

Omega Picks Rodeo For First Store in U.S.

BY DAVID MOLN

NEW YORK - Omega, the 156-year-old Swiss watch company and timekeeper of the Olympics, plans to open its first U.S. store, on Rodeo Drive, sources told WWD.

The store will be in a building at 325-329 North Rodeo Drive, a prime, two level 7,500-square-foot parcel just purchased by a real estate investment group consisting of Robert Siegel of Metropole Realty Advisors, Inc. and Melvin Heller of Heller Properties.

Coach is also moving into the property, at 325 North Rodeo, planning a two-level, 4,200-square-foot unit expected open in the fall of 2005, as previously reported. It will be Coach's first store in Beverly Hills.

Omega is seen occupying about 2,000 square feet. The current tenants of the building, BCBG and Giorgio (which is owned by BCBG), are expected to vacate within 12 months.

Asked about leaving the site, Ma Azria, president of BCBG, Max Azria, said through a spokeswoman, "Absolutely there will be no change this year. We're looking forward to a great 2004."

Omega, owned by the Swatch Group, has flagships in Bangkok, Cannes, Paris, Zurich, Milan, Honk Kong and Hamburg, Germany. The watches are also sold through thousands of authorized dealers around the world.

Executives at Omega were not available to comment Monday about the Rodeo Drive plan because they were attending the Baselworld Watch & Jewelry Show this week in Basel, Switzerland. However, one insider acknowledged that Omega did have a plan to open on Rodeo.



325 - 329 North Rodeo Drive

The real estate investment group declined to comment on incoming tenants. However, Siegel said his group paid \$20 million for the property. Coach and Omega are expected to do major construction, creating new facades and interiors.

Other tenants on the block include Gucci, Fendi, Ferragamo, Christian Dior, J.P. Tod's, Brioni, and the future Prada flagship.

Siegel said his financing was arranged by Cooper Horowitz and provided by UBS. Jay Luchs of CB Richard Ellis represented the buyer and Dembo & Associates and Cushman & Wakefield represented the seller.

Siegel said he and Heller intend to purchase additional properties in luxury retail destinations in New York City, Chicago, Boston, Palm Beach, Beverly Hills and San

Francisco. "The acquisition of this property capitalizes on our mutual interest in AAA luxury retail locations," said Siegel, chief executive officer and principal of Metropole.

Siegel declined to disclose his other property stakes. But Heller indicated his real estate portfolio includes the Madison Avenue buildings that house Talbot's near 54th Street, and Hermes by 62nd Street.

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