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LOS ANGELES
FASHION WEEK

CALIFORNIA COLLECTIONS

Los Angeles Fashion Week kicked off with a lineup that included local designers as well as national and international labels. Highlights from the show can be found on page 7, and extended coverage appears at ApparelNews.net.

Saltwater Luxe

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Fall '16 Market Draws Mixed Reviews

By Andrew Asch, Deborah Belgum and Alison A. Nieder

For some, it was an opportunity to place Fall 2016 orders. For others, it was a chance to replenish depleted inventory. The recent **Los Angeles Fashion Market** officially opened on March 14 with a lineup that included permanent showrooms at the **California Market Center**, **The New Mart**, the **Cooper Design Space**, the **Gerry Building** and the **Lady Liberty** building as well as several trade shows, including **Designers and Agents**, **Coeur**, **Brand Assembly** and **Alt**.

Traffic reports varied, according to showroom owners and sales representatives. Some said a crowded calendar diluted the turnout while others said diligent preparation drew committed retailers ready to place solid orders.

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Fashion Design Chair at Otis Stepping Down After 35 Years

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

When Rosemary Brantley walked up the stairs in 1980 to the newly established fashion design department at the **Otis College of Art and Design**, then located near Los Angeles' MacArthur Park, she found only one office with a single telephone plugged into the corner and four classrooms.

As a fashion designer for such well-known labels as **Jaeger** and **Kasper** for **Joan Leslie**, she had never been a teacher, knew very little about running a college fashion design department and didn't have a clue about academia.

At the suggestion she become the first chair of the newly established department, she thought "it was the most farcical thing I had ever heard."

That was some 35 years ago. After more than three decades as the first and only chair of the fashion design department, Brantley is getting ready to step down on July 1 when the fashion design department moves from its present location at the **California Market Center** to the main campus of

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Axis Trade Show Planning LA Event in October

Axis, a lifestyle trade show for millennial women's brands, is coming to Los Angeles.

Vanessa Chiu, Axis' show director, announced that the trade show would produce its first West Coast dates in downtown Los Angeles in October. Specific dates and a venue were yet to be determined, she said. Axis is owned by Reed Exhibitions, the parent of lifestyle trade shows Agenda and Capsule. Axis has produced three separate show runs in New York. The most recent one was produced at Pier 92, where close to 200 brands exhibited.

Axis vendors had requested a Los Angeles show. An increasing number of their retail partners have been spending open-to-buy in Los Angeles, Chiu said. Also, the city has become even more prominent in fashion. "Saint Laurent did a show here," Chiu said of the heritage brand's celebrity-heavy fashion show at the Hollywood Palladium concert hall in February. "Major trend forecasts are made here. Everyone talks about how there needs to be a resurgence for trade shows, lifestyle and pop-up shops here."

The Los Angeles Axis show will look very similar to the New York show and offer the same categories: fashion, lifestyle, athleisure, swim, accessories, intimates, beauty and home. Vendors exhibit in 10-by-10 booths. Show staff provide tables and chairs.

Past vendors have included **The Park Showroom, Reebok, G-Shock, Hidden Jeans and Skingraft**. Retailers visiting the show in the past included **Asos, Barneys Japan Co. Ltd., Bloomingdale's, Everything but Water, Fred Segal, Free People** and

Galleries Lafayette, according to a trade-show statement.

Chiu said a point of difference with Axis is that the show staff is also the end consumers for the show's vendors. "We personally buy the brands at the show. We shop the stores that go to the show."

Show producers also put together art exhibitions and serve unique drinks such as kombucha at the show. For more information, email info@axcessshow.com.

—Andrew Asch

Wet Seal Maps Its Rebound

With new offices, new staff and new merchandise, **Wet Seal** put its rebound on display on March 16.

The once-prominent mall retailer emerged from bankruptcy in fall 2015. Since then, Melanie Cox, Wet Seal's chief executive officer, has been putting together the ingredients that she believes will power a turnaround for the 170-store chain.

The first looks of Spring/Summer 2016 from Wet Seal's new team started appearing in the retailer's stores in early March. The new looks are California-casual but not surf, Cox said. "Our goal was to quickly return to the original DNA of the brand, something that had been lost in recent years," Cox said to a presentation for bloggers. "Wet Seal was one of the first retail brands that captured that easy, California chic and brought it

to the national retail landscape."

Wet Seal's problems started when the company stopped making clothes with a California inspiration. "Over time they lost touch with the customer," Cox said of former management. "They lost the ability to provide the customer with what she wanted, and what was once a nimble and fast retail machine had slowed down to a very slow-to-react business model. We've changed that."

Wet Seal's new direction has come with great speed. Crucial executives such as Annette Hickey, vice president of apparel, tops and bottoms, joined the company Feb. 1. Kara Stangl joined last August as vice president of accessories.

On Feb. 20, the company moved into new digs in an office park in Irvine, Calif.—a less than five-minute drive from its store at the



Melanie Cox

PHOTO COURTESY WET SEAL

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Irvine Spectrum mall. It moved out of its longtime compound with a distribution center in Foothill Ranch, Calif., when the building's lease expired.

An e-commerce redesign and logos, including a secondary logo that referred to the store as "WS," also were introduced. Cox said that a new look for Wet Seal shops would be unveiled in the first quarter of 2017. But design refreshes for the retailer's fleet have appeared recently.

Other design focuses will include plus-size styles, which are currently only available online. "The tenets of our core values are reflected in our product offering, which is accessible and inclusive fashion. We will reintroduce ourselves to the market in new, fun, engaging and fashionable ways through all of our marketing efforts. We are about inclusivity, not exclusivity, and feel that our customer will start to feel that across all our various brand touch-points," said Angelo D'Agostino, the retailer's vice president of brand marketing.

Wet Seal's main focus is outfitting women ages 17 to 25 and giving them affordable, stylish clothes, Cox said. "Affordable" doesn't have to mean 'cheap,' Cox said during the presentation. "We have worked hard on affordable. We have worked hard on making comfortable clothes."

For the goals in its near future, Cox hopes to strengthen the retailer's gains.

"We will see steady growth in total penetration of sales in e-commerce, hopefully internationally. Our [bricks-and-mortar] stores will grow, and we will open new locations next year."

The market has generally been weak for retailers serving teens. **Tilly's Inc.**, also headquartered in Irvine, reported on March 16 a same-store-sales decline of 0.9 percent for the fourth quarter of its fiscal 2015 year. Same-store sales declined 9.5 percent for **Zumiez Inc.**, based in Washington state, for the fourth quarter of its 2015 fiscal year. The performance had beaten Wall Street estimates, said Liz Pierce of **Brean Capital** in a March 11 retail note.

For a long time, teen retailers have been in sharp competition with teens' fascination with smart devices. "Gadgets seem to dominate people's lifestyles," Pierce said. Paying bills for smartphone use can eat away at other diversionary spending.

"Also hampering the market, many retailers also complain about lack of newness in styles," Pierce said. "Vendors say that there are new things happening out there, denim is coming back in all different silhouettes, but it takes a while for them to start resonating."

During the blogger presentation, Wet Seal staff displayed installations of the brand's Spring/Summer 2016 looks. Hickey said that styles will be feminine and modern with a touch of bohemian. The customer is sensitive to value and mixes items from high-end and low-end brands. "She wants to look put-together."

Looks include fashion basics such as T-shirts, the bottoms style "soft shorts" and slouchy V-neck tops.

"The dresses and shirts business continue to be effortless," Hickey said. "They resonate with the customer now."—A.A.

Convert Streamlines Concept

San Francisco Bay Area retailer **Convert** closed its Berkeley, Calif., shoe store last month and reopened it as a clothing store. Next up, Convert cofounder Randy Brewer hopes to open more stores and introduce a clothing line. The Convert men's shirt line will take a bow in April. There is no schedule for opening new stores.

Brewer and cofounder Fred Whitefield opened the Convert stores as boutiques with a focus on "sustainable" clothing for men and women. These brands often use eco fabrics such as organic cotton. Footwear store **Convert Shoes** was located at 1844 Fourth St. in Berkeley, about a mile from the **University of California** campus. Its neighbors include boutiques for brands such as **Margaret O'Leary, Jigsaw** and **Erica Tanov**.

The footwear concept was shut down because it was hard to source shoe brands that were manufactured in a sustainable way in California, Brewer said. He also believed that if his group of stores were to expand, it needed to focus on one concept.

The 1844 Fourth St. shop, now doing business under the nameplate of Convert, has sister shops located at 1809B Fourth St. in Berkeley, which is across the street and a block away



Interior of Convert in Berkeley. Photo courtesy of Convert.

from the former footwear store. Convert also runs a San Francisco store at 556 Hayes St. The San Francisco store also made a change. Last month it changed from carrying only men's clothing to a boutique selling men's and women's clothing.

Brewer said his store's demographics had a sweet spot of people in their late-30s. "I'm blown away by it," he said. "It's everybody from teenagers to 80-year-olds. We have a lot of looks that are ageless. Those are the looks that sell the best; everybody can relate to it."

The Convert stores sell denim brands such as **Frame, Strom** and **Fidelity**. It offers basics lines such as **Velvet** and **Suzie Winkle** to fashion lines such as **Max 'N Chester**.—A.A.

LA Market *Continued from page 1*

Traffic stalls at CMC

Buyer traffic was down and sales were slow, according to many of the exhibitors at the California Market Center. Showroom owners blamed their sluggish business on the proximity of the humongous apparel trade shows in Las Vegas held last month to the market held this month. Stores weren't ready to grab another look at Fall clothing yet.

"It has been kind of quiet this time around," said Ida Hsiang, an account executive at the third-floor **Shu Shu** showroom, which carries such labels as **LuLu** and **YuLi**. "We've written some orders, but it hasn't been one of our stellar shows. It's so close to Las Vegas."

Julie Vandevent, who carries eight lines in her **JV Associates** showroom on the third floor, said her business was down at least 30 percent from last year. "It's been a little quiet," she noted. "I saw many of my regulars and a few out-of-territory people from Texas and Colorado."

At the temporary showroom for **Color Me Cotton** and **Click**, sales rep Wayne Mourry felt the show was just okay. "This show hasn't been that busy because of Las Vegas."

Several showroom owners felt that the Los Angeles Fashion Market in March should be combined with the **Majors Market** for department-store buyers in April, creating more buzz and vibrancy and giving specialty-store buyers a little breathing room between Las Vegas and the next big show.

At the **Select** show—a separate show for premium apparel, accessories and footwear held in the CMC's Fashion Theater—vendors were having mixed results.

For **G-Lish**—which has done the event at least 10 times

Festival season at The New Mart

Some New Mart showrooms were getting ready for the "festival" season and providing looks that will be worn at big events such as the **Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival** in mid-April in Indio, Calif.

"Knowing Coachella is coming, [retailers] are loading up for anything that is festival," said Eme Mizioch of the **Joken Style Showroom**. Sales for the showroom were divided evenly between Fall/Winter '16 and Immediates, Mizioch said. "If it was Immediates, it was inspired by Coachella."

One of the lines at the **Jackie B Showroom** focused on festival and rock 'n' roll imagery. It was the **Gypsy Heart** line, which made its debut at the **WDMAGIC** trade show in February. Tina Rani and Freddie Rojas, the cofounders of the line, showed vendors through the label's 40 categories such as outerwear and sweat bottoms as well as knits and henleys. Rojas is a veteran of Los Angeles' independent design scene. For Jackie Bartolo of the Jackie B showroom, business at the March 2016 business was good.

"We had a good market. We've been consistently busy," she said.

There was an ebb and flow of retail traffic, said Stacey Gossman of **The GIG Showroom**. "Tuesday was like the old days; it was fabulous," she said. "Monday was like the new days; it was medium." The showroom focused on **PVH Corp.** lines such as **Tommy Hilfiger** and **Calvin Klein**. Sales were reportedly good for lingerie brand **Maison Close**, Gossman said. "People want item-y lingerie. They want something a little more special, not just basics."

Matt Boelk of the **Groceries Apparel** brand wandered if the upcoming **CALA** trade show in San Francisco, sched-

before market, adding that they'll do the same when they show their collections at the **CALA** show in San Francisco and in Dallas later this month.

On the third day of market, there were multiple meetings going on at the **Lefties Showroom**, where showroom co-owner Ellen Cope said the first two days of market were also busy with buyers looking for Fall merchandise.

Cope said most of the appointments were West Coast retailers, but there were some majors, including **Saks**; e-tailers, including **Shopbop**; and some of the showroom's Japanese customers.

Lefties carries contemporary, athleisure and lifestyle collections including **Tori Prayer**, **Stone Cold Fox**, **Spiritual Gangster**, **Electric & Rose**, **Cleobella** and **Saint Grace**.

"Some stores buy a lot of our lines, so they are here for a good part of the day," Cope said, adding, "A lot of our brands are West Coast [-based]. That has worked well considering how the climate has been. Even our East Coast stores are buying blouses and layering pieces."

The staff at the **Castillo Showroom** was juggling multiple buyer meetings on the third day of market.

Representative Jessica Fong said traffic on the first two days of market was also brisk with buyers coming from across the Western U.S.

The showroom represents several collections—including **LAmade**, **Parks Project**, **Track & Bliss** and **Feed**—as well as guest collections, including **PLDM** and **Vuori**.

Challenging market at Gerry

Showroom owners at the Gerry Building were discover-



Ida Hsiang, with the Shu Shu showroom, at the CMC



Gabrielle Hoffman, with G-Lish, at Select at the CMC



The Lefties Showroom at the Cooper Design Space



The Castillo Showroom at the Cooper Design Space



Matt Boelk of Groceries Apparel at The New Mart



Freddie Rojas shows Gypsy Heart at The New Mart



Designers and Agents



Designers and Agents



A sign welcomes buyers to the Gerry Building.

to display the company's glittery cocktail handbags, headbands, bracelets, necklaces, purses, embellished blue jeans and T-shirts—the show was just okay. "We've seen some old customers and met some new customers," said Gabrielle Hoffman, co-owner of the brand, based in New York. "In general, the market all over has been difficult."

Hoffman had seen stores from as far away as Colorado, Oregon and northern California. Many were attracted to the booth by the shiny objects made in India.

Crystal Parra—working at the **Z&L Europe** booth, which showed bohemian-style sandals, beachwear, scarves and accessories made in India—thought the show was slower than the previous show in January. "It has been steady," she said.

This was the first **Select** show for **Maison Mère**, a new line of high-end cashmere and fine wool sweaters made in Italy that wholesale for \$120 to \$400. The Spring/Summer line of cotton sweaters wholesales for \$65 to \$200.

Gabriela Rochin, the company's operations manager, said the show had not been good for **Maison Mère** and she felt it wasn't the right show for the label. The company showed recently at **Coterie** in New York and got a lot of attention from Japanese retailers.

"I think we should probably go to **Brand Assembly** [a high-end show at the **Cooper Design Space**]," Rochin said.

uled for April 11–12, encouraged Northern California brands to not come to Los Angeles Fashion Market. "Attendance was down," he said of the March LA Fashion Market.

He also believed that lower retail traffic might be a result of assertive sales reps going on the road and visiting stores. Many stores owners have come to expect store visits, he said.

Retailers said to be visiting The New Mart included **Nasty Gal**, **Revolve**, **Shop Bop**, **Dillard's** and **B. Poy & Jo** in Los Angeles.

Brisk business at Cooper

Traffic was steady at the Cooper Design Space, where showroom owners and staff reported a good turnout from buyers looking to place Fall orders.

"It's been really great," said **Hatch** owner Kay Sides on the third day of market. "It's been a nonstopper."

Sides said she saw retailers from "all around," many of whom gave themselves plenty of time to shop the market.

"Everybody is really excited and happy to be here," she said.

Hatch carries contemporary fashion, activewear and accessories collections including **Twelfth Street by Cynthia Vincent**, **James Perse**, **Wilt**, **Baldwin**, **Woolrich** and **Stance**.

Sides said she and her team did quite a bit of preparation

ing that last year's warm weather across the country was having a hangover effect on buyers' shopping patterns for this year's Fall fashions.

Sarah Kirakossian at the **Arlene Henry Showroom** said buyers were wary about ordering too many goods and prefer to place orders closer to season to gauge their inventories.

Showrooms that made appointments with store buyers said they were having a halfway decent market, but walk-in business was down.

"It was busy because we made appointments," said Megan Tushar of the **Julie Walls** showroom, whose lines include **Nic + Zoe**, **Bobeau** and **NYDJ**.

Lara Lemmi, who represents **Komarov**, a Los Angeles label designed by former costume designer Shelley Komarov, said this show was not as busy as she had hoped.

Launchpad at D&A

After a seven-year-hiatus, Christopher Enuke, designer of denim lines **Oligo Tissew** and **Kasil**, introduced a denim line that is intended to challenge the five-pocket jean.

He introduced the **Kristopher Enuke** line at the Fall '16 run of the **Designers and Agents** trade show at **The New Mart** showroom building. "It is five-pocket," Enuke said of jeans in his new line. "But it is unconventional. It was intended to put fashion back in the jeans business."

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Italian Denim Mill Candiani Opens LA Design Center

Designers and denim brand owners turned out to celebrate the opening of the **Candiani Los Angeles Design Center** on March 16 in downtown Los Angeles.

Los Angeles' denim brands make up nearly 40 percent of business for the Italian denim mill, which has a similar center at its headquarters in Robecchetto con Induno, Italy.

The Los Angeles space will serve as a research and development center for U.S. den-

keep exclusivity for the customer, but we share all this laundry knowledge with the customer and their production partners."

Customers can also use the design center to host events with their sales force or retail partners, Candiani said. "Or even the final customer, [who] is interested in how the products are made," he said. "And we try to make it fun. To create the products is the most fun part."

Stocked with industrial washing and drying machines, a **Jeanologia** laser finishing machine, a spraying booth and stations where jeans can be hand finished, the Candiani Design Center uses less water than the standard dry cleaner, Candiani said.

The space has a modern exterior and a loft-like interior with exposed brick walls and a high ceiling.

"From outside, it's very modern and clean," Candiani said. "Inside it's also modern and clean, but it has the brick walls. It's bringing to Los Angeles what we have in Italy, which is a 78-year heritage."

Founded in 1938 by Luigi Candiani, the family-owned mill is now run by Luigi's grandson GianLuigi Candiani and



GianLuigi and Alberto Candiani

im labels to work with Candiani technicians on new wash techniques.

"We can custom design washes to take advantage of the potential of our denim," said Alberto Candiani, the company's global manager. "We engineer fabrics to be treated in a certain way that is cost effective and clean. This is a showcase of what we can do."

Candiani customers can come to the design center to test different finishing techniques. Once they find a technique they want to put into production, Candiani technicians will provide them with the "recipe" to take to their wash house.

"In LA, everyone is concerned about not looking like each other," Candiani said. "We



great-grandson Alberto Candiani. With 650 employees and an annual capacity of 25 million meters, Candiani considers itself Europe's largest denim mill and the "most sustainable denim mill in the world."

—Alison A. Nieder

Calendar

March 21

Coast
Miami Airport Convention Center
Miami
Through March 22

March 22

CALA
Fort Mason Center
San Francisco
Through March 23

March 24

"Fashion After 5" networking mixer presented by FGI-LA
Clifton's
Los Angeles

March 25

Splendid/Ella Moss Warehouse Sale
Cooper Design Space, 11th floor
Los Angeles
Through March 26

March 29

LA Men's Market
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through March 30

March 30

"A Fireside Chat With Rachel Pally," presented by FAB Counsel
Maker City LA

Los Angeles

Dallas Apparel & Accessories Market
Dallas Market Center
Dallas
Through April 2

FIG

Fashion Industry Gallery
Dallas
Through April 1

There's more
on ApparelNews.net

For calendar details and contact information, visit ApparelNews.net/calendar.

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LA Market *Continued from page 3*

D&A was created to be a forum for designers such as Enuke, said Ed Mandelbaum, cofounder of D&A. At the March 14–16 show, 106 booths exhibited. The number of booths dipped 5 percent compared to the D&A show in March 2015. “We could have filled up this show with three times the booths,” he said. “But size doesn’t matter for us. It’s finding new designers and keeping it special.”

Retailers walking the show included Los Angeles-area boutiques **Ron Robinson** and **Stacey Todd**. Also seen were Canadian retailer **TNT** and Brooklyn, N.Y., boutique **Bird**. Brands taking a bow at the show included **Pas de Calais**, a Japanese brand, and “Project Runway” alum **Melissa Fleis**. Other vendors included show veterans **JP & Mattie** and **JET/John Eshaya**.

Retail traffic was reportedly heavy Monday and Tuesday and kept a good level on the last day of the show. JP & Mattie cofounder Mattie Illel showed her line’s batiks from Rajasthan, India, and vintage-style embroideries from Thailand. “It was a good show,” Illel said. “We see the people we always see, mostly people from California.”

Matta, another brand that features Indian styles, sold Fall ’16 looks and Immediates, said Mary Ayscue, the wholesale manager. “This is the last market in the season,” she said. “People are apt to leave paper.”

New location for Coeur

After one season away from the **Los Angeles Fashion District**, the **Coeur** accessories and lifestyle trade show returned to set up in a new space on the top floor of the California Market Center.

With a view that took in downtown Los Angeles’ skyscrapers against a mountain backdrop, the show featured a tightly curated mix of 50 brands.

“We brought it back down to a highly selected group of lines that make sense,” said Coeur organizer Henri Myers. “There’s a little something for everyone.”

The show got off to a brisk start with buyers from boutiques including **Wendy Foster**, **New Stone Age**, **Merci Paris**, **Bow & Arrow**, **Mes Amis**, **Shipwreck** and **Lane Crawford** among the opening-day attendees.

Handbag designer Allison Burns has attended Coeur in the past, but this was the first time she had exhibited at the show. Burns recently relaunched her eponymous collection of made-in-Los Angeles bags.

“I always pride myself on made-in-LA, she said, adding that Japanese retailers always ask her to make sure the bags are marked “Made in LA.”

Burns said opening day was busy. “I placed a bunch of orders,” she said. “It’s going great.”

For the relaunch, Burns reintroduced her signature “Faithful” bag, a slouchy leather hobo style. She also added many new pieces, such as a two-tone, fold-over clutch.

Delia Kosowicz has shown New York-based **Jo** handbags at Coeur since the show launched in 2011. She praised Coeur’s curated mix and format that “stands out from the rest.”

Opening day was also quite busy, she said, adding that she saw a mix of new and existing customers.

“We tend to do really well on the West Coast. This aesthetic is appreciated,” Kosowicz said, adding that she saw retailers from California, Colorado, Utah and Oregon at the show.

The made-in-Mexico handbags feature classic shapes with subtle, special details. Several bags can be worn several ways. A handbag can convert to a tote, and another style has an adjustable strap.

Christina Oh, owner and designer of **Boulevard**, a Fullerton, Calif.-based leather-goods collection, estimated that this was probably her fourth time at Coeur. The collection of cheery wallets, zippered pouches, folders and card cases are printed with monograms, cheeky phrases (“Holy Chic”) and small images.

Wholesale priced from \$13 to about \$50, all the pieces can be monogrammed and personalized, Oh said.

Boulevard sells well at preppy East Coast stores in places such as Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts as well as in the South. On the West Coast, it sells well in stores in beach towns, but Oh said she was looking to expand her West Coast accounts.

Oh said she saw a “good flow of local stores” at Coeur as

well as some out-of-town retailers, including stores in Colorado and Florida.

Coeur’s exhibitors also include apparel collections such as Anita Arze’s line of sweater knits made in Bolivia and Peru.

Ojai, Calif.-based **Love Tanjane** introduced new hand-washed pieces in 100 percent linen as well as a sweatshirt fabrication knit and dyed in Los Angeles.

“I like super-light fabrics,” said designer Sonia Erneux, who met with a few potential new accounts on opening day but had booked appointments for the second day of the show.

New exhibitor Cody Montgomery was at Coeur on the suggestion of Erneux. Montgomery is the founder of **Totally Blow** a collection of made-in-America unisex and women’s clothing based in Joshua Tree, Calif.

Totally Blown specializes in casual pieces “distressed with shotgun.” The hand-dyed tees and sweatshirts feature a constellation pattern of holes made from shotgun pellets. The collection also includes hand-dyed kimonos and dresses.

“Our friends at Love Tanjane said we should do this show,” Montgomery said. “It’s turned out to be really good. We got about a dozen new customers.”



Theresa Matthew King and Christina Jones of Nux Activewear at ALT



Janie Franks of Uintah Collection at ALT



Boulevard’s Christina Oh, right, meets with a buyer at Coeur.

Brand Assembly’s high-end mix

There were nearly 120 brands showing at the March 14–16 run of the Brand Assembly show on the top floor of the Cooper Design Space, including a mix of new and returning exhibitors.

This was the first time at Brand Assembly for **Maison de Papillon**, a New York-based collection that blends the luxe lounge and lingerie looks with contemporary styling.

The line sells well in California, said Shriya Bisht, designer and cofounder, but this was the company’s first trade show on the West Coast.

“We want to reach out to potential buyers,” Bisht said, adding that she met with several new stores on the opening day of the show.

The company recently expanded its collection to include two- and four-ply Mongolian cashmere pieces as well as washable leather items. The average wholesale price point for the cashmere items is \$130, and for a leather jacket the average wholesale price is \$389.

Another new exhibitor was **Namche Bazaar**, a Los Angeles-based collection now in its third season. Designer Ainsley Cohen was showing the collection’s hand-loomed cotton and silk pieces, all made in India. Namche Bazaar sells in higher-end contemporary stores such as **10 Over Six**.

Namche Bazaar was showing in Brand Assembly’s emerging-brand section, which was located in the center of the trade-show space.

Cohen said she was looking to show her line in a relaxed environment and was pleased with the turnout at Brand Assembly.

“I’ve seen a lot of people—it’s a good mix of buyers,” she said, adding that she’d seen existing accounts as well as potential new ones.

This was the first time at Brand Assembly for Los Angeles-based **Gold Hawk**, which was fielding back-to-back appointments on opening day.

“We made appointments and all of them were here,” said representative Susan Chase, who added that buyers were visiting from all over the country, including “a few good surprises.”

Some buyers were looking for Fall merchandise, but most were looking for Immediate goods, Chase said. “We’re lucky to have the capability to provide Immediates,” she said. “It’s a win-win for our company and the stores as well.”

Lynn Rosetti, owner of the **#8 New York** showroom, was among the returning exhibitors at Brand Assembly. Rosetti represents several accessories collections, including **Poulette**, **Vanessa Lianne**, **Hare + Hart**, **Marie Turnor** and Rosetti’s own handbag line, **Oliveve**.

“We like LA,” Rosetti said. “We do really well here. The

people that write us come back, and they’re writing bigger orders.”

ALT Show bows at CMC

For the last two seasons, a show called **Shape** was organized by the California Market Center for the increasing number of activewear and yogawear collections popping up to serve the exercise crowd.

This season, the show’s name was changed to **ALT—Activewear & Lifestyle Tradeshow**—and expanded to include activewear, yogawear, beach/resort, swimwear and intimate apparel.

The show debuted during Los Angeles Fashion Market, taking place in the building’s 13th-floor penthouse and sharing space with the **Transit** shoe show. In the past, the Shape show was off on its own in the penthouse and separated from the shoe show, which was on the other side of the elevators.

The merger of the two in the same penthouse exhibition area was a bonus for ALT exhibitors because there were only 13 companies showing. On its own, the ALT show would have seemed lost in the cavernous open space, but there was more of a buzz of activity.

This was the third time **Nux Activewear** participated in

the activewear show, having attended the first two Shape shows. Nux Activewear, which launched in 2008, is based in Vernon, Calif., and manufactures its collection in the Los Angeles area. The label is known for its tie-dyed leggings and body-engineered jacquard designs knitted into the garment. Average wholesale prices range from \$28 to \$36.

Theresa Matthew King, the company’s sales manager, said the show had had its lulls but, overall, traffic had been steady. By the second day, King, and her sales colleague, Christina Jones, had seen a handful of new stores from as far away as Texas and Washington state as well as local stores from Manhattan Beach and other surrounding neighborhoods in the Los Angeles area.

Jones felt the show was attracting about the same amount of traffic as previous Shape shows, but buyers seemed to be lingering longer.

This was the first show for the **Mine** label of eco-friendly canvas and leather bags. Twin sisters Martha Tipper and Meredith Britt launched the bag line, made in New Jersey, two years ago. The bags, which have little sayings in them that change with the seasons, wholesale for \$60 to \$100.

They started doing sales on the West Coast because Britt and her family recently moved to Manhattan Beach. “We’ve definitely seen a fair share of buyers, especially from Palm Springs and San Francisco,” Britt said. “It has been a good experience, especially for being our first market here.”

This also was the first time at the show for the **Uintah Collection**, a relatively new label that is manufactured and designed in the Los Angeles area.

The activewear collection, designed by owners Heather Carlos and Janie Franks, wholesales for \$24 to \$70 and is strong on tribal and Indian prints. Franks said she saw a handful of accounts who stopped by and was encouraged to hear that some of them were actually opening up new bricks-and-mortar stores.

At Lady Liberty, warm weather helps attract buyers

As temperatures warmed up during LA Fashion Market, **One Showroom** introduced **MarleyClub**, a Brazilian swimwear line.

Kristen Aguilera, the showroom’s owner, said the March fashion market remains popular with buyers from around the nation and the world. “A lot of buyers like to come to Los Angeles. They like the weather. It’s a place where they can relax,” she said.

Aguilera called the March market one of the busiest markets of the year. For her, Monday and Tuesday were busy. “[Buyers] know that they have to get their orders in before deadlines,” she said. Fall deadlines are often scheduled in April.

Buyers dropping by One Showroom included **Neiman Marcus**, **Planet Blue** and **Saks Fifth Avenue**, she said. Lines represented at the showroom include **Blank NYC** and **Blank Men’s**, which debuted at the showroom for the March market.

Other lines were **Jachs Girlfriend**, a women’s contemporary line, and **Pop Active**, a Los Angeles-based athleisure line that features bold prints and anti-bacterial fabrics. Most of the lines retail for under \$100. ●

California Collections

Los Angeles Fashion Week began on March 13 with the Fashion Week LA shows and seminars at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. Next up was Art Hearts Fashion Week, which returned to the Taglyan Complex in Hollywood for its shows, which began on March 14. LA Fashion Week kicked off its second season in Los Angeles on March 17 in its new location at Columbia Square in Hollywood. Style Fashion Week also moved to a new location, the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, Calif., for its shows, which began on March 17 as well.

Extended coverage of Los Angeles Fashion Week appears at *Apparel-News.net*.

Cynthia Rowley Swim



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Saltwater Luxe



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Rosemary Brantley *Continued from page 1*

the Otis College of Art and Design, located in Westchester, near **Los Angeles International Airport**.

Jill Higashi Zeleznik, currently the fashion department's assistant chair, will become the acting chair while a global search starts in October to find a new chair.

Under Brantley's helm, the fashion design school has evolved into one of the most prestigious on the West Coast as well as a top fashion design school in the United States. Alumni include California womenswear designers Cynthia Vincent and Eduardo Lucero and swimwear designers Rod Beattie and Red Carter. Claire Chouinard, daughter of **Patagonia** founder Yvon Chouinard, graduated from the fashion program and is now working at the family company in Ventura, Calif.

Famed designers such as Bob Mackie, Isabel Toledo and Todd Oldham have routinely mentored classes. Over the years, working and teaching relationships have been established with major clothing companies such as **J Brand, Quiksilver, Lucky Brand, Perry Ellis, Joie** and **Lane Bryant**.

Fashion design students have gone on to work in New York for big fashion brands such as **Michael Kors, John Varvatos, Banana Republic, Abercrombie & Fitch, Polo Ralph Lauren** and **DKNY**.

But after more than 35 years of getting up at 4:45 a.m. to be at school by 7 a.m. and weekends often taken up with school events, Brantley said it was time to step down. She will remain the principal designer and business partner in her women's clothing label, called **Staples**, launched the same year Brantley took over the fashion design department.

This is a big change for the Texas native, who is known for her high-energy personality and nonstop enthusiasm for fashion and Los Angeles as a design center. "Personally I feel

students in his class at the old campus before the fashion department moved in 1997 to the CMC building.

"Honestly, I remember the first day I met Rosemary in a freshman orientation in the gallery on campus," he recalled. "She was a tornado of energy. She was wearing a red dress and came walking into the gallery, and you thought, 'Who is she?'"

He found her inspirational, a great teacher and a wonderful mentor. "She is very creative, incredibly hard working and has set amazing standards," he noted.

Red Carter, who also has his own self-named swimwear label and now lives in New York, graduated in 1992. He remembers Brantley as being as gorgeous as Grace Kelly and as tough as nails.

"Before I started school there I had never stitched anything before," he said. "When I finished, I was making garments for Bob Mackie."

He learned that the fashion business can eat you up and spit you out. "This business is not for the weak-hearted," he said. "If you don't have a thick skin and you don't learn to move and shake to keep your product going, you won't make it. Rose helped me create my backbone, and it is still intact."

Bob Mackie, who has mentored classes on designing eveningwear ever since the school opened, said Brantley always brought an amazing exuberance to the school.

"She was always pushing to do better and better and bring in interesting people," he said. "She's the one who did it."



Bob Mackie and Rosemary Brantley

Fashion roots

Brantley started her fashion career as a model in Dallas, having grown up in Irving, Texas. The father she grew up with, Bill Brantley, was a police officer for 28 years, and her mother, Barbara, was an executive secretary who told her that if she could type, everything would be okay in her life. "And I was so terrible at typing," Brantley said.

At the age of 16, she got a job go-go dancing on a runway with 11 other girls in a juniors showroom at the **Dallas Market Center** to attract buyers and show off the fashions of **Thermo Jack**.

One day, someone asked her to take over some clothing samples to a modeling agency for an upcoming fashion show. The owner of the agency took one look at the 5-foot-9

Brantley and put her in an upcoming fashion show. Brantley soon signed on with the **Kim Dawson Agency** and did several fashion shows for high-end department stores such as **Neiman Marcus** and **Sanger-Harris**.

Later, she was freelancing at the fashion office of Neiman Marcus, where she rubbed shoulders with internationally known fashion designers. She did a lot of modeling for designer Stan Herman, who went on to become president of the **Council of Fashion Designers of America** for 15 years and one of the founders of **New York Fashion Week** in Bryant Park.

Brantley told Herman she wanted to be a fashion designer, and he started the wheels turning to get her into the **Parsons School of Design**, where he taught in New York.

Soon Brantley got a call from Ann Keagy, the longtime chair of Parsons' fashion department, saying she was accepted to the school and could start classes the following week. That sounded wonderful, but her family didn't



The Otis fashion design class of 1984

that I need to find out who I am besides the fashion design chair of Otis. My job has been all-encompassing. Even having weekends off is something I almost don't know what it is," she said.

But she has felt incredibly lucky to have a career where she has worked every day with creative people.

Also, a heart attack last year made her reassess her life and what she wants to do. In addition, about six months ago, her biological father, who is 90 and lives in Canton, Texas, came into her life, and she would like to spend more time with him.

"I would like to explore who I am and find out what else I am good at," she noted.

Brantley has educated hundreds of design students, who fill the school's 24 classrooms, library and fitting studio. Rod Beattie, who has had his own self-named swimwear label for years, was one of the first students to study at Otis and has mentored several classes. He graduated in 1986 when there were about 25

Rosemary Brantley *Continued from previous page*

have the funds to pay for room, board and tuition. So her father, who worked as a part-time security officer at a bank, approached the bank president about getting a loan that would enable her to get her through the first semester.

With money being scarce, Brantley worked to get scholarships, which financed the rest of her four years. When she graduated in 1973, the school named her "Designer of the Year," and she immediately nabbed a job working at Jaeger, the large, venerable British apparel manufacturer. Her task was to design a Jaeger line for the U.S. market. Every month, she shuttled between London and New York and traveled around Europe looking for inspiration for the **Jaeger American Collection**.

It was in London that she met her husband, Peter Christian, who was working at the original **Hard Rock Café** there. They eventually moved to Los Angeles, where Brantley did design work for several clients and was traveling frequently.

Then she got a call from Ann Keagy, her former mentor at Parsons School of Design. The **Otis Art Institute**—as the college was called then—wanted to establish a fashion design department and merge with Parsons. Keagy was against the whole idea, but the Parsons board had overruled her. She called Brantley and said she would only bless the merger if Brantley would be the fashion chair.

"Ann called and said, "California is a very bad scene for fashion. It is all about the color turquoise and coral. No one has any taste out there," Brantley recalled. "But she said if the Otis fashion design department was going to go forward, she wanted me to be the chair."

Brantley visited the campus, which was located at the time across the street from MacArthur Park in a rundown neighborhood near downtown Los Angeles, and the most amazing thing happened. "I walked into that old building and it just reeked of old painting oils," she recalled. "All these things about school came back to me and the importance of what school has done for me."

She accepted the job and was soon faced with the daunting task of starting with hardly anything. When she took over, there were only three professors on staff, including herself.

"For the next three years the students referred to themselves as guinea pigs," Brantley recalled. "I said, 'Stop calling yourselves that.' But in retrospect, that is what they were." ●

PLM Helps Moods of Norway Do Biz 'In Season'

On runways in Oslo and Los Angeles, the **Moods of Norway** fashion label has been busy, having displayed looks from its Autumn/Winter 2016/2017 season in the past four weeks.

The Scandinavian fashion brand, which runs a major Los Angeles office, also made a technology announcement recently. After 12 years in business, Moods of Norway adopted its first product lifecycle management system. PLM software manages a product's development from design to placement on the shop floor.

Moods is working with **Gerber Technology's YuniquePLM V6** management software. Thomas Frodahl, Moods' product director, said that the software program had given his company a strategic edge as the company shifts to an operation where it only sells "in season." With an "in-season" discipline, the label must monitor and adjust buying volumes to sales progress. It reduces the risk of excess stock at the end of the season, Frodahl said. He works in Moods' Oslo office.

"[YuniquePLM V6] enables us to be quick on our feet and, at the same time, be conscious about our product cost," Frodahl said.

PLM can consolidate data on a wide array of information, such as costs for freight-on-board prices, landed-duty prices, gross margin—things that may not be on a creative team's radar but could spell profit or disaster in the market, Frodahl said.

"If a trim cost changes, we can see how this affects our overall gross margin percentages," Frodahl said.

YuniquePLM V6 software also offers updates such as the software's "integrations" or partnerships with programs such as **Adobe Illustrator**. "The system now also provides our designers an easy way to update sketches and artwork," Frodahl said.

Moods' adaption of PLM came at a time when Yunique was making major changes in its software. Moods began to work with the system around the time the software pub-

lisher introduced its YuniquePLM In The Cloud program. Clayton Parker, a YuniquePLM product manager, said the cloud-based system gives companies an opportunity to work with PLM without acquiring separate machines or hardware to run the programs on. They could run the PLM programs on whatever machines were already being used by the company or even devices such as smartphones.

Along with YuniquePLM In The Cloud, the company offers its flagship programs plmOn and srmOn, which offer line management, digital asset management, materials management, specifications management, quotation and bid management, sample and production planning, and process tracking and management.

Cloud-based services have made PLM more affordable to small- and mid-size companies, said Jill Mazur, an independent business consultant focusing on technology. "Most larger companies have some sort of PLM, so the natural progression is to look to smaller companies for new sales," she said.

This year will be a time of growth for Moods of Norway. It is scheduled to open two more stores in Norway, bringing its store fleet to more than 18. Stateside, it wholesales goods to **Trunk Club**, a subscription service retailer owned by **Nordstrom Inc.** On March 15, it showed some of its looks at **FWLA** runway shows at **Union Station** in downtown Los Angeles.

Since 2013, Moods of Norway has run a flagship store at 7964 Melrose Ave. in Los Angeles, which is devoted to its branded clothes for men and women, said Stefan Dahlkvist, Moods' president for its North America region. With a slogan of "Happy Clothes for Happy People," the brand has offered an array of looks over the years ranging from outrageous tuxedos to sweaters, jeans and dresses, many of which make some nod to Norwegian rural culture. The label's main logo is a gold Norwegian tractor.—*Andrew Asch*



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