



Globe Trotters

Its cool downtown aesthetic and attention-grabbing collaborations have made **Opening Ceremony** the international arbiter of style



Think of the opening ceremony at the Olympic Games and you'll likely envision a spectacular gathering of the best and brightest from around the globe. That's exactly what **Carol Lim** and **Humberto Leon** wanted to capture in a retail store. The aptly named boutique opened in downtown New York in 2002 and has since spawned six stores in cities like London, Tokyo and Los Angeles. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, melded sports and business on a world platform, and **Opening Ceremony** does the same in fashion by blending American designers with their international

counterparts. And it's not just limited to style—the brand has extensions that dabble in art, music, culture and more.

“You can tell the history of Opening Ceremony through a visit to our flagship store on Howard Street in Manhattan,” says **Jacky Tang**, vice president of retail development. “We took a chance and opened on this street when there was nothing here, and over the years we've welcomed other nice shopping and food spots to the neighborhood. Inside the store itself, luckily, we've been able to physically expand from the original shop space, so you can feel the growth and gradual phases of our company as you shop around. We're always trying to make more room, so everyone can join the celebration.”



JULIETA CERVANTES

DISCERNING CURATION

Lim and Leon, friends from their days at the University of California, Berkeley, traveled to Hong Kong together after college and realized they wanted to merge their passions for travel, art and fashion. They left behind their corporate jobs—Lim was a merchandiser at **Bally** while Leon served as the visual director at **Old Navy**—to open the original Opening Ceremony boutique. They quickly became known for their discerning eye and careful curation, stocking a mix of downtown staples and up-and-comers

Hood by Air can typically be found in the Howard Street outpost.

“We don’t necessarily look for any one particular thing when we bring on a new designer,” Tang says. “It’s mostly about what we like, and we have always bought for the store very emotionally. We can usually tell immediately if a collection is right for Opening Ceremony—and then we do everything we can to support the brand and tell its story in our own personal way.”

BUZZ-BUILDING COLLABORATIONS

The spacious New York flagship—

This page, from left: Opening Ceremony founders Humberto Leon and Carol Lim; *Hart of Dixie* stars Rachel Bilson (dress) and Jaime King (leather skirt) wearing Opening Ceremony; the interior of the New York flagship store.

Opposite, top: Part of the presentation of Opening Ceremony’s spring/summer 2015 line was the play *100% Lost Cotton*, written by Spike Jonze and Jonah Hill and starring Elle Fanning, Dree Hemingway, Karlie Kloss and Rashida Jones. Opposite, bottom: No two Opening Ceremony stores are alike.

Collaborations with designers, artists, musicians, filmmakers and tastemakers have also caught the attention of the fashion world. So what do all of the partners have in common? “Everything and nothing,” Tang says. “There are no rules when it comes to partnering, because it really



for men and women, which has earned them a celebrity following including *Hart of Dixie* stars **Rachel Bilson** (who wore OC on the show in Season 2) and **Jaime King**. **Solange Knowles** even asked Leon (who pulls double duty as the designer for **Kenzo**) to create her wedding dress for her surprise nuptials last fall in New Orleans.

From their minimall concept in Los Angeles to an eight-story department store in Tokyo and the gift shop at the Ace Hotel in Manhattan, no two Opening Ceremony outposts are alike. Each carries a different inventory that plays off its locale. Although it is always evolving, Kenzo, **Acne**, **Proenza Schouler**, **Alexander Wang**, **Christopher Kane**, **Dries Van Noten**, **J.W. Anderson**, **Band of Outsiders**, **Toga**, **Marques Almeida**, **Patrik Ervell**, **Raf Simons** and

recently expanded with another floor of more than 2,000 square feet—contains a second-floor loft; an alcove with baby and toddler apparel and handmade toys; a working kitchen that doubles as a book, magazine and music shop; and the only **Repetto** shop-within-a-shop in the U.S., situated in the basement annex. Opening Ceremony also has its own blog, annual magazine and online television channel, and in spring 2005 it launched its eponymous fashion line, capturing the boutique’s signature cutting-edge aesthetic. Now sold in more than 200 stores worldwide, the line includes men’s suits, women’s dresses, accessories, handbags, leather goods, and men’s and women’s shoes. Each collection is inspired by a different traveling couple, ranging from siblings to best friends to romantic partners.

can be anything. It can be a **Magritte** painting printed on Birkenstocks. It can be a prairie dress designed by **Chloë Sevigny**, or a **Rashaad Newsome**-painted Lamborghini selling Solange’s latest album out of its trunk.” It seems the only common requirements are to get creative and have fun. Opening Ceremony has also teamed up for clothing collaborations with **Adidas Originals**, **Mickey Mouse**, **Spike Jonze**, **Vans** and **Thierry Boutemy**, proving that its collaborations are as varied as the contents of its stores.

“We introduce and embrace the new and unexpected, wherever we find it—in the clothing, in the customer, in the conversation,” Tang says. “It comes down to one common denominator: the celebratory experience of shopping and discovery.” — *Celia Shatzman*