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PHOTO COURTESY OF MONIQUE LHUILLIER

ITALIAN INFUSION

For Spring 2020, Los Angeles designer Monique Lhuillier traveled to northern Italy and Lake Como for a setting that influenced this season's collection. For more looks, see pages 6 and 7.

RETAIL

E-commerce Brands Find Value in a Jump to Bricks-and-Mortar

By Dorothy Crouch *Associate Editor*

The move into bricks-and-mortar is becoming a sign of growth for smaller e-commerce brands such as Santa Barbara, Calif.-headquartered **Catherine Gee**, a womenswear brand that on July 1 launched a boutique shop located next to **The Mill** on the city's burgeoning East Haley Street.

According to Marshal Cohen, chief industry advisor of **The NPD Group, Inc.**, this trend from e-commerce into bricks-and-mortar is gaining traction due to the maturation of online retail, a need for internet brands to fully infiltrate the market and the importance of experiential shopping.

"Online retailers are now saying 'We have to change the way we bring product to market,' which opens up the opportunity to sell through traditional retail," he explained. "In reality, touch and feel are important, particularly in fashion."

Catherine Gee's eponymous label enjoyed an e-commerce
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TECHNOLOGY

Fast Retailing Is Treating Denim Jeans in Southern California With Water-Saving Techniques

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Fast Retailing, the Japanese parent company of **Uniqlo**, recently launched its Southern California denim innovation center to announce it is very close to eliminating the use of water from its denim-treatment process.

The \$19 billion company showed off its **Fast Retailing Jeans Innovation Center** in Gardena, Calif., next door to the Japanese-owned **Caitac Garment Processing** location, which has been washing jeans for local denim manufacturers for years.

It was nearly three years ago that Fast Retailing started the center in Los Angeles to reduce water usage because L.A. is the center of the denim world. "If we had built this center in Tokyo, it would have been too influenced by vintage. If we had done it in Europe, it would have been too influenced by fashion. Here in L.A. it's a mix of all cultures. Jeans originated here," said Masaaki Matsubara, chief operating officer of the Jeans Innovation Center.

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INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Influential West Hollywood Shop LASC to Close

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

After a nearly four-decade run, LASC announced it will be closing its 4,000-square-foot bricks-and-mortar operation on the 8500 block of Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood, Calif.

For years, the store was an influential player in the men's denim and swimwear game as well as a community hub for the area. The store was famous for its annual L.A. Pride and Halloween parties, attracting hundreds of people to the building's rooftop.

Co-founder Don Zuidema said the business he ran with Mike McGinley and Alfredo Izaguirre was doing well financially, but their lease is scheduled to run out in August. A new lease would have seen a rent increase that Zuidema wouldn't detail and the cost of business is too expensive.

"We feel like we are going out at a good time. Business has been decent. We are going out on our terms," Zuidema said. "It comes down to the cost of doing business—rents, overhead and employee costs made the business model tougher for bricks-and-mortar."



LASC, which stands for **Los Angeles Sporting Club**, also manufactures and wholesales an activewear and swimwear line also called LASC. It is sold on the store's e-commerce channel, www.shoplasc.com, and at more than 40 retailers. Zuidema said that no decision has been made on the future of the LASC clothing line but shoplasc.com will remain active.

A liquidation sale for the bricks-and-mortar shop started on July 11, and the store is expected to close at the end of August.

Zuidema did not know who would be

moving into the LASC space, which is housed in a compound where an extensive construction project will be wrapped up at the end of July. A **Sprouts Farmers Market** will open on July 31 in the building adjacent to LASC.

News of the store's closing was a shock to LASC vendors such as **Parke & Ronen**. "LASC was the store

for our demographic to be in," said Ronen Jehezkel, co-founder of the New York-headquartered men's collection. "Emotionally, this is sad. I was hoping that someone would buy them out and the legend would continue."

Jehezkel forecast that the business lost from LASC's closing would be balanced by customers shopping for fashions at the Parke & Ronen e-commerce site, parkeandronen.com.

Parke & Ronen had a Los Angeles store from 2007 to 2014, but Jehezkel said that the boutique business is tough in the Los Angeles area. "L.A. has a serious issue with retail.

There is no foot traffic, and where there is no foot traffic it is hard to survive unless you are using the store as a marketing tool."

LASC started as a shop devoted to gym wear and swimwear. When Izaguirre joined in 1998, the shop branched out into premium denim, casual clothes and some high-end looks. Along with Parke & Ronen, LASC devoted a lot of store space to brands like **Diesel**, **G-Star** and **Scotch & Soda**.

The store opened a year before West Hollywood incorporated into a city and became a refuge as well as a capital for the LGBTQ crowd. LASC grew up with the city, said John Heilman, a West Hollywood city councilmember who served on the town's inaugural city council.

"It has been much more than a clothing store," Heilman said. "It has been a center and gathering place for members of the LGBTQ community. The owners of the store have been leaders in our business community and proud supporters of so many organizations and causes in West Hollywood. We will miss the store, but I know the owners will continue to be involved in our community." ●

Obituary

Stan Tendler, Founder of Kennington Men's Shirts

Stan Tendler, the founder of the men's shirting brand **Kennington Ltd.** and a charter member of the **MAGIC** trade show, died of esophageal cancer at his Los Angeles home on July 1 at the age of 88, said his son,

Lance Tendler.

Stan Tendler built a multimillion-dollar business with the shirting company he started in his apartment in 1957, developing a reputation for weaving Southern California

style into Oxford shirts.

The company grew, and he later expanded into real estate, mortgage banking and the hospitality industry. By the late 1970s, the company's annual revenues were more than \$100 million.

"Apparel was the only business my dad ever cared about," Lance said. "My dad's eyes glazed over if it wasn't about shirts."

Born on Aug. 30, 1930, in Staten Island, N.Y., he and his family later moved to Los Angeles, where he attended Hamilton and Fairfax high schools.

Shortly after high school, Tendler joined the Air Force for four years and served in the Korean War as a staff sergeant in the office corps. "He joked that he won the war with his typewriter," Lance said.

Stan Tendler met his wife, Audri, in 1955 and married her that same year.

Tendler always wanted to run his own business and saw an opportunity in the fashion world. He got a \$6,000 loan from a grandfather. To name the company, his sister picked out the name Kennington by looking at a map of England. He liked the name because he thought it had an established, old-money sensibility. "It was ironic because they were selling something that was new and different," Lance said.

When Tendler started his business, mainstream men's shirting had an Ivy League sensibility. But Tendler wanted to experiment with the look. He designed shirts with colorful prints and made slimmer silhouettes. The brand was a success. Later, he took on Lee Condon as a business partner and they worked together for decades. Condon handled production and Tendler handled design and sales.

Long before the current craze in collaborations, Tendler had a knack for forging creative partnerships. In the late 1960s, Kennington sponsored the **Malibu Surf Club** and associated the shirt with the surfing world.

He also had a license with **The Walt Disney Company**, whereby he put prints of Disney cartoon characters into his woven shirts. "He was just putting an adventurous

spin on traditional styles," Lance said. "My dad was not afraid. He did things on a hunch. He worked long before market research became a big deal."

The brand experimented with different styles, including the body-hugging polyester



Lee Condon, left, and Stan Tendler in a 1963 photo.

shirts of the mid-1970s. But it never stopped producing collared print shirts, which the company continues to make.

Tendler also was active in the apparel business community. For a year he served as president of the **Men's Apparel Guild in California (MAGIC)** when the trade show produced events in Los Angeles and Palm Springs, Calif.

Tendler was part of the group that urged the organization's move to Las Vegas to attract buyers from outside of California. MAGIC started producing Las Vegas trade shows in the 1980s.

The Kennington brand was inactive from 2010 until it was relaunched in 2013. In 2018, the brand name was licensed to Alan Walters, who had been a longtime associate of the label.

Tendler is survived by his wife, Audri, son and daughter-in-law Lance and Karyn, daughter Bettina O'Mara, and four grandchildren.

Services were held July 3 at **Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary** in Culver City, Calif.—A.A.



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Alchemist Launches Center to Grow L.A. Apparel Industry and Cultivate Cannabis

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

With his sights set on the future of using hemp in a variety of goods, **James Jeans** founder James Chung unveiled one of the first fully licensed and legal cannabis-cultivation facilities in Los Angeles, which he is opening with college friend Conrad Yun.

Several years ago, Chung began studying hemp's various uses, which number more than 50,000, eventually leading him to partner with Yun to launch premium-denim and apparel brand **Alchemist Los Angeles**.

"In Chinese medicine, we've been using hemp since 2,737 B.C.," Chung explained. "If you look at our logo, it says, 'Established 2,737 B.C.' That is nearly 5,000 years that Chinese medicine has been using it. Seven years ago, I started to examine it and learned that hemp had a bad rap all this time. The plant isn't used only to get high."

Cultivating industrial hemp crops to create fabrics is one of the most traditional—and sustainable—resources for clothing manufacturing. Colonial-era farmers in the United States raised the crop, as did such notable figures as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Betsy Ross.

"Hemp was 30 percent of American agriculture before cultivation became illegal in 1937," Yun said. "We looked at hemp to create a lot of different materials as regulations have been evolving over time. The [Agricultural Act of 2014] allowed it to be used for research purposes. With the Farm Bill of 2018, the floodgates opened for the federal opportunity."

From friendship to farm

As students at **Harvard University** followed by the **University of Chicago Law School**, Chung and Yun first became friends in 1989. With Chung as Alchemist chairman, chief executive and founder, and Yun as the vice chairman and co-founder, the duo launched the company in Los Angeles in 2017 following the recreational legalization of marijuana in California in 2016.

"The long-term goal is to be fully sustainable. The hemp stalk has cellulose, which you can turn into plastic and apparel," Yun said. "The agriculture industry is really suffering right now due to trade wars. China isn't buying our products, and there is flooding in the Midwest. We want to revitalize American agriculture through the use of hemp."

The two began building a state-of-the-art cultivation facility using laboratory-grade inner panels, an antibacterial floor coating, cross-redundant HVAC systems, efficient Octo LED lights and wireless integrated environmental controls. Due to stringent contamination controls within the rooms where the plants are grown, the crop is pesticide-free.

The finished space resembles a medical laboratory rather than a sketchy grow house, and the business partners are intent on shifting the perception of hemp cultivation away from the bad reputation it has had for the last 80 years.



Models wearing Alchemist apparel



"The beauty of the material is that it's extremely sustainable. It's light and has a low-carbon footprint, in addition to using 85 percent less water than cotton," Yun said. "This is an opportunity for us to showcase this for the entire country. People have been conflating hemp and [marijuana] for so long, and they don't know the difference."

Despite their cultivation from the same plant, there exists a considerable difference between hemp and marijuana, mainly their abilities—or lack thereof—to create a psychoactive effect. The strain of cannabis that yields a higher measurement of tetrahydrocannabinol, commonly known as THC, can produce a high. Industrial-hemp strains produce lower amounts of THC, the current legal measurement of which is .3 percent or lower by law in the United States.

Adding hemp into apparel

Currently, Alchemist sources its hemp from China, and it is then spun into a blended yarn in Georgia. The company's fabrics and apparel are manufactured in Los Angeles. After the

opening of the Los Angeles cultivation center and with more than 300 acres of land in Palmdale, Calif., Chung and Yun are looking to scale their business into a completely U.S.-based operation while they examine ways to incorporate more hemp into their goods.

"We're not saying we're 100 percent hemp—we're hemp incorporated," Chung said. "There are styles in which the fabric might not have hemp, but what about the stitching, labels, or accessories? Sometimes an undertaking seems too monumental, but I like to focus on baby steps toward sustainability."

With **Father's Daughter** co-founder Su Kim as their senior designer, Chung and Yun have created a vertical model for cultivating cannabis products, from its luxury denim and apparel to CBD-infused lifestyle products. Alchemist launched its apparel line with women's denim, T-shirts and hemp-linen button-up shirting.

"The shirting reminds me of the original idea of hemp clothing—very blousy," Kim said. "We'll expand that fabrication into drawstring shorts, a shorter sleeved top and a dress."

This expansion will take place next month, in addition to more growth in the works for Alchemist's apparel offerings. This August, the company plans to enter into a basics category that Kim refers to as "hemp leisure."

"We're trying to expand into men's with a basic athleisure collection," Kim said. "For now, it would be the basic Los Angeles uniform—unisex

T-shirts, crew necks and V-necks. We'll adjust it to be a converted style, the same pattern but cropped so it will be a fluid production."

Available through its e-commerce site, *Alchemistla.com*, Alchemist is remaining selective when considering wholesale partners. Women's denim is retail priced from \$160 to \$194 and sized 24–32 or 34, depending on the style. Shirts are available in sizes XS–L, with T-shirts retailing for \$68 to \$79 and the button-up style available for \$172.

The Alchemist team is not only intent on growing the American agricultural hemp business but also the local Los Angeles apparel industry. By maintaining an executive space in Koreatown and launching its cannabis-cultivation center in Boyle Heights, the company wants to create jobs for the local community to thrive.

"We're trying to keep as much as possible in Los Angeles to help revitalize the garment industry," Yun said. "One of our core values is sustainability, and there are two aspects: environmental and human sustainability—making communities self-sustainable and self-sufficient." ●

Levi Strauss & Co. Sees Revenues Rise in Second Quarter

By Deborah Belgum Executive Editor

Levi Strauss & Co. reported that second-quarter revenues were up across all brands, regions and key product categories with sales rising 5 percent to \$1.3 billion.

However, because of costs associated with the company going public earlier this year and being listed on the **New York Stock Exchange**, net income declined 63 percent to \$29 million. This was due primarily to \$29 million in costs associated with the company's initial public offering in March and \$25 million in underwriting commissions paid on behalf of selling stockholders.

The San Francisco denim company known for its Levi's 501 jeans has been on a diversification plan to expand its product categories and offerings for its various brands, which include **Dockers**, **Denizen** and **Signature for Levi Strauss**. One of those initiatives has been to expand the women's apparel business.

While the men's business grew 6 percent, sales in women's merchandise rose 16 percent for the second quarter ending May 26. "The high-rise jean has fueled growth [in women's] and fueled the tops business," said Chip Bergh, president and chief executive officer during the company's earnings conference July 9.

He noted that Levi's 501 cut-off shorts did well at the recent **Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival**. "We dominated Coachella with the 501 cut-off shorts, with sales up 50

percent during the quarter," Bergh said.

Sales during the second quarter were up in all geographic regions. The Americas, which accounts for about half of the company's revenues, saw its sales inch up 3 percent to \$693 million. Europe's sales were up 9 percent to \$398 million. Asia saw its sales move up 6 percent to \$222 million.

International sales now make up 58 percent of business, said Levi's Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Harmit Singh, while direct-to-consumer sales account for 39 percent of revenues. The company had 78 more stores in the second quarter than during the same time last year.

China is still proving to be a challenge, although sales were up 3 percent during the second quarter. Levi Strauss has been closing some underperforming franchise stores while sales at company-owned outposts have been doing well. "We have been growing there in the last couple of years, but it is a bit of a heavy lift," Bergh said, noting that Levi's should see accelerated growth in the next 12 months after executives met in Hong Kong and strategized about boosting sales. "We have to optimize our franchise partners, and we have some doors to clean up, but we are focused on building the right kind of doors," Bergh said.

The CEO added that he has seen no Chinese consumer backlash against American brands even though trade issues between the U.S. and China are tense as the Trump administration threatens to impose tariffs on almost all Chinese goods imported into the United States.

This year, Levi's has become much more sustainable

by finishing its blue jeans with laser technology instead of manually and using fewer chemicals. This new technique cuts finishing design and development time in half, from months to weeks. It is part of the company's Project F.L.X., or future-led execution, launched last year.

"Today, about 25 percent of Levi's denim bottoms on a global basis are finished with F.L.X.," Bergh said. "We should ramp it up to its full potential in two years."

The company also will soon be offering personalized services to customers who can create their own blue jeans using the Project F.L.X. method, with the finished product landing on consumers' doorsteps possibly in a matter of days. "This will roll out soon in the United States, and it will be premium priced," Bergh said.

Data collection is another area the company is planning to expand. "We collect a ton of data, and we have not done a lot with it," Bergh said.

The company recently hired Katia Walsh as the company's senior vice president and chief strategy and artificial intelligence officer, who came on board at the end of April. She will be translating Levi's data analytics into decisions that will drive business and promote better decision-making.

"The opportunity to leverage data is getting better and smarter in how we operate," Bergh observed.

Data can be used to dictate pricing, forecasting and determining what kind of merchandise is carried in each store and even figure out new store locations. "The opportunities," Bergh said, "are endless." ●

L.A. Fashion District Fire Destroys Three Storefronts

An all-encompassing blaze that broke out at 4:20 a.m. on July 11 destroyed two stores that occupied three spaces on Wall Street in the **Los Angeles Fashion District**.

It took 109 firefighters nearly two hours to knock out the fire, located at 1220 S. Wall St., which is owned by **G.G. World**, whose chief executive is listed as David Ju. Firefighters on the scene said the blaze is under investigation.

Hours after the incident, store owners on the block between 12th and 13th streets watched as firefighters pushed large puddles of water around mounds of debris accumulated in the street.

One burned storefront is occupied by Sunny Angels, who just moved in one week ago to the space, where he sells baptismal dresses and special-occasion dresses for girls. Angels was not at the scene, but the owner of an adjoin-

ing childrenswear store, Peter Pyun, said Angels had moved in after the blaze was **Unik**, a childrenswear store whose owner was in Vietnam. The owner's sister-in-law, Stephanie Huynh, who owns a nearby store, stood by and watched as firefighters surrounded the area in yellow tape. Huynh said her sister-in-law was informed about the blaze. The owner's children came to inspect the damage before they had to go to work in a warehouse.

The other store destroyed by the blaze was **Unik**, a childrenswear store whose owner was in Vietnam. The owner's sister-in-law, Stephanie Huynh, who owns a nearby store, stood by and watched as firefighters surrounded the area in yellow tape. Huynh said her sister-in-law was informed about the blaze. The owner's children came to inspect the damage before they had to go to work in a warehouse.

Pyun, whose boutique is called **Kiki Kids**, has only been in his space for six months. The smell of smoke permeated his merchandise



and store, which was undamaged but had no electricity. Pyun said he heard about the fire from an employee who called at 7:30 a.m. and said to turn on the TV to see the blaze. "I was shocked, just shocked," Pyun said. "I said, 'Oh

my God.'"

Hours after the blaze was extinguished, insurance adjusters were roaming up and down the sidewalks to talk to people about what had happened.—*Deborah Belgum*

Reformation Takes On New Majority Partner

Los Angeles-based sustainable women's brand **Reformation** said an investment from new partner **Permira** will help fuel international growth.

On July 10, it was announced that London-headquartered Permira took a majority stake in the women's collection, which focuses on dresses and denim. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Reformation co-founder Yael Aflalo will remain the brand's chief executive officer and a significant owner. Hali Borenstein will remain

Reformation's president.

Reformation launched in 2009 as a brand that focused on producing stylish clothes while cutting waste and pollution by using dead stock and eco fabrics in its products. Its clothing is sold through its e-commerce channel, *thereformation.com*. A couple of years ago, it started opening a number of bricks-and-mortar stores, which now number 14 in the U.S. Last year, it began wholesaling to **Nordstrom**.

Permira has invested in clothing and footwear brands including **Hugo Boss**, **Valentino**,

Dr. Martens, **Minted**, **The Knot Worldwide** and **Allegro**. "When we met with the Permira team, it was clear that they shared our commitment to sustainability and have a strong understanding of how to best navigate the complex and rapidly changing consumer market," Aflalo said in a statement. "Their partnership allows us to expand our business domestically and internationally and launch into new product categories, taking us one step closer to our mission of bringing sustainable fashion to everyone."

Stripes Group, another Reformation investor, will continue to be active in the brand's business, according to a Reformation statement.

Reformation's international growth started this week. On July 11, it opened its first store in Toronto with another location to follow this fall in London. Reformation also partnered with the e-commerce platform **Global-e** to develop its e-commerce platform to support more than 95 currencies and offer 50 alternative payment methods.—*Andrew Asch*

TAGS & LABELS

ITL Commits to Social Responsibility Through Partnership With Surfer Shaun Tomson

London-headquartered **Intelligent Label Solutions** and world-champion surfer Shaun Tomson have embarked on a common mission of goodwill. Through a new initiative, they hope to increase the quality of education and support communities around the world.

"We're so excited to partner with Shaun Tomson in support of the wonderful work he

is doing among the youth in the USA and across the world," ITL North America's senior vice president of marketing and sales, Barry Burgess, said in a statement.

The label-and-packaging manufacturer and the Santa Barbara, Calif.-based surfer, environmentalist and activist, trace their roots to South Africa and share a commit-

ment to charitable work.

"While I am impressed with ITL's environmental-sustainability mission, I am even more excited that we can work together on a social program to help important charities and young people uplift their schools and communities," Tomson said in a statement.

In addition to founding his own brands,

Instinct and **Solitude**, Tomson has worked with other apparel manufacturers including Ventura, Calif.'s **Patagonia** and O'Neill in Irvine, Calif. He hopes to work with ITL to promote ecologically sound solutions to reduce the negative environmental impact caused by certain segments of the apparel-manufacturing industry.—*Dorothy Crouch*

Talon Develops New Style of Zippers

The **Talon** zipper has been around for more than 100 years, used in military uniforms, leather jackets, denim pants, dresses, shirts and skirts.

A zipper seems like a basic thing, but **Talon International Inc.**, headquartered in Woodland Hills, Calif., has come up with a more whimsical zipper it calls the Character Zip.

It is perfect for kids who want to wear their favorite cartoon character front and center on their jackets or sports aficionados who want to display their team loyalty.

The Character Zip has its own proprietary design with the traditional zipper pull being replaced with a figure or symbol.

Talon said the product has huge market potential for toy licensing, character licensing, sports marketing and creating brand



awareness.

Talon International started out as the **Universal Fastener Co.** in Chicago in 1893. After various companies bought and sold it, **Tag-It Pacific** acquired the brand in 1996 with Tag-It changing its corporate name to Talon International in 2007.—*D.B.*

Calendar

July 12

Paraiso Trade Show/Festival
W South Beach
South Beach, Fla.
Through July 16

Miami Swim Week by Art Hearts Fashion
Faena Forum
Miami Beach, Fla.
Through July 15

Miami Swim Week powered by The Society
Nautilus
Miami Beach, Fla.
Through July 14

July 13

Cabana Miami
Collins Park
Miami Beach, Fla.
Through July 15

SwimShow
Miami Beach Convention Center
Miami Beach, Fla.
Through July 16

Hammock
Hotel South Beach
South Beach, Fla.
Through July 15

Capsule Miami Beach
Miami Beach Convention Center

Miami Beach, Fla.
Through July 15
DestinationMiami
Faena Forum
Miami Beach, Fla.
Through July 16

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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A Touch of Italy in Monique Lhuillier Collection

Los Angeles designer Monique Lhuillier looked to the regal touches of Italian nobility for her Spring 2020 collection, which is infused with jewel tones, metallic brocade fabric, decadent beading, artisanal pleating and flowing gowns.

To make a statement, there are dramatic silhouettes with billows of fabric and infinite trains that give an elegant vibe to eveningwear that evokes a palatial scene. Fresh, printed floral dresses sit next to structured and architecturally designed faille gowns.

Jumpsuits are a staple of the collection, which harkens back to the 1970s for pleated crêpe jumpsuits, a white draped suiting with a long top that ties at the side and is paired with palazzo pants, as well as a printed jacquard suit.

The jewel-tone palette includes aquamarine, zircon, amber and burnt sienna to create a patch of femininity. Printed floral dresses take a stand.—*Deborah Belqum*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MONIQUE LHUILLIER



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New Lines
Texworld Wrap
Premiere Vision Wrap
Industry Focus: Finance

AUGUST 2
Cover: Runway
LA Market Wrap

AUGUST 9
Cover: Fashion
Technology
Denim
Made in America
Active Collective Coverage
Swim Collective Coverage

Fashion Advertorial
SOURCING & FABRIC SPECIAL SECTION WITH TECH
Sourcing Advertorial
Fabric & Trim Advertorial
Technology Advertorial

SUPPLY CHAIN WITH TECH
Fashion Advertorial
Made in America Advertorial
Denim Advertorial
Supply Chain Advertorial
Technology Advertorial
Finance Advertorial

Bonus Distribution
OffPrice Show 8/10-13
Agenda LV 8/12-14
CurveNV 8/12-14
Liberty Fairs LV 8/12-14
POOL 8/12-14
Project 8/12-14
Project Women's 8/12-14
Sourcing@MAGIC 8/12-14
Stitch LV 8/12-14
WWD@MAGIC 8/12-14
WWIN 8/12-15
NW Materials Show 8/14-15
Fashion Market Northern California 8/18-20

Bonus Distribution
OffPrice Show 8/10-13
Agenda LV 8/12-14
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Happy Socks Treads Into the Swimwear World

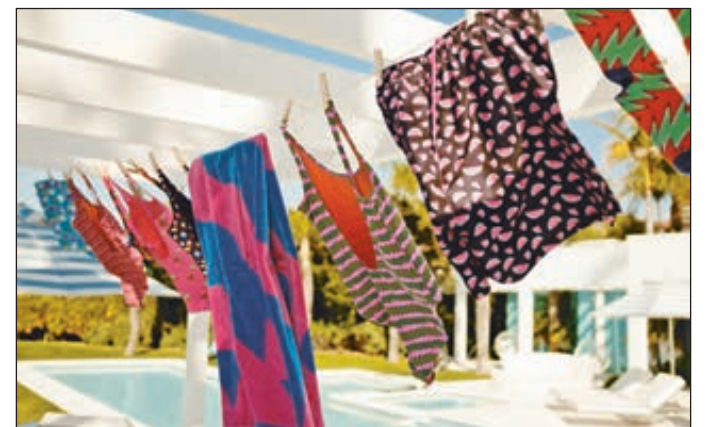
More than a decade ago, a Swedish advertising executive and an illustrator banded together in Stockholm to start **Happy Socks** with the goal to make the world a happier place with some crazy-looking socks with colorful prints.

Since that fortuitous beginning in 2008 between Mikael Söderlindh and Viktor Tell, the company has manufactured more than 40 million socks and seen its annual revenues climb to over \$100 million.

The fast-growing company now occupies a six-story building called the Happy House in the heart of Stockholm and has more than 100 stores around the world. The second

are manufactured in China with the men's trunks made of 100 percent polyester and the women's bathing suits made of polyester, polyamide and elastane.

Women's suits retail for \$75, and men's swimwear prices range from \$65 to \$75, depending on the trunk length.



Happy Socks store in Los Angeles opened in May in the Silver Lake area.

With so much going on, who would have thought that a company that started out covering your toes would decide to dip its sock-clad feet into the swimwear world? But that is exactly what Happy Socks has done. In April, Happy Socks released a collection of men's and women's swimwear in limited silhouettes made of the same Happy Socks prints found on your feet.

"This seemed like a big step for us, but it felt fairly natural," said Carin Gunnstam, the company's chief merchandising officer. "It partly comes from the fact that a lot of our fans have been asking for swimwear for a long time."

The current collection launched in April with just one silhouette for women, a one-piece suit with a scooped neckline that comes in eight different prints, and two silhouettes for men, swim trunks in two lengths.

Happy Socks has one in-house print designer creating all the swimwear and an in-house product developer. All the swimsuits

To inject a bit of fun into the new swimwear launch, Happy Socks teamed up with actor David Hasselhoff for a photo and video shoot in Malibu, Calif., where they had the former "Baywatch" star bobbing in an inner tube in a pool in his Happy Socks trunks, washing his car in his trunks, slipping by the pool in his pink Happy Socks trunks, practicing some operatic vocals and doing high-kick karate moves for a promo called "Hoff's Day Off."

The idea is to appeal to the company's demographic, which falls between the ages of 20 and 40. "Our brand's mission is about spreading happiness to every corner of the world," Gunnstam said. "That excitement extends to making people happy on the beach."—*Deborah Belgum*



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Retail *Continued from page 1*

presence on her website and partnerships with a handful of retailers. After securing 50 new doors at the beginning of 2019 and receiving attention from major wholesale accounts, Gee decided to enter the bricks-and-mortar space with her own boutique.

“The business has to rely on wholesale. While we’ve been building that aspect, our e-commerce has been picking up, but I learn the most and understand who my woman is when I face direct-to-consumer clients,” she said. “For us to jump into bricks-and-mortar, you have to create an experience that is memorable, with quality products.”

For Gee, building her retail space included growing her brand as well. While she relied on a Mediterranean and Santa Barbara aesthetic during her e-commerce days, she is expanding her designs while maintaining her core elements.

“We’ve expanded from resort into more ready-to-wear,” she said. “A lot of people don’t like to wear silk blouses, so a high-quality Pima-cotton T-shirt allows you to be casual, which I want to infuse into our elevated styles. We’re also doing some cotton-twill trousers and denim out of Lima—it’s very different, but it’s still a made-in-L.A. brand.”

In addition to selling her own brand, Gee is partnering with other luxurious lines that share her brand’s values and commitment to quality. One of those partners is Los Angeles luxury handbag brand **Altaire**, which Gee discovered through **Instagram**.

Gee approached Altaire’s owner, Kayla Schwartz, to enter into a wholesale partnership. The handbag designer has relied on e-commerce through her own website and was picked up by online retailer **Shopbop** in April. But she wants to maintain a small presence in bricks-and-mortar.

“I want to keep it exclusive regarding the store presence and extremely selective,” she said. “Working with another female designer who also manufactures in Los Angeles and to be featured through another channel is great.”

For her launch, Gee blended her social-media sourcing with a more traditional approach to partnerships. Working with Sonia De Mello of fellow Santa Barbara, Calif., brand **So De Mel**, a



BRENT HOLLAND

Amy Waltz handwrites notes to her customers.



JACQUELINE PILAR

Catherine Gee

swim-and-resort collection that has been sold in shops at **The Ritz Carlton** and **Four Seasons**, Gee has found a partner who believes in the return of the boutique presence.

“Catherine and I are both into quality, and people should be aware of what they’re buying. We are operating on the belief of quality pieces rather than quantity,” De Mello said.

Life after Etsy

As an artisan who creates sustainable, handcrafted jewelry, Amy Waltz began her business by creating pieces for her friends. In 2011, she opened an **Etsy** shop from her home in Chico, Calif. At the time, the online marketplace was a popular destination for unique goods crafted by artisans and was a perfect fit for Waltz’s self-named brand of pieces made from eco-friendly and recycled materials.

“Around 2015, Etsy changed its platform. It shifted from sourcing handcrafted goods created by authentic artisans to overseas sourcing,” she said. “I needed to diversify if I was going to continue. I started my own website and different revenue streams. I started opening myself up to local retailers and bricks-and-mortar establishments.”

While Waltz moved her business from her home into a fabrication facility at the **Chico Municipal Airport** in 2014, her

intention wasn’t to launch a bricks-and-mortar presence. As an increasing number of customers started to stop by the space, **Amy Waltz Designs** began to expand its business hours until it had a consistent schedule.

“Everyone in town always thought the airport was far to travel, so I was surprised when locals would show up,” she said. “My customers are everything. I live and breathe their satisfaction. It isn’t about creating the cheapest product that I can to have the widest margin.”

This personal approach to bricks-and-mortar born from an e-commerce model has helped Waltz maintain a healthy business, allowing her to bypass many of the issues that stem from an exclusively online-based business.

“Our return rate is so incredibly low because the quality is such a big component,” Waltz said. “I don’t skimp. It’s not in my fiber.”

In addition to her own bricks-and-mortar presence, Amy Waltz Designs is also offered at **Made in Chico**, a local shop that sells a variety of goods made in the area. The single-door store has been in business since 1982 and relies only on the bricks-and-mortar model, bypassing an online presence in favor of traditional retail.

“People are now over the novelty of having something just shipped to their doors, and they want something special and unique,” said manager Aimee Anderson. “This leads them to drive downtown and have the experience of connecting with a product.”

While Waltz continues to maintain her e-commerce presence, she is interested in cultivating a stronger retail presence to strengthen her relationship with customers.

“It’s worth it to have bricks-and-mortar. I don’t want to lose the beauty of connection, and with e-commerce you don’t have it,” she said. “This store is a necessary component of my business.”

This need for a traditional-retail-store presence to forge a substantial connection with customers is a move that more online retailers will make, according to The NPD Group’s Cohen.

“What we have now in front of us is the great equalizer,” he said. “The stores are catching up to what made online unique and online now has to catch up to what makes stores unique.” ●

TECHNOLOGY

Uniqlo *Continued from page 1*

The 10,000-square-foot facility features laser-engraving and ozone machines made by Spanish manufacturer **Jeanologia**, a company whose equipment is a familiar sight in many denim factories.

The center developed new technologies using nano-bubble and ozone-washing machines, which were used on select styles of Fast Retailing’s 2018 line of jeans which include some J Brand and Uniqlo jeans. It cut water usage by an average of 90 percent and as much as 99 percent.

The company also dropped its use of an industrywide practice of using pumice stones for stone washes to give jeans a worn and distressed appearance. Instead, it uses synthetic stones, which help create a vintage look but don’t deteriorate as fast as pumice.

Already, Fast Retailing has shared with its overseas factories the washing and finishing processes developed at the L.A. center.

By 2020, the technology will be used for all of Fast Retailing’s denim brands, which include Uniqlo, **J Brand**, **Theory**, **G.U.** and **Princess Tam-Tam**.

“We have innovated with existing technology, figuring out how to outperform other brands at scale to achieve water savings of up to 99 percent in the wash process at our full production scale. We never intended to reduce water used for jeans washing by only 10

percent or 20 percent. Ultimately we want to reduce water usage to near zero,” Matsubara said in a statement.

Cutting water usage has been an important initiative for California companies such as **Levi Strauss & Co.**, **Volcom** and **Outerknown**. Sustainability consultant Derek Sabori applauded Fast Retailing’s announcement. “At 99 percent, they are saying they’ve reduced their water footprint almost entirely. That’s huge,” he said. “You don’t often see rates that high. So for that achievement they deserve credit.”

He noted this gives confidence and inspiration to other brands. “Soon enough, cutting water usage will reach critical mass and

become the expected norm,” said Sabori, who was Volcom’s vice president, global sustainability, and currently runs a sustainability consulting company called **The Underswell**.

Levi’s has been working on cutting water usage since 2011 with its Water<Less technique. Currently, 67 percent of all Levi’s products are made with this method. By 2020, Levi’s hopes it will make 80 percent of its products with Water<Less, according to a company statement.



ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF FAST RETAILING

The mannequin machine, left, and a machine using synthetic stones at the Fast Retailing Jeans Innovation Center



Masaaki Matsubara speaks at the Jeans Innovation Center.

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A black and white photograph of a city street at night. In the foreground, there are horizontal light trails from moving vehicles. In the background, there are palm trees and several multi-story buildings. One building on the left has a sign that says "Hilton Grand Vacations". Another sign on the left says "CABLE CENTER". A sign on a building in the distance says "Don's".

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