

**Class Trade Show Returns With New Exhibitor Mix**

by Erin Barajas, Manufacturing Editor  
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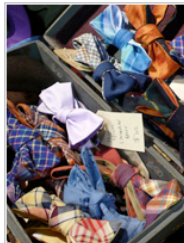
**Class**, the boutique menswear-centric contemporary trade show, rounded out the Spring 2011 trade show season. Held Sept. 1–2 at the **Santa Monica Civic Center** in Santa Monica, Calif., the trade show fell two weeks after the late-August dates of the Las Vegas **MAGIC Marketplace, Project** and **Capsule** shows. The trade show lured mostly local retailers with a few international buyers from Japan and Canada stopping by. Buyer attendance was expected to be somewhere between 300 and 500.

"We're like a clean-up show for men and an early show for women," Jason Bates, **Class'** show director and chief executive, said of the show's timing. **Class** remained roughly the same size as last year's show, Bates added. "But the quality of exhibitor is vastly improved." The feathers in his cap were brands such as **Hugo Boss, Winter Kate, LnA, Vix, W.R.K. and Company of We**. "Buyers are demanding a more upscale brand mix," he said. Bates said emerging brands and international brands such as **Nisha, Franklin + Gower, Sim.me.ri.a.n, Neuw, Uni, Copy** and **My Pet Square** added a new dimension to **Class** to which buyers responded well.

Exhibitors reported slow traffic but good buyers, with representatives from **Fred Segal, Nomads, Conveyor, Rolo, Neo 39, Atrium, Belmont Army, LASC** and **Alpha** shopping the show floor.

"It's the last show of the season for us, so we have to come out and be seen," said Eric Ruhle of **WeSC**. The brand didn't expect to clock big sales but took the opportunity to highlight its first-ever collection of footwear, which debuted in August in Las Vegas. Wholesaling for \$35 to \$75, the shoes are launching with limited distribution for Holiday 2010 and expanded distribution for Spring 2011.

Paco McCauley of **Franklin + Gower** echoed Ruhle's sentiments. "We're new, and **Class** is the right-sized show for us. We don't get lost in the shuffle, and buyers are here to shop. We want to be in front of them every chance we get," McCauley said.



**TIE ONE ON:** Buyers and brands think guys should dress up a little bit—but in a totally manly way. All over the **Class** show floor were collared shirts, trim chinos, rich textures and luxurious fabrications. Bow ties and ties from **Pierrepoint Hicks** were the



**WHAT WE WANT:** *Company of We's* founders, Jayzel Samonte (left) and Christopher Crawford (right), got tired of paying designer prices for chic menswear. Their solution was to launch *Company of We*, a new line with a "Bergdorf" look and contemporary price points.



**COPY KEEPS GROWING:** *Copy's* Murphy Martines has been busy reinventing his brand into a full menswear collection with a more upscale twist. Trim shirting, premium T-shirts with cool not kitschy graphics, minimalist sneakers, jewelry and the brand's first-ever blazer were showcased at **Class**.

**Franklin + Gower**, which launched as an online purveyor of customizable men's walkshorts, is expanding into wholesale for Spring 2011. The collection, which has grown beyond walkshorts to include blazers for men and two shorts and a jacket for women, maintains some level of customization. Retailers can choose from a few select trims, McCauley said. He's hoping the brand, which produces in Los Angeles and has no minimums, can leverage its preppy look and quick turn-around time into orders at specialty boutiques.

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**Manly but special**

The Americana look was prevalent at **Class**—think lots of plaids, dark-washed denim, premium T-shirts with vintage styling, soft knits and tailored fits.

**Copy**, a brand that was born out of the premium streetwear market but has repositioned itself as a more fashion-forward sportswear line, is a prime example of the shift. Designed by **Murphy Martines**, the collection features a slim, tailored bonded jersey blazer, crisp button-up shirts and understated sneakers for Spring 2011.

**Rogue Territory** showed handcrafted prints on vintage-washed T-shirts, chambray shirting and manly accessories such as pocket knives.

Some brands skewed more upscale.

**Company of We**, a New York-based menswear line, showed a full collection of pieces with high-end designer touches. "We have a boutique feel at a contemporary price point," said Jayzel Samonte, the brand's founder and creative director. Cashmere knits, alpaca scarves and sleeveless moto jackets sell alongside über-preppy bankers' shirts, pintucked jackets and holey T-shirts that appear to have been peppered with buckshot.

**Franklin + Gower** showed slim seersucker shorts paired with a white European-cut jacket trimmed in matching seersucker. Also available were skinny red corduroy shorts trimmed with a mod contrast piping and a navy brushed-cotton tuxedo jacket.

**Pierrepoint Hicks**, whose tagline is "rugged luxury," rounded out the menswear offerings with a collection of neckties and bowties that volley between sheer prep and ironic hipster. A "Hatchery" collection of more-upscale ties that retail for \$120 featured 100 percent wool, 100 percent camel hair and 100 percent silk fabrications; hand-rolled tips; and contrast liners. The core collection featured a multitude of plaids and reversible bowties.