Appendix of the voice of the industry for 72 years



BUSY AT MARKET: Florence Ratzsch, Carly Daft and Adrienne Koeppel of the Lynn Girard Showroom at The New Mart had buyers waiting outside in the hallway on the first day of Los Angeles Fashion Market to take a look at their lines.

DENIM

Premium-Denim Line Works With Skingraft Brand to Knock Homeless Crisis

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Los Angeles County's homeless crisis has skyrocketed in the past year, with 57,794 individuals counted as homeless by the **Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority**. It's an almost 23 percent increase over 2016.

Government and nonprofits have sought different solutions to one of the region's toughest problems. One nonprofit, **Skid Row Housing Trust**, has been developing and managing housing for the chronically homeless. The 25-year-old nonprofit raises money, partially through grants and fund-raisers, for its 26 buildings throughout Los Angeles County. The trust's Brad Robinson thought his nonprofit could raise funds in a uniquely Los Angeles way: design and sell a premium-denim line.

Brands with a philanthropic edge are nothing new, but nonprofits diving into high-end design might be few and far between. The line **Skid Row Denim Academy** started business in 2016 with a capsule collection called "Heritage," which was comprised of two jeans jackets and two denim pants. They're made with dead-stock denim fabric, sourced in Los Angeles by **Pacific Blue Denim Inc.** The collection also is sewn in Los Angeles. Downtown Los Angeles brand **Skingraft** has consulted on the design and manufacturing of this brand, which will give proceeds to Skid Row Housing Trust. Skingraft's chief executive Skid Row page 4

Bebe Sells Distribution Center and Puts LA Design Center Up for Sale

By Deborah Belgum Senior Editor

Bebe Stores, the decades-old retail chain that closed all its stores at the end of May, has sold its distribution center in Northern California for \$22 million.

With that sale behind it, Bebe is now trying to sell its Los Angeles design center as the company winds down its bricksand-mortar operations and becomes a business that makes money off its brand name.

Bebe anticipates closing the sale of its Benicia distribution facility, northeast of San Francisco, in the next 60 days, the company said in a press release.

Bebe Stores, based in Brisbane, Calif., said it had terminated all its 168 store leases at a cost of approximately \$65 million. Its leases were mostly in malls owned by **Simon Property Group Inc.** and **General Growth Properties**.

The winding down of operations has resulted in about 700 employees being laid off at its headquarters, design center and retail stores.

Meanwhile, the retail chain has entered into a \$35 million loan agreement with **GACP Finance** to make payments to the retail store landlords, pending the closing of the building sales.

Last year, Bebe sold nearly half of its brand to **Bluestar**

Alliance, a brand-management company that raised \$35 million and was intended to help Bebe develop a wholesale licensing business.

Into this joint venture with Bluestar Alliance, Bebe has transferred both the *www.bebe.com* URL and international wholesale agreements. The joint venture has also set up a royalty agreement with a third party for both the URL and wholesale licenses.

Going forward, Bebe said it will have no stores and its sole form of revenue will come from royalty income from the joint venture.

B. Riley & Co. was a financial adviser to Bebe on this transition.

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 West Coast retailers that have struggled. **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. ●

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Quiet June Market Draws Focused Buyers Ready to Spend

By Andrew Asch, Deborah Belgum and Alison A. Nieder

June market in Los Angeles is typically a quiet affair with buyers arriving to wrap up Fall orders and start looking at Holiday goods. Sandwiched between the larger Fall markets in March and the massive Las Vegas trade shows in August, June tends to draw lighter traffic comprised of mostly regional buyers.

The June 5–8 run of **Los Angeles Fashion Market** was typically small, but several showrooms and reps reported good business from local and out-of-town buyers ready to place orders. Surprisingly, many reported little price resistance and fewer requests for Immediate goods than in recent years.

Coverage of market begins on page 5.

A New NAFTA Is Having a Ripple Effect in Los Angeles

By Deborah Belgum Senior Editor

With changes in the North American Free Trade Agreement in the wind, Los Angeles blue-jeans factories have been fielding more inquiries from denim labels thinking about switching production from Mexico to California.

"We have had some people visit—big brands that are used to doing production in Mexico and China. They came to see if they could do American made," said Mateo Juarez, the general manager of **United Jeans**, a factory with 80 workers that has been doing premium-denim manufacturing in south Los Angeles since 1994. "I think they want to do more production in the U.S., but they want to pay Chinese and Mexican prices."

That is particularly challenging in the city of Los Angeles and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, where the minimum wage for businesses with more than 26 employees

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► NAFTA page 3
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St. John Gives Pink Slips to More Than 100 Workers

In an effort to cut production costs, **St. John Knits** is laying off 130 workers effective on June 26.

Notices were given to workers, and news of the layoffs was filed with the state Department of Employment Development in late April.

The venerable Southern California fashion house, whose luxury label is known as **St. John**, is shifting some of its manufacturing jobs from its sprawling facilities in Irvine, Calif., to its plant in Tijuana, Mexico, while more jobs are being shifted to a contractor in Glendale, Calif., and to Chinese factories, said Bruce Fetter, president, chief executive and chief operating officer at St. John Knits.

"We have been doing some restructuring of our manufacturing team here over the last 12 months, and this reduction has been planned for some time," Fetter said.

In 1998, St. John Knits set up a large factory just outside Tijuana, where many of its metal hardware such as belt buckles and buttons were made as was jewelry. For some time, the luxury label has been using **GSA Design**, an independent sewing contractor in Glendale, to pick up its extra work.

St. John Knits, founded in 1962 by Bob and Marie Gray, has an international reputation for its high-quality separates and knit suits, which for \$200 to \$2,000. Over the years, the company has tried to maintain its core customer, who is often a professional over the age of 40 who needs a sophisticated look that carries through the years. For a while, a revolving door of past chief executives tried to capture a younger customer by employing Angelina Jolie and Gisele Bündchen as models. But lately St. John Knits has been relying more on social media and in-store events to get the word out about the brand.

St. John Knits is one of the few high-end manufacturers that still do the bulk of their production in the United States. The company is the largest flat-knitting factory in the U.S. with some 300 knitting machines. Its production facilities are housed in several buildings next to the St. John Knits headquarters in an industrial park.

St. John Knits started out as a private company, went public and then went private again. In 1989, with Bob Gray suffering health problems, he and his wife sold the apparel company to **Escada** for \$45 million. The German apparel company took St. John Knits public four years later.

Then, in 1999, the Gray family and **Vestar Capital Partners** took the company private again. Bob Gray passed away in 2012. Vestar Capital is still a majority owner with a minority stake being held by **Fosun International**, a Chinese investment company.

Layoffs in the apparel industry have ramped up this year. **American Apparel**, which filed for bankruptcy protection a second time, was sold early this year to **Gildan Activewear**, which paid \$88 million for the brand name. All 3,500 workers at American Apparel were shown the exit door.

—Deborah Belgum



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Centric to Host PLM Education Series at Outdoor Retailer

Los Gatos, Calif.–based product lifecycle management (PLM) solution provider **Centric Software** will host a series of seminars and demos to help apparel companies "Get PLM Educated" at the **Outdoor Retailer** trade show in Salt Lake City next month.

During the trade show's July 26–29 run, Centric will host group and one-on-one demo sessions at the **Salt Lake Marriott Downtown at City Creek**.

On July 27, Centric will hold a "PLM Lunch & Learn Session" featuring Centric's new Visual Innovation Platform (VIP) of Digital Boards. Centric VIP is a digital collection of boards for touch-based devices that is connected to PLM and geared toward executives, creative, merchandising, product development, sourcing, and sales and marketing teams. The lunch will be at noon at the **Salt Lake Marriott Downtown at City Creek**.

That evening, the company will host a dinner at **Squatters Brew Pub** in Salt Lake City at 6:30 p.m. near the **Salt Palace Convention Center**.

All the events are free to attend, but registration is required. Attendees can register on the events page at *www.centricsoftware. com.* Centric's flagship product is Centric 8, which helps fashion, retail, luxury, footwear, outdoor and consumer-goods companies with merchandise planning, product development, sourcing, business planning, quality and collection management functionality.

Equestrian Designs Taps New Reps in the Mid-South, New England

Santa Barbara, Calif.–based **Equestrian Designs** has new representation in Texas and New England.

The company will be represented in Texas and the adjacent states by **Pam Kramer and Associates**, located in the **Dallas Market Center**.

Alan Hyman's Clothing & Accessories Galore in Dedham, Mass., will represent the company in New England and upstate New York at the New England Apparel Club Show in Marlboro, Mass., as well as other markets in the Northeast.

The two representation companies join Equestrian Designs' existing sales team,

including Barbara Broadhurst for the Chicago–Great Lakes region, Kimberly Abell for the Southeast, Barbara Nogg for the Southwest region and in-house representative Analise Morales.

Founded in 1990, Equestrian Designs produces fashions that combine fashion and function. The made-in-America collection is sold in independent boutiques. The company is owned by husband-and-wife team Rick and Iona Ledesma. Iona Ledesma serves as the company designer while Rick Ledesma serves as chief executive officer. For more information, visit www.equestriandesigns. net.—Alison A. Nieder

Obituary: Wet Suit Pioneer Jack O'Neill, 94

Jack O'Neill, founder of the surf brand **O'Neill**, died on June 2. He was 94.

The Colorado-born and Long Beach, Calif.-raised O'Neill had a lifelong love of the ocean. After serving in the **U.S. Navy** during World War II, O'Neill and his wife, Marjorie, settled in San Francisco, where O'Neill began experimenting with materials to protect the avid surfer from the chilly water off

Ocean Beach. His design began as a vest and expanded to a two-piece version until finally becoming the familiar full wet suit, which has been a staple for surfers ever since. O'Neill wet suits carry the company's motto: "It's always summer on the inside." By the mid-1950s, O'Neill had developed wetsuits for surfing and bodysurfing and opened a surf shop near Ocean Beach. According to the company, O'Neill later received a trademark for the term "surf shop." As the business grew, O'Neill relocated to Santa Cruz, where he opened the O'Neill Surf Shop and began making surfboards and supplying wet suits to a growing surfing community.

Over the years, O'Neill continued to surf, sail, fish and fly—both planes and hot-air balloons. A collision with a board while surfing left O'Neill with his signature eyepatch. O'Neill grew his business into an international concern that encompasses wet suits, swimwear and apparel. Today, **the La Jolla Group** in Irvine, Calif., holds the license for O'Neill clothing.

In 1996, he founded the **O'Neill Sea Odyssey** marine and environmental educa-



tion program that took children on tours of the **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary** aboard the O'Neill catamaran. Since its inception, nearly 100,000 children have participated in the O'Neill Sea Odyssey program, which also includes a classroom and lab at the Santa Cruz harbor.

O'Neill was inducted into the International Surfing Hall of Fame in Huntington Beach, Calif., in 1991 and in the Huntington Beach Surfing Walk of Fame in 1998. He was named Waterman of the Year by the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association in 2000. In 2002 he received the Entrepreneur of the Year Award from Ernst & Young. On June 3, surfers participating in the 37th annual Sunshine Freestyle Surfabout on Carmel Beach in Carmel, Calif., observed a moment of silence in O'Neill's honor.

O'Neill was predeceased by his wife Marjorie in 1972 and son Mike in 2012. He is survived by his second wife, Noriko; children Cathi, Bridget, Shawne, Pat, Tim, Lisa and Jack Jr.; and grandchildren Uma, Riley, Connor, Bridget, Phoenix and Kodiak.

Memorial contributions can be made to the O'Neill Sea Odyssey (*http://oneillseaodyssey. org*).—A.A.N.

Guess Celebrates 35 Years With FIDM Exhibition

Los Angeles-based Guess? Inc. recently celebrated its 35th anniversary with the opening of "Guess: 35 Years & Still Dreaming," a retrospective exhibition at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising Museum & Galleries in downtown Los Angeles.

The June 5 event drew a mix of models, actors and influencers who took in the exhibition, which covers Guess' iconic styles over the decades, including the "Marilyn" three-zip jean from the 1980s. Guess Chief Creative Officer Paul Marciano was on hand to kick off the exhibition.

"This exhibition is a representation of Guess' place at the forefront of fashion and its culture. It's also an homage to Los Angeles, our home, our roots and our legacy in creating an industry here in our city," said Marciano in a statement. "I am happy to share this special tribute with you. Our heritage is forever ingrained in denim, all denim out there, and this will continue to be the case for the next 35 years and beyond."

The exhibition is now open to the public and runs through July 8.





'80s-era Guess

'90s-era Guess

Paul Marciano and Barbara Bundy



Colin Owens and Brian Gove



Nikia Provenzano of Madmavenstyle and Casey Carlson of Officially Quigley



Bella Harris

Ta'Rhonda Jones



Guess styles in the first two decades of the 21st century

IMPORT/EXPORT

cial to both sides, but there are some changes that could be implemented.'

She pointed out that some of those changes could include the de minimis requirements that under NAFTA allow 7 percent of the total weight of the component that determines the classification of a garment to be from outside the NAFTA region. Under the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement, the accord allows for 10 percent to be from outside the region.

Sewing thread, pocket lining and other inputs are another subject that is likely to be addressed. Currently, NAFTA rules allow the use of sewing thread, narrow elastic fabric and pocket lining fabric from outside of the United States, Mexico and Canada. But under DR-CAFTA, which began to be implemented in 2006, the rule is that sewing thread, narrow elastic fabric, visible linings and pocket-lining fabric must come from the region unless they are short-supply fabrics.

from regional yarns, but exceptions to this rule of the countries that are part of the free-trade ing member countries in the free-trade pact.

fabric produced outside the free-trade-agreement region to be used in apparel production San Mateo, Calif. Through June 27

<u>June 26</u>

CALA Denver Mart Denver Through June 27

June 29

Los Angeles

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<u>June 11</u>

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June 14

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Through June 13

<u>June 20</u> CALA Fort Mason Center San Francisco Through June 21 Techtextil USA McCormick Place Chicago Through June 22 OC•Mix Z Supply

Irvine, Calif. Through June 21 June 22

Coast The Seagate Hotel & Spa Delray Beach, Fla. Through June 23

June 25 Fashion Market Northern California San Mateo Event Center

<u>July 10</u> Hong Kong Fashion Week Hong Kong Convention Center Hong Kong Through July 13

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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.

NAFTA Continued from page 1

rises to \$12 an hour on July 1, up from the current \$10.50 an hour. "Nobody wants to pay this minimum wage," Juarez said. It is only adding to the additional cost of an already higher production price that keeps going up in California with new laws and regulations.

"If you make blue jeans in China, including the fabric washes, it is \$6. If you do the same jeans in Mexico, you can make it for \$10, which includes dropping if off here in Los Angeles. And if you do it in the U.S.A., you are looking at \$40 to \$50. That's a big difference," Juarez explained.

He calculates that if you manufacture 100,000 jeans in Mexico, it will cost \$1 million. Make those jeans in Los Angeles, the price skyrockets to \$4 million. The difference is astronomical and only economically practical if blue jeans are selling for \$100 to \$200.

Steve Rhee, owner of Jean Mart Inc., another major Los Angeles denim factory with 300 workers, said he has been getting a lot of phone calls and inquiries about switching production from Mexico to Los Angeles. But he is not sure if it is because of NAFTA or brands shifting to a fast-fashion production model.

He did get one big order from a brand that traditionally has done production in Mexico, but he notes that the July 1 rise in the minimum wage could put a damper on that. He will be forced to increase his prices and wonders if customers will be willing to accept the higher production price. "The only option we have is to raise prices," he said.

Atomic Denim-which has 200 workers who have made premium blue jeans for Tom Ford, Diesel and Hudson-has been getting its share of telephone calls from brands doing an exploratory search for possible Los Angeles production facilities. "I definitely

think there is a bigger interest from brands for manufacturing in Los Angeles, but I don't think I have seen any significant production changes. Time will tell," said Claudia Bae, Atomic Denim's vice president.

The manufacturing facility used to be a principal production site for True Religion, Bae said, but the company switched its production to Mexico and Vietnam after True Religion in 2013 was sold for \$835 million to TowerBrook Capital Partners. She doesn't think they're coming back to Los Angeles.

NAFTA renegotiations

Public hearings on NAFTA's renegotiations will be held June 27 in Washington, D.C., where companies, industries and interested parties can suggest what changes they would like to see or not see implemented in a revamped trade agreement that hasn't been overhauled in 23 years.

The real heavy lifting starts on Aug. 16, when the renegotiations on the free-trade agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico are scheduled to be launched. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has been keeping NAFTA renegotiation plans under wraps.

Many believe that more effort will be spent on overhauling big industries such as autos, dairy, sugar, energy and e-commerce. Apparel and textiles may be less affected because clothing imports from Mexico look minuscule compared with imports from China and Vietnam.

"Textiles and apparel are not going to be making headlines," said Nicole Bivens Collinson, an attorney who leads the international trade and government-relations practice at international law firm Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg. "Many think the textile and ap-

parel positions of NAFTA have been benefi-

Under free-trade agreements, garments have to be made of regionally made fabrics coming can be requested if a fabric is not made in any agreement. This means fabrics can be added to a short-supply list after a formal request is made to the trade authorities of the participat-

Under DR-CAFTA, the addition of a fabric to the short-supply list takes about 45 days. Under NAFTA, it can take years, Collinson said. Many would like to see a speedier process implemented under a new NAFTA.

Then there are the trade-preference levels, which allow a certain amount of yarns and as long as the non-regional goods are cut and sewn within the free-trade countries.

Many U.S. yarn and textile manufacturers would like to see TPLs done away with under a revised NAFTA, giving more opportunity for U.S.-made products to be incorporated into clothing production. Currently, Mexico is allowed to bring in 45 million square-meter equivalents of yarn and fabric a year from places such as China, which it normally uses up halfway through the year. These preference levels don't expire.

Under DR-CAFTA, the TPLs were limited to Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Nicaragua's TPLs expired at the end of 2014. For Costa Rica, the TPLs should expire in 2019.

Some see stricter origin rules for NAFTA. 'The objective under the renegotiation of NAFTA will be reciprocal access for U.S. and Mexican apparel and textile products and to improve the competitive opportunity for U.S. exports," said Jonathan Fee, an international trade attorney with **Alston & Bird** in Washington, D.C. "They want to make original rules that support U.S. production and jobs."

There could also be stronger enforcement of countervailing duties and anti-dumping laws that add tariffs on goods being subsidized by foreign governments or on goods priced below fair-market value.

Julie Hughes, president of the U.S. Fashion Industry Association in Washington, D.C., is hoping there won't be too many changes to NAFTA for the apparel and textile industries. "After 20 years, companies have spent a lot of time and energy trying to understand and work with NAFTA as it exists today," Hughes said. "In the current environment with tough retail and a tough consumer environment for fashion products, we don't think it is the time to tear it apart and start all over again."







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Skid ROW Continued from page 1

officer, Chris Cota, is on the brand's board.

Until now, the line-including the collection's "Activist" jeans and "Advocate" denim jackets, which are priced from \$150 to \$200has been available online at www.skidrowdenimacademy.org and at fund-raisers.

Expect to see more of Skid Row Denim Academy in downtown. On June 10, the line is scheduled to be featured at an event in the Rogue Collective boutique in downtown Los Angeles' Arts District. The Skingraft flagship near the Fashion District will be a retail focal point for the brand. Eventually, Skid Row Denim Academy will be sold at highend department stores and leading boutiques, predicted Robinson, who is a director of corporate development and innovation for Skid Row Housing Trust. As the line grows, he also forecast that it will employ formerly

homeless people.

Skid Row Denim Academy is currently based in a ground-floor space of New Pershing Apartments, a restored Victorian building on Fifth and Main streets in downtown Los Angeles. It is owned and managed by Skid Row Housing Trust. The nonprofit executives who put together the brand were looking for a project that could earn dollars and do more for Skid Row Housing Trust, said Lee Raagas Janc, a board member.

Robinson. Below, styles from Skid Row Denim "How do we make a product that brings a solution?" Raagas Janc asked. Academy. The line was planned to make money and develop awareness of the homeless crisis. "This thing is just a start. We're still creating a path. If we begin to solve this issue in Los Angeles, where the problem is significant, we can influence other cities facing the same challenge."

Skid Row Denim Academy joins a wave of new businesses that define themselves as philanthropy entrepreneurship. Part of their mission statements is to do business to raise funds for nonprofits. For-profit fashion and lifestyle companies such as Tom's and Warby Parker, respectively, donate shoes and glasses for every product they sell. Other companies, such as Apolis, a fashion line out of downtown Los Angeles, are benefit corporations. They are for-profits that include a positive impact on society as part of the company's legally defined goals.

Philanthropic entrepreneurship resonates with a key group of consumers, said Kenn Henman. He cofounded Los Angeles-based IGXO Cosmetics, which donates 10 percent of its sales to nonprofits. IGXO and some of Henman's other projects link YouTube personalities with philanthropic enterprises. He said that these companies are profitable because they cater to millennials, a demographic every youth-oriented business wants to attract from.

'Millennials are becoming more active politically and socially. It gives them the avenue to purchase something from their favorite [YouTube] star and also to give back a little," he said of philanthropic entrepreneurship. Henman is a former public-relations executive who served in Cambodia in the Peace Corps in 2014. In the late 1980s, he served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

Robinson, a tattooed father of two boys and who previously worked in nightclub management and music licensing, counts Skid Row Denim Academy as his first design gig. Skingraft's Cota consulted, and Scott Meisse, partner in Brand Name Studio, a brand and design consultancy based in Los Angeles, also worked on the project.

The collection is made with raw selvedge denim. The wide-leg pants have no stitching on the back pockets. Instead of a coin pocket, denim academy's pants feature a leather pocket for a smartphone. Both pants and jackets bear black leather patches with the logo of Skid Row Denim Academy. The brand is scheduled to introduce T-shirts this year. Robinson said denim was the best fabric to wrap his cause in. "Denim symbolizes people who roll up their sleeves and work. You don't wash it. It's distressed. It shows how you interact with the world and your community," he said.

Robinson took style inspiration from what the denizens of New York's mid-1970s punkrock scene were wearing as well as the denim look of rockers David Bowie and Iggy Pop during the period.



From left, Chris Cota, Lee Raagas Janc and Brad



Cota of Skingraft also made a limited collection of lambskin leather jackets for Skid Row Denim Academy. The motorcycle jacket for men and women is based on Skingraft's fitted motorcycle jacket. "This is a fresh take on a classic moto jacket," Cota said. "It's been one of our classic looks. But we updated it. We modernized the hardware to make it appeal to a wider audience."

Robinson thought in the case of Skid Row Denim Academy, consumerism can be activism. "This is a great entry point for people to get involved. You get the jeans, you get turned on to the great work that Skid Row Housing Trust has done for the past 25 years. The most important thing anyone can do is to show up. This is how you show up," he said.

Mike Alvedres, chief executive officer of Skid Row Housing Trust, said that it's going to take a lot more than denim to solve the homeless crisis.

"Rising housing costs and stagnant wages across the county mean that many of our friends, family members and neighbors are one crisis away from living on the street. We will not end homelessness until this economic crisis is addressed," he said.

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TRADE SHOW REPORT

Continued from page 1

Busy at CMC

The June LA Fashion Market is traditionally slow, but California Market Center showroom owners said that they were pleasantly surprised with a busy pace of retail buyers making their way through showrooms.

Des Wilson, the women's West Coast manager for The Park Showroom, estimated that the pace of market traffic was busier than the June LA Fashion Market of 2016. "The first two days, we were really packed," she said. The last official day of the mar-

ket was busy, too. A surprise for Wilson was that there were no cancellations-a frequent occurrence during the market. During the market, The Park debuted the Lisa Maree swimwear line, women's line Stoned Immaculate and the cashmere line Sori.

Melody Fast of Melody Fast Sales said the buzzing business was evidence of an improving retail market. "Obviously, they are selling," she said of retailers. "People were still buying Immediates. They were buying for Fall and they left orders.

Los Angeles-headquartered brand By JJ debuted during the June market at Fast's showroom. San Diego-headquartered brand IPNG made its debut at the Betty Bottom showroom as well. Betty Bottom owner Ernesto Mantilla said that the quality of buyer traffic depended on the quality of brands. "If you have something that is exciting, [traffic] always is going to be good," he said.

Gila Leibovitch of The Vault family of boutiques in Laguna Beach, Calif., shopped the CMC showrooms. She said the challenging fashion market has shifted in favor of retailers. "As a buyer, I control the buying. Now, I can buy whatever I want, whenever I want."

She said that once-ironclad rules on order minimums are bending and buyers have much more control over the buying schedule.

"I'm buying smaller quantities for delivery. If it does well, I reorder it. By that time I buy it off-price," she said. CMC management listed stores shopping the showroom

building included Madison, Revolve, Nordstrom, Dillard's,



From left Rosanne Tritica, Veronica Vejas and Ernesto Mantilla of CMC's Betty Bottom showroom. Exhibiting the IPNG brand are Tritica and Vejas.

LF Stores, Brigade LA, Fred Segal, Kitross, Mod Cloth, Tilly's, Seed People's Market, MGM Resorts, Paris Hotel and The Ritz Carlton.

Along with the action in the showrooms, CMC also hosted contemporary trade show Select in the lobby's Fashion Theater and ALT, an athleisure-focused show in the building's penthouse.

At Select, 25 booths exhibited 35 lines. The Lines of Denmark showroom returned to Select to show Danish fashion. Birmingham, Ala.-based headwear line Aviate made a West Coast debut at the show. Denver-

headquartered CoFi Genuine Leather also debuted at Select. The company exhibited its printed leather, which can be used to make customized footwear for its retail partners.

There were 13 exhibitor booths at ALT, including the tradeshow debut of The Parks Apparel, an outdoor lifestyle brand that makes 90 percent of its sales through its Instagram page, said Wayne Borromeo, founder and chief executive officer of the line. Chelsea Hughes of the Cantiq LA intimates line said that she did great business at ALT. "I got to reconnect with some accounts. I made a new account in Beverly Hills. I'm a happy camper," she said.

Mixed reports at The New Mart

Traffic at The New Mart was like a tale of two showrooms. Some sales representatives were extremely busy and others barely wanted to talk about market

Some showrooms were devoid of buyers and others were humming with activity.

"This has been one of the best June markets we've ever had," said Florence Ratzsch, co-owner of the Lynn Girard Showroom, which has been in business for more than 35 years. "Sunday was very busy, and Monday we literally had people out in the hallway waiting to get inside because we had no room. We had to turn away four buyers, and that was with four of us working." To generate traffic, the showroom employees sent out email

blasts, made phone calls and scheduled appointments to view the nine lines they represent.

Ratzsch credits the showroom's traffic to unique products in each of her contemporary lines. Each brand had one or two things that drew in store owners and merchandise managers. Spanx, which is expanding on its line of compression-wear garments, introduced a faux-leather distressed legging that wholesales for \$49. It was selling well.

The Eva Varro collection has a slim jacket with silver zippers on each front panel that is made of polyester, rayon and spandex. It is very slimming and never wrinkles. It wholesales for \$89. In the last two years, Ratzsch said, she has sold 20,000 of these jackets.

For the first time, the M Made In Italy label introduced a pre-Fall collection with June and July deliveries. The line, which is made of lightweight fabrics but with fall colors, was ideal for California with its warmer temperatures. "This has been a huge success," Ratzsch said.

At the Karen Kane showroom, Joyce Christensen said attendance was heaviest on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. "I thought it was a well-attended June show," the sales rep said. "I found there was less hesitation to book farther out. We have 12/30 deliveries. People were receptive writing farther down the year."

Buyers were snapping up items made of velvet and anything that had a different sleeve treatment such as bell sleeves and ruffled sleeves as well as cold shoulders and off-the-shoulders looks.

The Karen by Karen Kane sportswear line introduced more activewear elements in its Fall collection, incorporating fabrics that are soft to the touch. "Before it was more weekend wear, and now it includes something you can wear to go to the gym or be out and about on the weekend," Christensen said.

For every busy showroom, there were other showrooms where traffic was scarce. "It was slow," said Valerie Hambas, whose Valerie Hambas Showroom carries a wide assortment of clothing-from intimates and shoes to jewelry and cashmere sweaters. Her eight lines include Custo Barcelona, Papillon Blanc, Plus Cashmere, Free Minds and Blue Canoe.

She estimates that about 55 to 60 buyers showed up, but in the past she has seen a lot more people.

Even opening doors a day before market didn't work out for some showrooms. Judy Wexler at J. Wexler Sales worked on ► LA Market page 6

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TRADE SHOW REPORT

LA Market Continued from page 5

Sunday but only saw two people who had made appointments to see her one line—**Mystree**, a young contemporary brand based in Los Angeles. She was the only showroom open on her floor on Sunday. "It has been on the slow side," she said of market. Foot traffic was not that abundant, she observed. She relied on appointments for business.

Steady business at the Cooper

Los Angeles Market Week set the stage for a new art show in the lobby of the **Cooper Design Space**. Bijou Karman, an artist who works at the Cooper, exhibited her colorful portraits of women whose unique faces were wrapped in California settings.

The June market also set the stage for some new showrooms. Accessories brand **Bandolier** opened a showroom in the Cooper's lobby. The brand offers smartphone cases that can be worn over the shoulder like a bandolier. Previously, the Bandolier brand rented space in third-party showrooms, said Adam Derry, a creative director and partner for Bandolier. He said the time was right for the brand to get a long-term showroom because buyers needed a place to see and feel the product.

Showrooms remain important, but many salespeople said they would be taking their acts on the road after the June market to show their brands to retailers. "Store owners often don't have time to go to shows," said Katie Nichols, a sales rep showing the **Retro Brand** at the **One Girl Agency** showroom. Nevertheless, Nichols said the June market traffic was steady.

During the recent market, the **Lauren Moshi** brand showed mostly Fall looks, said Michael Moshi, the brand's owner. The label works close to delivery dates, Moshi said. Fall looks included embroidered sweaters and detailed shirts. Moshi said the market was steady. "The usual people came through. It was nothing out of the ordinary," he said.

During market, the **Subtle Luxury** brand, headquartered in Torrance, Calif., introduced a Holiday wrap cashmere shawl, featuring motif prints, said Andrea Zaplin, a West Coast sales representative for the brand, founded by Cindy Freeman. It displayed a giant selection of cashmere scarves as well as coverups and kimonos for its beach-lifestyle division, **Pool to Party by Subtle Luxury**, in the temporary showroom is opens during every LA Fashion Market.

At the **Anonymous 213** showroom, owner Eric Wheeler said the handbag brand **Tarryn Simone** did very well during market. "I was surprised how many buyers placed orders for it. It is an expensive brand that is not a designer label," he said. Some Tarryn Simone bags retail for \$1,600.

Anonymous 213 also celebrated its one-year anniversary representing Australian brand **Luxe Deluxe**. Wheeler said the brand's sales were 60 percent over its forecast for its Resort collection, which was being sold at the recent market. The brand is popular for its neutral color palettes and its feminine silhouettes.

Quiet June at Gerry Building

Showroom owners at the **Gerry Building** tried to be humorous when asked about the recent Los Angeles Fashion Market. "What market? This is market week?" one rep said.

Julie Walls, whose showroom is on the ninth floor, summed it up in one word: "slow."

But business was being written with appointments and regular customers. The owners of **Chaussure**, a decades-old specialty store in Long Beach, Calif., were looking for novelty items that would entice customers through the doors.

"We are looking for fabulous items," said Barbara McElrath, who owns the store with her sister Beverly Patel. "Our customers don't need anything, but they want things."

Chaussure is located near the upscale Naples area of Long Beach, a neighborhood with million-dollar homes perched alongside winding canals where many people have their **Duffy** boats and motorboats docked.

The store describes itself as an outpost that sells chic and cutting-edge fashion. With that in mind, the store owners were looking at items made by Los Angeles line **Mezon**, which has an artsy vibe to it, and **Lauren Vidal**, a French contemporary line with sophisticated silhouettes, both in the **Arlene Henry Showroom**.

One item that had drawn them into another showroom was a fur-trimmed cashmere sweater. They loved it.

For sales rep Loretta Kendrick, who was showing temporar-



Karen by Karen Kane at The New Mart

Chiefs of Boot Star boutique take in a meeting with Cooper's One Girl Agency

ily at the Arlene Henry Showroom, generating new business was high on her list of things to do. She opened four new accounts during market in California, Colorado and Hawaii. She represents eyewear company **Eyebobs**, high-end straw hats and purses by designer Eric Javits, women's clothing by French-Canadian line **Angela Mara**, and moderate wear by **Fresh Produce**.

Kendrick is seeing a retail market that is still having its ups and downs but is doing better now that the presidential elections are over and the three months of California rain have dried up. "The people who are coming to market are buying," she said. "They need merchandise. I have been selling a lot of Immediates."

Focused at D&A

The mood was upbeat at **Designers and Agents**, where several returning exhibitors—including the **Brothers and Sisters Showroom**, **Kim White Handbags** and **Jakett**—were consistently meeting with buyers throughout the three-day show. "We love June market," said D&A cofounder Barbara Kramer. "When the buyers are here, we get their full attention."

Business at the **Streets Ahead** booth got off to a strong start on opening day, said Sales Director Michelle Sack. Most of the traffic was from existing stores, Sack said, but she did open a couple of new accounts. Traffic was primarily local, but Sacks said she saw some out-of-state stores from Texas and Georgia. And buyers were placing orders for Immediate deliveries to "as LA Market page 7





Sales rep Loretta Kendrick at the Gerry Building

far out as November."

"I had absolutely no price resistance whatsoever, which is great," she said. "The people who came in were coming to buy."

Green Room

LA Made is another returning D&A exhibitor. Sales rep Diane Davis agreed that opening day was the strongest. In addition to showing at D&A, LA Made also exhibits in its showroom in the Cooper Design Space. Davis said at D&A she was mostly meeting with existing accounts, but she did land an order from a store she had been trying to reach. In addition to California stores from San Diego, Palm Springs and Long Beach, Davis said she saw stores from Colorado as well. This season, Davis said she saw more online stores coming to market. And buyers seemed to be buying further out than they have in the past.

"They're looking out a bit to Fall and Holiday," she said. "I'm not getting as many Immediates-especially if they've already written the line."

June is also when D&A hosts its Green Room section for up-and-coming and eco-friendly brands.

Among the collections showing in the Green Room was Dylan SV, a luxury handbag line based in Sun Valley, Idaho, and produced in Los Angeles.

Designer Sunny Mills said she wanted to create a line of luxury handbags that were moderately priced and made in America.

"I didn't think women needed to pay \$3,000 or \$4,000 for a Mongolian fur handbag," she said, adding that she wanted to launch a line that would also create jobs in the U.S.

Dylan SV bags are wholesale priced from \$200 to \$800. The bags are made from Italian leather, Mongolian lamb and kangaroo fur and trimmed with industrial metal hardware sourced in



Dylan SV handbags at Designers and Agents'

Los Angeles.

Kim Tran was in the Green Room to launch her Annam collection of hand-dyed clothing made in Vietnam and wholesale priced from \$130 to \$180. Tran, who is based in South Pasadena, Calif., sources her hand-loomed fabrics from Vietnam's Hmong hill tribes and works with a studio in Vietnam that employs mute and deaf women to do the hand-stitched details on the garments.

Camilla at Brand Assembly

"I believe in the people I'm working with and in the studio," she said. "That's dear to me."

New and returning at Brand Assembly

Brand Assembly got off to a brisk start on the top floor of the Cooper Design Space, where a tightly edited mix of returning and new brands showcased their latest collections.

The booth for Australian lifestyle line Camilla wrapped around one corner of the trade show where sales representatives Samantha McKay and Saville Dorfman showcased the resortthemed collection of caftans, dresses, sportswear and accessories. The booth also included some of the Camilla home décor pieces in the brand's signature original prints.

On opening day of the show, McKay and Dorfman met with several stores from California, as well as a few from out-of-state, including a new account from Portland. Ore.

We have a strong team helping find the right stores that fit our aesthetic," Dorfman said. 'We take care of our distribution. We give them that Camilla love."

This was the first trade show for Josa Tolum, a travel-based collection that splits its time between Tolum, Mexico, and Los

Angeles' Venice neighborhood. Founder Joanne Salt has three Tolum boutiques in Mexico and an online store. To launch the brand's wholesale business, she opened a showroom in Venice under the direction of Josa Chief Executive Officer Jason Ferro and tapped longtime sales executive Jason Bates to help introduce the line to retailers. The company is targeting resort stores and luxury hotels.

The collection reflects Salt's own aesthetic, which is inspired by her current home in Tolum and her travels between Mexico and New York and Los Angeles. For example, Salt will wear one of the collection's easy dresses or jumpsuits while in Tolum and then pair it with a leather jacket and heels when she's in the U.S. Wholesale prices range from \$60 to \$110. The company can turn product in two weeks in its own factories in Mexico, Salt said.

Katharine Marinaro returned to Brand Assembly with the latest Verdad collection, designed by LA designer Louis Verdad. Marinaro said she saw some new stores-including retailers from Alabama and Austin-and saw "all my regular people."

Natalie Brougham, account executive for Ameriex Group, was showing Red Carter swimwear as well as Red Carter apparel and Dolce Vita apparel at Brand Assembly. She said she saw a mix of existing and new accounts at the show, with several leaving orders.

At the booth for Dolce Vita footwear, buyers were vying for space to view the collection on opening day.

By the end of the three-day run, Dolce Vita rep Derek Delgado declared the show "amazing."

'This is the first time we've done the show in June," he said. "It surprised us how well it's going-even with a smaller show."

Delgado said part of the reason for the brisk business was he was showing several seasons at Brand Assembly, including Summer, Fall, Holiday and pre-Spring '18.

According to Hillary France, cofounder and chief executive officer of Brand Assembly, traffic at the recent market was up 40 percent over last June.

We had people from North Carolina, Kansas and New York," she said.

Next up, Brand Assembly heads to Dallas Market for the first time. The June 14–15 show will be held at Nasher Hall, an art gallery located near FIG (Fashion Industry Gallery) in Dallas. Brand Assembly will ferry buyers between the two venues in golf carts, France said.



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Black & White Ball Raises \$500,000 for Nat'l Jewish Health

The backdrop was the elegant **Langham Huntington Ho**tel in Pasadena, Calif. Required dress was black suits and gowns. Martin Chalifour, the principal concertmaster of the **Los Angeles Philharmonic**, dropped by to give a short performance on his violin.

The event was the annual **Black & White Ball**. Held on June 3, the event, hosted by **Los Angeles Professional Ser**vices, raised funds for **National Jewish Health**, the more than 100-year-old hospital in Denver.

When National Jewish Health opened in 1899, the hospital focused on treating tuberculosis and offering health care to those who couldn't afford it. Since then, the hospital has expanded its focus to pulmonary, cardiac and autoimmune diseases. It is one of the hospitals and health foundations consistently supported by Los Angeles' fashion industry as well as the attorneys and factors serving the industry.

While the cause was noble and the gathering stately, it didn't mean that the guests and honorees weren't allowed to be a bit irreverent.

The honoree, Gail K. Bernstein of **PNC Business Credit**, started her evening's remarks with this: "Someone introduced me as the president of the Badass Women's Club," Bernstein joked. But there was truth behind the jest. In addition to a long career in banking, Bernstein has devoted ample time to nonprofits and helping others. She was a volunteer translator for non-Englishspeaking women seeking to take out restraining orders against their batterers.

"You should always give back," she told the crowd of 500. "It is incumbent for us to make the world a better place."

Noel R. Ryan of **Houlihan Lokey**, the other honoree of the 2017 Black & White Ball, vouched for Bernstein's moxie. "Gail and I have known each other for

20 years. She has more energy than anyone I know. She has a wry wit and she gets things done," Ryan said.

During comments leading up to his speech, Ryan was described as a boss who focuses on the continuing education of his staff. Another described Ryan as "one of the nicest guys in investment banking."

More than \$500,000 was raised for National Jewish Health, which has been consistently ranked by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top two hospitals in America for pulmonology. Robert Ezra of Freeman, Freeman & Smiley LLP was a committee cochair for the 2017 Black & White Ball and 2002–2003 Black & White honoree.

"We've been supported by people of significance who have appreciated the work that the hospital has done," Ezra said. Past honorees have included James Perse, a pioneer in Los Angeles' boutique scene; Ronald Reagan,



Gail Bernstein, right, and her daughter Alex Taking bids for the Black & White Ball's auction

who was an honoree for 1973–1974; and newspaper baron Randolph A. Hearst, who was the inaugural honoree for 1961–1962.—*Andrew Asch*



Noel R. Ryan



Martin Chalifour of the L.A. Philharmonic



Soulville provided tunes and dance sounds for the Black & White Ball.

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Z Supply Opens In-Store Shops at Sunny Days

Irvine, Calif.–based **Z** Supply recently opened its first in-store-shop concept in the Sunny Days boutique on Balboa Island in Newport Beach, Calif., with plans to open a second in-store shop at the Sunny Days boutique in Orange, Calif.

To kick off the first opening, Z Supply and Sunny Days hosted a grand-opening party where shoppers and guests enjoyed acai bowls from **Amazebowls** and a gift with purchase.

The Z Supply in-store shop takes up approximately 200 square feet of space in the Balboa Island shop and can carry up to 500 units of Z Supply product.

"We have had incredible success with the Z Supply brand and with this new curated shop-in-shop concept we will be able to expand the popular product offering to our customer," said Deanna Frieze, founder of Sunny Days, in a statement. "Z Supply will help direct us on bestsellers, manage inven-



The Z Supply shop at Sunny Days on Balboa Island in Newport Beach, Calif.

tory as needed as well as help us market the brand to our customers."

Founded in 2011, Z Supply LLC has a growing portfolio of brands, including Z Supply, **Black Swan**, **White Crow**, **Others Follow**, **Icons of Culture** and **Rag Poets**. A former clothing rep, Frieze opened the first Sunny Days boutique in 2010. Today the company runs a fleet of five Sunny Days stores across Southern California. The retailer specializes in a mix of "timeless," international brands that reflect the "easygoing coastal lifestyle" and the personal taste of the Sunny Days shopper.—*Alison A. Nieder*

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