

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 75 YEARS

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ROMAN GONZALEZ PEÑA

Roman Gonzalez Peña
for Ruth E. Carter



VERONA TU

GRADUATING WITH HONORS

The future looks bright for Otis College of Art and Design graduating seniors who unveiled works from their mentorship experiences as they make the grade with a new vision. Read more on page 4.

INDUSTRY VOICES: FASHION

A Time for Real Change —Not Just an Instagram Post

By Kevan Hall *Contributing Writer*

“Momma” ... this is one of the final words that George Floyd uttered as life was crushed out of him by a white police officer who held his knee on Floyd’s neck for eight minutes, 46 seconds. When we are young, our mothers mean everything to us. They hold us when we scrape our knees, rub our heads when we are racked with fever and teach us our bedtime prayers.

I thought of my mother the day of the killing. Angeline Tolbert was born in Texas, the youngest daughter of 12 siblings. She was spoiled by her doting mother, who lavished her with pretty pinafores and matching redingotes. Her dad, a hardworking farmer, had accumulated nearly a thousand acres

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WHAT’S CHECKING

Retailers Navigate e-Commerce Sales During COVID-19 Pandemic

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

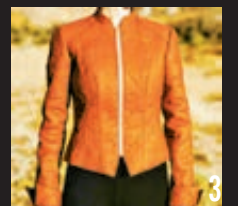
Upon the spread of COVID-19 in the United States, the crisis forced retailers around the state to change the way they did business. Retailers who emphasized bricks-and-mortar operations had to become digital retailers if they weren’t already.

The economic shock of the pandemic upended once-secure business plans that no one could have foreseen such as selling bridal gowns, prom dresses and clothes for a summer festival. Retailers have had to revise not only what they are buying and manufacturing but also how they do business.

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Yarn Movement, Nicholas Mayfield Collaborate to Empower Girls

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

Blending their distinctive fashion backgrounds, designer Nicholas Mayfield and **Yarn Movement** founder Shantelle Brumfield, who designs under the name S. Ladybug, dig back into their own childhoods to create a collection of T-shirts and beanies that afford the comfort of Grandma's house while sending a strong message that empowers girls to succeed. While Mayfield and Brumfield have worked within the same circles for years outfitting celebrities, the potential for collaboration began a few years ago.

"From our first conversation, it was a quick connection, or, as I like to say, 'stitched together,' because I am a crocheter," Brumfield said. "Our conversation was in the same vein of utilizing what we love to make an impact."

Known for his artistic fashions that rely on colorfully painted creations, Mayfield has been interested in creating a sourcing system, or belt, on a global scale. By establishing connections with communities around the world, he hopes that the people who make the materials for his collections will be able to cultivate businesses that will lead to greater empowerment.

"It's time we are making a belt when it comes to culture. We have to start working different niche markets with our cousins and family members in different countries since we are all the human race," Mayfield said. "To make sure we can make cool stuff to help the situations around us."

Through Yarn Movement, Brumfield created the Believe in What You Dream initiative, which has led the crocheter to visit different countries in Africa including Nigeria, Morocco and Tanzania. It is in these areas



Yarn Movement's Believe in What You Dream initiative in Morocco

that Brumfield teaches school-age girls to crochet while also providing a Dream Girl Kit that includes supplies that will empower them through preparedness. One of Brumfield's former pupils (also known as "believers"), Hafssa Marni, has launched her own business and is now registered to attend university.

As a former investigative-research scientist and chemistry teacher, Brumfield is familiar with problem solving and connecting with students, often relying on the same concepts used in crocheting to connect with pupils. With this experience, she set out to build the initiative that would cultivate confidence in girls to help them succeed.

"Three and a half years ago I had just returned from Nigeria. That trip was driven by



Nicholas Mayfield's goddaughters, Chloe (left) and Madison Morgan, model pieces from his collaboration with Yarn Movement.



I Believe collection

whether I could go into a culture that I wasn't 100 percent familiar with, don't speak the language, and still bring yarn and teach crochet. It was incredible," she said. "Crocheting wasn't necessarily something that was foreign to them, it's just utilized in a different way."

In this region, crochet concepts and materials are often used to adorn hair, with many colors in black, gold and burgundy. While Brumfield used brighter lime greens and yellows during her trip, the new project with Mayfield now relies on colors they both recall from their childhoods. Launching this week, the I Believe collection of crocheted granny-square beanies created by Brumfield and T-shirts designed by Mayfield to relay powerful messages, such as the collection's theme of "I am the reason for the season," will pay homage to the comfort found in their grandmothers' homes when they were children, and the project will fund Dream Girl Kits for girls in Africa.

"We wanted to do grandma colors. She does granny patches, and I wanted that to be my signature with us working together. When I was a kid, all we used to do was sleep on pallets when we had family events," Mayfield recalled. "It reminds me of soul food, silence, obedience and resilience. There is something about quilts back then and listening to the women in your family. All of my family standing around listening to the elders."

As a child, Brumfield also found great influence from her grandmother and her friends. It was in this environment that Brumfield learned to crochet the granny-square styles that are now being incorporated into the collection. With experiences similar to Mayfield's, Brumfield also hopes to provide comfort to the customers who buy pieces from the collection.

"The pattern always reminds people of their childhoods, and the granny square is that for me. It allows me to pay homage," she said.

"For us, in the culture of being black families, we had the same things in our houses. It was the wood-paneled walls, the crocheted blankets on the couches. There was this intermixing of textures and colors. Everything had primary colors, but you also had the color combination of brown, orange, yellow and red. It brings back that feeling of being in the comfortable space of your family or grandmother's home centered around love."

For every piece sold from the collection, 100 percent of the proceeds will be donated to purchase Dream Girl Kits. The beanies, which retail for \$100, and T-shirts, priced at \$80, will provide materials to create a dream catcher, yarn, a hook, scissors, a journal, a solar lamp and sanitary products. Each piece within the kit holds great importance to encourage girls to succeed. While the dream-catcher materials, journal and crocheting tools serve to inspire girls creatively, the solar lamp serves a more-practical purpose in schools where overnight students traditionally rely on kerosene lamps for reading at night. In a region where the female cycle is taboo, the Dream Girl Kits also provide reusable sanitary products, which are made by women in Uganda, allowing the young girls to strive for the awesome potential that Brumfield sees in them.

"The most important part for me is to help young girls discover their superpowers," Brumfield said. "That is the mission, that is the goal, that is the energy behind it. When they discover their superpowers, they are both theoretically and economically empowered to be fearless in the future."

T-shirts and beanies for the collection are available via the Yarn Movement website at <https://products.yarnmovement.com> and through Nicholas Mayfield's **Instagram** account, @st.nicholasmfmayfield1st. ●

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WELCOME BACK!
LA MARKET JUNE 15-18



A young Believer holds her AFRIPADS package

MII Launch Affords a Central Unifier for Greener Materials Development, Sourcing

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

Transitioning into a mainstream rather than a specialty segment, ecologically sound approaches to apparel manufacturing can be found in brands that claim full sustainability and others that launch capsule collections based in greener practices. With each of these important steps toward manufacturing clothing that leads toward a healthier planet, advancements in producing materials that contribute to a sustainable supply chain are crucial.

To increase exposure for manufacturers of eco-friendly materials, Stephanie Downs, an entrepreneur with more than 20 years of experience, and Nicole Rawling, a lawyer with more than 13 years of corporate and nonprofit advisory experience, recently launched a new resource for the apparel industry. The two plant-based food-industry veterans recently launched the **Material Innovation Initiative**.

The nonprofit group works with materials makers and technology producers to refine formulations and approaches within the sustainable plant-based-materials category that serves the fashion, automotive and home-goods industries, eventually forging partnerships with brands and retailers.

“Most people have heard of the Beyond Burger and Impossible Burger. We were part of the movement to develop that. I ran the international programs for a nonprofit called the **Good Food Institute**, so we are now duplicating those programs for materials,” Rawling explained. “We just saw a huge increase in entrepreneurs, startups and investors in this space because of what the Good Food Institute does, and we saw a similar need in the materials space.”

Through cultivating competition within the fashion marketplace, MII’s goal is to create accessibility for the typical consumer to purchase products within the sustainable and plant-based-apparel category, which is often viewed as exclusive.

“Our belief is to use the marketplace. We feel there should be more competition out there. The better the products, the lower the prices, and the consumers get what they need,” Rawlings said. “They want reasonably priced goods that are beautiful and made with the high quality of animal materials but with the added benefit of not harming animals and the environment.”

As with many trends that make their way into apparel from



DeLaunay Jacket made with Pinatex from Ananas Anam

the food industry, the demand for natural foods paved the way for the eventual increase in demand in apparel. Due to consumer demand for responsibly made goods, trends in apparel are ticking toward plant-based products.

“Consumers are demanding more-sustainable products. Currently, there are not a lot of high-quality alternatives to animal materials at scale,” said Kirsty Stevenson, senior director of brand and product sustainability at **Gap** and a member of the MII advisory board. “The work of the Material Innovation Initiative is enabling brands greater accessibility to the alternate materials they need to meet their customers’ demands.”

To date, the San Francisco Bay Area-headquartered MII is working to promote the missions of **Bolt Threads**, **EcoPel**, **Ecovative Design**, **Natural Fiber Welding**, **Orange Fiber**,

Piñatex and **VitroLabs**. In addition to these materials providers, who are happy to work with MII, apparel manufacturers are also excited to establish connections with like-minded supply-chain partners.

Rebecca Mink of the California-headquartered, made-in-Italy luxury vegan footwear and accessories brand **Mink** depends on quality materials to make her pieces at a factory where goods for other exclusive brands are also made. She is excited to work with MII to develop vegan-leather options for her brand and to share the process with the industry.

“They [MII] think about the full spectrum. How a company makes it—is it in a sustainable way? If they got a big order, are they going to be able to sustain it and not collapse and go bankrupt?” she explained. “That could really hurt the image of this movement in sustainable fashion, and it also causes a problem with the identity. How are we going to trust anyone unless they thought this through?”

For Mink, MII’s thorough approach to research, development and scaling a business is a fresh approach to the vegan-materials market. Echoing these sentiments, **House of Fluff** Chief Executive Officer Kym Canter feels that MII is the central unifier for materials producers, brands and investors. As a brand that creates vegan luxury faux fur, with recently launched cactus-leather goods and a bio-based fur-alternative product launching later this year, Canter foresees many benefits to working with MII.

“The great thing about what they are doing is that their scope is so large and they are so thorough,” she said. “If you don’t know how to bring your goods to market, things don’t happen. MII becomes the middle person between connecting us—the brands—to the makers of these new materials, who in some cases aren’t familiar with fashion.”

According to Rawling, 55 percent of consumers across the United States would prefer a leather alternative, regardless of region, gender or economic background. Forty-seven percent of those cite concerns for animals as the reason for this preference, while 29 percent are concerned about environmental responsibility.

“Consumers really do want these alternative materials that are better for the environment and do not kill animals,” she said. “We’re not asking them to sacrifice. It’s not about giving up something that they love. It’s about having what they love but being more responsible about it.” ●

RETAIL

Amid Unrest and Uncertainty, California Retail Still Looks to Reopen

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

The killing of George Floyd while in the custody of Minneapolis police officers set off weeks of protests across America and the world. With cities still in flux due to the COVID-19 pandemic, retailers and fashion brands that were set to reopen suffered a setback.

As protests spread, the activity reached some of California’s most prominent retail areas such as Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, the **Third Street Promenade** in Santa Monica, Calif., and the streets outside of **South Coast Plaza** in Costa Mesa, Calif. Many of the protesters were peaceful; however, retailers were hit by vandals and looters who used the protests as cover for their activities. Some defaced retail streets with graffiti while others broke into stores and stole products ranging from high-end sneakers to red-carpet gowns.

As of press time, the **Los Angeles Police Department** did not have a monetary estimate of the extensive damage that took place in the City of Los Angeles.

Organized retail-crime crews have also been part of the problem, said Dr. Read Hayes, director of the **Loss Prevention Research Council** and a **University of Florida** research scientist headquartered in Gainesville, Fla. During the past couple of weeks of unrest, the LPRC has been in contact with police departments and loss-prevention staff of major retailers. It said that organized gangs of thieves followed these protests looking for opportunities. “They’re taking advantage of the chaos and times when police are overwhelmed,” Hayes said. He also mentioned that stores selling popular fashions were hit especially hard.

Retailers responded by covering shattered windows with plywood and resolving to reopen their businesses to serve their customers and their neighborhoods. The question for most retailers affected by the unrest was when they could reopen safely in a market that has continued to reel from the pandemic.

Some retail centers in the Los Angeles area opened on June 10, including Westfield Centers and the Beverly Cen-

ter. South Coast Plaza reopened June 11. Other shops that reopened were a few M.Fredric stores, such as its Malibu, Calif. location. Select Nordstrom stores were scheduled to reopen June 11. Dover Street Market in Los Angeles’ Arts District also was scheduled to reopen on June 11.

The **Pol’ Atteu Beverly Hills** atelier was looted on May 30. However, business partners and spouses Pol’ Atteu and Patrik Simpson have resolved to open as soon as they can. They put together a **GoFundMe** crowdfunding page named Restore and Reopen Pol’ Atteu Beverly Hills to finance the rebuilding of their 27-year-old store located at 9414 Dayton Way, just off of Rodeo Drive.

Simpson said that the crowdfunding page was crucial. “Since we are in Beverly Hills, people think that we can afford to rebuild. But no business can afford the loss that we’ve taken,” Simpson said. More than 100 gowns were stolen, each ranging in price from \$3,000 to \$10,000. Also stolen were jewelry, accessories and computers. In addition, the shop is the set for their reality series, “Gown and Out in Beverly Hills,” on **Amazon Prime Video**.

Simpson and Atteu have not put a final estimate on damages, but they are determined to rebuild and reopen. Some friends helped them clean up their 1,000-square-foot store during the week of June 12, including Carolyn Hennessey of the soap opera “General Hospital.” One reason they anticipate getting back to work soon is that they have been commissioned to make a gown for Hennessey for the upcoming **Daytime Emmy Awards** ceremony.

Looting broke out in Santa Monica on May 31. An estimated 200 properties suffered some damage, said Kathleen Rawson, chief executive officer of **Downtown Santa Monica Inc.**, a nonprofit that works with the City of Santa Monica to manage the business district where the Third Street Promenade is located along with other high streets.

“It was truly heartbreaking to see our beloved downtown treated in such a manner,” Rawson said. “We support peaceful protests and people’s right to express themselves, but we

do not support criminal activity, and we saw the difference between protestors and looters that day.”

After many retailers were damaged, her group distributed an emergency resource to assist businesses with processing city permits to rebuild and help them contact companies that could help them secure their properties. Santa Monica residents also dropped by to help clean up.

“What was truly inspiring and beautiful to see was the outpouring of support from residents and others who came out the day following the looting to help clean up our downtown,” Rawson said. “We put out a call on social media, and people really stepped up. There were scores of volunteers with their own brooms, dustpans and garbage bags who were out early in the morning sweeping up broken glass and debris and removing graffiti. These folks worked with the city’s maintenance team and within a few hours were able to clean up most of the damage.”

Alan Au, vice president and co-designer of **Jimmy Au’s for Men 5’8” and Under** in Los Angeles’ Sherman Oaks area, reopened his store for curbside shopping on June 8. He may reopen his store for limited in-store business on June 18. But he said that he will only reopen his in-store retail on the condition that looting is over and if L.A. County’s COVID-19 cases are declining.

Rioting came to his neighborhood on June 1 when looters broke into a **CVS** store adjacent to his shop, but his order of plywood had not been delivered by that time so he couldn’t board up 1,500 square feet of window space. The environment became tense when a group came over from the CVS.

“I’m not going to be able to stop them,” Au thought. “Maybe I can convince them to move along. I don’t want anyone to get hurt. I don’t want anyone to throw anything at my store.”

So he tried to talk to the group and reminded them about that night’s curfew. None of them would talk to him or make eye contact.

The group dispersed moments later when a man passed by and sternly told them to go home. The man continued to walk without giving his name, Au said. ●

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T.Anna
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Yossi
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CREATE CONSULTANCY C420

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LoveClosely
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Sara Tanimi
Luxury ready-to-wear

SANDRA LOULAKIS C420

Furious Furs
PETA-endorsed faux-fur outerwear

SHEILA LOTT SALES C437

MxMatthildur
Related separates

ELOISA & MIA C508

DM Merchandising
Kids' lifestyle and accessories
brands

AB SPOON C534

Mar Mar Copenhagen

Danish childrenswear

Mushie
Silicone bibs and baby goods

IN PLAY SHOWROOM C537

Paigelauren Los Angeles
Premium childrenswear

WENDY'S CLOSET C546

Cry Wolf
Children's outerwear
Tiny Treats + Zomi
Kids' jewelry
Yo Baby
Girls' clothing

NICKY ROSE KIDS C580

Boardies
Swimwear
Littlesleepies
Bamboo pajamas

JULIE SMITH KIDS C590

Tea Collection
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EDGEMINE C630

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Bohemian clothing

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Naif Montreal

CHANTAL ACCESSORIES, INC. Suite 509

Bali Elf

Bobbies

Christopher Kon
Co-lab
Dual Crossroads
INKED by Dani
Jou Jou
Kay Kay's Fashion
Sunny Cords

KRISTINE CLEARY LIFETYLES Suite 607

APNY Apparel and Masks

HASSON COSTA Suite 700

Beautiful Creatures
David Lerner
Gazelle
Goldie

SUE GOODMAN SHOWROOM Suite 909

Bracha
Noend

THE LANDA SHOWROOM, INC. Suite 1001

Barok Paris

BAHH COLLECTIVE Suite 1005

Fresh Laundry

STACY KEYES SHOWROOM Suite 1010

Ella Mara
Flat White

VALERIE HAMBAS Suite 1108

Krazy Larry

FASHION

Within a Shelter-in-Place Environment, Otis Students Complete Mentorship Program

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

Each year, graduating students and juniors from the **Otis College of Art and Design** showcase their final works, yet for the class of 2020 there was a different mood and process. Part of this milestone is the Scholarship Benefit and Fashion Show, which would have been in its 38th edition in May. While its fashion mentorship program has remained intact, the exhibition has gone virtual this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite not having a showcase, these fresh artists worked diligently to complete their mentorships with renowned designers and brands. This year's students worked with some of the most celebrated veterans in fashion and design including Marisol Gerona Bradford, vice president of design and development at **NBCUniversal, Inc.**; Doreen Brennan, vice president of design at **BCBG/Manhattan Beach Wear**; Ruth E. Carter, **Academy Award**-winning costume designer; Henriette Ernst and Amy Adams of **ALC**; Vivienne Hu, founder of **VHNY**; David Meister, founder of his eponymous brand; Sandy Oh and Yul Ku of **AG Jeans**; and Michelle Watson, founder of **MICHI**. While students were grateful for the opportunity to learn from these experts, their mentors were thankful for their own opportunities to grow while mentoring.

"It's a gift to work with people who are starting out on their journey. Working through the process of questioning for them is good for us because we took that reinvigoration for practice. The breadth of ideas was inspiring," Adams explained. "I also learned a lot by working with the teaching staff. They are so focused on how to help the students grow, and they communicate that clearly with us and the students."

Adams, the company's senior designer, together with her ALC colleague Ernst, who is the executive vice president of design for ALC, encouraged the student designers to channel their inspiration from modern influences of gender fluidity, equality and diversity. Graduating senior Roman Gonzalez Peña found inspiration in women's equality efforts but also noted how Ernst and Adams embodied the spirit of bold action undertaken during the movement.

"With my research and being inspired by the '70s and giving a voice to women's rights, my inspiration was allowing them to be who they want to be," he said. "Henriette and Amy owned the place when they came in. They started talking about the collections being androgynous, powerful and bold—I was hooked. These two are a force to be reckoned with. Fashion just oozed from them."

Other mentees found a comfortable space in which they could thrive creatively with a brand that speaks to their career ambitions. Originally from Bangkok, Verona Tu was always the fashion adventurer within her group of friends back home. "The feminist edginess is in me still," she said.

In Los Angeles, she feels comfortable, and working with members of the ALC brand allowed her to begin carving out a path in a category where she would like to build a career under direction that speaks to her own style.

"ALC is a company that is similar to what I love. Women's contemporary sportswear is what I am going toward. Working with Henriette and Amy was fun because they are so different," Tu said. "Amy thinks about the students' ideas and has the students further and polish them. Henriette gave the perspective of the industry. She would give us a lot of direction on how the project should be."

While Gonzalez Peña and Tu worked with fashion-industry veterans to create fresh ideas in design, they were both certain to emphasize the importance of reducing waste as part of a comprehensive mission to create a sustainable business. For his designs, Gonzalez Peña relied on leather to create accents, in addition to a bag that complemented a chic approach to a jumpsuit.



Roman Gonzalez Peña (pictured right)



Verona Tu (pictured right)

"It's all recycled leather. We believe in sustainability, and the school had all of this leather that was donated. I thought it wasn't fair to the animal—it's a waste of life," he said. "It worked out to give more chicness to the design. The leather bag, if I had gone to buy all that leather, it would have been more than \$1,000."

When creating pieces such as leather cropped tops complemented by a soft, pleated undershirt, Tu recognized the importance of remaining resourceful. While designing during the COVID-19 pandemic, her access to materials became limited, yet the challenge expanded her design methods, which will help her retain the innovative spirit to drive sustainability.

"As up-and-coming fashion designers, sustainability has always been on everybody's mind when designing, but it's not always reinforced," she explained. "It is something all designers should consider in their collections. A lot of companies have sub-brands with sustainable clothing. Maybe this is the time to think about how we can really be creative and practice sustainability."

Additional information regarding this year's Otis College of Art and Design showcase can be found at otis.edu/annual-exhibition/2020. ●

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FALL II/HOLIDAY 2020

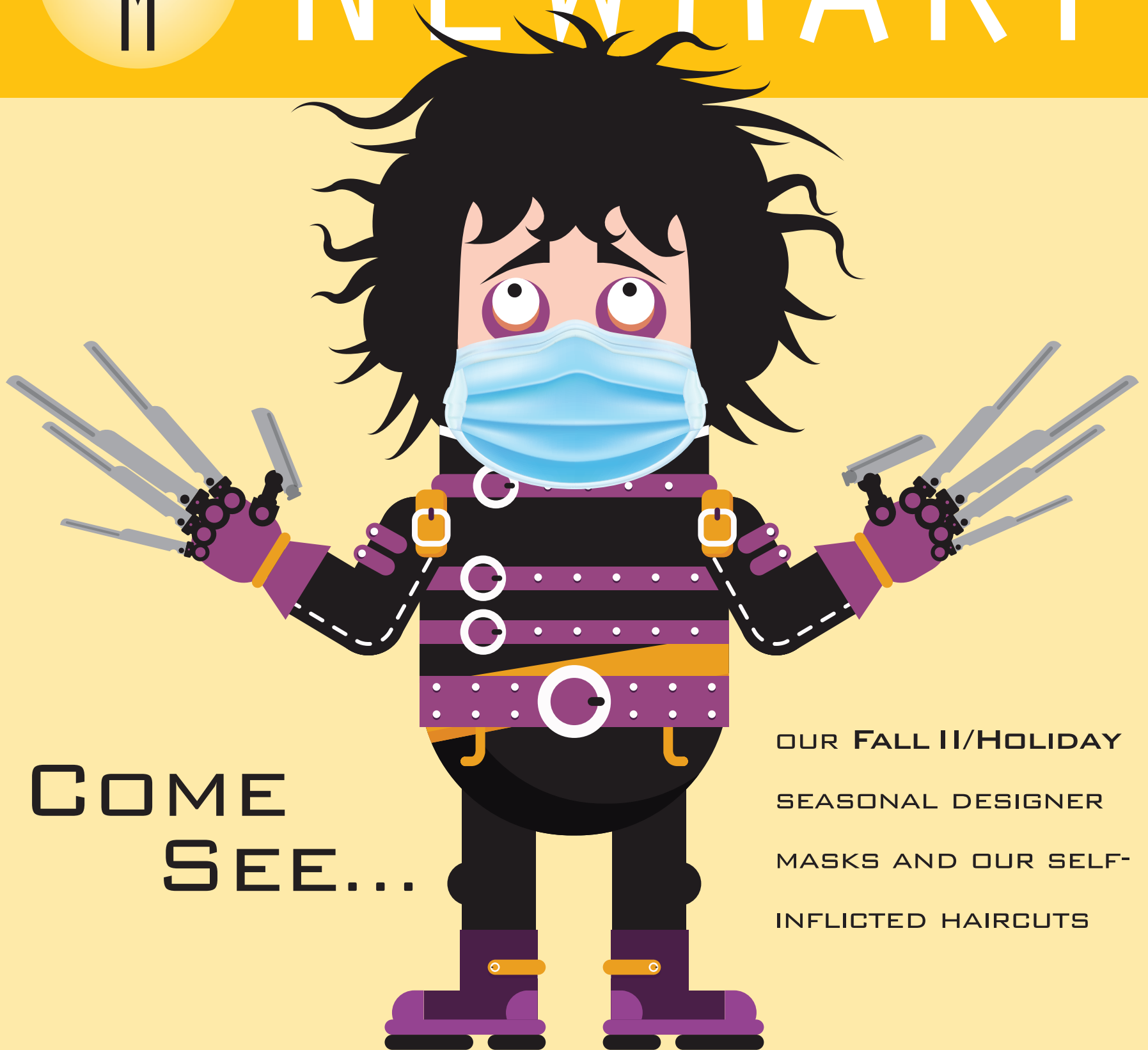
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WHAT'S CHECKING

What's Checking

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Lulus

Lulus

www.lulus.com

While Lulus has been a digital-only store since 2008, it had to scramble to figure out how to sell clothes to shoppers whose needs had changed quickly, said Colleen Winter, co-founder of *Lulus.com*. The e-emporium, headquartered in Chico, Calif., has focused on its Lulus brand of bridal, special occasion, dresses, shoes and accessories, as well as emerging designers and some third-party brands.

"This has been a drastic shock to everybody," Winter said of the past few months of navigating the pandemic's economy. "People had to prioritize what they were going to shop for."

It was such a profound change that, in mid-March, Winter put *Lulus.com*'s product pipeline on pause for the first time in its 24-year history.

The company's operations also were changed to an environment in which the e-tailer's workers could build a system where a majority of its employees could work from home.

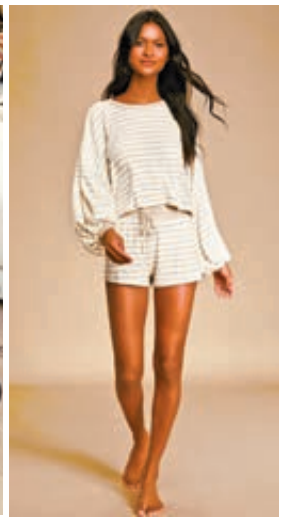
Lulus had developed a niche in making bridal and special-occasion dresses at affordable prices. Earlier this year, it expanded its selection of bridal gowns, bridesmaids dresses and even special-occasion jumpsuits

under its namesake **Lulus** label by including extended sizing. Retail price points ranged from \$60 to \$120 for bridesmaids dresses and \$75 to \$250 for bridal gowns.

But special occasion was not the only game at Lulus. Winter had already been planning to boost sales for other categories such as separates and loungewear. The pandemic forced the company to accelerate those plans. While some consumers were still buying dresses, many were buying leisure clothing and were willing to support some of Lulus developing categories. Fortunately, the retailer's manufacturing partners were capable of rapid speed to market, which allowed the retailer to stay nimble.

Top-selling items include loungewear such as the Act Casual White and Beige Striped pullover sweater, which retails for \$46, and a matching pair of shorts. Active-wear top-selling bottoms include the Yummy Black Brushed Knit jogger, which retails for \$48. The bottoms are fitted and come in several colorways. Also popular, almost anything in tie-dye, including the Cuddle Up Cutie Beige Tie-Dye Fleece jogger pants, which retail for \$40.

Winter said that core categories should rally in popularity. "I don't know how long this will last. At some point, weddings will come back," she said. "However, I think separates will remain after COVID-19."



Graffiti Beach

Graffiti Beach

2220 Fern St.
San Diego
www.Shopgraffitibeach.com

The Graffiti Beach bricks-and-mortar boutique in San Diego's South Park neighborhood closed in mid-March and like other boutiques across the state worked on its e-commerce, said Melanie Michaud, the shop's founder.

What's selling best at *shopgraffitibeach.com* and its sibling store *threadandseed.com*, which Michaud opened in 2018 a few miles away, are beauty products made from ingredients that don't carry suspected toxins. Gift boxes packed with chocolates, clean beauty items and other gifts have been big sellers.

"On Mother's Day, I got hundreds of orders for gift boxes. I thought, 'How am I going to get them out on time?' It was a big is-



sue," she said.

Since she had been able to rehire her staff after a pandemic furlough, delivering Mother's Day orders was possible. Shoppers continue to buy fashion at *shopgraffitibeach.com*. Bralettes that can be used as lingerie or serve as casualwear are popular. The bralettes come from a variety of brands such as **By Together** and **Wishlist** and are retail priced from \$14 to \$32.

Joggers are also selling well. One such bottom, The Jake Lounge pants made by the **All : Row** brand, retails for \$58. T-shirts bearing humorous slogans from the brand **Alley & Rae Apparel** also have been popular. A tee typically retails for \$36.

In the first week of June, Michaud noticed that there was an increase in demand for dresses. "People are excited to dress up again," she said.

WHAT'S CHECKING



Late Night Gypsy

Polkadots & Moonbeams

8361 W. 3rd St.
West Hollywood
www.polkadotsandmoonbeams.com

Wendy Freedman is one of the pioneers of boutique retail on West Third Street between the **Beverly Center** and **The Grove** retail centers. She started selling vintage fashions on the thoroughfare in the 1980s. Polkadots & Moonbeams developed into a boutique with its own point of view.

Hala Bahmet, stylist for the ABC series “This Is Us,” frequently used Polkadots & Moonbeams for the show’s costumes. The boutique also appeared in TV shows such as “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills” and the 2019 feature-length movie “The Wedding Year.”

But nothing prepared Freedman for the economic scenario of COVID-19. She had to put her bricks-and-mortar boutique on hiatus, which forced her and her employees to further develop the store’s e-commerce.

“People never thought they’d be quarantined at home for two weeks much less three months,” Freedman said. “Luckily, people still want to look beautiful, sexy and be comfortable on their everyday walks. People feel better if they’re in a new outfit. It will put a better spin on their day.”

After a few months in quarantine, not many consumers are looking for skinny jeans, Freedman said. However, the fashions selling have their own style. Anything tie-dye is selling well. “Tie-dye is going to last through



Polkadots & Moonbeams

fall,” Freedman said.

One brand doing well with tie-dye is the Los Angeles-headquartered **Late Night Gypsy**. The brand takes vintage sweatshirts and T-shirts and works with dye houses to tie-dye them. A Late Night Gypsy tie-dye tee retails for \$78.

Another simple piece that has been popular has been the ribbed tank top from the retailer’s namesake **Polkadots & Moonbeams** brand. It retails for \$26.

“It’s a beautiful underpinning of the shape,” Freedman said. “That’s what I am about as a buyer—the shape. This should make your body look amazing.”

A trend of repurposed clothing, or vintage clothing that has been tailored into a new garment, has continued to be popular, she said. Shoppers are also interested in trends of matching tops and bottoms.

“Face masks are a big deal,” she said. “Everyone is putting a mask into their cart.”

Along with the pandemic, Freedman’s neighbors had to deal with looting. About five shops were looted in her neighborhood when the George Floyd protests hit Los Angeles.

However, post-unrest, shoppers from all backgrounds volunteered to help clean up the neighborhood and have sought to support retailers by shopping.

“It’s been crazy what we have been pounded with on a retail level,” Freedman said. “But part of being a retailer is embracing what is happening with our country and embracing the change.”



Prince Peter Collection

Haley Solar

4606 Eagle Rock Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.haleysolar.com

When stay-at-home orders were issued in March, Haley Solar closed her bricks-and-mortar boutique and took an accelerated course in developing her digital and social-commerce channels.

When people shopped her digital channels, haleysolar.com and **Instagram** profile @haleysolar, she found that they were most interested in buying face masks and gift packs that she calls Care Packages.

“Every day I’m reordering face masks,” she said. Face masks from her house brand, **Haley Solar**, are selling particularly well.



Haley Solar

The hand-dyed silk charmeuse masks sell for \$25. Customers have also been buying tops from the downtown Los Angeles-brand **Fabina**. Women want to look presentable for **Zoom** meetings, Solar said.

“The tops are boxy but not too long. It’s a big, classic T-shirt that you can wear with a skirt and high-waisted jeans,” Solar said.

Some things never change. One is the popularity of the rock-band T-shirt. The Los Angeles-brand **Prince Peter Collection** maintains a high diligence on honoring licenses for bands on its T-shirts, guaranteeing consumers that bands are getting paid for the license, Solar said. Prince Peter T-shirts with classic-band graphics retail for \$46. ●



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INDUSTRY VOICES: FASHION

Industry Voices *Continued from page 1*

by the 1940s that would be taken by the white sheriff of their small town. Her dad was badly beaten and nailed inside a coffin for days until he signed over the land to the sheriff.

Mom survived the trauma to marry Curtis Hall and had three children: Vondie, Sherry and me. The redingotes she wore as a child informed her taste as an adult. On Sundays, she dressed Sis in organza empire dresses with stiff crinoline petticoats while Bro and I sported collarless jackets and cashmere balmacaans.

I'm not sure if she knew about Elizabeth Keckley, the former slave who became a seamstress and personal modiste to first lady Mary Todd Lincoln. Keckley, skilled at sewing, was able to purchase her and her son's freedom in 1855, later moving to Washington, D.C., where she was able to establish her own successful dressmaking business. I wonder if Mom knew it was a black woman, Anne Lowe, who designed Jacqueline Bouvier's gown for her nuptials to John F. Kennedy—a beautiful portrait-collar gown made from 50 yards of ivory silk taffeta.

Too often the accomplishments of black designers go uncelebrated. At the very least, every fashion enthusiast should know about Patrick Kelly, the ex-pat who was the first American to be accepted into the prestigious **Chambre Syndical Du Pret-A-Porter Des Couturiers et Des Createurs**, thus putting him in the company of fashion greats Yves Saint Laurent and Gabrielle Chanel.

How is it possible that fashion design students today don't know who Willi Smith is? The multitasking designer who built a fashion empire, **Willi Wear Limited**? In 1986, it was grossing over \$25 million in sales. One of the few black designers and a 1983 **Coty Award** winner, Willi was a fashion influence for me. His clothes had a nonchalant DNA that inspired a generation. On a shelf in my showroom sits an illustration of Willi by Risko that was given to guests at his **Lincoln Center** memorial after his death in 1987.

When I accepted the prestigious post of design and creative director for the iconic American brand **Halston**, I couldn't have imagined the firestorm that would be ignited. New York fashion players can be insular, but beyond that there were rumblings as to how a black man had been chosen to head the house and could he do it. With four weeks to showtime, I assembled a new team and designed and presented the Spring 1999 collection.

Seated in the front row was a stellar lineup of fashion editors and retailers: the late Liz Tilberis of *Harper's Bazaar*, Polly Mellon of *Allure*, Andre Leon Tally of *Vogue*, Constance CR White of *The New York Times* and Joan Kaner, the fashion director for **Neiman Marcus**. With 42 stunning looks, all doubters were silenced. Senior Vice President Joe Boitano was waiting at the Halston showroom the following morning at 8 a.m. to be the first to negotiate placement for **Saks Fifth Avenue**. Neiman Marcus and **Bergdorf Goodman** soon followed, as did every other major boutique in the United States.

The sleek designs were seen on the red carpet worn by a distinguished coterie of celebrities including Celine Dion, Salma Hayek and Charlize Theron. In spite of the rave reviews and increase in sales, when the company was sold the new owners did not renew my contract as they preferred a different face for the brand.

When I peruse the fashion landscape to-



Serengeti gown from Hall's Spring 2008 collection, Africa: A Safari

day, there is still a lack of diversity. Less than 10 percent of fashion designers in America are black. Unfortunately, black designers don't receive the support necessary to build viable businesses. I find that a mediocre designer of other races can gain success and notoriety, especially now in our **Instagram**-staged world. America appropriates black culture because we bring the cool factor yet we are not granted a seat in the rooms where design, marketing and advertising decisions are being made. It is because of the lack of inclusion that **Gucci**, **Prada** and others

have had to fall on the sword for their offensive products and advertising campaigns.

As we look to the future, after the protests, rage, pain and fear of the unknown, we must take steps to make our industry better. Companies can improve the culture of their brands by providing opportunities for qualified black candidates to excel and promote from within. Young talent needs to be allowed to flourish

while gaining the necessary experience to be successful.

We need retailers to take a good look at their merchandise mix and include black designers. According to a **Nielsen** report, black buying power is estimated at \$1.4 trillion in 2020. Because of the recent events, we are seeing a shift in the community to support socially conscious brands. Those companies that are not willing to change their matrix will see a reduction in their bottom lines. This is the time for change, not a committee-written, politically correct statement plastered on social media. Real change can only come with a change of heart, and that is something only God can bring.

Kevan Hall is an iconic fashion designer whose creations have been worn by Hollywood's most glamorous. In addition to his work in fashion, Hall is also the founder of Novus Forum—a New York trade event showcasing United States and international luxury designers, a mentor and co-founder of the Black Design Collective. His work can be found at www.kevanhalldesigns.com.

KEVAN HALL

Kevan Hall with his dog Gypsy at his atelier on Beverly Boulevard

Remembering Mindy Lubell, Veteran Showroom Owner

Mindy Lubell, a veteran Los Angeles showroom owner, passed away at her home in Los Angeles May 14 after a bout with cancer.

Born in Forest Hills, N.Y., she was a life-long fashion worker. Her grandparents ran a Brooklyn, N.Y., shop called **Dave's Variety Store**, where she developed a love for fashion and started taking notes on how to run a fashion business.

In 1979, she and her twin sister, Debbie McGrath, took a vacation to Los Angeles where Lubell fell in love with fashion districts such as Rodeo Drive as well as the California lifestyle. The sisters decided to move to Los Angeles, where they continued to work in fashion.

Lubell had worked and run showroom operations in the **California Market Cen-**

ter building in downtown Los Angeles since the 1980s. Since 2005, she shared showroom space with Rose Marie "Romy M" Migliazzo in her self-named **Mindy Lubell** showroom.

"She was a diligent worker," Migliazzo said. "She came in and she made her calls. It was the one-on-one of getting people on the phone. She would always keep in touch with buyers. Her buyers loved her, and they would always come in and see her."

Lubell continued to work until a couple of months before her death. She is survived by her husband, Kevin Nielsen; her twin sister; and her nephew and niece, Kyle and Morgan McGrath. Her sister said that the kids considered Lubell a second mother. Lubell was also remembered for loving farmers markets and watching her husband surf.—*Andrew Asch*



Mindy Lubell

FINANCE

Retailers Announce Sales Results During Pandemic

Some of the fiscal toll from the COVID-19 pandemic was detailed in earnings reports from prominent brands over the last week.

Guess? Inc. announced that revenues declined 52 percent to \$260 million for the first quarter of the year, announced on June 10. Guess Chief Executive Officer Carlos Alberini said that his company moved to control as much as possible during the pandemic's economic meltdown. The company adjusted its inventory levels, lowered capital expenditures and extended vendor payment terms.

"Looking forward, the building blocks of our long-term strategy are still intact. We remain focused on enhancing our omni-channel platform centered around the consumer and are accelerating our efforts to gain efficiencies across our local operations and rationalize our store portfolios," he said. "I fully expect to be on the other side of this crisis with a more efficient business model, a more focused and consistent global brand strategy, and a more nimble and agile organization."

On June 9, **Macy's Inc.** released a preliminary report of its first-quarter earnings. The company said that it would likely report sales of \$3.02 billion, which will be a 45 percent decline from the same period in the previous

year.

Jeff Gennette, Macy's chairman and CEO, said that its digital channels kept the department store afloat.

"The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted our first-quarter sales and earnings results, but I am proud of the way our team navigated this difficult period and maintained the business while our stores were closed," Gennette said. "Our strong digital business sales trend continued throughout May, and it is encouraging to see that as we reopen a store the digital business in that geography continues to be strong. By June 1, we had approximately 450 stores reopened, with the majority opened in their full format. Our reopened stores are performing better than anticipated. Importantly, we are receiving positive feedback on the curbside-pickup experience and our efforts to create a safe and welcoming shopping environment."

Zumiez, Inc. announced results June 4 for the year's first quarter. Total net sales declined 35.3 percent to \$137.8 million from \$212.9 million in the first quarter of the previous year, said Rick Brooks, Zumiez's chief executive officer.

"We came into fiscal 2020 in a strong fi-

nancial position, and the new year was off to a good start with first-quarter sales and earnings tracking ahead of expectations through early March," Brooks said. "Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we closed all of our stores in accordance with state and local guidelines to protect the health and safety of our customers, employees and the communities in which we operate."

Gap Inc. reported results for its first quarter on June 4. Net sales declined 43 percent in a year-over-year comparison, said Sonia Syngal, Gap Inc.'s president and CEO. However, net sales for its online business increased 40 percent in April. In May there was 100 percent growth in online sales, she said.

"This online momentum, enabled by new omni-capabilities that have expanded the way customers can shop with us, leaves us well positioned to fuel our brands going forward," Syngal said.

Gap also announced that it would close its less than 2-year-old **Hill City** brand. The men's athleisure brand was closed so the company could focus resources on its larger brands. Hill City's styles would be folded into future men's lines for other Gap brands such as **Banana Republic**.—*A.A.*

TECHNOLOGY

ADNAS Commits to Developing Authentication for PPE

To combat counterfeiting in the apparel industry—most notably within the luxury-goods segment—**Applied DNA Sciences** has been known for its technology that uses DNA-specific markers to identify authentic goods.

With the rise in demand for personal protective equipment since the onset of COVID-19, manufacturers from an array of industries, including apparel, have shifted focus to creating PPE such as N95 masks that fall under United States standards or the counterpart from China, KN95, both of which include a respirator to filter 95 percent of particles. As manufacturers rushed to create these goods, fears surrounding their authenticity as masks that qualify as filtering the particles have risen.

Using its DNA-based identifiers, the Stony Brook, N.Y., company is committed to developing a method that will allow manufacturers of masks and suppliers of the raw materials used to create these products prove their authenticity.

"Our company as a whole adheres to our promise, which is to keep life real and safe for all aspects of our business whether it's

textiles or pharmaceutical drugs. PPE is still an ongoing global issue," said the company's vice president of textile sales, MeiLin Wan. "It's not clear if the products in the market are authentic. But they are the last defense against any virus."

While the efficacy of the masks used for protection by frontline workers, essential staff and civilians are a major concern, a root cause of these issues could likely be in the raw materials used to make the products. For Wayne Buchen, vice president of strategic sales at ADNAS, this early stage in the supply chain is the most important place to examine the quality of materials.

"If I was an apparel manufacturer who converted to manufacturing PPE products, how do I know the imported materials are authentic and meet the 95 percent particulate threshold the N95 or KN95 mask needs without getting certificates and proof that all the materials came from the supplier?" he said. "When times are rough and people are just rushing to produce as many masks as possible, they don't always test the fabrics to ensure they meet the standards."

To aid manufacturers in their work to pro-

duce authentic masks, retailers who are selling the goods and consumers who are buying, ADNAS recently released a white paper titled "Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)—Guaranteed Authenticity?" authored by Wan, Buchen, Judy Murrah, ADNAS' chief information officer, and James A. Hayward, the company's chairman, president and chief executive officer. The white paper outlines how threats from counterfeit PPE disrupt the supply chain and shows that this issue endangers those who use the products. Buchen has revealed that the company is developing a method of tagging to thwart the counterfeiting of PPE and promote the distribution of authentic goods. He estimates the solution should be available within six weeks.

"The safest route would be to tag the raw material. The raw material itself is what has to protect you from filtering out the 95 percent of particulates. If you buy a substandard material, it is not filtering out what you're expecting. It's not any different than a counterfeit **Nike** being put into a real box from the brand," he said. "We will be in a position to protect the raw materials."

—*Dorothy Crouch*

Inside the Industry

The **Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors** unanimously approved a motion June 9 to support SB 1399. The anti-wage-theft bill was introduced in the California State Senate by State Sen. Maria Elena Durazo in February. The bill would establish an hourly wage for garment workers, many of whom currently work on a piece-rate basis. It also would make retailers liable for the policies of the subcontractors they work with, said Hilda Lucia Solis, member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. "L.A. County stands in solidarity with these essential workers by supporting SB 1399, which will strengthen protections for garment workers. Many are hardworking immigrant women who are often exploited by unscrupulous employers, and I thank State Sen. Durazo for authoring this critical bill, which gives voice to vulnerable garment workers," said Solis in a statement.

Authentic Brands Group and **IB Group** announced a partnership on June 11 to expand Forever 21 stores across Mexico. A newly formed venture, Forever 21 Mexico, produced by IB Group and Grupo Cojab, will distribute Forever 21 apparel in Mexico. It also plans to open Forever 21 shops-in-shop in that country. This new venture also represents Forever 21's transition from a vertical operation to a licensed operation. Los Angeles-founded Forever 21 filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last year. It was acquired by ABG, a global brand development, marketing and entertainment company and Forever 21 landlords Simon Property Group and Brookfield Property Partners.

The **Outdoor Retailer** trade show will introduce a new platform called Outdoor Retailer Online, according to a June 9 announcement by the event brand, which is owned by Emerald Expositions. The in-person Outdoor Retailer Summer Market was canceled due to COVID-19. The first run of the trade show's interactive environment is scheduled for July 21–23. On the Outdoor Retailer Online platform, exhibitors can host multiple live video conversations on their page and book appointments and interviews from the platform. There also will be scheduled online events for the three-day run. The platform will be available to registered exhibitors and attendees throughout the summer.

Rose Marcario is stepping down from her position as chief executive officer of Patagonia Inc., a leading sustainable apparel company headquartered in Ventura, Calif. Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard will be leading a search for a successor, according to media reports. Marcario had been planning to leave the company for more than a year. She joined Patagonia as its chief financial officer in 2008 and spent the last six years as its CEO. She helped the company improve its commitment to sustainability and supported developing new products such as recycled down and Yulex natural-rubber wet suits.

The **California Market Center** recently announced new dates for its calendar of in-person trade shows. Its popular LA Textile trade show is currently scheduled for Oct. 7–9. The show will be informed by physical-distancing protocols, according to a statement from CMC management.

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