

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 72 YEARS

\$2.99 VOLUME 73, NUMBER 20 MAY 12-18, 2017



KATHE

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The Otis College of Art and Design's annual scholarship benefit and fashion show on May 6 highlighted the creations of the junior and senior classes, who worked with various industry mentors to create vivid fashions. This colorful piece was designed by student Hannah Kwak under the mentorship of Shanghai-based designer Chris Chang. For more from the show, see page 6.

Reformation's Fight Against Toxic Denim

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Los Angeles' **Reformation** label is one of a handful of companies that has lifted eco-fashion from a cottage industry to a larger scale.

The 8-year-old company recently opened a San Francisco store, the fourth of the company's physical stores. In March, the company opened a pop-up in Miami. In late 2016, it opened a 120,000-square-foot sustainable sewing factory in Vernon, Calif.

Its next big step is to expand its category of denim. It won't be easy. Denim manufacturing does not have a great reputation in environmental circles.

There are a small group of denim labels that make eco-friendly jeans. But mainstream producers of denim clothes have been criticized for wasting thousands of gallons of water and using harmful chemicals. Kathleen Talbot, Reformation's vice president of operations and sustainability,

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Bebe Stores Resolves Store Leases and Skirts Bankruptcy

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

Several weeks ago, **Bebe Stores** notified its landlords it was planning to close all 168 of its stores by the end of May because they weren't that profitable.

Getting out of a store lease isn't easy. Most landlords don't want to break long-term leases, so retailers resort to declaring bankruptcy to be able to walk away from the contracts that bind them. Mall owners then end up with very little money in their pockets.

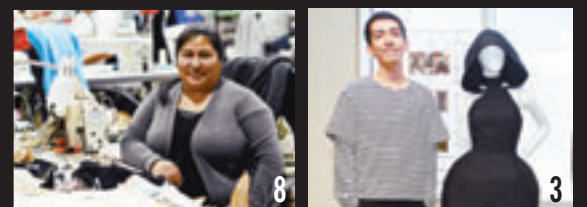
But *Reuters* is reporting that Bebe Stores has negotiated deals with its landlords—primarily mall owners **Simon Property Group Inc.** and **General Growth Properties**—to shutter its stores.

Neither Bebe Stores nor the malls would comment about the news. An email sent to Bebe President and In-

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Upscale Lifestyle Trade Show Coeur Partners With Project Womens

Coeur, the upscale accessories and lifestyle trade show, is partnering with **Project Womens** to launch a “premiere apothecary, home and gift trade fair” during the Aug. 14–16 run of Project Womens at the **Mandalay Bay Convention Center** in Las Vegas.

Dubbed **Coeur x Project Womens**, show organizers have enlisted interior designer Joseph Jagod to showcase ways retailers can “incorporate gifts, home, apothecary and tech accessories into their ready-to-wear stories.”

Among the companies showing at Coeur x Project Womens are **Los Poblanos**, **Lux-Eros**, **Kelly + Jones**, **Happy Habitat** and **Castify**.

“Traditional retailers are looking for a way to reinvent their stores now more than ever. Bricks-and-mortars strive to create a more inspirational experience for their customers while shopping. Ready-to-wear stores are interested in introducing lifestyle items into their lineup of products that will complement their existing offerings. Project Womens attendees have echoed this interest in tech accessories, apothecary, home décor and gifts, propelling this partnership with Coeur,” said Kelly Helfman, vice president

of Project Womens, in a company statement. “Coeur is the perfect partner for Project Womens, offering a curated selection of home, gifts and beauty merchandise that will create an added value for our retailers to shop.”

Founded in 2011, Coeur hosts shows in Los Angeles and New York showcasing high-end collections of fashion accessories, gift items, home décor and lifestyle products. “The trend in gift and beauty brands engages a more involved shopping experience to the end consumer, thus more excitement and demand to shop. Coeur has partnered with Project Vegas to bring to life a fast-growing category in the overall lifestyle industry including hand-picked brands in beauty, home, gift and tech, allowing retailers—from hotels, spas, specialty and majors—to discover hand-selected items to add to their store curation,” said Henri Myers, Coeur cofounder and creative director. Owned by UBM, Project Womens is part of the massive **MAGIC Marketplace** in Las Vegas, which also includes **Project Las Vegas**, **WWD MAGIC**, **The Collective**, **Pooltradeshaw**, **Stitch**, **Sourcing at MAGIC**, **FN Platform** and **WSA at MAGIC**.

—Alison A. Nieder

Lenzing Takes Eco a Step Further

The producer of **Tencel**, the closed-loop cellulosic fiber made from eucalyptus-tree pulp, has a new eco-friendly fiber. Austrian fiber maker **Lenzing** has introduced a new fiber made from cotton scraps and wood.

Refibra officially launched at the recent **Première Vision** textile trade show in Paris. Refibra is Lenzing’s latest effort to develop new textile solutions with the goal of creating a circular economy by recycling production waste.

Lenzing is dubbing Refibra “reborn Tencel.” Refibra is produced using the Tencel closed-loop production process, in which close to 100 percent of the solvent used in the production process is recovered and any emissions are broken down in biological water-treatment plants.

Lenzing has also developed a new identification system that allows companies to identify the Refibra content in the finished textile.

“Tencel is an environmentally responsible fiber of botanic origin,” said Robert van de Kerkhof, Lenzing’s chief commercial officer. “With Refibra, we add to the future of manufacturing and start to reassess waste as resource. The target is to close the loop. We will not stop our innovation before we are there. Lenzing is working for a better planet.”—A.A.N.



Lenzing Refibra

Capital Business Credit Gets a Name Change

Five months ago, **White Oak Global Advisors** acquired **Capital Business Credit**, known for its asset-based lending portfolio.

Now White Oak Global is renaming Capital

Business Credit **White Oak Commercial Finance**.

“The White Oak Commercial Finance platform will provide asset-based loans,


equipment financing, factoring, working-capital solutions and credit services, ranging from \$1 million to \$100 million, to small- and middle-market companies,” said Andre Hakkak, White Oak Global’s cofounder and chief executive, who is based in San Francisco. “This provides a great number of companies with access to more capital and services than previously offered by either White Oak or CBC individually.”

Robert Grbic, formerly of Capital Business Credit, established in 1988, will be the president and chief executive officer of

White Oak Commercial Finance. Andrew Tananbaum will serve as the executive chairman.

When White Oak took over Capital Business Credit in December, it acquired CBC’s existing loan portfolio comprising more than \$300 million of assets employed as well as office locations in New York; Los Angeles; Hong Kong; Shanghai; Charlotte, N.C.; and Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Now the combined entities also have offices in San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta and Denver.—Deborah Belgium



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Bebe *Continued from page 1*

terim Chief Financial Officer Walter Parks was not returned.

Simon Property Group spokesman Les Morris said the mall owner would not comment on the transaction. Kevin Berry, senior vice president of investment and public relations for General Growth Properties, said the company doesn’t publicly discuss any business transactions involving its tenants.

But in a recent filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Bebe Stores said it hoped to close its locations by the end of May at a cost of \$20 million.

Stories about financial troubles surfaced in March when Bebe, headquartered in Brisbane, Calif., said it was exploring strategic alternatives and retained **B. Riley & Co.** as its financial adviser. It also hired a real estate adviser to determine what to do with its store leases.

All along, Bebe said its goal was to get rid of its stores and concentrate on online sales. One month later, the decades-old retail chain, which caters to young contemporary customers, notified the California Depart-

ment of Employment Development that it planned to lay off some 700 employees.

About 400 retail workers were given notice as well as 136 workers at Bebe’s headquarters in Brisbane, Calif. Also, 160 workers in a design office in Los Angeles were given pink slips.

Bebe Stores has been running up against hefty financial headwinds in the last couple of years. Its same-store sales had been consistently down for some time. In fiscal 2016, revenues totaled \$393.6 million, down from \$484.7 million in fiscal 2013.

Despite the drop in revenues, Bebe Stores has not racked up a lot of debt and had about \$67 million in cash at the end of 2016.

Last year, Bebe sold nearly half of its brand to **Bluestar Alliance**, a brand-management company. The move raised \$35 million and was intended to help Bebe develop a wholesale licensing business.

For years, Bebe has been a mainstay of the California retail scene. The company was founded in 1976 by Manny Mashouf, who is still Bebe’s chief executive officer.

Bebe Stores is just one of a growing number of retailers who have opted to declare bankruptcy as consumers gravitate more to online shopping and avoid big malls.

BCBG Max Azria in Los Angeles filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in February, and **The Wet Seal**, headquartered in Irvine, Calif., closed its store doors earlier this year. In March, Wet Seal sold its brand name in a bankruptcy auction to **Gordon Brothers** for \$3 million. ●

Corrections and Clarifications

In a May 5 story about **Woodbury University**’s annual fashion show, Woodbury student Alejandra Rodriguez’s name was misspelled.

The Nuances of Profitability vs. Growth Discussed at Fashion Digital LA

By Alyson Bender Contributing Writer

Profitability is a powerful weapon for a company, “to be used thoughtfully and consciously,” said Rebecca Kaden, a partner at Howard Shultz’s capital venture firm, **Maveron**.

Kaden spoke at the **Fashion Digital LA** conference as part of a panel, “Black Is the New Black: The Path to Profitability,” with fellow panelists Tony Drockton, chief executive officer of **Hammitt**; Aubrie Pagano, CEO of **Bow and Drape**; Chelsea Moore, founder, **BOXFOX**; and Asher Leids, investor, **Tacitus Ventures**. Drew Koven, founder and CEO of **LDR Ventures**, moderated the discussion on profitability from both operations and investment perspectives.

Leids—who is active in angel investing in various consumer, fashion and digital brands—said when looking at a business plan, in terms of profitability and growth, he looks for founders who will know how to control their growth properly so it does not consume them. Leids agreed with Kaden, saying companies should always have profitability in their sightline, and it should always be a controlled decision. Otherwise, they may be consumed by growth, which, as he cited as an example, is what happened with **Nasty Gal**.

Kaden agreed with his point, adding, “When a company has bad business practices because its teams do not have

enough discipline to spend the money well, like in the Nasty Gal situation, it ends up in disaster.”

As the conversation evolved, the panelists discussed the importance of people planning and making key hires when growing the business. Drockton said when Hammitt hires, whether it be an outside contractor or employee, they look at how well the person fits in with the company culture. “We don’t work with assholes,” Drockton said. “If you do not make conscious hires and respect the company culture, it will kill your business.”

Kaden, who works with founding teams regularly, was asked by the panel moderator how she approaches hiring strategies with the companies she works with. “We like to keep our teams lean and grow conservatively, but we have also seen that very strategic hires have extremely helped to move the needle for companies,” she said. “Going into an investment, the one thing we always look for without fail is, ‘How has the founder organized people around them?’ We do a lot of data driving around people because we believe in investing in great people.”

Entrepreneurs hire help for one of two reasons—either they are so busy, or they find someone who can do a task better than they can, Kaden said. “Most entrepreneurs hire for the former, and it’s completely the wrong reason to hire,”

she said. “Everyone is busy. If you go at it with that lens, you are not going to find the best people. Our best entrepreneurs have the latter lens. The second lens requires self-awareness and the ability to put ego aside.”

The three CEOs had the common thread of all being founders of their companies but differed in representing different stages of maturity and growth. Drockton, who has been in business 10 years, reported Hammitt was not profitable for the first five years. During this time, Hammitt “concentrated on the back end of digital from the beginning” and established a strong foundation of relationships with different specialty wholesalers. It is now profitable and growing at a “healthy rate.”

Bow and Drape, which has been in business for five years and is venture-backed, is projecting to be profitable for the first time this year. BOXFOX has been in business two and a half years and remains self-funded at this point. Moore and her two cofounders are still establishing themselves while looking to increase margins.

Fashion Digital LA took place at the **Skirball Cultural Center** on May 4. The all-day event featured a series of retail and technology panel discussions on mobile, social, and influencer marketing, multi-channel marketing attribution, search-engine optimization/search-engine marketing, and customer acquisition and retention. ●

EVENTS

CFF, TALA Present Annual Scholarship Awards

The **California Fashion Foundation**, the philanthropic arm of the **California Fashion Association**, and the **Textile Association of Los Angeles** held their annual 2017 Scholarship Awards luncheon on April 27 at the **California Market Center**.

CFA Executive Director Ilse Metchek urged the students to take advantage of the opportunity to network with the apparel-industry leaders in attendance.

Students also received awards from the **YMA Fashion Scholarship Fund Awards**, which were presented by YMA FSF Executive Director Douglas Evans, who said his organization has partnered with 61 design schools around the country and annually presents \$1.5 million in scholarship funds.

The event included a buffet lunch provide by **STC-QST**’s Brian Weitman and the **New Moon** restaurant.

Pat Tabassi, the product-development manager of Los Angeles knit mill **Design Knit**, returned for a second year to speak with the students about her industry experience and the company’s path to success as an LA business.

“Challenge motivates us to push beyond what is easy and gives us the opportunity to be partners in the community,” she said. “We nurture our relationships with our clients and the community. That’s what’s important.”

Jesse Dombrowiak, chief operating officer and co-founder of **Indie Source**, offered advice for students looking to launch the company’s own line.

“There are countless opportunities out there—especially in Los Angeles,” he said.

Many of the graduates at the event are now tasked with finding a job.

“Your first job will never be your last job. Every step is a learning experience,” Metchek said, before introducing Tam-



Kenta Tanaka, Santa Monica College, winner of the Knit Textiles Award from Design Knit



Lucy Ochoa, Woodbury University, winner of the Design Award from Swat Fame



Rocio Arias, Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, winner of the Fashion With Ethics Award from Rags For Riches Foundation



Roman Ibarra, Long Beach City College, winner of the Design Award from Velvet Heart and the Presentation Award from California Apparel News



Sarah Tepo, California State University–Long Beach, winner of the Design Award from Barbara Lesser



Summer Davis, Mt. San Antonio College, winner of the Brand Development Award from CIT Commercial Services and the Production Value Award from STC-QST

my Chatkin, executive vice president of **24Seven Talent**.

Chatkin told the graduates to “give it 150 percent,” be prepared for interviews, send thank-you notes and find a mentor.

“Reach out to people you find interesting. Everybody is eager to tell their story,” she said.

Henry Cherner, managing partner with enterprise resource planning software **AIMS360**, presented all the graduates with a certificate for an AIMS360 ERP course and invited all the students and instructors to the AIMS360 “Empowerment Day” event on May 16 at the **Biltmore Hotel** in downtown Los Angeles.

Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising graduate Epic Hemmy Darbani was presented with the **Betty Baumgardner Award** for best use of textiles, an award named in honor of Betty Baumgardner, a **Los Angeles Trade-Technical College** patternmaking instructor and longtime supporter of TALA and the scholarship awards. Darbani’s collection featured original prints inspired by her family’s immigration from Iran.—Alison A. Nieder



Abby Pollock, California State University–Long Beach, winner of the Brand Development Award from Moss Adams LLP



Ainslee de Wolf, Santa Monica College, winner of the Visionary Award from the California Market Center



Epic Hemmy Darbani, Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, winner of the Betty Baumgardner Award for Best Use of Textiles



Ghislaine Harding, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, winner of the Design Award from MGT Industries



Alejandra Ramirez, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, winner of the Brand Development Award from Fineman West & Co.



Ariana Nazarian, Woodbury University, winner of the Design Award from Karen Kane and the Technology Award from Tukatech



Joanna Rubalcaba, Otis College of Art and Design, winner of the Design Award from Frankie



Kellan Kauffman, Art Center College of Design, winner of the Fashion With Ethics Award from the Ben B. & Joyce E. Eisenberg Foundation



Chyan Robinson, California State University–Long Beach, winner of the Design Award from 360 Sweater Company



Kimberly Ortiz, Long Beach City College, winner of the Design Award from KWDZ Manufacturing



Linbei Xie, Otis College of Art and Design, winner of the Design Award from Stony Apparel



Patrice Rubio, California State University–Los Angeles, winner of the Future Label Award from PCB Label



Yun Huang, Mt. San Antonio College, winner of the Visionary Award from the Cooper Design Space and the Technology Award from AIMS360

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Imports Will Grow Nicely Through the Fall

With unemployment hitting extremely low levels and workers' wages rising, the nation's ports should see a decent uptick in cargo-container volumes through at least September.

During the first half of this year, containerized imports coming through the ports should rise by 5.6 percent, to 9.5 million 20-foot containers, compared to the first six months of 2016, according to the monthly "Global Port Tracker" report, issued by the **National Retail Federation** and **Hackett Associates**.

"Regardless of whether the sales come in their stores or through their websites, retailers see that consumers are buying more this year, and they're importing the goods needed to meet the demand," said Jonathan Gold, vice president for supply chain and customs policy at the National Retail Federation, a trade group based in Washington, D.C. "With unemployment at its lowest level in a decade and the economy adding jobs, retailers expect shoppers to continue to increase their spending."

In March, cargo-container volumes of imports shot up 15.8 percent from a year ago when the Chinese Lunar New Year last year came a week later than this year, idling factories across that Asian country. Cargo volumes in April are estimated to see an 8.3 percent increase over last year while May is forecast to rise 2.6 percent over 2016. June cargo volumes should inch up 3.3 percent, and July will follow with a 3.1 percent

nudge. August is expected to see a modest 1.6 percent uptick and September cargo-container import volumes are expected to rise 3.6 percent as retailers bring in more goods for the holidays. For all of 2016, cargo-container imports totaled 18.8 million 20-foot containers, up 3.1 percent from 2015.

At the **Port of Los Angeles**, cargo-container imports were up nearly 10 percent of this year while at the neighboring **Port of Long Beach**, cargo-container imports this year rose 5.6 percent.

The National Retail Federation is expecting a healthy year for retail sales. It predicts that—excluding automobiles, gasoline and restaurants—sales for 2017 will grow between 3.7 percent and 4.2 percent over 2016, driven by job and income growth coupled with low debt.

"In the United States, the economy continues to slowly grow," said Ben Hackett, founder of Hackett Associates. "Gross domestic product was lower than expected in the first quarter, but unemployment has dropped to levels not seen since before the Great Recession, and, best of all, labor employment has increased dramatically. Our view, therefore, remains unchanged. There is nothing to worry about in the first half of the year, and growth is expected to continue in the second half even if it comes at a slower rate."—*Deborah Belgum*

New Key Buyer Program Established at WWIN

In an attempt to identify new attendees and buyers, the twice-a-year **Womenswear in Nevada** show held in Las Vegas has appointed Lynn Visser as the new key account manager.

Visser will be the point person and main contact for buyers in the apparel industry, including catalogs, specialty chains, department stores and others.

"We are continuously working to further grow and strengthen the buyer base for the WWIN show and are excited to add Lynn to our team," said Chad Timney, WWIN show director. "As the next step in our long-term buyer acquisition and retention strategy, Lynn will be working with our exhibitor marketing partners to identify potential new attendees, top retail accounts, buying groups and others to bring to the show."

Key accounts who qualify for the new key buyer program will receive complimentary registration, travel incentives, personal concierge service and other VIP features at the show, held at the **Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino** at the same time the **MAGIC Marketplace** and other apparel and footwear trade shows are held in Las Vegas in February and August.

WWIN is a consistently sold-out show featuring womenswear and accessories exhibitors. Most recently, about 500 companies representing more than 1,500 lines participated in the event.

Urban Expositions, the Georgia-based company that operates 36 trade and consumer events, acquired the WWIN show in 2015.—*D.B.*

Calendar

May 13

Xehar's "Biggest Fashion Event"
5345 McConnell Ave.
Los Angeles

May 14

Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Australia
Various venues
Sydney
Through May 19

May 16

Modama
Expo Guadalajara
Guadalajara, Mexico
Through May 18

May 18

"Baywatch" exclusive collection launch
Ron Robinson
Santa Monica, Calif.

Imprinted Sportswear Show

Nashville Music City Center
Nashville, Tenn.
Through May 20

May 23

Licensing Expo
Mandalay Bay Convention Center
Las Vegas
Through May 25

Apparel Sourcing Show
Grand Tikal Futura Hotel
Guatemala City, Guatemala
Through May 25

There's more
on ApparelNews.net.

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

Submissions to the calendar should be faxed to the Calendar Editor at (213) 623-5707. Please include the event's name, date, time, location, admission price and contact information. The deadline for calendar submissions is the Tuesday prior to Friday publication. Inclusion in the calendar is subject to available space and the judgment of the editorial staff.

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Hundreds of Guests Attend the Annual Otis College of Art and Design Fund-raiser and Fashion Show



Zaid Affas with model and student winner Claudia Chang



Design by student Sinnamon Thomas



Mentor project by Chris Chang



Costume designer Albert Wolsky with model and student winner Joanna Rubalcaba



Evening gown designed by Hannah Kim



Honorees Claudia Cividino and Daniela Villegas



Fashions mentored by Marisol Gerona-Bradford



Mentor Marisol Gerona-Bradford with model and student winner Kiara Murase



Fashions mentored by David Meister



Swimwear designs mentored by Red Carter



Kendra Bollenbach of the Benefit Committee with student Lillian Xie



Mentor Michelle Watson with model and student winner Kiara Murase



Designs mentored by Cory Casella for Jessica Simpson



Mentor John Murrough with model and student winner Hanna Dorman



Swimwear designers Anna Kenney, Rebecca Virtue, Robyn Phillips and Priyanka Patel



Fashions mentored by designer Claire Pettibone

A fashionable collection of 800 people crowded into a large ballroom at the **Beverly Hilton** for the annual **Otis Scholarship Benefit and Fashion Show**, which raises money for students and highlights the fashion collections designed by the junior and senior classes of the fashion design department.

The well-dressed crowd of alumni, mentors, supportive parents and students gathered on May 6 for an elaborate event that started out with an acrobatic performance that could have rivaled anything performed by **Cirque du Soleil**.

Bruce Ferguson, president of **Otis College of Art and Design**, started out the evening by remembering two fashion greats who were longtime supporters of the school and passed away this year—Anne Cole, a major name in the swimwear industry who mentored hundreds of swimwear design students, and Susan Crank, head of **Lunada Bay**, a swimwear company in Anaheim, Calif. She was also on Otis' board of trustees.

Metamorphosis was the theme for this year's show. "And there is no better theme for the college this year," Ferguson said.

This year has been a year of transition and transformation for the nearly 100-year-old school, started in 1918 by *Los Angeles Times* founder Harrison Gray Otis when he donated his house in the Westlake area of Los Angeles as the spot where the first independent professional art school in Southern California was started.

For years, the fashion design department was located at the **California Market Center**, separated from the college's

main campus in Westchester, near the **Los Angeles International Airport**.

But last year the fashion design department moved to the main campus, which has been upgraded with a new academic building, a residential hall for 200 students and a grassy commons area.

This was also the first year that the founder of the fashion design department, Rosemary Brantley, was not at the show. She retired last year, turning over the department to Jill Zeleznik, now the interim chair.

Over the years, the scholarship dinner has become a sophisticated evening of networking and fashion, much different from the first fashion design department benefit dinner, which consisted of box suppers at the **Hard Rock Café** and models standing on wooden boxes. "There is no doubt we have become an integral part of the extensive art and design community in Southern California," said Shelley Reid, the benefit committee chair.

Each year, the benefit dinner honors two distinguished individuals in the fashion area. This year, Claudia Cividino, chief executive of **Bally Americas**, was given the creative leadership award. She was recognized for her mentoring of students and young people. She recently spent a day with students at the Bally store in Beverly Hills talking about the industry and what it is like to be a woman executive in the luxury-brand business.

She also has helped develop a corporate philanthropic

program called "Bally Crafting Futures," which supports organizations that address the issues facing children and youth in need, from preschool through high school to vocational training and employment.

Also honored was Daniela Villegas, a jewelry designer born in Mexico and now based in Los Angeles. She was awarded the creative vision award for her jewelry collection of mostly one-of-a-kind intricately crafted pieces. She also has been dedicated to mentoring young talent for some time.

Seen on the runway were the student collections done under the mentorship of several industry experts. The mentors this year were renowned costume designer and two-time **Academy Award** winner Albert Wolsky, couture designer Chris Chang, and industry leaders such as David Meister, Zaid Affas, Claire Pettibone, Red Carter, and designers John Murrough for **Illia**, Michelle Watson for **Michi**, Cory Casella for **Jessica Simpson** and Marisol Gerona-Bradford for **NBCUniversal Brand Development**.

This was the second time that Pettibone, a 1989 Otis graduate who has her own self-named bridal label, mentored students. She gave her 14 students the task of creating romantic lingerie using vintage laces and sustainable hemp fabric. "They did a beautiful job," she said.

Pettibone believes in giving back to the students because every student has a lot to learn about the real world of fashion. "There is nothing to replace that mentor experience," she said. "It is an added benefit."—*Deborah Belgium*

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Reformation *Continued from page 1*

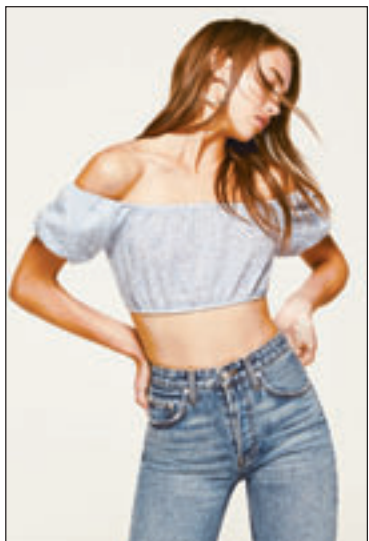
said that her company supports the critique. “Denim is pretty much the worst clothing for the environment,” she said.

But the eco-brand was compelled to take on the challenge of making a line of ecologically sustainable denim. America is a jeans country. A market-research company, **Statistic Brain Research Institute**, which runs a Los Angeles office, found that 96 percent of American consumers own a pair of jeans.

But the manufacture and care of jeans takes 2,500 gallons of water throughout each garment’s lifecycle, Talbot said. Reformation was going to find a way to make sustainable jeans—and still be fashionable.

Reformation designers have been researching ways to make a more ecologically sustainable jean, Talbot said. “Basically, we are looking for alternatives to virgin cotton that significantly reduce the impact. And then finishing and dyeing it in the most sustainable way available,” she said.

Cultivating cotton takes a heavy environmental toll, according to a recent study from the conservation organization **World Wildlife Foundation**. It found that 2.4 percent of the world’s crop land is planted with cotton, and yet it accounts for 24 percent and 11 percent of the global sales of insecticide and pesticides, respectively.



Reformation seeks to take an environmental turn by not buying virgin cotton and looking for denim fabric that already exists. The company sources surplus vintage denim fabric. “This is a triple win for us,” Talbot said. “The fabric is ready to ship, has the right finish and is good for the environment.”

If recycled fabric does not meet demand, Reformation sources fabrics with a high content of recycled fabrics. The company’s designers also work with fabric mills that will substitute a sustainable fiber such as **Tencel** for cotton. For dyeing and finishing, Reformation works with companies that recycle water and use methods deemed eco-friendly such as ozone treatments and bio-based softeners.

Talbot estimates environmental savings in Reformation’s “Cropped Cigarette” jean. Manufacture of the garment releases four pounds of carbon dioxide and takes 170 gallons of water. The industry standard is 1,435 gallons of water and 32 pounds of carbon to make a similar garment.

Along with the “Cropped Cigarette” jean, which hangs above the ankle, the company also makes skinny jeans that come in indigo and black, a white denim, mid-crop flare and shorts. Some come with frayed hems, others with sequins, skirts and jackets. Retail price points range from \$98 to \$128. The garments are sold in Reformation’s physical boutiques as well as its ecommerce shop at

www.thereformation.com.

Mainstream cotton producers say that they should not be counted out in development of sustainable denim. Last year, **Cotton Inc.**, the organization backed by American cotton producers and importers of cotton and cotton textile products, showcased “environmentally responsible” denim manufacturing methods at the company’s booth at the **Kingpins** trade show in New York. Among the eco-friendly products showcased was a concept collection developed by Greensboro, N.C.-based **Cone Denim** using Swiss chemical company **Archroma’s EarthColors** dye, which is derived from cotton plant materials.

Only a few eco-friendly denim labels have made garments that survived on the market. In 2005, the New York- and Dublin-headquartered **Edun** brand stated that its mission was to sell environmentally sustainable clothes. Cofounded by U2 frontman Bono, it was retailed at some high-end department stores during its debut. Amsterdam-headquartered line **G-Star** started a line, “RAW for the Oceans,” that uses plastic culled from the ocean for its denim fabric. Like Edun, there’s a celebrity angle. In 2014, G-Star developed the eco-jean using fabric from **Bionic Yarn**, which is owned by music star Pharell Williams. In 2016, Williams became a co-owner of G-Star. Ventura, Ca-



Reformation’s Kathleen Talbot

lif.-based **Patagonia** also introduced a line of organic, fair trade-certified sustainable denim in 2015.

Doing eco denim remains a tough venture, Jeff Shafer said. He is founder and chief creative officer for denim brands **Agave** and **Bluer**. “Ecologically sustainable denim is a bit like saying ‘clean coal.’ It’s better, but better is just a tiny improvement,” Shafer said.

However, Los Angeles-area jeans manufacturers are gaining more of an interest in making ecologically friendly denim, said Jazmin Kim, cofounder and creative director of the **S.M.N.** label, which is based in Vernon and sells its denims at **Ron Herman**.

But the will to make eco-friendly clothing rests solely with the manufacturer. “In Los Angeles, people use a lot of chemicals compared to Europe and Japan, where there are more regulations,” she said.

It took a lot of work to make an eco-friendly jean. “We went through so many steps to reduce water usage,” she said. ●



Reformation’s denim program makes jeans out of vintage denim fabric.



Reformation moved into an eco-friendly sewing plant in Vernon in November 2016.

QUARTLY REPORT

Department Stores Report Declines 1st Qtr of 2017

Several department stores reported results for their first-quarter earnings on May 11, and the results included steep same-store declines for **Macy’s Inc.** and **Dillards Inc.**

Same-store sales at Macy’s declined 5.2 percent in the first quarter. Its net sales were \$5.338 billion, a decrease of 7.5 percent compared to the first quarter in 2016. **Dillards Inc.’s** same-store sales declined 4 percent. Its net sales were \$1.386 billion. Same-store sales at **Nordstrom Inc.** declined 0.8 percent in its first quarter. Its net sales increased 2.7 percent to \$3.3 billion. For **Kohl’s Corp.**, same-store sales declined 2.7 percent. Kohl’s total sales for the period was \$3,843 billion.

The results come at a time when the retail business is looking for some wins during what has been a tough time, said Ken Perkins, president of research firm **Retail Metrics Inc.** In a May 10, research note, he wrote that a steady drumbeat of news on bankruptcies and store closings engendered a number of stories using terms such as “Retailpocalypse” and “Retailmegeddon.” But Perkins amended his outlook once the de-



partment stores reported results on May 11, noting that sales were better than many Wall Street analysts forecast.

“Things are really tough out there,” he said on a May 11 phone call. “With same-store sales declining, as a retailer you are going to find it hard to generate more earnings

growth while sales are in decline. The overwhelming problem is declining foot traffic to their locations and that there has been a massive shift that has been taking place.”

More people are shopping via m-commerce, or shopping through their cell phones. While department stores are catching some of that m-commerce, it doesn’t necessarily help the bricks-and-mortar stores, he said.

Jeff Gennette, president and chief executive officer of Macy’s Inc., said the company’s focus in 2017 will be stabilizing its bricks-and-mortar business.

“At the same time, we will invest to aggressively grow our digital and mobile business while continuing the integration of our online and offline experience to allow our customers to shop the way they live,” Gennette said.—*Andrew Asch*



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TLM PUBLISHING INC.

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Publishers of:

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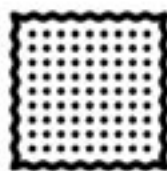
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3

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