

# CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

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## DENIM REPORT

### A Movement Is Slowly Rising to Resurrect Selvage-Denim Production in the U.S.

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

When it comes to manufacturing selvage denim in the United States, Ryan Huston could be the last man standing.

Inside an old airplane hangar at the former **March Air Force Base** just north of Sacramento, Calif., the **Huston Textile Co.** has six **Draper** shuttle looms from the 1960s. Of the six looms, one can make the narrow-width selvage denim so cherished by purists who relish the fabric's finished edge.

Shuttle looms were very versatile and popular until the 1950s to 1960s when U.S. denim mills modernized their machinery to increase production and feed the growing demand for denim fabric.

With less demand for shuttle looms, the Draper Corp. shut down in the 1970s.

Until the end of last year, **Cone Denim Mills** was the last producer of selvage denim in the United States, but a

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## TRADE-SHOW REPORT

### Fashion Market Northern California Sold Out as Business Picks Up

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

SAN MATEO, Calif.—A good economy made for good business at the Oct. 21–23 run of **Fashion Market Northern California** at the **San Mateo County Event Center**.

The retailers attending FMNC during a sunny autumn weekend noted that their customers were buying more. However, a more confident retailer did not mean that boutique owners had entirely changed their buying habits of the past decade.

A significant number were making **Immediates** orders, buying close to season, vendors said. The show provided a chance to stock up on inventory before consumers start shopping for the crucial holiday season. The October market ended almost one month before **Black Friday**, the traditional start of the holiday shopping season.

Vendor space was sold out at FMNC, said Mary Taft, ex-

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ANDREW ASCH

## HOLIDAY HUSTLE

During the Oct. 21–23 run of **Fashion Market Northern California**, exhibitor space was sold out at the San Mateo, Calif., event, while buyers ordered goods to prepare for the holiday shopping season.



# NRF Finds Consumers Will Spend More During Holidays

The **National Retail Federation** released a forecast earlier this month that shows sales for the upcoming holiday season will increase from 4.3 percent to 4.8 percent over the year.

On Oct. 24, the prominent Washington, D.C.-based merchants group revealed shoppers will spend an average of \$1,007.24 during the holiday season. That's up 4.1 percent from the average of \$967.13 that consumers spent in the holiday 2017 season, Matthew Shay, NRF's president and chief executive officer, said.

"Confidence is near an all-time high, unemployment is the lowest we've seen in decades, and take-home wages are up," he said. "All of that is reflected in consumers' buying plans. Retailers expect strong demand this year and are prepared with a wide array of merchandise while offering strong deals and promotions during the busiest and most competitive shopping season of the year."

The NRF survey was conducted by **Prosser Insights & Analytics**. It also broke down where holiday shoppers will make

their purchases and forecasted the types of products they will buy.

Forecasted as one of the most popular items, gift cards were requested by 60 percent of people surveyed. The second most popular category was clothing and accessories with 53 percent of people requesting fashion.

The survey found that 71 percent of consumers chose the stores they patronize because of the sales and discounts offered by the seller. Quality and selection of goods were also important—60 percent of shoppers said

they picked a store because of its merchandise. Free shipping was chosen as a deciding factor by 47 percent of those surveyed, and the convenience of a store's location was ranked as a deciding factor regarding where to shop for 45 percent of those surveyed.

A majority of consumers—60 percent—will start shopping for gifts in November. A significant minority of 21 percent are early birds who started shopping in October, while 18 percent began shopping earlier.

—Andrew Asch

## ATSM Looks Toward Major Expansion for May 2019 Event

With its return to the **Mana Wynwood Convention Center** May 20–22, 2019, **Apparel Textile Sourcing Miami [ATSM]** will double in size for its second event following a 2018 launch. Show producer **JP Communications**, which is the parent company of the **Apparel Textile Sourcing** trade-show brand, joined the world's largest textile and apparel trade agency—the **China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textile and Apparel (CCCT)**—in investing \$2 million toward the event's expansion.

"We at ATSM are so grateful for the support of all our international partners and our community and business partners in south Florida, each of whom has been instrumental in helping us make this show a success and with whom we look forward to growing," ATSM Chief Executive Officer Jason Prescott said in a statement.

The three-day event will feature seminars, fashion shows and networking oppor-

tunities for attendees. As the show seeks to connect the southeastern United States, the Americas and the Caribbean with more than 300 international and domestic manufacturers who will exhibit at the event, CCCT chairman Cao Jiachang is hopeful that industry professionals will forge strong relationships with new partners from Asia.

"These are all highly successful leading apparel brands in China looking for U.S. partners to represent them in America and help grow their brands globally," Jiachang said.

During the show, attendees will have free access to conference and educational sessions, a runway presentation and buyer-to-supplier matchmaking services. There will be a new Sourcing Markets Pavilion; the LATAM Markets Pavilion, showcasing products from Latin American markets; a Streetwear Pavilion, which will include Lil Wayne's **Young Money** and **TruFit** lines; a fabric and trim section; and an area dedicat-

ed to swimwear, resort collections, active-wear and athleisure.

"Thousands of top buyers from more than 40 countries are expected to attend ATSM 2019 to source, connect and develop lasting relationships with qualified international and domestic suppliers," Prescott said.

As the largest apparel and textile source-

ing show in the southern United States and Latin America, Prescott expects ATSM will see buyers from major brands including **Kate Spade, HSN, Perry Ellis, Zara, Gap Inc., Chico's, Macy's, Disney, Zumba, Fountainsbleau, Hard Rock, Royal Caribbean, Levi's** and **Westgate Resorts**.

—Dorothy Crouch

## Fields Finds What's Trending in Los Angeles—and What's Not

Trend forecaster Barbara Fields of the **Barbara Fields Buying Office** builds her reports through researching what juniors styles are making cash registers ring in world fashion capitals such as London, Tokyo, Sydney and New York City.

For her recently released October 2018 Trend Report, Fields detailed what juniors styles are selling well in Los Angeles. She also detailed what is not selling well.

According to the report, juniors in Los Angeles like tops and sweaters that feature lattice-like details on the back and sometimes on the neckline. T-shirts with necklines that can be laced up like sneakers are also popular.

Trending well for the juniors set: tops featuring ruching, camisole tops, animal-skin prints, tops featuring color blocking, graphic T-shirts—sometimes bearing feminist slogans—and utility pants.

Anticipating winter, juniors are buying puffer jackets, nylon windbreakers and outerwear with faux-fur trims.

The report also noted specific looks on the outs. Premium looks from years past are having a hard time. Think T-shirts bearing skull graphics. Think denim featuring embroidery. Fields said these trends were victims of their own success. "It's oversaturation," Fields said. "It just died."

Corset tops aren't faring very well either in Los Angeles. Casual clothing featuring sequins is also not performing well, Fields said. Track pants with side taping are still doing well, but she anticipates that their popularity will decline unless these track pants feature velvet trims or other embellishments.

Also having a tough time: tops with ruffles, pants and shirts with gingham checks, and clothes featuring rock 'n' roll sass such as grommet rings.—A.A.

## Ahead of the Holiday Season, Piper Jaffray Reveals the Brands Teens Want

As the retail industry approaches the holiday shopping season, overall teen spending has increased by 1 percent over fall 2017 but decreased 5 percent since spring 2018 among teenage members of Generation Z. Regarding their fashion purchases, teens in the United States are placing more importance on brand-name clothing than they were during the same time frame six years ago.

These trends were uncovered in the 36th semiannual "Taking Stock With Teens" survey, which was conducted by the Minneapolis-based investment bank **Piper Jaffray**. Surveying 8,600 teenagers in 48 states, the report affords insight into the spending habits of Gen Z, with an average age of 16 for survey respondents.

"Our fall survey showed overall teen spending flat over the prior year," Erinn Murphy, Piper Jaffray senior research analyst, said in a statement. "That said, teen spending continues to expand in categories like video games and food. Females now indicate they spend three times more on beauty than accessories."

While spending on accessories fell among female teenage consumers, fashion experi-

enced a slight year-over-year uptick. Overall, 45 percent of teenagers surveyed during fall 2018 considered branding as the most important factor when making purchases compared with 33 percent in 2012.

"Within fashion, we see a strong brand cycle emerging led by athletic, streetwear and 1990s brands ranging from **Vans, Supreme, Tommy Hilfiger** and **Adidas**," Murphy said.

As **Nike** maintained its top position as the most popular clothing brand, it also decreased in mindshare from 25 percent in 2017 to only 22 percent in 2018. **American Eagle** placed second, with 9 percent, and Adidas retained its spot at No. 3 with 6 percent mindshare. Among female respondents, Vans enjoyed an all-time high as the top footwear brand for those shoppers in the upper-income bracket. Overall, Nike, Vans and Adidas placed in the top-three spots for footwear, respectively.

When buying their preferred clothing, those in Gen Z are most likely to choose **Amazon** over other online shopping destinations. Social-media use is now led by **Instagram**, which edged above **Snapchat**, and **Facebook** continues to decline.—D.C.

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# Industry Veterans Reformulate Misses/Contemporary Through Launch of Alchemy Thread

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

For Spring 2019, Mandy Wang, owner of the fashion brand **Daniel Rainn**; Sonia Ding, an apparel-factory owner based in China; and Eileen Bushman, an apparel executive with more than 30 years in the business, have introduced the misses/contemporary line **Alchemy Thread** and its discounted counterpart, **Alkamy**.

As owner of Daniel Rainn, Wang launched the brand in 2008 with Creative Design Director Daniel Norzagaray. During planning for Daniel Rainn, Wang found guidance from her friend Bushman, who served as a consultant. With a career that includes 11 years at **One World Apparel**, where Bushman served as president, she was the perfect choice to lead Wang's new venture as president.

"Eileen has worked in this industry for many years. She has both fashion and business-management talent and experience," Wang said of her friend, whom she has known for 18 years. "Working together with the right person will increase the success of the business. Eileen is the right one."



With strong histories working in fashion, Wang and Bushman understand the specific needs of the consumers they are targeting. These consumers are women who want to wear colorful pieces that will complement their body types while also being comfortable.

"Everything is done with the woman's body in mind. We are dressing real women

with real figures, not models," Bushman explained. "We are very sensitive to what she likes to show and what she likes to camouflage."

For the launch of the banner brand, Alchemy Thread, Bushman designed clothing that is influenced by a laidback California lifestyle. Heavily focused on knits, with nearly 65 percent of the line dedicated to this fabrication, and some wovens, Alchemy Thread relies on bold colors and prints that are meant to flatter women's bodies. There are vertical stripes in yellows and blues, batik-inspired prints in reds and robin-egg hues, and tie-dyed deep purple, pink and teal.

"Fabrication is number one. I am knits driven, though I do have wovens in the line," she said. "When designing the tops I thought about pairing them with jeans on the weekend, with many California-influenced prints and colors."

Most of the pieces in the collection are tops and dresses with a few bottoms, which wholesale between \$10.50 and \$17.50. The line is manufactured in China, using Chinese fabrics—an easy decision considering Wang and Ding's relationships within the country's manufacturing community.

When designing Alchemy Thread's mid-tier counterpart, Alkamy, Bushman wanted the clothing to reflect the same California-cool style sought by her Alchemy Thread customer but at a more affordable price.

"Alkamy is a lot of the same looks but designed for the mid-tier price range," she explained. "Some fabrics are a bit different but very California influenced in print and color vibe."

Buyers are taking notice of Bushman's approach to misses/contemporary dressing, as they responded positively to the new lines during **New York Market Week** held in September.

"The response was great, and we got paper immediately. The dresses were very strong," Bushman said. "One thing I was most excited about was our printed cotton/Modal T-shirts and casual tops in cotton/Modal jersey and slub jersey—those really took off."

While the team at Alchemy Thread and Alkamy is hopeful, following a successful introduction to its new retail partners, there remain challenges for new brands launching in the current apparel-manufacturing climate.



"The fashion business is not easy now," Wang said. "The marketing is changing and consumers' thinking is changing. If we keep an open mind, use creative thinking and shift together with the market, we will find a successful niche."

This creative thinking and open-mindedness are part of the process that contributed to Bushman's conceptualization for Alchemy Thread and Alkamy. By adhering to the meaning of the word "alchemy," she believes these new clothing lines could strongly affect a woman's life.

"Alchemy is an ancient practice, when someone takes the ordinary and turns it into the extraordinary, such as someone who can take lead and turn it into gold," she explained. "I am looking at fashion alchemy. What are we transforming? We're transforming a woman's self-image as well as transforming what others see in her." ●

## TRADE-SHOW REPORT

### FMNC *Continued from page 1*

ecutive director. There were 209 exhibitors displaying fashions ranging from knit dresses, caftans, denim, outerwear and lingerie to hats, footwear and jewelry. FMNC is held five times throughout the year, and the October show marked the last event on its 2018 calendar.

The regional trade show mostly serves independent boutiques in the San Francisco Bay Area and the wider Northern California region. But it also attracts boutiques from the Pacific Northwest and around the Western United States. A wide range of boutiques visited the show, including the **Thunder Valley Casino Resort** in Placer County, 30 miles northeast of Sacramento. Also attending were **California Lifestyle**, a boutique located in Terminal 3 of **San Francisco International Airport**, and **Suji**, a boutique from Santa Monica, Calif.

Consumer confidence soared to an 18-year high in September, according to **The Conference Board**, a nonprofit market-research group, which takes the pulse of American shoppers. The sentiment marks a rebound, said Tricia Hancock, founder of the boutique **Voluptuary** in Los Gatos, Calif.

"Things are coming back to where they were before the [2016] election," Hancock said. Jitters from the political turmoil of the 2016 election season caused many shoppers to scale back their consumption. Fierce competition from e-commerce also took a bite out of bricks-and-mortar boutique retail. Recently, boutique shopping started to make a rebound. "A lot of boutiques went out of business," she said. "But people are coming back to shopping at boutiques. They want to try and feel garments again."

Politics will continue to shape business. Since President

Trump levied larger tariffs on Chinese goods, the number of tourists from China that visit California Lifestyle has dropped, said Rilla Ginsberg, founder of the airport-based retailer. "We have to capture more domestic business," she said.

However, a unique time in U.S. history does not call for a specific look, said Sheryl Moyle, owner of the **Trendz Boutique & Salon** in Sonoma, Calif., which is located in California's Gold Country. "Almost anything goes," Moyle said of the current style trends. Looks from the 1980s are increasingly in vogue, especially bright colors, leg warmers and acid-wash fabrics that were big during the Reagan era, said Tammy Cooper, who also works at Trendz.

While Southern California continues to enjoy summerlike weather, Northern California retailers are anticipating colder weather in the coming months, said Wink Wells, co-owner of the **Wells Apparel Group**. "I'm doing a lot of robes and pajamas. We're selling a lot of warm clothes," he said.

Faux-fur outerwear and clothes with faux-fur trim were featured at several booths, including at the **Vine Street Apparel** brand.

Raffi Mauleon displayed his **Raffi** brand of hand-painted

tops at the show. He said business was good but that around 60 percent of his customers were making orders for **Immediates**. Fern Liberson of **Fern Liberson & Co** also said buyers were focusing on the near future. "I got a lot of **Immediates**. I got a little bit of Spring. I won't complain. I got 24 stores in two days," Liberson said of retailers ordering at her booth.

Like any other trade show, there was a range of opinion on the amount and quality of buyer traffic. Vendor reactions on buyer traffic ranged from solid to great. "Turnout is good. We always do well here," said Silvio Dano, who represented the European line **Ivko**.

"We had a lot of new accounts, and our schedule was busy," said Sharon Koshet, a veteran vendor at FMNC.

It also pays to show up, according to exhibitors. Designers Cara Ucci and Ruby Bettencourt put in appearances at the **Crayola Sisters**

booth. Ucci estimated that sales for her **Caraucci** brand increased 30 percent over the FMNC show in August. "Instead of talking to customers over the phone, we met them face-to-face," Ucci said.

The FMNC calendar starts again in 2019 with the first show of the year scheduled to run Jan. 27–29 at the San Mateo County Event Center. ●



Lulu-B brand booth at day 2 of FMNC





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## T-SHIRTS

## Cashmere N Tee Bets on Multi-Brand Boutique

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Walk through any mall or retail street—some of the most prominent shops are mono-brand stores that sell a wide variety of basics from a single fashion label. Lauren Goldstein and Samera Arkel are providing an alternative.

Earlier this month, they opened a boutique devoted to tops, T-shirts and cashmere from a diversity of labels. The multi-brand store, **Cashmere N Tee**, quietly opened at 409 E. Woodbury Road in Altadena, Calif., located only a few minutes' drive from Pasadena, Calif.

The 1,100-square-foot store divides half of its selling space into high-end women's T-shirts. The other half features cashmere sweaters, tops and scarves.

In addition to working as a design assistant and sales rep, Arkel has owned fashion boutiques. Goldstein's career has included working as a stylist for cable network MTV as well as for personal clients. She also has worked as a retail consultant with the **Tucci Boutique** in the San Diego area and **Madison**, the prominent fashion boutique run by her cousin Mark Goldstein.

Personal shopping with a forte of stylists such as Goldstein will be offered as a service by Cashmere N Tee. Some of the inspiration for the store's concept came from insights from her previous stylist gigs.

"When I pulled clothes for clients, I would post pictures [of T-shirts and cashmere], and they would buy it," Goldstein said. "These are core essentials. They are the most worn items in a women's wardrobe. They are classic."

As one of the most popular categories she has seen in her career, more than 30 percent of her business came from tees and cashmere. Demand rarely declines, she said. Whenever she goes through clients' wardrobes, she always sees stacks of T-shirts piled high—but

there always seems to be room for one more.

Brands currently stocked at the shop are **Sundry**, **Monrow**, **LNA Clothing**, **Stateside** and **143**. Featured cashmere brands include **Minnie Rose**, **27 Miles** and **Brazeau Tricot**. Price points range from \$100 to \$400 for cashmere. The store also sells dresses, sweaters and track pants. A specialty of the store is new brands, Goldstein said.

"We like to discover new and emerging talent, designers people have not seen. It keeps things fresh," she said. Eventually, Cashmere N Tee will offer men's and children's styles. It also will focus on the e-boutique *cashmerente.com*, which is scheduled to launch before the end of the year.



Currently, Arkel and Goldstein consider Cashmere N Tee to be a destination boutique. Arkel forecasts that Altadena will be a retail neighborhood. Residents of the city are well off, and Altadena is surrounded by the affluent enclaves of San Marino and La Cañada Flintridge. But Arkel said that Altadena is under-retailed. No fashion boutiques do business on the same street as Cashmere N Tee. However, the boutique is located a half-mile from Zagat-rated hipster café **Lincoln Pasadena**.

Behind the store, there's a 1,500-square-foot enclosed patio

where the duo will host events and Arkel will sell unique and vintage furniture.

When Arkel crafted the interior design of Cashmere N Tee, she strove for a clean, minimalist look, similar to the clothes the store sells. The store's interior includes bay windows, custom-made shelving that scales the store's walls like ladders, and its wood flooring extends up the back wall. Goldstein hopes the store offers a relaxing milieu. "We hope it feels like someone's living room," she said. ●

## Calendar

### Oct. 28

#### NW Trend Show

Pier 91, Smith Cove Terminal  
Seattle  
Through Oct. 30

### Nov. 2

#### Los Angeles Christmas Cash & Carry Gift Show

Los Angeles Convention Center  
Los Angeles  
Through Nov. 4

### Nov. 7

#### CALA San Francisco

Fort Mason Center  
San Francisco  
Through Nov. 8

### Nov. 8

#### Outdoor Retailer Winter Market

Colorado Convention Center  
Denver  
Through Nov. 11

### Nov. 13

#### ReMode

Los Angeles Convention Center  
Los Angeles  
Through Nov. 14

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on ApparelNews.net.

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# Thrive Société Forges Its Own Path in the Race to Compete With Athletic Apparel

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

The activewear category in apparel has expanded far beyond fitness enthusiasts and accomplished athletes as fashion continues to embrace the trend with chic athleisure pieces and luxurious streetwear lines. As athletic wear was beginning to cross over into mainstream fashion, Walnut, Calif.-based **Thrive Société** launched its Spring 2018 women's collection to offer a unique blend of femininity and function.

"There was a hole in the market as far as active athleisure [was concerned], where the air of femininity wasn't there," the brand's senior designer and triathlete Bre Neidt said. "A lot of activewear that is out there right now is not performance based."

While she and the company's founder—30-year apparel-industry veteran Perry Wang—wanted to create pieces that were based on runway designs, the collection had to meet the performance demands of athletes, which is a struggle Neidt knows all too well.

"For me, fabrication is always something that I think is really important," she explained. "I was tired of wearing itchy, scratchy things when I worked out. It's about being comfortable and wanting to wear something not only during your workout but after."

With 14 years of swim and athletic-apparel design experience, working with brands including **Warnaco Swimwear Inc.**, **Adidas** and Australian sports brand **Jaggad**, Neidt is familiar with the evolution of the industry. As Thrive Société has grown over the last year, since its August 2017 launch at the **MAGIC** trade show in Las Vegas, the brand is holding on to some of its original design features—such as knitted twill tape that yields a softer hand—and manufacturing methods that have contributed to its success.

"People were really attracted to the details of the garments and the finishing. I am super detail oriented," Neidt explained. "Bound seams on the interior of hoodies and twill tape at the back of the neck—those finishing details are really important. I want your garment to be as beautiful hanging on the back of your chair as it is on you."

Through four collections a year, the brand is relying not on simple athletic-wear and athleisure trends but also on those that are found on the runway during each season on the fashion calendar.

"We used this beaded metal trim along seams. It's small and delicate, but it gives a tiny bit of glimmer to the garments," Neidt revealed. "That was a high-end runway trend that **Brunello Cuccinelli** used, and **Alexander Wang** was using it in a way bigger way."

By examining the looks found on the most notable luxury designers, Neidt translates these high-end styles into clothing that women can feel good about wearing while working through the most demanding training session or simply enjoying the latest **Netflix** binge-worthy series.

"The aesthetic of taking a runway trend to a level that is affordable and using it in a completely different way, such as on the shoulders of a runner's tank, is not normal, but it brings an elevated feel," Neidt said.

Despite its runway influences from some of the world's most lauded contemporary designers, Thrive Société also relies on features that are influenced by common issues that athletes face. Whether a woman wants to attend a yoga class or participate in a triathlon, the Thrive Société collection of sports bras is designed in different styles to provide the necessary support for a variety of activities.

"It's extremely difficult to find technical companies that produce such beautiful activewear for runners, the gym and yogis," Dana Brusilovsky, a buyer for New York City-based **Paragon Sports**, said. "This is the second season I have Thrive Société on my floor, and customers are completely thrilled. They are touching the fabric, trying it on, and the fit looks great."

While Neidt considers how she can improve upon designs in the future, if a piece proves to be extremely popular with customers, she will rework it slightly and release the altered version during the next season.

"We kept some of our best-selling pieces, recolored them and carried them forward," she said. "For Fall, we tried to bring a bit more functionality to our athleisure pieces. We added reflective bungee, which was fun because it looks cool, but it also reflects light if you're wearing it during a workout during dusk or dawn. We keep customers safe."



Using this method of building a brand through new designs yet reimagining customer favorites, Neidt is helping to establish a legacy for Thrive Société that could further elevate the company to become a heritage brand of athletic/athleisure apparel in the future. For the Spring 2019 collection, which wholesales between \$16 and \$102, the brand is expanding the line by improving on its solutions to problems customers face while working out.

"This Color Block Jacket, which was the shining star at all the trade shows, uses this reflective oil slick-looking fabric," Neidt revealed. "It's designed for high performance, and it's the highest-end jacket that we do."

The polyurethane jacket features a fabric similar to material used by **Maison Margiela** for its Spring '18 line, noted Neidt. When worn by athletes who prefer to train outdoors during the darkest periods of the day and night, the material reflects the light from vehicles, thereby allowing drivers to see these fitness enthusiasts.

With its Spring 2019 collection, Thrive Société also included a plus-size capsule of pieces for women who enjoy working out but face the challenges of finding activewear that fits their bodies. For the initial rollout of its expanded-size offerings, the company will feature pieces measuring 16–24 and 1X–3X. "It's four styles for Spring, and we'll keep adding through Summer into Fall, said Neidt. "We're really excited about that."

Working with the same beloved China-based manufacturer since its inception, Thrive Société continues to evolve. While the company isn't a completely sustainable brand, it is using more-responsible manufacturing and dyeing processes. The brand has included fabrics such as brushed bamboo and recycled polyester for certain styles.

"Trying to find sustainable fabrics that don't completely obliterate the price point is important," Neidt said as she explained that the industry is shifting toward more-environmentally responsible practices. "When I am sourcing, if I have two fabric swatches in front of me, one says recycled or eco, I am going toward that selection." ●

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# Using Reclaimed Fabric to Promote a Sustainable Manufacturing Model

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

For **Tonlé** apparel-brand owner Rachel Faller, entering into fashion wasn't part of her career plan when she studied textile design at the **Maryland Institute College of Art**, where she focused on fine art and sculpture.

"I loved making things, but I knew that the fashion industry had problems, and I wasn't sure how to participate in a way that I felt good about," she said.

It wasn't until 2007—during a trip to Cambodia—that Faller met artisans who were using fair-trade practices. She realized apparel could be manufactured without contributing to the waste issues that occur during clothing production.

After receiving a Fulbright grant to research methods for sustainable textile production in Cambodia, Faller recognized the need for socially responsible, sustainably produced clothing and launched her own ethical fashion brand, named **KeoK'jay**, in 2008.

"There was a gap in the market for ethically made, sustainable clothing that was wearable and usable on a daily basis," she said.

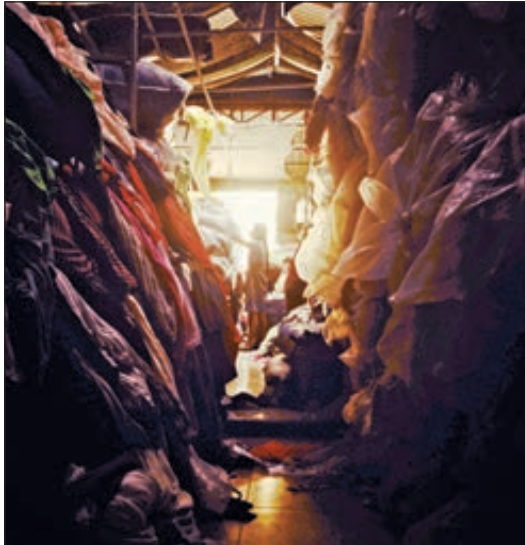
There isn't a large raw-materials market in Cambodia, and Faller was unable to find the organic fabrics that she wanted to use in her womenswear designs. Instead, she searched second-hand markets for used clothing and linens and soon found piles of fabric waste from local apparel factories.

"That is how I discovered there was a huge amount of waste coming out of the garment industry," Faller explained, as she described her shift toward sourcing pre-consumer recycled materials. "We don't need to create new materials when there is so much waste."

With this shift, Faller wanted to emphasize her improved ap-



A Srey Dun sweater in Palm and a bias-cut skirt from Tonlé's Autumn/Winter 2018 collection



A fabric market in the Beung Sayap area of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh

proach to ethical, sustainable fashion and rebranded her business as Tonlé, the Khmer word for river. Searching for alternative sources of fabrics, Faller started to use a combination of dead stock, cutaways and smaller scraps.

"In 2014, I rebranded as Tonlé," Faller said. "It was at this time we adopted a totally zero-waste model."

By simply sourcing her materials through reclaiming fabrics from factories, Faller provides Tonlé's workers with enough resources to create her line through the company's San Francisco flagship and select boutique partners. The brand recycles approximately 20,000 pounds of fabric annually.

In addition to her sustainable mission, Faller follows ethical production standards for the clothing as well. The Tonlé workshop in Cambodia uses a station-based approach, where workers move between tasks to learn different skills, which will make them more employable.



Rachel Faller in her workshop

"In our workshop, we try to promote from within the team and have people learn transferable skills," she said.

There are 30 cut-and-sew professionals in Faller's workshop, but in 2016 she started working with **Weaves of Cambodia**, a non-profit organization started by American

veterans of the Vietnam War. Many of the workers employed by the organization were left permanently disabled from landmines placed in the region during the conflict.

The comprehensive approach to ethical manufacturing is resonating with Tonlé's clientele. At Berkeley, Calif.-based boutique **Palm & Perkins**, Genna Gershkow and Julia Gordon focus on telling the stories behind the ethically made goods they sell.

"Her [Faller's] style is on point for us. It's simple, but it has fun and interesting touches that make it different from any other piece of clothing that I've seen," Gershkow explained as she discussed her store's business, which launched last November.

As part of the shift toward conscientious shopping, Gershkow feels that consumers are starting to think about the origins of their clothing. "Hearing about Tonlé and Rachel's story opened up our customers' eyes to value that product," she said.

With the launch of the brand's Autumn/Winter 2018 collection, Tonlé has saved 14,000 pounds of textile waste from entering landfills in this single line, positioning the company to exceed its annual average. Wholesale pricing ranges from \$20 to \$96, depending on the fabric and construction, with pieces that include hand-woven details selling at the highest cost.

"One of the other ethical sides of the business is making it approachable," Faller said. "There is a ton of high-minded eco fashion not accessible to people who want to be a part of this but don't have a lot of money." ●

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## DENIM REPORT

### Denim *Continued from page 1*

private-equity group that bought the company in 2016 decided it wasn't profitable to make the fabric anymore. Consequently, the company's selvedge-denim operations at its White Oak mill in Greensboro, N.C., shut down at the end of 2017 after being in operation since 1905.

That left denim makers scrambling to find selvedge-denim sources outside the United States—principally in Japan and Italy. But selvedge-denim enthusiasts are hoping more people like



Kat and Ryan Huston



Inside Huston Textile Co.

Huston will fill the void in the United States.

Tony Patella, co-founder of **Tellason** jeans in Sausalito, Calif., who was using Cone Denim selvedge denim to make his premium-denim pants, is a purist and would like to see that kind of selvedge-denim production done in the United States again. "I have this thing about historical products coming from where their history started," he said.

Huston has the same philosophy. It was in 2013 that he happened into the manufacturing business by using old looms to make a baby carrier-specific fabric and later moved into other fabrics, including denim.

"Then the vintage workwear enthusiasts contacted us about making shirting material and selvedge denim and that got us on track," said Huston, whose company inside the former military hangar is home to the business' looms, sewing machines, a 40-foot-long cutting table, winders, warpers, a knotting machine, a fabric re-roller and tons of parts.

Huston, who runs his company with his wife, Kat, has found that his fabrics—which include cotton duck, canvas, chambray, and wool-and-cotton blends made on old looms—have become more popular than his selvedge denim, which right now only makes up 7 percent of his production. But he is hoping to change that when he finds a U.S. company that produces indigo-dyed yarns for his selvedge denim. Indigo lets denim



Weaving chambray fabric

fade with a more natural look. "One of the important things about blue-jeans denim is that it fades," he noted.

Right now, Huston is doing runs of sulfur-dyed denim and bull denim, but indigo is his preference. Custom orders for his selvedge denim take about six months, with fabric selling for \$12 to \$30 a yard, depending on the quantity ordered.

The process to make his selvedge denim starts when he places an order with a spinner



Denim roll and pants



Woven denim roll



Denim roll



# Forced Labor Targeted in New Agreement

Apparel is one of the industries marked by forced labor in its supply chain. Some prominent members of the industry recently took steps to protect migrant workers from forced labor in their supply chains as part of an effort to implement ethical standards.

Recently, 123 apparel and footwear companies signed the AAFA/FLA Apparel & Footwear Industry Commitment to Responsible Recruitment. The agreement's signatories promised to work with their supply-chain partners to combat conditions that create an environment for forced labor.

The agreement includes stipulations that no worker must pay fees to get a job. Other rules include guarantees that workers must retain control of their travel documents and have full freedom of movement. Also, workers will be informed of the basic terms of their employment before joining the workforce,

said Rick Helfenbein, president and chief executive officer of the **American Apparel & Footwear Association**.

"Creating a more transparent supply chain has long been a focus of the apparel and footwear industry, and removing the possibility of forced labor is a major part of these efforts," Helfenbein said.

"Not only does this commitment show that our industry does not tolerate forced labor, but it also shows our customers that we take this issue seriously and are proactively working together as an industry to initiate measures to ensure these values are respected throughout the supply chain. We hope that many other members of our community will join us in the near future."

Sharon Waxman, president and chief executive officer of the **Fair Labor Association**, said that forced labor often starts out with recruitment practices that require migrant

workers pay large fees to secure a job.

"With this renewed commitment to responsible recruitment, we hope to bring the power of collective action to highlight these harmful, and sometimes deceptive, practices and protect workers against forced labor in global supply chains," she said.

Companies signing this agreement include Fair Labor Association members including **Outerknown, Patagonia, Nike, Adidas, Fruit of the Loom, Gildan, Delta Galil and Under Armour**. Other signatories such as **Levi Strauss & Co.** were already following codes of conduct for responsible supply-chain practices. Also signing the agreement were **Carhartt, Eileen Fisher, Lucky Brand, Nordstrom, Perry Ellis International, Vanity Fair and Columbia Sportswear Company**.—*Andrew Asch*

## DENIM REPORT

### Denim *Continued from previous page*

in North Carolina who uses mostly U.S.-grown Upland cotton for the order. The yarn is then twisted in one of two mills in the South, sent to a dyer and then on to Huston Textile.

Using U.S. fabric manufacturers is important to Kristine Vejar, whose natural-yarns-and-fabrics store in Oakland, Calif., is called **A Verb for Keeping Warm**. She buys fabric from Huston Textile because the environment's health is very important to her. "It is precisely for these reasons why I am proud to support Huston Textile. They are a U.S.-based manufacturer that uses materials raised on U.S. farms," she wrote in an email. "We carry anywhere from Huston Textile organic-cotton canvas, wool cloth, wool/cotton cloth to their naturally dyed indigo cloth."

### The search for old machinery

To find old Draper shuttle looms can be a bit of a treasure hunt. There is a small network of cognoscenti who deal

in old textile machinery. Often purchases are done through word of mouth. "I got a couple of looms for free," said Huston, who has let people know he is in the market for shuttle looms. "A couple in Connecticut bought a house, and in the shed behind the house were a few looms."

They contacted him. He drove to the East Coast, picked up the looms and had them shipped to California.

Through a broker, a shuttle loom can cost as much as \$50,000, depending on its condition, Huston said.

While Huston is trying to ramp up his selvedge-denim production, a Los Angeles company that sells and distributes wholesale denim fabric is taking the first steps toward manufacturing selvedge denim by as early as next year.

Omid Davoodi, chief executive of Los Angeles-based **Pacific Blue Denims**, said he has acquired six Draper shuttle looms and has another 28 similar looms in storage in Guatemala.

"We started on this project before Cone Denim shut its mill down," said Davoodi, whose family-run company was started in 1988. "We had these machines for years and had

put the project on the back burner, but once Cone shut down, we shipped the [six] looms to our warehouse to get them going. There are a lot of our customers who have their brands based on U.S.-made selvedge denim as well as ourselves who sell it."

When Davoodi heard Cone Denim was closing down, he bought 500,000 yards of its selvedge denim. "We sell these fabrics to people all over the world. I have customers in Japan and Thailand," he noted. "There is a very strong market for U.S.-made selvedge denim. Once Cone shut down, everyone was looking to us and saying, 'What are we going to do?' Hopefully by next year we will be producing something."

Other people, such as U.S. blue-jeans manufacturers, also bought up what was left of Cone Denim's selvedge denim last year, but supplies will start dwindling.

Ryan Huston is counting on it. "When Cone closed, I heard from my customers that they were stocking up inventory," he said. "It hurt my business, but as they use that supply they are going to have a harder time finding it. I'm hoping that will benefit me." ●

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