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FASHION MILESTONE

Skimgraft, the Los Angeles collection designed by Jonny Cota, celebrated its 10th anniversary with a high-energy choreographed performance at a private club in downtown Los Angeles. For more from the event, see p. 6.

QVC: Living Large With First West Coast Distribution Center

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Everything about **QVC Inc.**'s first West Coast distribution center in Ontario, Calif., seems big.

The 30-year-old cross-channel retailer, headquartered in West Chester, Pa., recently announced the grand opening of the compound, located less than 40 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. When it reaches its full capabilities in 2020, the new D.C. will utilize 1 million square feet of space—or more than 22 football fields.

The Ontario site is anticipated to handle more than 20 percent of QVC's total shipments. Its existing distribution network has shipped 570,000 units in a single day, according to a QVC statement. It currently runs four other distribution centers—in Suffolk, Va; Lancaster, Pa; Rocky Mount, N.C.; and Florence, S.C.—all of which will remain open.

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TRADE SHOW REPORT

Loyal Retailers Shop the FMNC Show in Northern California

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

The show floor at the Aug. 21–23 run of **Fashion Market Northern California** was not as full as the April and October events, but exhibitors said a faithful following of Northern California retailers shopped the floor and placed orders at the event, held at the **San Mateo Event Center**.

One factor helping attendance was that the biannual **San Francisco International Gift Fair**—held in February and July—at the **Moscone Convention Center** was canceled this summer because renovations are going on at the event space. The gift show will return after remodeling is completed.

“August is a wonderful fill-in show, especially for accessories,” said Cynthia Zahm, who represents several acces-

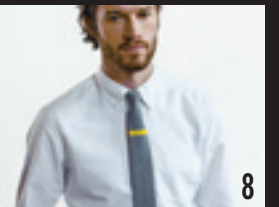
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Forever 21 Sues Brandy Melville for Copyright Infringement

In the world of copyright lawsuits, the tables have turned with **Forever 21** stepping up to sue a fellow teen retailer for allegedly knocking off a fabric print that Forever 21 said it copyrighted nearly two years ago.

On Aug. 18, Forever 21 sued **Bastiat USA Inc.**, which does business in the United States as **Brandy Melville; Thomas Aquinas**, a California corporation that does busi-

ness as Brandy Melville; and Stephen Mar-

san, cofounder of Brandy Melville, whose U.S. offices are in Santa Monica, Calif.

In the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, Forever 21 claims that last spring it became aware that Brandy Melville was selling a dress whose fabric design "completely copies Forever 21's design and which is protected by Forever 21's copyright."

Under current law, original prints or graphics on clothes can be copyrighted as

they are considered artwork. Forever 21 purchased the Brandy Melville dress online for \$38.62, which included shipping and handling, to show how it was similar to a Forever 21 romper selling for \$15.90 made from a copyrighted print that Forever 21 said is the same print used in the Brandy Melville dress.

Forever 21 is asking that Brandy Melville stop selling clothing with that particular design, that it turn over its profits made from the dress, for damages to be determined at trial and for attorneys' fee. Calls to Brandy Melville's offices in Santa Monica were not returned by press time.

Brandy Melville is a relatively new retailer to the teen circuit in the United States. The chain was founded in the early 1990s in Italy by Stephan Marsan and his father, Silvio, an Italian entrepreneur.

The first U.S. store opened in 2009 in the Westwood area of Los Angeles, near the **University of California, Los Angeles**. The retailer now has 15 stores in California; a number of stores in New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut; two outposts in Hawaii; and one in Texas. The Brandy Melville brand is also carried by some **Nordstrom** stores.

The fact that Forever 21 is suing someone else for copyright infringement appears unusual considering the Los Angeles retailer has been sued more than 50 times for copyright infringement. Designers Anna Sui,

Diane von Furstenberg and Philip Lim have gone to court accusing Forever 21 of stealing their work.

Last year, **H&M** sued Forever 21 over a beach tote bag that had a similar palm-tree print and the same message on the side: "Beach Please."

One case in Southern California actually went to trial in 2009 when high-end label **Trovata Inc.**, started in 2002 by four college friends, took Forever 21 to court in a trade-

dress lawsuit, not a copyright-infringement suit, charging the retailer copied Trovata's designs right down to the buttons and labels.

The suit alleged infringement of several garments, including a hoodie, dotted blouse, cardigan, a striped polo shirt and a Henley with mismatched, oversize buttons.

The case ended with a hung jury, and a new trial was expected when Trovata and Forever 21 settled out of court.

—Deborah Belgum



Brandy Melville dress



Forever 21 romper

ness as Brandy Melville; and Stephen Mar-

san, cofounder of Brandy Melville, whose U.S. offices are in Santa Monica, Calif.

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Beer Named Western Regional Sales Manager at CIT

The CIT Group Inc. named Darrin Beer Western regional sales and portfolio manager for the company, replacing Mitch Cohen, who has retired.

"Darrin has more than 25 years of financial-services experience and has been an important member of our Commercial Services team since 1999," Heller said in a company statement. "He brings tremendous knowledge and experience to this new role and will provide strong leadership to the Western regional team as we continue to offer excellent service to our new and longstanding clients in the region."

Beer was previously Western regional client credit manager at CIT. He joined the financial-services firm in 1999 when CIT acquired **Heller Financial Inc.**, where Beer was senior account executive. He was also leasing broker with **Financial Industry Consultants**. Beer is based in Los Angeles and reports to Marc Heller, presi-

dent of CIT Commercial Services.

"I am excited to be taking on the management of CIT Commercial Services' Western regional team," Beer said in a company statement. "I look forward to working with this team of seasoned professionals to continue to provide financial services that help consumer product companies grow and further build our relationships throughout the region."

CIT Commercial Services provides factoring and financing to consumer product companies, including providing tools to increase sales, improve cash flow and reduce operating expenses. The company provides clients with real-time credit approvals and comprehensive accounts-receivable information. CIT clients range from \$2 million small businesses to giants with \$1 billion in annual sales. Founded in 1908, CIT has more than \$65 billion in assets.

—Alison A. Nieder



Darrin Beer

Gerber Technology Shares Sold to American Industrial Partners

San Francisco-based private-equity firm **Vector Capital** has sold its shares in software and equipment maker **Gerber Technology** to **American Industrial Partners** for an undisclosed amount.

Tolland, Conn.-based Gerber Technology provides software and system solutions to more than 78,000 customers worldwide working in the aerospace, construction, furniture, fashion and apparel, transportation, technical textiles, packaging, wind energy, and sign and graphics industries. The company's products include CAD software for pattern design and grading, PLM (product lifecycle management) software and automated systems for material preparation and production.

Vector Capital has owned Gerber Technology since 2011, when it took the company private. Since then, Gerber Technology has invested in innovation to release new products, streamlined its manufacturing operations and expanded its international presence.

"With the full support of Vector, we have invested to broaden our product offerings and expand our global reach to provide customers with automation solutions that re-

duce their time and expense to market," said Michael Elia, chief executive officer of Gerber Technology, in a company statement. "Vector has been a great partner in transforming Gerber into a world-class leader in automation solutions."

Based in New York, American Industrial Partners is a middle-market private-equity firm that specializes in buying industrial



Harrison Roday, AIP associate; Graham Sullivan, AIP partner; Mike Elia, Gerber Technology CEO; Eric Baroyan, AIP partner; and Justin Fish, AIP partner

businesses headquartered in North America. The company has completed more than 50 acquisitions and invests in corporate divestitures, management buyouts, recapitalizations and going-private transactions of businesses with revenues of \$100 million and up.—Alison A. Nieder

Hanjin Shipping Bankruptcy Causes Havoc at LA Ports

Importers trying to extract merchandise from **Hanjin Shipping Co.** vessels docked at LA's two ports were being told to pay \$400 to \$800 extra to retrieve their containers.

Hanjin Shipping Co., a South Korean shipping line, declared bankruptcy in South Korea on Aug. 31, putting the company's entire shipping operation in limbo. Ships leaving ports around the world have been told to drop anchor and stay put until further notice, sources said.

Three Hanjin container ships carrying a total of 10,000 containers were anchored off the coast of Southern California, awaiting instructions about what to do, said Capt. J. Kip Louttit, executive director of the **Marine Exchange of Southern California**, which tracks all the vessels headed for the **Port of Los Angeles** and the **Port of Long Beach**.

"We have been told the ships have been told to stop," Louttit said, noting Hanjin cannot pay its docking fees and terminal costs right now. "We called the [shipping] agents and said, 'What is going on?' and they said they were told to stop."

A fourth ship, the *Constanza*, which is owned by Hanjin but operated by **NYK**, was being allowed to dock in the afternoon of Sept. 1 at the **Yusen** terminal at the Port of Los Angeles, Louttit said, because NYK is responsible for all costs and charges at the port.

With thousands of cargo containers stuck on Hanjin Shipping vessels around the world, importers are panicked about what to do. Customs brokers' phones have been ringing off the hook. "Right now it is sit and wait," said Debra Taylor, a customs broker for **Alba Wheels Up International** in Inglewood, Calif.

Taylor said importers trying to fetch their containers already on the docks were told they would have to pay at least \$400 extra to guarantee that the terminals get paid. "Truckers haven't been able to return their empty containers or chassis at the Hanjin terminal and now they are trying to figure out what to do," she said.

The situation is particularly critical at the Port of Long Beach, where Hanjin is a majority owner of the **TTI** terminal and does most of its business. It also uses two other Long Beach port terminals. The Port of Long Beach said it is not letting incoming Hanjin vessels dock and not releasing any Hanjin containers from terminals. It is also not accepting export loads for Hanjin ships.

Nate Herman, senior vice president of supply chain at the **American Apparel & Footwear Association** in Washington, D.C., said he is trying to get as much information out to AAFA members to help resolve the situation. "We started to reach out to the Federal Maritime Commission to see what kind of action they can take to help the situation," Herman said.

The Federal Maritime Commission, an independent government agency that regulates the country's international ocean transportation, issued a statement saying it is aware that Hanjin Shipping has filed for court receivership and that this is "causing uncertainty among the American shipping community about cargo in transit with Hanjin."

The FMC said that it has no jurisdiction when it comes to resolving these bankruptcy claims and does not interfere in legal actions between third parties. The FMC suggested that shippers consult with their attorneys about what remedies can be taken.—*Deborah Belgun*

Thousands of Fake Ferragamo Shoes Seized at LA Ports

Nearly 8,000 pairs of shoes bearing fake "Salvatore Ferragamo" labels recently were seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

The 7,800 shoes arrived in two separate shipments from China on July 20. If they had been real Ferragamo shoes, their retail value would have been \$4.3 million.

"These seizures demonstrate the high level of skill and vigilance of our officers in protecting the intellectual-property rights of companies and individuals as well as preventing the proliferation of counterfeit luxury footwear, potentially damaging our national economy," said Sergio Espinoza, CBP's acting port director for the Los Angeles/Long Beach Seaport.

Customs officials said the amount of knock-off merchandise seized at the nation's ports in fiscal 2015 amounted to \$1.35 billion, up 10 percent from the previous year. The top five countries sending those counterfeit goods are China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Romania and Turkey. China accounted for 52 percent of the value of the goods seized in 2015.



Examples of counterfeit Ferragamo shoes seized at the ports

Most counterfeit goods are sold on websites and in underground outlets or swap meets. Government officials said profits from many counterfeit operations are used by drug cartels or criminals involved in illicit activities.

Apparel, electronics and footwear make up the greatest number of counterfeit and pirated items seized by U.S. customs officials.—*D.B.*

QVC *Continued from page 1*

In four years, 1,000 people are expected to work at QVC's California distribution center. The new center is intended to deliver QVC orders faster and more efficiently to people on the West Coast, said James Reid, vice president of distribution operations at QVC.

QVC started operations on cable in 1986 and has kept pace with the fast-changing technological environment. Consumers can buy fashion, jewelry and electronics as well as beauty products and homewares through the company's e-commerce and mobile shopping.

Well-known designers such as Bob Mackie have sold clothes on QVC. Celebrities seen on the channel have included Nicole Richie selling her **Nicole Richie Collection** and Ellen De Generes representing a home décor line.

Apart from theatrical projects, QVC has turned into Mackie's main business. Did he expect to be a QVC star when he started at the business in 1991? "Never in a million years," he said. Friends encouraged him to take a chance on QVC. He wasn't entirely sold on the project at first. However, it was not much of investment of time. He sold his scarves and jewelry a few times every couple of months on the stage at QVC's main studio. It had a bank of telephones beside it where orders were taken. He remembers that after pitching products at shows, salespeople had to stay at QVC and ship goods that they sold. Fast forward a quarter century, salespeople no longer ship what they sell because they often sell hundreds and thousands of orders. Currently, Mackie works at QVC monthly selling his separates. "It's affordable," he said of his QVC products. "It's not ridiculously cheap. [QVC] does not want returns because things are not made well. That's the whole point. It



QVC executives and Ontario city councilmembers cut ribbon for distribution center



QVC distribution-center workers at CEO Mike George's speech



Exterior of QVC distribution center



QVC CEO Mike George

is a bargain but is well made. They're very fussy about that."

According to its second quarter 2016 results, which were released on Aug. 5, QVC's American e-commerce revenue increased 11 percent to \$727 million. E-commerce was 51 percent of the company's total U.S. revenue. The company's range is worldwide, however. Its programming is seen throughout the globe in places ranging from the United Kingdom and Germany to China and Japan.

QVC's U.S. revenue increased 2 percent to \$1.4 billion in the second quarter. QVC has not been able to avoid the tough times that affected much of U.S. retail this year. Mike George, chief executive officer and president of QVC, reported a solid business during its most recent second quarter. "Late in the quarter, we experienced a deceleration in de-

cretionary income years, and a new generation has other alternatives. The game is changing."

Another looming issue for QVC is the success of social networks. When QVC started in the Reagan era, it served as a social network. Callers to various QVC programs loved talking to program hosts and each other on air, Rosenblum said. But that function is increasingly challenged by the endless array of social-media sites.

One thing that has helped QVC in the past, however, is that it has been great at building audience loyalty, Rosenblum said. Over the past decades, the company has developed a unique environment that has kept its audience engaged and buying goods, which has been an increasingly elusive quality in the recent past. ●

August Business Tough for Many

August is considered one of the crucial months for the Back-to-School season, and it was tough for many retailers.

The Buckle Inc.—the Nebraska-headquartered purveyor of jeans, footwear and accessories—posted a decline of 14.8 percent for its same-store sales in August. **Cato Corp.**, a Charlotte, N.C., retailer with a fleet of more than 1,300 stores, reported a decline of 8 percent in its same-store sales. “August same-store sales continued our negative trend and remain well below our expectations,” said John Cato, the retailer’s chairman, president and chief executive officer.

Gap Inc.’s Old Navy Global division posted a 1 percent increase for its same-store sales, but its sibling divisions reported declines. **Banana Republic Global** posted a 10 percent decline, and **Gap Global** reported a 5 percent decline. Old Navy beat forecasts, however. The discount chain was predicted to report a 1.8 percent decline, said Ken Perkins, president of market-research firm **Retail Metrics Inc.** Wall Street forecast a drop of 2.4 percent for Banana Republic and a 1.5 percent decline for Gap Global.

L Brands Inc., the parent company of **Victoria’s Secret**, provided a bright spot for

the month’s business. It reported a comp-sales increase of 2 percent during August.

Those companies posting quarterly reports also relayed stories of a tough summer. **Abercrombie & Fitch Co.** reported a 4 percent decline in its same-store sales for its second quarter of its fiscal year, which was announced Aug. 30 by Arthur Martinez, the

August Retail Sales

	\$Sales (in millions)	% Change from yr. ago	Same-store sales % change
The Buckle Inc.	\$87.20	- 14%	-14.8%
Cato Corp.	\$62.00	- 7%	- 8.0%
Gap Inc.	\$1,170.00	-2%	-3.0%
L Brands Inc.	\$852.90	+3%	+2.0%

Information from company reports. Zumiez Inc., a chart regular, will report August results Sept. 8.

company’s executive chairman. “Flagship and tourist locations continued to account for the vast majority of the comparable-sales decline as traffic remained a significant headwind,” he said.

Bebe Stores Inc. also reported a tough quarter. On Sept. 1, the San Francisco Bay Area-headquartered company announced its fourth-quarter results for its 2016 fiscal year. Same-store sales decreased 4.6 percent during the quarter. —*Andrew Asch*

Mahoney Named CEO at Manhattan Beachwear

Manhattan Beachwear named Kevin F. Mahoney chief executive officer of the Cypress, Calif.-based company.

Before joining Manhattan Beachwear, Mahoney held executive positions at apparel companies **Big Strike**, **Cynthia Vincent**, **NYDJ**, **Hartstrings**, **Chaps Ralph Lauren** and **The Arrow Shirt Co.** He takes over the CEO position from Allan Colvin, who is stepping down from the job.

“Manhattan Beachwear is a best-in-class leader in women’s swimwear, activewear and resortwear and is well positioned for growth in the near, mid and long term,” Mahoney said in a company statement. “Manhattan



Kevin F. Mahoney

Beachwear’s founders have done an outstanding job building the company, and I look forward to applying my core competencies in taking the firm to the next level of sales growth and profitability.”

Manhattan Beachwear designs and manufactures women’s swimwear, activewear and resortwear under the **La Blanca**, **Maxine**, **24th & Ocean**, **Bikini Lab**, **2 Bamboo**, **Green Dragon** and **Pink Lotus** labels and holds licensing agreements with **Polo Ralph Lauren**, **Lauren Ralph Lauren**, **Chaps Ralph Lauren**, **Trina Turk**, **Trina Turk Recreation**, **Nanette Lepore**, **Kenneth Cole New York**, **Kenneth Cole Reaction**, **Hobie**, **Lucky** and **Sperry**. —*A.A.N.*

Calendar

Sept. 2

Bread and Butter
Arena Berlin
Berlin
Through Sept. 4

Sept. 4

Londonedge
Business Design Centre
London
Through Sept. 6
Riviera by Mode City
Palm Beach Casino
Cannes, France
Through Sept. 6

Sept. 6

Milano Unica Shirt Avenue
Rho Fieramilano
Milan, Italy
Through Sept. 8

Sept. 7

NE Materials Show
Doubletree by Hilton
Danvers, Mass.
Through Sept. 8
CentreStage
Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre
Hong Kong
Through Sept. 8

Sept. 8

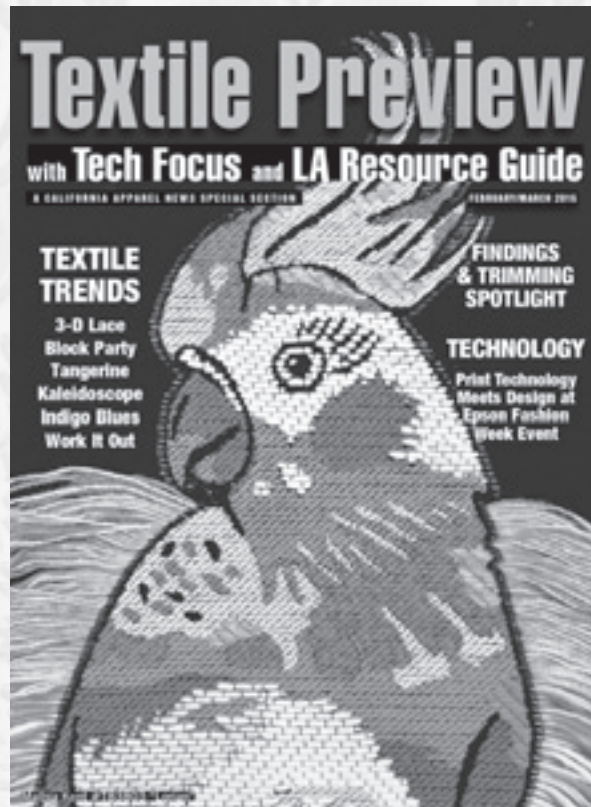
Surf Expo
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
Through Sept. 10
Imprinted Sportswear Show
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
Through Sept. 10

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on ApparelNews.net.

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

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FMNC *Continued from page 1*

sories lines that include jewelry and scarves. “The fact that there was no gift show hopefully means it will bring some of those people to our show, especially those who buy accessories and fashion items.”

Zahm, who is based in Corte Madera, Calif., opened some new accounts and noted that retailers were a little more upbeat about the economy. “I have been out on the road, and the first half of the year was tough,” she said. “But the retailers who came to our show were ready to buy.”

The August show, where Holiday/Resort collections are displayed, always occurs one week after the big apparel and accessories trade shows in Las Vegas, which means that fewer vendors are at the market. But buyer traffic was up this August compared to last August, said Mary Minser, who is the spokesperson for FMNC as well as a Los Angeles showroom owner who represents several lines.

The San Mateo show is a must-attend event for salespeople representing Europe-

fleece outerwear and accessories, noticed that stores are not planning ahead like they used to and are relying more on closer-to-the-season orders. “A lot of people were still buying for Fall delivery after seeing what the summer brought them,” she said. “Also, the buyers like to walk the show instead of setting up appointments. They will set up appointments with vendors they need to see to get their production orders in, but they like to walk the aisles.”

To keep the show more interesting for those browsing buyers, FMNC organizers rotate vendors’ locations so that they are not always in the same place. “All the different reps move to different areas at each show so it is a new show for us and for the buyers,” Muller explained.

Nancy Prickitt, who represents several accessories lines, went into the show with modest expectations but was surprised by the number of retail buyers who attended. “The health of the stores is very strong in Northern California,” she said.

Orders for her jewelry line, **Liquid Met-**



Cynthia Zahm



Nancy Prickitt and Jessica Moore



Business was busy at Stan and Alyssa Morris' booth.

an lines, which have earlier cut-off dates for orders than American-designed lines. That was one of the reasons that Melody Fast was exhibiting at the August show.

“Because of those European lines, we do really well,” said Fast, whose **Melody Fast Sales** showroom is at the **California Market Center** in Los Angeles. Her European lines include **Transparente** from Germany, **Grizas** from Lithuania and **Luukaa** from Turkey. “August is not as big of a show as our other shows, but we get to spend more time with buyers. We were three people at the show, and we were constantly busy.”

Northern California retailers at the show were in an upbeat mood, but Alanna Unkovich, the Western-region sales manager in Los Angeles for **Mododoc**, a lifestyle collection of casual clothing, said buyers seem to be shopping around more. “They are not necessarily cautious, but they are trying to make the right buys for them,” she observed.

Buyers were placing orders for mostly Holiday and some Spring, which Mododoc will officially debut in October.

Patricia Muller, a sales representative in San Carlos, Calif., for **Janska**, a line of

al, were up 25 percent over last year and sales jumped 45 percent for **Rapti**, her line of Nepali-made cashmere scarves, which wholesale for \$19.

Sales for her **Hobo** bags and wallets inched up slightly even though the Spring collection doesn’t debut until October. “I didn’t expect a lot from the August show, but I was pleased,” she said.

Kathy Franz, whose **Kathy Franz Collection** represents several fashion accessories lines, said she picked up 15 new accounts at the show. “The stores were fairly upbeat, and we saw a lot of them,” she said. “Every buyer who comes into the show is really a buyer. **Paisley Road** scarves turned out to be my No. 1 line.”

Michael Farrell, a sales rep in San Rafael, Calif., who has never skipped a show, agreed that buyers are shopping more cautiously and placing orders closer to season. That is why three years ago he started his own line, **Michael Farrell**, which does a lot of Immediate orders for its tops and dresses, whose wholesale prices range from \$18 to \$36. “I always have a good show there,” he said. ●

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Courtney Allegra to Open on Melrose



Alexander Masson and Courtney Allegra

Courtney Allegra started showing her self-named line as a 15 year old showing her collection at LA Fashion Week events and later, in July, at Miami's **Funkshion** runway shows. Her next act—as a 19 year old—is retail. Allegra held a preview party for her boutique, also named **Courtney Allegra**, at 7224 Melrose Ave. in Los Angeles on Aug. 25. The store's formal opening is Sept. 10.

The all-white 2,500-square-foot shop is focused on Courtney Allegra's swimwear. Her Resort 2017 collection was inspired by the Amazon rainforest. Colors include earth tones, and fabrics include microsuede. A significant piece in the collection is the "UB" top, which is a high-neck razorback top that reveals "undercleavage" instead of cleavage," she said.

"I like to mix skimpy cuts with fun prints that

make people laugh," she said. The Courtney Allegra shop's retail price points range from \$40 for bikini separates to \$120 for maillots.

The Melrose store was financed by e-commerce sales from Courtney Allegra's website (www.courtneyallegra.com). Allegra's streetwear and leatherwork are also sold at the boutique, which features lush dressing rooms with shag carpets, chaises lounges and palm trees flanking the rooms.

Courtney Allegra noted that her store will offer work from a few emerging designers. More room might have to be made for her label's colorful streetwear. She forecast that demand for it will increase. But her label's focus remains on swim. In the future, Allegra said, she would like to do a swim boutique in Miami.

—Andrew Asch



Kiara Belen and Courtney Allegra



"Project Runway" designer Michael Knight



Janice Dickenson and Courtney Allegra



Skingraft Celebrates 10th Year With Fashion Performance in DTLA

In recent years, Los Angeles label **Skingraft** has been showing its men's and women's collections at **New York Fashion Week**. But to celebrate the label's 10th anniversary, designer Jonny Cota and his brother and company cofounder, Christopher Cota, hosted a fashion show and party in downtown Los Angeles on Aug. 26.

The **RVCC** private club inside the **Reserve Lofts** set the scene for the high-voltage performance. Rather than a traditional runway show, dancers were dressed in the latest collection, titled **Primal**. In a performance choreographed by Danny Dolan,



Jonny Cota



the dancers were set inside a circle surrounded by cool-white neon lights. As they whirled past, guests got a glimpse of the collection, which stayed close to Skingraft's roots. Using a palette of black, white and gray with a pop of one color, a deep burgundy, Cota offered layerable pieces featuring plenty of subtle details. There was a double-layer cut-away coat with sharply angled labels and quilted detailing and an elongated bomber jacket with top-stitched leather sleeves. There were leather jackets and color-blocked knits in black and gray layered over leggings, shorts or slouchier trouser styles. Two oversized styles proved perfect for the performance—a leather-trimmed black poncho that ended in a trio of white stripes and an oversize white shirt with a hem that hung to the model's knees.

The show was followed by a butoh dance performance by Austin Westbay followed by LA drag performer Squeaky



Blonde, who sang Nina Simone's "Wild Is the Wind" to close out the evening.

The cavernous **RVCC** space also housed an installation of archival Skingraft pieces and a pop-up store where guests could purchase pieces from the **Primal** collection.

—Alison A. Nieder





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Thursday Finest: Tapping Into 3-D for Made-in-America Fashions

By John McCurry Contributing Writer

A Brooklyn, N.Y.-based husband-and-wife team is seeking to disrupt the traditional business model for textile and apparel manufacturing with a startup company that produces neckties, socks and scarves on a custom-order basis using the latest 3-D knitting technology.

Thursday Finest launched last December, focusing initially on accessories such as neckties and scarves. Cotton socks were added to the repertoire in July. All production is in response to custom orders and is produced on a **Shima Seiki** 3-D knitting machine.

Michael Carlson and Veronika Harbick conceived Thursday Finest. They operate a micro factory that can deliver a made-to-order product to customers within three to seven days. It's a streamlined process, currently employing just two production staff.

The pair came to textiles and apparel



from technology marketing backgrounds. Carlson previously led technology teams at web and **iPhone** development companies in the New York area. His teams built products and applications that have been featured at **Apple's WorldWide Developer's Conference**. Harbick is an entrepreneur, brand strategist and now knitwear engineer. She has moved from content creation to social media to 3-D knitting. She began her career at **NBC**, producing content for digital platforms. More recently, she has spoken at conferences on the future of manufacturing.

The couple were introduced to Shima Seiki while researching machinery for a friend in the U.K. who had a small knitting business and was looking for ways to create custom products for small-batch orders. They met with several companies and were "blown away" by what could be created with the Shima machine.

"It sort of ran from there and did more and more due diligence and ended up with this lovely partnership we have had with them [Shima Seiki] for the past year," said Carlson, who has been a featured speaker at Shima Seiki 3-D knitting seminars.

"We focus on customers who care about design," Harbick said. "Our products are thoughtfully designed for someone who cares about fit. We are reaching out to young men in their late 20s to early 40s who are excited about new technologies, excited about how they look and excited about how they express themselves."

The customized e-commerce aspect is also attractive to women who shop for these men, Harbick said, noting that customized products are great products for gift giving because the recipient knows the product has been made just for him.

While Thursday Finest is primarily an online retailer, it occasionally branches out. To bring this experience closer to potential customers, the company often deploys pop-up stores around New York for periods of two weeks or shorter. As the company evolves, look for other pop-ups in Chicago, Dallas, California and Southern cities, depending on how the customer base develops.

Thursday Finest's Brooklyn micro factory is close to Shima Seiki's New York office as well as to yarn suppliers in New Jersey. Bringing manufacturing back to the U.S. is an important facet of the company.

"Some of our customers really care about that," she said. "They want to shop brands that are made in the U.S. For other customers, it's more of a connection and having a transparency about the product. We tell our customers where the yarn comes from and how it is made. We tell them when it is knitted and shipped. We have a connection with our customers and try to make the process as transparent as we can."

Thursday Finest sources its cotton yarn from **Supreme Corp.**, a spinner of high-performance and specialty yarns in Hickory, N.C. Ties and scarves are made from Merino wool sourced from Italy. Sustainability is increasingly important to customers and suppliers. Thursday Finest's manufacturing process reduce typical apparel manufacturing waste. The company also doesn't carry inventory.

"The really exciting part is that we can make full-fashion products seamlessly," Harbick said. Orders are fed into our e-commerce knitting queue and then get put into our machine for manufacturing. It's an automated process."

The addition of socks to the company's product line has met with great success. A few weeks after their introduction, about a third of its customers were requesting socks.

Socks can be customized with the text of an individual's choosing knitted on the rear of the sock.

"We are excited about customizing socks," Carlson said. "We can monogram initials and we have had some occasional



bad language that gets written on them. About two-thirds of our customers are being cheeky and having fun with it. Some write funny messages or things about their kids."

What's next in the way of products? Carlson and Harbick are being coy but say that new products will be rolled out in the near future.

"We see the excitement from our customer, and that's the most important thing," Harbick said. "They are interested in what we are doing, the sustainability aspect of it, and the reimagining of manufacturing and design. We are able to serve many different types of customers with the design and color combinations we have available. We will grow our offering to serve them." ●

BCBGMAXAZRIA Partners With Make-A-Wish for Benefit Runway Show

Los Angeles label **BCBGMAXAZRIA** fulfilled a lot of runway dreams at an Aug. 24 benefit for the Los Angeles chapter of **Make-A-Wish** at the **Taglyan Complex** in Hollywood.

Celebrity stylist Brad Goreski served as host for the black-tie affair, which featured a runway show of BCBGMAXAZRIA fashions modeled by Wish kids alongside models and celebrities, including Petra Nemcova, Alyssa Milano, Riki Lindhome, Perrey Reeves, Chloe Lukasiak, Azie Tesfai, Jolene Blalock and Michelle Alves.

The **ParkerWhitaker**-produced event also featured a performance by Rebecca Black.

Founded in 1983, the Make-A-Wish Greater Los Angeles chapter has granted more than 9,000 wishes to Los Angeles County children. The nonprofit organization works with volunteers, donors and supporters to grant wishes to children diagnosed with life-threatening medical conditions.

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