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FASHION FORWARD

Graduating students at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising showed off their creations at the annual student fashion show.

For more looks, see page 7.

Anna Reinherz

Even as Trends Shift, Activewear and Athleisure Remain Relevant to Fashion

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

As utilitarian looks and retro-style streetwear gain momentum, some in the fashion industry are declaring the end of activewear and athleisure. Looking back through activewear's history, from the bodysuit-and-leg warmer days of the 1980s to the baggy basketball shorts of the 1990s and the track suits of the early 2000s, it's clear that activewear doesn't leave fashion—it simply evolves over time.

Examining the evolution of activewear and its athleisure sibling, it is apparent that this category of apparel has become a mainstay of fashion. Just ask Beyoncé and Adidas, who recently announced they were partnering to relaunch Knowles-Carter's Ivy Park brand of athleisure apparel.

Trend-to-lifestyle transition

For the latter half of 2019, forecasters note that fashions are comfortable but stylish in a fun way. Many of the characteristics

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Byer California Cited for Evading Customs Duties by Undervaluing Garments

By Deborah Belgum Executive Editor

After years of litigation, **Byer California** has agreed to pay \$325,000 in a civil fraud lawsuit that alleges the decades-old San Francisco clothing company for five years undervalued the cost of its merchandise coming through customs, paying lower duties than normal.

The case came to light when a whistle-blower, identified as Michael Krigstein, told federal officials that Byer California reportedly had been receiving goods from **Queen Apparel NY Inc.** on a DDP, or delivered duty-paid basis, meaning that Queen Apparel took care of filing the customs forms and delivering the goods to Byer California.

But federal prosecutors maintained in a lawsuit filed in the Southern District of New York that Byer knew that Queen Apparel was undervaluing Byer's garments in customs forms submitted between 2009 and 2013 to Customs and Border Patrol inspectors but Byer continued to do business with Queen anyway.

"Byer chose to continue sending work orders to Queen

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Fashion Designer Mossimo Giannulli and Wife Charged With Money Laundering

Nearly one month after 33 parents were indicted for paying bribes to get their children into prestigious universities, 16 of them were indicted by a federal grand jury on a secondary charge of fraud and money laundering.

Those 16 parents include Los Angeles fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli and his wife, actress Lori Loughlin.

They were originally accused of paying \$500,000 to get their two daughters—Isa-

bella Rose and Olivia Jade—into the **University of Southern California** by being designated as recruits to the USC crew team even though they did not participate in crew, court documents said.

The money-laundering charge, filed on April 9, comes from contributions the parents made to a nonprofit run by William “Rick” Skinner, accused of masterminding the college bribery scandal that used \$25 million to get students into, among other

colleges, **Stanford University**, **Yale University** and **USC**.

Skinner’s nonprofit, called the **Key Worldwide Foundation**, headquartered in Newport Beach, Calif., allegedly used donated funds from the parents to pay off athletic directors to recruit some of the students for their teams and to pay test takers to help students improve their scores.

Many of the parents deducted their Key Worldwide Foundation contributions on

their federal tax forms.

Actress Felicity Huffman was not named in the additional charge. She is one of 13 parents who agreed to plead guilty to charges of committing mail and wire fraud and honest service mail and wire fraud.

With this additional indictment, the 16 parents will be required to appear in federal court in Boston in coming days to enter a plea.—*Deborah Belgium*

Levi Strauss Reports Solid First-Quarter Earnings

Just weeks after going public, **Levi Strauss & Co.**, based in San Francisco, reported that its first-quarter revenues for 2019 were up 7 percent to \$1.435 billion over the same period last year. Net income in the first quarter was \$147 million compared with a \$19 million net loss during last year’s first quarter.

The region that performed the best for the company was the Americas, which encompasses the United States, Canada and Latin America. Revenues in those geographic areas were up 9 percent to \$717 million while in Asia revenues inched up 8 percent to \$253 million, but revenues rose only 3 percent in Europe, to \$465 million.

Chip Bergh, the company’s chief executive officer and president, noted that this was the sixth consecutive quarter of double-digit constant-currency revenue growth. “This shows the strategic results of our plan seven years ago to become a world-class omni-channel retailer,” he said in a conference call following the earnings results released on April 9.

Bergh noted that growth in the first quarter

was driven mostly by Levi’s women’s business, which grew by 18 percent. “Skinny jeans and high-rise styles continue to be popular,” Bergh said.

Men’s bottoms sales were up 6 percent in the first quarter and still made up the largest percentage of revenues. “Wholesale business was up 8 percent despite continued door closures,” the CEO said.

Levi’s continues to open its own stores. At the end of the first quarter, it had 70 more stores than during the same time last year. Its retail plan for fiscal 2019 is to unveil 100 doors.

E-commerce business was up 24 percent over last year. The company has a plan to roll out an online shop later this year, and a pickup-in-store feature to help boost sales.

Looking around the globe, the company still feels there is a lot of untapped business to be found in China, where revenues inched up 5 percent in the first quarter compared to last year. “China continues to be a huge long-term operation for us,” Bergh said. “Part of the challenge is setting up the team. There is still more

work to do on the franchise business. We feel we have barely scratched the surface.”

Looking at the rest of 2019, Levi’s chief financial officer, Harmit Singh, said the company that makes clothing under the **Levi’s**, **Dockers**, **Signature** and **Denizen** labels should see revenue grow in the mid single digits. “This may sound conservative,

but it is still early in the year and there are uncertainties,” he noted.

Levi’s, which was a public company from 1971 to 1985, returned to being a publicly traded entity in late March. Its stock opened at \$17 a share when it debuted on the **New York Stock Exchange**. Recently, it closed at around \$22.88.—*D.B.*

Michael Levine to Close Space Devoted to Home-Décor Fabrics and Pound Goods

Michael Levine, the well-known downtown Los Angeles fabric store, is closing its space at 919 Maple Ave. and its loft at 917 Maple Ave., which sell upholstery fabrics and notions.

It is located across the street from the Michael Levine fabric store at 920 Maple Ave., which has approximately 20,000 square feet on its main floor and a 3,500-square-foot mezzanine.

The spaces closing have signs advertising 50 percent to 80 percent off merchandise focused on home and patio textiles. The space also sells closeout fabrics by the pound.

The two spaces are closing because the lease agreement between Michael Levine and property-management firm **Ard Company** will expire in June, said Amir Damavandi, the real-estate business’s president. While no date has been set for when Michael Levine will vacate the space, the business will move out when the lease expires or another tenant agrees to move in.

Michael Levine’s president, Larry Freidin, emphasized that the closure of the predominantly home design-focused space does not signify that the company will completely leave the neighborhood.

“The location address that is closing is 919 Maple Ave., which houses our home, deck and



The Michael Levine spaces at 917 and 919 Maple Ave.

pound-goods fabric,” he said in an email. “Our store that has apparel fabric located at 920 Maple Ave. will remain open.”

Neighborhood experts feel that the closure is simply good business sense due to the company’s reputation as a fabric-and-notions resource and the popularity of the 920 Maple Ave. location.

“There is still a strong market for fabric here because people want to touch and feel fabric,” said **L.A. Fashion District Business Improvement District** Executive Director Rena Masten Leddy. “Michael Levine is one of the top places people visit in the Fashion District, and people come from all over California to go there. It’s definitely a draw, and we consider it one of the many anchors in the district.”—*Dorothy Crouch*

RETAIL SALES

March Retail Sales Are Mixed

March business showed a slight uptick for **The Buckle Inc.**, whose same-store sales increased 0.5 percent in a year-over-year comparison.

However, its net sales remained flat at \$82.3 million, according to an April 11 statement from the Kearney, Neb.-headquartered retailer, which is focused on denim.

March same-store sales for value retailer **The Cato Corp.** declined 7 percent compared with last year. The company’s net sales were \$87.4 million for the month, a 10 percent decrease from the previous year.

John Cato, the Charlotte, N.C.-based retailer’s chairman, president and chief executive officer, argued that March results did not tell his company’s full story. “March sales were negatively impacted by the shift of Easter from March last year to April this year,” Cato said. “Because of this shift, the

best measure for performance is the combined sales for the two months.”

The Buckle Inc. and Cato Corp. are two of the last retailers who report company results monthly. In February, **Zumiez Inc.** and **L Brands Inc.** separately announced they would cease their monthly sales reports. Instead they will report quarterly sales.

It’s a marked difference from a decade ago when almost every public company reported monthly sales results. In 2008, **Macy’s Inc.** stopped its monthly sales reports followed by **Walmart Inc.**

Los Angeles retail analyst Jeff Van Sinderen of **B.Riley FBR** said many business executives didn’t want to sandbag investors with bad news during the Great Recession and the recovery. “Why report monthly when the metrics are negative and you don’t have much positive to say?” Van Sinderen recalled.—*Andrew Asch*





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Athleisure *Continued from page 1*

of these fashions are spreading into activewear and athleisure by simplifying a consumer's life.

"There are all these trend reports coming out for late 2019 or 2020 saying that 'utility chic' is trending. To me, it's simply adding function to the clothes you're wearing," said Bre Neidt, senior designer at Walnut, Calif.-based activewear brand **Thrive Société**. "As an evolution, utility chic is a trend in active and athleisure that will bring more pockets, more functionality and also more reflective items to make female athletes safer."

Active and athleisure pieces are often paired with more-formal apparel to create a fresh take on business and special-event attire. For the upcoming season, pairing more-casual styles from the activewear and athleisure markets will become more common.

"Athleisure is the uniform of the new generation. It has broken out of category, and it encompasses everything from your classic white T-shirt and items with serious tailoring to pieces polished enough for a boardroom," said Michelle Wahler, co-founder of Culver City, Calif., brand **Beyond Yoga**. "It's no longer about the activity, it is about servicing a lifestyle. We are excited to be in a space that is so flexible and future facing."

Not only are brands designing to serve the fashionable active and athleisure client, but partners along the supply chain also report that these two segments of the apparel market remain strong. At Long Beach, Calif., fabric manufacturer **Texollini**, there is a large offering of textiles that serve the active and athleisure categories.

Texollini's director of merchandising, Sherry Wood, explained that the segment is strong. "We haven't seen any slowdown in either the active or athleisure market. If anything, we've seen continual growth," she said. "There is this big market happening with self-awareness and self-wellness and health—not only with diet, but also mentally. It's a lifestyle trend."

Style in the active segment

During trend-forecasting shows for Fall 2019 and into 2020, there has been a lot of talk about a return to bright colors including hot pink, orange, lime and cool cyan while mixing these hues with more neutral tones such as dusty rose or olive green. When pairing active and athleisure pieces for a look that reaches beyond gym walls, Neidt mentions that accessorizing and layering is key to the trend-driven consumer.

"The super-crop hoodie or crew for Fall—it's about showing how many pieces you can show off at once through layer-

ing," she said. "The woman who is trend driven will invest in a lightweight cargo pant in a utility fabric in a stretch woven that can be worn to work with a heel and on a hike with sneakers. You can dress it up or dress it down and it will work for you all day long."

A key element of athleisure has been its ability to add versatility to a consumer's wardrobe. Investing in quality pieces that work in a variety of settings, from lounging at home to a night out with friends, has been the earmark of this segment.

"Over the last five years, we have used our fabrics to make more crossover items like rompers, loungewear and trend basics—items you could wear out for cocktails," Wahler said. "[Our customer] wants to live comfortably and for all of her items to move seamlessly through her day. The same high-quality leggings she wears to a class she wants to toss a tunic over and look chic at supper. For the consumer, it is no longer an 'active' category, it's simply fashion."

Throughout the most recent period when fashion has embraced more-active styles and the advent of athleisure, a noticeable shift in athletic-focused apparel manufacturing has occurred. Serious athletes also want to have fun with their clothing, oftentimes through their warmup and post-workout apparel.

"Those that started as pure activewear brands now include some portion of athleisure," Wood said. "Within their high-performance, active garments, they are now adding athleisure, whether it's T-shirts, tops, track suits, sweats, sweatshirts or hoodies—any of those styles will complement and can be mixed with true active styles."

On the activewear side, Wood has noticed trends moving toward technical fabrics that provide performance value to consumers who need apparel that will maintain its integrity despite demanding workouts and wash cycles.

"We're seeing specific trends from a textile perspective with second-skin fabrics that are fine gauge with a lot of **Lycra** and some compression," she said. "They are lightweight, free flowing with great movement but still have technical properties."

On the athleisure side of the textile business, she sees demand for French terry, fleece, ribbed, twills and novelty jacquards, as texture is trending in a major way among brands who

serve this market. At Thrive Société, Neidt is designing toward these trends as she sees consumers responding to multi-textured garments.

"We've seen a push toward ribbing and mixing it with a solid, smoother fabric," she said. "You're getting that textural play by making your solid garment more interesting. You're seeing more jacquards and also beautifully monotonal multi-textured garments."

The role of active and athleisure

The consistent success—and staying power—of the activewear and athleisure markets goes beyond the new trends in style but can also be found in the positive effects it can have on a person's mood.

"Some brands are doing better than others, but the ones that are doing better are approaching inclusivity and highlighting our diversity by promoting fearless body positivity," Wood said. "It's all-encompassing. The brands are trying to diversify and not cater to one active or athleisure customer."

The future of activewear and athleisure lies in the ability of these segments to support body positivity and diversity in a way that pure fashion struggles to achieve.

"There are girls who work out that are not a size small, but they are healthy and they are allowed to feel good about themselves," Neidt explained.

Activewear and athleisure brands are on-board with the feel-good trends. When consumers wear clothing that makes them feel better or improves their self-esteem, they are likely to return to the brands that provided these experiences.

"We pull from runway trends and combine that inspiration with our high-endurance fabrics and popular silhouettes," Wahler said. "We want all women to be able to access trend-forward collections that make them look and feel amazing."

Brands have also noticed a change in the attitude of their clientele as the demands of the female consumer are reflective of an emboldened overall outlook.

"That is the state of women," Neidt said. "The trends are going the way women are feeling: empowered, bold and our future is bright." ●



Thrive Société

NEWS

Byer *Continued from page 1*

for garments that it understood would be imported into the country with false customs forms resulting in fraudulent underpayment of customs duties," the U.S. Department of Justice said in a March 27 press release announcing the settlement. "Byer admitted to and accepted responsibility for certain conduct alleged in the government's complaint and agreed to pay \$325,000 to the United States."

Phil Byer, chief executive of Byer California, said the company fully accepts responsibility for its conduct described in the settlement agreement. Although Byer did not inform customs about Queen's suspected undervaluation, he said, it did not conspire with Queen to undervalue merchandise.

"Byer was not part of the undervaluation scheme that Queen had in place with other customers, and Byer did not obtain lower prices as a result of any of Queen's valuation calculations," he noted. "While it was found that Queen occasionally paid the government less duty than was legally owed, Byer paid Queen market prices for the imported goods and resold that merchandise to its U.S. customers for regular market prices."

He said the company decided to pay a settlement fee considering the cost to further litigate the case.

Byer California, a major supplier of juniors and misses clothing to major department stores, was one of a handful of apparel companies named in a civil fraud lawsuit first filed in 2013 under the federal False Claims Act. The other companies named included **Motives Inc.**, a clothing importer, and **Motives Far East** and **Motives China Ltd.**, foreign clothing manufacturers. They were accused of engaging in a double-invoicing scheme where there were two sets of invoices, one with lower prices shown to customs and one with the actual prices of the garments.

In a 2016 settlement agreement, Motives admitted to underreporting the value of its imported clothes and agreed to pay \$13.375 million to the United States. "Motives disguised the true value of goods imported into the United States to cheat the government out of millions of dollars in customs

duties," said Angel Melendez, a special agent-in-charge for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "This scheme backfired."

Other apparel companies, named in different lawsuits, have been caught up in this kind of scheme. In 2014, clothing manufacturer **Dana Kay** and its affiliate companies, including **Danny & Nicole**, were sued for underreporting the value of their garments and ended up paying \$10 million to settle their False Claims Act case.

According to the government, Dana Kay and its affiliates produced invoices for customs that undervalued the price of a garment by, on average, \$2.50 a piece. Customs officials maintained that with customs duties averaging 22 percent, Dana Kay was saving 55 cents per garment.

That added up to a lot because Dana Kay was importing millions of skirts, dresses and blouses every year, which were sold under various label names including **Studio 1**, **Taylor Dresses**, **Zarr Collection** and **Gabby Skye**, as well as private-label clothing produced for **Chico's**, **Cache**, **Ann Taylor** and **Dress Barn**. "This was simple customs fraud," said Michael Fitzgerald, the New Jersey lawyer who represented Michael Krigstein, the whistle-blower in that case too.

Krigstein, a former employee of Dana Kay, received \$2.2 million for tipping off customs officials, which was 22 percent of the \$10 million settlement.

What all these cases have in common is that a whistle-blower alerted customs officials that these companies were undervaluing their garments when bringing them in through customs. And all the garments were brought in DDP as opposed to FOB, or free on board.

FOB means the clothing company importing the merchandise is responsible for getting the goods through customs or hiring a freight forwarder or customs broker to do all the paperwork.

For years, customs officials have urged that importers take more responsibility for their imports and bring them in FOB as opposed to relying on overseas manufacturers to deliver the goods under DDP.

Richard Wortman, a customs attorney in Los Angeles for

Grunfeld, Desiderio, Lebowitz, Silverman & Klestadt, said this case is not the general rule because it was not initially brought by the government but by a whistle-blower.

"There have been a series of False Claims Act violations recently with a number in the apparel sector," Wortman said. "They are usually filed by a disgruntled former employee, someone who has knowledge and is not happy with the company for whatever reason."

He said the lesson people should learn through these cases is that Los Angeles is the land of companies that love to bring in goods DDP, but they need to be careful and review all customs documents. "Customs is focused on DDP imports," he said. "Customs has a belief that DDP is a bad thing. There are absolutely good business reasons for importing DDP because you don't tie up your money because you don't owe anything until you get your goods."

He warned that if the price listed for a garment in the importing documents sounds too good to be true, there is something wrong. "You should be doing some due diligence," Wortman advised. "You can't turn a blind eye."

Customs brokers and attorneys said they noticed that last year the government began taking a more intensive look at imported goods. Elon Pollack, a customs attorney in Los Angeles with **Stein Shostak Shostak Pollack & O'Hara**, said he is seeing more shipments being flagged that are brought in by nonresident importers. "People who have been importing for five or six years are all of a sudden getting their entries rejected," he said.

Robert Krieger, president of the Los Angeles customs brokerage company **Krieger Worldwide**, said customs officials are getting more sophisticated with computer software that can analyze the stated purchase price of a garment and see if it conforms to the price listed for similar garments brought into the country. "Let's say you are bringing in cotton woven denim jeans from China," Krieger said. "There is a harmonized tariff number for that, and customs has data for every importer of that product for the last couple of years."

If the garment's price falls below 10 percent of the typical price, customs officials start asking questions, he said. ●

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PERFORMANCE/ACTIVE/ATHLEISURE

Expert Brand Introduces New Collection

Expert Brand, a longtime active lifestyle apparel and promotional clothing company based in Vernon, Calif., is celebrating more than 25 years in business by expanding its **American MoCA** collection with eight new styles, six for women and two for men.

The new collection is meant to mix fashion and function for everyday wear and is offered in a number of colors made with an environmentally friendly sustainable fiber.

The collection of hoodies, V-neck shirts, tanks and cardigans have a blend of MicroModal and combed cotton. The new women's styles include a tie-front tank, drape-front cardigan, sleeveless hoodie, V-neck hoodie, V-neck T-shirt and a cinch-back tee, while the women's styles include V-



neck short- and long-sleeve tees.

"The latest additions to the American MoCA collection are ideal for an everyday active lifestyle of cycling, yoga, hiking, walking and other activities," said Sion Shaman, the owner of Expert Brand.

Shaman named the collection for both its combination of materials—Modal and cotton—and its California roots, with each piece made in the United States.

Expert Brand was started in 1993 by designing, developing and manufacturing performance fabrics. Then two of its largest customers asked if the company could sew T-shirts to respond to last-minute orders from retailers.

The company started out with four employees, two apparel styles and less than 100,000 garments manufactured a year. Today, there are more than 100 employees and 200 apparel styles making up the millions of garments made each year.

The company's customer base has grown from a handful of entities to more than 800 companies, including promotional-products distributors, apparel decorators, gyms, yoga studios, sporting-goods retailers and more on the business-to-business side.



Calendar

April 12

Hawaii Market Merchandise Expo

Blaisdell Exhibition Center
Honolulu
Through April 14

Coachella Festival Dusk Till Dawn

46605 Dillon Road
Coachella, Calif.
Through April 14

Fashion and Sustainability Summit

LIM College
New York

April 14

Fashion Market Northern California

San Mateo County Event Center
San Mateo, Calif.
Through April 16

April 19

Coachella Festival Dusk Till Dawn

46605 Dillon Road
Coachella, Calif.
Through April 21

April 20

Hong Kong International Home Textiles and Furnishings Fair

Hong Kong Convention and
Exhibition Centre
Hong Kong
Through April 23

April 26

Stagecoach

Empire Polo Club
Indio, Calif.
Through April 28

April 27

Global Sources Fashion

AsiaWorld-Expo
Hong Kong
Through April 30

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on ApparelNews.net.

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information, visit ApparelNews.net/events.

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FASHION

FIDM Debut 2019 Showcases the Future of Fashion From New Designers

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, Calif., was the setting for **FIDM Debut 2019**, the annual showcase produced by the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising**, headquartered in downtown Los Angeles.

The show provides an opportunity for select graduating students to unveil their design talents during a professionally produced runway show in front of an audience comprising some of the industry's most influential players.

Starting the night with Chairing Styles, this segment of the April 6 event showcased collaborative projects created by students who are pursuing design degrees in textiles, interiors and fashion.

Five groups of students were each tasked with developing one chair and a complementary fashion design. With the help of **Ana Maria Designs**, which manufactured the chairs; embroidery business **Royal Maye Chie Enterprises, Inc.**; and fabric-printing provider **Textile Xpress**, five student groups developed designs to reflect four different countries: Japan, Russia, China and India.

For this year's presentation of Advanced Theatre Costume Design, students Audrey Anna Cook, Lorraine Ely, Shannon Farkas, Hannah Smith, Emily Stipcak and Jessica Swanson took inspiration from Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute." Working with this theme, the students channeled the composer's work to create whimsical costumes that relayed the tale of the opera's characters—the Queen of Night, Prince Tamino and Pamina.

A new addition to this year's show was also included on the runway—a segment dedicated exclusively to denim. After FIDM started its Business of Denim program in 2017, the second class of students representing the program—Bianca Betdashtoo, Edith Baeza, Isabella Barreiro Seiden, Joseph Gonzalez, Shannon Reddy and Xinyu Liu—will graduate this June. In addition to traditional washes in indigo hues, these Advanced Business of Denim students featured on-trend denim in patchwork, tie-dye, neon colors and bright white.

"The Advanced Study Program in the Business of Denim is designed to facilitate a unique education for students in the areas of denim design and development, product application, industry sustainability, and denim finishing and production," Barbara Bundy, FIDM's vice president of education, said in a statement. "Students are prepared to enter and succeed in the international world of denim from fiber origin through product life."

The school's Advanced Fashion Design students created collections in categories from

formalwear to swimwear and streetwear. They also channeled personal trials, family connections and science as inspiration for their collections.

The **Guess** Scholarship recipient, Andrea Isaza, presented clothes that would allow her target audience to experience the power she feels from fashion. The colorful collection featured a faux-fur white coat with red-and-black accents with the message "Pray for fashion" written on the back. Isaza was also chosen as the recipient of a scholarship to **Accademia Koefia Roma**.



2019 FIDM Debut Designers (from left, back to front) Heewon Moon, Jason Tirtorahardjo, Mitchell Carr, Anna Reinherz, Adam James, Sofia Elin, Emi Ishizeki, Kyle Denman, Kai Erven and Andrea Isaza

Using Rio de Janeiro's Carnival and designer Oscar de la Renta as her inspirations, Sofia Elin, the recipient of the Jack and Joan Bonholtzer Scholarship, created a full line of swimsuits, cover-ups, light jackets, skirts, pants and blouses. Taking her inspirations to heart, the designer created a cyan swimsuit with pink-and-yellow accents, a floor-length, blue-and-pink open-front skirt and a feathery Brazilian Carnival-style *costeiro* worn on the back of the outfit.

As inspiration for his men's and women's pieces, the Nolan Miller Scholarship recipient Jason Tirtorahardjo looked to the legacy of Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli. The hand-painted and hand-dyed approach to his designs elevated basic T-shirts, pants and shorts but also added unique details to a white trench coat-style dress and a light-pink spaghetti-strap baby-doll dress.

Kneeling down to meet her little models as they started down the runway, Emi Ishizeki designed childrenswear inspired by French fashion designer Coco Chanel. The Rose Morbit Bolognone Scholarship winner created tailored jumpers and slacks in addition to more feminine, bouncy dresses adorned with bows, tulle and ruffles.

Inspired by work he performed with the **Scripps Center** regarding the effects of art on patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease and dementia, Kyle Denman presented fashions that included a black avant-garde piece with a cylindrical face-covering headpiece and matching top, worn with a floor-length bubble skirt. The winner of the FIDM Debut and Jerry Epstein Scholarships, Denman also created edgy but wearable looks such as black



Barbara Bundy



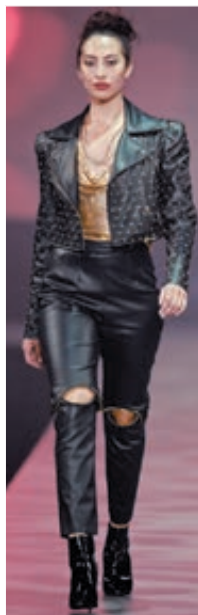
ALEX J. BERLINER/AB IMAGES

Joseph Gonzalez



BENJAMIN SHMIKLER/AB IMAGES

Heewon Moon



ALEX J. BERLINER/AB IMAGES

Adam James



ALEX J. BERLINER/AB IMAGES

Kyle Denman



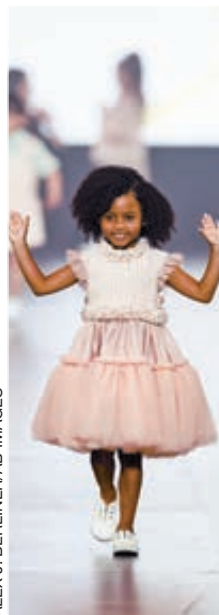
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Jason Tirtorahardjo



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Andrea Isaza



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Emi Ishizeki



ALEX J. BERLINER/AB IMAGES

Mitchell Carr

straight-leg pants with dramatic red hip-to-shin embellishments.

As a Guess Scholarship winner, Kai Erven was inspired by space and technology, particularly Elon Musk's **Tesla** and **SpaceX**. With a collection that relied on a lot of black and brown, in addition to metallic touches and hardware embellishments, Erven created utilitarian men's and women's pieces in slim pants, hoodies, jackets and a brown knee-length skirt whose fabric zipped off in two places, creating two additional, shorter lengths.

For the John and Victoria Hill Scholarship winner, Anna Reinherz was inspired by icons from the 1980s, such as Grace Jones and Joan Collins, for her collection of trench-coat dresses, pencil skirts, slim-leg pants and blazers with strong shoulders in fuchsia and mustard tones. One below-the-knee trench dress in a striking pink hue was complemented by a leopard-print belt to cinch the waist.

Taught to sew by his grandmother, Adam James was inspired by his family's machinery business to create

pieces that were strong yet feminine. In addition to evening gowns and military-style coats, the FIDM Merit Scholarship winner unveiled a long-sleeve, high-neck, black faux-leather mini-dress embossed with metal nail-head details.

Creating high-end mens- and womenswear, the Karen Kane Scholarship winner Heewon Moon favored asymmetrical design details, such as a sleeveless little black dress that featured pieces of fabric folded into fan shapes that overlapped for a ruffle effect. A men's coat in white featured dropped lapels and an asymmetrical hem.

For Bob Mackie Scholarship winner Mitchell Carr, the resilience of bumblebees and his own strength to overcome injuries sustained in a car accident inspired his collection of womenswear. Featuring skirts in lace and tulle, loose styles in pants and romantic off-the-shoulder tops with ruffle details, Carr also designed a yellow ball gown with a corset top; a shiny, black-beaded, fringe off-the-shoulder detail; and a black tulle overlay. ●



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Kai Erven



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T-SHIRTS

Tech Experience Inspires Brandon Kawai to Become a Clothing Designer

The casual fashion style of the tech industry and its leaders has been critiqued as being too basic, but Brandon Kawai saw nothing but possibilities for this particular style when he interned two years ago at a startup tech company in downtown Los Angeles.

The idea of outfitting entrepreneurs inspired Kawai more than developing the next cool app. So in 2018 he charted a new career direction when he introduced his basics and fashion brand called **Kawai**, which made its wholesale debut at the **LA Men's Market** in March.

Kawai wanted his self-named brand to offer T-shirts, sweatpants and jackets that were casual and comfortable but different from other labels. "I wanted to make clothes for the young L.A. entrepreneur. They could be nice enough to wear to work or to go to happy hour at a place like **Perch** afterwards," Kawai said, referring to the high-end bar and nightclub in downtown Los Angeles. "Kawai's clothes are made in Los Angeles. This city made me into who I am."

As a kid in Fullerton, Calif., he learned about putting clothes together from his mother and grandmother, who sewed garments while he sketched clothes. When he got his driver's license, he would drive to Los Angeles' Fairfax Avenue to check out the flagship stores for streetwear brands including **The Hundreds** and **Diamond Supply Co.**

When he got serious about fashion, he searched the Internet for Los Angeles patternmakers who could help create the clothing he sketched. His first foray into fashion was making denim trucker caps. When his

long-sleeve work shirt made of Japanese indigo denim. It retails for \$350.

The basics line features tees made of a softer, ringspun cotton and retails for \$40.

For more information, visit www.kawailosangeles.com.—Andrew Asch



fraternity brothers at **California State University, Fullerton** and high school friends purchased the caps, he took it as a sign that he was on his way to a solid business.

Kawai broadened his collection to include jackets with Japanese silhouettes, denim work shirts, sweatpants and T-shirts. The line's silhouettes are oversized. The T-shirts have a boxy fit with drop shoulders.

On some shirts, the brand's name is embroidered. On others, Kawai screen-prints graphics. But he doesn't want the embroidery or graphics to dominate the clothes. "Embroidery and screen-printing are tools to enhance the garments," he said. "I want the silhouettes to do the talking. I want people to say, 'That's a Kawai shirt because of the way it is cut and the fabrics.'"

The Kawai label is divided into two lines. Kawai's Collection 1 offers finer fabrics, such as a French terry shirt that retails for \$110. The higher-end collection features a



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L.A.-Based Omnichain Solutions Puts New Tech in Supply-Chain Game

Across the street from the hipster hangout **The Line Los Angeles** in L.A.'s Koreatown area, a group of supply-chain industry veterans are working on a way to mesh their established practices of their business with the new world of blockchain.

The tech company **Omnichain Solutions**, founded by Pratik Soni and Ray Young, officially started business last year with the mission of shaking up the supply-chain business with blockchain. Blockchain gained a cachet when the system started about a decade ago in the Wild West world of cryptocurrency.

Blockchain is basically a time-stamped immutable ledger of data on a computer network not owned by a single entity. Its advocates consider it to be one of the most secure forms of recordkeeping.

Since blockchain systems are set up on peer-to-peer networks, the only way to change a ledger is to request approval from everybody else on the network. Many believe that blockchains encourage honesty and increased communication.

Soni said that his company is the first to offer a well-rounded, holistic blockchain platform and is exactly what the supply chain needs to improve efficiency and communication.

"If you look at the supply-chain industry in general, no matter what vertical you're in, whether it's fashion or medicine, the supply-chain industry has not innovated since 1985 with the advent of EDI," Soni said of Electronic Data Interchange, a form of electronic communication that has been used by major retailers to record purchase orders and



Pratik Soni



Ray Young

invoices.

Soni said that EDI can limit the number of parties communicating on a network. A blockchain can expand it. "All data will flow seamlessly through the supply-chain upstream and downstream," he said. "It's a more proactive approach to supply chain when you need to know how much fabric to buy. Or if you need to know how much inventory to meet a future demand."

Blockchain's detailed ledger makes it easy to trace when an event took place or where something was produced. It's become a hip topic in business circles, and it is gaining a lot of momentum. Retailers such as **Walmart** worked with a blockchain platform developed by **IBM** last year to track lettuce and other leafy greens from farm to store shelf.

Trade associations such as the **Blockchain in Transport Alliance** started operations in August 2017 to put together industry standards for block-

chain. Leading companies listed as participating on BITA's board include **FedEx**, **UPS** and **Daimler**. Soni serves on the board of BITA.

Omnichain hosts and produces a cloud-based platform where companies can develop and work on their operations. People participating on the network can gain access on any electronic device.

Omnichain's mix of blockchain and supply chain has been received warmly by members of the tech crowd. Last year it was honored by the tech journal *Red Herring* as one of the Top 100 North America winners. The juried award is given to private technology ventures the magazine believes demonstrate high marks for innovation and business strategy.

Soni claimed that it is harder to keep track of retail operations since basic retail channels have expanded and diversified in the past 15 years. Bricks-and-mortar operations typically are part of the same retail conglomerate as e-commerce, social-media commerce and mobile-phone commerce.

He contends that retail operations and their supply chains can become unwieldy without a tool that can give executives a clear and commanding view of their operations. The increased communications provided by his platforms, he maintains, can increase productivity and can cut the time a product reaches market by five days.

Omnichain has been working with fashion clients such as **RomperJack** as well as the watch company **Breda** and the dairy-free snacks company **Ruby Rockets**.—*Andrew Asch*

RETAIL

Macy's Hopes New Concept Will Reinvent Its Retail Experience

Macy's Inc. is rolling out a new store within a store called **Story at Macy's**, which is debuting at 36 Macy's locations across the country. The shop is the latest chapter in Macy's multiyear effort to reinvent its 640 department stores.

The Story unveiling started on April 10 at select Macy's across the country, including California locations at **South Coast Plaza** in Costa Mesa, **Fashion Island** in Newport Beach, **Union Square** in San Francisco and **Westfield Valley Fair** in Santa Clara. **David Stark Design and Production** crafted unique looks at the stores, which average 1,500 square feet and feature details such as faux-fur columns. The idea behind the store is that the store designs and merchandise change every two months.

In recent years, Macy's has been experimenting with other retail concepts. In 2015, it introduced its off-price **Backstage** stores in more than 120 Macy's. Beauty store **Bluemercury** joined Macy's in 2015 and has expanded as stand-alone stores as well as Bluemercury sections inside Macy's stores. There are currently 163 Bluemercury stores.

Macy's acquired **Story** in May 2018 for an



CARLOS DELGADO/AP IMAGES FOR MACY'S

A new Story at Macy's at South Coast Plaza

undisclosed amount from Story Founder Rachel Shechtman, who was hired to be Macy's brand experience officer and to shape the Macy's experience outside of Story shops.

Shechtman gained notoriety when she started Story in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood in 2011. Her novel merchandising sense inspired a bricks-and-mortar retail market still reeling from the effects of a deep industry downturn during the

Great Recession and a mounting challenge from digital commerce.

Story relied on whimsy and novelty to attract consumers. According to the company's website, it sold like a retailer but changed frequently like an art gallery and curated themes like a magazine. Story reinvented the look of its stores and how it changed its merchandise every month to two months.

The first theme for Story at Macy's is Color. The shop will feature clothes from children's brands **Primary** and **Levi's Kids**. Other brands will include **Crayola** crayons, **MAC Cosmetics**, "Make Your Own" palette stations and candy bars from **Compertes**.

In a recent statement, Shechtman said that Story was to be driven by a new sense of shopping. "The Story at Macy's experience feels a lot like a real-life version of scrolling through **Instagram**. You discover things you weren't looking for but are inspired by all the fun finds—the second you see it, you need it! We aspire to create that feeling with the breadth of the narrative-driven merchandise edit we are bringing to life with the launch of Story at Macy's across the country."—A.A.

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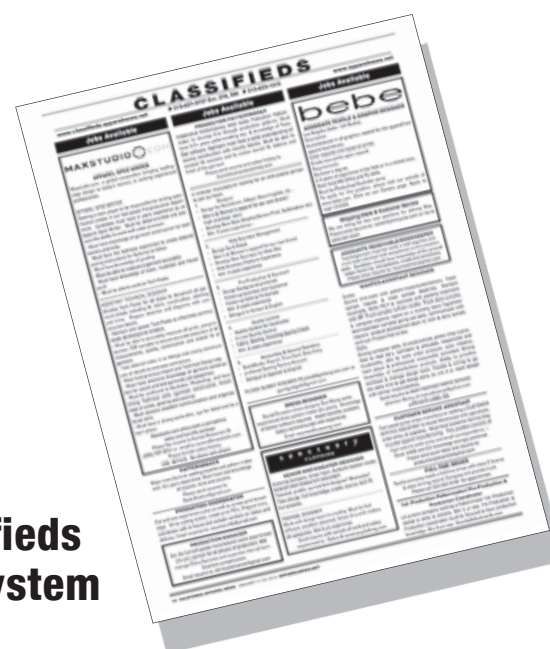
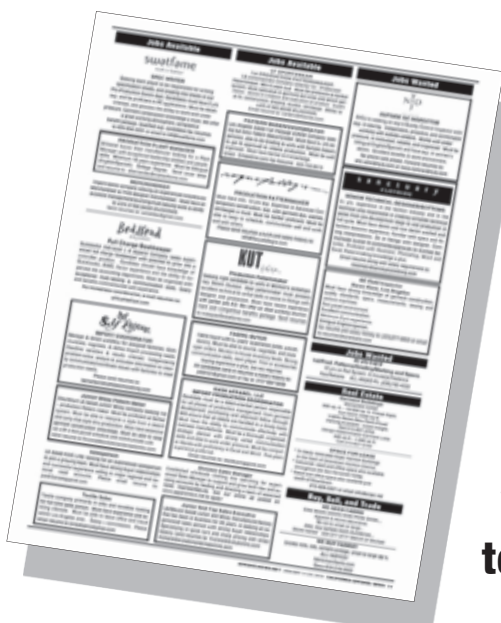
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