

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 74 YEARS

\$2.99 VOLUME 75, NUMBER 9 MARCH 1-7, 2019



Left to right: LSK Finetex Co., Ltd.; Solstiss; LSK Finetex Co. Ltd.; Bennett Silks; Texollini; Confetti Fabrics

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

Spring and Summer are popping in the textile world. But we're not talking about this
Spring and Summer. We're talking about Spring and Summer 2020.

New colors and trends predominant next year will be front and center at the
LA Textile show March 6-8 at the California Market Center.

Gap Inc. to Split Into Two Separate Publicly Traded Companies

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

For years, **Old Navy** has been the workhorse for **Gap Inc.**, whose other brands include **Gap**, **Banana Republic**, **Athleta**, **Intermix** and the newly launched **Hill City**.

Now Old Navy will be its own separate company after Gap Inc. executives announced on Feb. 28 that they are spinning off Old Navy and will create two independent publicly traded companies. One company will be called Old Navy, which is known for its family-oriented, moderately priced goods. The other company, consisting of all the other Gap Inc. brands, does not have a name yet but is being referred

to as **NewCo**.

Old Navy currently has about \$8 billion in annual revenues while NewCo has about \$9 billion in annual revenues.

"Following a comprehensive review by the Gap Inc. board of directors, it's clear that Old Navy's business model and customers have increasingly diverged from our specialty brands over time, and each company now requires a different strategy to thrive moving forward," said Robert Fisher, the board chairman for Gap Inc. "Recognizing that, we determined that pursuing a separation is the most compelling path forward for our brands—creating two separate compa-

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Private Label Is Lending a Helping Hand to Retailers' Business

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

If you want to buy a pair of **Levi's** jeans, it's not too hard to find a store that carries them.

But if you want to buy a pair of jeans not owned by almost everyone, that's another story.

As retailers try to distinguish themselves from e-commerce sites and everyone else, they are turning more and more to developing their own private-label clothing to lend an air of uniqueness to their shop floors.

That idea is being adopted by **Macy's Inc.**, which recently named Patti Ongman as its new chief merchandising officer. One of her jobs will be to look for new opportunities within the department-store chain's private-label program, according to a Macy's announcement.

"Department stores once promised that private label would not take up more than 25 percent of their stores," said Mary Susan Wilberding, a New York-based retail consultant.

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A Cease-Fire in the Trade War Has the Apparel Industry Wondering What Will Happen Next

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

The recent lull in the trade war between the United States and China was good news for U.S. retailers, clothing manufacturers and importers who have seen their bottom line eroded by a 10 percent tariff on certain goods imported from China.

Those 10 percent tariffs on items including fabric and handbags were scheduled to be raised to 25 percent on March 2, but President Donald Trump recently called a trade-war cease-fire while U.S. and Chinese negotiators hammer out some kind of solution that will put a halt to these punitive tariffs.

"Right now, the immediate reaction from importers is

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A Weekly Farmers' Market Comes to the California Market Center

Tables stacked with carrots and celery. Bushel baskets filled with Cara Cara oranges and tangelos. A sea of strawberries packaged in white cartons.

For the first time in 50 years, the **California Market Center's** front plaza was the site for a farmers' market expected to be a weekly occurrence every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The inaugural market, held on Feb. 27 with 19 vendors occupying 30 white-tented booths proved to be extremely popular with CMC tenants and local office workers in the downtown Los Angeles Fashion District.

Carolyn Mathis, owner of the **Marcel**

Ties store in the Fashion District, stopped by the market after seeing a large sign on the street for the event. "Everything is fresh, organic and natural," said Mathis, who is a vegetarian. She noted that the CMC farmers' market fills a void in the fashion district's food scene because there are only a handful of places in the area to buy organic food and meals. "People are more health conscious now," she said.

Natalia Pereira, owner of the nearby **WoodSpoon** restaurant, bought mushrooms and oranges at



Sushi chef Yamamoto Yun of Rolland



Alex Zadeh of AZ-Ranch



Farmers' Market scene

the market for her popular Brazilian restaurant. She believes the market will not only contribute fresh food to the neighborhood but also create more of a community by drawing people out of their offices. "We can take a stroll here. We can have a coffee. We can talk to each other. It's a blessing," she said.

Gabby Natareno, an assistant apparel buyer who works at the CMC, liked the convenience of the market.

The idea for a farmers' market came from a brainstorming session last September when representatives from the CMC and the **LA Fashion District Business Improvement**

District got together.

Becca Dawson, the CMC's senior marketing manager, said the building and the BID were looking for a way to build a wider community of people and also have something the entire fashion district could enjoy. The BID then got together with Susan Hillyer of **California Produced**, which organizes farmers' markets, and Hillyer recruited the vendors to exhibit at the market.

Fruits and vegetables were not the only items at the market. Prepared foods, including pupusas, sushi and baked goods, were also sold and could be eaten at nearby tables and chairs.—*Andrew Asch*

Deckers Brands to Close Camarillo Distribution Center and Lay Off Nearly 100 Employees

Deckers Brands—parent company of footwear-and-lifestyle brands **Ugg**, **Koolha**, **Ugg**, **Teva**, **Hoka One One** and **Sanuk**—will permanently close its Camaril-

lo, Calif., distribution center by Aug. 31.

In accordance with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN), senior counsel for the Goleta, Calif.—headquar-

tered Deckers Brands outlined details of the closure in a letter dated Feb. 5., which was sent to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, the City of Camarillo and the Workforce Development Board of Ventura County.

In the letter, the company explained it began winding things down starting Nov. 1, 2018, when five employees were laid off from the warehouse. The gradual process of closing the Camarillo location means 99 jobs will be lost. While the layoffs affect a number of positions, it is mostly equipment

operators and warehouse associates who will be terminated.

The affected employees do not retain bumping rights and are not represented by any unions, but the Deckers Brands noted in its letter that it is "prepared to work with state and local government agencies to assist its employees during this time of transition."

It is rumored that the company is consolidating its distribution into the Deckers Brands' Moreno Valley, Calif., fulfillment center located in Riverside County.—*Dorothy Crouch*

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Edouard Macquin Appointed President of Lectra Americas

Lectra, the French information-technology and digital-solutions leader that produces software and hardware to facilitate fabric cutting, appointed Edouard Macquin as its new president of **Lectra Americas**.

Previously he was the company's chief sales officer and exhibited a keen understanding of how to aid Lectra's global clientele with fresh technological product offerings.

"I know Lectra's solutions by heart, and I know the effort we put into research and development to make them work," Macquin said. "My deep knowledge of the global market in apparel is important. This ecosystem starts in New York, continues in Hong Kong, goes to Vietnam and China, and comes back to New York. That ecosystem—I understand it well."

During Macquin's 32-year career with Lectra, he has successfully led the company to increase its business in France, Italy, the United States and Brazil. Now based in Atlanta, he looks forward to shifting the apparel industry toward solutions that will create a more efficient business.

"The consumers are becoming an actor of the product," Macquin explained. "If you want things to happen, you have to do it with a fast response time. It's a very fast creation process for a collection. It is the market and

needs of the consumer that are going in that direction."

As president of Lectra Americas, Macquin will continue to cultivate the company's interests within the fashion, furniture and automotive categories across North and South America. He will also lead brands to recognize new business and product opportunities.

"With his ability to execute on our entire range of technological solutions, there is no better choice to lead our Americas business and our Industry 4.0 offerings there," Lectra's chairman and chief executive

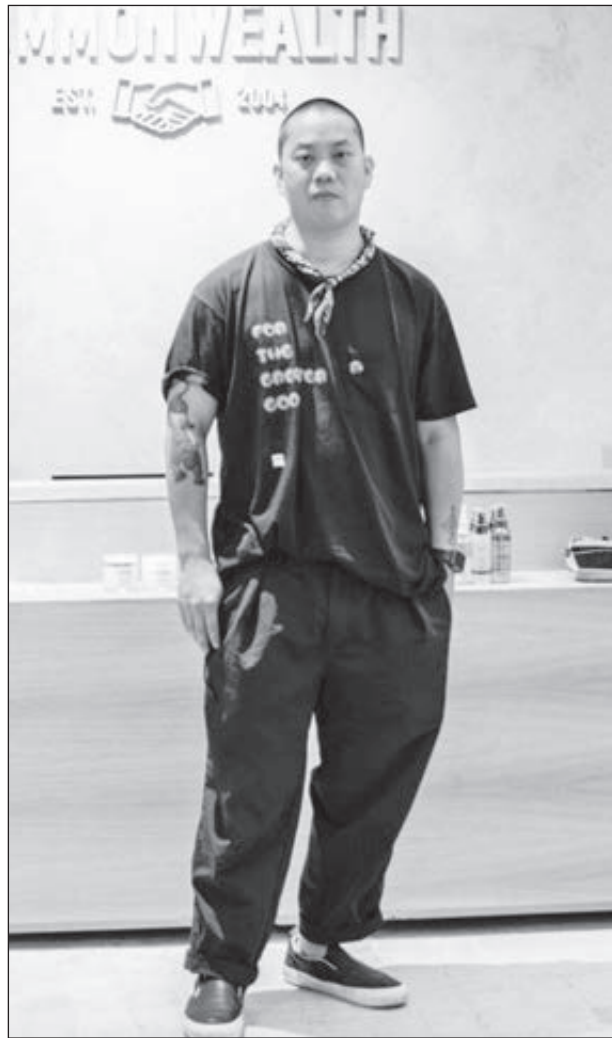
Daniel Harari said in a statement. "Edouard consistently delivers on our strategic objectives. Our values of innovation and customer empowerment are ingrained into the way Edouard thinks and works, so we look forward to him continuing to grow our business in the Americas."—*D.C.*



Edouard Macquin

Private Label *Continued from page 1*

Wilberding used to develop private-label clothing for department stores as a former executive at Los Angeles-based **One World Apparel**. “But now the gloves are off,” she said. “Branded people can’t control prices because of online shopping. Neither can department stores. [Private label] is the only way I can see that [stores] can control online pricing and be



Omar Quiambao

consistent with what they sell on the shop floor.”

So, department stores, and others, are upping their game on private label. “They’re hiring more designers. Their development and production is becoming more sophisticated. They’re going to be funding private label and advertising it like they never did before,” said Wilberding.

Macy’s is not alone in looking for new revenue streams that could come from more private-label business.

For the last few years, **Target** has been on a major campaign to reinvent its own private-label merchandise to com-



Commonwealth

pete with online sites such as **Amazon**, which has been making inroads into the apparel business and churning out private-label clothing at a rapid pace. Amazon’s private-label apparel brands include **Lark & Ro**, a career-clothing brand for women, and **Paris Sunday**, a women’s clothing brand.

In 2016, after paying royalties to licensed brands that were almost exclusive to the store, Target decided to shift to private label. It replaced the licensed **Cherokee** line for kids and introduced **Cat & Jack**, a childrenswear line that after one year sold \$2 billion in goods.

Then, in 2017, the mass merchandiser announced it was dropping its long-running licensed brands **Mossimo** and **Merona** and launched 12 new Target-exclusive brands for apparel and home décor. One of those was **Wild Fable**, a moderately priced line for teenagers and young adult women, as well as a men’s clothing line called **Original Use**, both introduced last year.

Walmart has also gotten into the game, making private-label brands including **Terra & Sky**, a plus-size label for women, and **George**, a men’s casual brand.

According to a recent report from market-research com-

pany **The NPD Group**, private-label brands will become even more important because they help retailers have better control over clothing margins and differentiate them from their competitors. They also don’t have to pay royalties to outside companies for exclusive labels. Currently, private-label apparel makes up almost one-third of total apparel sales in the U.S., up 2.1 percent over the previous year, The NPD Group said.

Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst of The NPD Group, said growth in the private-label apparel business is cyclical. The last big surge of private-label business crested more than a decade ago, but the Great Recession knocked out many retailers’ private-label business.

About 18 months ago, he said, the business started gaining momentum when traditional retailers saw the success of pure-play Internet retailers, including **Fashion Nova**, **PrettyLittleThing** and **Everlane**, were having with their own self-named brands. “It changed the whole playing field,” Cohen said. “[Traditional retailers] said they’re selling direct to consumers, why can’t we?”

Traditional retailers are also increasing the stakes of the game. “This is not just generic, low-priced products. Sometimes it has the same attributes as branded products,” Cohen noted. Sometimes new private label can surpass branded competition. To compete in a tougher market, brands might have to open their own direct-to-consumer channels and look for partners who either don’t rely on private label or can afford to work more with brands.

In the past, private-label’s competitive advantage was its low price, and many assumed it wouldn’t translate into higher-priced merchandise. But The NPD Group said premium private labels are growing, and consumers in recent years have been willing to buy these products at a higher price point. In a market that is in flux, higher-end private-label lines could draw in new customers and more sales.

This has provided independent retailers with a new window of opportunity.

Omar Quiambao co-founded menswear retailer **Commonwealth** in 2004 in the Washington, D.C., area, and in 2017 he opened a boutique in downtown Los Angeles’ Arts District.

The store’s self-named Commonwealth private-label brand sells T-shirts, hoodies, pants, outerwear and accessories with retail prices ranging from \$40 to \$170. Quiambao said private-label items can fill merchandising gaps left empty by other lines. “No one else knows our customer like we do,” he noted.

However, to make a popular private-label brand, retailers have to think like designers and manufacturers and put together marketing campaigns, all of which require a different set of skills. “There’s a lot more than building the product,” Quiambao said. “It’s understanding the marketplace and having a point of view.” ●

Trade War *Continued from page 1*

cautious optimism that we’re going to navigate this without a full-blown trade war,” said Julie Hughes, president of the **U.S. Fashion Industry Association** in Washington, D.C., whose members are U.S.-based brands, retailers, importers and wholesalers doing business around the world. “But we’re not out of the woods yet.”

On Feb. 24, Trump said in a tweet that he was going to delay the deadline to increase tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese imports that has been in effect since last September. The Chinese retaliated by putting tariffs on 5,207 American products worth \$60 billion. Earlier in the year, the Chinese slapped a 25 percent tariff on U.S. uncombed cotton.

Currently, apparel imports are not subject to tariffs, but Trump had threatened to add \$257 billion worth of Chinese products to the tariff list down the road, and that would have included apparel.

The tariff on Chinese-made fabric has been a financial drag on fabric importers such as Steve Barraza, chief executive of **Tianello**, which manufactures its women’s and men’s tops made primarily from silk or **Tencel** near downtown Los Angeles.

With the tariff, he is currently paying close to \$11 a yard for his silk. One year ago, he was paying \$9.30 a yard on silk that normally enters the country duty free.

He said a potential 25 percent tariff on silk made him postpone ordering any more fabric until he was sure what was going to happen. “I’m just starting to place my orders now,” he said.

Sourcing shift

For months, the recent heated trade war has been reverberating through the apparel industry because China provides about 34 percent of all the clothing imported into the United States.

Even though no tariffs are immediately seen for clothing, major apparel corporations have been reevaluating their exposure to Chinese production and making adjustments to their sourcing strategies. Some have been looking to Vietnam, which is now the second-largest producer of clothing to the United States. But industry observers note that all the good Vietnamese factories are booked up.

With a trade-war reprieve in sight, there is the question of whether U.S. apparel manufacturers will keep their production in China.

“I haven’t heard anybody say that they are going to change their China plans, and the China plans they have been talking about are moving out of China,” said Steve Lamar, executive director of the **American Apparel & Footwear Association**, a Washington, D.C., trade group representing some of the country’s largest apparel manufacturers and importers. “What they need to keep in China they will keep in China. That means local production for local Chinese consumers or production for Europe.”

For years, apparel companies have been tossing around the idea of moving out of China as labor costs grew more expensive. But the efficiency of Chinese factories and the long process to find good factories in other countries where transportation runs smoothly is arduous. “In the last year I’ve heard people tell me that for the last 10 years they have been thinking about getting out of China,” Lamar said. “Now they are going to do it. I haven’t heard anyone say that now that tariffs might be delayed or lifted I will put my business back into China.”

Still, the U.S. apparel and textile industries are nervous about whether Trump’s optimism toward a trade truce and a tariff reduction is a bluff, a negotiating strategy or the real deal.

On Feb. 27, a broad coalition of American trade associations against tariffs sent a letter to the Trump administration commending the progress made in the trade negotiations and asking that a tariff hike be avoided on March 2.

The **Americans for Free Trade** coalition emphasized that in November alone U.S. businesses paid an additional \$2.7 billion in tariffs, a massive year-over-year increase from the \$375 million in tariffs paid on the same products in November 2017.

At the same time, the coalition pointed out that U.S. export growth hit its lowest level in 2018, thanks in part to a 37 percent decline in product exports facing China’s retaliatory tariffs. “Due to these costs, American employers are eager to see trade negotiations conclude as soon as possible and for all tariffs to be lifted,” the coalition said in the letter.

The letter was signed by more than 140 associations, including the **California Retailers Association**, the **Los Angeles Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Association**, the **Fashion Jewelry & Accessories Trade Association**, the American Apparel & Footwear Association, the **National Retail Federation**, and the U.S. Fashion Industry Association. ●

Apparel Textile Sourcing Miami Adds Events to Second Show

Apparel Textile Sourcing Miami recently announced the lineup for its three-day show to be held May 28–30 at the same time as **Miami Fashion Week**.

The **Pantone Color Institute** will present a trend forecast for Fall/Winter 2020–2021 to help designers and fashion executives get a jump on creating their collections later this year. Visitors will have the opportunity to see the upcoming trends firsthand and talk with color specialists at the Pantone booth, which will be located on the show floor.

Laurie Pressman, vice president of the Pantone Color Institute and an ATSM speaker, said that next year's colors will be reflective of hues found in an oasis. She said rich, saturated shades will sit alongside strong modern pastels and muted natural colors, with texture, reflection and shine acting as integral partners in the way colors are seen and executed.

In the show's VIP Lounge will be an Asia–U.S.–Latin America Investment Summit organized with the **Investment Association of China**. The summit will be focused on local investment opportunities in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in the areas of logistics, ports, commercial/residential real estate, infrastructure and technology. "ATSM is the perfect venue for this summit due to its impressive mix of global manufacturers and location," said Milly Bu, chief executive of the Investment Association of China.

ATSM also is bringing a delegation of Latin American apparel and textile producers to the show to facilitate sourcing opportunities in that region.

With trade tensions rising between the

United States and China, an increasing number of companies are looking to Central America for alternative production locations.

Last year, Guatemala saw its apparel exports to the United States rise by 12 percent. "More work is coming to this region as we can compete with closeness, production flexibility with added value, high productivity and an integrated supply chain," said Lucia Palacios, director of **Vestex Guatemala**, which is the industry association for apparel and textile producers in that country.

Speaking at the show will be Julie Hughes, president of the **U.S. Fashion Industry Association** in Washington, D.C., which promotes global trade for U.S. apparel brands, importers, wholesalers and retailers. She will be giving an update on the latest developments in global trade, tariff and non-tariff barriers, and new sourcing opportunities.

Returning to this year's show is the **ATSM 2019 Fashion Show** highlighting the creations of Miami-based and international designers, as well as student collections from **Miami International University**.

Last year was the first ATSM show in Miami, which had scores of booths, pavilions, trend displays and seminars for apparel, fashion, textile and sourcing companies at the **Mana Wynwood Convention Center**.

The show is being organized by **JP Communications**, the parent company of **Apparel Textile Sourcing** trade shows, which two years ago launched a similar apparel and textile sourcing show in Toronto. The event organizer has since expanded to organize similar shows in Montreal and Berlin.—*Deborah Belgum*

Calendar

March 5

WWSRA Rocky Mountain Post Show
Denver Merchandise Mart
Denver
Through March 6

March 6

LA Textile
Los Angeles
California Market Center
Through March 8

March 7

Fashionindex Sustainable Fashion Forum
California Market Center
Los Angeles

March 9

Malibu Fashion Weekend
Rosenthal Wine Bar & Patio
Malibu, Calif.
Through March 10

March 10

JA New York
Javits Center
New York
Through March 12

MJSA Expo

Sheraton Hotel Times Square
New York
Through March 12

March 11

Label Array
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through March 13

Designers and Agents LA
New Mart
Los Angeles
Through March 13

LA Market Week
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through March 13

LA Kids' Market
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through March 13

Brand Assembly
Cooper Design Space
Los Angeles
Through March 13

March 13

Atlanta Spring Gift, Home Furnishings & Holiday Market
AmericasMart

Atlanta
Through March 15

Fashion Community Week
Modernist
San Francisco
Through March 16

March 17

ASD Market Week
Las Vegas
Las Vegas Convention Center
Through March 20

March 21

Art Hearts Fashion
Majestic Downtown
Los Angeles
Through March 24

March 22

LA Fashion Week
Petersen Automotive Museum
Los Angeles
Through March 25

There's more
on ApparelNews.net.

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

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.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: CALIFORNIA APPAREL NEWS, Customer Service, PO Box 4419, Orlando, FL 32802. **CALIFORNIA APPAREL NEWS** (ISSN 0008-0896) Published by TLM PUBLISHING INC. APPAREL NEWS GROUP Publishers of: *California Apparel News*, *Market Week Magazine*, *New Resources*, *Waterwear*, *New York Apparel News*, *Dallas Apparel News*, *Apparel News South*, *Chicago Apparel News*, *The Apparel News (National)*, *Bridal Apparel News*, *Southwest Images*, *Stylist* and *MAN (Men's Apparel News)*. Properties of TLM PUBLISHING INC., California Market Center, 110 E. Ninth St., Suite A777, Los Angeles, CA 90079, (213) 627-3737. © Copyright 2019 TLM Publishing Inc. All rights reserved. Published weekly except semi-weekly first week of January, second week of July and first week of September. Periodicals Postage Paid at Los Angeles, CA, and additional entry offices. The publishers of the paper do not assume responsibility for statements made by their advertisers in business competition. Opinions expressed in signed editorial columns or articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publishers. Subscription rates: U.S.: 1 year, \$89; 2 years, \$140. Foreign: \$180 U.S. funds (1-year subscription only). Single-copy price \$2.99. Send subscription requests to: California Apparel News, Customer Service, PO Box 4419, Orlando, FL 32802 or visit www.apparelnews.net. For customer service, call (866) 207-1448.

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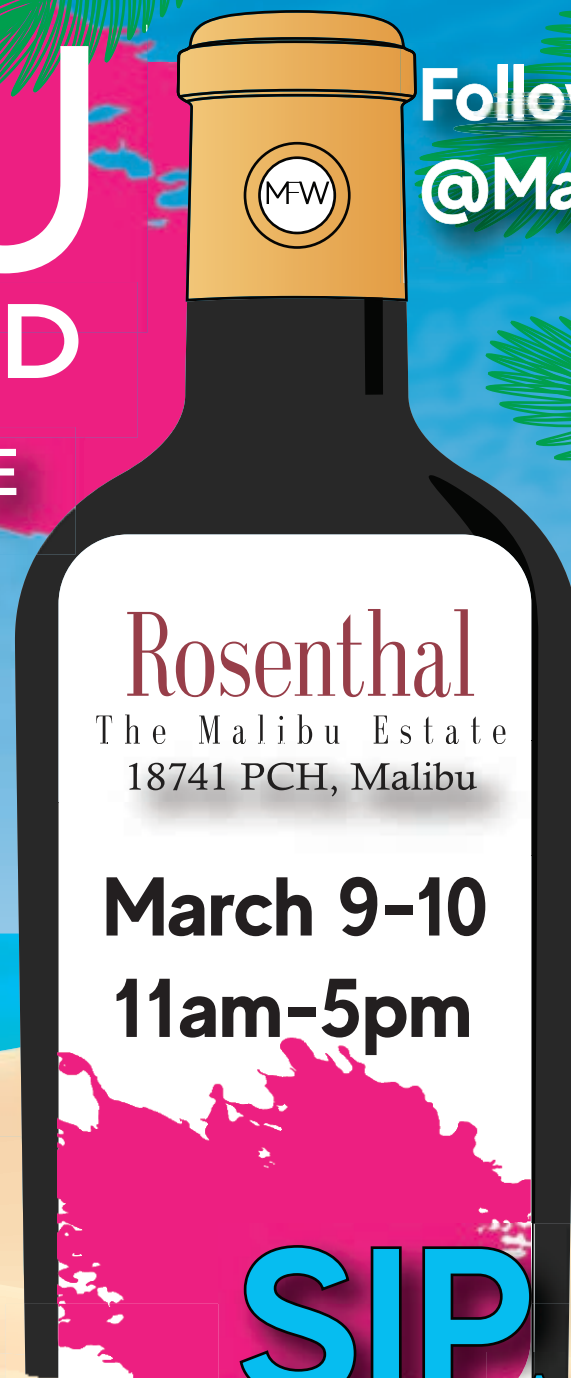
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T-SHIRTS

Dirty Milk Label Rebounds With New Style and Attitude

Designer Daniel Antonio is breathing new life into his **Dirty Milk** label, which is being resurrected after being dormant for several years.

The Los Angeles label, for women who like an edge to their clothing, will release its fourth graphic-driven collection this month bearing slogans including “Woman-up!” and “Intellectual intercourse please!” on its T-shirts and hoodies.

Antonio started the label in 2006 when streetwear was becoming very popular and influential in men’s fashion, but there were no streetwear or sportswear lines for women that offered that same kind of edginess.

So Antonio started Dirty Milk to fill a niche, placing it into leading boutiques such as **Fred Segal**. But his emerging line was a victim of the Great Recession that took hold of the country in 2008.

He rode through the recession by helping to manage production and design for **Reset Content**, which runs a division making T-shirts, sweats and jackets for film crews and studios. He is still there.

But he also wanted to revive his label, financing a comeback for Dirty Milk in 2017. “The love of this business and the love of creation is my forte,” Antonio said, who explained that the brand’s name is a humorous description of the creative process. It’s pouring information, or dirt, on the milk, or the blank canvas, of a garment.

Along with an edge, Antonio hoped that his T-shirts and hoodies would have a greater fit and sense of comfort than other labels. So he uses a poly-viscose fabric for his shirts. “It’s like having butter on your skin,” Antonio said. “It’s imperative you feel that you can sleep in our shirts.”

Also important is a comfortable fit. To do that, Dirty Milk gives plenty of room around the armholes and shoulders of each piece.

Silhouettes in the collection include crew-neck tees and hoodies cropped around the midriff. The hoodies have an open panel around the elbow, which gives the garment a unique style.

Once sold, the T-shirts and hoodies are put into gold-metallic-colored bags intended as a statement of support. “It throws people off sometimes,” Antonio said. “But it’s a mirror of gold. It says that you’re going to shine. Let your light shine.”

With eyes on wholesaling the label, the designer in early February exhibited at a downtown Las Vegas pop-up market called **Commotion** that was produced with the help of **Zappos.com**.

At Commotion, Antonio introduced a piece called the Dirty

poncho, which was a heather-gray fleece poncho that sold out in its first run.

Dirty Milk is made in Los Angeles. Retail price points range from \$38 for T-shirts to \$110 for hoodies. The garments are sold online at www.dirtymilk.com.—Andrew Asch



COURTESY OF DIRTYMILK



Daniel Antonio



Frances Austen Brand Elevates Ecologically Sound Classics to a Heritage Level

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

Launched by Margaret Coblentz in 2017, the **Frances Austen** brand was founded in San Francisco to provide responsibly crafted, classic cashmere pieces to consumers who are concerned about how their clothing is made.

For Coblentz, spending six years at **Charlotte Russe** as the director of e-commerce apparel provided an extensive education in the growing business of overconsumption within the U.S. apparel market.

"There was really no conversation around the impact the business was having," she said. "The wider conversation that we're having now in 2019 means companies such as **H&M** are playing catch-up as smaller brands have led the conversation."

With Coblentz's growing awareness about apparel manufacturing while at Charlotte Russe, she experienced a conflict between her work at the company and her own convictions as a consumer.

"When I left Charlotte Russe, I had gotten older and our customer had stayed the same age," she explained. "It felt like I was on this path where I learned and my career grew, but I was doing something where the more I matured the more I was at odds with my personal point of view."

Thinking about her next steps, Coblentz examined the reasons she loved sweaters, some of which were approximately 40-year-old cashmere pieces inherited from her grandmother, Corky Mitchel.

Determined to create apparel with the longevity, natural fibers and heritage of her grandmother's sweaters, Coblentz researched certified supply-chain partners through **GOTS** (Global Organic Textile Standard) and **OEKO-TEX**. Her newly found goal was to launch a collection of clothing without using synthetic fibers and made from natural materials. The ideal clothing would retain its integrity over generations of wearers and biodegrade if discarded.

"That is how I came to work with **Johnstons of Elgin** and

Cariaggi," Coblentz said as she discussed her supply-chain partners, Scottish woolen mill Johnstons of Elgin and Italian yarn spinner Cariaggi.

In addition to creating cashmere sweaters, Coblentz wanted to include silk pieces in her Frances Austen line. Using these naturally sourced materials, which could biodegrade within one to five years of being discarded—depending on the environment—Coblentz felt she could achieve her perfect blend of heritage-grade clothing that was responsibly manufactured.

After the Feb. 27 launch of her Frances Austen Collection IV for Spring 2019, Coblentz said she remains committed to improving upon the brand.

While she emphasizes the quality of her former silk supply-chain partners, Coblentz wants to source a more ecological fiber and will bring production of these clothing pieces stateside.

"I am in the process of finding a higher certification of eco silk, which is really hard to do. Silk is further behind than cotton and other fabrics," she explained.

"The plan is to launch our silk L.A.-made clothing in line with our Fall collection this August. Manufacturing in Los Angeles is great, and there is a lot of capability there."

This commitment to creating a brand that would positively affect future generations led Coblentz to ensure her packaging was made in the United States with 100 percent recycled and recyclable materials. Details, such as clothing tags cut and letterpressed in downtown Los Angeles, remain important to the Frances Austen brand.

While Coblentz intended to rely primarily on a direct-to-consumer model, she recognized the benefit of partnering with select retail partners who shared her vision.

"I built the model for how we would launch Frances Austen based on well-established metrics for e-commerce conversion," she explained. "I discovered it's hard for an unknown brand to gain trust and recognition from customers. A key part of doing that has been affording the opportunity to people to touch, see, feel and try on."

At **Batch**, a retail showroom that opened in San Francisco in 2017 and will launch a New York City location on March 15, owner Lindsay Meyer brings together collections of 15 to 20 different online brands during eight-to-10-week cycles. She partnered with Frances Austen for a Holiday 2017 initiative and will carry the brand at the New York launch.

"Our target consumer is thinking about making investments," Meyer said. "It's a great customer fit with Margaret's mission about creating these heirloom pieces that are telling a unique story, infused with a lot of authenticity in terms of where they are crafted and the intentionality she brings when thinking about the design of these pieces."

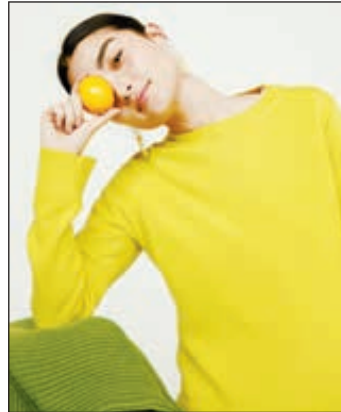
While Coblentz describes her pricing as a "low luxury price point," her partners, who might be a bit more conscientious regarding cost, see the value in offering Frances Austen pieces. Mariko Yamasaki, personal stylist and owner of the San Francisco boutique **Pavilion**, believes the Frances Austen brand creates a special connection between a mission-driven brand and the community.

"Sweaters are a notoriously difficult category to do without blowing the budget. When I saw her cashmere I thought it was absolutely phenomenal. The ethos behind it, her focus on sustainability and ethical business practices, it was really exciting and it's in line with what we're trying to do. It filled a category hole, but it was that perfect alliance of brand-visibility goals," she said.

Available online at www.francesausten.com and at select independent retail boutiques, Frances Austen retails from \$85 to \$495. ●



Margaret Coblentz



Frances Austen Collection IV





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NEWS

Intimates Company ThirdLove Completes a \$55-Million Fund-raising Round

San Francisco direct-to-consumer women's intimate-apparel company **ThirdLove** announced the completion of a \$55-million round of fund-raising. While ThirdLove was not seeking new capital, the preemptive round was performed by **L. Catterton**, which is partially owned by **LVMH** and **Groupe Arnault**, and investment bank **Allen & Company**.

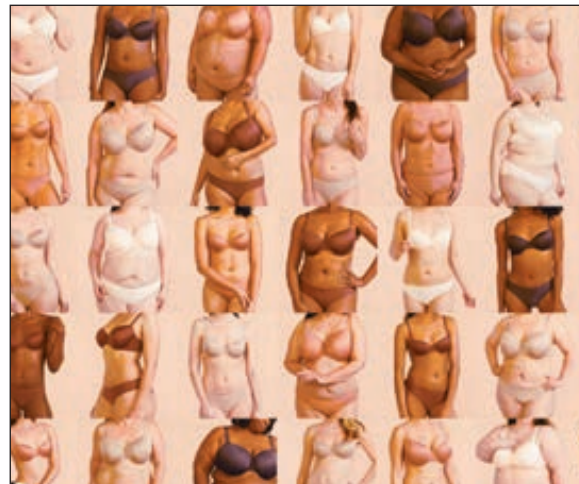
With the funding, ThirdLove will expand its sizing, styles and product offerings. To fulfill its mission of creating products that accommodate every female body type, the company will also invest in fit technologies.

The company is known for its Fit Finder technology, which takes only 60 seconds to complete and has been used by more than 12 million women. It allows customers to easily find a perfect bra size and style from the comfort of their homes.

"This new funding round allows us to continue delivering on ThirdLove's mission to create a bra for everybody," said Heidi Zak, ThirdLove's co-founder and co-chief executive officer, in a statement. "We are more dedicated than ever to giving all women the level of choice they deserve. We recently increased our offerings to a total of 78 bra sizes in five beautiful styles, and we have no intention of stopping here."

In addition to L. Catterton and Allen & Company, a group of female angel investors included Anne Wojcicki, co-founder and chief executive officer of genetic testing com-

pany **23andMe**; Susan Wojcicki, chief executive officer of **YouTube**; journalist and author Katie Couric; and Nancy Peretsman, managing director of Allen & Company, whose investment was independent of the bank's.



"I'm a big fan of ThirdLove's mission to build a brand for every woman, regardless of her shape, size, age, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation," Anne Wojcicki said in a press release. "ThirdLove promotes reality over fantasy and shows the spectacular beauty of all sizes, shapes and colors of women."

The round also included participation from Tim Armstrong, former chief executive of **Oath** and **AOL**; Jeff Keswin, founder of **Lyric Partners**; and Michael Zeisser, former U.S. chairman of **Alibaba Group**, **Felicitis Ventures** and **Valor Equity**.—Dorothy Crouch

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Smartrac Brings Its Green Tag Program Initiative to LogiMAT

Following the January announcement that it would invest in producing greener products, Amsterdam-based RFID-product and IoT-solutions provider **Smartrac**, while exhibiting at the 17th edition of **LogiMAT**, unveiled its plan to add environmentally friendly tag options to its offerings.

Held Feb. 19–21 at **Messe Stuttgart** in Stuttgart, Germany, the LogiMAT trade show covers intralogistics solutions and process management.

Smartrac revealed that it is dedicated to bringing to market RFID products constructed to be less harmful to the environment. Each of its products that receives a Green Tag will include a published Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), according to ISO 14040/44.

“At LogiMAT 2019, we are presenting a broad range of our innovative capacity,” Patrick Eichstädt, vice president of sales for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said in a statement. “No matter if companies want to meet the challenges or leverage the opportunities of Industry 4.0 with improved efficiency or enhanced sustain-

ability, Smartrac’s product and solution portfolios provide the right answers.”

The Green Tag Program announcement outlined criteria that must be met for a Smartrac product to receive a Green Tag label. In addition to being free of plastic—meaning substrates used must be recyclable or compostable paper—the products must use antennas that do not contain heavy metals. Chemical etching of aluminum antennas is not permitted to allow for complete recycling of aluminum residues. Printable antennas must only be printed directly on recyclable or compostable cardboard using Graphene ink.

“I am convinced that our Green Tag Program will fairly and squarely lead the RFID industry in terms of environmental sustainability,” Smartrac Chief Executive Officer Christian Uhl said in a statement. “We are doing this because it is important for all of us and our planet, as well as being in accordance with the wishes of our global customer base, who will soon be able to receive real, sustainable Green Tag products.”—*Dorothy Crouch*

NEWS

Gap *Continued from page 1*

nies with distinct financial profiles, tailored operating priorities and unique capital allocation strategies, both well positioned to achieve their strategic goals and create significant value for our customers, employees and shareholders.”

Art Peck, the president and chief executive of Gap Inc., said this will help all the brands move forward. “We have made significant progress executing on our balanced growth strategy and investing in the capabilities to position our brands for growth: expanding the omni-channel customer experience, building our digital capabilities and improving operational efficiencies across the company. Today’s spin-off announcement enables us to embed those capabilities within two stand-alone companies, each with a sharpened strategic focus and tailored operating structure.”

Peck will continue as president and chief executive officer of NewCo, while Sonia Syngal, current president and chief executive

of Old Navy, will lead the new stand-alone enterprise. She has led Old Navy since 2016.

The transactions to divide Gap Inc. into two separate companies should be completed by 2020 and are subject to final approval by Gap Inc.’s board of directors.

NewCo will be based in Gap Inc.’s current headquarters, and Old Navy will remain at its current headquarters, both located in San Francisco.

The announcement came on the same day the company reported its fourth-quarter and fiscal-year earnings for 2018.

For the fourth quarter ending Feb. 2, 2019, Gap Inc. had net income of \$276 million on \$4.6 billion in sales. For the same period last year, net income was \$205 million on \$4.78 billion in sales.

For its current fiscal year, net income was \$1 billion on net sales of \$16.6 billion compared to net income of \$848 million on net sales of \$15.85 billion. ●

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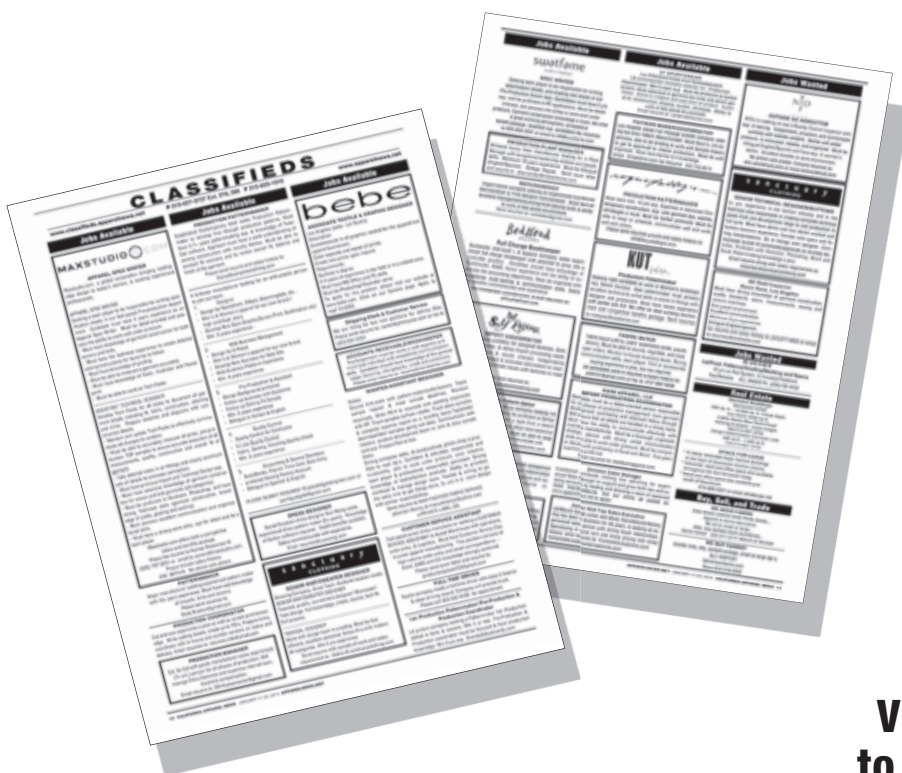
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