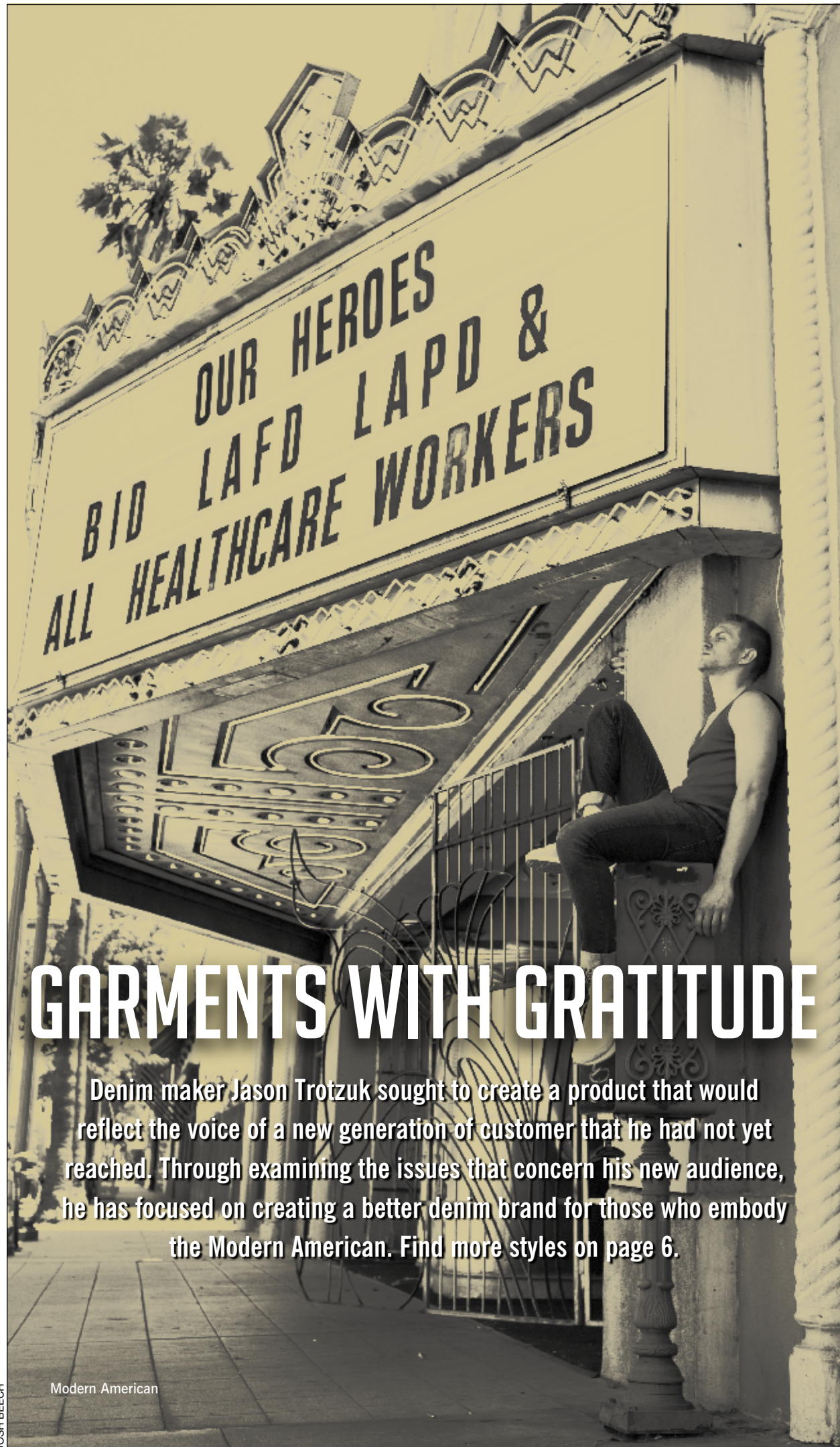


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GARMENTS WITH GRATITUDE

Denim maker Jason Trotzuk sought to create a product that would reflect the voice of a new generation of customer that he had not yet reached. Through examining the issues that concern his new audience, he has focused on creating a better denim brand for those who embody the Modern American. Find more styles on page 6.

Modern American

JOSH BEECH

TECHNOLOGY

Informa to Ramp Up Virtual Trade Show With NuOrder

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, trade shows have been postponing physical events, but that has presented opportunities for business in a virtual-trade-show setting.

Informa Markets Fashion, the producer of the sprawling **MAGIC** trade shows, announced that it would produce digital trade shows starting in August with a men's show and September with a women's event. To produce this venture, Informa formed a partnership with **NuOrder**, a Los Angeles-headquartered business-to-business e-commerce platform, said Heath Wells, a co-founder of the company.

"Imagine a fashion version of **LinkedIn**. This will be a digital trade show that allows buyers and brands to discover each other and to connect," Wells said of the venture. "Once

➔ Technology page 3

MADE IN AMERICA

U.S. Apparel Industry Relies on Collaborative Efforts to Stay Competitive

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

The movement to support domestic manufacturing in the United States was growing prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 at a slow yet steady pace. With supply chains disrupted and early shortages of personal protective equipment, apparel makers were faced with difficult decisions. One option was to become essential businesses by making the supplies necessary for essential workers and, eventually, the public.

"This has been very fast. When the factories realized production was going to close, they were very fast in realizing that shifting to PPE was going to be important due to a big demand," explained Edouard Macquin, president of the Atlanta-headquartered technology provider **Lectra Americas**. "It's not something you can do overnight, but many reacted

➔ Made in America page 5

INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to business SM

NPD on summer-clothes shopping ... p. 2

Financial-relief resources ... p. 3

Resource Guide ... p. 7

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Consumers Buy Summer Clothes Despite Pandemic Freeze

Purchasing summer clothing is creating some bright spots in the economic gloom caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data released by **The NPD Group** on May 28.

The prominent market-research company found that summer seasonal-apparel categories such as shorts and swimwear recently accounted for 20 percent of total apparel sales. The NPD also found that by the end of the week of May 2, summer seasonal-apparel sales were still down compared to last year. But declines have been softening, said Maria Rugolo, an NPD apparel-industry analyst.

"Apparel was a low priority early in the COVID-19 crisis, when consumers were focused on things like groceries and other in-home necessities, but we're seeing evidence that apparel is once again entering the spending-consideration set," Rugolo said. "Warmer weather is spanning much of the country, allowing consumers to extend their mostly homebound routines to the outdoors and expanding their apparel needs beyond comfort and above-the-keyboard dressing."

The study also found a steady rise in sales for basic apparel categories



U.S. Consumption Trends by Week—General Merchandise

increased while in-store traffic has declined as many apparel retailers across the country are just starting to open up.

In a statement, Marshal Cohen, NPD's chief industry adviser, said that consumer behavior remains in flux. "The consumer's buying behavior has been consistently changing over the past several weeks, and with much uncertainty still looming it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. As the consumer's lifestyle goes through this transformation, retail needs to hone in on opportunities to address those changes in order to achieve sustainable long-term growth."—*Andrew Asch*

ries such as underwear and sleepwear. Basic apparel took a larger portion of the recent apparel market, capturing 25 percent of sales in the last week of April compared to 17 percent during the same time the previous year.

The NPD also found that total U.S. retail purchasing was flat in a comparison between the week ending May 16 and the previous week. According to the study, the pandemic has changed shopping behavior. Not surprisingly, e-commerce traffic has

BDC Launches COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund to Aid Designers



From left, actor Gabrielle Union, Kevan Hall, costume designer Ruth E. Carter, Angela Dean and TJ Walker during the Black Design Collective's inaugural scholarship gala in 2019 during which Carter was honored

Founded to cultivate design talent in the industry by elevating black designers and apparel makers, the **Black Design Collective** announced last week the launch of its **COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund**. Through this initiative, the BDC seeks to support design professionals of color during the pandemic. According to the BDC, designers of color comprise less than 10 percent of America's fashion designers, and, coupled with the consistent challenges they face, these artists are experiencing greater obstacles during the COVID-19 pandemic, explained Kevan Hall of **Kevan Hall Designs**, who founded the collective with Angela Dean of **DeanZign** and TJ Walker of **Cross Colours**.

"When you add a pandemic that causes canceled income and a decline in demand for creatives, something had to be done. Without support, these designers may never recover and their contributions to the industry would be lost," Hall said. "The COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund will provide micro-grants to designers and affiliates to help them cover operating costs and increase online brand awareness and sales."

In addition to raising money for the fund through <https://www.gofundme.com/f/black-design-collective-covid19-crisis-fund>, the collective is working on providing additional resources to aid designers. Every Monday, the BDC hosts virtual Los Angeles-based workshops via **Zoom** in order to address COVID-19-related topics that include brand building, label expansion, digital marketing and financial assistance such as the **Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program**.

The invitation-only workshops, led by creative veterans, are available to members in addition to their friends and families and other industry professionals. A recent workshop, hosted by *Essence Magazine's* former editor-in-chief, Constance White, was the first session produced from New York City.

Additionally, the BDC is proud to reveal that many of its members have been diligently contributing to the support of frontline workers and protection of the public by manufacturing masks and adding protective features to existing personal protective equipment such as hospital gowns. These steps have allowed these designers to continue employing staff, but Hall reveals that additional support is needed to maintain production led by these creatives.

"We are raising money for the fashion, costume, accessory and textile communities along with industry affiliates," he said. "We need your help to help our creative community of black design talent."

—*Dorothy Crouch*

Inside the Industry

The **Dallas Market Center** announced that its Apparel & Accessories Market will run June 23–26 and its Men's Market would run Aug. 14–18. The Texas-based market center reopened for business May 4 working with health officials to support health and safety, said Cindy Morris, the Dallas Market Center's president and chief executive officer. Market-center executives were mindful that retailers might have concerns. "We understand that for many retailers their first steps are reopening their doors, restarting their sales and then making careful decisions about visiting the marketplace. But Dallas has clear advantages that balance good business with good health," said Eva Walsh, the market's executive vice president of retail development.

Target Corp. announced that it would be participating in a new retailing service produced by the social-media platform Instagram. Named Instagram Checkout, the application allows shoppers to make purchases on Instagram without leaving the page where they were shopping. In the past, shoppers had to leave Instagram to make a purchase. Target consumers can specifically visit the retailer's Instagram pages @Target and @TargetStyle. Instagram is owned by Facebook, Inc. The company's Facebook division recently introduced a new digital-commerce application called Facebook Store.

Talkshopleive, a live video service with a commerce platform, announced that it will introduce a pay-to-enter live-streaming service. The service will enable people producing Talkshopleive events to monetize their events. Page owners can use this service to keep track of inventory and cash in real time as they sell products. Viewers will be able to purchase products and also make donations, according to co-founders Bryan Moore and Tina Moore.

Mossimo Giannulli, a California designer who shot to stardom during the 1990s, agreed to plead guilty for his involvement in the Operation Varsity Blues college-admissions bribery scandal that became national news in 2019. His wife, Lori Loughlin, who starred in the sitcom "Full House," also pled guilty to attempting to fraudulently gain admission to the University of Southern California for their daughters. A formal sentencing will be announced in August. Giannulli might serve five months in prison, pay a \$250,000 fine and complete 250 hours of community service. Loughlin faces two months in prison, a \$150,000 fine and 100 hours of community service.

The **Afterpay** payments platform announced May 26 that Elana Rubin would transition from the publicly traded company's interim chair to the chair of its board. Anthony Eisen, Afterpay's chief executive officer and managing director, said that Rubin's selection was made after an extensive global search. The company also announced that Sharon Rothstein was appointed as an independent non-executive director of Afterpay. She will join the board on June 1. Rothstein presently sits on the board of Yelp Inc. and is also an operating partner at Stripes Group, a growth equity firm. She formerly served as a global chief marketing officer for Starbucks Corp. and as a senior vice president of marketing at Sephora. Afterpay is traded on the Australian Stock Exchange under the symbol APT.

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Businesses Navigate PPP Loans and Other Disaster-Relief Sources

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

The U.S. Small Business Administration's Payment Protection Program distributed billions of dollars in loans in the past months to companies with less than 500 employees that were hurt by the COVID-19 economic shutdown. According to Tom Waldman, a shareholder in the law firm of **Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth**, opportunities remain to get SBA loans.

Despite the hassles and the flawed rollout of the loan program, in addition to the criticisms of the SBA distributing loans to big businesses, Waldman said that the benefits of these loans outweigh the problems.

"They're better than bank interest rates," Waldman said. Businesses can apply to have loans forgiven. If businesses can prove to the SBA that its loans were spent in an eight-week period on expenses such as payroll, utilities, rent or a mortgage, companies do not have to pay back the PPP loan. However, applying for loan forgiveness is onerous.

"The loan-forgiveness form is quite complicated," Waldman said. "It is 11 pages. It looks like a tax return in terms of details that you need to provide."

Businesses asking for loan forgiveness have to prove how many employees continued working at their facilities, and they also must show the other areas where they spent the loan money.

Waldman recommended looking for new PPP loans at smaller banks that may have not been overwhelmed by applications in the last couple of months. Waldman said that there is no near-term deadline to apply for these loans as Congress will likely not review the program until October.

The SBA's PPP program is intended for small businesses. Larger operations plus small businesses can apply for the Main Street Lending Program supported by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Main Street Lending Program loans could be used for pay-



roll, similar to the PPP options. They can also be used for such things as moving costs and buying inventory. They cannot be used for compensating shareholders.

SBA loans and programs from the federal government are not the only game in town for seeking disaster relief and crisis support. Local governments also offer assistance programs.

The **PACE Business Development Center**, headquartered in Los Angeles' Pico-Union district, has been advising its clients on SBA loans and other programs through this crisis, said Daniel Ing, the group's marketing manager.

The City of Los Angeles has offered a small-business emergency-relief micro-loan program in which Los Angeles businesses can apply for loans that range from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Borrowers must pay back loans in 18 months to five years.

Some districts in the County of Los Angeles also offer assistance programs. There is a loan program for L.A. County's District 1, where loans are offered to encourage development for unincorporated areas around cities in that district such as Bell, Commerce and Cudahy.

The **Economic Development Agency**, which is a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce, offers a loan program for building a business around economically disadvantaged areas in South Los Angeles and the southeastern cities of Los Angeles County such as East Los Angeles, Montebello and Monterey Park. PACE serves as an SBA micro-loan lender and an SBA community advantage lender. Some of these loans can help with needs such as buying inventory, debt refinancing and building working capital. Many of these loans are reserved for minority-owned businesses.

PACE counselors can help determine what loan programs could serve a business best, though businesses also must be proactive in sourcing aid, Ing said.

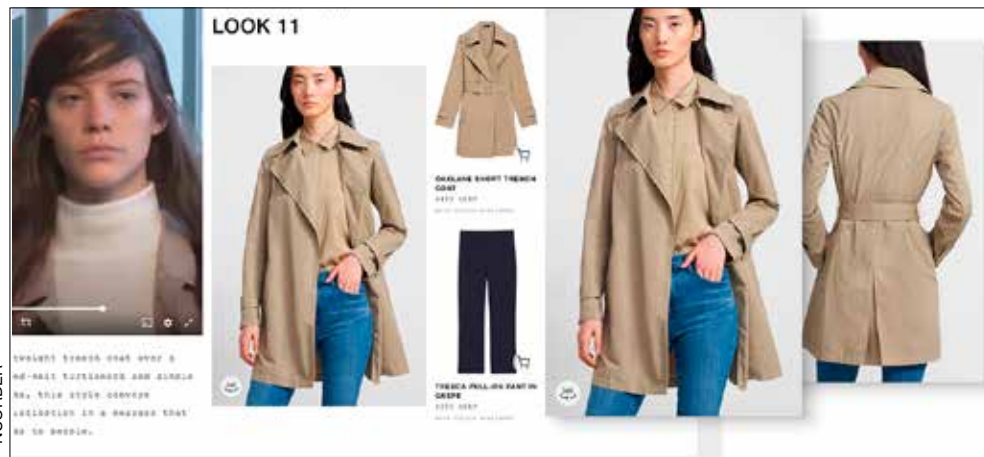
"You can't wait [until] the point that you are so desperate that it is a challenge," Ing said of searching for loans and aid. Businesses must be prepared to demonstrate that they qualify for specific loan programs.

"Businesses must be prepared for the application process because that takes time," he explained. "It helps to have your finances in order and know how much you need and what you need it for. It's a race against time while you wait for funding to be approved and for the funds to show up in your bank account."

Major businesses and utilities also offer grant programs. Communications and technology company **Verizon** has funded a Verizon Small Business Recovery Fund. On April 30, it announced a round of grants that has a total of \$2.5 million to help small businesses meet payroll, pay rent and help with operational needs, according to Rose Stuckey Kirk, Verizon's chief corporate social-responsibility officer.

"Verizon recognizes how valuable small businesses are and that the economic stability of our communities is based on their success," she said in a statement. "It's critical that we lean in and support these businesses so they can continue to sustain themselves during this unprecedented time of need." ●

TECHNOLOGY



Technology *Continued from page 1*

you are connected, you enter the digital equivalent of the trade-show booth."

The upcoming market will feature aspects of NuOrder's recently released Virtual Showroom platform. Virtual-trade-show booths and showrooms will include 360-degree product imagery. It is billed as giving buyers the ability to view an item as they would at a physical trade show—from all angles and highlighting details such as fabrications up close.

The platform also features immersive brand experiences such as the ability to post video footage from runway shows and designer interviews.

NuOrder's Virtual Showroom also will offer a global photography network that will support producing 360-degree product photography. Transactions also can be made on or off the platform according to a user's wishes.

NuOrder has worked with 2,000 brands and 500,000 retailers, according to a brand statement. Companies working with NuOrder include **Nordstrom**, **Bloomingdale's**, as well as brands such as **Vince**, **Theory** and **Lacoste**.

Wells said that the physical trade show would remain a vital part of the trade-show experience; however, he forecasted that trade shows will develop into something of an omni-channel experience, similar to how bricks-and-mortar retail and digital retail are often divisions in the same retail

company. But the current moment represents a big change for digital-trade-show platforms.

While digital wholesale platforms such as **Brandboom** and **Joor** have become an established part of the fashion business, digital trade shows, or wholesale platforms run in conjunction with established trade shows, have not gained the success or been as widely used as physical trade shows. In the past, **UBM**, the former owner of **MAGIC**, produced the virtual trade show **ShopTheFloor**. In 2018, NuOrder worked with the **Agenda** trade show to build a digital extension of Agenda.

While the technology to produce digital trade shows has been around for the past few years, there hasn't been an overwhelming industry interest until the pandemic curtailed public gatherings, Wells said.

"Brands were sitting on the fence before this. It's forced them to jump into the pool," Wells said of the current environment. Virtual trade shows will remain a way of doing business. "As people start traveling again, and markets open up for physical meetings, the digitalization of the presentation will still exist. What will happen will be an integration with the physical world," he said.

Digital showrooms and trade shows will make the wholesale business more efficient. Virtual showrooms also might cut down on the need to send out clothing samples. One could get a good sense of them from visiting a digital showroom, Wells contended.

Other technology companies producing virtual showrooms have been seeing increases in interest from fashion brands and retailers. **Faves**, a Copenhagen-headquartered technology company, has seen increased interest in retailers using its digital products to plan buying, said Ulla Hald, the company's chief executive officer and co-founder. There has been a spike of 46 percent of retailers using the Faves app in a year-over-year comparison from April 13–May 24, 2020, over the same period the previous year, Hald said.

"Because trade shows are postponed as the climate is still deemed unsafe, businesses will approach digital trade shows and showrooms out of necessity," she said. "It's the stick, not the carrot, that's driving digital adoption."

Eric Martin, owner of Los Angeles-headquartered **The Park Showroom**, has exhibited for years at major trade shows such as **Project**. His showroom exhibited brands in a 3,000-square-foot space at Project in Las Vegas in February. He predicted that retailers would be comfortable making orders digitally for products they know well. But he also forecasted that physical trade shows would continue to be important for new brands. Retailers would want to kick the tires of a new product before committing to it, Martin said.

"If you have always driven a **Ford** and you want to switch over to a **Chevy**, you're going to want to give it a physical test drive," he said. "In this case, you might not always take a sales rep's word for it over the Internet." ●

75
Fashionable Years

PHOTO: MEERA FOX FOR GETTY IMAGES; DESIGNER: WILLFREDO GERRARDO

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RETAIL



L.A. Mayor Gives Green Light to Reopen Retail

After weeks of being required to shut down operations because of the COVID-19 pandemic, boutiques and independent shops were given the green light on May 27 by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti to reopen.

Since late March, bricks-and-mortar retailers deemed nonessential had to close operations. Recently, these businesses were permitted to conduct curbside retail sales where staff was allowed to place goods in the trunks of parked cars. Many retailers continued to run their digital operations.

"All retail establishments may reopen for in-person shopping," Garcetti said. "With the proper safety measures and with extraordinary caution we can now go back into all stores."

Garcetti noted that consumers have been allowed to shop for goods at pharmacies and grocery stores during the pandemic shut-down.

"We couldn't shop at our local neighborhood stores. They have suffered, and many are at the point where they are not coming back," he said. "We know how to shop safer. We have learned a lot about social distancing, wearing our masks, making sure that we follow protocols on washing hands, but we have to make sure that we don't punish our local stores and that we begin to fortify again our Main Streets."

Veteran Los Angeles boutique **Polkadots & Moonbeams** will reopen for business, said Wendy Freedman, the shop's founder. It had been handling business recently with curbside pickup and virtual appointments, where Freedman would show store goods through phone cameras. When the store, located at 8631 W. Third St. in Los Angeles, reopens, it will have to follow new rules. It will remain open during shorter hours, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. It must also follow protocols such as customers and staff wearing face masks and also limiting the number of people who are allowed into the store.

Freedman forecasted that retailers would reopen slowly. She also noted that many consumers would take their time before venturing out. "No one's going to be waiting in line like **Starbucks**," Freedman said. But there is a lot of pent-up demand. "People don't want to wear the same stuff all the time. It makes them more depressed," she said.

The closures came during a crucial time for her business. In past years, spring meant women buying styles for festivals like **Coachella** and also special events such as weddings, graduations and Mother's Day. But many weddings and graduations have been canceled or postponed. However, a lot of her loyal customers kept an eye out for the store. "I am so happy and grateful that people have given support," she said.

After the mayor's announcement, Los Angeles' **Beverly Center** announced it would reopen on May 29. **South Coast Plaza** in Costa Mesa, Calif., announced it would reopen on June 1.

The **Citadel Outlets** retail center, a short drive south of downtown Los Angeles, reopened on May 28, though individual stores were responsible for their own reopenings. It was anticipated that 24 mall stores would open in-store operations by the weekend. These shops include outlets for **Old Navy**, **Lucky Brand**, **Michael Kors** and **Marni**. Other stores would continue to operate only with curbside pickup and virtual shopping, according to a statement from the retail center.

When Citadel stores reopen, they'll have to observe health protocols recommended by the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. These measures include:

- limiting the number of customers to no more than 50 percent of the store's maximum capacity
- marked aisles indicating traffic can only travel in one direction
- clearly designated entrances and exits
- social-distancing standards of six feet between staff and shoppers
- floor markings to indicate physical distancing
- physical partitions such as **Plexiglass** barriers
- frequent cleaning of store areas
- hand sanitizers, tissues and trash cans near the entrance to the store
- time set aside for regular deep cleaning

Individual shops and stores in retail neighborhoods also announced reopenings. **Dover Street Market** in downtown Los Angeles' Arts District was scheduled to reopen May 29. Popular resale store chain **Buffalo Exchange** said that its Los Angeles-area locations around Melrose Avenue and in Sherman Oaks, Calif., as well as in Santa Monica, Calif.; Long Beach, Calif.; and Costa Mesa, Calif., would reopen June 3.

The company also announced that it would require customers to wear face masks and encourage contactless payments through methods such as **Apple Pay**, **Google Pay**, **Samsung Pay** and tap-to-pay credit cards. If a consumer needs to use a credit-card keypad, the consumer will be provided with a clean **Q-tip** to punch in a PIN number, said Rebecca Block, Buffalo Exchange's vice president.

"It's been a long, uncertain road, and things may not be 'normal' for quite some time, but we're excited to see our Buffalo family again and get back to what we do best," she said.—*Andrew Asch*

Made in America

Continued from page 1

like that in a matter of weeks.”

At **SEAMS**, the organization that represents the interests of sewn products within the United States, Executive Director Will Duncan also recognized a desire from members on how to make and access PPE for health-care workers and government organizations.

“They recognized it immediately. Our whole industry—we started getting calls immediately from people looking for PPE, especially face masks, but gowns as well,” he said. “We had some members that were up and running within a week. They pivoted their businesses, not only those in cut and sew but also textile mills.”

The initial manufacturing shift

Relying on a global network that included peers from China, which was the first region to experience the devastation of the coronavirus, Macquin was able to learn from these colleagues how to support his clients in the United States and guide them through organizing a PPE-production model within a short amount of time. With many questions regarding how to navigate this new manufacturing frontier, he had comprehensive solutions to meet the immediate needs of customers.

“There were a lot of goals and questions from our customers. The good news was that dealing with PPE is not very complex from a technical standpoint. It is probably more complex to deal with shirt measuring or something similar,” he said. “There was a lot of requests for mask patterns, but when you don’t know how [to do it], you need help.”

As his customers began to receive order cancellations, Ram Sareen, founder of the Los Angeles technology company **Tukatech**, knew he wanted to help. Recognizing that many manufacturers within the apparel industry were unfamiliar with PPE production, he was able to work with his staff to create patterns to guide businesses in need.

“These companies were making bras and panties, jackets and denim, outerwear and leatherwear—they didn’t know how to make PPE,” he explained. “I created a task force within Tukatech, and we started making patterns. Several people within our company had done similar products for customers. We started creating [patterns for] HAZMAT suits, caps, masks, gloves, boot covers and gowns. Since we are a technology company, we could make a digital 3-D sample and create sewing instructions to hand over to anyone.”

One of Tukatech’s clients, Marta Miller, co-founder of Los Angeles’ **Lefty Production Co.** was nearly devastated by the blight of COVID-19.

“My husband and I started getting on the phone with hospitals and we landed a \$500,000 order in masks,” she said. “My team pretty much continued to work on our core business and help the few clients who could sustain their businesses during this time. Some clients actually found their audience improved because their audience was shopping from home.”

For Brenna N. Schneider, founder and chief executive officer of the Lawrence, Mass., manufacturer **99Degrees**, the shift from creating performance activewear to making PPE was an easy decision after the state government announced the Manufacturing Emergency Response Team initiative to support production shifts. Through producing isolation gowns, Schneider was able to find her place within this new industry.

“First we recognized that COVID-19 would be interrupting our supply chain,” she said. “We started seeing some materials being delayed. Then, when it became clear that it was coming to the U.S. and would impact our operation, we started thinking about risk management.”

Initially, the COVID-19 pandemic was



a scary new landscape for Jeoff Bodenhorst Jr., president of both **SEAMS** and the **Lebanon Apparel Corporation**—also known as **LACorp**—a Virginia-based cut-and-sew plant. By April, Bodenhorst had used his industry contacts to secure projects making face coverings for the Department of Health and Human Services, which eventually expanded to include isolation gowns. Following this shift, Bodenhorst’s regular clientele began to resurface.

“In the middle of April we saw a rebound in our typical customers, and new customers started placing orders again with new PPE requests and other needs from our historical customers. This all hit at the same time,” he said, expressing optimism for the continued domestic production of PPE. “From a manufacturing point of view, I think there will be a greater push for PPE production in America with American textiles.”

A new domestic-manufacturing model

Citing the potential for opportunities in a post-COVID-19 apparel-manufacturing industry, **Sewn Products Equipment & Suppliers of the Americas** President Michael McDonald believes that companies who invested in modern equipment will see a return by remaining competitive with their counterparts in Asia. Remaining prepared to incorporate PPE production in their offerings for the long term will afford new opportunities for brands who invested in these tools early on compared to those brands that were simply shifting to this type of product to maintain their businesses.

“We were seeing an increase in domestic manufacturing slowly. The industry is coming close to solving a lot of those hurdles through automation,” he said. “The hurdle has always been labor costs. We can be viable. If you come in and invest, you can compete with Chinese or Vietnamese labor, and you can make products that compete with those costs, but you can’t do it with the same equipment you bought in 1942.”

This rings true for Schneider, who has secured contracts for more than 2 million level one and two gowns. An investment she made a year ago with her technology partner, **Lectra**, prepared her for this very moment.

“Finally, a year ago, we purchased an IX machine. We’ve been doing automated cutting with **Lectra** for the last maybe six months or so,” she said. “It’s a newer machine for us, and we’ve been in business for seven years.”

Implementing social-distancing practices, **99Degrees** management was able to retain employees. This ability to be agile and quickly change the course of her production has allowed Schneider to remain relevant now, and she also looks toward a future that allows her to support the brands with whom she has partnered.

“One of the benefits of U.S. manufacturing is the demand-driven production model, where speed enables more inventory turn.

During any crisis cash is king, and if all of your cash is tied up in inventory that can be a problem and a risk. It works in brands’ favor to be responsive to demand and mitigate that risk during a period of uncertainty,” she said. “How can U.S. manufacturing help brands become more focused on speed and be demand driven?”

As a low-minimum manufacturer who made masks as one component of its product offerings prior to the coronavirus outbreak, **FabFad** founder and CEO Sean Saberi was well prepared with his Los Angeles-based “concept-to-closet” microfactory model that reduces waste and allows brands greater inventory management. He sees a post-COVID-19 industry that is more nimble and able to weather crises.

“This was our DNA from the get go. We’ve been talking about this model for the past two years, saying this is where fashion

should be. We are showing how this can withstand a pandemic and tariffs,” he said. “We are talking about smart inventory. We have an algorithm to make sure we can make an appropriate amount of units, which means less waste.”

While the current apparel industry in the time of COVID-19 has seen a more-open environment that embraces working together as a benefit rather than a threat, more collaboration is needed, specifically from the government. From manufacturers to industry organizations, many who work in apparel would like to see a government initiative for PPE similar to the Department of Defense’s **Berry Amendment**, which requires funds spent on the purchase of many products—including clothing, fabrics, fibers and yarns—be dedicated to support providers within the United States.

“The country as a whole doesn’t want to see us in this shortage crisis again,” Duncan said. “There certainly needs to be some type of legislation for us to have a base and companies to have long-term contracts. Hopefully we will see that.”

While the made-in-the-U.S.A. movement was advancing steadily, Bodenhorst noticed that the coronavirus pandemic created greater support for domestic products due to the accessibility that solves supply-chain issues. He has also recognized a greater sense of community across the country as brands, manufacturers and consumers support one another.

“There was a slow movement, almost comparable to the farmers market movement in which people buy produce locally. This coronavirus is making us examine how we can help our neighbors. We can sew in the U.S. We can make fabric in the U.S.,” he said. “If the government was buying the products, it would support the industry, and then private companies would begin buying because it would be made more efficiently here.” ●

Go Beyond the News and Behind the Scenes

The editors and writers of *California Apparel News* are blogging at *ApparelNews.net*

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Fidelity Denim Founder Develops a Jean for the Modern American

Driven by his own generation's seeming inability to overcome racism, sexism, classism and polluting, **Fidelity Denim** founder Jason Trotzuk wanted to create a brand that not only spoke to generations Y and Z but also gave a voice to their concerns. With the launch of **Modern American** in February, Trotzuk gave these consumers a more meaningful shopping experience. While his peers embraced the premium-denim boom that occurred during the early days of the 2000s, Trotzuk has seen a clear shift in the priorities of the audiences he wants to reach.

"They don't care about high-end denim. It means nothing to them. It means nothing to their friends, their social circles—it means absolutely nothing. What matters to that 15-to-35-year-old or 20-to-35-year-old is all of the issues that surround them outside of fashion," he said. "Eco, sustainable, reusable, repurposed fashion is totally in. They want locally made versus product imported from countries that don't deal with human-welfare issues."

As a member of Generation X, Trotzuk recognizes his place sits between the Baby Boomer generation that grew up following World War II and during the Vietnam War and these younger generations that are facing the greatest global



crises of environmental threats and socio-political strife.

"Even though these generations are faced with the biggest challenge we've faced as a species, they don't know how to get together. As a designer, I want to create what I am seeing on **Instagram**—baggy jeans, mom jeans and dad jeans, but my Fidelity customer isn't interested," he said. "I had to make sure the brand itself had meaning and substance."

Modern American products are made ethically and completely in North America with cotton from the United States, denim production at **Tavex** and **Double Dragon** in Mexico, and jeans manufactured in Mexico and Los Angeles. Zippers are made using material from 100 percent recycled water bottles, while labels and trims are created from 100 percent post-consumer waste. The brand relies on a wash process that reduces water usage and utilizes waterless ozone finishing. Silhouettes include the women's Soho Crop, a Soho Skinny, The Highland—an updated boyfriend—and a '70s-style wide leg. Men's cuts feature the Ventura, a relaxed fit, and Fig, a skinny.

"I was always fascinated with the history of the U.S., but at

this point I made a decision that I didn't care what happened in the past, I want to see what we can do in the future," Trotzuk said. "Vintage Americana was glorious and wonderful, but that was in the past, and we need to march forward by looking forward. I wanted to know what a Modern American looks like."

Turning his denim making into a mission through the Modern American brand seems promising for Trotzuk. Upon its launch at **Nordstrom** in Los Angeles and New York, the brand gained a large following for two weeks—and the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Retailing for \$120–\$140, Modern American is part of Trotzuk's vision to use his brand as a platform.

"If I had 10 million members of ModAm and I sold an eco hat and took \$20 from each sale from that hat alone it would give me \$200 million, which is a good start," he said. "I could start lobbying for change and motivating people."

As retail begins to open up and consumers return to bricks-and-mortar shops in a safe, slow manner, Trotzuk has been selling Modern American denim and face masks, which retail at \$25 for a pack of four, through **iammoderamerican.com**. To support the brand's mindful movement and show gratitude to front-line workers during the coronavirus pandemic, Modern American also donates masks to these heroes.

"I am trying to do more than just make jeans," Trotzuk explained. "I am trying to create a movement that might change the planet. It's bold and it's aggressive, but it's time."

—Dorothy Crouch

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