER MISSES A SCENT. ONE DAY I HAD PUT ARGON OIL IN MY HAIR, JUST TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT," JONATHAN REMEMBERS. "RON PASSED BY ME, NOTICED, AND SAID, 'YOU SMELL SO GOOD!' HIS NOSE IS ALWAYS ON."



“

I CAN TELL YOU ON A PERSONAL LEVEL WHY THEY STAND OUT AS PEOPLE

SHARON ORR

“Ron would disguise his voice to throw me off” says Sharon Orr, who was Stacy’s executive assistant in the early days of Ron and Stacy’s courtship.

“When he called he might pretend to be a salesman needing to talk to Stacy right away, and asking to make an immediate appointment. At times he probably used an accent,” Sharon recalls. “Then he’d just start laughing and I’d say, ‘Okay, Ron, let me go get her.’ That was his way of having fun.” After Stacy left The Broadway, she and Sharon “kept in contact, and in

1995 she called me and said they needed an office manager. It was a very easy transition,” says Sharon. She now handles human resources, ordering the company’s supplies, and booking all company travel as well as special projects for Ron and Stacy. “It’s whatever gets thrown on my desk.”

Having known Ron and Stacy for so many years, Sharon “can tell you on a personal level why they stand out as people,” she says:

“Ten years ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer,” Sharon relates. “I went to Ron and Stacy and they both said, ‘Just take care of yourself and focus on getting well. We will do whatever we need to do to make things easier on you,’” she remembers.

health now; everything’s all right. Ron and Stacy care. They look out for their employees.”

Employees in turn take an interest in numerous aspects of the company. When Ron created IF, querying a test group of 100 people around the country to pioneer the world’s first internet fragrance, Sharon was invited to take an active part in the discussion.

“As the perfumer, Sarah Horowitz, was working with Ronney on this fragrance, the research was happening here in the office,” Sharon says.

“I sat in on all the meetings when they were sniffing the different notes, and gave my input

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE IF TEAM. I FELT VERY SPECIAL TO BE INVOLVED.”

“It was two years from when I was diagnosed, through chemo and surgery and radiation,” Sharon notes. “The company set it up so that I could work from a home office. When you’re going through that kind of thing, being able to contribute helps. You’ve got something else to focus on, to keep your mind occupied,” she explains.

“Ron and Stacy bent over backwards, assuring me, ‘We are here to support you.’ And they were. Without a doubt that made my recovery go more smoothly,” states Sharon. “I’m in good

when they were creating the questionnaires and putting the samples together: ‘What do we like? What don’t we like?’ I hadn’t expected Ron to include me, but he did.”

Sharon’s role in the iconic Apothia fragrance is a continued source of pride. “I actually have a bottle of the IF Air Mist on my desk right now,” she exclaims. “I spritz the room every so often. And I’ve got a plaque in my office that I look at every day that reads, ‘Thank you for being part of the IF team.’ I felt very special to be involved.”



JEN ROMIS

It was karaoke time at the office party, and all the Ron Robinson employees were taking their turns on stage. “Ron disappeared for a few seconds,” remembers Jennifer Romis, “and on comes the song ‘I’m Too Sexy.’” The room went crazy when “Ron walked out, unbuttoned a few buttons of his shirt, and performed the full song,” she recalls with delight.

But it wasn’t just the fun of the moment that makes this a great memory: “It was really good for camaraderie,” Jennifer explains.

“He’s one of us. He’ll get down on his knees and clean a spill on the floor. He wouldn’t expect anyone else to do something that he wouldn’t,” she explains. “He is a legend.”

Destiny led Jennifer to the legendary Ron Robinson store in 1997, just after high school. On her way to the beach, dressed in jeans shorts, she was asked

**RON ROBINSON
IS LARGER
THAN LIFE!**



by a friend to come along to her interview and encouraged to apply as well. “My housing situation had fallen apart at San Francisco State,” Jennifer remembers, “and I was trying to figure out if I should stay in town. I interviewed with Stacy and got the job for sales in the kids’ department. I decided to change my path, stay in Los Angeles, and go to the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising.”

Working while pursuing her studies and “tailoring all my school projects to the store,” Jennifer was impressed with the mix of merchandise at Ron Robinson. “Compared with all the other shops in Fred Segal, Ron Robinson was in another league: The cleanest store, the coolest merchandising,” she states.

“Before I worked in the store—and we still laugh about it—I had never seen a baby dressed in black,” says Jennifer, who became a buyer for kids’ at Ron Robinson in 1999. “Sometimes we’ll have a product that nobody else understands at first, and then a year later it’s on every shelf in every other store.”

Jennifer notes that “the natural instinct as a buyer is to ask, ‘what have you been selling?’ But after being at Ron Robinson for more than 20 years, it just comes

naturally to me: When I go into the marketplace I’m looking for something I haven’t seen before. Maybe something really hot in adult fashion that I haven’t seen in kids’,” she explains. “We usually buy what no one else has bought. If everyone else is buying white, we buy black.”

Such innovation requires that “when Ron notices that something isn’t out there, he goes out and he has it made,” says Jennifer. “And if a company sends us their final product with strings hanging and rhinestones missing, that won’t fly in our store. Our customer is looking for top quality.”

Even when it comes to basics like folding or display, Ron always upends the ordinary: “I’ve seen him put a hanger through the arms of the shirt instead of the shoulder, or tie things to the pole. He wants people to see the merchandise in a different way,” Jennifer explains.

“Ron really taught me to be one step ahead; he knows the next trend before everyone else. I am six feet tall, but even so, to me Ron Robinson is larger-than-life; he listens to the cues and clues of what’s going on,” says Jennifer, “and then he turns it into something bigger.”



“

BUT HE NEEDS TO
TEACH, HE WANTS
YOU TO LEARN.
THAT'S A GIFT HE
GIVES

MARCIA
SACHARNY

“Stories that always make me laugh involve Ron reacting to my badly pronounced English and trying to teach me how to say words right,” says Marcia Sacharny. “Once on a phone call I had a question about a fragrance we sell. I said, ‘Ron, you know the fragrance Perfect Veal?’ He was silent for a long while. ‘Marcia, do you mean Perfect Veil?’ He and I had a good laugh about that.”

Born in Brazil, Marcia moved to the United States in her early 20s, quickly adding English fluency to her native Portuguese and conversational Spanish. Interviewing with Stacy for a bookkeeping position in 1995, she was hired and reported directly to Ron.

Marcia, now the Ron Robinson Operations and Accounting Manager, makes the point that “Ron could have chosen someone other than an immigrant with limited English to assist him. But he needs to teach, he wants you to learn. That’s a gift he gives,” she explains.

“Even here is Ron’s hand: He taught me good writing,” says Marcia. “I was responsible for letters to customers and vendors, and in the beginning, Ron just dictated. Then little by little he

feel quite proud when I see my work supporting these elegant products and our beautiful stores,” says Marcia.

“And what I can certainly tell you about is Ron’s legacy of respect, fairness and loyalty. Both he and Stacy are relentless in their fairness to all who work for them, no matter what your gender, color, religion or politics. I barely spoke business English when I started at Ron Robinson. Yet Ron brought me into meetings with bankers, web developers, and engineers; he encouraged me to participate, to have a say.”

Seven years ago, after Marcia’s two sons “had become engineers and flown the nest, my mother needed some assistance. I proposed to Ron and Stacy that I would come down to Brazil and

“RON HAS A DEEPLY JUST AND ETHICAL CHARACTER THAT PERVADES ALL HIS DEALINGS WITH ME AND OTHERS IN HIS COMPANY,”

would ask me to write it, and then send the letter back to me with corrections, re-phrasing my words and commenting on the changes, or he would call me and go over it on the phone. He writes beautifully. I learned from him.”

From the start, Marcia saw that Ron “demanded the best work with no exceptions. But simultaneously, he was generous with his time and patience. He would explain why things needed to be done one way and not another,” she says.

“Perhaps I am not the best person to tell you about Ron’s legacy in products and business concepts, since I am mostly an operations and numbers person. But I can tell you that I

continue to work from here.” Though telecommuting was common by that time, “I think working from 6000 miles away was a bit of a stretch,” laughs Marcia. “Wouldn’t you know, they stuck by me even then. They trusted me and helped me through this transition,” she remembers.

“Ron has a deeply just and ethical character that pervades all his dealings with me and others in his company,” observes Marcia. Even in tough economic times, when retail “went through rough waters, no one here was thrown off the boat, as we saw happening at other companies. Ron has stuck by us throughout and has kept his company safe,” Marcia states. “Ron has been our trusted and respected captain.”



VERONICA GUTIERREZ

As a young girl, Veronica Gutierrez was entranced with New Kids on the Block. Listening to their music, it was only natural that she “always wished that one day I’d be able to meet them.”

Years later, “Ron knew how obsessed I was, and he got me a green room pass to a Jimmy Kimmel show featuring New Kids on the Block,” recalls Veronica, who has worked in accounts payable for 17 years and is assistant e-commerce manager.

“I will never forget meeting the band members. Of course I didn’t ask to take pictures because I didn’t want to look like a groupie! I tried to play it cool!” Veronica laughs. “Who would have thought Ron would make my childhood dream a reality?”

TIFFANY STARR

“Even in Texas, prestigious stores know the Ron Robinson brand, and associate it with high design,” says Tiffany Starr, who began at the company in 2003, and now works remotely from Austin. As Ecommerce Content & Merchandise Director, she manages the Ron Robinson online site and supervises the company’s email marketing campaigns.

Drawing on years at the Ron Robinson stores, Tiffany works with a graphic designer to echo “the modern and elegant aesthetic of the Santa Monica flagship on our site,” she explains.

“Our online clients get a customized experience they won’t get in a department store,” says Tiffany. “If someone asks for a shirt in a color we don’t normally carry, we’ll special order it. They feel like they’re part of an exclusive club.”





JOE GARCIA

“Ron is from the same hometown I am,” says Joe Garcia. “How inspiring to have him come from El Paso.”

Joe was hired as warehouse manager in 2013, and views it as a platform for studying retail. “There’s a lot to learn from Ron, businesswise,” says Joe. “One time I mentioned Beats headphones. Ron immediately knew the Apple Store’s sales percentages. Then he went deeper into consumer motivation, why they make a purchase at the Apple Store versus other venues.”

Fascinated with skating since age 14, Joe plans to return to El Paso one day and open a skate/lifestyle shop influenced by the west coast. “I’d like to showcase it in a fresh way,” he states, “to take it back to where I grew up.”



AVVI ANTONIO

“Santa. That’s what all the store employees call me” at the holidays, says Avvi Antonio, the driver responsible for transporting products between Ron Robinson locations for 14 years.

“The packages get wrapped in white paper with red ribbons, so I’m carrying a sack full of gifts back to the office to ship,” he illustrates. The nickname “feels good, because people are sending presents out to their loved ones.”

Of course, unlike St. Nick, Avvi is responsible for deliveries year-round. He acknowledges that “it does get hectic, especially since we process corporate shopping and online purchases.”

Avvi notes that Ron is “passionate about everything that he does,” and Avvi puts that spirit into his driving every day: “I’m delivering products that are going to make people happy.”



MAUREEN ENGELBERT

“All of a sudden, a stern, boisterous man came behind the counter, semi-shouting at me,” recalls cashier Maureen Engelbert. I had just started working at Ron’s establishment, and I was training at the computer. He called out loudly, ‘When you greet the customers from afar, don’t be afraid to yell! Let them know you’re here for them and you see them!’” Of course, “unbeknownst to me, it was Mr. Ron Robinson himself.”

In Maureen’s five years at the Melrose location “I do just about anything and everything, and as a result, I have learned so much here,” she says. “I am proud to fulfill the most important thing that this company asks of me: to put the client first. Whatever they want, make it happen.”

ADAM CASEY

Adam Casey’s story is so cinematic, it’s only appropriate that it began at the movies. Washing his hands with liquid soap at a Pasadena theater, Adam “fell in love with the fragrance and tracked it down.”

The scent was Soul, created for Apothia, “and just by a twist of fate,” Adam happened upon a job posting at Ron Robinson a year later, in 2013, and was hired in sales. But the story gets better: Adam is currently the manager of Apothia!

“We treat everyone who walks through the door like family,” says Adam. “It doesn’t matter who you are, where you came from, how much (or how little) you have...all are welcome here.” In other words, it’s a store with soul.





JOANNA CATALDO

“Ron’s ideas have paved the way for retailers,” says JoAnna, the apparel and accessories manager at Melrose. For example, “Apothia made it possible for a retailer to create a line. Most start with a line, then open a store. Ron opened his stores and created a perfume and home fragrance line to complement them.”

JoAnna, who has worked at Ron Robinson since 2015, comments that “our clothing and accessories are specifically ordered to create a unique lifestyle rather than just dress the client. We all look forward to what Ron will decide is the next big thing, then watch as customers embrace the products, and other retailers try to follow the trend.”

JESSICA CORTEZ

“When Ron talks about the products we sell, you can’t help but be mesmerized. He wants all of our clients to have a great shopping experience, and that’s exactly what we strive to do,” says Jessica Cortez, who started working for Ron Robinson in 2007. Now she is the assistant manager of the kids’ department at the Ron Robinson store in Santa Monica.

Jessica particularly enjoys “working with our loyal customers and reaching out to clients when new merchandise has arrived,” she says. “And it’s wonderful when we build a relationship with new clients, and make them part of our Ron Robinson family.”





HEAGAN YU

Heagan Yu is responsible for selling Ron Robinson products to other retailers, managing all domestic and international accounts.

“I look for venues of a similar caliber to Ron Robinson,” Heagan says. “If I see on the retailer’s website that their highest price point for a candle is \$20, that’s just not our market.”

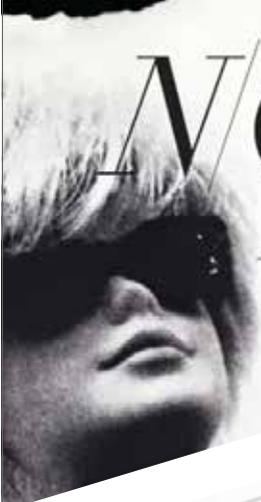
One reason Heagan accepted the Apothia job is that “Ron has staff who have been there for 15, 20 years; that says a lot to me,” she notes.

“Ron is never shy about handing out compliments to everyone who works for him. From day one, Ron has been the most kind and respectful person and I am proud to be a part of his team.”





NOW IN LOS ANG



WATCH THE THRONE

RETAIL KING RON ROBINSON EXPANDS HIS PRESENCE INSIDE FRESNO'S WEST HOLLYWOOD

By Neil Anne Jacobson | Photos by Eric Meador

Ever since Ron Robinson opened his first men's retail store in Fresno in 1978, he has been a fixture in the city. The ground-breaking venture has been a staple of the city's retail scene. This spring, Robinson is expanding his empire to Los Angeles with a 2,000-square-foot store in West Hollywood. The store is a mix of men's and women's clothing and accessories. Robinson is a former CEO of the clothing retailer J. Paul Jones. He has always had a passion for retail and has been successful in several other ventures, including L.A. Fitness, which he founded in 1992. Robinson is a well-known figure in the Los Angeles business community. He is a member of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation. He is also a frequent speaker at industry events. Robinson's expansion into Los Angeles is a testament to his success in retail. He has built a strong brand and a loyal customer base in Fresno. Now, he is bringing that success to Los Angeles. Robinson's new store is located in West Hollywood, a prime retail location. The store is a mix of men's and women's clothing and accessories. Robinson is confident that his store will be a success in Los Angeles. He has a proven track record in retail and a strong understanding of the Los Angeles market. Robinson's expansion into Los Angeles is a bold move. It shows his confidence in the Los Angeles market and his belief in his brand. Robinson's new store is a testament to his success in retail. He has built a strong brand and a loyal customer base in Fresno. Now, he is bringing that success to Los Angeles.



King of Cool

Ron Robinson sets up shop in Santa Monica with a few of his favorite things.

By Larissa Zayas

King of Cool

Ron Robinson sets up shop in Santa Monica with a few of his favorite things.

By Carina Rizzo



Los Angeles Times Magazine

Hollywood Off-Kilter

Can an industry ascended regain its sense of balance? A town loses its breath.

L.A.'S SULTAN OF SCENT ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

Los Angeles Times

Women, children



DESIGN NEWS + TRENDS

Brick-and-Mortar Is Not Dead

By Casha Doernlund on 10/10/2018 | 5 Minute Read

Design makes my life better," says Ron Robinson, founder of B&I. He enhances my life as well as the life of many other people because through his store in Santa Monica off 5th street, that message is clear: you're almost afraid to touch anything.

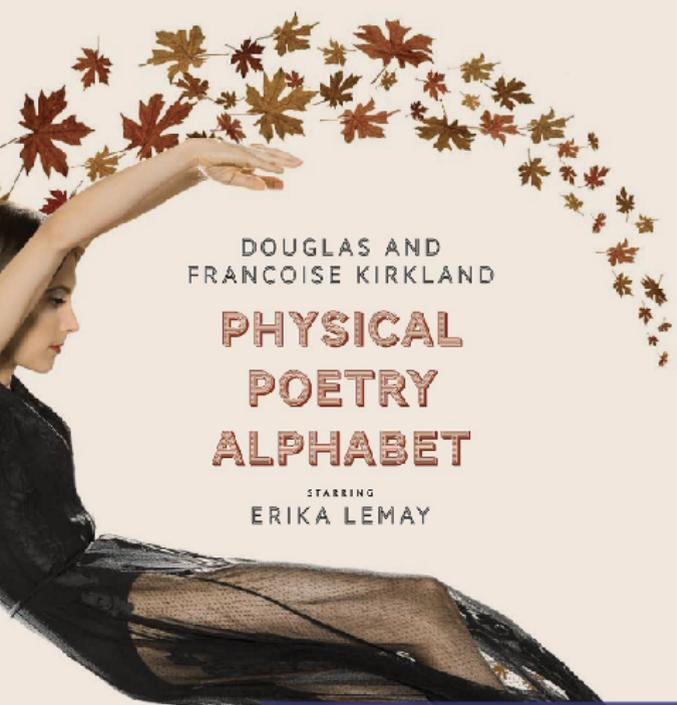


Women, children are next

ONKA RETAIL

Robinson has a remedy for America's brick-and-mortar sales: Shopping Fun Again

ason Trotter's geometric based art is exhibited at the top of the wall plants and a stainless steel QLOCKTWO displaying the time. Neon art next to rows of art and fashion books. Jewelry from local designers is displayed against a white background sits across from an apothecary jars, large and small, including his line Apothia.



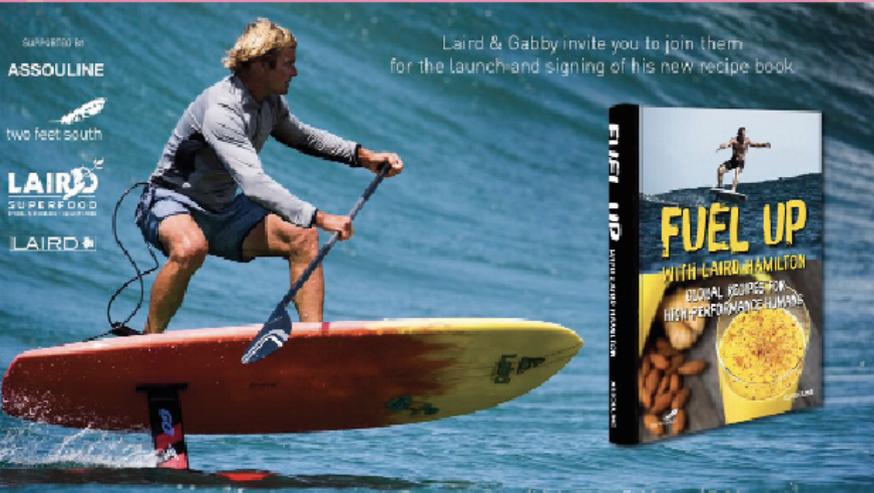
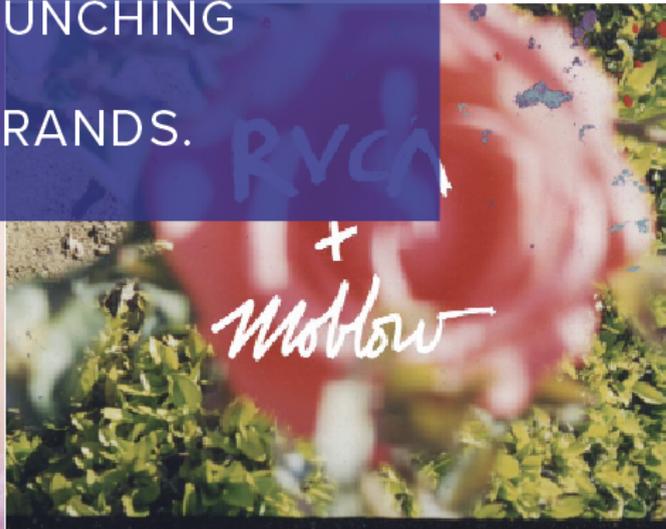
DOUGLAS AND FRANCOISE KIRKLAND

PHYSICAL POETRY ALPHABET

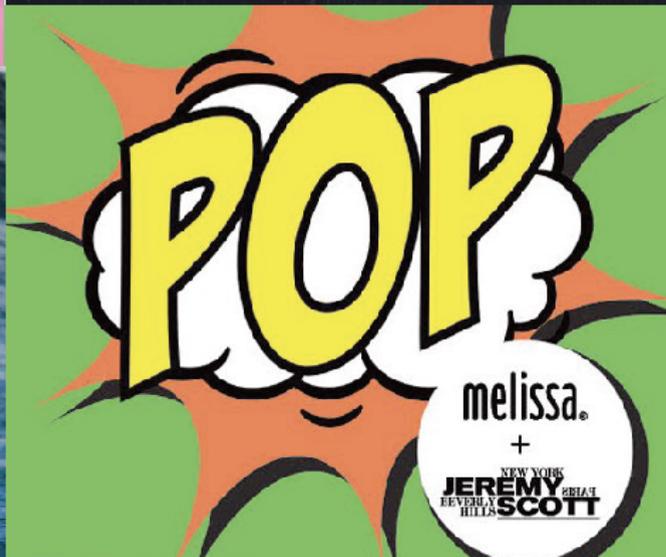
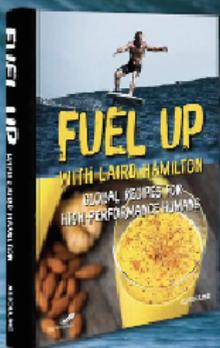
STARRING ERIKA LEMAY



RON ROBINSON AND TEAM HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR LAUNCHING SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST INNOVATIVE BRANDS.



Laird & Gabby invite you to join them for the launch and signing of his new recipe book.



melissa.
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WHERE STARS ARE BORN

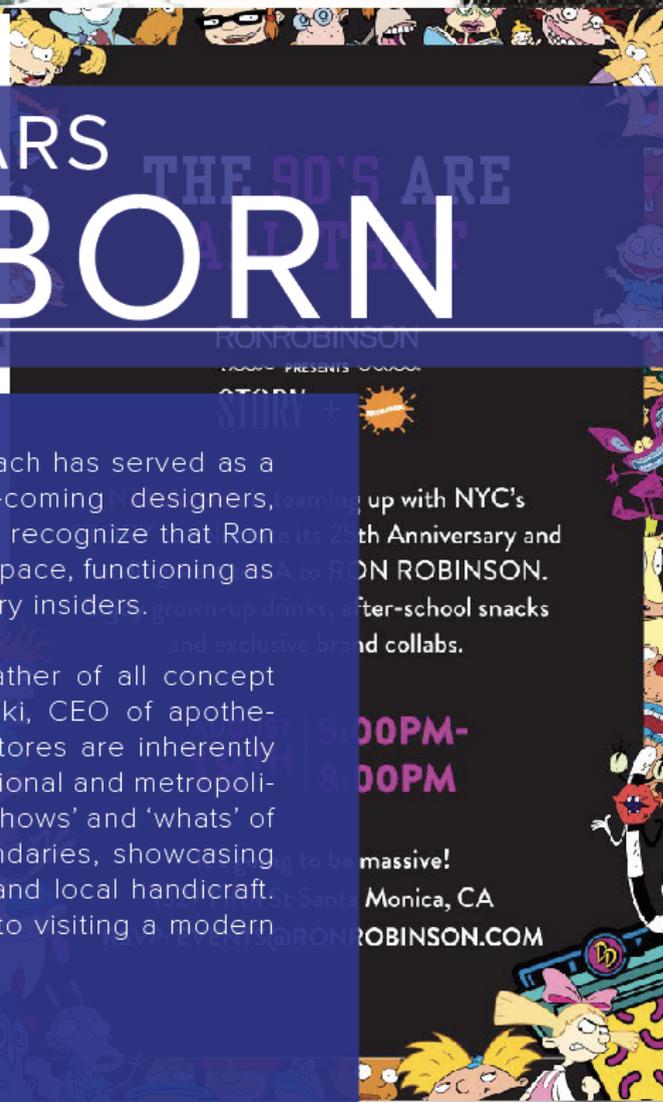
Ron Robinson's curatorial approach has served as a crucial launchpad for up-and-coming designers, entrepreneurs, and artisans who recognize that Ron Robinson is an iconic incubator space, functioning as an organic introduction to industry insiders.

"Ron is an L.A. icon, and the father of all concept boutiques," says Lukasz Rychlicki, CEO of apothecary collection Alba 1913. "His stores are inherently California, mixed with an international and metropolitan artsy flair. Cutting across the 'hows' and 'whats' of retail, Ron keeps breaking boundaries, showcasing world class, honest artisanship and local handcraft. He offers an experience closer to visiting a modern art museum than a shop."

teaming up with NYC's
celebrating its 25th Anniversary and
A to Z at RON ROBINSON.
grown-up drinks, after-school snacks
and exclusive brand collabs.

5:00PM -
8:00PM

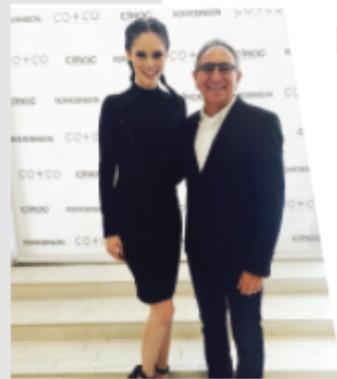
It's going to be massive!
Santa Monica, CA
WWW.RONROBINSON.COM





"Ron Robinson was our first retail account when we debuted there in 2017," says clothing brand Tribe Kelley cofounder Brittney Kelley. "Before that, we were solely ecommerce, so picking a retail store that represented our brand was crucial. We were blessed to find that spot in Ron Robinson!"

Even a first meeting with Ron is often a positive learning experience.



"I'd been developing a skin care brand for ten years, and met Ron the moment I walked into Fred Segal," says Jenefer Palmer, founder of skincare brand OSEA. "I was so nervous, I just babbled through my presentation, but once I was done Ron immediately said 'OK, I'll take the line!' He has a heart of gold and plays fair and square. Karen Meena is also a key part of the whole operation. The whole team there really cares."



"I remember the day I met Ron like it was yesterday," says Killian Hennessy, founder of eponymous fragrance brand, Killian. "I had launched my first collection, L'Oeuvre Noire, in October 2007. I went to Los Angeles to meet Ron in May 2008. I introduced him to my collection of fragrances in the café in front of his Melrose store, Apothia."

Leading editors, groomers, celebrities, and influencers all flock to Ron Robinson, whether they live in Los Angeles, or are merely passing through town. The store's appeal functions as a spotlight for new brands.



"Ron was definitely instrumental in getting our brand into the hands of many Los Angeles professional celebrity groomers and make-up artists," says Rychlicki. "We love being part of his highly curated, often edgy selection. It always has an inherent cool factor and is continuously ahead of the game while remaining faithful to quality craftsmanship. It is truly a must-see location on the West Coast!"



"Once we got our shelf in the store, since this is where all the best editors

shop, we got a lot of attention," says Palmer. "I'll always be grateful to Ron Robinson for that. We're very honored by his commitment to us."

Working with the Ron Robinson team doesn't end once the purchase order is signed, either. Brands report help on everything from product development to events.

"We started doing business with Ron Robinson in 2002 when RVCA first launched," says Eric Thomas, Vice President, sales for the fashion surf/skate brand. "They recognized that our founder, Pat Tenore, was onto something very special. Our Artist Network Program collaborates with artists who contribute to the graphic and design details of our apparel, so we are constantly looking to support and promote the art community. Ron and Karen appreciate that we make a high-quality product, driven by great art. We have done several events there to launch new artist collections, including those with Barry McGee and Mark Oblow."

"Ron Robinson has carried our line since our very first season, Spring 2010, and we have con-

tinued to ship every season since," says Matteo Maniatty, creative director and co-founder of apparel collection Descendant of Thieves. "Over the years, we have seen our business transform and expand by taking his team's advice on everything from fit to category development. We've worked closely with Ron Robinson to create exclusive products and exciting consumer events; and are thankful for having the opportunity to work with such amazing people."

"We love the energy and vibe, from the people, to the space, to the customers, and we felt like it was only fitting to offer our products in a retail space that represents what we're about," says Tribe Kelley's Brittney Kelley. "Ron and his team are a dream to work with! They have such a great eye for curating a space like no other. We feel honored to work with their team and draw new inspiration every time we visit."

Ron Robinson and his team have made developing and tending young talent into an integral part of their successful formula.





CELE

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FASHION

FASHION

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SEE YOU AT THE BOOKS

A MAN

Ron Robinson always provides a personal touch, but he recognizes that his responsibility as a businessperson goes beyond store walls, extending to the entire community. From supporting not-for-profits, to wellness and society, Robinson has repeatedly shown himself to be a friend indeed and in deed. He often supports charities with in-store shopping events and invites wellness professionals to work with his customers. Spokespeople from a wide spectrum of organizations praise his generosity, his can-do attitude....and of course, his fabulous store.

"He's the real deal," says Celia Bernstein, Director of Development for the Westside Family Health Center. "I'd originally met Karen Meena through a women's chamber of commerce event here in L.A., and she introduced me to Ron. The store itself is a perfect place for a party. When I turned 60, I asked if we could have a fundraising birthday party there where people could shop and make donations to our organization. It was right around Mother's Day, so the timing was perfect. After the party, Ron himself made a personal donation! He sees himself as a member of the community. These days, when so many people live in a bubble, Ron demonstrates that he is a genuine human being, and that perspective extends through his whole team."

Robin Allinson Smalley is the co-founder of mothers2mothers, an organization working in Africa to end pediatric AIDS. "When I met Ron, he couldn't have been warmer or more welcoming," says Smalley. "He agreed to hold a fundraiser in the flagship store on December 1st, both World AIDS Day and Giving Tuesday that year. Through planning and implementation, the Ron Robinson staff was helpful, easy to work with, and supportive. The evening resulted in a \$6,000 donation. It isn't often

that local businesses reach out their hands and hearts to causes based so far away, but Ron's empathy for the women and children we serve was real and reflected in his generosity."

Erica Fisher, founder of Present Now, says, "We provide backpacks filled with school supplies for children in domestic violence shelters. I got to know Jennifer Romis, Ron's kids buyer, while shopping in the store for my own children. Jennifer suggested that Ron and Stacy (who have an incredible partnership) would like working with a smaller, grass roots charity, which ours was at the time. He immediately asked, 'How can we support you?' and personally stepped up as a sponsor." She goes on to say, "Ron is always there at events and very deeply engaged! He doesn't manage from above: he was at our party, talking to attendees and letting people know why they are there, and always asking 'How can we help? What else can we do?'"

These shopping events have been a hit with customers and not-for-profits alike. "Alliance of Moms helps teens, in foster care, who are pregnant or parenting. Last fall, Ron opened the doors of his West Hollywood store to our members for an exclusive shopping experience," says director Kerry Buzzell, and Mitch Hedlund of Recycle Across America, says, "We were the benefactors of the Coco Eco Magazine launch that took place at one of Ron Robinson's stores in Santa Monica."

"National YoungArts Foundation identifies and nurtures promising young artists," says Carolina García Jayaram, President and CEO. "Ron's support has been both timely and fitting because of his ability to find the most unique design pieces and offer up-and-coming fashion designers a forum to showcase their art."

Of course, hosting an event at Ron Robinson may also come with built-in celebrity appeal. Susan Brandt is the founder of Rational Animal, a non-profit that produces media to help at-risk animals.

"We did a series of notecards, featuring top photographers' work with artists and animals. We asked to do a show featuring all the photographs from the notecards. Ron was immediately on board, selling the original, signed photographs," says Brandt. "He was very enthusiastic and creative, and even got involved with hanging the show! It looked beautiful, of course. Alison Mosshart and Jamie Hince of The Kills, as well as Chris Isaak and other celebrities all showed up and lent their support to the evening."

"We were thrilled to connect with Ron last year when he sponsored God's Love We Deliver at our Second Annual Love ROCKS NYC charity concert at The Beacon in New York City," says Emmett Findley, the organization's Manager of Communications. "The event was hosted by Whoopi Goldberg, and starred Norah Jones, Keith Richards, and Mavis Staples, just to name just a few."

WELLNESS FORMULA

"Ron hosts Yoga and Wellness Saturdays, where he invites high-profile instructors from the Los Angeles area to teach complementary one-hour classes for his customers. We've done eight of these events, offering 30 minutes with a personal trainer, 30 minutes with a yoga instructor, then finished with a massage," says Tara

Hannaford of GoTYM, a mobile app for fitness. "Ron has a huge heart and loves to promote local businesses. It's amazing how dedicated he is to his clients...and those clients shop! Sometimes even in the middle of a class!"

"Ron is more than a successful retailer, he is also a community builder," says Christine West, Studio Manager of Yogaraj, a yoga studio with locations in Santa Monica and Los Angeles. "The beautiful space and in-store events he supports invite like-minded people to come together."

Kody Kitchen, founder of Best U Studio says, "We started selling our Ubarre product in the store...it was pretty cool to be in Ron Robinson! One of my instructors would do a workout for customers, so it really became interactive marketing, and an experience...which is what people are shopping for now!"

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

Ron also has a heart for his neighborhood...and isn't afraid to interject a little star-quality of his own. "Ron has been a great supporter of our community and programs at Santa Monica Travel and Tourism," says Misti Kerns, President and CEO. "He graciously starred in one of our destination videos! Ron provides an authentic and personable experience to his customers with a carefully curated selection of merchandise that is a perfect fit for our beachside city."

BUILDING COMMUNITY IS JUST PART THE RON ROBINSON ROUTINE.

ABOUT HIS TOWN



Laurel Rosen, the President of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce adds "We were excited to welcome Ron Robinson to our city. His stores are incredibly beautiful and an asset to any community, elevating the experience for the consumer."

What's next? Only Ron knows, but his customers will feel that much better about their purchases, knowing they are supporting a force for good.

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