LONDON — YGM Trading, the owner of Guy Laroche, is poised to pocket another Western heritage brand, Aquascutum, and is part of a growing band of Chinese investors eager to snap up companies with potential for growth in their home market.

The Hong Kong-based public company, which also has distribution deals in Asia with brands including Charles Jourdan and J. Lindeberg, plans to purchase Aquascutum Ltd., the loss-making British arm of the brand — and the only part of the Aquascutum business that it does not already own.

On Wednesday, Aquascutum’s administrators, FRP Advisory, said they have entered into an exclusivity agreement with Aquascutum International Licensing Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of YGM Trading for the purchase of the business, which entered the U.K. equivalent of Chapter 11 last month.

YGM, which is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, owns Aquascutum’s intellectual property rights and controls its Asian business, which generates about 80 percent of global sales and 100 percent of the profits.

Although it is no money-spinner, the U.K. business will give YGM global control of the brand and the opportunity to build it in the U.S. and Europe, where it still has a strong name and heritage.

A long-term licensing deal is already in place with Ittierre SpA, which has a six-year contract to produce Aquascutum’s men’s and women’s ready-to-wear and accessories for the continental Europe, Russian and Middle Eastern markets. The first collections bowed for fall.

The acquisition, which is set to be completed next week, is more than simply an opportunity to cover more of the globe with Aquascutum trenches, outerwear and plaid umbrellas, however. It is part of an increasing drive by Chinese investors to help themselves to a slice of the profits from Western brands with growth potential in China.

“This is a serious trophy asset for YGM, a phenomenal purchase,” said Kim Winser, who served as chief executive.
create a subbrand, such as Fred Segal at Home. He said Sanford has created "a style guide," so all the products will look, feel and even smell the same, even though the products may be localized to the region.

Sandow said they are working with real estate developers and retailers to open Fred Segal stores around the world. "We'll control the creative and intellectual property of the center. All creative control and brands that are carried will be controlled through us," he said. Sanford noted that the first store would probably open early next year.

Fred Segal at Santa Monica and Melrose will operate as "is" and no new locations are planned, said Sanford. "They have the right to use the name. Everything else outside those boundaries in Santa Monica, we control," he said.

As for the tenants that the mat is under the Fred Segal moniker (such as Fred Segal + Interior Design Nation at Fred Segal, Babakul at Fred Segal, and several shops to expand using the Fred Segal name), they will have to work out a deal with Sanford to pay licensing fees. Sanford said he owns the Fred Segal name, which will be used in the San Francisco family for their use.

Ron Herman, who operates one of the women's and men's apparel stores within the Fred Segal complex on Melrose Avenue, is unaffected by the new deal. Asked to comment, Herman, who is Fred Segal's son-in-law, said it's business as usual.

Canato said a key priority will be establishing a vibrant Web site, focusing on "must-be-in lists," as reported in a WWD story in 2003, whether in Santa Monica. "Why do they have bigger outreach as much as they pay models. They have bigger outreach and are unique," he said. In preparation for this deal, Sanford has established another West Coast office, headed by Dan Levin, vice president of Culture + Commerce, who recently joined the firm from Beanstalk, the licensing company.

Sandow was founded in 2002. The company is made up of design, beauty, luxury, and fashion operations. Among its media properties are Interior Design, Luxe Interiors + Lifestyle, Stanford Review, Worth and Watch Journal. In the service area, its properties include Material ConneXion and Gen Art and for commerce and licensing, its brands include Culture+Commerce, Spaulding.com and, now, Fred Segal.

Fred Segal has operated as a mutual service area, its properties in the center was overhauled as a retail operation. The Honest Co. co-founders Song and Cianiato said. "This is a WWD story in 2003, whether in Santa Monica. "Why do they have bigger outreach as much as they pay models. They have bigger outreach and are unique," he said. In preparation for this deal, Sanford has established another West Coast office, headed by Dan Levin, vice president of Culture + Commerce, who recently joined the firm from Beanstalk, the licensing company.

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