

# REISS



Reiss is a global clothing brand and the vision of designer David Reiss. Starting as a menswear brand in London, the goal was to bring aspirational and affordable clothing in a lifestyle environment. Launching their first US store in March of 2005 on West Broadway in Manhattan made them an international name.

Nolcha magazine spoke with Laurie Marco, Vice President of Retail Development to find out their methods for selecting successful retail locations, never wavering from their original inspiration and growing their business globally as a true independent retailer.

**Lynn Furge:** What store was your first launch outside of the UK? Why?

**Laurie Marco:** West Broadway in Manhattan. The location was phenomenal. We were ready to tackle the US market and New York was always going to be our opening city. We looked for a few years for the perfect location.

**LF:** How does Reiss select the locations when opening new boutiques (for instance San Francisco before Los Angeles and Boca vs. Miami)?

**LM:** We are a privately owned business and David Reiss is very influential. He travels the world constantly. He is very familiar with the markets. Boca, for instance has a lot of traffic, you get a lot of New Yorkers that are already familiar with the brand etc. We are looking to go into Miami in May. David desires the right location and the right real estate deal; it is never one or the other. There was so much energy around the location in San Francisco and it was right at the edge of the mall so it was noticeable, therefore we decided to make that our first California store. In LA we held out for the right location.

**LF:** How do you build brand awareness when launching into a new marketplace?

**LM:** We partner with local business. For instance in New York we partnered with Soho House. Plus it is the training of our managers. They have a lot of ownership for driving the brand.

**LF:** What is David Reiss' design inspiration?

**LM:** His vision is to have products designed for normal people. We bridge from that High Street Level to luxury. We create beautiful clothes at affordable prices. We have clients that we build their entire wardrobe for them. They can buy the dress and then add on the bag the coat the shoes.

**LF:** How as a brand, have you built from the original concept of Reiss to what it is today?

**LM:** The brand has changed a lot. People in fashion retail move very quickly. When we introduced women's wear in 2000 the entire brand changed. We had to adjust the staff in the stores to introduce womenswear into the collection. In the past 7 years we have really been building the brand globally. We assess every fine detail. The music, the windows etc. All specifics are really focused and every store has the same vibe.

**LF:** How has Reiss become a global brand?

**LM:** In 2005, once we opened in the US we basically had a brand and vision that could be anywhere globally. Then we opened our First Franchise store in Stockholm later that same year and the rest just kept growing based on success.

**LF:** What signature things make a Reiss garment recognizable anywhere in the world?

**LM:** The individuality of the garments and the longevity they get from it. You can really be creative with the garments each season.

**LF:** How much of an increase profit-wise came when you added accessories to the line?

**LM:** Up until spring summer 08 we have kind have been driveling accessories in. Add-ons are a big focus, but this season is the first season that we are 100% focused on accessories. We took on a new team of designers just to create and help launch the new accessories stores.

**LF:** How important is brand imaging (logo, location and advertisement) when launching a retail fashion line?

**LM:** As paramount as it could possibly be! The locals, the art work... it needs to be as perfect as possible. First impression is the last impression. We have someone in the UK that approves every single piece of artwork. We do not advertise.

**LF:** Customer service and knowledge of products is very important in retail. How do you keep the "Reiss experience" consistent in each location?

**LM:** Managers have a meeting with their team every Saturday for one hour before opening. It is always different but it gives people updates. They are not commissioned base but they are recognized for their positive work. Our staff members are very driven people.

**LF:** What is the goal globally for Reiss in the next 5 years?

**LM:** The expansion in the US. We will look for another 40 stores in the next 5 years. The Middle East is a big emerging market for us and David is considering an Australian market as well.