

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

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FALLING FOR FANTASY

A magical fashion season is on the horizon for next year, according to Monique Lhuillier, who recently introduced her whimsical Fall 2020 collection of ethereal garments. See additional looks from the collection on page 6.

STAS KOMAROVSKI

RETAIL

Fashion District's Sparkle Factory Building Finds New Life With Tarina Tarantino

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

After a four-year hiatus from running a bricks-and-mortar boutique on Los Angeles' Melrose Avenue, designer Tarina Tarantino has opened a self-named **Tarina Tarantino** boutique in downtown Los Angeles. The business is housed in **The Sparkle Factory** building, which is more than 100 years old and located in the fashion district. She renovated the 26,600-square-foot building with her husband and business partner, Alfonso Campos.

Located at 910 S. Broadway, across the street from the **Ace Hotel**, The Sparkle Factory will house creative offices, street-level retail, a basement bar scheduled to open fall 2020 and, on the seventh floor of the building, the Tarina Tarantino boutique. The boutique officially opened Nov. 23, offering Tarantino's colorful collections, as well as art, beauty and gift
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RETROSPECTIVE 2019

Looking Back on 2019 as Apparel Industry Prepares for 2020

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

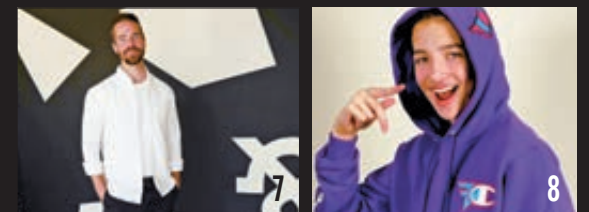
Over the course of 2019, financial uncertainty subsided a bit as consumers set new records on spending and economic forecasters revised initial predictions in favor of increased optimism through the end of the year. Despite a continuing conflict with China and potential tariff issues with other trade partners, the United States economy saw bright spots.

Compared with January's unemployment numbers from the **U.S. Department of Labor** that stood at 4 percent and 6.5 million unemployed persons, November's figures, which were reported Dec. 6, saw a decrease in unemployment. According to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**, unemployment reached a 50-year low in November, decreasing to 3.5 percent and 5.8 million unemployed persons.

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Epson Unveils New POS Printers

Epson has developed a reputation for making direct-to-garment printers for manufacturers both large and small to print on T-shirts, hoodies and more.

Now the technology company has unveiled new point-of-sale printers. On Dec. 9, it introduced all-in-one thermal receipt printers—the OmniLink TM-T88VI-DT2 and OmniLink TM-T70II-DT2—for POS customers. The thermal printers produce a printed image by heating thermal paper, not unlike what shoppers typically see in receipts. The difference is that these new machines reduce paper usage by 49 percent, according to a company statement.

Epson hopes to sell its new POS printers to retailers and hospitality businesses as well

as banking and financial-services companies, according to an announcement made by Epson America Inc., based in Long Beach, Calif.

The new model of POS printers takes up 70 percent less space than traditional printers, according to Gregg Brunnick, director of product management for POS printers, Epson America Inc. The machines have more processing power. They are powered by an Intel Celeron processor, which gives them the capacity to handle new technology and new POS applications.

“Epson is continually evolving its core POS solutions—including its receipt printers—to accommodate the requirements of the next generation in retail solutions,” Brunnick said. “Our OmniLink DT2 printers deliver

the key functionality and flexibility needed to support POS applications as they become available on the market so that our customers can streamline essential operations and, in turn, better engage with their customers.”

2019 has been a busy year for Epson. In August, it introduced the cloud service Epson OmniLink Merchant Services 3.0. The cloud service is accessed through Epson’s point-of-sale system. This POS system can be used to wrangle information about a company’s performance, sales and other information. The printer extracts data from receipts and sends data to the OMS cloud. Retailers can glean information on sales and performance from the data harvested from the receipts.

—Andrew Asch



CFF Hosts 72nd Annual Christmas Party for Kids

More than 250 Los Angeles kids got holiday gifts from the **California Fashion Foundation** on Dec. 11 at the penthouse of the **Cooper Design Space** in downtown Los Angeles. The California Fashion Foundation produces charitable events that are supported by its parent organization, trade group **California Fashion Association**.

The recent party marked the 72nd time this Christmas party has been produced. The **Textile Association of Los Angeles** started the

gift-giving event during the Harry Truman administration. CFA took the reins of the event when CFA absorbed TALA in 2013, said Ilse Metchek, CFA’s president.

The annual Christmas party is for children who are part of the **Boys & Girls Clubs**, **Para Los Niños** and the **Dolores Huerta Elementary School**. The children, mostly aged 5 to 7, were treated to pizza, potato chips, a visit with Santa, as well as gift bags that included skateboards, T-shirts and coloring books, said

Ilse Metchek, CFA’s president.

Arturo Rivera, who works as a coach and in staff development for Para Los Niños, said that his kids look forward to the event. “They’re engaged from the moment they enter the party,” he said. “They’re engaged with the coloring books, the photo booth and the music. We’re very fortunate. They’ve been very hospitable,” Rivera said of the fashion businesspeople who produce the party.—A.A.

Patricia Welman, 3 Girls Clothing Co-founder, 60

Patricia Welman, co-founder and president of the juniors brand **3 Girls Clothing**, passed away Dec. 1 after a short illness with cancer. Her funeral is being held Dec. 17 at **Sts. Simon & Jude Catholic Church** in Huntington Beach, Calif.

Welman spent her career as a buyer, designer and eventually as an executive. Her last project was 3 Girls Clothing, which offered tops and dresses characterized by a surf aesthetic, said Alison Budow, the brand’s director of sales. A division of the **Lunachix** brand, 3 Girls started business in 2018 and has been sold at retailers such as **Tilly’s**, **The Buckle** and **Lulus.com**. Welman showed the line at the **LA Majors Market** trade show in downtown Los Angeles. 3 Girls will continue to be run by co-founder Karen Frazier.

Starting her fashion career in 1983, Welman had worked as a buyer for **Nordstrom** and **Clothestime**, moving her way up to executive jobs at **Gurly Clothing Company**, among others, during the past decade.

Her sister, Jennifer Greenleaf, said that Welman was a natural merchandiser. “She was born to be in the industry. She would predict a trend a year before it became popular,” Greenleaf said.

Welman also was active in lobbying for strong laws to protect women from domestic abuse as well as campaigning for Republican candidates in Orange County, Calif., where she spent most of her life.

She was briefly married in the 1990s and was preceded in death by her husband. Survivors include her cousin, skateboarding pioneer Tony Alva, and three siblings. In lieu of flowers, her family requested that donations be made in her name to the **National Kidney Foundation**.—A.A.

Week in Review

Tom Ford will show his Fall 2020 collection in Los Angeles, according to media reports. The designer, film director and chairman of the Council of Fashion Designers of America said that he would produce his Los Angeles show on Feb. 7, which is a couple of days before the 92nd Annual Academy Awards. Ford’s Los Angeles show is scheduled to run concurrent with New York Fashion Week, which is scheduled to take place in Manhattan Feb. 6–13. Steven Kolb, CFDA’s president, was quoted saying that Ford’s Los Angeles show would not affect New York Fashion Week.

Shopafor, a social-networking gifting platform, started business on Dec. 11. The Los Angeles–headquartered venture announced that it is the only social-networking space that uses artificial intelligence to help people pick gifts for one another. Shopafor founder Chris Herbert said the inspiration for this venture came from poor gifting choices for his daughter’s birthday. “My wife and I were frustrated by the number of gifts that were either toys for kids four to five years older than her or clothes that were for a child half her age. We saw it all as such a waste, and I wanted to figure out a solution to prevent it from happening,” he said.

WeBuy is an on-demand shopping platform that is currently being beta tested in Tel Aviv, Israel. Emil Guberman, WeBuy’s founder and chief executive officer, said that his platform will make shopping easier. The platform aims to match consumers and sellers in real time. Guberman critiqued e-shopping as being needlessly complex. Consumers must travel to various digital commerce sites to find deals and services rather than going to a central place to find what they need. WeBuy is crowdfunding on exitvalley.com.

The Renewal Workshop, based in Cascade Locks, Ore., announced a \$5.5-million Series A financing round, it was announced on Dec. 11. The Renewal Workshop takes discarded apparel and textiles and then repairs the damaged clothes to sell or uses the upcycled fabrics to make sustainable clothing. Money from the financing round will be used to expand in Europe. The round’s investors include Social Impact Ventures, SHIFT Invest and Quadia with participation from existing U.S. investors Closed Loop Ventures, Gratitude Railroad, the Portland Seed Fund and the High Meadows Investment Group.

Running Bear Ramirez, an activist, fashion consultant and member of the San Manuel tribe, based in San Bernardino County, Calif., organized a friends-and-family-only Gucci pop-up shop at the Chateau Marmont hotel in West Hollywood, Calif., on Dec. 12. The pop-up is to raise funds for the Native American Diabetes Pilot Program, which provides medically tailored meals and nutritional counseling to Native Americans in Los Angeles County living with diabetes. The sale will run Dec. 13–15. When customers mention “Project Angel Food” while purchasing goods at the Gucci store on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, Gucci will donate 10 percent of the proceeds to Running Bear’s program.

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Looking Back *Continued from page 1*

Even the final release of the quarterly UCLA Anderson Forecast reversed course on its earlier predictions that warned of a potential recession, now citing gross domestic product in fourth quarter 2020 is expected to reach 2 percent. By Decem-

ber 6, it had upgraded its national economic forecast through 2020 from 1 percent real growth to a fourth-quarter-to-fourth-quarter figure of 1.7 percent.

While 2019 saw a number of retail bankruptcies and acquisitions from the beloved **Barneys** to fast-fashion pioneer **Forever 21**, new opportunities arose through experiential models

that saw pop-up shops, collaborations between brands, new designs for shopping centers and digital commerce. Entering the holiday season, a number of consumers hit the stores in bricks-and-mortar and online.

Coverage of our 2019 Retrospective on the financial happenings that affect the apparel industry begins here. ●

During a Year of Bankruptcies, Retailers Experience Risk and Find Opportunity

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Bankruptcies and store closures spiked in 2019, and some retailers hoped bankruptcy could give them an edge during a year when many thought the chips were down for retail.

Influential retailers such as **Forever 21**, **Barneys New York**, as well as long-suffering retailers such as **Dress Barn** filed for bankruptcy. A sense of decline increased when major retailers such as **Gap Inc.** said that it would close 130 stores by the end of the fourth quarter of its 2019 fiscal year.

In May, New York-headquartered **Coresight Research** forecasted that as many as 12,000 store locations were at risk of closing by the end of the year. And **The Conference Board**, a nonprofit research group, released a survey of chief executive officers' confidence levels. It found that it was only a few points higher than the first quarter of the Great Recession in 2009.

"CEO confidence declined to its lowest level in a decade," said Lynne Franco, senior director of economic indicators at The Conference Board. "Tariffs and trade issues coupled with expectations of moderating global growth are causing a heightened degree of uncertainty. As a result, more CEOs than last year say that they have curtailed investment."

Since bankruptcy seemed to be a more common occurrence in 2019, some retailers tried to play it to their advantage, said Syama Meagher, chief executive officer of the retail consultancy **Scaling Retail**.

"I think retailers are looking at bankruptcy as an opportunity to restructure," Meagher said. "Filing for bankruptcy does not indicate that a brand has died. Bankruptcies can be strategic. It can pave the way to a second or a third life for a brand."

But bankruptcy is a risky strategy, she said. Since bankruptcies are covered extensively in media, retailers and brands can lose their cachet with the public when they declare bankruptcy. The private-equity firms buying bankrupt firms also have their own ideas on the direction they want to take their new property.

"The purchasers want to break down bankrupt companies and sell them for their parts," Meagher said. "I'm scared that Barneys will become what **Henri Bendel** is today—a highly licensed brand that has lost its edge. The Barneys name is strong. It might get over-licensed and lose its integrity through the acquisition."

While many were gloomy about retail during 2019, the research and advisory firm **IHL Group** said that anxiety over store closures was overstated. The latest iteration of its multiyear study, "Retail's Renaissance—The True Story of Store Openings/Closings," was released in August. IHL said that more than five retail chains are opening stores for every retailer that is closing stores in 2019.

The research firm also reported that 20 retailers represent 75 percent of all store closures. Closures and bankruptcies were more the fault of the individual retailer than a prob-

lem with the whole industry, according to Lee Holman, IHL Group's vice president of research.

"U.S. retail has increased \$565 billion in sales since January of 2017, fed not just by online-sales growth but net store sales growth," Holman said. "Clearly there is significant pressure in apparel and department stores; however, in every single retail segment there are more chains that are expanding their number of stores than closing stores."

One retailer who made a rebound from bankruptcy in 2019 was **Charlotte Russe**, a San Diego-headquartered retailer for young women's fashions who announced its Chapter 11 bankruptcy in February. In March, Canadian company **YM Inc.** acquired Charlotte Russe for an undisclosed amount. By June, it was announced that Charlotte Russe was back in the bricks-and-mortar business. It opened a handful of stores in the United States and also opened a digital commerce channel, www.charlotterusse.com.

Retail might be at the beginning of a new chapter. Business on Black Friday, the traditional start of the holiday shopping season, broke records this year. It was a sign that the worst in a wave of bankruptcies was over, said Ron Friedman, partner and head of retail and consumer products at **Marcum LLP**, which offers accounting, financial and consulting services.

"Business is good right now. People are making money. Consumer confidence is high," he said. But the proverbial rising tide may not lift all boats. "If you're strictly a bricks-and-mortar store, these stores must improve their experiences." ●

Economic Forecast for 2020 Revised After Solid Year

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

On Dec. 4, the influential **UCLA Anderson School of Management** raised its 2020 forecast for the U.S. and California economies from 1 percent real growth to 1.7 percent due to low unemployment and high consumer confidence and spending.

David Shulman, an author of and the senior economist for the UCLA Anderson Forecast, said the forecast uptick represents a break from its forecast from the 2019 third quarter. In September, he wrote an essay entitled "The Year of Living Dangerously" in which he predicted an economic slowdown. "[It's] not quite a recession but pretty close," Shulman wrote then.

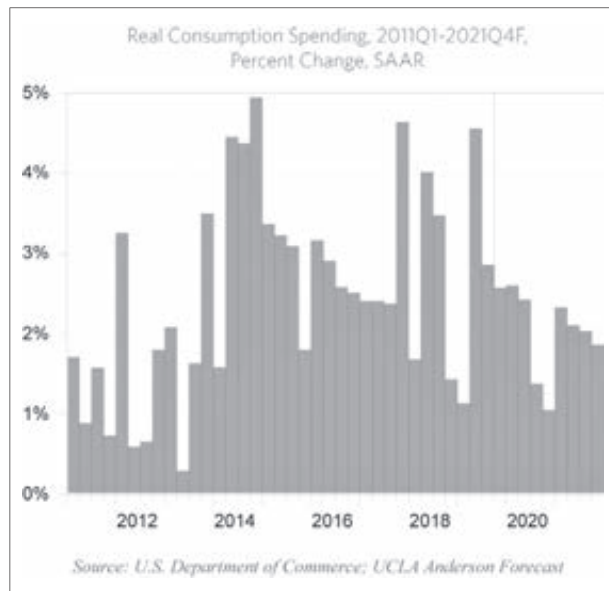
The UCLA economist wrote that there is still a risk of economic slowdown in the second half of 2020. But consumer spending has pushed back economic doldrums for the time being. The forecast changed because a predicted slowdown in consumer spending did not materialize.

This was bolstered by numbers from the **National Retail Federation**, which had overestimated Black Friday Weekend spending last year but will likely exceed its forecast for this year.

The change in UCLA's outlook came as no surprise to economy watcher Ken Wengrod, president and co-founder of the Los Angeles-headquartered lender **FTC Commercial Corp.** He also serves on **U.S. Commerce Department** advisory groups including the **Trade Finance Advisory Council**.

"The U.S. economy is very vibrant, especially compared to the rest of the world," Wengrod said. "There's a lot of stability. I think that the U.S. economy will remain strong for at least the next 12 months."

Wengrod said that the strong labor markets are resulting in strong consumer spending, which is great news for retail-



ers. "People have money to spend and are looking to spend it for the right product. But they are spending it more wisely. If you have the right merchandise, there is a demand for your product," he said.

But not all economists believe that consumer spending can support the economy for a sustained period.

In a Dec. 4 column for **Bloomberg**, economist Karl W. Smith argued that investment in housing and business has been slowing. Consumer spending has been a moderating force in the economic slowdown, but consumers can't spend their way out of an economic slowdown.

"Consumer spending, like overall GDP, peaked in mid-2018 and has been declining ever since. The decline has been shallower than that of business investment, so consumer spending has exerted a moderating force on overall growth," Smith wrote. "But the trajectory is still downward, and it is nearing levels that prevailed in 2016 and 2017." Smith serves as vice president for federal policy at the Washington, D.C.-headquartered **Tax Foundation**.

UCLA Anderson School of Management's forecast director, Jerry Nickelsburg, agreed with Smith that business investment has been softening and that consumer spending has been supporting the economy. He forecasted that it would continue to support the economy.

"Consumer spending makes up two-thirds of the absorption of [gross domestic product]," he said. "Consumer spending has been a big part of the economy for a long time. There is nothing new about that." He forecasted that in the next year and 2021, consumer spending will continue to hold up the economy.

In the recently released forecast, Nickelsburg also made predictions for the California economy. The state's economy has been growing slightly faster than the national economy. If the U.S. economy is forecasted to grow 1.7 percent in the upcoming year, California probably will grow in the mid 2 percents in 2020, he said.

In his forecast, entitled "California Enters the Next Decade with Full Employment and Slowing Growth," Nickelsburg writes that unemployment rates are at historic lows. They are under 3 percent. In this situation, slow growth won't hurt the California economy. "There is faster growth when businesses draw on a large pool of unemployed workers. When people are working, we have to grow slower. That is a good thing," he said.

Calendar

Jan. 4, 2020

London Fashion Week Mens
Store Studios
London
Through Jan. 6

Trendz
Palm Beach County
Convention Center
Palm Beach, Fla.
Through Jan. 6

Jan. 5

Accessorie Circuit
Accessories The Show
Fame
Intermezzo Collections
Moda
NY Women's
Javits Center
New York
Through Jan. 7

The Trends Show

Phoenix Convention Center
Phoenix
Through Jan. 7

Jan. 8

Surf Expo, Bluewater at
Surf Expo
Orange County Convention
Center

Orlando, Fla.
Through Jan. 10

Jan. 12

LA Kids Market
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 15

LA Market Week
California Market Center,

The New Mart, Cooper Design
Space, Gerry Building,
Lady Liberty Building,
Primrose Design Building
Through Jan. 15

Jan. 13

Brand Assembly

Submissions to the calendar should be emailed to the Calendar Editor at calendar@apparelnews.net. 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.

Cooper Design Space
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 15

Designers and Agents
The New Mart
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 15

There's more
on ApparelNews.net.

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

COMING UP!

Editorial, advertorial, special sections and bonus distribution for the next four weeks

December 20

Cover: Year in Review
Accessories

Bonus Distribution

AccessoriesTheShow 1/5-7

December 27

Cover: Retail
New Laws
Technology

Fashion Advertorial

Bonus Distribution

Active Collective 1/29-30
Swim Collective 1/29-30
AccessoriesTheShow 1/5-7
DG Expo NY
FAME 1/5-7
MODA 1/5-7

January 3

Cover: Swim
Swim/Active Profiles
Surf

Fashion Advertorial Waterwear Special Section Waterwear Advertorial

Bonus Distribution

Surf Expo 1/8-10
L.A. Market Week 1/12-15
Brand Assembly LA 1/13-15
Designers & Agents LA Summer 1/13-15
Dallas Market Week 1/14-18
Apparel Sourcing USA 1/19-21
Texworld USA 1/19-21
DG Expo NY 1/20-21
Liberty Fairs NY 1/20-21
Premiere Vision NY 1/21-22

January 10

Cover: Fashion
Retail Sales
T-Shirts
New Lines

T-Shirt Advertorial Finance Advertorial Textile Preview and Resource Guide with Tech

Bonus Distribution

L.A. Market Week 1/12-15
Brand Assembly LA 1/13-15
Designers & Agents LA Summer 1/13-15
Impressions Expo Long Beach 1/17-19
Apparel Sourcing USA 1/19-21
Texworld USA 1/19-21
Liberty Fairs NY 1/20-21
Premiere Vision NY 1/21-22
Active Collective NY 1/22-23
Fashion Market Northern California 1/26-28
Label Array

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Copyright and Labor Fashion Cases Reach Supreme Court

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Issues in copyright and labor kept lawyers busy in 2019; however, the Los Angeles case that made the most headlines was a streetwear brand that brought its case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a 6-3 decision, ruling that the brand **FUCT (Friends U Can't Trust)** could register its name with the **U.S. Patent and Trademark Office**. The majority opinion for the court decided that the brand did not break a provision of the Trademark Act of 1946, also known as the Lanham Act. This provision bars registration of a trademark considered to be "immoral or scandalous."

FUCT had been selling T-shirts and clothes bearing its name since 1990. The Los Angeles-headquartered brand had been hailed by various consumer magazines and was also seen on the backs of celebrities from Leonardo DiCaprio to Rihanna. In 2011, brand founder Erik Brunetti attempted to register the brand's name at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to help protect the brand against knock-offs. The office deemed the brand's name too immoral and scandalous for trademark protection. Brunetti sued and took his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Writing the opinion for the majority, Justice Elena Kagan said that the provision creates a bias based on viewpoint and therefore violates the First Amendment. "If the 'immoral or scandalous' bar similarly discriminates on the basis of viewpoint, it must also collide with our First Amendment doctrine," Kagan wrote.

Other copyright cases loomed large during 2019. A prominent player on the California fashion legal scene is the **Doniger/Burroughs** law firm. It has sued brands and prominent retailers for copyright infringement. It experienced a setback in the case **Gold Value International Textile v. Sanctuary Clothing LLC**. It was decided June 4 at the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in Pasadena, Calif., that Doniger/Burroughs' clients had to pay \$121,423.01 in attorneys' fees and litigation expenses to the defendants in the case. A motion for additional fees and expenses is on appeal.

The case was originally filed in 2016. **Gold Value International Textile**, which was doing business as **Fiesta Fabric**, alleged that **Sanctuary Clothing LLC** copied a fabric design that was sold at various retailers. The suit stumbled when Sanctuary's lawyers saw mistakes in the Gold Value/Fiesta copyright registration and demanded that the court deem the copyright registration invalid and dismiss the action.

Representing Sanctuary was Jessica Rutherford, a partner in **Ferdinand IP**, which has offices in several cities, including Los Angeles and New York.

"The court made clear that there is a severe downside to bringing cases without valid registration," she explained.

"This is the first time an appellate court held that a registration can be declared invalid under the PRO IP Act [Prioritizing

Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property Act of 2008] without a finding of intent to defraud the copyright office, which was the old common-law standard," Rutherford said. "It makes it easier for defendants to prove a registration invalid."

The Ninth Circuit has declined to rehear the case, but in November Gold Value filed a petition with the U.S. Supreme Court to discuss the case. Defendants have been granted an extension until Feb. 3, 2020, to file a brief in opposition.

Other copyright cases continued to be important. In one case, **SPI**, an established brand that makes scrubs used by medical personnel, sued the 6-year-old brand **Figs**. The younger scrubs brand has been successful enough to mount a splashy billboard campaign around Los Angeles.

SPI sued Figs in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleging that Trina Spear, Figs's co-founder and co-chief executive officer, stole trade secrets from SPI while she was working as an associate for the private equity firm **The Blackstone Group, Inc.** Blackstone was privy to SPI's trade information because the equity group was considering handling an SPI transaction. After allegedly becoming privy to the confidential information, Spear left Blackstone and started Figs with Heather Hasson, who now serves as the company's co-CEO. Hasson said that the lawsuit has no merit.

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

In 2019, California became the first U.S. state to pass a fur ban, making it illegal to sell or distribute a fur product.

In June, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a state budget that included \$16.3 million that would be placed in the state's underfunded **Garment Restitution Fund**. It was estimated that more than 400 people are on this fund's waitlist for compensation for unpaid wages, said Marissa Nuncio, executive director of the **Garment Worker Center**, headquartered in downtown Los Angeles' fashion district.

However, wage-theft investigations continue. The U.S. Department of Labor issued a nearly \$54,000 fine against **ESS Apparel Inc.**, a Los Angeles garment-sewing contractor for underpaying 21 employees, it was announced in early June.

The GWC's Nuncio said that these investigations are crucial in a large industry. "They are sending a message that there are eyes watching," she said.

"The industry is large, and there aren't as many resources to do enforcement adequately. There are thousands of factories and tens of thousands of workers. It is hard to be everywhere. We have a long way to go still," Nuncio said. "We've seen the labor agencies [U.S. and California State Labor Departments] working to improve and be more strategic with their investigations." ●

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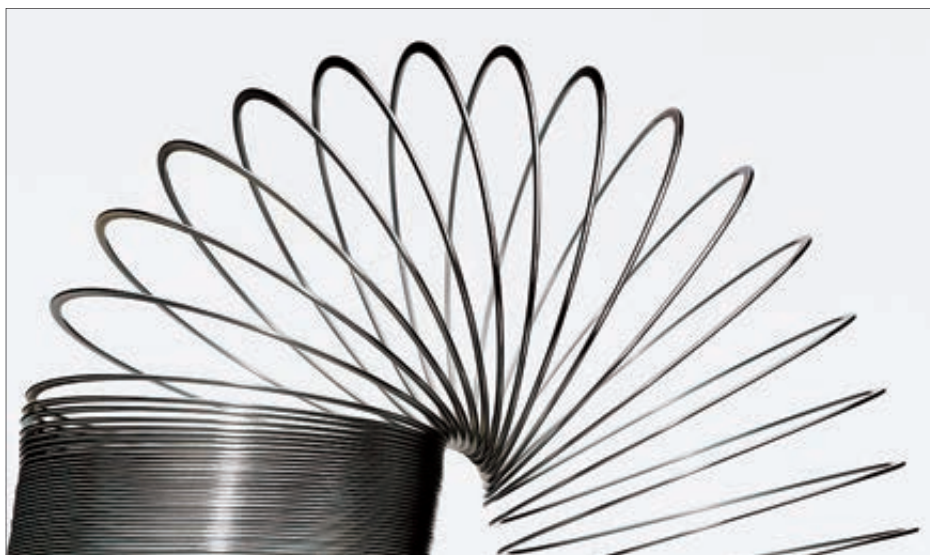
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FASHION



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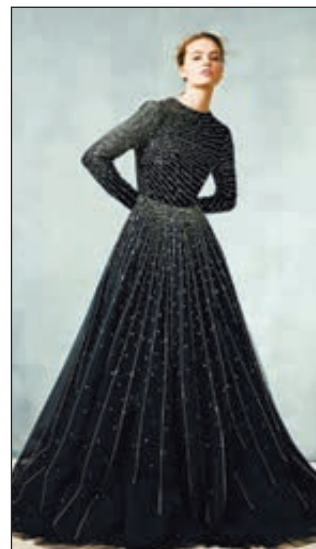
An Air of Enchantment Makes Fall 2020 Monique Lhuillier Designs Magical

With the release of her Fall 2020 campaign, Los Angeles' Monique Lhuillier showed pieces that evoke a feeling of magic as she set her campaign against a backdrop of a whimsical sylvan setting, described by the company as "understated, sleek sophistication in relaxed silhouettes. A sense of release from over-constructed garments—couture reimaged," the collection might offer a break from the confines of fashion rules, but it is far from simple.

Gowns are featured in rich velvets, and striking sequins enhance the beauty of the hues including a deep burgundy. The designer also included styles that offer a lighter approach to formal dressing. A fuchsia strapless, floor-length gown features a soft, ruffled sweetheart neckline and ruching

at the hips that is complemented by a daring slit accented by a silver knotted brooch featuring colorful stones.

While Lhuillier's collection plays into the fantasy of an enchanted forest, there are structured elements included in her garments. In addition to a black-and-white off-the-shoulder crepe gown in a floral pattern, Lhuillier used the same approach for pleated formal trousers. A winter-white Lhuillier-style suit is comprised of a ruched top that extends downward into a single floor-length drape over relaxed-fit trousers with a jacket to complete the look. Worn as a dress, her tuxedo jacket's strong, powerful design elevates cocktail dressing to a new level.—Dorothy Crouch



Tact & Stone Looks to Push Boundaries in Both Fashion and Sustainability

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Sustainability commands increasing interest from the business world. A novice in the field, Landon Nash vowed that his new apparel line, **Tact & Stone**, would serve as an engine to innovate in this burgeoning category.

"I thought that if you're going to do this you're going to have to be 100 percent committed to sustainability," Nash said. He also wanted Tact & Stone to provide a fashion alternative. "I don't have to sacrifice style to be sustainable," he said.

Nash is finding places to test his ideas. In mid-November, Tact & Stone joined the merchandise mix at the **Forum**, a West Hollywood, Calif., bricks-and-mortar lifestyle boutique that focuses on developing bricks-and-mortar spaces for direct-to-consumer brands.

In April, Nash officially unveiled Tact & Stone. The headquarters for the sustainable label is located in downtown Los Angeles' Arts District, but the brand is mostly sold on its direct-to-consumer site, tactandstone.com.

The inspiration for the brand started when Nash couldn't find sustainable clothes that would look appropriate for business meetings and didn't fit into the contemporary fashion category. Nash formerly worked as a residential-real-estate agent in San Francisco. He needed to wear office clothes or at least styles with a more contemporary look when he showed properties. He also wanted a sustainability factor in high-end basics and essentials clothing that he said he did not see on the market.

In seeking a contemporary fashion look, he wanted to be different from the dominant looks in the men's sustainable category, which mostly reflect an outdoorsman or surfer look. **Patagonia** and **Outerknown**, two prominent brands that make men's sustainable styles, focus on these types of looks, leading Nash to wear their pieces. They helped reflect his growing interest in the environment.

He also was alarmed by reports that ranked the fashion business as a major environmental offender, emitting carbon emissions into the air, chemical runoffs into the world's rivers, as well as glutting landfills across the globe.

"I realized that I was a part of the problem," he said of buying expensive suits and high-end jeans. "I had no idea that I was contributing to this. It made me rethink my consumption."

Nash was becoming a sustainability nerd. He was paying his own way to travel to and participate in sustainability conferences such as the **Textile Exchange Conference** in Washington, D.C., in 2017. He also had built enough capital from his real-estate gig that he could finance his own venture. His goal was to build a small brand that would rank at the highest level of sustainability while giving people a fashion alternative.

"Large brands are needed to raise awareness," he said of developing the market for sustainability. "But innovation will come from small brands."

Nash hired freelance designers to shape the contemporary look of his brand. To help develop his sustainability program, Nash started working with **Sustainable Source Studios**, a Los Angeles-headquartered consultancy where Andrew Schulenburg serves as a managing partner.

"This was our first consumer-brand project," Schulenburg said of his group's work with Tact & Stone. "We had an opportunity to develop a brand with Landon from scratch almost—the company's sustainability charter, materials strategy, product strategy, circular strategy, brand identity, marketing strategy, the complete package."

S3 is part of a company that is prominent in sustainability circles. Its founder, Isaac Nichelson, was honored with the 2018 Global Change Award from **The H&M Foundation**, which is funded by the owners of retailer **H&M**. The award came from his work with S3's sibling company, **Circular Systems**. Circular Systems was awarded for its Agraloop Bio-Refinery technology, which turns food-crop waste into a fiber that can be milled and spun into textiles.

Like almost every other company that places a stake in sustainability, Tact & Stone uses fabrics such as organic cotton. The brand also aims to extend sustainability to woven shirts, using a high composition of recycled cotton that is applicable to modern weaving technologies to fabricate lightweight Oxford shirts and "waterless" chambray shirts through a process that utilizes almost no water during production, Schulenburg said.

These woven shirts include up to 35 per-



Tact & Stone founder Landon Nash



Tact & Stone

cent recycled-cotton content, which was certified by the **Global Recycle Standard**, which sets requirements for certification of recycled content in clothing. One reason why recycled cotton is harder to include in high-end shirts is that the fiber length of recycled cotton becomes shorter so it is more difficult to turn into a high-value product, Schulenburg said.

S3 had worked with factories in Portugal to transform what some would consider waste into fabrics that could be used to make sturdy shirts. Other fibers used in these shirts include organic cotton and recycled polyester.

The shirts feature a tailored fit and come in colorways of white, black and gray as well as patterns such as stripes and plaids. They retail from \$100 to \$125. The brand also offers a blazer that retails for \$248, as well as hoodies. Also available are Pichu alpaca pullover sweaters, which retail for \$245, and shorts and chinos, which retail for \$145.

Tact & Stone's T-shirts are made in Los Angeles. Price points range from \$45 for a short-sleeve organic-cotton shirt to \$75 for a long-sleeve hemp tee.

The price range is not expensive and it is not inexpensive, Nash said. It costs more because it was made using materials certified as being sustainable as well as being produced by factories in Portugal and Los Angeles that were certified according to fair labor practices.

"There's a statistic that says six out of 10 garments will end up in landfills in one year. But everything [Tact & Stone] makes is built to last," he said. ●

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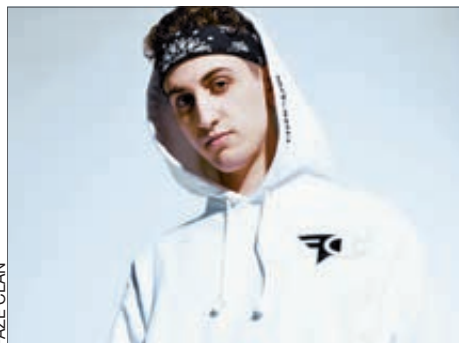
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FaZe Clan Forecasts Big Biz With Active Styles for Video Gamers

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Professional e-sports competition over video games such as **Fortnite** is hitting the big time. It attracts investments from owners of major-league sports teams; competitions are viewed by millions of people across the globe; and for the Los Angeles-based e-sports team **FaZe Clan**, fashion is becoming a big deal.

On Dec. 10, the team's website, *FaZeClan.com*, released a capsule collection with athletic and sportswear brand **Champion**, an official partner of the team. One of the pieces in the collection is the \$120 Black Ops hoodie, which features a special reflective fabric. Also featured is a unique mash-up of the logos of the FaZe Clan team and the Champion brand.

Along with the Champion collaboration, the company will also release a women's line inspired by FaZe Clan's first female player, Soleil "Ewok" Wheeler, that will feature tees and a purple Champion hoodie bearing sign-language designs honoring Wheeler's status as a deaf person.

The team has also been receiving attention from the hip-hop world. Hip-hop star Offset, born Kiari Kendrell Cephus, is releasing a capsule collection with FaZe Clan on Dec. 17. Offset plays on the team and also is an investor in FaZe Clan. Another hip-hop star, Lil Yachty, born Miles Parks McCollum, also serves as an investor. **Philadelphia 76ers** point guard Ben Simmons also has played with the e-sports team.

The capsule collections will not only be sold on the team's website but will also be sold at the team's pop-up shop, called **FaZe Arcade**, which opened at 7312 Melrose Ave. in Hollywood in November and will run until Dec. 18.

Playing video games may be a workout only for the mind and a player's fingers, but clothes with an active and performance edge are big attractions on the FaZe Clan site, said Greg Selkoe, FaZe Clan's president and a partner in the team. Hoodies, sweats, baseball caps, plus basketball- and hockey-style jerseys are a big part of streetwear, which has a heavy influence on e-sports and increasingly fashion. Influential European fashion houses from **Louis Vuitton** to **Balmain** have produced streetwear lines and collaborations.

Selkoe forecasted that FaZe Clan will have earned \$10 million from its active/street/fashion merchandise in 2019. The entire FaZe Clan company is forecasted to earn \$35 million in revenue in 2019. Selkoe also

forecasted that e-sports will become much more influential. "It is the future of fashion," he said, "just like the way skateboarding and hip-hop changed the landscape of fashion."

Selkoe was the founder of the digital streetwear emporium **Karmaloop**, which he left in 2015. He started a digital market and content platform, **Wanderset**, in January 2017. He has served as FaZe Clan's president since December 2017. One of the people working on FaZe Clan's merchandise program is Aaron Levant, the founder of the **Agenda** trade show and the founder and chief executive officer of the e-commerce and content platform **NTWRK**.

Currently there is no specific e-sports look, Levant said. "Kids will dress in whatever feels authentic to their personal style. It will look like streetwear and action-sports styles. These kids are defining themselves with what they are passionate about, but it's not like these clothes are functional," he said.

But e-sports fans seem to seek out clothes with an active edge. In November, FaZe Clan released a capsule collection of tees, hoodies and track suits with the Italian brand **Kappa**. In September, it released caps made in collaboration with the **New Era** brand. The baseball caps feature the FaZe Clan logo of an "F," which was designed by team co-founder Tommy Oliveira.

While other e-sports teams such as Seattle's **Evil Geniuses** and New York's **G2 Esports** sell merchandise, Selkoe said that fashion was the focus of FaZe Clan to expand into new categories of the business. "We're a pop-gaming collective with an e-sports division. We're a gaming lifestyle, which goes to fashion. It is a huge piece of what we are doing," Selkoe said.

FaZe Clan was founded in Boston in 2010. The team moved to the Los Angeles area in 2016. Currently much of the team lives in a mansion in Los Angeles' Hollywood Hills area. There, 15 players work with content creators to make videos and other content for social media such as its @fazeclan profile on **Instagram** and its **YouTube** channel.

The team might do other bricks-and-mortar pop-ups in the future, Selkoe said. More fashion is definitely in the group's future, said Lee Trink, FaZe Clan's chief executive officer and a former **Capitol Records** president. "We will continue to go where no team has gone before, expanding our long-standing relationship with Champion and the many player lines and projects like **Kappa** and others," Trink said. ●

Mergers and Acquisitions Strengthen Businesses and Save Brands

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

During 2019, a consistent trend within the apparel industry took shape not just on the fashion front but also the business end of garment making. The **LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE** acquisition of **Tiffany & Co.** wasn't the only big sale of 2019. With some companies floundering, others recognized opportunities through acquisitions that would potentially strengthen their brands' presence and fortify their financial standing.

"It's interesting to see a lot of companies like **Walmart** that went through acquisitions also get rid of brands such as **Modcloth**," said Syama Meagher, founder and chief retail strategist at the Los Angeles-based **Scaling Retail**. "The trend is bigger retailers are looking for opportunities for their business models to stay relevant. These acquisitions are made either with the intent of revitalizing the brand they are acquiring or an opportunity to increase their profits."

Gap Inc. doubles down on childrenswear

One of the larger apparel-acquisition stories of the year was that of **Gap Inc.**'s purchase of the **Janie and Jack** childrenswear brand from **Gymboree Group Inc.** for \$35 million. Since 2017, Gymboree had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy twice. After the first filing, in June 2017, the brand emerged from bankruptcy in five months only to file again on Jan. 17 of 2019. The Gap deal was finalized on March 4, following San Francisco's Gap decision to branch off **Old Navy**, creating two separate, publicly traded companies. Additionally, **Children's Place Inc.** reportedly paid \$76 million for the **Gymboree** and **Crazy 8** brands.

Charlotte Russe finds new life

Southern California-founded **Charlotte Russe** filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Feb. 3. The San Diego juniors retailer didn't receive much interest from prospective buyers until, in April, Toronto's **YM Inc.** stepped in to purchase the

branding and intellectual property of Charlotte Russe for an undisclosed amount, while **Mamiye Brothers Inc.** of New York purchased the **Peek Kids** children's brand.

"We are very excited Charlotte Russe will be joining the portfolio of brands at YM," Charlotte Russe interim Chief Executive Officer Dayna Quanbeck said in a statement at the time. "This acquisition marries a beloved brand with a sophisticated retail platform and provides Charlotte Russe a path to grow in the future."

In June, YM Inc. announced that it had opened multiple Charlotte Russe locations in U.S. malls, ultimately intending to open a total of 100 bricks-and-mortar stores.

Three Dots bought by FAM Brands

Another Southern California brand to experience a descent into financial hardship was the contemporary womenswear company **Three Dots**, which ceased operations in April after almost 25 years in business. Founded in 1995 by Sharon Lebon, the company closed its doors by the end of April despite the label's presence during **Fashion Market Northern California**, which was held mid-April. At the time, there were no records of documents being filed with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

By June, the Frank Zarabi-owned Los Angeles manufacturer **FAM Brands** announced it had acquired Three Dots. The Garden Grove, Calif., brand joins FAM Brands' other labels including **Marika**, **Zobha**, **Balance Collection** and **Aerodynamics**.

ABG has a major year in mergers

New York brand-development and licensing company **Authentic Brands Group** purchased the intellectual-property rights to Costa Mesa, Calif., action-sportswear brand **Volcom** from former parent company **Kering S.A.** The April sale to ABG, which owns 50 brands including **Juicy Couture**, **Vince Camuto**, **Jones New York**, **Aéropostale**, **Hervé Léger** and **Frederick's of Hollywood**, was completed for an undis-

closed amount.

Through a collaboration with Volcom Chief Executive Officer Todd Hymel, ABG is slated to launch a new company named **Liberated Brands**. This venture will manage the label's business and operations.

Following an \$875-million investment from **BlackRock Inc.**'s Long Term Private Capital fund in August, ABG acquired storied retailer **Barneys New York Inc.** at the end of October. ABG will license the Barneys brand name through global partnerships. While **Saks Fifth Avenue** was named as a retail partner, a licensing agreement for 12 Barneys stores in Japan through **Seven & I Holdings** will remain intact.

More mergers in the financial segment

This trend wasn't limited to clothing lines and brand-management companies, as financial firms explored the potential for their own acquisitions. In August, New York-headquartered **CIT Group Inc.** announced its interest in acquiring Omaha, Neb.-based **Mutual of Omaha** for its retail-bank subsidiary **One West Bank**, based in Pasadena, Calif., at a purchase price of \$1 billion comprising cash and \$150 million of CIT common stock. By November, the **Office of the Comptroller of the Currency** approved the acquisition, through which CIT hoped to better serve its small and mid-size businesses by providing technology, financing and deposit solutions.

Interested in expanding its presence in California, New Orleans's 8-year-old **Republic Business Credit** announced in early December its acquisition of Sherman Oaks, Calif.'s 30-year-old **Continental Business Credit** and **Fast A/R Funding**. Continuing to conduct business with Stewart Chesters as chief executive officer and Robert Meyers as president, Republic named Matt Begley, the former CEO of CBC, as the financing-and-factoring firm's chief operating officer.

"Republic has built a strong foundation and reputation in the commercial-finance industry," Begley said at the time. "Together, we represent a formidable force, and I am excited to work with Stewart [Chesters] and Robert [Meyers]." ●

RETAIL

Tarantino *Continued from page 1*

items from third-party brands and, eventually, fashion.

"It's destination retail," said Tarantino, who cuts an idiosyncratic figure with her mane of pink hair. "I want people to have an experience when they come up here." She also hopes to produce events for designers and make the space available to be rented out for such gatherings as birthday celebrations.

The 1,000-square-foot shop formerly served as her brand's showroom. It features handpainted walls, concrete-glitter floors, and a chandelier that features Tarantino's jewelry and branches reminiscent of octopus tentacles. Tarantino designed the chandelier with Philadelphia artist Adam Wallacavage. Fixtures that appear inside the boutique were designed by Campos.

The space also features a collage that includes pictures of her retail inspirations such as Barbara Hulanicki, an influential retailer during the 1960s Swinging London period in England, as well as Elio Fiorucci, the founder of the **Fiorucci** fashion label and a creator of retail destinations.

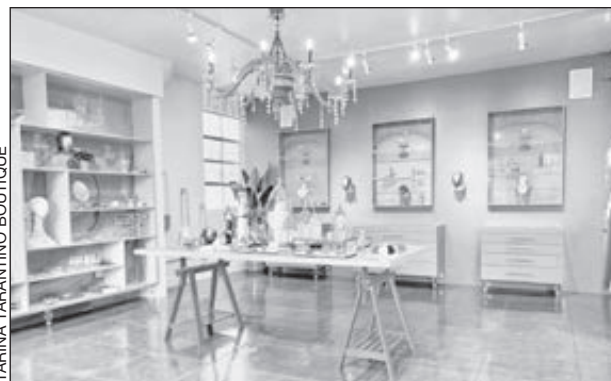
She and Campos acquired the building in 2007, but the entrepreneurs had a lot of work ahead of them. For more than six decades, 910 S. Broadway housed a number of apparel factories. Tarantino said that it took years to refurbish the building from being a factory space to being one for shops and creative office spaces.

Since it had been zoned as commercial space, she did not have to petition the city of Los Angeles to rezone the building. She declined to state how much she paid for the building and how much it took to remodel it. The building is 60 percent leased. Tenants include design offices for accessories brand **Incipio** as well as **Mira**, an augmented-reality company.

While Tarantino and Campos remodeled the building, the corner of Broadway and Ninth welcomed the first wave of luxe retail boutiques opening in the neighborhood. In December 2013, Swedish brand **Acne Studios** opened a flagship on a corner of Broadway and Ninth. **Urban Outfitters** opened an emporium in the former **Rialto Theatre**.

The next month, the Ace Hotel opened down Broadway. In later years, the **Theory**, **Mykita** and **BNKR** brands moved to the corner of Broadway and Ninth. Up the street, flagships for **Vans** and **Apple** are scheduled to open, as is a **Paul Smith** boutique and **Ganni**, a Danish brand.

Tarantino does not feel bad about not being part of the first wave of retailers on her street. "The timing is perfect. I did a pop-up on [The Sparkle Factory's] street level in 2016. It was



The Tarina Tarantino boutique at The Sparkle Factory building



Tarina Tarantino



Accessories at the Tarina Tarantino boutique



The Sparkle Factory building at 910 S. Broadway

too early. There was no foot traffic. Now it is a different story," she said. "There is organic foot traffic. There are enough stores on the street for people to feel like they are having a proper shopping experience."

Unveiled in 1914, the building was the backdrop to a lot of downtown Los Angeles history. It gained cachet as the site where portions of the 1923 silent Harold Lloyd comedy "Safety Last" was filmed. It also was home to the **Western Costume Company**, which continues to serve as a major Hollywood costumer to film and television productions.

In 2010, enigmatic and popular street artist Banksy made a

mural on the side of the building, which formerly faced an open parking lot. Now it faces a walkway across from the **Broadway Palace Apartments**. Tarantino and Campos covered it with **Plexiglas** to preserve it, and it continues to be an attraction, with Banksy fans regularly dropping by to take photos. Tarantino forecasted that there would be a lot more shoppers.

"As far as Los Angeles' retail scene, [downtown Los Angeles] is still new," Tarantino said. "We know that we have to get creative for customers to come to experience our stores, and that makes it more fun. Downtown Los Angeles is emerging as an exciting and vibrant community." ●

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