

Clothes for HIM, a new Katonah shop

By EVE MARX

Catherine Hiriart, better known around town as “Catherine H.,” opened her eponymously named boutique for women on the Parkway in Katonah nearly four years ago. “Our goal is to help our clients find themselves through fashion,” Ms. Hiriart said.

The store, an instant hit, was and remains a tasty mélange of classy, relaxed California-style apparel with a saucy European twist. Now, Ms. Hiriart is turning her attention to menswear with her new shop called HIM by Catherine H., located around the corner on Katonah Avenue.

“I did it because of our clients,” Ms. Hiriart shared on the phone from her home in Connecticut, describing the inspiration for her new venture in her strong French accent. “We are almost in our fourth year in Katonah, and I would say really the last two years there have been a lot of men who have come into Catherine H. expressing interest, asking would there be anything like that for them?” she said.

“It’s very funny,” she continued. “The men go through the racks and make comments about the great fabrics, the great cuts. I’ve never done a store for men. With so many women to shop for, I didn’t even know what was out there for men, honestly. So I started to explore a little bit, mostly out of curiosity. Meanwhile, little by little, the demand grew.”

Ms. Hiriart grew up in the south of France and has lived in the United States for 33 years. “I came to New York as a girl to study art design. I became a window dresser — for a long time I worked for Henry Lehr. Dressing windows and women has always come naturally to me. My mother was always taking me shopping with her.”

She said her upbringing has strongly influenced her approach as a fashion store owner. “It is a distinctly European experience, to go into a boutique and have a stylist dress you. It’s very personal, a true boutique experience. I want to offer that same kind of service to my customers in this beautiful setting.”

“I believe there is a demand for what I’m offering, and this store is the right size to do it. It’s such a great spot in town. It’s right in the heart of the retail



PHOTO COURTESY OF HIM BY CATHERINE H.

Shoppers perusing the selection at HIM by Catherine H. on Katonah Avenue.

community,” she added.

As is true of her women’s store, service at HIM is everything. “I care very much about service and the customer experience,” Ms. Hiriart said.

She said she explored the idea of selling menswear as an experiment — and a timely one — as it coincided with the fact that some of her favorite designers for women were starting to do things for men, too. “I ordered a few pieces for men for the holidays and put them in Catherine H.,” Ms. Hiriart said. “I tried making a corner of the store for men to see what would happen. I ordered two lines, but the more I was thinking about it, it didn’t feel right.” That’s when her landlord, the Goldfingers, suggested she rent the Katonah Avenue storefront which is located next to Ebba.

It was meant to be, she said. “The space is masculine on its own. It’s really beautiful. It’s a leap of faith — and voila.”

Ms. Hiriart said she went to New York City to have her clothing racks fabricated to her specifications. “They are plumbing material,” she said. “It’s very industrial. I wanted to create an ambiance of a very cool, very masculine men’s clothing store. Nothing trendy, nothing dressy, things that go with your jeans and a night out.”

She described the clothes as fashionable and tailored — “but not for a 20-year-old.” Offerings include “casual pants, but not khakis,” U.S.-made jeans, classic T-shirts and shoes. “You can find similar clothes online, but you won’t find the quality,” she assured. “I’m paying attention to cut and fabric.”

HIM’s owner said the boutique is for men who might wear a suit to work but don’t want to spend their time off in sweatpants. “The pieces they will find in my store will be a cool sweater, a cool jacket, a great sweatshirt,” she said. “I have belts and

jewelry from a Brooklyn designer. Accessories are from Canada and Portugal.”

“There will be a slight European look to the clothes,” she added, noting that several lines are from Germany and Italy, “but I am European.”

Filling out the merchandise mix for the store is a work in progress, she said. “I’m still researching artisans and lines. I won’t buy something unless I really love it. For example, I am still searching for the perfect men’s bag.”

HIM by Catherine H. held its “soft” opening March 29. An opening party is in the works.

“The demand is there,” Ms. Hiriart said. “People were coming in and buying things before we were officially open.”

HIM is located at 109 Katonah Ave., Katonah. The phone is 401-9292. Hours of operation are 7 days a week — Monday through Friday 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.