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SPRING VICTORY

For his Spring 2021 ready-to-wear presentation, New York designer Thom Browne hosted a global event for Paris Fashion Week by producing a show filmed at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. For additional looks, see page 7.

THOM BROWNE INC.

TRADE EVENTS

For LA Textile, CMC Experiments With Talk Show–Style Presentations

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Following its debut during the August edition of **L.A. Market Week**, the **CMC Uploaded** virtual platform was used again by the management of the **California Market Center** to host the CMC's popular biannual textile-and-fabrics show, **LA Textile**. During the virtual show, which ran Oct. 7–9 and was called **CMC Uploaded x LA Textile**, Matthew Mathiasen, the CMC's manager of buyer and community relations, conducted interviews with various exhibitors. After each 30-minute talk, titled "Exhibitor Spotlight Sessions," attendees had opportunities to submit questions to the exhibitors, said Moriah Robinson, the CMC's event director.

"For us at the CMC, the LA Textile show always feels like a big family gathering. When deciding on a virtual format, we wanted to evoke the same feelings that we have

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RETAIL

Ron Herman Changes Hands, Charts Next Steps

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

After more than 40 years, the red, white and blue letters of the **Fred Segal** sign that had graced the ivy-covered brick building at the corner of Los Angeles' Melrose Avenue and Crescent Heights Boulevard were recently taken down. The navy blue-and-white lettering of Ron Herman was posted in its place on Oct. 2.

That sign was a significant symbol for Los Angeles fashion. The building, at 8100 Melrose Ave., was the address of a cradle of high-end Los Angeles boutique retail. Since 1965, consumers, celebrities and influential stylists looking for cutting-edge fashion shopped there, and many in California fashion started their careers there.

For the first time in the history of that building, Ron Herman is the only boutique retailer doing business at that address. Its neighbor, **Ron Robinson**, closed its bricks-and-

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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In Its New L.A. Site, the Rudholm Group Leads a Sustainable-Label Shift

By the end of 2019, the **Rudholm Group** had added a Los Angeles-based printing operation to its list of centers around the globe. The Sweden-headquartered manufacturer of notions, labels and packaging set its sights on Los Angeles as part of a United States expansion plan that began four years ago with the opening of its New York City development-and-sales office. Now, the Rudholm Group has brought to Los Angeles a more sustainable approach to this segment of the apparel supply chain by offering recycled care labels and barcode stickers.



Rudholm Group's care labels

"The Rudholm Group has been around since 1953 in Europe. It has been in the manufacturing business for a very long time in the packaging and trim-manufacturing business," Dennis Lau, director of the Rudholm Group USA, explained. "It was in the business plan since day one to expand from New York to Los Angeles at some point."

The Rudholm Group attained its **Global Recycle Standard** certification as all of its care-content labels created in the United States are made using 100 percent post-consumer-waste recycled polyester. Its stickers

are also Berry Amendment compliant. With its stateside production established in the Vernon neighborhood of Los Angeles, the Rudholm Group was able to offer more-responsible stickers and care tags to its clients in the United States. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rudholm was also able to gain business by manufacturing products concerned with personal protective equipment.

"We were able to work on a couple of PPE-related products like barcode stickers for isolation gowns, which were a couple of million pieces," Lau said. "That was unfore-

seeable, and it was good support for our revenue."

With its responsibly made care labels and barcode stickers—which are available printed in color on recycled paper and recycled PET, Rudholm's vision for the future is to add more offerings to its roster of made-in-Los Angeles, ecologically sound products. Noting that Rudholm can accommodate businesses throughout the United States, Lau hopes that the company's location in Los Angeles will serve as an asset due to California's reputation as an ally to eco-friendly advancements, with the business expanding to potentially include paper-printed products, which would be produced in partnership with the Forest Stewardship Council.

"We can serve all of America from Los Angeles, that is for sure," Lau said. "Sustainability had become a huge topic maybe four or five years ago. The Rudholm Group, as a Scandinavian-owned company, has always been far ahead in that regard. It's always been the vision. It has also seen its biggest growth in the last couple of years."

—Dorothy Crouch

Bolt Threads Makes Big Partnership Announcement

Weeks of teaser posts appeared on the **Instagram** account for **Bolt Threads**, the biotechnology materials company founded in 2009, prior to the company's big announcement on Oct. 2 that it would be joining forces with a few enormous brands to form **The Mylo Consortium**. The San Francisco-based

Bolt Threads has partnered with **Adidas, Kering, Lululemon** and **Stella McCartney**. Through this partnership, the fashion companies have committed to investing in Bolt Threads' Mylo Unleather Initiative, which promotes Mylo, the material firm's leather alternative, which is created from mycelium,



Swatches of Bolt Threads' Mylo

an underground network of fungal filaments.

"We are thrilled to be working with partners who recognize that we are in a race to develop sustainable solutions to conventional technologies," Dan Widmaier, Bolt Threads' founder and chief executive officer, said in a statement.

Through the consortium, Adidas, Kering, Lululemon and Stella McCartney will make Mylo-based products available to consumers by 2021. The entrance of these major apparel-market players into the space in which a fresh leather alternative is used in luxury and designer goods will afford greater reach to the mycelium fashion market.

For Bolt Threads, this partnership affords an optimistic end to the year. In 2012, the company introduced its spider silk fibers created from a process that imitates the insect's process of spinning its web, which yields a biodegradable, antimicrobial and hypoallergenic thread, thereby creating proteins.

This is also not the company's first time working with McCartney and Adidas. In 2017, Bolt Threads launched its Microsilk fiber—its first commercial product—as a collaboration with Stella McCartney, which yielded dresses from the design house. Following the 2018 launch of its b-silk protein, Bolt Threads collaborated with McCartney and Adidas to produce **Stella McCartney x Adidas Microsilk**, a skincare line. In addition to the launch of its b-silk protein, in 2018 Bolt Threads also launched Mylo, the foundation for The Mylo Consortium, applying the material to a Mylo driver-bag design.

—D.C.

Inside the Industry

Apparel Business Systems, an enterprise-resource-planning software publisher, recently announced the release of absNEXT. According to Jean Kopan, ABS' president, absNEXT is a web-based application that offers user-friendly features such as improved navigation and the ability to tailor views as well as download data from any device with a web browser. "In this version of ABS, we focused on how to make technology work harder for our customers with data grids, dashboards and user-managed-information reporting and extracts," Kopan said.

Telemundo, the media company serving the Spanish-speaking community in the continental U.S. and Puerto Rico, recently announced that it is getting into the e-commerce business. It unveiled Shop Telemundo, an online marketplace that gives space to more than 50 retailers. These retailers will sell home, fashion and beauty products among other goods, said Romina Rosado, senior vice president of entertainment and content for NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises. "With over \$1.5 trillion in buying power, Hispanics have emerged as one of the most powerful and influential consumers in the U.S.," Rosado said. "With Shop Telemundo, we are enhancing the viewer experience with a new layer of engagement that allows fans to interact with their favorite content while driving results for retailers and partners."

Le Black Box recently unveiled its new website, *leblackbox.com*. The website offers an e-marketplace for independent fashion designers including Bohemian Society, Jessica Bedard and Karnit Aharoni, said Melissa Laskin, Le Black Box's founder. Laskin, who has worked as a stylist, designed a fashion line that was sold in leading Los Angeles boutiques and whose styling work has been featured in glossy magazines such as *Vogue* and *Elle*.

The **Fashion For Action** fundraiser is scheduled to run Nov. 12–14, and the annual event is promising a new way to tell the world about the group it supports—Housing Works, a New York City-headquartered nonprofit that advocates for and provides services to the homeless and those living with HIV/AIDS. A recent statement promised an omni-channel celebration, which will include online and in-store events. Those holding VIP tickets to the fundraiser will be invited to join virtual discussions with fashion luminaries. Those speaking at the virtual discussions will include outspoken author and fashion journalist Andre Leon Talley, *Paper Magazine* editor Mickey Boardman, celebrity stylist Misa Hylton and designer Kimora Lee Simmons. There also will be an e-sale of designer goods sold off price from Cesar Galindo, Libertine, M.Gemi, Everyone, Indochino, Ulla Johnson and Issey Miyake as well as one-of-a-kind donations from fashion luminaries such as Christian Siriano. For more information, visit <https://www.classy.org/event/fashion-for-action-2020/e293295>.

Ruby Ribbon, the Burlingame, Calif., intimates-and-athleisure brand, has hired two new executives. Michelle Sanft was named the company's new chief operating officer and chief financial officer. Loly Hlade was hired as the company's chief marketing officer. They will report to Clint McKinlay, Ruby Ribbon's chief executive officer.

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TRADE EVENTS



Catherine Gee stands beside her Spring 2021 collection during L.A. Market at the Cooper Design Space.



Matthew Mathiasen hosts a CMC UPLOADED segment with Purebaby Organic from Australia.



Elliot Lauren brand at the Julie & Stuart Marcher showroom at Gerry



Candance Simmons of All That & More Boutique works in her shop while also attending L.A. Market through the CMC's virtual CMC UPLOADED event.

Onsite and Online, L.A. Market Week's Hybrid Model Sees Success

By Andrew Asch and Dorothy Crouch

Buyers descended on downtown Los Angeles' fashion district in person and virtually Oct. 12–14 for **L.A. Market Week**. At **The New Mart**, **California Market Center**, **Cooper Design Space**, **Gerry Building** and **Lady Liberty Building**, buyers conducted business under an air of cautious optimism.

Marking progress at New Mart

The October market brought in the new for **Lenchner & Kane Sales**, formerly known as **Lisa Lenchner Sales**. Lechner, a veteran showroom owner, introduced new lines such as **Robell**, **Que**, **Lands Downunder** and **Sno Skins**. She also introduced a new associate sales representative, Tina Kahn, who is representing the jewelry line **Escape from Paris**.

Lenchner said that traffic was good during the show. "This market was better than the last," she said.

She and her daughter Shannon Kane, who serves as a partner in the showroom, said that stores were being cautious about Immediate and Fall orders. But the retailers were making Spring orders. "I'm seeing a lot more confidence," Kane said. "They're also investing more in Spring. People are feeling safer. They're also trying to float their businesses."

Julie Jennerjahn, owner of the **Steppin' Out** boutique in Taos, N.M., shopped The New Mart for trends including hoodies and leisure clothing with matching tops and bottoms.

New experiences at the CMC

Through its **CMC Uploaded** virtual feature, the CMC hosted buyers such as Candance Simmons, owner of the **All That & More Boutique** in Culver City, Calif., who has never missed a market during her 10 years in business.

"You have to be able to pivot in your mindset and business, and I've always been impressed with how the CMC can help you pivot," Simmons, who shopped **Fern Liberson & Co.** and **Sandra Loulakis**, said. "I did everything virtually. It was amazing."

Onsite at the CMC, Mark Tunnell of **Tunnell Fashions Inc.** reported a good market with buyers traveling in from New York and Pennsylvania to place orders in his showroom. He reported interest in anything tie-dye, bike shorts, lounge pieces, pleated and tennis skirts, and cargo pants.

"Right now, I am having a lot of good sales at market," Tunnell explained. "Everyone is putting one foot in front of the other and continuing to stock their stores with more merchandise. I just took a bunch of 1/30 deliveries, which is really positive for me."

Consistent traffic at Cooper

At the Cooper, Catherine Gee showcased her Spring 2021 collection, which drew in buyers with its luxurious pieces in bright colors, including her popular silk shirting. Gee welcomed buyers from Alabama, Colorado and Texas.

"A lot of them flew in, did business and flew out. The buyers who are here know that life has to go on and we have to conduct commerce," Gee said. "They aren't being conservative but being very specific with their buys."

One of Gee's clients, Michelle DeHaven of Boulder, Colo.'s **Haven**, flew into Los Angeles for the day. Placing orders mostly for Spring, DeHaven added a small Holiday capsule, noting that it was important to properly serve her clientele, who expect extraordinary quality.

"It felt very safe—please come back out. I want everybody to feel comfortable," DeHaven said. "I never felt like people were not taking it seriously."

Proven lines drive business at Gerry

Julie and Stuart Marcher, the husband-and-wife team behind their self-named showroom **Julie & Stuart Marcher**, showed the newly released Spring looks of their longtime clients **Elliott Lauren**, **Clara Sunwoo** and **Nally & Mills**. Stuart Marcher said that it was crucial to represent lines with proven track records.

Another issue for the market is that many retailers are seeing lines a bit late. "The timing of things is a little askew," Marcher said. "But people were definitely happy. They're buying." The Marchers estimated that they conducted 25 meetings during the show.

Lady Liberty showrooms sense rally in wholesale business

Wholesale buying is rebounding from earlier this year, said Suzie Hart, co-owner of the **Niche Showroom**, which was representing **Lysse**, **Billy T** and **Brave & True** in the Lady Liberty Building.

"It was surprisingly busy. It was more of a market than we had all year," Hart said. But retailers' orders had not fully rallied. "They are buying vignettes. They are not buying in depth," Hart said.

A new showroom opened at Lady Liberty during the October market. The cooperative showroom **Globe Showroom/Omarche** and **Édité** opened a permanent space, said Bruno Peutat of the **Globe**. Peutat feared that his clients might have a tough time finding a new address. "But it wasn't bad at all," he said. The **Globe** represented lines such as **Let Me Be**, **Psophia Spain** and **Suncoo Paris**. ●

LA Textile *Continued from page 1*

at the show, which is promoting intimate and productive conversations in a comfortable setting," she said. "Matthew Mathiasen works with both our LA Textile exhibitors and attendees, so by having him as our textile host, we feel that we instantly created that feeling of familiarity and comfort for both parties."

Exhibitors and attendees said that this new formula yielded some good results. Pat Tabassi serves as the marketing manager of **Design Knit**, a Los Angeles-based domestic fabric mill, and works in product development. Following her session with Mathiasen, Tabassi discussed her company's new showroom concept, **Studio DK**.

"It's a different time," Tabassi said. "We have to be creative. This was a great way to make it fun and directly engage with attendees with the question-and-answer period. It is a smart alternative. It makes your presence known." Minutes after her Exhibitor Spotlight Session, attendee inquiries appeared in her email inbox, Tabassi said.

Elisabetta Rogiani, founder of the self-named **Rogiani** label, based in Los Angeles, viewed the **Peclers Paris** trend presentation on Oct. 7. Rogiani said that the format gave new focus to the trade show.

"The big advantage is one-on-one instead of being in a big room," she said of the format, which she said gave a feeling of intimacy. "It was a very comfortable way to see the presentation."

Robinson said that more than 750 people from around the world visited the CMC website to participate in individual Exhibitor Spotlight Sessions.

Other exhibitors included Japanese companies **Hokkoh Co. LTD.** and **Shindo**. Hokkoh makes prints and solids for men and women, with bright colors informing its looks for the Autumn/Winter 2020 and Spring Summer 2021 seasons.



Spirit Lace



Ohzone ItaliaA Collection

Shindo devoted time in its presentation to its expanded sustainable program, which included trims, tapes and ribbons made out of organic cotton and recycled polyester.

Firms based in the United States included the Los Angeles-based apparel-manufacturing company **Fil & Needle** as well as the New York City-headquartered **Buttonology**, which exhibited a selection of buttons including novelty metals and eco-friendly offerings made out of coconut and other sustainable materials. Cyrus Nazari, owner of **Fil & Needle**, also noted its sustainability aspect. Some of his clients use

newly made sustainable fabrics to make collections with a high-fashion edge. Others buy dead stock and old clothes that are cut into new garments, he said.

The tech in LA Textile

CMC Uploaded x LA Textile also served as a platform for apparel technology. **Ohzone Inc.**, a Sunnyvale, Calif.-headquartered startup, made its debut earlier this year. Ohzone made a presentation showcasing its 3DREAL proprietary technology. Alison Lewis, the company's design strategist and new business development, who gave the presentation, explained that Ohzone developed virtual environments that can show photorealistic representations of clothing and exhibit details such as the drape of a garment. The virtual samples can then be distributed to clients and displayed in digital showrooms.

The Carlisle, Ky.-headquartered **FeltLOOM** demonstrated its FeltLOOM Pro, a needle felting machine that is used to rebuild and refurbish fabrics. After being refurbished by the machine, fabrics can be used to make new items, which allows waste to bypass the landfill, said Lanette Freitag, president of **FeltLOOM**, whose customers include the **Eileen Fisher** brand. As the leader of a business that is based in a former factory town located in Kentucky's Bluegrass region, Freitag was hopeful that the company's machines could bring industry and jobs to America's Heartland. The machine can help people develop their own businesses.

Freitag was glad that the platform of CMC Uploaded gave her the opportunity to exhibit a large machine at her company's studio. But she missed the in-person aspect of a traditional trade show.

"With in-person you can see the person's expression," she said. "You can see that 'aha!' moment. You can't always see that virtually. You don't get the same reaction as you do in person." ●

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INDUSTRY VOICES: FASHION

Finding a Path in Fashion: Where are we now and where are we going?

By Ilse Metchek *California Fashion Association*

We have watched the gradual decline of brand loyalty, a development borne of fast-fashion's demand for new products all the time and the rise of influencer peddling. This reality has posed real threats to established brands that are not as agile due to legacy assets and their own bureaucracies.

In this age, characterized by instant changes in consumer taste and preference, there is significant risk of holding any inventory position while apparel brands and e-commerce companies must contend with online return rates as high as 39 percent in some sectors. Even if more-conservative estimates are accurate, one third of all online purchases is returned.

What is luxury?

Even the word "luxury" is not what it used to be. The Internet, the rise of on-demand services and the shift in consumer values are all challenging traditional notions of luxury. The classic symbols—the **Hermès** Birkin bag, an *authentic* **Rolux** watch and a couture made-to-measure dress are not in any danger of losing status, but around the edges the concept of luxury is not as clear. An exquisitely crafted product, the cornerstone of traditional luxury, matters less to young shoppers than it did to previous generations.

Traditional luxury makers have been forced to adapt to the new normal, clearly as the result of the younger generation's social and environmental awareness, creating *different markers of status*. Why was a United States-based skate-brand hoodie in collaboration with **Louis Vuitton** a runaway bestseller at \$400? Is a \$2,500 dress still a luxury item when you are renting it for a night at \$250? Even luxury labels are turning to sweatpants and sneakers for sales growth.

Today, it is the brand—the image and the storytelling—that attracts. Conspicuous consumption is on the decline and has been replaced by a social, environmental and cultural awareness as the new social capital.

Millennials and Gen Z-ers already account for 30 percent of global luxury sales, and they are on pace to be 45 percent by 2025, according to the **Bain & Co.** consultants. For many of these consumers, ownership is not necessarily the way to go. Why purchase a movie on a DVD when you can stream it on **Netflix**? Why purchase a car when there is **Uber**? Online resale sites such as **TheRealReal** and **RentTheRunway** are a part of these generations' economy.

Social media has totally changed the marketing concept. Brands used to create their own image from the top down through fashion advertisements and relationships with fashion editors. Now, anyone with a smart phone can become an influencer, shifting the balance of power. *Brands ignore influencers at their peril*; they must target small demographic communities online in ways that speak to just them.

Influencer marketing is part of the new online review space. Most of **YouTube**, **Instagram** and **WeChat** influencers are making a profit off of their product reviews, and many do not disclose this information to their audiences.



Ilse Metchek

Six years ago, the United States Federal Trade Commission issued guidelines for disclosure requirements. Bloggers and influencers are required to include an explanatory phrase: "Commission is received from purchases made through this link." The majority of disclosures do not abide by FTC guidelines—yet. Research indicates that a vast majority of marketing programs by influencers on platforms like YouTube go undisclosed. Currently, only 10 percent of YouTube videos contain any disclosure at all.

Basically, the inclusion of such a disclosure does not automatically mean that a review is biased. The question is whether or not the consumers' choices would be different if they knew that the blogger profits when they make a purchase. Full-time influencers, whose followers number in the millions, are now represented by talent agencies that help broker relationships for them and brands.

In August of 2019, the FTC sent over 90 letters to celebrities and influencers reminding them that they should clearly disclose brand relationships.

However, celebrities and social influencers hold formidable power over Gen Z; this generation has fewer concerns about privacy and data security on these platforms, and a Gen Z consumer is four times more likely to buy based on social-media input than any previous generation.

Experimentation and innovation

To be successful in this new data-based environment, small-scale experiments are essential. While influencers may not be appropriate for every company, the idea represents an approach for change. The culture of any company today must embrace the realities that the new consumer talks about—sustainability, social justice and labor equality.

New product has to be all the time, including special drops and new releases that are the lifeblood of e-commerce fashion and speed-to-market thinking. These ideas generate recurring revenue rather than amassing margin-killing inventory.

The world of fashion is changing. It is certainly a challenge but also a great opportunity for the companies that grab all new concepts and run with them. Technology and continual testing can create the environment for innovation; all products and brands will grow and benefit by listening, experimenting and implementing. ●

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EM:BODY

Em:body's Toby set

Em:body Works With the Human Body to Achieve Fitness Goals

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

As the saying goes, “No pain, no gain,” but for Emma Vollrath, a personal trainer and founder of the San Jose, Calif., activewear brand **Em:body**, the mantra would be “No sweat, no results.” Starting her own fitness journey in 2013, first in weightlifting, eventually gravitating toward Pilates and barre, Vollrath launched Em:body in 2019 after a year of working as a personal trainer who noticed a common concern among her clients when she would inquire about their goals.

“Almost every single one of them either said something about their lower stomach, bloating or water weight, or it was about looking good naked,” Vollrath said. “There are waist trainers and waist belts, but they tried them and didn’t like the way they looked or they just felt too bulky.”

After considering the needs of her clients, Vollrath wanted to not only keep them fit through remaining active but also wanted to create beautiful apparel that works with the body’s own science to enhance the results from fitness activities. Seeking to create activewear that will warm the body and trap heat, Vollrath knew that this type of apparel would increase sweat, thereby helping to expel water weight and reduce bloating.

“Make something that makes you look good and holds you in but also helps you get to that end goal of looking good naked and getting rid of water weight and bloating, so that is what I had in mind when I started Em:body,” she said. “I just wanted something that could benefit and reward you while you’re working out.”

For her first collection, Vollrath created sculpt-and-sweat yoga pants that included 3.5-millimeter neoprene on the inside, the same heat-conserving material used to create wet suits designed for scuba divers and surfers. While the material retains heat, it also increases sweat and eliminates water weight.

“The neoprene raises your body temperature and holds you in because it’s not super stretchy so it sticks to your stomach very well. I love the idea of it being hidden, not super bulky. It would hold your waist in, and that was what my thought process was for the first one,” she said. “It is phenomenal getting rid of water weight and bloating because you just sweat out everything.”

Following the release of Em:body’s first collection, Vollrath sought to improve upon the product that she created by offering a bit more stretch, which is not a characteristic of neoprene. Released in June, Em:body’s next

collection, named Toby, was created using polyvinyl chloride, a popular material used in creating sauna workout clothing, which creates the heat-retaining effect sought by Vollrath, but those pieces are often made in silhouettes that are baggy.

“With the neoprene, you have to take it off because it can irritate your skin if you wear it too long when you’re sweaty,” she said. “PVC doesn’t do that at all. It’s super thin, still holds you in, and it’s not noticeable either, which was my main goal as well. It doesn’t make you look bulky.”

Moving forward, Em:body will create its pieces using PVC as it affords the ideal result that mirrors Vollrath’s vision of a sleek piece that works with the body to lose bulk. Offering results similar to a sweat belt, which can appear bulky, Em:body streamlines the body’s shape, looking chic while also working hard.

“It’s something that didn’t look like a waist trainer but worked as a waist trainer, so I wanted it to resemble normal activewear with a twist,” Vollrath said. “On the outside it looks normal, but on the inside it’s like, ‘What is this, I’ve never seen this before in [workout] pants?’”

Additional changes for the brand include moving production from Shanghai to New York City with fabric sourced in Los Angeles. Having production established domestically is another step in the evolution of Em:body that Vollrath welcomes as she hopes to remain more hands-on with closer access to the supply chain.

“I want to change the way people look at activewear and fitness and the way people look at themselves,” Vollrath explained. “Once you have a good, flattering outfit you can pretty much do anything. I want to make more-fashionable activewear as opposed to your run-of-the-mill sports bra and yoga pants.”

As an active brand that aims to appear more fashionable while working hard to shape the body, the brand will introduce a Fall 2020 collection using its PVC inside with comfortable navy-blue velvet on the outside. Spring 2021, Em:body will offer styles that rely on a tennis theme with pastels in light pink, baby blue and a lime green or pale yellow, but the decision on the final color will be left up to an **Instagram** vote by fans of the brand. Available at embodyactivewear.com, Em:body’s Toby line is sold in sizes S–XL with other styles offered in S–XXL and priced at \$35–\$95 retail. ●



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Ron Herman *Continued from page 1*

mortar shop in 2019. The family of Fred Segal, the man who founded the Fred Segal compound of shops at that address, sold his intellectual property and trademarks in 2012. Then, in 2016, Segal opened a new flagship in West Hollywood. Big changes recently came to Ron Herman, which has been in business since 1976.

With no public announcement, Ron Herman sold his company to the Japanese holding company **Sazaby League Ltd.** for an undisclosed amount in 2019. Sazaby runs more than 20 Ron Herman stores in Japan. The Japanese company had partnered with Herman more than a decade ago. These shops offered Japanese-only product lines such as a unique **Vans** collaboration and a limited-edition Ron Herman **Toyota FJ** Cruiser vehicle. Herman and his wife, Carol, served as consultants until January 2020 and then left the company. Ron Herman had been looking for a successor. His children were not interested in taking over the business. However, he had been working with Sazaby for a decade. He believed that the Japanese company not only understood the retailer's DNA, but they had the passion and professionalism to bring Ron Herman into a new era. "It's a natural evolution," Herman said. "I felt secure and grateful to find someone who could do that."

Since then, James Quirk, who has worked as a Ron Herman salesperson, buyer and store director, has been helping run operations in the United States. He currently serves as Ron Herman's general manager and director of operations. The retailer's U.S. operations include the two-story, 14,000-square-foot Melrose flagship as well as women's boutiques in Los Angeles' upscale Brentwood neighborhood and in Malibu, Calif. Also part of this boutique operation is the e-commerce shop *ronherman.com*.

Ron Herman's chief operations officer, Jenny Hodge, and Toshi Fujita, its vice president, presided over hiring a new team, most of whom started their jobs a couple of months before the COVID-19 shutdown. The new slate includes Ami Lasser, who joined as the new women's buyer. She has worked as a stylist and buyer for more than 20 years and started her career at Ron Herman. Ruben Leal, who co-founded the popular Venice Beach boutique **Tradesman**, joined Ron Herman as its men's buyer. Kyle Moffett, the new director of e-commerce, joined in August.



James Quirk

The pioneering retailer's change of leadership takes place during a time of transformation for the retail business and society. Quirk said that Ron Herman would chart a course to forge new ventures for the retailer. However, the new team also has been working diligently to retain the company's personality and aesthetic, which grew out of the sensibilities of the company's founder.

In a 2018 interview with *California Apparel News*, Herman called his aesthetic an "elegant simplicity." It was one of the first stores that could mix high and low fashion, designer and denim, as well as whimsical and street styles. Its retail price points range from \$45 for a T-shirt to \$2,500 for high-end designer pieces and more than \$8,000 for jewelry.

Ron Herman set a template for California fashion, said Nicole Pollard Bayme, a stylist and CEO for the **LaLaLuxe** company.

"Before laid-back, California blogger style was the rage. Those in the know could head to Ron Herman for the best selections of denim and sweats that L.A. had to offer," she said. Her company organizes fashion tours of Los Angeles, and Ron Herman has long served as a stop on LaLaLuxe routes.

Ron Herman's aesthetic has kept people coming back to the store for decades and made the boutique a retailer whose

influence continues to be felt, Quirk said.

"He's done everything so well. It has been consistent for so long. It is in our DNA. So for everything I do, I'm thinking, 'Would Ron appreciate and embrace this decision?'" Quirk said.

Like other retailers, Ron Herman has grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. Its bricks-and-mortar business shut down on March 13 and reopened in early June. During this time, a remodel was rolled out.

An independent footwear store, **Gregory's**, had moved out of its space next to the first level of Ron Herman. Ron Herman extended its women's wing and added footwear on the second floor, Quirk said. "For the first time, we carry shoes. It's been a dream of ours," he said. "We've never been able to style a head-to-toe, complete look."

The retailer also opened an in-store jewelry salon. Eyewear company **Oliver Peoples** opened a separate shop in the bungalow building formerly occupied by the Canadian retailer **Aritzia**. Throughout the location, interiors were spruced up, and the interiors have a brighter, airier ambience.

The landing area between a staircase leading to the second floor will be dedicated to new ventures. In November, it will serve as the site of holiday shop-in-shops for Los Angeles brands such as **Camp High**, a basics brand with a whimsical sense of humor; **Soyer**, a women's contemporary knits brand; and **I'm OK!** by **Larry Schaffer**, aka Mr. Gift, who founded a Los Angeles gifting and homeware line.

Another upcoming project will be to further develop Ron Herman's private-label clothing brands. Sazaby Private Label Coordinator Yoshie Yanagi has been working on developing more Ron Herman lines such as the upcoming **RHLA** sustainable-cashmere line.

The new leadership team for Ron Herman will have some big shoes to fill. Ron Herman is still known as a shop that gambled on new lines such as **Juicy**, **True Religion** as well as **Trina Turk** and **J Brand**, which came to dominate retail, said John Eshaya, founder of the **JETJohn Eshaya** brand, who worked at the retailer beginning in 1984 and left in 2008 as its vice president and women's buyer.

"To be in Ron Herman in the '90s meant that your line was going to be seen by the buyers of every department store and every specialty store as well as every designer and every actor. You would become a star," Eshaya said. "Everyone's eyes were on Ron Herman." ●

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THOM BROWNE

Thom Browne Produces Science-Fiction Fashion Film at L.A. Coliseum

Playful, surreal runway shows are part of the **Thom Browne** brand as much as they are the shrunken silhouettes of the New York designer's suiting. But the COVID-19 crisis forced Browne to change his fashion-show plans. In-person runway shows for the Spring 2021 **Paris Fashion Week** were canceled. Browne pivoted by producing a film to exhibit his women's and men's looks for the Spring '21 season. He shot his fashion film at the **Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum**, where the 1932 and 1984 **Summer Olympics** took place. Browne incorporated a science-fiction edge into his film.

In the unnamed film, performer and filmmaker Jordan Firstman plays a sportscaster at the 2132 Intergalactic Olympic Games, which take place on the moon at a venue that is a re-creation of the Los Angeles Coliseum, where a crowd has gathered to witness the opening ceremony.

Models walk up and down the steps of the coliseum as Firstman announces the games' opening ceremonies, with 37



Thom Browne looks at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum

looks on the models, who wore Browne's Spring '21 layered styles.

The season's women's looks include sack suits; long,

structured blazers; and pencil skirts. For men, the season's styles include oversized blazers, shorts, cropped trousers and pleated skirts. The styles were made using wool, cotton, cashmere, silk and satin, according to a statement from the Thom Browne label.

This collection seeks to embrace a unique style in the construction of suiting. The suits follow a couture inspiration and use an intarsia style of knitting in which a number of different colors are employed, according to the statement. "Jackets for men and women [are] sewn together like pieces of a puzzle using intarsia techniques that mix fabrics and fabrications. Each piece [was] hand sewn together."

Other unique fabrications in the collection include women's coats that use strips of wool seersucker that were ruched and sewn together with hand-stitched beading. The designer's sketches also were hand embroidered into blazers, jackets and skirts.

Browne's fashion film was released Oct. 4 and can be viewed on **YouTube** and at thombrowne.com.—Andrew Asch

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After Building Its Brand in Taiwan, Vast Hopes to Build Business Back in the U.S.

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Growing up in Los Angeles, Sam Yang surfed and aspired to design his own surf-and-lifestyle brand that would be sold in California's core shops in the category. He started a brand called **Vast**, which was inspired by the vastness of the oceans and exotic vistas where he hoped his travels would take him.

He took the new brand to the popular trade shows such as **MAGIC**, **Surf Expo** and the defunct **Action Sports**

Retailer from the years 2010 to 2013. He took orders. He experienced the camaraderie and the good times for which action-sports trade shows are known. But he felt that a lot of the shelf space at California's surf shops had already been spoken for. Major surf brands dominated the segment's retail scene.

During this time, he'd been hearing more about the burgeoning surf scene in his parents' native country of Taiwan. "It was new. It was younger. It was growing. We could bring experience from the States to Taiwan," Yang said.

He opened a boutique in the stylish East neighborhood of Taiwan's capital, Taipei, in 2016 and it thrived. For most of the world, Vast is primarily a direct-to-consumer brand. Yang kept his manufacturing contacts in Los Angeles and focused on selling the brand's clothes to much of the world on the brand's direct-to-consumer channel, *vastlife.com*.

Yang also developed business in the surfer's paradise of Hawaii. Vast had worked on a collaboration line with the core surf/skate brand **In4mation**. In4mation's designer, Jun Jo, joined Vast as a creative director around 2017. The line was **Vast x In4mation**, and it featured an organic, woven checkered pattern.

But California was calling. In the past year, Yang started increasing his efforts in his home region. In June 2019, he hired a new Los Angeles-based branding manager, John Ito. They've been developing new ways to grow deeper roots in California, which remains the center of the surf, skate and action-sports industry, Yang said.

"We've grown and we have more recognition," he said. "We want to see what we can do in Los Angeles. L.A. is home. L.A. is

where the core of the industry is."

Yang has also been developing new ways to keep his far-flung manufacturing supply chain local and sustainable.

"For a lot of products in Los Angeles, we make them in Los Angeles. If it is sold in Taiwan, we make it in Taiwan, the same thing with Hawaii. We try to source as locally as possible," Yang said.

Vast produces T-shirts, some of its knits and one of its most-popular accessories, face masks, in Los Angeles. This year, Vast introduced a campaign through which it would contribute clothing and masks to **Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital** in Los Angeles for every face mask sold.

Vast offers unique graphics such as all-over prints of flowers on its floral T-shirts. Retail price points for

tees range from \$30 to \$50.

Yang and his colleagues also hope to shine a brighter spotlight on Aqua Terra. It's an antimicrobial performance fabric for which Yang was awarded a patent by the United States Patent Office earlier this year.

Vast currently uses the Aqua Terra fabric in a unique class of surf T-shirt. "You can wear it in the water and the wet fabric won't feel like it's clinging to the skin," said Yang.

Yang believes that demand will grow for this style of hybrid shirt because there is already a market for hybrid walking shorts. In the first decade of this century, surf brands manufactured hybrid walking shorts that could be used in the water like boardshorts but could also dry quickly and be worn away from the beach. Hybrid shorts have continued to be a popular category. Since Vast has the patent, it hopes to expand its program of Aqua Terra fabric in its shirts and perhaps introduce the fabric to other brands.

Ito said that the brand also hopes to expand its wholesale program in America. "I want people to look at the brand and feel excitement and happiness," Ito said. "I want them to look at this as a true lifestyle brand with the root of it all in surfing and share the vastness." ●



Sam Yang

Go Beyond the News and Behind the Scenes

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GrooveNStyle's Digital Showroom Aims to Provide the Human Touch

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Over the past decade, there has been a demand for virtual-showroom platforms. Despite their success, all of these platforms have missed a crucial element of the business—sales, according to the founders of **GrooveNStyle**, a virtual-showroom platform scheduled to make its official debut on Oct. 19. The platform can be found at groovenstyle.com.

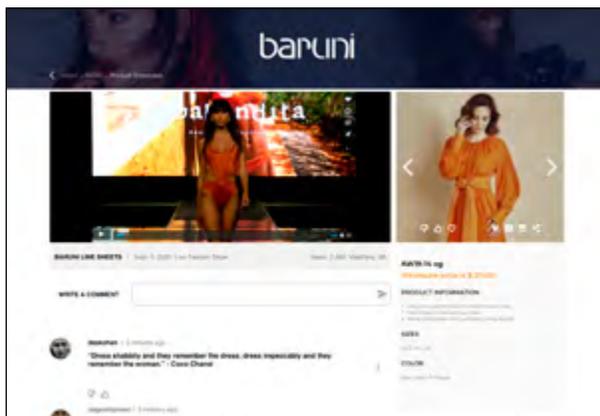
"There still needs to be a human touch in a digital platform," said Eme Mizioch, a GNS co-founder who has also run the **Joken Style** fashion showroom in Los Angeles for 15 years.

Patrick Campbell, a Houston-based GNS investor and president of the **LennyLu** footwear brand, said that salespeople can't be replaced. The appeal of a fashion brand cannot be entirely communicated through pictures.

"You have to talk to someone," he said. "There's no other way to close a sale."

The platform will provide the same basics as other digital-showroom platforms. There will be digital space to display line sheets, media such as brand video and forms to create orders. A GNS point of difference will be Mizioch and her colleagues, who will act as sales reps. They will be available to offer presentations on a brand's finer points. These meetings will be arranged through brand agents and buyers meeting through the GNS platform.

GNS's sales representatives also will do the legwork that is at the core of a salesperson's role. They'll be knocking on doors. They'll assess if their clients' brands are right for certain retailers. They will also handle marketing services to pro-



GrooveNStyle

vide the brands and advise on marketing strategy.

The GNS founders also hope to help their clients with additional support from the technology world. Through the platform's big-data analytics, it will show a client who is looking at its virtual showroom how the brand's name, logo and products are trending on social media, Campbell said.

"You'll see how the brand is perceived. You'll see how things are trending," he said. "The platform's proprietary technology also will ascertain how many views a certain item gets so a brand can confirm if an item is gaining interest and where it is trending. Along with big-data analytics, the platform also aims to offer the services of a planner such as a marketplace calendar for fashion weeks and trade shows. It

will also offer a search engine for retailers, buyers, manufacturers and designers.

The GNS platform will give viewers a button by which they can communicate whether they like a particular garment and show brands which items are resonating and which items are not, Mizioch said. "The 'like' button is a highlighter. You're highlighting off of a line sheet," she said.

At a future point, GNS also hopes to offer warehousing and distribution services, said Randy Prado, a GNS partner who also serves as the chief executive officer for **Republisys**, a software developer that has offices in the Philippines and Australia. GNS is currently going through a seed round of investment to support the rollout of the platform's logistics services. Eventually, Prado hopes that the company will offer services in product development and sales, analytics and logistics.

GNS also hopes to develop into a global platform. More than 30 brands are currently participating in the platform, including Campbell's **LennyLu**. Prado is in talks with entrepreneurs and companies across Southeast Asia to participate. Mizioch forecasted that Los Angeles-headquartered brands would participate as would Italian brands she has represented in the past.

Before a brand can join the GNS platform, it will have to demonstrate that it is working on a solid foundation. This includes showing samples to GNS. Brands, sales representatives and agencies will be required to pay an as-yet undisclosed subscription fee to participate in GNS. The site's fees will run from the basic platform experience, which will include posting line sheets and media on the platform, to a full package, which will include access to analytics and sales services. The site will offer the first 90 days for free. ●

TRADE EVENTS

FMNC Produces First Open-Air Show

While many trade shows reacted to the COVID-19 rules against in-person gatherings by producing virtual shows, the regional **Fashion Market Northern California** took a different path. It reacted against COVID by producing its first open-air show, which ran Oct. 4-6 in San Mateo, Calif.

In a typical year, FMNC produces five shows annually at the **San Mateo County Event Center**. Rules against in-person events caused three of FMNC's 2020 shows to be canceled. The October show was its final show of the year, and it was produced in an open-air space on the grounds of the event center, said Mary Taft, the show's executive director.

"One of our exhibitors said that it was like a French open-air market," Taft said of the collection of booths, which were covered by white canopies. "It was the first time we've done an outside show. It was a maiden voyage."

Taft said that 95 exhibitors displayed goods from denim, dresses, activewear, accessories and footwear. More than 100 retailers shopped on the first day of the show, the great majority of whom were located in Northern California. Some came from Arizona and as far away as Minnesota. All were attracted to the notion of going to an in-person show, Taft said.

"Everyone was super happy. They wanted to get out. Exhibitors wanted to see stores. Stores wanted to see product," she said.

However, show producers, attendees and exhibitors had



to respect COVID rules. All were required to wear masks. People's temperatures were taken before they were permitted to enter the market area. Bathrooms were cleaned after every use. Booths were placed at a greater distance from each other than in past shows, Taft said.

COVID-19 wasn't the only calamity that FMNC had to battle. The San Francisco Bay Area had been grappling with what has been described as its worst fire season in history during the past few months. During the market dates, the Glass Fire has been spreading through Napa County, located about

60 miles north of San Mateo. However, ash and smoke from the fire had not made the skies around San Mateo hazy, Taft and show exhibitors said.

Don Reichman, founder of the **Reichman Associates** sales agency, is a veteran exhibitor at FMNC and a former member of the show's board of directors. He said that exhibiting at in-person shows was crucial. "My customers want to touch, feel and try on the garments and see for themselves if they are right for their boutiques," he said. At the show, he was exhibiting lines including **Alison Sheri**, **Brand Bazar**, **Damee** and **Karissa & Me**. Wholesale price points for these lines range from \$30 to \$50.

However, the fires and COVID did affect the show's business. "The orders were very small. They're [retailers] not placing orders like they used to," he said. A lot of stores were waiting until consumer demand rallies before posting robust orders.

Ginger Reynolds-Roe, founder of the **Time Out Clothing** boutique in Los Gatos, Calif., said that she wanted to be conservative with her funds. "I'm not buying too far ahead," she said. But what she did buy fit in with the current culture where people are continuing to shelter in place. People are looking for clothes to lounge in. Women are buying presentable tops to wear for **Zoom** meetings. "I'm trying to interject some happy color," she said of tops. "I saw a lot of that for Spring."—A.A.

Entrepreneurs Forecast What the Factory of the Future Will Look Like

The entire business of fashion has been undergoing major changes in the past decade. The **Virtual Symposium**, a webinar series produced by the **TechTextil North America** and **Texprocess Americas** trade events, charted what may happen next with manufacturing. The **Zoom** panels were webcast on Oct. 7 and 8.

In "The Factories of the Future," fashion's future may lie in micro factories that make bespoke clothing, said Andrea Madho, chief executive officer and co-founder of **Lab 141**, a Brooklyn, N.Y.-headquartered online platform and startup company that produces small batches of clothing for its customers.

"The future of clothing manufacturing is, we believe, personalization and localized small-factory production," Madho said. She forecasted that small factories producing made-to-measure clothes for individuals would help solve looming environmental issues such as the dumping of millions of garments in landfills. If clothes were manufactured with better quality, so many tons of clothing would not be thrown in the trash. "One hundred years ago, everything was made one-off," she said. "You went to your local tailor or your local seamstress. One hundred years later, it's how do we return to that in an efficient

way using 100 years of development and technology?"

Another panelist, Eric Spackey, president and chief executive officer of **Bluewater Defense**, agreed that in the future small, tech-enabled factories would manufacture clothes specifically made for individual consumers. Bluewater Defense is headquartered in Puerto Rico and makes apparel for the U.S. military.

"On-demand manufacturing is the future," Spackey said. "We're looking at this for soldiers. A soldier will go to a recruiting station and get scanned. I will get the markers. I will actually produce the training uniform. Once it is produced, **Amazon** will deliver it to that training site. When that recruit is almost through with the training cycle, they'll get scanned again because their body shape has changed. At that point, I'll produce combat uniforms on demand for that particular individual. All is done online without any interaction other than that scan. The scan will become personal through that phone. So, you'll be able to do it remotely."

However, human workers will continue to dominate factory floors. Robot-dominated factories are something that won't happen in the next decade, Spackey said. But artificial intelligence will be of growing importance, especially for manu-

facturers' enterprise-resource-planning needs.

Another panel, "The Workforce of the Future," also forecasted that increasingly automated factories would be staffed by people but added that human workers need to be better supported with training and living wages, said Jenny Guarino, chief executive officer of **ISAIC**—the **Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center**.

"It's a miscalculation to say that spending on people makes things more expensive. It's actually a reallocation of resources," Guarino said.

Another panelist, Sheng Lu, an associate professor of Fashion and Apparel Studies at the **University of Delaware**, said that people would pave the road to change. "The fashion industry has been changing dramatically because of COVID-19. One strategy of those changes is that we need to be innovative. But who can innovate? It's people. We need to invest in people, not just machines," he said.

Another panel discussed the future of fabrics. "Designing Textiles With Energy Functionalities" included academics on the panel discussing the research field of smart textiles, which will enable functions such as enhancing a wearer's performance.—A.A.

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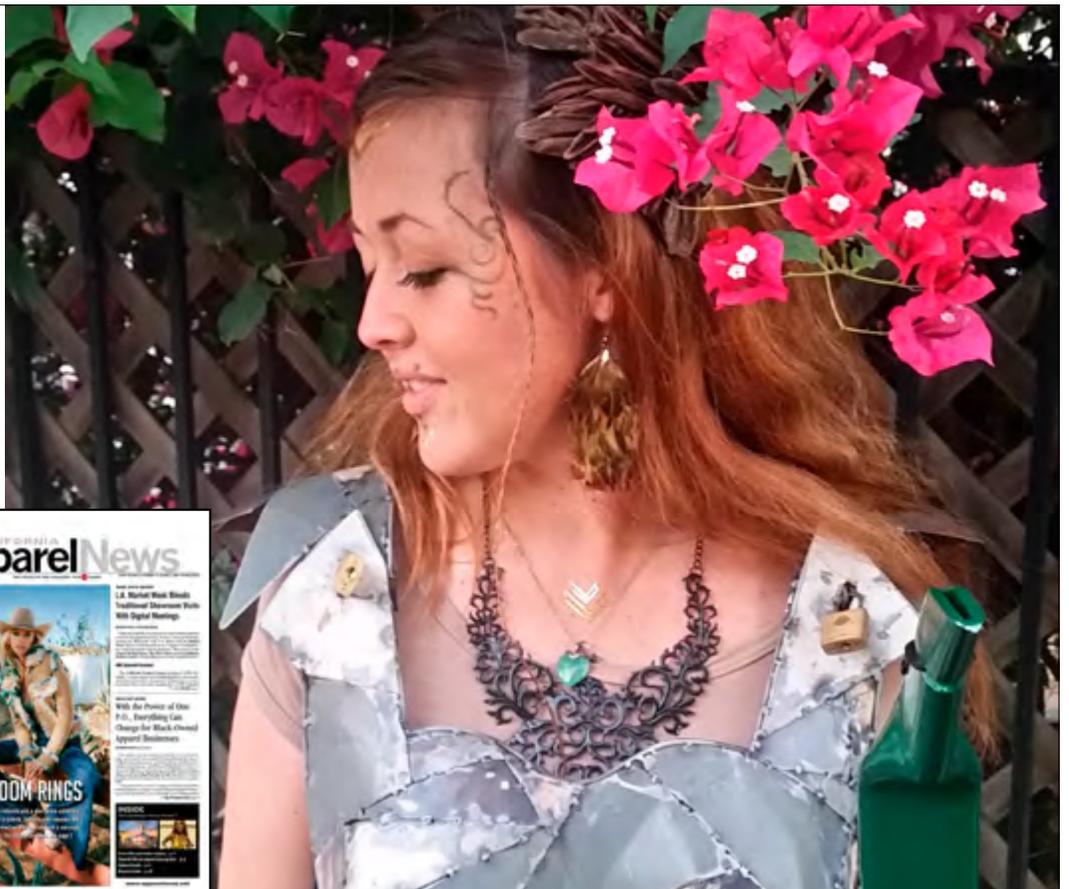
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