

# CALIFORNIA Apparel News

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## FROM THE VINE

For her Fall 2019 collection, Trina Turk took a trip to California's wine country for her inspiration and colors. For more looks, see page 8.

WADLEY

## Art Institute Fashion Students Scramble After Their College Shuts Down

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

For 150 fashion students at the **Art Institute of Hollywood**, their future now hangs in the balance after their college closed without warning earlier this month.

Some of these students were just months away from graduating from the campus in Los Angeles' North Hollywood area. Students said they had no idea if they were going to receive diplomas or if they would get transcripts so they could transfer to other institutions.

The for-profit university closed on March 8, which meant that one of the highlights of the year for fashion students was canceled. That was the quarterly portfolio show scheduled for March 13. It is an important event where students can present their fashion projects and fashion executives are invited to meet possible job prospects.

Julia Szkiba, an adjunct fashion professor at the college, lost her job when the school closed, but she wanted to make sure  
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### TECHNOLOGY

## Shima Seiki Debuts a Collaborative Apparel-Technology Space in Los Angeles

By Dorothy Crouch *Associate Editor*

**Shima Seiki**, the nearly 60-year-old Japanese machine manufacturer and technology firm, recently unveiled its new showroom in the Arts District where it can take advantage of the neighborhood's roots in the apparel-manufacturing industry and its place in fashion's future.

"We can feature and highlight each of our machines with our new showroom," said Hayato Nishi, who manages sales and senior business development for Shima Seiki. "There are three main highlight rooms—one will be our sustainability room, the other will be the technology room and the third will be our Apex 3 Design System classroom."

The approximately 6,000-square-foot showroom was unveiled March 13-14 during the company's fifth annual **G3D Seminar**, a two-day event called "Yarn to Shelf." The new showroom replaces the company's previous showroom located at the **California Market Center**.  
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# Guess? Inc. Reports Solid Earnings for Fiscal 2019

**Guess? Inc.** has been undergoing a lot of executive changes this year, but that didn't hamper its bottom line.

The lifestyle-clothing company founded in Los Angeles 38 years ago reported that fourth-quarter net income was \$23.2 million, a drastic improvement over the same period last year, when net income was only \$1 million.

Revenues for the latest fourth-quarter period were up 5.7 percent to \$837.1 million compared to \$792.2 million the previous fourth quarter.

For fiscal 2019, net income was \$14.1 million compared to a net loss of \$7.9 million in fiscal 2018. Revenues in fiscal 2019 totaled \$2.61 billion compared to \$2.36 billion the previous year.

Softness was seen in the Americas market, where retail revenues for the year declined 1 percent but retail comp sales including e-commerce increased 4 percent. On the wholesale side of the Americas business, revenues shot up 13.6 percent.

The strongest performance was seen in Asia, where revenues rose 25.4 percent and

retail comp sales including e-commerce saw a 15 percent improvement.

The March 20 earnings results were reported just as Carlos Alberini returned to the company to take over as chief executive officer, replacing Victor Herrero, who after four years stepped down on Feb. 2.

Previously Alberini was at Guess between 2000 and 2010 as the company's president and chief operating officer. He left to work for **Restoration Hardware** and later **Lucky Brand Inc.**, where most recently he was the chairman and chief executive.

On an earnings conference call with analysts, Alberini said that he was glad to be back at the lifestyle-apparel company. "This was and is my dream job," he said. "While nine years may seem like a long time [to be away], it took me no time to feel I was back home."

He noted that during his absence Guess had expanded its international sales and global reach to now be distributed in more than 95 countries. But he said there was a "big white space" to expand the company's international presence, particularly in areas including China, Japan, and Eastern and Northern Europe.

He said that in his first 100 days he would work on a number of initiatives and develop a strategy for making the company more profitable. He noted that in the past year logistics and distribution costs had been higher than usual and he would work to reduce those.

He also pointed out that he wanted to work on product development and expand areas such as accessories, menswear, denim and the **Marciano** brand, which he thought had room to grow.

"Denim has always been at our core and has always been a dominant product category for Guess, one that brings the customer into the store," he noted. "Today, our denim penetration is much lower than our historic levels, and I believe that we can grow it back with a great product assortment, strong store presentation and effective marketing. Other product opportunities include Marciano, our men's business, and accessories across channels and territories, just to name a few."

Keeping a fashion-forward clothing company relevant after nearly 38 years is not easy, Alberini said, but he was proud that the brand was favored by some of the label's heritage

customers as well as younger customers.

"Through very innovative initiatives and highly meaningful collaborations with key celebrities, the Guess brand is engaging new customer profiles that are representative of millennials and Generation Zs, which now represent more than half of the online customers doing business with Guess in the U.S.," Alberini said. "Great examples of brand partnerships, driven by Nicolai Marciano and his team, have been **ASAP Rocky**, **J Balvin**, **88rising**, **Places + Faces** and **Sean Wotherspoon**. Through our authentic positioning on our product capsule, Guess? has been able to attract a younger consumer, who has developed into a community of brand ambassadors."

Despite a profitable year, Alberini noted that the company by the end of the fiscal year had more inventory in stock than it would like. "We exited the year with higher inventory than we planned," he noted. "We will move out our inventory through our own retail stores and stock-liquidation channels, which will ease inventory more in the back half of the fiscal year."—*Deborah Belgun*

## S&S Activewear Shuttles California Warehouse, Opens New Facility in Nevada

**S&S Activewear**, the 31-year-old distributor of wholesale apparel, is laying off 136 employees as it prepares to close down its large warehouse in Santa Fe Springs, Calif.

On March 5, the Illinois-based company filed papers with the state Employment Development Department advising that its layoffs of 136 workers would be effective May 31.

The employees work in a warehouse that

encompasses 240,000 square feet and has been a main distribution center for the apparel concern for many years.

But in February the wholesale uniform and promotional-apparel distributor opened a gargantuan 800,000-square-foot warehouse in Reno, Nev., where the company said it planned to employ 350 workers and consolidate its California operations into its

new warehouse.

With a larger facility, the company said it is able to carry 30 percent more SKUs and three times more inventory than it previously was able to offer from its California location.

"Perhaps most significantly, though, our quest to bring one-day shipping across the country is now a reality," said Frank Myers, the company's chief operating officer, in a statement. "We've been growing since 1989, with expansion to California, New Jersey, Kansas, Texas and Georgia. Our Reno location is by far our biggest yet."

Moving to Reno helps the company's bottom line, with rents, electricity, transportation and labor costs being much lower in Nevada than they are in Los Angeles County, where the minimum wage for a larger company is

\$13.25 an hour. In Reno, the minimum wage is \$8.25 an hour. The new facility also has a solar-powered generation system to save on electricity costs.

Myers said the new location provides employees with more favorable costs of living plus access to desirable public schools and national parks, including the Tahoe National Forest.

With the decision to move to Reno, Myers said the company also decided to relocate its California call-center operations to Tempe, Ariz.

Some of the brands that S&S Activewear distributes include **Alstyle**, **American Apparel**, **Bella + Canvas**, **Next Level**, **Columbia Sportswear**, **Bayside**, **Hanes**, **Sierra Pacific** and **Calvin Klein**.—*D.B.*



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## Levi Strauss & Co. Closes Above IPO Pricing With Unexpected Investors

Following the initial public offering price of \$17 per share, San Francisco's **Levi Strauss & Co.** closed at \$22.41 per share on March 21, up \$5.41, a 31.82 percent increase.

The company started trading on the **New York Stock Exchange** on March 21 under the symbol "LEVI." It offered 9,460,557 shares of Class A common stock, while selling stockholders were offering 27,206,110 of Class A common stock.

According to media outlets, Levi Strauss & Co. raised more than \$623 million during its IPO, with the \$17-per-share asking price well above the expected \$14-to-\$16 range.

Underwriters have a 30-day option to purchase up to an additional 5.5 million shares of Class A common stock from Levi Strauss & Co. at the IPO price, less underwriting discounts and commissions. Subject to the

satisfaction of customary closing conditions, the closing of the offering is expected to take place on March 25.

As part of its initiative to persuade Levi Strauss & Co. to move away from using the traditional leather back patch on its jeans in favor of a vegan option, the animal-rights group **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals** bought the minimum number of 175 shares, which would allow the organization to submit shareholder resolutions and to attend and speak at Levi's annual meetings.

The parent company of **Levi's**, **Dockers**, **Signature by Levi Strauss & Co.** and **Denizen**, Levi Strauss & Co. reported net revenues for fiscal 2018 were \$5.6 billion, a 14 percent increase over the previous year, while net income was \$285 million.

—*Dorothy Crouch*

## NCTO Elects Glen Raven CEO to Chairman

During its 16th annual meeting, the **National Council of Textile Organizations** elected its 2019 officers.

The Washington, D.C.-based trade association chose Leib Oehmig, chief executive of **Glen Raven, Inc.**, to succeed Marty Moran, the CEO of Jefferson, Ga., yarn manufacturer **Buhler Quality Yarns**, as the NCTO chairman.

Headquartered in Glen Raven, N.C., Glen Raven specializes in textile research and de-

velopment, dyeing, spinning, weaving and finishing, and distribution and logistics.

Others elected to the board during the March 19-21 meeting were David Roberts as vice chairman. Roberts leads Clover, S.C.'s specialty-yarn manufacturer **Cap Yarns, Inc.** as chief executive officer. In this role, Roberts succeeds Don Bockoven, who is the president and chief executive of Wellford, S.C.'s **Leigh Fibers, Inc.**—*D.C.*



## Art Institute *Continued from page 1*

that her graduating students had a chance to put together a final portfolio show, so she scrambled to produce a show at **Indie Source**, a downtown Los Angeles manufacturer and fashion-consulting business located at **The Reef**, the building that houses the **LA Mart**. More than 15 students showed up for the March 20 event and set up presentations of their designs.

Speaking to them were fashion-industry veterans including Mona May, a Hollywood costume designer who worked on the movie “Clueless.” Scott Wilson, a sewing contractor, was there as were Chris Walia, chief operating officer for fashion-technology provider **Tukatech**; Frances Harder, author of “Fashion for Profit”; and Jill Mazur, a Los Angeles business and technology consultant. Also present were Dov Charney, owner of **Los Angeles Apparel** and Shahrooz Kohan of **Aims360**.

May was scouting for interns and gave career advice to students. “Some of them are quite talented,” May said of the exhibiting students. Her advice was to think of how the market will react to their ideas. “How will people wear [your fashions]? Is it sellable?”

In the past, Zack Hurley, Indie Source’s co-founder and chief executive officer, has hired interns from Art Institute of Hollywood.

### What’s next?

Fashion students at the college were still reeling from the sudden closure of the school. Bryan Gomez, a **U.S. Army** veteran, had anticipated receiving his bachelor’s degree in Fashion Marketing and Management, but his plans were upended when he received a March 6 email informing students the school would be closed at the end of the week.

In previous months, there had been a lot of rumors about the school closing. But Gomez and others thought they had

some breathing room. “We were guaranteed this quarter. I thought that I would be safe, I would be good,” he said.

March 8 was the last day the campus administration office was open. Students crowded around the office to get their transcripts, which turned into a chaotic scene, Gomez said. “It was like a movie scene going on. There were news cameras and security guards. We were told that we had to get out of the building at 3 p.m.”

Students who did not receive copies of transcripts were left in limbo. They were referred to an email and a voice mail where they could send a request for their records.

Tuition at the school was approximately \$30,000 a year, said Anjee Beckett, a costume designer who also had been an Art Institute faculty member since 2005. Beckett said that the now-shuttered program had focused on giving students hands-on experience with internships at Los Angeles fashion brands. “We prepared students for the real world,” Beckett said.

Fashion student Marili Ochoa had a few more quarters before she completed a bachelor’s degree in Fashion Design. While exhibiting her sustainable designs at the Indie Source event, she considered what she was going to do next. She probably will not transfer to another college, she said, because she was told that many institutions wouldn’t accept credit for her art classes. That means she has to start over.

There’s also the question of her \$50,000 student debt. She was going to investigate a student-loan cancellation program called the closed-school discharge. It’s available for those who go to schools that close before students graduate.

Despite not receiving a degree, Ochoa said all was not lost. “It was not in vain. I learned enough to get an entry-level job,” she said. “The teachers became mentors and friends.



Mona May



From left, Marili Ochoa, Bryan Gomez and Julia Szkiba

They know a lot of people. They say that they will introduce us to people. The teachers really cared.”

The Art Institute of Hollywood was part of the **Argosy University** chain of for-profit schools. Earlier this month, Argosy filed a motion for the emergency closure of 22 campuses. The U.S. Department of Education has accused the school’s parent company, **Dream Center Education Holdings**, of mishandling around \$13 million in financial-aid money. ●

## TECHNOLOGY

### Technology *Continued from page 1*

“We saw that there is a revitalization in the Arts District. The building at 2301 East 7th St. used to be a textile industrial building where there was a lot of manufacturing,” Nishi explained. “It was a perfect merge because this location is a manufacturing hub and there have been manufacturers within the building.”

While Shima Seiki nodded to the past with its new location, Nishi notes that the company will introduce the future of manufacturing with its Apex classes by the end of 2019 with a focus on solving its customers’ greatest needs to ensure future success.

“There are some trading companies that use our technology as a communication tools with their overseas factories. We’ll have to create a class that caters to that sector,” he said. “There are also programmers that utilize our machines on a day-to-day manufacturing basis, and they need to enhance their knit-programming capabilities, so we’re going to have classes cater to that.”

### A collaborative environment

Nicholas Brown, the conscious-fashion liaison for **Fair Trade LA**, attended the launch to learn more about how 3-D knitting technology can support a sustainable apparel industry. He is also **Fashion Revolution**’s L.A. ambassador and works with designers such as Christian Wijnants.

“They brought together all these different people from the fiber industry and brands to have a discussion, and it’s the perfect space to have this hub to foster different partnerships,” he said. “I have a knitwear designer who I work with from Antwerp who is coming in next month, and I can’t wait to take him down there and see what he thinks of this process.”

Within each of the rooms, visitors can learn more about how Shima Seiki’s machinery helps create more technologically advanced or sustainably made apparel. There are also areas that showcase the types of materials that would be most relevant to a company’s mission as it works toward these trends.

“The sustainable room and technology room are segmented to highlight two different areas where we’ve seen a lot of



Nimble’s Christian Birky discusses innovating manufacturing in the United States and on-demand production during his presentation.

growth,” Nishi explained.

The technology room features an SVR machine that relies on 2.5-D knitting for apparel, automotive, medical and industrial purposes. By observing Shima Seiki’s SWG mini machine, visitors can learn how knit accessories such as hats, scarves and socks can be created using 3-D knitting technology using a smaller needle bed.

“The samples in the technology room will be more on the performance and technology side so we have some wearable garments that monitor your heart rate,” Nishi said. “There is also a cooling jacket/vest.”

The sustainability room houses two of the brand’s **Mach 2XS** machines, one of which offers 8-gauge and the other providing 15-gauge needles. Showcasing samples from its customers, Shima Seiki also displays yarns created from fibers including 100 percent organic cotton and traceable wool.

“Since our whole-garment 3-D knitting technology is one of the most sustainable forms of knitting right now, we dedicated one room to more-natural fibers,” Nishi said. “We wanted to create a space for people to see the machines in action, the materials they could possibly use and the products that might come out of the machine.”

As part of the new showroom, the educational offerings for Apex technology—which include the Apex 3-4 launched earlier in 2019—reveal the ways that this 3-D design system can streamline the entire supply chain. These features

include technology such as digital yarn design, virtual swatches, simulated wovens and digital avatars generated from fit-model specifications.

“Our goal is to set up a room for industry professionals to take classes on the Apex 3 design system,” Nishi revealed. “This design system is primarily for digitalization. It’s our platform for knit digitalization for designing in the manufacturing language.”

The G3D Seminar theme of “From Yarn to Shelf” was meant to be a play on the popular culinary farm-to-table trend surrounding local-ingredient sourcing.

“We wanted to highlight the benefits of our whole-garment technology and how we skip the cut-and-sew fabric-buying process and go from yarn to garment, but at the same time if you utilize our Apex design system you can utilize that all the way through retail as well,” Nishi said.

The event was an opportunity for on-demand 3-D-knitting company **Nimble**’s co-owner Christian Birky to open a discussion through his presentation called “Distributed and On-Demand: The Role of Whole Garment in Supply-Chain Innovation.”

As a Los Angeles-headquartered manufacturer that focuses on utilizing technology to promote a cleaner and more sustainable apparel supply chain, Nimble Made’s business relies on the Mach 2XS resources offered by Shima Seiki. Birky is currently working with the company to expand his base.

“It’s a small but growing group of fascinating people who are seeing what Shima has built around 3-D knitting,” he said. “Everyone has their own lens and reason for being there.”

Annie Lim, the senior knit designer for **M.M.LaFleur** in New York, was at the event to talk about the role of Shima Seiki’s Mach 2XS whole-garment technology, which her company used when making its **Noble Knit Collection** manufactured at **Tailored Industry** in Brooklyn, N.Y.

She was impressed with the showroom’s inclusion of a sample archive and the ability to demonstrate the machines’ capabilities.

“The atmosphere is generally one that makes it open to be collaborative. You have the tactile experience with the archive and a visual experience with the machines,” she explained. “It was a rare chance for me to be in the same room with someone who is doing research for engineering technology or wearable-technology robotics.” ●



Mike Caird of Shima Seiki showcases samples from yarn spinner UPW, while speaking with an attendee.



## New Shared Workspace Going to The Bloc in DTLA

For those who like to be able to shop in the same space where they work, then a new co-workspace at **The Bloc** in downtown Los Angeles might just be the place.

**Carr Workplaces** is taking over 24,000 square feet in the 33-story office building that is part of The Bloc shopping center, which is still filling in after a \$180-million renovation finished up a few years ago.

The retail section is about 90 percent leased, said Jeffrey Kanne, president and chief executive of **National Real Estate Advisors**, owner of The Bloc.

New to the 1.8-million-square-foot shopping center since the renovation is **Uniqlo**, **Nordstrom Local** and lifestyle store **Brandwalk Handcrafted LA**, a store that stocked merchandise made in Los Angeles, recently moved out of the shopping center.

This is the first Los Angeles location for Carr Workplaces, which has two sites in Orange County and one in San Francisco as well as several locations on the East Coast.

The space, which will have desks, offices and conference rooms that can be rented on a temporary basis, will open in

June. "We are thrilled to open our 27th location," said Austin Flajser, president of Carr Workplaces. "The Bloc in downtown L.A. offers best-in-class amenities and programming to its tenants, to which we will add."

After The Bloc was acquired in 2013 for \$231 million by National Real Estate Advisors with **The Ratkovich Co.** and **Blue Vista Capital Management**, the closed-in mall underwent a dramatic renovation. The roof over the plaza area was removed and a new open-air plaza with patio furniture and faux grass

was installed so it can double as an events space. The **Macy's** store got an updated look and new stores moved in. An entrance from the mall was also constructed to connect with the 7th Street **Metro** station. Later this year, an **Alamo Drafthouse** movie theater is expected to open by May or June.

The shopping center barely resembles its old format, which had a dark interior. Originally built in 1973 and designed by architect Charles Luckman, it was called **Broadway Plaza**, which was anchored by a **Broadway** department store, which later became **Macy's**.

Last year, The Ratkovich Co. sold its stake



in the project to National Real Estate Advisors.

"We have created a premium, cutting-edge office environment at The Bloc that should enhance the overall work experience for Carr Workplaces' clients," Kanne said.

Carr Workplaces is not new to the shopping-center scene. More than 10 years ago it teamed up with the **Irvine Spectrum Center** in Irvine, Calif., to open a shared workspace in an adjoining 15-story office building to the shopping mall with more than 130 stores and a Ferris wheel.—*Deborah Belgium*

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## Calendar

### March 22

**LA Fashion Week**  
Petersen Automotive Museum  
Los Angeles  
Through March 25

### March 23

**Malibu Fashion Weekend**  
Rosenthal Wine Bar & Patio  
Malibu, Calif.  
Through March 24

### OC Fashion Week

Various venues  
Various cities  
Through March 27

### March 25

**DG Expo Fabric & Trim Show Miami**  
Doubletree Inn by Hilton Miami  
Airport Convention Center  
Miami  
Through March 26

### March 27

**Dallas Apparel & Accessories Market + Total Home & Gift Market**  
Dallas Market Center  
Dallas  
Through March 30

### Dallas Western Market

Dallas Market Center  
Dallas  
Through March 30

### Kidsworld

Dallas Market Center  
Dallas  
Through March 30

### March 31

**Gift & Home Spring Market**  
LA Mart  
Los Angeles  
Through April 2

### April 1

**LA Majors Market**  
California Market Center  
Los Angeles  
Through April 3

### April 2

**Atlanta Apparel**  
AmericasMart  
Atlanta  
Through April 6

### April 3

**DG Expo Fabric & Trim Show Dallas**  
Dallas Market Center

Dallas  
Through April 4

### April 12

**Fashion and Sustainability Summit**  
LIM College, Maxwell Hall  
New York

### April 7

**Denver Apparel & Accessories Market**  
Denver Merchandise Mart  
Denver  
Through April 9

### April 7

**NW Trend Show**  
Pier 91, Smith Cove Terminal  
Seattle  
Through April 9

There's more  
on ApparelNews.net.

For calendar details and contact information, visit [ApparelNews.net/events](http://ApparelNews.net/events).

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## NEW RESOURCES

### Grayson Debuts a More-Affordable Option to Sibling Brand Frank & Eileen

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

Upon the 10-year anniversary of her premium-shirting brand **Frank & Eileen**, Audrey McLoughlin wanted to create a new product exclusively for women who work hard for luxurious products but might not be able to spend \$250 for a single shirt.

"As I was growing the company and looking around at the everyday women who are conquering the world in different ways, it was frustrating that I couldn't make a product for them," she said.

When McLoughlin launched Frank & Eileen, her Los Angeles brand of luxury button-up shirts in 2009, it was always a family affair. McLoughlin, an industrial-engineering graduate from the **Georgia Institute of Technology**, named the line of men's and women's dress shirts after her grandparents.

"Everything was centered around building this really exclusive product for a really exclusive customer," she explained about her luxury brand of button-up shirts. "We've been so fortunate to have amazing superfans who are style icons like Meghan Markle, Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres and her wife, Portia."

Five years after founding her brand, McLoughlin began courting an Italian family in Mexico whose business focused on creating men's button-up shirts. The result of this collaboration is **Grayson**, a brand of women's button-up shirts named for McLoughlin's

rics such as a feathered flannel. In addition to providing quality button-up shirting at a more affordable price, the Grayson brand was created to help women overcome their issues with standard sizing.

Working with 30 different fit models, McLoughlin developed millions of prototypes, finally creating the Hero cut. This single silhouette complements many different female body shapes, regardless of a woman's height or build. Part of the issue when fitting women into the appropriate shirt measurement, according to McLoughlin, is that they don't know their real size.



Audrey McLoughlin

"We would put all of their measurements into a chart and ask, 'What size do you identify with?'" she said. "Up to 70 percent of the time, the size they identified with did not match their measurements. Because of the overuse of the universal-size scale, people don't know what small means, they don't know what medium means, and we were setting ourselves up for failure."

To dispel this confusion, Grayson relies on its own sizing scale of 01 to 05. As the brand grows, additional sizes will be added according to the Grayson formula.

"Inside each garment, the full-size scale is inside, so it says 01, 02, all the way to 05," McLoughlin said. "If you're petite, you're going to be on the low end. If you're really tall or a bigger woman you're going to be on the other end. It also gives us flexibility; as the brand grows, we can add either smaller sizes



3-year-old daughter.

For its launch on March 14, **Grayson** introduced a single cut called Hero in an array of colors and patterns retailing for \$128 to \$138. Throughout the year, every month, the brand will launch a new shirt capsule in designs and fabrics that tell a different story based on seasonal trends.

"We launched with our first fabric called 'washed cotton.' It's an incredibly beautiful soft cotton with a bit of subtle texture. It's a year-round fabric and comes in a color story of mélange gray, French blue, pink and white," McLoughlin said. "There will be 15 different SKUs in that first delivery with a selection of stripes, plaids, solids and prints."

For the month of April, Grayson will offer its tumbled linen as a solution for women who would like to wear the material but don't want to deal with the trouble of working with its temperamental nature.

"They want to love it, but they don't know how to wear it and it's historically so stiff—they're worried that it will get wrinkled," McLoughlin explained. "We developed this really gorgeous tumbled linen and it comes already scrumptious and delicious and wrinkled. That will be in a whole color story of solids, stripes, prints and plaids."

Progressing through the seasons, the brand will offer a summer fabric in tissue cotton followed by more autumn-appropriate fab-

or larger sizes and not break the size scale."

Through combining a direct-to-consumer business model with a small selection of retail partners, Grayson sets apart its brand from competitors'. By offering exclusive designs through collaborations with **Anthropologie** and **Nordstrom**, McLoughlin is offering shirts that follow the Grayson formula of femininity coupled with strength and will appeal to the consumer whose style is represented at those retailers.

"It has to be flattering," she said. "You want to show enough of your collarbone, where it's very feminine, and you want it to open up, but there has to be enough room where it's not pulling."

Retail partners who carry the line agree, and, at Anthropologie, the company believes that Grayson's female leadership brings a unique understanding of its customers' needs and lifestyle.

"As a female-led company, Grayson understands that women lead busy lives," said Kyle Heady, Anthropologie's divisional merchandise manager. "The Hero button-up is the ideal wardrobe staple for our customers—they're moms, they work, they travel—who covet pieces that effortlessly serve a wide range of occasions and events."

For more information or for direct-to-consumer purchases, visit [www.grayson.com](http://www.grayson.com). ●



# Karsan Stakes Claim on Refined Style in Men's Basics

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Rahim Karsan has had a dual life. During the week, he has been assembling marketing campaigns for growing tech and higher-education clients.

But during his free time he has been ensconced in front of a sewing machine, trying to assuage his dissatisfaction with the clothing he found in stores he thought would look better with extra details or embellishments to nudge them toward



Karim Noor showed Corey Brooks the Karsan styles. On March 15, Brooks, a cast member of "Big Brother," season 18, dropped by The Park Showroom, which represents Karsan.

a unique look.

Karsan was serious enough about this extracurricular activity that for two years he employed a tutor to teach him the finer points of tailoring from his home base in Toronto.

"I'm still learning. I'm an okay tailor," he said. "It's not about perfecting a garment. It's about trying to communicate a vision."

After collecting a number of compliments on the clothes he restructured, he thought he'd try the fashion business by

contacting family friend Karim Noor, who works in the Los Angeles fashion business.

In December, they released an elevated men's streetwear and basics brand called **Karsan**, which is designed in Toronto, where Karsan sews the brand's samples, and then the line is manufactured in Los Angeles, where it undergoes more design development. "The first sample is always 60 percent to 70 percent good. But it's not ready to take to market," Noor explained.

Garments are made in limited runs of about 50 to 100 pieces to boost the brand's exclusivity, Noor said.

While Karsan hasn't quit his day job as the founder and chief marketing officer for **Blueprint International Marketing**, he is serious about developing his brand.

Karsan focuses on categories that have been called high-end streetwear and elevated basics—a competitive fashion categories that receives attention from prominent fashion forecasters such as **WGSN** and various fashion blogs.

Karsan's line is made from high-end fabrics, which is why Karsan's retail price points are relatively high, ranging from \$298 to \$398 for hoodies and \$88 to \$108 for T-shirts, which are made of Supima cotton and MicroModal fabrics.

"The price is a sticking point. We're costly," he noted. "But we use the highest-grade fabrics in the U.S. That alone is expensive. It is manufactured in Los Angeles. The custom dyeing we put the garments through puts in layers of cost. But when people touch, see and feel the product in person, there's an 'aha' moment when they realize the quality. It's the reason why we're going into wholesale quickly rather

than waiting for a year. Once we get it in front of the customer, they realize why the cost is high."

The brand also hopes to create a unique look with its T-shirts. Tops feature raised seams that go down the center of the garment's back and also have raised seams on the sleeves.

Karsan's tees come in three styles: a modified boxy T-shirt that aims to be the halfway point between a slender cut and a baggy silhouette, a top with a scooped hem, and a performance T-shirt made of technical fabrics that wick

away sweat and have anti-microbial properties.

Shirts are custom-dyed in hues that include charcoal, military green, black and white. After they are dyed, they are put through a silicone wash to make them softer.

Hoodies also have added elements. One of the brand's hoodie styles has a zipper shield made of lambskin leather placed under the zipper. Hoodies also feature high-end metal **Riri** zippers.

The Karsan brand aims for a clean aesthetic. When the brand

started out, it didn't use any graphics on its T-shirts, but that changed when customers requested them.

So Karsan and Noor made a logo out of the brand's initial, which is an upper-case K placed next to a backward K.

"The brand's logo stands for fashion from all angles. The brand creates something, but the customer wears it in the way they want to wear it. It's about them being true to themselves and using the brand as a vehicle to do that," Noor said.

In February, the brand began its wholesale program by exhibiting in Las Vegas at the **Project** trade show's N:OW section for established and emerging brands that are "culturally relevant."

Currently, Karsan is sold on the brand's website, [karsan-clothing.com](http://karsan-clothing.com). ●



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## Trina Turk Visits the Vine for Her Fall 2019 Collection

For Fall, Los Angeles designer Trina Turk looked to California's wine country for inspiration and a guide to the hues that dominate her 2019 collection.

For her print- and plaid-heavy ensemble of dresses, pantsuits and various pants, she used hues reminiscent of a Spanish Rioja, a California Merlot and a French Sancerre.

Turk believes polished separates are key this Fall with suits back on the rack for women who want a sleek look for daytime and even evening. Menswear tailored blazers populate the collection with a coordinating toothpick or kick-flare trouser or a midi skirt for a more feminine flair.

The designer's favorite fabric this season is what she calls "smart denim" in a dark indigo for a perfectly tailored fit, which can be seen in her '70s-inspired blazer with a super-long, flared trouser.

Sheath dresses always popular with the designer are back in her collection as is a faux-fur leopard jacket. New to the collection is a moto jacket to put the finishing touch on any piece as well as a trench coat with contrast grosgrain, four-row topstitching in viscose twill.—*Deborah Belgum*



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# Koral Expands Into Men's Activewear

For several years now, Los Angeles designer Ilana Kugel has been the creative drive behind the **Koral** label, which has been producing high-end, stylish activewear for women who value quality and design.

The label, launched in 2014 with the help of Ilana's brother Marcelo Kugel as chief marketing officer, has been carried by fitness chain **Equinox** as well as other retailers.

The women's label was so popular with women who work out that about one year ago Equinox's buyers suggested that Koral take that same high-fashion edge and transfer it to menswear with a line that could go from the gym to work or be worn on weekends. "They wanted something that is exciting for men," said Ilana, who grew up in Brazil and studied art and design at the **Universidade Anhembi Morumbi**.

This more fashionable outlook on men's activewear goes hand in hand with the growing trendiness seen in men's fashion as your everyday guy is more conscious about the way he dresses and looks. Even in the gym, men are donning well-made leggings worn under shorts and sporting sweatshirts that go beyond the standard hoodie with a drawstring. "The male consumer is becoming more fashion conscious, like women," Marcelo said.

The Spring/Summer menswear line, with 18 SKUs,

shipped with mostly basic colors, but the more expansive pre-Fall line with 70 SKUs has brighter neon colors integrated into it plus camouflage fabric for bomber jackets and joggers.

The No. 1 seller in the past for the women's side of the business has been a shiny black legging, which can be worn day or night. That same legging is being integrated into the men's line with a wide band at the top and retails for \$120.

Ilana said she is using high-end Italian polyester for most of the menswear line as well as a thin scuba-like fabric made of polyester and spandex that is seen in the label's sweatpants and sweatshirts. There are also shorts with a stretch short underneath built into the garment.

The camouflage bomber jacket and matching joggers are made of polyester, which is soft to the touch. Then there are the puffer sweatshirts that have a crew neck and can be

paired with slacks or jeans for a more day-to-day look.

Everything is machine washable, which is ideal for people on the go. "I'm aware that we are all busy," Ilana said. "I try to make it as easy as I can."

The pre-Fall line will launch April 30 and be carried exclusively by Equinox for three months as well as at *koral.com*. Then the Fall line, with plaid bomber jackets and shades of yellow, will kick off July 30 and be carried on a wider scale, with **Neiman Marcus** as one of the first department stores to stock it.

The line, whose retail prices range from \$80 to \$300. If the Koral name sounds familiar, it's because Peter Koral, a co-founder of the **7 For All Mankind** premium-denim brand, is a partner.

Koral and the Kugels got together after Ilana launched a resort and swimwear line called **Koral Swimwear**. At the time, Peter Koral had a denim line called **Koral Los Angeles** that he started in 2012 with his son David Koral.

The Koral Swimwear name caught Peter Koral's attention, and he connected with Ilana Kugel. He loved her designs, and instead of hashing out who got to keep the name the two decided to join forces.

—Deborah Belgum



Ilana and Marcelo Kugel standing alongside the pre-Fall collection



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