

interiors + design



Boutique banks on O.C. expansion

The Newport Beach location of Elyse Walker's namesake shop curates luxury brands inside a former bank building. The store is her first in Orange County.

FASHION DESIGNER Elyse Walker, above, opened her latest women's clothing store in Lido Marina Village, which carries luxe apparel and accessories from fashion-forward designers. Gucci woman's shoes, at right, are among the items available.



Photos by Don Leach | Weekend

BY KATHLEEN LUPPI

Nearly two decades after launching her Pacific Palisades boutique, which houses couture with contemporary fashions, Elyse Walker has opened her first Orange County store.

Situated on the prime corner of the recently renovated Lido Marina Village, the 12,000-square-foot shop inside a former bank building incorporates fine shoes, bags, jewelry and clothing from women's ready-to-wear and couture collections.

Below the space's open ceilings and mesh chandeliers are edited displays of luxury brands that read like a compendium of international opulence: Givenchy, Chloe, Hermes, Stella McCartney, Alexander Wang, Lanvin, Brunello Cucinelli.

But don't let that intimidate you.

Walker, a stylist and buyer whose star-studded clientele includes actresses Jennifer Garner, Kate Hudson, Cindy Crawford and Reese Witherspoon, is known for creating a relaxed and casual ambience within a fashion-forward showroom.

"This should feel comfortable and fun, and it shouldn't feel like high pressure," Walker said as she sat on a pink velvet chaise in her Newport Beach store, which opened in late August.

"But, if something looks really great on you and I tell you, you know I mean it," she said with a laugh.

Fashion wasn't her initial profession.

While majoring in mathematics at Columbia University with plans to work on Wall Street, Walker's mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

She took charge in running the family's shoe business in New York City and completed her edu-

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THE VELVET SLIPPERS are true to size and can be thrown into the washer on a cold spin.

Fifi Venezia offers Venetian luxury that's closer to home

Two Newport Beach friends started the shoe company, inspired by the colorful velvet slippers made popular in Venice.

BY KATHLEEN LUPPI

When Kim Fox went to Venice 20 years ago, she found inspiration on the ground: slippers.

Venetian velvet slippers were worn by locals in a variety of colors like red, gray, black and blue.

Fast forward two decades later, and Fox has adapted the memory to a present shoe company she operates with friend Lynn Pyle.

The Newport Beach residents, who were sorority sisters at USC and who have remained friends since 1982, founded Fifi Venezia — a handmade velvet slide constructed by Italian craftsmen in Venice.

The company, named after Fox's sophisticated and cultured grandmother, started less than a year ago and is stocked at a handful of retailers, such as A'Maree's, Juxtaposition Home and shops in Los Angeles, Vermont and Japan.

There's a story behind the founders' shoes that starts long before they pop up

in a photo on a luxury designer or indie singer's Instagram.

Legend has it that when Venice was liberated in 1945, a young woman stepped from her gondola, rushed toward the palatial Palazzo Dandolo and dashed up the 14th century staircase.

There, she stumbled by a window overlooking the Grand Canal.

Her velvet slippers fell from her feet, falling toward a marble column at the base of the stairs.

The traditional velvet slipper worn by Venetians rose to prominence after World War II, but its history goes back a longer way.

During the 19th century, the Italian countryside struggled and women crafted a special shoe from recycled materials.

The shoes reached Venice, where gondoliers favored the footwear, as the soles were gripped with a non-damaging stability that didn't skid on the boats.

Since the shoes' origins, the centuries-

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CO-OWNERS OF Fifi Venezia Kim Fox, right, and Lynn Pyle at A'Maree's in Newport Beach. The shop carries the pair's line of velvet Venetian shoes.



Photos by Drew A. Kelley

SHOES

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old craftsmanship is continually made out of canvas juke sacks and cardboard.

They are completed by welding bicycle tires on the bottoms to make them waterproof and the uppers of velvet are assembled and sewn with a blanket stitch — a symbol of fine tradition.

“We loved the history, the art and that it's handmade,” Fox said as she stood next to Pyle before a display of the slip-ons in A'Maree's in Newport Beach. “We wanted to bring that story and authenticity here.”

The Canal shoe, priced at \$235, is offered in nine colors, ranging from red and yellow to orange and green.

Fuchsia and violet are carried in the line's Canal and Gritti style (\$250), a cotton velvet loafer with rubber soles.

Fox and Pyle said they sell out of a shipment of 250 pairs in two weeks.

Women usually wear them around the home, then to barre or spin classes or at a casual lunch, they said.

It's a favorite shoe to wear around town because it not only offers a pop of color but also a point that helps elongate the leg, they added.

The velvet slipper is true to size, and if it needs a cleaning, it can be thrown into the washer on a cold spin. If the pair appears crushed, the dryer will fluff them up.

The shoes may be monogrammed, and the company can add embellishments. They have men asking for pairs to wear around the house or aboard a boat.

Fox and Pyle said they order a shipment of 250 shoes from the Venetian manufacturer, and it usually takes about a month for the slippers to arrive to the U.S.

They have plans to add a lighter red to the shoe's color assortment and are in the process of regularly cycling out the demand for customer orders.

Today, the slippers have been snapped up by Brock Collection luxury designer Laura Vassar, indie singer and songwriter Zella Day and Vogue magazine fashion assistant Cynthia Smith.

“We are so proud to share this history with people here,” Fox said. “You're joining a club of old-world craftsmanship. To me, that's incredible.”

For more information, visit fifivenezia.com.

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BOUTIQUE

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But she lost her mother — who was 42 — to the disease.

In 1996, she and her husband, David, moved California. Three years later, she opened her first boutique, which at first carried mostly shoes and handbags.

The nondescript store located on an unassuming block in Pacific Palisades garnered a following. Since its inception 16 years ago, the store has quadrupled in size with more than 150 designers and a team of stylists.

Since founding her namesake boutique, which is stocked with a mix of new and emerging designers, Walker founded her Internet business, Forward by Elyse Walker, and her curated women's line, ThePerfext.

With expansion in mind, Walker embarked on opening a new store for the Orange County shoppers who would visit her Palisades shop.

The O.C. store, she conceptualized, would share her personal love for art while offering a different point of view.

The result: A space that features designer shop-in-shops, fine jewelry housed in the former bank building's vault, a denim bar, beach shop and salon.

Guests may sip Champagne while slipping on precious stones by New York jeweler Bayco or have their hair colored and styled at the boutique's two-chair salon.

They may stand before works of art created by street artist Retna, painters Paul Rusconi and Robert Mars and abstract mixed-media artist James Verbicky, or have a stylist unwrap a shoebox's tissue paper before them to reveal the latest style by Gucci or Manolo Blahnik.

With more than 250 showcased



Photos by Don Leach | Weekend

MARK CROSS HANDBAGS, above, and Bayco fine jewelry, below, are displayed at Elyse Walker in Lido Marina Village in Newport Beach. Says Walker of her O.C. store, at top: “You should leave here feeling happy.”



designers, Walker said she wanted to create a shopping experience that felt like a place where a woman could take risks in pieces right off the runways while also shopping for classic and timeless pieces that could suit any occasion.

“This experience should be relaxed,” said Walker. “I hope you feel like you got a great foot massage. You should leave here feeling happy.”

Elyse Walker is at 3444 Via Lido, Newport Beach. For more information, call (949) 612-2646 or visit elysewalker.com.

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OCMA

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An aristocrat for sure, Phillips was born in 1886 into a wealthy family in Pittsburgh. His mother was an heir to the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company.

His family moved to Washington, D.C., in 1896. Phillips attended Yale University and made his way to New York, becoming an art critic. Back in the nation's capital, he founded the Phillips Collection in 1921 in the family's Dupont Circle home — America's first museum dedicated to modern art.

“During the 1910s Phillips had come to know many American artists and that personal relationship with America's contemporary artists continued over the next 50 years,” said Susan Behrends Frank, a curator at the Phillips Collection and the organizer of the OCMA exhibition.

“Phillips saw firsthand how they struggled to find collectors to buy their work, how America's living artists were ignored by museums between the wars. Throughout his life, Phillips gave American artists his patronage and encouragement.”

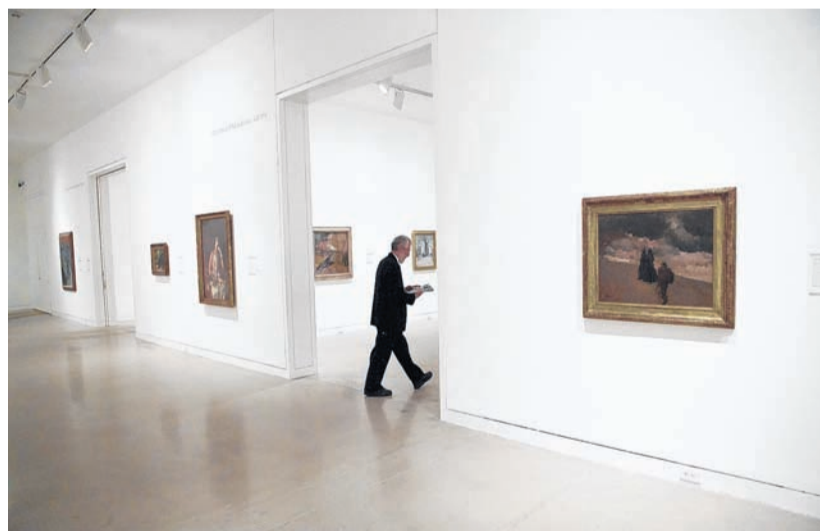
That support and patronage ranged from Albert Pinkham Ryder, an early and influential Romantic, to American Impressionist Ernest Lawson to John Sloan, a noted “Ashcan” painter.

Phillips also collected self-taught and foreign-born artists, as well as several artists of color, including Jacob Lawrence, Allan Rohan Crite and Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

“Phillips' message about the diversity of American art as the essential nature of our national character was an idea ahead of its time and certainly is still important today,” Frank said.

The OCMA exhibition is divided into 10 chronological and thematic sections, starting with “Romanticism and Realism” and ending with “Abstract Expressionism.”

Highlights of the exhibit include



Scott Smeltzer | Weekend

THE “AMERICAN MOSAIC” exhibit runs through Dec. 4 at OCMA.

IF YOU GO

What: “American Mosaic: Picturing Modern Art Through the Eye of Duncan Phillips”

When: Till Dec. 4; gallery hours are from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays

Where: Orange County Museum of Art, 850 San Clemente Drive, Newport Beach

Cost: \$7.50 to \$10; every Friday, children age 12 and under and museum members are admitted free

Information: (949) 759-1122 or visit ocma.net.

Homer's windswept oil “To the Rescue” (1886), Marsden Hartley's colorful, expressionist oil on academy board “Mountain Lake – Autumn” (c. 1910), Hopper's contemplative, moody oil “Sunday” (1926), and Edward Bruce's stark and spiritual oil on canvas, “Power” (c. 1933).

Two iconic O'Keeffe's — “Large Dark Red Leaves on White” (1925) and “Ranchos Church, No. II, NM”

(1929) — grace the “Nature and Abstraction” section, as does Arthur Dove's stunning sunset captured in oil, “Red Sun” (1935).

Dove's painting “gives visual form to that moment of the sunset that hovers between light and dark over hills and patterned fields,” Frank said. “This picture captures everything I love about Dove — his rich color and his inventive visual equivalents that capture the interplay of heat and light in the landscape.”

“Red Sun” also is featured on the cover of the catalog, “Made in the U.S.A.: American Art from the Phillips Collection,” an evergreen publication produced to coincide with the 2014 exhibition of the same name at the Washington, D.C., museum.

“American Mosaic” draws heavily from that exhibition, which had a stop at the Tampa Museum of Art, where OCMA's Smith used to be executive director. This version will close in early December then travel to the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pa., where it will be on view Feb. 25 to May 21, 2017.

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BENNETT

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In its salt shakers alone, it had more personality than any other bagel chain in O.C. And with an expanded menu of salads and sandwiches, it won me over from anywhere else trying to peddle bagels on the side. It's the kind of place that's easy to take for granted when it's your everyday stop, but damn do you miss it when there's nowhere around to get a decent bialy stamped with garlic and sesame seeds.

Bagels & Brew has since added a spot in Lake Forest and another in Aliso Viejo, replicating its success as the neighborhood coffee shop while expanding its kitchen's reach into Angus burgers, tacos and (at the Aliso location, anyway) bowls of pasta, wholesome steak dinners and sweet griddle breakfasts (that cinnamon swirl French toast!).

Somewhere along the way, the company decided it needed to reach out to the next generation of future regulars and created a social media presence, including a well-followed Instagram, which over the last few years has been cluing the world in to this homegrown bagelry's new wave of creative baking.

Around Valentine's Day, they post photos of their red heart-shaped bagels. On St. Patrick's Day, they make batches of green ones. Before the Fourth of July, they make patriotic bagels out of red, white and blue stripes. When the Golden State Warriors play,

there are limited edition blue and gold bagels for sale. New menu items include baby back ribs and a pepperoni pizza bagel, draped in tomato sauce and cheese like a grown-up Bagel Bite. And instead of concocting more savory cream cheeses, this year's seasonal spring flavors included sweet-as-frosting Oreo cream cheese, toffee caramel crunch, s'mores and more.

In the context of this young, hip, Instagram-posting, dough-dying side of Bagels & Brew, a unicorn bagel was almost inevitable. That the already trippy bagel is given a kiss of vanilla and the recommended schmear is the so-called Birthday Cake Cream Cheese (let's be honest, it's basically cheesecake with sprinkles) is just a dessert-for-breakfast bonus.

For now, unicorn bagels are only available Thursdays through Sundays and, even though you'd think the novelty may have worn off after six months on the market, they still sometimes sell out. But don't worry. Even if there aren't any unicorn bagels left, there are still baskets full of normal-colored classics that — whether covered in plain cream cheese or used as the bun for a mushroom Swiss burger — will never go out of style.

SARAH BENNETT is a freelance journalist covering food, drink, music, culture and more. She is the former food editor at L.A. Weekly and a founding editor of Beer Paper L.A. Follow her on Twitter [@thesarahbennett](https://twitter.com/thesarahbennett).