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UCLA Anderson Forecast Sees a Slowing Economy Amidst Trade War

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

As the economists putting out the UCLA Anderson Forecast were writing their quarterly report released on June 5, the Trump administration had not yet announced its 5 percent tariff on all Mexican goods being imported into the country.

This new tariff will only add more sand to the gears of commerce, said David Shulman, a senior economist with the forecast. "It makes it much worse," Shulman said, explaining that the tariff is a tax on the American consumer, who will be buying less if prices go up.

Already, there is a 10 percent additional tariff on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods coming into the United States. After June 15, this will be upped to 25 percent on top of already existing tariffs on goods from China.

Additionally, the Trump administration has threatened to impose additional tariffs on all goods being imported from
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Cold Weather Puts a Chill on Retail

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Southern California has been cold and rainy this winter, and some have described the business of selling beach-inspired and summer clothing as a washout.

Bob Abdel, co-owner of the prominent surf boutique **Jack's Surfboards** in Huntington Beach, Calif., said rain and cold weather have made summer clothing-focused businesses like his suffer.

"When it rains this much, no one comes to the beach," he said. "There's nothing that we can do. It's Mother Nature. I wish the sun would come to us," he said.

February was particularly rainy in Southern California with more than five inches of rain coming down over much of the area and temperatures never rising above 69 degrees. The following months were also cool and cloudy.

Bigger retailers such as **Tilly's Inc.**, headquartered in Irvine, Calif., said poor weather hurt its Memorial Day-week-
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Tinctorium's Natural Indigo Dye Receives Support From the Godfather of Denim

By Dorothy Crouch *Associate Editor*

Michelle Zhu and Tammy Hsu, co-founders of San Francisco-based **Tinctorium**, are entering the apparel supply chain with a revolutionary natural product projected to transform sustainable indigo-dyeing methods in denim manufacturing.

"Current chemical synthesis of indigo involves dangerous chemicals such as formaldehyde, cyanide and petroleum. For every kilogram of indigo, over 100 kilograms of petroleum are used to produce that small, incremental unit," Zhu explained. "Indigo isn't water soluble. To apply indigo as a dye, a chemical-reducing agent, which is also a water pollutant, must be added."

The women launched their company earlier this year after bioengineering PhD candidate Hsu identified a naturally occurring enzyme she wanted to use as a research marker during her thesis coursework at the **University of California,**

Berkeley.

She discovered that this microbe-created pigment could be used as an indigo alternative to toxic synthetic dyes. The pigment could also be applied in a water-soluble state by adding an enzyme that finalized this natural dyeing process.

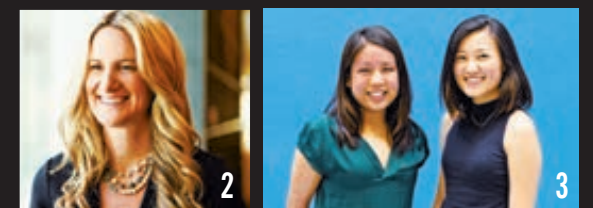
While Chief Executive Officer Zhu and Chief Scientific Officer Hsu might seem to be unlikely fashion entrepreneurs, they do have a connection to the Los Angeles apparel industry. For the last 20 years, Zhu's parents have owned **Vibes Base**, an El Monte, Calif., garment-development company.

"This was a new opportunity where Tammy needed someone with a business background," said Zhu, a graduate of the Olin Business School at **Washington University** in St. Louis. "The more we talked about it and discussed my family's background in the apparel industry, it felt perfect and serendipitous to us."

Growing in popularity at a rapid pace, Tinctorium's tech-
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Report Says Forever 21 Holding Debtor-in-Possession Talks

For months, the fashion industry has been talking about **Forever 21** being in financial difficulties after it started shutting down all its stores in China and selling its giant headquarters building east of downtown Los Angeles.

Now, a report by **Bloomberg News** said the fast-fashion retailer is having cash-flow problems and is in talks with potential lenders and restructuring advisers.

"This has been going on for three months," said one Los Angeles source who recently met with company executives about their business. "They want to take on a partner. They need the dough because they have this debt."

In a June 3 article, *Bloomberg News* said the company is looking for financing to help with liquidity and to make sure that co-

founder Don (Do Won) Chang keeps control of the company.

The financial news service went on to say that Forever 21 has spoken with **Apollo Global Management** about lining up potential debtor-in-possession financing for the company, which in 2017 had a reported \$3.5 billion in revenues.

Emails sent by the *California Apparel News* to Forever 21's press office were not answered. But an email sent by Forever 21 to *Bloomberg News* said the mammoth retail chain was speaking to its lenders in the normal course of business and is in compliance with all of its agreements and continues to operate as usual.

Gary Wassner, chief executive of **Hillduan Corp.**, a factor and financial corporation

based in New York, said his company continues to approve Forever 21's credit with vendors, but its credit lines are extremely limited. "We are reassessing them now," he said in an email.

In February, Forever 21 sold its L.A. headquarters building, which encompasses 2.1 million square feet, for just under \$166 million to the **Blackstone Group**. In 2010, Forever 21 bought the structure at 3880 N. Mission Road from **Macy's** for \$38 million.

Forever 21, which continues to operate out of the headquarters building it sold a few months ago, was founded in 1984 by Don Chang and his wife, Jin Sook Chang. They launched their first store in the Los Angeles suburb of Highland Park, later aggressively expanding to shopping centers across the

country. They dreamed of converting their smaller, mall-based stores into all-encompassing emporiums.

Over the years, the retail chain's stores grew in size. By 2010, it had opened a major 88,000-square-foot flagship store in the **Los Cerritos Center** shopping mall in Cerritos, Calif. The emporium had 86 fitting rooms, 24 cash registers and a staff of 263 employees.

In recent years, it launched outposts in major Chinese cities including Tianjin, Hangzhou, Beijing, Chongqing and Hong Kong, but it started shuttering those locations a few years ago.

In April, the company confirmed it was closing all of its Chinese stores after eight years of business in that country.

—Deborah Belgium

White House Announces Termination of India's GSP Status

Following the White House's removal of Turkey from the countries eligible for GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) status last month, the Trump administration declared that India has been deemed ineligible for continued inclusion as a beneficiary under the duty-free trade program.

On the GSP list since November 1975, India was the program's largest beneficiary, with \$83.2 billion in products sent to the United States during 2018, according to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

President Donald Trump said India was removed because it didn't assure that the United States had equitable and reasonable access to its markets.

The GSP was established by the Trade

Act of 1974 and went into effect Jan. 1, 1976, to aid countries located in developing regions by allowing duty-free importation of thousands of products into the United States.

Many trade experts in the United States opposed India's removal and the country benefited greatly from the program. Dan Anthony, executive director of the special-interest group **Coalition for GSP**, said, India was willing to work with the United States to avoid removal from GSP consideration.

According to Anthony, new tariffs would hurt companies in the United States that import goods from India, particularly those that have 10 to 30 employees. Anthony sees the scaling down of GSP eligibility as a harmful trend for United States businesses.

While finished apparel and many textiles don't qualify under GSP status, Anthony said there have been recent discussions to change these statutes.

"There are a number of conversations going on right now in D.C. and congressional offices about removing that prohibition on apparel and footwear," he said. "If that

comes to be and Congress passes it, India is a major supplier—you would want them in rather than out."

India's GSP status was eliminated June 5. The country is expected to implement retaliatory tariffs on products imported from the United States beginning June 16.

—Dorothy Crouch

Canadian Company to Open Several Charlotte Russe Stores

Canadian fashion company **YM Inc.** will put the young women's boutique chain **Charlotte Russe**, formerly of San Diego, back in the retail game.

On June 5, Toronto-headquartered YM Inc. announced it had opened several Charlotte Russe boutiques in U.S. malls. YM Inc. intends to roll out 100 physical stores, according to a company statement, and it opened an online store at www.charlotterusse.com on June 3, said Eric Grundy, YM Inc.'s chief executive officer.

"We are thrilled to be bringing Charlotte Russe retail outlets back for customers who love the brand's affordable, on-trend fashions," Grundy said in a statement.

Charlotte Russe shuttered its fleet of 500 stores in March.

YM Inc. acquired the Charlotte Russe brand for an undisclosed sum that same month after the long-troubled retail chain filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

YM Inc. has opened new Charlotte Russe stores in **Southland Center** in Taylor, Mich.; **Cumberland Mall** in Atlanta; **Willowbrook Mall** in Wayne, N.J.; **Park City Center** in Lancaster, Penn.; and **Monmouth Mall** in Eatontown, N.J.

YM Inc. also runs other retail chains including the action sports-focused **West 49** and **Amnesia Mode**, urban-inspired **Urban Planet**, children's shop **Urban Kids**, denim-focused **Bluenotes**, teen retailer **Stitches**, and women's fashion chains **Sirens** and **Suzy Shier**. —Andrew Asch

True Religion Names a New Interim CEO

A little more than seven months after naming an interim chief executive officer, Los Angeles denim brand **True Religion** has chosen a new interim CEO to take over as the search for a permanent CEO continues.

Replacing Chelsea Grayson, who was named True Religion's interim CEO on Nov. 1, 2018, is Farla Efros, a consultant to the company who is also president of **HRC Retail Advisory**. She will continue in her capacity as president of HRC while she takes on the duties of interim CEO. "I am honored to assume this new role," Efros said in a statement.

The announcement was made June 5 by True Religion Chairman Eugene Davis. "On behalf of True Religion, I thank Chelsea Grayson for her vision and significant contributions and wish her the very best as she moves on to new endeavors," Davis said. "At the same time, we are pleased to have Farla stepping in as interim CEO to enhance our strong team."

Grayson, who at one time was the CEO and a board member at **American Apparel**, is resigning to pursue other opportunities, the company said.



Farla Efros

True Religion was co-founded in 2002 by Jeff Lubell, who aggressively grew the company. In 2013, he sold True Religion to **TowerBrook Capital Partners** for \$835 million, but soon denim sales started to hit a downcycle.

For its fiscal year ending Jan. 28, 2017, the company's direct-to-consumer sales netted \$273 million, or nearly 74 percent of revenues. Its wholesale business in the Americas brought in \$54 million, or nearly 15 percent of revenues. For that year, the company lost \$78.5 million on \$369.5 million in revenues.

In 2017, True Religion filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy but exited a few months later.

The company said it has experienced positive comps and trends this year in direct-to-consumer and e-commerce sales and sees continued growth in international markets, including Great Britain, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Asia.

Before Grayson came on board, John Ermatinger had been the chief executive since 2015. He retired from the company last year. —D.B.



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Los Angeles Apparel Contractor Fined for Underpaying Employees

After a six-month investigation, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a nearly \$54,000 fine against a Los Angeles garment sewing contractor for underpaying 21 employees.

ESS Apparel Inc., which is owned by Young Suk Song, was charged with violating the minimum wage, overtime and recordkeeping provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

ESS Apparel did not return phone calls for a request to comment.

According to the Labor Department, ESS Apparel, located at 813 E. Slauson Ave., paid employees a flat rate for

each piece sewn without taking into consideration the number of hours they worked.

This resulted in minimum-wage violations when piece rates failed to cover all the time worked at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour and in unpaid overtime, the Labor Department said.

Also, the majority of the employees did not appear in ESS Apparel's records and were paid in cash, the government said.

The Department of Labor said ESS Apparel will pay \$53,876 to 21 employees.

"Employers must not allow unlawful labor practices that hurt hardworking employees and prevent law-abiding employers from competing on a level playing field," said Rodolfo Cortez, the Wage and Hour Division District director in San Diego, Calif.

The Department of Labor said the investigation took place from Oct. 1, 2018, to April 2, 2019. It did not say who or what tipped the department off to launch an investigation. Labor inspectors said they conduct investigations for a number of reasons, but many are initiated by complaints, which remain confidential.—*Deborah Belgium*

Following New Board Hires, The RealReal Files for an IPO

Luxury reseller **The RealReal** filed documents with the Securities and Exchange Commission to prepare for an initial public offering.

The move follows last month's appointment of four new members to its board of directors—Stefan Larsson, James (Jim) Miller, Niki Leondakis and Rob Krolik—by The RealReal's chief executive officer and founder, Julie Wainwright.

Founded in 2011, the San Francisco-based The RealReal began as an online reseller using proprietary technology but has expanded within recent years to include bricks-and-mortar locations. With its focus on selling premium goods such as apparel, accessories and footwear under an agreement

with consigners, The RealReal operates without the traditional retail risks of investing in inventory.

Revenues for the company totaled \$207.4 million in 2018, up 55 percent over 2017. Net losses for 2018 totaled nearly \$76 million, an increase from a net loss of \$52.3 million in 2017.

By selling stock, The RealReal expects to raise \$100 million and will trade on the **NASDAQ** under the symbol "REAL."

The company said it would use the money from its IPO to support operations and investment in new technology. Additionally, 1 percent of net proceeds would support its chari-

table arm, **The RealReal Foundation**.

"We intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, including working capital, operating expenses and capital expenditures," said the company in the filing. "We may also use a portion of the net proceeds to acquire, invest in or obtain rights to complementary technologies, products, services or businesses."

With 416,000 active buyers from approximately 60 countries in 2018, The RealReal stated in the SEC documents that more than 80 percent of its gross merchandise volume was traced to repeat buyers. Over the same year, The RealReal says that it has processed up to 14,000 SKUs per day.—*Dorothy Crouch*

Tinctorium *Continued from page 1*

nology is now supported by the denim industry's sustainability master. Through a network of sustainable-apparel technology professionals, Zhu and Hsu were introduced to Adriano Goldschmied, the godfather of denim, who is dedicated to creating cleaner, safer and ecologically sound denim-manufacturing practices. On May 9, he was named Tinctorium's denim innovation adviser.



Tammy Hsu and Michelle Zhu

"From the beginning of my first conversation with him, it was clear Adriano wants to do things right and he cares a lot about openness," Zhu said. "He understands the patience needed to develop a big change in technology."

For Goldschmied, who currently leads the Los Angeles-based development organization **House of Gold**, learning about Tinctorium's technology was groundbreaking. Working with science-based solutions is a shift he welcomes in his mission to clean up the denim industry.

"When I met Michelle, she explained the concept and—after half an hour—I knew I needed to join them," he said. "Our industry has not always been very scientific, but the connection with authentic research brings the industry to a different level. We live in an era where we have to contribute to fashion from the aesthetic point of view but also the substantial point of view."

Through House of Gold, Goldschmied is developing Tinctorium-dyed fabric with **Blue Diamond**, a mill located in China's Hebei province. The sustainable-denim mission he has embarked on has led Goldschmied to develop a mindset by which he believes making an impact is only possible through mass-market distribution of ecologically produced jeans.

"The final destination of this process is going to be Asia," he said. "It's a region where they produce more jeans than any other place—whether it's China, Vietnam, Bangladesh or Pakistan. It's a place where we need to be when we have



Adriano Goldschmied

an industrial solution."

By the end of June, Tinctorium will complete its demonstration day at the San Francisco science-based startup incubator called **Indie Bio**, which is similar to a graduation for the company. Within the next few months, Goldschmied said he will be ready to begin fabric testing.

"We have the capacity to produce one kilogram of indigo every two weeks. We are starting to make fabric with the dyeing process," he said. "Then we will make the first jeans with the bio indigo. It is a revolution."

Currently, the Tinctorium team is navigating the manufacturing process and anticipates its products will hit the market by 2021. Once the technology is ready, Zhu

sees adoption of Tinctorium technology by denim manufacturers as an easy transition.

"One of our advantages is that we see this as an easy plug-in solution for the supply chain," she said. "It's not something that requires a ton of additional investment into a lot of new capital and machines."

In order to maximize the reach of Tinctorium and revolutionize the way the apparel industry produces denim, Zhu hopes to begin with capsule collections through premium-denim-brand partnerships.

"We are actively looking for partnerships with brands to incorporate a more sustainable solution into their solutions," she said. "We would love to launch lines with brands who are interested in creating a more sustainable pair of jeans." ●

Cold *Continued from page 1*

end performance with same-store sales declining 6.6 percent. Sales in California, where 95 of Tilly's 228 stores are located, were particularly down, the company said.

Cold, rainy weather also hurt retailers who do not specifically cater to the beach crowd. During a conference call with analysts, Art Peck, chief executive officer and president of **Gap Inc.**, said the weather in February waterlogged some sales. "As you know, this was one of the coldest, wettest quarters in memory, and while traffic and sales trends improved as we moved through March and April, it was difficult to overcome the extremely slow business that we and others encountered in February," Peck said.

The San Francisco company reported on May 30 that net sales for the first quarter ending May 4 were down 2 percent to \$3.7 billion compared to \$3.78 billion during the same period last year.

Planalytics, Inc., a weather-business intelligence group based in the Philadelphia area, said that cold temperatures made most Southern Californians run for the coat closet to cover up. Southern California retailers selling beach and

summer clothes lost \$54 million in sales in May because of cooler conditions.

The group's research found that sales of shorts in Los Angeles were down 4 percent in May compared to the same period a year ago. The cool temperatures also put a damper on beach-style clothing. Sales of polo shirts in May were down 3 percent compared to last year.

Some retailers and brands were able to offset the cold weather by selling to travelers visiting sunny spots that weren't as cold as coastal Southern California.

LASC in West Hollywood, Calif., does big business in swimwear and shorts. Many of the retailer's customers spend the weekends in the nearby desert resort town of Palm Springs, where temperatures were in the mid-80s in April and May, said LASC co-founder Don Zuidema.

Selling clothes to party at Palm Springs-area festivals such as the **Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival** and **Stagecoach Festival** also help LASC throughout the year.

"These events and the great weather [in Palm Springs] have been helpful to keep our business relatively strong," Zuidema said.

It's a different story for LASC customers who stay in West Hollywood or hang out at the beach. "Business has softened in town. It's sort of flat," Zuidema said.

Brands such as **Outerknown** have reacted to cool weather by broadening their categories, said John Moore of the Culver City, Calif., brand, which has been focusing on manufacturing clothes you can layer.

"The fleece- and blanket-shirt programs on both sides [men's and women's categories] of our brand are really strong. It is the perfect layer for the recent weather patterns," he said.

Scott Bernhardt, Planalytics president, said that Southern California's normal run of pleasant, warm weather has spoiled the area's customers. "People are much more sensitive to small changes in weather," he said of Los Angeles shoppers. "The tiniest weather change makes a huge difference in retail."

To avoid the chill by changes in weather, Bernhardt recommended that retailers add forecasting to their set of skills. "Watch the weather," he said. "Understand that weather matters. It's not something that can be ignored." ●

Guess Sees Net Loss Even as Revenues Increase in the First Quarter

Carlos Alberini, the new chief executive of **Guess?, Inc.**, was celebrating more than four months on the job with financial news from the Los Angeles company's first quarter of 2020.

In a conference call with analysts on June 6, he said business in the Americas and Europe posted strong revenue growth but was offset by weakness in Asia during the quarter ending May 4.

"In Asia, it has become clear during the first quarter that there has been a softening in the business with lower traffic to our stores and with e-commerce," said Alberini, who left **Lucky Brand Inc.** in late January to join Guess after former CEO Victor Herrera departed.

For the first quarter, the company's revenues

were up 3 percent to \$536.7 million compared to \$521.3 million in the prior-year quarter. Net loss for the first quarter of 2020 totaled \$20.6 million versus \$21 million in the same period last year.

Sales in the Americas were the strongest of the geographic areas, with retail revenues climbing 3 percent and retail comps including e-commerce up 4 percent during the quarter.

Revenues in Europe inched up 2.2 percent, but Asia only saw sales growth of 1.4 percent. Retail comp sales including e-commerce decreased 15 percent.

Alberini talked about how the company's sourcing strategy was being affected by tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods and more threatened on apparel and footwear.

"We are taking action to mitigate poten-

tial tariffs, from cost sharing with our suppliers to shifting sourcing to other countries," he said. "We are raising prices if the product can deliver and offsetting cost increases with other cost-saving initiatives. If tariffs go up [from 10 percent] to 25 percent, the impact will be meaningful, but the situation is still fluid."

Alberini noted that the company's e-commerce sales only made up 12 percent of revenues, which is below what many other retailers are experiencing. He said best-in-class e-commerce sales for many retailers range from 30 percent to 40 percent of revenues so the company needs to improve in that area.

To better serve the **Marciano** customer with style preferences, the company is creating two design teams to manage the com-

pany's contemporary label. One is to be set up in Los Angeles for the Americas and a second team will be centered in Davos, Switzerland, for Europe.

Denim will be a focal point in this summer's marketing campaign, and there will be more denim in the stores this summer and fall. "We have a number of key products including denim, accessories, Marciano and men's," Alberini said. "We believe if there is a better assortment and better representation in stores and online we can drive sales."

In the long term, China is still considered a revenue growth area even though business has been slow there. "We have stores in only 34 of the top 60 cities in China, and 90 percent are directly operated," he noted.

—Deborah Belgium

TRADE SHOWS

Boutique Hub and Atlanta Apparel Partner on Boutique Summit in Georgia

Atlanta Apparel, the producer of the largest apparel trade show in the United States' Southeast region, is partnering with **The Boutique Hub**, the digital-media company in Chipewawa Falls, Wis., that helps boutique retailers cultivate their businesses.

Through this collaboration, the partners will host the third annual **Boutique Summit** June 9–11 at the **AmericasMart Atlanta** to support the boutique retail segment, according to Bob Maricich, chairman and chief executive of **International Market Centers** and producer of Atlanta Apparel.

"Atlanta Apparel shares a passion and a mission with The Boutique Hub to support and celebrate the independent retail commu-

nity," he said in a statement. "We are honored and privileged to host its members and partners this June and look forward to continuing to grow our relationship with this important voice in the fashion retail community."



Ashley Alderson

Preceding the June 12–15 Atlanta Apparel market, which will primarily serve as a showcase for Fall/Winter and Holiday 2019 apparel, shoes and accessories, The Boutique Summit is projected to see 800 brands, boutique owners, service providers and other professionals connected with the boutique retail community.

Founded in 2013 by Ashley Alderson, The Boutique Hub launched its Boutique Summit in 2017 at the **Dallas Market Center** and is now in Atlanta.

"We are so proud of what this event has to offer and how much our attendees are able to take away and instantly put into bettering their businesses," said Alderson, chief executive of The Boutique Hub. "The excitement and passion these individuals leave The Boutique Summit with is palpable and is what drives us to continue putting on this first-class event."

As part of the educational opportunities offered during the summit, Alderson will participate in breakout sessions and advise attendees on topics including "The Content Sanity Plan: Getting the Most Out of Your Time & Marketing Content" and "What Does the Future of Boutique Retail Hold? The Vision for 2020."

In addition to breakout sessions that will feature input from boutique owners, including Nadia Martinez of San Diego-based **Kallie & Co.** and Shannon Burns of San

Bernadino, Calif.'s **Layered by Cake**, the event will also provide guidance from speakers whose companies provide solutions for managing retail operations.

Shahrooz Kohan, partner and chief executive of the Los Angeles-based business-enterprise software provider **AIMS360**, will lead a technology session covering "How to Expand Your Business From Retail to Both Retail & Wholesale," and Baskar Agneeswaran, owner of the Walnut, Calif., e-commerce application company **Vajro**, will discuss "Understanding Your Digital Data: Analytics in Mobile Apps."

The event begins the evening of June 9 with a VIP welcome party followed by mentor roundtables. While the event will be held at the AmericasMart Atlanta, digital registration to view The Boutique Summit remotely is also available.—Dorothy Crouch

OBITUARY

Carolyn Ajavananda, Designer at Maggie Barry

Following a long illness, Carolyn Ajavananda, a designer at **Maggie Barry Company**, passed away on June 3 after succumbing to complications from a stroke. She was 55.

Sister to designer Maggie Barry, Ajavananda was an accomplished graphic artist and patternmaker, which allowed her to flourish as an integral member of the team at her older sister's company, which encompasses a custom-clothing line and fashion-and-costume-design venture.

"She was a talented, strong woman and passionate about her work in fashion," Barry said. "She worked with so many shows behind the scenes. You see people wearing clothes and don't realize the time and work from the soldiers behind the glamour. She made a lot of people look fabulous, but she led a very simple life."

Ajavananda was born on Jan. 6, 1964, in Rochester, N.Y., a twin to her sister Marilyn. The artist moved to Los Angeles nearly 30 years ago at the request of her older sister, Maggie, who offered her a job at her company. Ajavananda worked as a graphic artist, patternmaker and co-designer while also overseeing the production side of the Maggie Barry business.

Passionate about her work, Ajavananda's

career spanned fashion and costume design for different forms of media and entertainment, from television to music. She worked with performers including Cher, **Van Halen** and **LMFAO**. Referring to Ajavananda as "one of the best patternmakers in the industry," Barry recalled the dedication her sister

applied to her work—especially during sleepless nights and on tight deadlines—through a story involving a costume created for Lady Gaga.

"Carolyn stayed up all night gluing Lady Gaga's jewels on her mermaid dress. You had to apply one pink, one blue, one pink, one blue and after 20 tubes of glue it becomes one blue, one blue, one pink, one blue," she said. "She called it 'wabu sabi,'

which in Japanese means 'imperfections are beautiful.' We lived by that."

Ajavananda was preceded in death by her father, Vithya, and sister Melissa. In addition to her sisters Maggie and Marilyn, Ajavananda is survived by her mother, Carol, and additional siblings Kimberly, Rebecca and Vithya Jr.

She was a beloved aunt to Barry's children, Lillie May and Maverick Mudge. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Ajavananda's name to **National Public Radio** in honor of her patronage of the media outlet.—Dorothy Crouch



Carolyn Ajavananda, right, with Maggie Barry

Calendar

June 8

New York Denim Days
Pier 36 Basketball City
New York
Through June 9

London Fashion Week Men's
Store Studios
London
Through June 10

June 9

Accessorie Circuit
Accessories The Show
Fame
Moda
NY Women's
[Pre] Coterie
Javits Center
New York
Through June 11

The Trends Show

Mesa Convention Center
Mesa, Ariz.
Through June 11

June 10

OffPrice
Penn Plaza Pavilion
New York
Through June 11

June 11

CALA
Fort Mason Center
San Francisco
Through June 12

WWSRA Intermountain Summer Preview
Utah State Fairpark
Salt Lake City
Through June 13

Pitti Immagine Uomo
Fortezza da Basso
Florence, Italy
Through June 14

June 12

Kingpins
Pier 36 Basketball City
New York
Through June 13

Atlanta Apparel
AmericasMart
Atlanta
Through June 15

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.

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Montana's Past, Present and Future Is Female

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Jill Roberts opened her first self-named boutique 24 years ago on Montana Avenue in Santa Monica, Calif.

While the business of retail has gone through big changes over the past two decades, she said that Montana Avenue has remained the same place it was when she opened during the Clinton administration and has remained a hub for independent women's specialty boutiques.

Over the past few decades, larger specialty-retail chain stores have moved onto the 11-block district. But these retailers, including **Planet Blue**, **Sweaty Betty**, **Chico's** and **Splendid**, did not change the look nor feel of the area, Roberts said. "It's a tree-lined block. Women push strollers on the sidewalk. What could be better?" she said.

About 29 Montana Avenue boutiques sell women's fashions. Only a couple of shops, such as **Enda King**, sell men's styles. Independent boutique **Femelle** opened at 1627 Montana Ave.

in July. Owner Brooke Feder said the street gets good foot traffic with the great majority of shoppers being locals who enjoy the thoroughfare.

The mere fact that Montana Avenue is a busy pedestrian shopping district in a car-obsessed Los Angeles makes it unique, said Melissa Selbert, vice president of merchandising at Planet Blue. "They want the boutique feeling," Selbert said of the Montana shopper. "It is what we pride ourselves on. It is the experience we serve."

Femelle

1627 Montana Ave., Suite B
www.shopfemelle.com

Brooke Feder chose to open on Montana Avenue because she thought her retail concept fit in with the neighborhood. "I also wanted to fill a gap," she said. She felt there were no boutiques selling clothes at a mid-range level. Femelle is a shop where the clothes are not expensive but not cheap either.

Femelle is Feder's first retail venture. Previously she worked as a stylist. The boutique's merchandise is a mix of Los Angeles and Los Angeles-friendly styles designed in Australia. The shop also stocks brands that she finds on shopping trips to France.

Top-selling items include the Carmen ruffle dress by **Robert Rodriguez**, which retails for \$535. Another popular item is the Plaza dress from **BA&SH** featuring ethnic-style embroidery and retailing for \$315.

Australian brand **Camilla and Marc**'s Peyton deep-V blouse retails for \$420 and features ruched sleeves and floral fabric. Another Australian brand that is popular is **Stevie May**, whose lacy Aralia top retails for \$220.



BA&SH



Robert Rodriguez



Camilla and Marc



Jill Roberts

920 Montana Ave.
www.jillroberts.com

After serving the Montana Avenue woman for 24 years, Roberts knows this woman has a specific look. "It's jeans, tees and cashmere sweaters. It's nothing too fancy," she said.

The top-selling items reflect the neighborhood's sartorial point of view. A cashmere sweater from the boutique's self-named **Jill Roberts** brand is popular, coming in two styles and selling for \$300.



Jill Roberts cashmere



Freecity

A sweatpant is another sought-after item. A hot brand is Los Angeles-headquartered **Freecity**, whose Super Fluff OG sweatpant is inspired by the first sweatpants distributed by the brand. It retails for \$172. The **Ulla Johnson** brand's dresses have been selling well, with prices ranging from \$295 to \$795.

In March, Jill Roberts released **Honorine**, a resort lifestyle collection of linen sundresses and gauze beach covers, which retail from \$275 to \$425.

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WHAT'S CHECKING

Only Hearts

1407 Montana Ave.
www.onlyhearts.com



The Only Hearts boutique is one of Montana's veteran shops, with the lingerie-focused brand celebrating 30 years on the avenue this year. For the past 24 years, Lisa Fremont has been the store's manager and buyer.

For all those years, Only Hearts has been an advocate of "inner/outerwear," or lingerie that can be worn as a fashion statement. Certain lingerie pieces can be worn as a top.

In 2016, Kendall Jenner was photographed wearing Only Hearts' Second Skin bodysuit as

a top, which continues to be a bestseller for women wearing it as a top or underneath a dress. It retails for \$52.

Lingerie and pajamas made out of organic cotton are big sellers, with an organic-cotton pajama set retailing for \$141.

Another brisk-selling item is the Chemette slip, which retails for \$140. The lacy slip falls to the thigh and has adjustable straps.

One of the most popular items in the store is the brand's racer-back bralette, which retails for \$45 and is often worn when women practice yoga or exercise at the gym.



Chemette slip



Organic cotton



Racer-back bralette



Second Skin

Planet Blue

800 14th St.
www.shopplanetblue.com



Montana Avenue has the reputation of being a street where mothers shop with their daughters, said Melissa Selbert, Planet Blue's merchandising vice president. The 3,580-square-foot shop opened in 2004 and makes it a point to offer something for every age group.

A popular look for younger women is the Sexpot minidress by Planet Blue's **Blue Life** label. It retails for \$150. It is a must-have among the festival crowd and it's popular for cocktails, too.

For a woman who doesn't want to show too much skin, another top seller is Blue Life's Baylee dress, retailing for \$196. It features a leopard print with **Lurex** metallic thread running through the pattern.

Blue Life's Coda shirtdress is easy to wear and retails for \$191. It also works well with the neighborhood's style. "It's important to have a mixture in the store. There are things that are bold and things that you don't have to think too much about," Selbert said.

The animal-print trend continues with another popular item, the **Sundry** label's leopard-print drape top, which retails for \$118, and the matching leopard-print pant, which retails for \$128.

Agolde's high-waisted Jaden denim cut-off short has been popular and retails for \$128. It features distressed fabric and a vintage wash that make it look well worn. Another sought-after piece is Agolde's Zephyr high-rise denim pant, which features hems cropped above the ankle. It retails for \$198.



Sundry



Agolde's Zephyr



Blue Life minidress



Baylee dress



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TRADE SHOWS

Second Apparel Textile Sourcing Show in Miami Attracts Larger Crowd

By Nicole Martinez Contributing Writer

Now celebrating its second year in Miami, the **Apparel Textile Sourcing** trade show ran at the **Mana Wynwood Convention Center** May 28–30 with a surge in new visitors and exhibitors.

With an opportunity to learn about innovative technology equipment and software, production and storefront accessories, textiles and ready-to-wear garments, ATS is gaining traction after it launched similar trade shows in Canada and Germany.

“We have more than triple the attendees since last year. I think there are about 1,500 people in this room right now,” said Jason Prescott, chief executive of **Manufacturer.com**, which organizes the ATS Miami trade show.

“On the exhibitor floor, we’re seeing the emergence of the Americas as a major player in the apparel space, with Haitian and Colombian exhibitors. This is also the first trade show ever with a Ghana pavilion.”

According to Darrell Botts, sales director of Manufac-

ica, which is an area I was really targeting.”

However, Saif Rahman, chief executive of the New York-based **T & S Apparel**, was underwhelmed by the foot traffic and didn’t connect with buyers and manufacturers from the Americas. “I thought I would be able to meet more Latin American companies, but I’m a little disappointed,” he said. “This is quite a small show—nothing compared to those I’ve attended in Las Vegas.”

Greg Thompson, a vice president at **Nanchang Steadfast Garments Co. Ltd.**, was also disappointed that the majority of attendees appeared to be small to startup-sized companies. “There’s been a fair amount of traffic, but I’m finding that most people here are startups from Miami,” he said. “I was cu-



rious to see whether they would be able to attract Central and South American buyers to the show. Regardless, I’m pleased with the exposure and marketing they’ve put into it.”

Other exhibitors and attendees, however, remained optimistic about the show and what it can bring to the area’s local fashion scene.

“This year’s show

is definitely better because of the size and variety,” said Jill Odermann, chief executive of sourcing firm **Miafashi LLC** and a 20-year veteran of the apparel industry. “I think last year was more focused on the global supply chain; this year you have a lot of exhibitors willing to do small minimums.”

Philomena Appiah, chief executive of **Global Garments & Textiles Ltd.**, a ready-to-wear garment manufacturer in Ghana, was pleased with both the sales-floor activity and the types of buyers she was encountering. “I wanted to connect with Latin American buyers, and I’ve written a few orders so far,” she said. “I usually go to Las Vegas but thought this would be a good change, and my sales have already offset the costs of being here.” ●

turer.com, an influx in Ghanaian, Indian and Bangladeshi exhibitors may be related to the current trade war between the U.S. and China. “While China’s strong manufacturing industry has certainly absorbed the effects of U.S. policy toward China, it’s also presented a lot of benefits to businesses in other countries,” he said.

Notably, the vast majority of exhibitors at ATS Miami were from China, signaling the continued health of its industry.

The trade show is positioned to attract buyers from Central and South America and the Caribbean. Connecting with this demographic of buyers was the primary motivator for attending the ATS Miami show.

Guisepppe Cianci, chief operating officer of **Bierrebi International**, exhibited an enormous cutting machine called Crystal, which rapidly cuts fabric with a patented energy-saving technology. “I decided to attend the show because it’s the best opportunity to showcase our technology before sourcing companies that provide prototype and sampling services,” he said. “I’ve met a lot of buyers from Latin Amer-



EVENTS

Black & White Ball Honors Two Outstanding Individuals at Fund-raiser

Some 450 guests gathered June 1 at the recently opened **InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown** hotel for a fund-raising event benefiting the respiratory hospital **National Jewish Health** in Denver.

This year, the **Los Angeles Professional Services Black & White Ball** event raised more than \$500,000 for the hospital, which conducts groundbreaking research to cure respiratory, cardiac, immune and related diseases.

Honorees at the event were Sydnee Breuer, executive vice president at **Rosenthal & Rosenthal**, a finance com-

pany that works with the apparel industry, and Nicholas Rozansky, an attorney with **Brutzkus Gubner Rozansky Seror Weber LLP**.

Dinner co-chairs were Gail Bernstein, **PNC Business Credit**; Robert Ezra, **Freeman Freeman & Smiley**; Ron Friedman, **Marcum LLP**; Robert Lewin, a former honoree most recently with **CIT Commercial Services**; Mark Levinson, **Thompson Coburn LLP**; and Debbie Steinberg, a former honoree when she was working at CIT Commercial Services.—*Deborah Belgum*



Richard and Maria Contino with Sydnee Breuer



Rob and Randy Greenspan and Linda and Fred Gaylord



Sunnie Kim, Yumi Yamagata and Clark Griffith



Oscar, Nick, Cathy and Sammy Rozansky



Alex Sturm, Alexandra Scoggin and John Merille



Soulville sings at the event.

NEWS

UCLA *Continued from page 1*

China, which would include apparel and footwear.

“If we didn’t have all this tariff stuff going on with Mexico, more people might be going to Mexico to produce their goods now that there are tariffs on Chinese imports,” Shulman said.

Tariffs are just one of the factors that will lead to slower economic growth in the United States in the next few years. Other ingredients affecting the mix are slower job growth and a lukewarm real-estate market. The UCLA Anderson Forecast is now predicting that the gross domestic product will rise only 2.1 percent this year compared to 3.1 percent in 2018 and taper off to 1.4 percent in 2020.

Shulman noted that when the economy slows to 1 percent growth, the risk of a recession becomes very real, with the second half of 2020 being problematic. “The stock market is worried about a recession sooner than later,” the UCLA economist said.

As the economy slows, job growth diminishes. The UCLA Anderson Forecast foresees job creation going from 220,000 jobs a month ending in April to about 130,000 jobs a month in the second half of this year and about 50,000 new jobs a month in 2020.

“It appears that the [national] unemployment rate will bottom out at April’s 3.6 percent level and remain there for about a year before rising to 4 percent in late 2020 or early 2021,” the report said.

While unemployment remains relatively low, so are interest rates. The Federal Reserve is on track to hold interest rates at their current level of 2.375 percent until the middle of 2020, when it is expected to cut rates by one-half percent as the Fed responds to a slowing economy.

Steady interest rates are benefiting the housing industry with more apartments being built as younger consumers put

off marriage and flock to urban areas where job growth is more vigorous.

In 2018, there were 375,000 multifamily units started. While that will dip to 355,000 units in 2019, it should be up to 400,000 units in 2021.

But, since 2016, individual home building has been locked in at a level that is considered below normal. On average, there are about 1.4 million to 1.5 million housing starts a year in the country. Over the last three years, housing starts have been at about 1.2 million.

Real-estate sectors not doing well include offices and retail. Currently, the national office vacancy rate stands at 16.6 percent, only modestly below the highs reached in the previous cycle and well below the 8 percent achieved in 2001.

The real driver in office vacancies can be attributed to offices occupying less space as the amount of square footage allotted to each employee declines. In years past, one employee was allotted on average 200 to 250 square feet of space. That has shrunk to around 150 square feet per employee.

Part of this is from the rapid growth of coworking spaces developed by companies such as **WeWork**. The UCLA Anderson Forecast said coworking tenants have accounted for one-third of all the office leasing in the United States for the 18-month period ending December 2018.

Because of this, short-term leases will become the normal way of doing business as companies look for more flexibility.

On the retail front, the real-estate industry is really taking a beating. This year alone, there were 5,994 store closings and 2,641 store openings, the UCLA Anderson Forecast said.

The culprit here is e-commerce, which isn’t being helped by **Amazon’s** recent announcement it will have one-day delivery available to Amazon Prime customers. “E-commerce’s share of total retail spending has advanced from 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 1999 to just under 10 percent in the fourth

quarter of 2018,” the economic forecast said.

Consequently, regional mall and shopping-center vacancy rates have remained at recession levels, standing at 9.3 percent and 10.2 percent respectively at a time when the economy is strong.

“The reason you see so much food service in malls now is there is little competition from e-commerce,” Shulman said.

California cooling

Just as the national economy will downshift, so will California’s economy.

California’s job growth is slowing primarily due to the fact that it is getting harder to find qualified new employees.

Currently, the state unemployment rate stands at 4.3 percent. That should hold fairly steady, inching up to 4.4 percent in 2020 and then rise to 4.6 percent by early 2021, wrote Jerry Nickelsburg, director of the UCLA Anderson Forecast.

Job expansion in California has been across most sectors—with growth in professional services, information, and scientific and technical services—but there has been less robust activity for nondurable goods such as apparel and retail.

Real personal-income growth in the state is forecast to grow 2.9 percent this year, 1.9 percent in 2020 and 2.1 percent in 2021, the forecast said.

Home sales in the state are behind what they were last year. In April, single-family-home sales were off by 4.8 percent over the same month last year, and condo sales were down 3.8 percent during the same period.

Housing prices were declining but have reversed their slide with the exception of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Still, builders are cautious at the moment. The number of permits issued during the three months ending April 2019 dipped 20.5 percent from last year. ●

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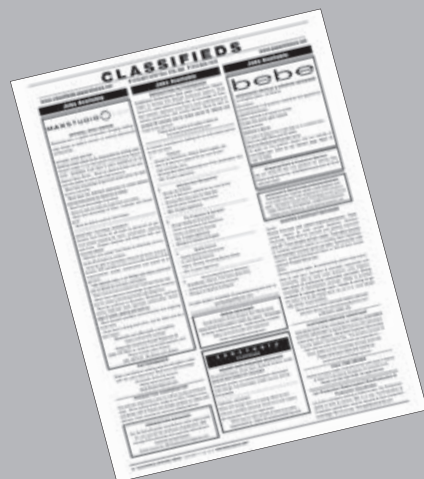
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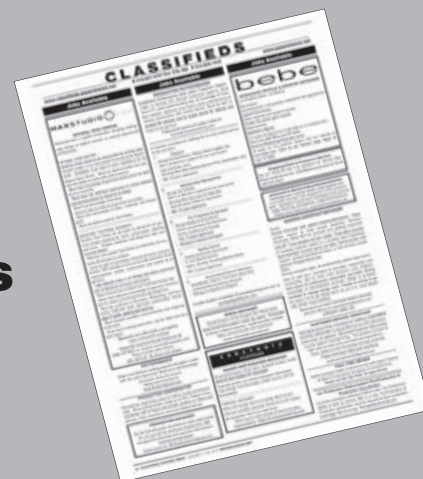
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