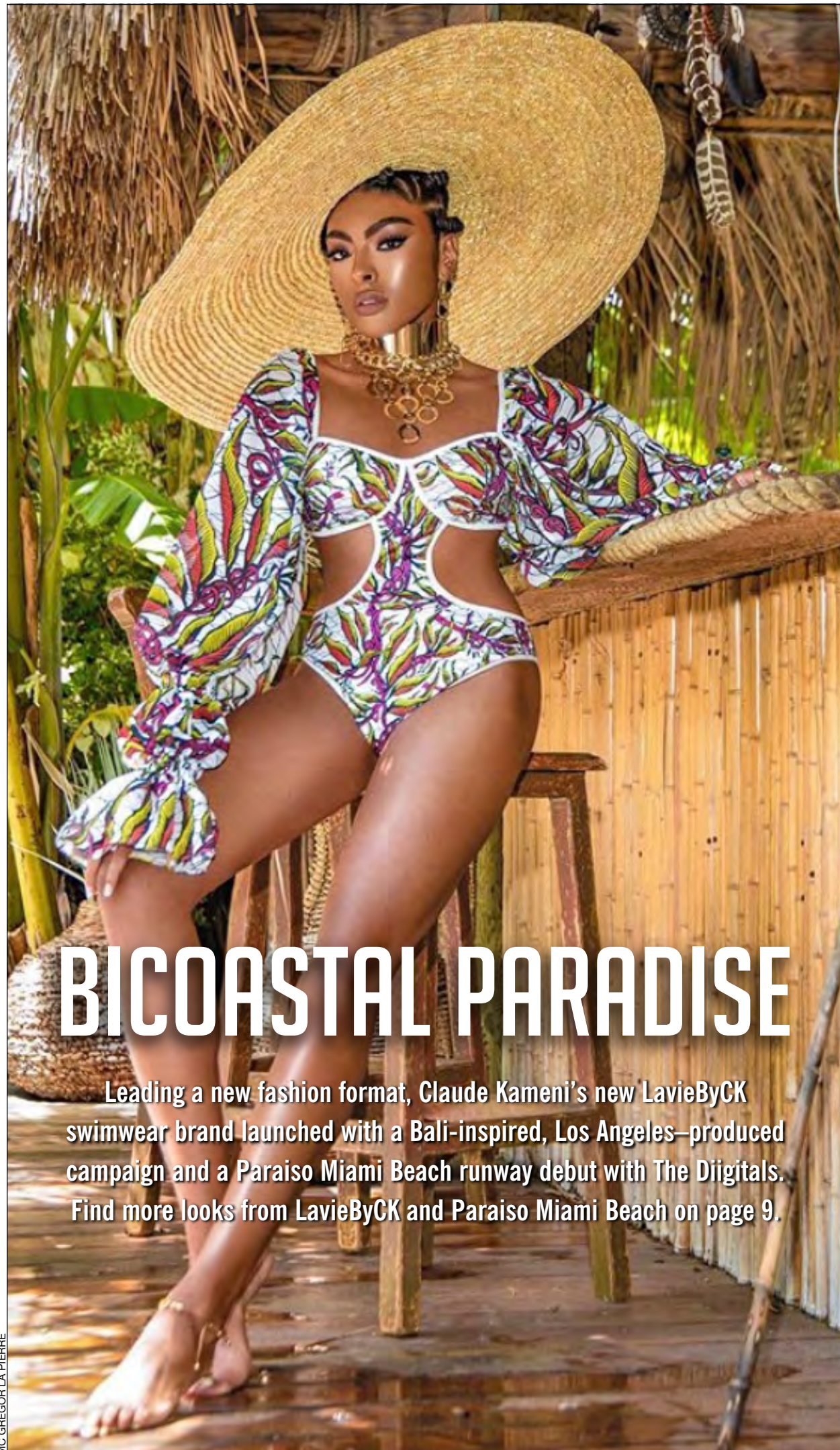


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BICOASTAL PARADISE

Leading a new fashion format, Claude Kameni's new LavieByCK swimwear brand launched with a Bali-inspired, Los Angeles-produced campaign and a Paraiso Miami Beach runway debut with The Diigitals. Find more looks from LavieByCK and Paraiso Miami Beach on page 9.

MC GREGOR LA PIERRE

RETAIL

Retail-Real-Estate Biz Looks for Ways Through COVID-19 Crisis

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

The COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on every sector of business, with the U.S. retail-real-estate sector experiencing its first decline since the Great Recession of the previous decade, according to a recently released report from **CBRE**, a commercial-real-estate services and investment firm.

More than 14.6 million square feet of retail real estate across the U.S. was vacated in the second quarter of 2020. It was the first quarterly decline in retail real estate since the first quarter of 2011, according to the CBRE report, titled "Retail Sales Hard Hit by COVID-19," which was released in late July. Completed real-estate deals declined 54 percent, or some 5 million square feet in the second quarter compared to the same quarter of the previous year, the national report said.

Some deals are still being made, said Jay Luchs, a promi-

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WHAT'S CHECKING

After Months of Challenges, Mid-City Retailers Get Moving

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Similar to other major metropolitan centers across the country, Los Angeles' retailers were hit hard by COVID-19 shutdowns and the fallout from looting stemming from social unrest. But many have rallied and returned to their jobs of selling fashion to the public. A group of retailers doing business on Los Angeles' La Brea Avenue, in the Fairfax District and within the vicinity of West Hollywood, Calif., shared their stories of trends that are checking at the moment as fashion returns to doing business in a new retail landscape.

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INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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After Another COVID-19 Closure, South Coast Plaza Set to Fully Reopen

South Coast Plaza opened its doors on Aug. 31 after a COVID-19 closure that lasted over six weeks. The prominent Costa Mesa, Calif.-headquartered shopping center reopened a few days after California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued guidelines to restart the state's economy. About 100 stores and restaurants opened last Monday, and more were set to reopen in the coming weeks, said Debra Gunn Downing, South Coast Plaza's executive director of marketing.

"The past months have been a test of resilience, flexibility and creativity for us as we've looked for solutions to support our boutiques and restaurants and continue to connect with customers," she said.

After mostly being dark, the shops resumed business from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

These stores include boutiques for top fashion houses such as **Prada**, **Salvatore Ferragamo** and **Dior**, as well as multi-brand designer emporium **The Webster**. Other apparel stores that are open for business include specialty retailers such as **The Gap**, **Free People**, **Guess** and the activewear shop **Lululemon Athletica**.

In addition to existing shops, the retail center was ready to welcome a new tenant during the reopening. A new location from Danish fashion brand **Ganni** is scheduled to open at South Coast Plaza on Sept. 8.

It's the latest turn in a story where the mall has had to open and close. South Coast Plaza closed the week of March 16 after Newsom ordered nonessential businesses closed to stop the spread of COVID-19. On June 11, it reopened for a few weeks. When COVID-19 cases started spiking across the state, the governor gave an order July 13 for indoor malls to close. South Coast Plaza's department-store anchors were exempt from the July clo-

sure because their buildings feature entrances and exits separate from the indoor mall.

During the first extended closure in its more than 52-year history, South Coast Plaza has sought alternate ways to drive shopping. In May, it introduced SCP 2Go, a curbside shopping program for more than 70 of its tenants, which include luxe boutiques such as **Alexander McQueen** and **Louis Vuitton**.

On Aug. 5, it introduced a special open-air shopping area named The Pavilion. Located in one of the shopping area's parking structures, it offered 14 private shopping suites that included mobile fitting rooms, floral arrangements and **Wi-Fi**. SCP 2Go and The Pavilion programs will continue to run.

To enter the mall, consumers are required to wear face masks. The pandemic also changed the operations of South Coast Plaza. The retail center has increased its cleaning regimen, which features protocols established by a certified industrial hygienist and improved air quality with what the retail center described as state-of-the-art air filtration and disinfecting lighting.

Despite Newsom's recent announcement, California's regions also remain subject to county and city orders, some of which contrast with the governor's guidelines. This includes Los Angeles County, which has implemented different guidelines for indoor businesses and those that can operate outdoors.

Westfield Century City, headquartered in Los Angeles' Century City neighborhood, is an outdoor mall. Its specialty retailers, department stores and restaurants have been open since June. A majority of retailers at **Caruso** property management's Los Angeles-area sites **The Grove**, **The Americana at Brand** and **Palmsades Village**—which are also open-air retail centers—have reopened, according to a Caruso

spokeswoman. Guidelines to ensure safety at these retail centers include making complimentary face masks available to visitors.

The **Beverly Center**, a leading mall sandwiched between West Los Angeles and West Hollywood, Calif., has remained closed, according to Jackie Plaza, the retail center's marketing and sponsorship director.

"Beverly Center will reopen once the L.A. County Health Department adopts the governor's latest order. Until then, retailers and restaurants are doing curbside pickup. All activities are done in accordance with local laws and mandates and CDC guidelines," Plaza said in a prepared statement.

Since July 30, **Traffic**, a veteran Beverly Center multi-brand fashion boutique, has run a stand-alone pop-up shop by Beverly Center's 3rd Street valet drop-off site. Michael Dovan, a Traffic co-founder, said that his shop's pop-up has mostly been selling sneakers and basics such as sweatshirts and sweatpants. It has not been selling its luxe items such as designer sports jackets and gowns.

"Surprisingly, business has been okay," Dovan said of the pop-up. "It has kept us going."—*Andrew Asch*

Garment Worker Protection Act Failed After Vote Deadline Missed

A constitutional deadline passed before voting could take place in the California State Assembly for SB 1399, the Garment Worker Protection Act, crushing hopes for the bill to be passed in 2020.

The bill sought to end piece-rate pay, a traditional way that sewers and garment workers have been compensated. It was scheduled to be voted on Aug. 28, the final day of the State Assembly's legislative session. Controversial bills on housing and police-reform issues took precedence. By law, if no action is taken on a bill by the end of the year, bill advocates must start over again and reintroduce it.

Democratic State Senator María Elena Durazo and the author of the bill said that she intends to do more work on the bill. Durazo serves the 24th district, which represents East Los Angeles, parts of downtown Los Angeles and neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

"I'm disheartened that SB1399 did not prevail in the final hours of the legislative session," she said in a prepared statement. "As we regroup to plan for the upcoming legislative session, our garment-worker bill will continue to be a priority, because every day wage theft continues to cheat workers out of their pay."

Ilse Metchek, the president of the **California Fashion Association**, said that the turn of events will help domestic manufacturing. Her group considered SB 1399 to be a poorly planned bill.

"The laws are very clear. Piece-work law is very clear. Piece-work must be paid based on minimum wage. You cannot underpay on piece work," Metchek said. "The SB 1399 bill was an overreach."

SB 1399 advocates believed their bill closed a loophole where retailers ducked responsibility for conditions of workers for contractors with which they do business.—*A.A.*

Corrections and Clarifications

Regarding the Aug. 21 story, "Liberty Fairs Launches First Virtual Trade Show," unique visits to the show on Aug. 17 totaled 1,800, not 2,800.

Regarding the Aug. 21 story "Brixton Charts a New Course With a Bricks-and-Mortar and New Lines," the brand's Encinitas, Calif., store will be its first in the United States. Brixton opened a flagship store in Sydney in January.

Inside the Industry


Old Navy, a division of the San Francisco-headquartered Gap Inc., announced Sept. 1 that it would pay its store employees to serve as poll workers on Election Day, Nov. 3. Employees who accept an assignment for a poll-worker position will be compensated with eight hours of pay, said Nancy Green, Old Navy's president. "Every voice in this country matters and deserves to be heard at the polls, and if we at Old Navy can be even a small part of making that process more accessible to the communities we call home, we are on board," she said. Old Navy will be working with the nonprofits Civic Alliance and Power the Polls for this campaign. Buck Mason, a Los Angeles-headquartered brand, announced that it would give its employees a paid holiday on Election Day to encourage voting.

Runway of Dreams will produce a New York Fashion Week show Sept. 14 that will display styles in adaptive clothing trends, or fashion for differently abled people. Brands in the show will include Tommy Hilfiger Adaptive. Mindy Scheier, the founder and CEO of Runway of Dreams, said that the event would be a landmark show. "In fact, for the first time ever, Runway of Dreams has five leading brands participating together in support of the inclusion and acceptance in the fashion industry of people with disabilities!" she said. The event will be webcast through the webinar platform on24.


Fashionphile, a Carlsbad, Calif.-headquartered e-commerce company focused on preowned luxe handbags, watches and jewelry, announced Aug. 28 that it had raised \$38.5 million in a Series B funding led by NewSpring Growth, a division of the private-equity firm NewSpring. Ben Hemminger, Fashionphile's chief executive officer, said that the investment would fund expansion of the company's omni-channel footprint and open regional fulfillment centers in the U.S. and overseas. The funding also will support Fashionphile's suite of proprietary technologies such as enhanced automation and artificial intelligence, which includes patent-pending visual-recognition technology.

Dallas Market Center, a 5-million-square-foot campus for fashion wholesale companies, announced Aug. 31 that it would partner with the Dallas-headquartered technology company RepTime to develop a business-to-business platform. As part of the deal, RepTime will change its name to MarketTime. This partnership will introduce a cloud-based platform where manufacturers and sales representatives can manage sales orders, product orders and shipping information. In the fourth quarter, the platform will introduce a business-to-business e-marketplace, according to a statement.

Apparel Textile Sourcing recently announced that it would produce more virtual trade shows. The events are scheduled to run Oct. 26–30 and Nov. 16–20. ATS's first virtual show ran in May. At these shows, international manufacturers and suppliers of apparel, fabric, home textiles, personal protective equipment and other goods will be available to virtually meet with attendees and buyers. The events also will host seminars on trade agreements, the United States presidential election, COVID-19 and how current events might affect the near-term future of sourcing in North America.





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Omnichain's Software Aims to Shake Up Traditional Inventory Systems

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Retailers and fashion brands are changing the way they manage businesses and inventory in order to reflect market adaptations in digital retail. It's one reason the market for inventory-management software has been growing, according to a report released in June by the market-research company **Global Market Insights, Inc.**, based in Selbyville, Del.

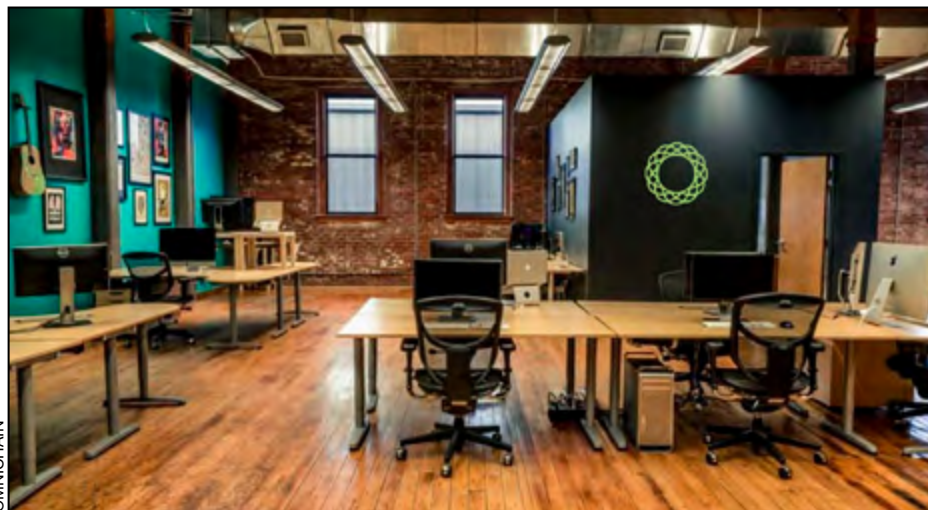
The software market was estimated to be \$3 billion in 2019 and is forecasted to grow 5 percent annually, according to Global Market Insights. Some proof of the growth of this market can be found in the expansion of the software company **Omnichain**. The 2-year-old company has been on a hiring spree.

In a 12-month period, it more than doubled its employee count from 12 full-time employees to more than 30, said Neil Soni, Omnichain's vice president of sales and business development. In late 2019, it also moved from its offices in Los Angeles' Koreatown neighborhood into more-spacious digs measuring over 3,600 square feet in El Segundo, Calif., near **Los Angeles International Airport**.

In January, Omnichain introduced its Dynamic Inventory Management software, including quarterly updates to the software. The program helps automate inventory management, allowing companies to be more flexible, Soni said.

"The biggest thing with inventory is having real-time visibility and agility," Soni said. "Visibility is hugely important—to know what is on its way, what will be there tomorrow, how you will get it to the customer, how to be more strategic with inventory."

Managing inventory in a traditional way is holding many retailers back, Soni said. Many retailers organize inventory in separate silos for bricks-and-mortar stores and for digital shops. If retailers need to react to market changes quickly, they may be hamstrung by an old system, which could also



Omnichain's new El Segundo, Calif., offices

result in inventory becoming lost.

"The software offers greater fluidity in inventory organization. Access must be available for inventory in any avenue where products are sold," Soni said.

Changes in inventory are communicated quickly with electronic signals that tell the user if inventory is in transit, at the warehouse or at a physical store. It also has the ability to pick the most optimal inventory to fulfill the order.

In addition, the software automates data entry. There is no need for clerks to manually handle data entry, Soni said. "A lot of clerks are highly trained individuals. They can use their skills for more functions and analysis," he said.

Dynamic Inventory Management is enabled by artificial intelligence. "The platform is constantly analyzing sales data. It is looking for where demand is stronger than anticipated. Then it sends more product," Soni said.

He contends that the program could eventually help users save money. "If you can pinpoint accurately where demand is going to be, you don't have to procure as much inventory."

ry." Other Omnichain software aims to help groups increase their forecasting accuracy to hone their requirements for product manufacturing.

Along with releasing Dynamic Inventory Management, Omnichain has also received some industry honors. In March, Omnichain was named one of the 10 most-innovative logistics companies of 2020 by the publication *Fast Company*, specifically for Omnichain's use of a blockchain system to help develop supply-chain management.

Blockchain is part of Omnichain's foundation. Omnichain made its debut by offering supply-chain software informed by peer-to-peer networks of blockchain systems. Blockchain advocates believe it is one of the most-secure forms of recordkeeping. They contend that it improves communications between people working in a supply chain so fewer errors are committed.

In the near future, Omnichain is developing a sustainability angle to its organizational software. "We are homing in on how organizations, specifically in the apparel space, can help contribute to global sustainability through reducing inventory wastage, which ends up in landfills," Soni said.

Another project on which the company is embarking is working with farms in developing areas of the world. These farms will work on the Omnichain platform, which can help introduce these farmers to United States—and European-headquartered food-and-beverage companies.

Pratik Soni, the founder, chief executive officer and cousin of Neil Soni, said that the company also is developing an authentication program that will help luxury brands trace their products from atelier to boutique, he said.

"Our innovation teams are constantly thinking and tinkering," Pratik Soni said. "We are also blessed to work with industry-leading brands that provide us continual feedback that is directly ingested and appropriately portrayed in future product releases." ●

RETAIL

Retail Real Estate

Continued from page 1

nent Los Angeles commercial-real-estate broker who serves as vice chairman at **Newmark Knight Frank**. However, 2020 will be remembered as a year like no other, he said. "First, people thought after three months that we'd be back to normal. Then people realized that there was nothing normal," Luchs said. Throughout retail streets, shop owners have asked landlords to forgive rents. Landlords have been feeling a lot of pressure as well because banks are demanding that landlords pay their mortgages. So, landlords and tenants continue to negotiate deals. One template for the few new deals being signed is to receive at least six months of free rent at the beginning of a lease in order to help secure longer terms.

"What I tell my clients is that if you can sign a tenant long term by giving six months of free rent, take it," Luchs said. "We need to keep the energy of neighborhoods as active as possible so you don't lose the energy of a neighborhood for good."

He encourages landlords and tenants to develop sincere partnerships in order to help each other get through the current crisis.

The CBRE report said that the current crisis has hit particularly hard in West Los Angeles. Vacancy in this area grew 2 percent when retailers left their sites or subleased spaces. In the Tri-Cities sections comprising Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena, total occupancy declined 142,000 square feet, said Eric Willett, director of research and thought leadership for CBRE's Pacific Southwest division.

The crisis also hit hard emerging areas of high-end retail such as downtown Los Angeles. With tourism plummeting and fewer people going to work in offices, fewer people are shopping downtown, according to Matt Siegel, the retail functional leader for CBRE's Pacific Southwest division.

It's tough news for an area that was experiencing a long-awaited renaissance of high-end retail, said Brigham Yen, a **Coldwell Banker** real-estate agent and publisher of the blog



New Paul Smith store in downtown Los Angeles

"DTLA Rising," which examines downtown Los Angeles commercial real estate.

"It was a renaissance," Yen said of high-end retailers coming into the once-blighted area. "We got the restaurants, bars, offices, residential, and hotels were coming in. Retail was one of the last critical pieces."

Downtown Los Angeles has experienced some big coups over the last seven years. Prominent fashion brand **Acne Studios** served as a pioneer to the area when it built a flagship in downtown Los Angeles' fashion district in 2013. The momentum continued as major brands built stores. In 2019, the **Vans** brand opened a flagship a couple of blocks away from Acne Studios. In 2020, the Danish brand **Ganni** and the U.K.-based brand **Paul Smith** opened boutiques.

Downtown Los Angeles retail has a better chance of surviving the current crisis, Yen said. In the past, there were few downtown Los Angeles locals to support retail. Currently, an estimated 90,000 residents live in the neighborhood and patronize the area. However, to thrive, retail needs more than the support of locals, Yen said.

"DTLA has to provide experiences to attract people who have all of these different options on a daily basis," he said. "We offer a big-city environment. It is something that many people value. But more people are afraid of big cities now because of the social-distancing culture."

Submarket	SA GLA	Direct Vacancy (%)	Overall Vacancy (%)	Current Net Absorption	TID Net Absorption	Under Construction	Construction Deliveries	Avg. Asking Lease Rates (\$/SF/100,000)
Antelope Valley	8,136,430	7.5	7.7	(27,734)	(46,402)	0	0	1.35
Greater Downtown	2,718,807	7.9	8.1	1,805	6,428	674,192	0	2.96
Mid-Cities	12,214,289	5.3	5.3	(7,704)	25,316	0	0	1.62
Mid-Wilshire	3,661,314	8.0	8.9	2,983	72,672	194,749	0	3.52
San Fernando Valley	15,049,139	6.1	7.6	(44,225)	(157,602)	0	0	2.56
San Gabriel Valley	20,703,457	6.1	6.6	(130,347)	(284,234)	0	0	2.09
Santa Clara Valley	5,904,623	7.0	7.0	(76,070)	(47,420)	0	0	2.22
South Bay	19,996,337	3.6	3.7	30,542	66,552	80,000	0	3.03
Southwest Los Angeles	7,269,313	5.4	5.4	(5,214)	(85,443)	82,450	0	2.90
Tri-Cities	9,368,596	4.2	4.2	(142,260)	(85,843)	312,700	60,000	3.19
Ventura	22,746,477	6.4	6.6	(16,482)	(9,948)	0	0	2.54
West Los Angeles	5,238,849	5.1	5.8	(96,216)	15,008	0	0	9.85
Greater Los Angeles	132,917,631	5.7	6.1	(518,974)	(530,916)	1,576,443	0	3.01

Source: CBRE Research, Q2 2020

The CBRE report did note an area of growth in retail real estate, revealing that low-end malls are being repurposed. Currently, a lot of the growth in this trend is taking place in the Midwest. But Larry Kosmont, chairman and chief executive officer of **Kosmont Cos.**, a real-estate and finance advisory firm, forecasted that this trend will find a place in California.

"We're calling it RE-industrial," Kosmont said of the transition of retail spaces into warehousing for e-commerce companies. "Amazon has spent the last 10 years mapping out the U.S. and putting distribution centers within miles of urban centers."

Now, Amazon and its competitors are seeking out that "last mile" for distribution centers to enable faster deliveries. With acres of empty **JCPenney** and **Sears** stores available, mall owners and tenants including e-commerce retailers are looking at last-mile distribution centers at malls that are repurposing former department stores and other vacant spaces.

Kosmont also forecasted that malls would be in store for even more repurposing. Mall owners will look to develop more green space and active open spaces at retail centers.

"Outdoors is the new anchor because of how we live now," Kosmont said. "Planners are studying how they can integrate outdoors with residential, office and ancillary retail." ●

Atlanta Apparel Is Back In-Person and, as Always, On-Trend

There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Atlanta Apparel is back in person—and with it brands and buyers eager to do business face-to-face after long months linked only through technology. Consumers are eager for fresh looks, and these vendors are among many only too ready to fill the demand for stylish yet comfortable goods.

Alias Mae

Australian award-winning footwear designer Tom Kirkhope knows what he is doing. Born into a shoemaking family, he began his career in 2001 when he worked in a Chinese footwear factory. Now the sole designer for Alias Mae, his Melbourne-based studio founded in 2011, Kirkhope is known for his exceptional designs, fine materials, and superb craftsmanship, which have earned him the attention of movie stars and a global clientele. The Alias Mae customer is “refined and sophisticated; she isn’t afraid to make bold choices when it comes to fashion.” The silhouettes, from flats and sandals to heels and boots of all heights, are strong yet elegant and decidedly on-trend. For Spring/Summer 2021, Kirkhope expects the strongest designs to be those featuring chain details, such as the thin, strappy Levi with a delicate ankle chain, and Isha, as well as styles in the rich olive colorway such as Isabella and the twisted-leather Issy.



Alv Jewels

“A Midwest-based jewelry and accessories brand with a West Coast heart,” ALV Jewels was founded in 2015 by Allie Vanata to create unique, on-trend pieces at an affordable price. The collection is sold online throughout the year, with new designs popping up weekly, which has given the company a leg up during these challenging times. But Vanata enjoys market for its face-to-face connection, “which we always love and get most excited about.” Spring/Summer 2021 brings pops of bright colors and vintage styles such as ‘90s symbols, and “the huge smiley trend that promotes positivity is going to sell well,” particularly to a younger consumer. Gold layers will continue to be popular since they work with casual and dressy styles alike. To that end, classic herringbone, Figaro and link chains will continue to shine. Vanata also predicts that variations on gold hoops will be bestsellers “because people are loving the classiness but also a little bit of fun on their ears.”



BTFL-Life

BTFL-Life (read: beautiful life) is the result of a collaboration of artists and fashion designers who got together in Downtown Los Angeles in 2019 to incorporate their print creations into a collection. “Our mission,” they say, “is to express our artistic creation and talent with our easy, casual, and dressed-up bodies.” For Spring/Summer 2021, the brand is focusing on vibrant prints, from pastels to bright colors, and textured solids for its best Spring categories of dresses, rompers, and tops. A nod to the times, “bodies will be a bit more casual and easier to wear rather than structured or serious.” After months of connecting with their buyers digitally, the BTFL crew is very much looking forward to meeting and greeting old and new clients at Atlanta Apparel. “It’s very important, since we feel it is best to meet buyers in person to see, hear, and plan together,” they say. “For new customers, it is a bit challenging to work only with the line sheet, but for our customers who know our brand, fit, quality, and styles it is business as usual. They are excited to see and book our Spring/Summer ‘21 collections.”



S’Edge Apparel

No one is happier to be returning to market than S’Edge Apparel, the tops-and-tees brand based in Atlanta and manufactured in L.A. “We are hopeful that our customers will be excited to get back to buying in person,” the company says. “Customers are wanting new merchandise and are willing to shop for fresh pieces.” S’Edge customers have shifted their focus from dressier items to casual pieces “that have a ‘specialness’ to them in details and silhouettes.” S’Edge has filled its menu with “comfortable leisure pieces that can go from a day full of Zoom meetings to dinner.” So far, the reaction to S’Edge’s Spring/Summer 2021 line “has been incredible,” the company says. “Our lightweight French terry, swirl tie-dye and printed satins, contemporary gauze and bamboo rib groups have been the strongest. For Summer, we anticipate our bright animal prints and slub groups will be great.”



See these brands and many more at Atlanta Apparel at AmericasMart Oct. 13–17, 2020.

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The Three Ways Fashion Brands Can Win the ‘Rack Race’

By Edouard Macquin *Contributing Writer*

Deadlines aren’t moving targets, so, while the increasingly global and complex nature of the fashion industry means there are more moving parts than ever before, clients and consumers don’t want this to affect product delivery. There is an ever-increasing demand to get more collections to market within tighter time frames, all the while maintaining quality and brand integrity. Meeting the fixed measures at each point of the supply chain—from design and collection planning to production, distribution, the e-store and the sales floor—is crucial to maintaining a thriving fashion brand.

In the post-COVID-19 landscape, where operations are more prone to disconnection and projections are difficult, companies that can deliver reliable results are even better positioned for success. Moving to a solution-oriented, collaborative strategy where all team members are able to access and share strategic insights can keep brands empowered and able to meet whatever challenges arise. Here are three ways brands can succeed by ensuring their collections continue to make it to market quickly and efficiently, regardless of the challenges.

1. Use Big Data to Power Strategic Collection Plans

Merchandising leaders rely heavily on historical and forecasting data to make decisions for the upcoming season. Especially now, with supply chains and retail reeling from the pandemic, the right data help you create a balanced collection plan and align products with seasonal merchandising strategies and stay on track with cost and profit margins. However, data are often disorganized, inaccurate or not available to the right people at the right time, which undermines the time and resources spent collecting and analyzing data in the first place. With e-commerce taking over, following up in real time the commercial behavior of all the competitive landscape has also become a major influence of any brand sales strategy.

It’s important to establish a single source of truth to manage data in real time, especially with fashion trends being more fluid than ever. Retail leaders should ensure their teams have actionable insights into collection planning across the supply chain to deliver on-trend products on time. They can achieve this through implementing a centralized data repository that incorporates analytics, consumer insights and the entire value chain—and then ensuring their people can access it at any time, from anywhere in the world.

2. Ensure Teams Are Collaborating Across the Product Life Cycle

Planning and execution of a fashion collection involves stakeholders from across a multitude of key departments. Organizations struggle to gain a consistent, complete and accurate single view of a product, including all the contents that need to be made available from creation to availability on the web. Misaligned teams, unheard voices or teams that operate in competition with each other rather than working as a unit can derail the supply chain and create costly delays, especially now, when teams are working remotely or on staggered schedules. Managing frustrated departments takes away from the ultimate goal of getting products to market.

From the start, topple silos and foster communication by ensuring each team shares its vision and insight on annual targets and buying seasons. The outcome is to get everyone



Edouard Macquin

on the same page and work toward a unified goal. Teams need efficient, streamlined collaboration for goal setting and execution.

The added bonus of team-oriented strategizing is that you can identify non-value-added tasks across the supply chain and ensure everyone has the proper tools from the start. It’s equally important to stay connected throughout the entire product life cycle so that the company can meet challenges together and ensure that high-level decision-makers are involved in everything that is happening. Building these organizational bridges creates brands that are responsive, more creative, on trend, on time and on cost.

3. Keep Communications Open With Suppliers

Inefficient communication with suppliers throughout the supply chain can lead to costly production mistakes, delays and wasted dollars. Similarly, outdated files, complex spreadsheets, late decision making and the onslaught of lengthy email chains can lead to major setbacks. You can’t risk losing the edge on an entire season because a supplier missed a critical order.

It’s crucial to harness technology to manage and collaborate with suppliers and keep processes running smoothly, especially in an industry as fast paced as fashion. Teams need to be able to have visibility, make decisions based on complete information and change course, if necessary, to keep processes running smoothly. Especially with many suppliers contributing from around the world, it’s essential that everyone be on the same page in real time—and this ties into up-to-the-minute data and communication.

Tracking all interactions with suppliers is also a key to ensure fashion companies are becoming truly aware of the growing importance of sustainability—a megatrend that is here to stay. In addition, considerations such as local compliance issues across the supply chain or measurement standards for materials and processes can make or break a product timeline. Choosing the right tools and strategies—and sticking to them across the board—will ensure accountability and clear communications.

Edouard Macquin is the president of Lectra Americas. Lectra, headquartered in France, is a technology company that combines software, cutting equipment, data and services to meet the specific needs of fashion, automotive and furniture companies across the globe.

THE INNOVATIVE bierrebi DS line



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One more step to the future



What's Checking

Continued from page 1



American Rag Cie
160 S. La Brea Ave.
amrag.com

Mark Werts opened American Rag Cie on La Brea Avenue in 1985 when the street was a thoroughfare of used-car businesses and Orthodox Jewish synagogues. The synagogues still have La Brea addresses, but the strip of La Brea from West Third Street to Melrose Avenue has been a fashion street since the late 1980s. Going on 35 years in business, Werts said American Rag would continue to be an anchor of the street's retail.

"It's an act of love and passion," he said of the store. "If you do things for money, you will never have it. Love and passion define success."

Following the lifting of COVID-19 regulations for stand-alone businesses, American Rag reopened in June. Since then, top-selling items have been hoodies and sweatpants from **Les Tien**, said Orlando Reneau, the retailer's buyer for denim and its men's collection. Les Tien is manufactured in the Los Angeles area. Retail price points are \$249 for a Les Tien hoodie and \$146 for bottoms. Both feature oversized silhouettes.

"Everyone is looking for comfort," Re-



From left: American Rag Cie exterior, Kato, Prospective Flow

neau said. A shelf with Les Tien styles has recently been placed at American Rag's World Denim Bar, which is a sprawling American Rag section devoted to denim.

Also popular at the World Denim Bar is **Kato**, a jeans brand that is also made in Los Angeles. Manufactured using Japanese fabric, the brand's denim has the look of raw denim but has four-way stretch for comfort, Reneau said. Popular styles are the slim-fit model, called The Pen, and the brand's skinny fit, called The Needle. The brand's retail price points range from \$198 to \$248.



Purple

Another denim brand doing well at American Rag is the Canadian label **Purple**. Price points for the high-end denim brand start at \$260.

The main floor of American Rag features vintage clothing and veteran brands that American Rag has been selling for years, such as **Stüssy** and **Comme des Garçons**.

"We're always looking for something new," Reneau said. One relative newcomer to American Rag has been the brand **Prospective Flow**. It designs new styles for templates of traditional Japanese clothes. One style is the Japanese baggy and work bottom, called the Momohiki pants, which retail for \$195.



From left: Golden Age exterior, vintage workwear, Golden Age brand

Golden Age

120 S. La Brea Ave.
goldenage_hollywood.com

Growing up in France, Ludovic Orlando and Jesse Bardy were inspired by Hollywood films of the 1930s to 1950s. As adults, they paid homage to the Hollywood of Humphrey Bogart and Gene Tierney when they opened **Golden Age**, a high-end vintage shop and fashion brand, in 2017. A Golden Age location opened on La Brea in November 2019. It also runs two other locations in Hollywood.

The COVID-19 travel ban hit Golden Age hard. Orlando estimated that about half of the business came from international tourists and designers visiting Hollywood. Online sales of Golden Age's vintage-inspired women's footwear has paid some bills. Also popular are styles from the Golden Age apparel brand.

One collection of the brand's sweatshirts pays tribute to the "Black Dahlia," a 1947 crime that scandalized Hollywood and Los Angeles. Another silhouette is inspired by an oversized 1980s style of sweatshirt. The



sweatshirts are made in Los Angeles and retail for \$79.

The collection was introduced in March at the **Noir City Film Festival** in Los Angeles before COVID-19 shutdowns were mandated. Other Golden Age-inspired tops feature collaborations between the brand and different science-fiction and horror films.

Golden Age's vintage specialties are a world away from Hollywood glam. It has cultivated a niche as a purveyor of classic French workwear. Think chore jackets and indigo work pants that were produced from the 1920s to the 1950s. Retail price points range from \$100 to \$200 depending on the quality of the



Vintage Alpha Industries

pieces, Orlando said.

Vintage denim, rare sportswear, military fatigues and camouflage also are a big deal at Golden Age. It sells 1950s- through 1970s-era fatigues from the United States military and European armies. Price points range from \$80 to \$300, such as an **Alpha Industries** flight jacket from the Korean War era that retailed for \$200.



From left: Bleu exterior; Ba&Sh, Bleu interior; Dorie Chamberlain, left, Gabrielle Zuccaro

Bleu

7378 Beverly Blvd.
bleuclothing.com

Veteran boutique retailer Gabrielle Zuccaro opened a new location for her contemporary women's boutique Bleu in Los Angeles' Fairfax District just a couple of days before the City of Los Angeles issued an order for businesses to shutter to stop the spread of COVID-19. She reopened on May 27 but had to close quickly because of social unrest in her neighborhood.

Since then, the Fairfax District has been coming back to life, and most of Bleu's business comes from people dining at neighborhood restaurants and taking walks down the street, which winds past **The Grove** retail center. Zuccaro estimated that her August sales were down 40 percent compared to the same month the previous year, but she re-



3.1 Phillip Lim

mained bullish that the Mid-City's fashion business would enjoy a comeback.

"There will always be a need for clothes and accessories," Zuccaro said. "When this is over, it's going to look a lot like the Roaring '20s. People will burn their sweatpants."

Recent top-selling items at Bleu included the Giles pants made by the **Cinq à Sept** brand, retailing for \$285. "They're chic," Zuccaro said. "They have an amazing waistband."

Since **Zoom** meetings have been such a big part of COVID-19 life, stylish tops have been selling at Bleu. One of the most popular is the **3.1 Phillip Lim** brand's French-terry sweater with puffy

sleeves, which retails for \$225.

Some things would sell well if people were sheltering at home or not, Zuccaro said. One is the Gianni wrap dress by the **Ba&Sh** label, which retails for \$395.



RON HERMAN



From left: Ron Herman interior, Free & Easy T-shirt display, Free City

Ron Herman

8100 Melrose Ave.
ronherman.com

Since 1976, Ron Herman has served as one of Los Angeles' pioneering boutique retailers. The shop's staff used the downtime of the COVID-19 shutdown for a big remodel after the **Gregory's** footwear store moved out of its space adjacent to the first floor of Ron Herman, which is a two-story shop.

Ron Herman's women's department expanded into the 1,200-square-foot space once occupied by Gregory's. Ron Herman also opened a women's and men's shoe department on the second floor of the store adjacent to the men's store, said James Quirk, Ron Herman's director of operations. Quirk said that the new additions would not change the shop's vibe.

"It still maintains the Ron Herman look and feel," Quirk said. "It feels familiar to clients."

Ron Herman closed for the COVID-19 shutdown on March 13. Then it closed down again on May 31 when unrest began on Melrose Avenue. Before the activity reached its block, the store boarded up its shop and



Forte Forte

hired extra security guards to guard its building, Quirk said. Windows were broken at the shop, but there was no major damage.

Ron Herman reopened in mid-June. Since then, the people shopping there have been longtime customers. Popular items have included **Free City**, a veteran brand, said Ami Lesser, director of women's buying. Brightly colored sweatpants from Free City retail for \$295.

Other brands selling well at the women's store include **Re/Donne** jeans, a line of repurposed denim and clothing. Retail price points range from \$95 to \$250 and up. Coats with a Navajo-inspired design by the **Forte Forte** brand have also been popular.

"It's not a seasonal thing," Lesser said. "If it's special, they'll collect it."

Popular men's items include \$78 T-shirts from the **Free & Easy** brand, said Ruben Leal, the director of men's buying. An upcoming focus for Ron Herman will be its self-named brand. It will offer store exclusives such as drop-shoulder crew-neck sweatshirts, which retail for \$285, and a light-stretch chino pant, which retails for \$220.



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MADE IN AMERICA

Through Creole Roots, House of Aama Grows Its Brand and Tells Its American Story

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

Maintaining their family's proud history rooted in the Creole traditions from the southern United States is crucial for Rebecca Henry and her daughter, Akua Shabaka, who are the founders of the Los Angeles brand **House of Aama**. An attorney by trade, Henry has a lifetime of experience in sewing and quilting, which has allowed her to build a business with her **Parsons School of Design**-educated daughter.

"From an early age, I watched the women in my family make crafts. It was something we did together. Before getting into fashion, my mother was teaching me basic things on the sewing machine and I would watch my mother make quilts," Shabaka said. "When it came to the business, my mother had the skill set of sewing, and it made sense because I had the eye for the creative direction and the aesthetic vision."

Established in 2015, House of Aama was formerly **Urban Nomad**, a brand born of Shabaka's interest in vintage and upcycled fashions during high school—and often given new life by Henry's sewing prowess. As Shabaka grew older, the brand evolved to become House of Aama, using Shabaka's middle name. According to the brand, Aama was chosen for its connection to the Egyptian goddess Het Heru and meaning "beneficence, graciousness and kindness." The collection was the women's investment in themselves, with Henry self-funding the venture and sewing many of the samples herself.

"That is when we decided to become more intentional and purposeful with our storytelling," Henry explained. "We have a lot of great stories and information that we can mine in our own family and heritage."

Honoring the legacy of their African American ancestors and their journey to establish a space within American life is integral to the brand, whose pieces are manufactured in Venice, Calif. This story began with the release of the Autumn/Winter 2017 collection named Bloodroot.

"Bloodroot is part of a legacy of root workers, and that particular herb is a guardian for the family. I have a legacy of root workers in my family on both sides but particularly on the maternal side coming out of Louisiana," Henry said. "That is a particular nuance in the Louisiana Creole type of culture. You have root working in that culture."

With its romantic pieces based on its Louisiana roots, Bloodroot celebrated this aspect of American heritage with contrasts between high lace necklines and billowy V-neck silk blouses featuring double bell sleeves and silk halter tops in paprika and baby blue. Pussy-bow tied shirts in silk and feminine boat-neck styles in ivory cotton are answered by lumber jackets and a striped military-style suit coat with matching straight-leg pants, and palazzo jumpsuits in deep orange set the tone of this unisex line.

"We have a particular interest in the post-bellum South. We want to present a narrative especially with African American people coming out of an enslaved status attempting to claim their rightful place in the world in a noble and majestic way," Henry said. "That is the story that we are telling, and we feel that it has broad appeal to any type of person from any type of background that is interested in the stories that we're telling. It does have a mass appeal."

Earlier in 2020, Shabaka and Henry were working on the subsequent collection for House of Aama when COVID-19 began to spread across the United States, followed by a rising social consciousness of injustice, which led to unrest across the country. Despite putting the collection on hold, the pair felt the time was right to expand the brand's reach by designing and releasing Silhouettes Collectibles.

A more-comfortable collection, pieces include 100 percent-cotton hoodies and T-shirts



Silhouettes Collectibles



Bloodroot

and tote bags created from recycled materials, yet they maintain House of Aama's sensibilities printed with Egyptian and Southern-belle imagery. Shabaka and Henry also remained committed to producing this collection in Los Angeles.

"Everything is made here; we source all of our fabrics here," Henry said. "It provides a value to the community. It employs people in the local community, and it feels good, especially during this pandemic and economic downturn, to contribute to the well-being of people who are here."

Silhouettes Collectibles are retail priced at \$45 for a tote, \$55 for T-shirts and \$75 for hoodies, while the Bloodroot collection and formal pieces can be priced up to \$1,600 for a winter coat. This range in pricing was important to afford more options as the women grow their customer base.

"We understood that our aspirational customer, who can at times be a little younger, may not be able to afford a \$700 dress," Henry said. "We wanted to be able to offer a divergent product. That is when we decided to combine our imagery and our brand DNA with products at a lower price point that would resonate with our customer base and aspirational customer." Sizing for the brand ranges from XS to XXL and 0-16. Pieces are available through houseofaama.com.

Preparing for the launch of their next collection, which will likely be released within the final months of 2020, Shabaka and Henry are sharing their stories that resonate with many others as they build a fashion legacy that Henry hopes will remain for her descendants and future generations of a growing clientele.

"Our brand DNA and brand narrative are telling a story that is hidden in plain sight, and our brand is telling an American story. It's based on Americana," Henry said. "The story that we're telling, rooted in our heritage and the postbellum South, is a story that is part of Americana and American history that has a nostalgic and sentimental reference. It's an American story just like the story that **Ralph Lauren** and others tell." ●

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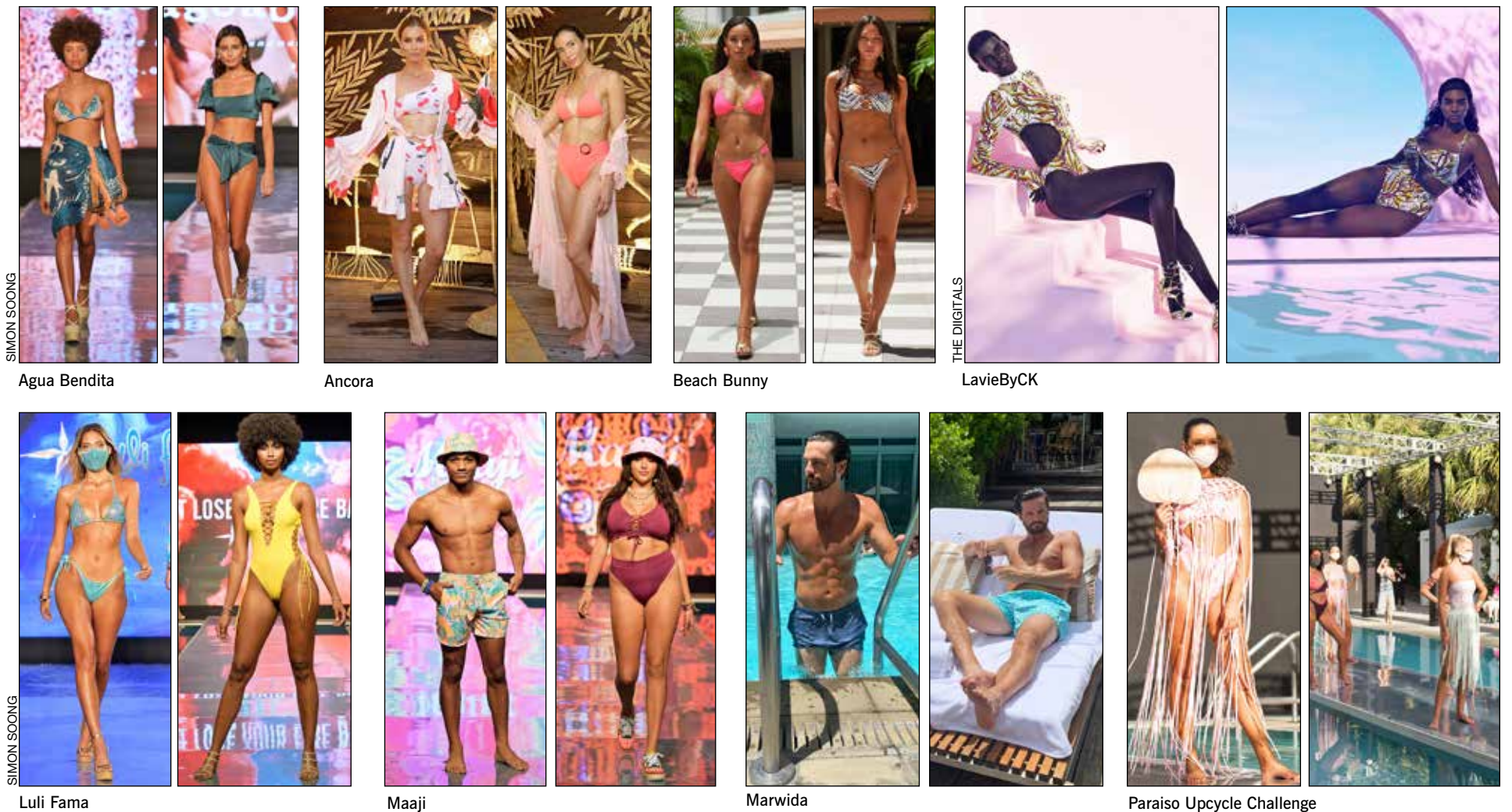
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FASHION TRADE EVENTS



California and Global Brands Shine as Paraiso Unveils Hybrid On-site/Virtual Swim Event

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

In a year that has been defined by the atypical, **Paraiso Miami Beach** looked toward 2021 as it hosted an event that blended the feel of a typical live **Miami Swim Week** with new virtual features. The regularly scheduled July edition of Miami Swim Week had been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet event veterans decided the show should go on with an Aug. 20–23 schedule of fashion showcases that were held safely onsite and streamed virtually by brands including **Agua Bendita**, **Beach Bunny**, **Vitamin A** and **Luli Fama**. Also on the itinerary was a private, socially distanced dinner held in the **Hyde Garden**, where the **Silvia Tcherassi** Resort 2021 collection was unveiled.

Focusing on honoring fashion leaders whose work has fortified the industry within South Florida, **Fashion Group International** worked with Paraiso to highlight the efforts of executives who are at the forefront of the region's business. The 2020 Awards for Excellence were bestowed on Adriana Epelboim-Levy, founder of **Alepel Shoes**, for the FGI South Florida Accessory Designer Award; Johanna Gomez, host of "NBC 6 in the Mix," for the FGI South Florida Media Award; Judy Stein, executive director of the **Swimwear Association of Florida**, for the FGI South Florida Trade Event Award; Aleksandar Stojanovic, co-founder of **Paraiso Miami Beach**, for the FGI South Florida Consumer Event Award; and Lourdes Hanimian and Augusto Hanimian, co-founders and designers of Luli Fama for the FGI South Florida Swimwear Designer Award.

The Paraiso Upcycle Challenge, which celebrates sustainable approaches to creating swimwear by working with students who are paired with swim-design veterans, hosted its second edition. For this edition of Paraiso, the award was bestowed on **Normailot**-mentored Raquel Zerbib from the **Miami International University of Art and Design**.

The online marketplace **Stitch Lab** featured a selection of Latin American brands for buyers to engage with from any location. The session also featured input from stylists Omar Thomas and Mariela Ortega. Through working with its technology partner **theCxn**, Paraiso was also able to organize opportunities for buyers from around the globe to shop in virtual showrooms, a service that is still available to buyers to explore new offerings from **Vitamin A**, **Dos Gardenias**, **Luli Fama**, **Agua Bendita**, **Ancora** and **Steam presented by Procolombia**.

Runway shows included Colombian brands **Maaji**, featuring colorful men's and women's suits and cover-ups, and An-

cora, whose tropical prints and design details including ruffles and bows, yielded a fun—yet sophisticated—approach to swim. Colombian brand **Agua Bendita** showed romantic suits with ruffles, ruching and short puffed sleeves on its bikinis and one-pieces, in addition to classic pieces in unique color-blocking underlays that made florals pop.

Miami's Luli Fama celebrated its 2021 Diosa collection on the runway during a show that saw inspirational messages set across a backdrop exclaiming, "We Rise by Lifting Others" and "Be Your Own Muse," as models walked the runway in designs that included lacing along the side, down the back and as a front detail on tops. The collection also featured unique cuts with strategically placed peek-a-boo details in the middle of bikini tops under the bust.

Some brands brought their swimwear beyond the runway. For responsibly made men's swimwear brand **Marwida**, the Stockholm label invited fashion insiders to Miami's **SLS South Beach** for a pop-up event on Aug. 23. During a live installation, a model lounged, sunbathed and dove into the hotel's pool while wearing pieces from the brand as guests learned about the new collection and its sustainable-sourcing practices.

Beach Bunny showed its pieces in a socially distanced show among palm trees poolside at the **Plymouth South Beach** as models strutted in bright neon pink, cool teal and sky-blue bikinis that featured multi-strap backs, intricately cut details and hardware including zippers. The Orange County, Calif., brand also showcased metallics, in addition to 1990s-inspired athletic-style construction. Neutrals made an appearance in chic pieces that featured unique metal hardware accents.

Laguna Beach, Calif.'s **Vitamin A** approached the swimwear event by featuring a video montage of user-generated

content comprising footage submitted by the brand's customers—real women who strutted and posed for the camera while wearing its **RESP21** pieces. New to the collection that will launch in November, **Vitamin A** is introducing its recycled metallic shimmer, **EcoRib** and yarn-dyed recycled stripe created using recycled nylon.

Others, including **Malibu**, Calif.-based **Dos Gardenias**, featured campaign videos showcasing new styles in the brand's classic cuts, which resemble ballet pieces, such as its long-sleeved single-piece

suit with plunging neckline and its one- and two-piece square-neck designs.

New to the scene was Los Angeles's **LavieByCK**, the inaugural swimwear collection from luxury designer Claude Kameni. Showcasing her brand during Paraiso was important to Kameni, whose pieces reflect her approach to modest yet sexy swimwear inspired by her family's travel business in her native Cameroon.

"I still want to be sexy but not showing too much of my body. This collection is for people who want to still feel sexy without showing too much," said the designer. "My dad owned a bus company that brought people to different places in Africa—Nigeria, Ghana. It really inspired me to create a collection where people could travel to any place in the world."

While launching a swimwear line during a history-making moment such as this special edition of Paraiso might seem ambitious enough, Kameni also made her mark by unveiling her 2021 Voyage collection at the event through a virtual runway produced by **The Digitalis**, the avatar-modeling agency that featured an array of digital runway walkers. The Voyage collection is currently available in sizes XS–XL, but expanded sizing up to 2X will become available within a month, which was reflected by models of various sizes walking the virtual runway.

"It was amazing how they created my garments on the digitals," Kameni said. "It was crazy."

In addition to the Paraiso runway, Kameni's pieces can be found in a campaign shot in Los Angeles during a session in a lush, idyllic backyard of a local home.

"We got out of lockdown. We finally put it on the models. We got a couple of models so we just went out to shoot it. It came out really beautiful," she said. "We went for Bali in L.A." ●

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