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A BIRDIE FOR GOLF APPAREL

As golf enjoys a skyrocket in popularity due to its outdoor, socially distanced structure, for its Fall 2020 campaign Kinona welcomed new players and remained authentic to the seasoned athletes who seek a female presence in the sport by featuring real golfers, such as Cindy Lohman, pictured above. For additional styles, see page 4.

TECHNOLOGY

SML Group to Put Trims in a 3D Spotlight

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Virtual showrooms have been increasingly popular since the COVID-19 pandemic put in-person meetings and events on hiatus. The **SML Group** has developed another way to virtually browse a garment's details with its recently released Digitiz3D platform; however, its service will specifically focus on trims, labels, tags, buckles, buttons and packaging.

Digitiz3D is the latest digital product released by SML. The Hong Kong company started business in 1985 as a producer of soft-line trims. As the apparel industry increasingly automated its methods of production, more technology-enabled products were necessary. SML pivoted by focusing more on producing technology products such as RFID tags and solutions.

The more-recent Digitiz3D platform was enabled by 3D and augmented-reality technology, said Gary Moskovciak, SML's senior vice president of the Americas region. Clients

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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MADE IN CALIFORNIA

Spirit Jersey Aims to Write a New Chapter in Love Letter to Los Angeles

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

After making signature tops for partners such as **Disney**, various top tourist destinations, as well as college sororities for more than two decades, the Los Angeles-based **Spirit Jersey** opted to make a solo project inspired by its hometown.

Spirit Jersey released its Love Letter to Los Angeles on its direct-to-consumer channel, spiritjersey.com, last month. The line's graphics give a tour of Los Angeles neighborhoods as well as shout-outs to some locally known landmarks such as the **Silver Lake Foot Clinic** sign. A favorite of the residents of the Silver Lake neighborhood for decades, the sign featured a cartoon-style foot that had been displayed until the clinic moved out of the area in 2019.

The graphics and the neighborhood monikers have been placed on the brand's signature bodies, which were unique

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California Proposition 15 Roils Retailers

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Gabrielle Zuccaro has guided her contemporary boutique **Bleu** through times of harsh economic downturns and, in May, a time of civic unrest. However, the veteran boutique owner has been particularly wary of the ballot measure Proposition 15, on which Californians will cast their vote Nov. 3.

Prop. 15 will change the tax assessment of commercial and industrial properties. If it passes, it will bring in an estimated \$6.5 billion–\$11.5 billion in funding to local governments and schools that have been in a financial crunch for years, according to a description in the state's official voter-information guide.

The voter guide also noted that the proposition will exempt residential properties, agricultural land, as well as owners of commercial and industrial properties with a combined value of \$3 million or less.

However, Zuccaro said that if this law passes it would endanger small businesses trying to survive the tough economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. She forecasted that landlords would increase rents to pay for their increased tax bills.

She leases 2,400 square feet of space at 7378 Beverly Blvd. in Los Angeles near **The Grove** retail center. Zuccaro declined to forecast how much her rent would increase if the proposition passes, but she said that even a 1 percent uptick would be painful.

The proposition has been unpopular with retail-and-business trade groups including the **California Small Business Association** and the **International Council of Shopping Centers**. In September, Rachel Michelin, president of the **California Retailers Association**,



An anti-Prop. 15 message on DTLA's shuttered Orpheum Theatre regarding the hotly debated commercial-property-tax bill.

released a statement urging voters not to support the proposition.

"Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one in four California workers were employed in retail. If we are to see a robust economic recovery, these millions of jobs hang in the balance, and a tax increase of this magnitude will only hamper that and lead to more retailers permanently closing their doors," Michelin said. "California's unemployment is more than three points higher than the national average. We do not need more obstacles to restoring jobs," she said.

People and groups supporting Prop. 15 include some public-employee unions and **Facebook** founder Mark Zuckerberg. California Gov. Gavin Newsom also has endorsed the proposition. In a statement emailed to supporters, he called the proposition overdue policy reform. "It's consistent with California's progressive fiscal values. It will exempt small businesses and residential property owners, it will fund essential services such as public

schools and public safety, and, most importantly, it will be decided by a vote of the people," Newsom wrote.

One of the last significant polls released on Prop. 15 found that the yes vote on the measure had a slight lead. The **Public Policy Institute of California** released a poll on Oct. 21 that found 49 percent of likely voters supported the measure while 45 percent opposed it and 6 percent were undecided.

The PPIC poll found that 71 percent of California Democrats were interested in supporting the measure. The poll also found that 64 percent of renters supported the bill and 41 percent of homeowners supported the bill. About 60 percent of younger voters, ages 18 to 44, support the proposition and 42 percent of those 45 and older support the measure.

Prop. 15 has enjoyed some of its greatest support in the Los Angeles area. About 55 percent of likely voters in Los Angeles would vote for the proposition. About 53 percent of likely voters in San Diego and Orange County would support it, while approximately 50 percent of the voters in the San Francisco Bay Area would support it. In the more politically conservative Central Valley, 42 percent of likely voters support it and 48 percent of likely voters in the Inland Empire would support it, according to the PPIC poll. ●



Re:store founder Selene Cruz brings online brands into physical spaces.

Retail-as-a-Service Business Re:store Acquired by b8ta

Expanding its retail-as-a-service reach into a heavier fashion presence, San Francisco-headquartered **b8ta** announced its acquisition of **Re:store**. Founded in 2019 by Selene Cruz, Re:store brings online brands into a bricks-and-mortar space at Maiden Lane in San Francisco.

"This acquisition is a big win in our mission to create a true fashion-meets-tech platform," Cruz said. "We're excited to finally be able to tap into our waitlist of brands and give them access to omni retail beyond Maiden Lane."

Re:store has worked with **Sezane**, **H&M's & Other Stories**, **Nasty Gal**, **Storets** as well as DTC startups experimenting with physical retail including **Thinx**, **11 Honore**, **MM La Fleur** and **Sleepy Jones**.—*Dorothy Crouch*

Corrections and Clarifications

Regarding the Oct. 2 story, "Curve Connect Launches to Afford a Virtual Home to the Intimates Community," the name of the Eveden brand name that was noted as Ilonia should have been listed as Elomi.

Inside the Industry

First Citizens, a financial holding company for the First Citizens Bank & Trust Company, headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., recently announced a merger with CIT Group Inc., whose commercial banking services include factoring for apparel companies. The merger will create a commercial bank with over \$100 billion in assets, said Frank Holding Jr., chairman and CEO of First Citizens. "This is a transformational partnership for First Citizens and CIT to create long-term value for all of our constituents including our stockholders, our customers, our associations and our communities," Holding said. "Together, First Citizens and CIT will be able to leverage both companies' unique attributes to create the 19th-largest bank in the country, well-positioned to compete across the United States."

London Fashion Week's February 2021 dates were recently announced. The British Fashion Council, which produces London Fashion Week, said that London Fashion Week would run Feb. 19–23. In the past, London Fashion Week has run in January. The group said LFW would run as a digital event that will feature scaled-back physical activities, said Dylan Jones, BFC's menswear chair. "This year's pandemic made us all rethink the current system in place," Jones said. "We are confident that this move will help designers reach more people via the digital LFW platform while still allowing them to do business as early as January without the deadline of a show."

Retail Properties of America, Inc., headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., announced Oct. 28 that it had published its first Corporate Sustainability Report at the site RPAlesg.com, said Steve Grimes, the company's chief executive officer. "RPAI has successfully completed and is in the process of executing significant ESG [environmental, social and governance] programs, and we are excited to highlight our accomplishments to date in our first Corporate Sustainability Report," he said.

True Religion recently emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy, according to a statement from Michael Buckley, the company's chief executive officer. He said that the company was forced to close stores and cut jobs. "The reorganization has allowed the company to reduce its operating costs and lower its debt load and emerge a profitable, lean operating company with a healthy balance sheet. The path is now clear for True Religion to continue its reinvigoration of its iconic American brand," he said.

The NPD Group, one of the largest market-research companies in America, announced that Susan Merrill was named president of the company's United States apparel practice. Merrill succeeds John Deputato, who is retiring. She will oversee NPD's portfolio of apparel services and product offerings, said Joanne Sackett, the president of NPD's soft lines. "Her commercial skills paired with a solid track record for building strategic relationships will allow us to partner with clients in new and different ways and identify additional opportunities to navigate them to success," Sackett said.

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Basketball Player Alex Stepheson Aims for Slam Dunk With El Crew PE

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

Alex Stepheson has shot hoops for the **Los Angeles Clippers** and **Memphis Grizzlies National Basketball Association** teams as well as several overseas sports leagues. He has also started a clothing brand, **El Crew PE**, a label that doesn't venture too far from his life on and off the court.

"Basketball has been the cornerstone of my life. It has taken me around the world. I built friendships with people from all walks of life. Whatever language they spoke, no matter their culture, everyone wanted to be part of a crew. Everyone wanted to be part of something. When you are an athlete, you have your team. When you are on a team, you have a crew. If there are 21 of us on a team, we want you to know that we support you. You are part of our crew."

Stepheson started the Los Angeles-based T-shirt and hoodie line **El Crew PE** in 2019, selling as a direct-to-consumer brand on *elcrewpe.com*. He's devoted more time to the brand in 2020 because his last team, the **Koshigaya Alphas** in Japan, cut its 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stepheson and Matthew Moses, the design and production manager who consults on **El Crew PE**, said that the T-shirts were intended to evoke the spirit of the basketball and sports lifestyle. Moses said that the T-shirts' fabric, a tri-blend, also was intended to offer comfort to the touch.

"The garments are really soft. Alex was ahead of the curve when he wanted to make comfortable clothes last year. We put a focus on materials that are soft to fit his vision," Mo-



Made in tri-blend fabric, the T-shirts offer a soft hand.



The first **El Crew PE** T-shirt was inspired by Stepheson's recreation-center league championship in 1997.

ses said. Moses is the founder and chief executive officer of **Apparel By SMG**, a downtown Los Angeles apparel design and production agency that makes private-label clothing for clients such as **Google**, **Facebook** and **YouTube**. Apparel by SMG also produces a house brand called **Mansfield Outpost**.

Basketball practices were the inspiration for the first T-shirt produced by **El Crew PE**. The graphics on this heather-grey tee feature a hoop and a basketball and the logo **El Crew PE**, 1997 Div. Champs. Stepheson led his team to a youth-league

championship in 1997 at Los Angeles' **Pan Pacific Park Recreation Center**. For a prize, he and his team were given championship T-shirts.

"It inspired me to collect as many T-shirts as I could. It looked cool and felt like a rite of passage getting the shirt," Stepheson said. T-shirts with sports themes followed. One T-shirt features a graphic of marathon runners. The marathon shirt is part of a trio of T-shirts named the **Triathlon Set**. Later this year, **El Crew PE** will be releasing a T-shirt with a bicycling theme and another with swimming graphics.

The T-shirt silhouettes also fit into Stepheson's tastes. Growing up in the 1990s, when baggy clothes were the style for teenagers, Stepheson preferred a fitted look. As the kid who was always the tallest in his class, it was tough to find clothes that were his size.

"When you found something that fit really well, you had to buy it on the spot. You didn't know if you'd find something that would fit again," he said. Growing to 6'10" as an adult, he often visits tailors for made-to-measure clothes for suiting. He's also had tailors customize his tees and hoodies to find an optimal fit.

Stepheson forecasted that his line would continue to be inspired by sports. "Sports have given me so much," he said. "I look for ways where I can give back. If it is a clothing line that inspires someone to go into business, or if they see the shirts and say, 'I want to go out on the court and shoot some hoops,' these T-shirts can inspire and motivate. That's the goal for me. Give the generation coming up the same feeling sports gave to me—learning life lessons and getting that feeling of accomplishment when you win a game." ●

SOURCING

Transformers Foundation Releases Report That Reveals Supplier Challenges

Established early in 2020, the **Transformers Foundation** was launched by **Kingpins** founder Andrew Olah of **Olah Inc.** to support denim supply-chain professionals by affording them opportunities to engage in discussions of creating more-responsible manufacturing.

"One of the things that is extremely noticeable is that the people who create the product—the factories, chemical companies and garment factories, the people that do a lot of the work to make a garment happen—know a lot about the process of production," Olah said during a recent webinar. "The foundation was set up so that the suppliers and supply chain, the transformative people, could get together to implement change and be a force in the process of making a sustainable industry."

On Oct. 27, as Olah prepared to unveil his latest edition of **Kingpins24 Amsterdam**, running through Oct. 30, the foundation released its first report, "Ending Unethical Brand and Retailer Behavior: The Denim Supply Chain Speaks Up." The report revealed an imbalance of power that affords privilege to brands, retailers and importers while suppliers suffer extended terms, canceled orders and discounts demanded outside of agreed-upon contracts in an industry that is over capacity.

"The intent of the report was to identify the root causes of the power imbalance but also to put forward actions that are doable, realistic and effective," explained Marzia Lanfranchi,



In its report "Ending Unethical Brand and Retailer Behavior: The Denim Supply Chain Speaks Up," the **Transformers Foundation** identified behaviors that hurt suppliers and provided solutions for a sustainable industry, which includes its "Eight Ethical Principles for Purchasing of Jeans & Denim."

the **Transformers Foundation** intelligence director and a report co-author. "[The denim industry] is a small community, but we can inspire others in the apparel-and-accessories sector to follow and enact long-term change."

To create the report, a survey was sent to 79 of the world's major denim suppliers offering anonymity. Despite the ability to remain anonymous, many of these companies declined to

participate due to fear of retribution from brands they consider partners. The report reflected feedback from 25 respondents.

"Very few factories feel comfortable speaking publicly about the most-shocking and egregious behavior from brands," said Alden Wicker, a fashion supply-chain freelance journalist who co-authored the report.

Due to the terms outlined in their orders, suppliers begin and finish projects for their partners but are left financially vulnerable should the customer decide to decline the goods upon completion. Under the topic of sustainability, when a brand declines to pay for its orders or vastly alters terms after a contract is agreed upon, its sourcing partner is left without the resources to create a safe, healthy, enjoyable working environment for its workers.

In addition to providing education regarding best practices, outlining a call to action and establishing ethical principles to be followed by brands, retailers and importers, the **Transformers Foundation** will soon introduce its **Ethical Denim Council**, which will comprise a group of professionals hailing from outside the industry who will mediate issues between suppliers and brands.

"We created a set of ethical-production principles," Olah said. "Our ethics are respect and keeping your order. They are not big asks. They are fundamental."—*Dorothy Crouch*

MADE IN CALIFORNIA

Spirit Jersey *Continued from page 1*

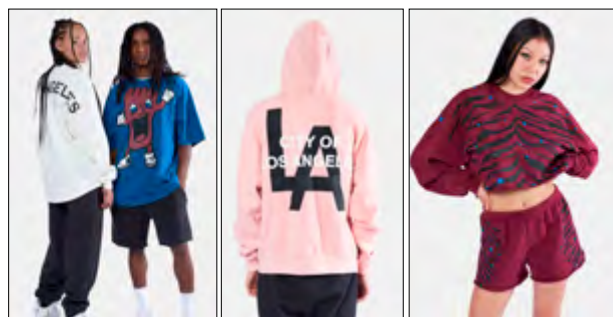
enough that, in 2012, the United States Patent Office awarded the label a trademark. **Spirit Jersey's** idiosyncratic fits feature the silhouette of drop shoulders, double-knit stitching on the yoke, a scallop-shaped hem, as well as a unisex, oversize fit. The baggy fit allows for a large canvas, said Jake Ptasznik, **Spirit Jersey's** president.

"We print 26-inch-wide art directly onto the garment-dyed shirt," Ptasznik said of the overall look of the brand's tops.

Spirit Jersey has been making these kinds of shirts since the mid-1990s and developing a client base of high-profile partners including everyone from **Disneyland** and **Harvard University** to the **Los Angeles Dodgers** and **Tapatio Hot Sauce**, which helped the brand cultivate a space for its products as high-end souvenirs, said Courtney Todd, **Spirit Jersey's** director of sales and merchandising.

"It became a classic, [social-media] post-worthy garment," Todd said of the **Spirit Jersey**. Her team noticed that people would tag the shirts on social media when they posted pictures of trips to Los Angeles on **Facebook** and **Instagram**. "Everyone stands at their favorite place, in front of a university, at a beach in Malibu or in front of the Disneyland castle," she said of the vacation backdrops featured in posts.

Trevor Larson, **Spirit Jersey's** national sales manager for ready-to-wear, said that the company was interested in building a higher profile. But they were looking for the right platform.



Looks from **Spirit Jersey's** Love Letters to Los Angeles line. Styles include an homage to the landmark sign of the Silver Lake Foot Clinic and tiger-stripe designs.

"We didn't have a clear brand voice," Larson said. "We wanted to give our fans a chance to purchase directly from us. We wanted an opportunity to put our voice on our apparel."

For the first run at a ready-to-wear collection, **Spirit Jersey** chose a city theme it felt would gain attention from denizens of the megalopolis of Los Angeles, as well as visitors and people who would want to spend more time in the city. Many of the shirts feature big graphics bearing large letters that spell out the names of Los Angeles neighborhoods such as Venice, Fairfax, Hollywood and Koreatown. Other pieces run the names of city areas in other languages such as Spanish, Arabic and Korean. There are landmarks that only locals

would know, such as the popular neon clown sign for the former **Hollywood Star Lanes**, which was featured in the cult film "The Big Lebowski." The line also features graphics of landmarks such as the **Griffith Observatory** accompanied by graphics of stars and the motto: "Where the stars are."

Other items feature graphics of tiger stripes, marijuana leaves and the state's flower—the California poppy. Designer Giselle Gonzalez said that since there were no partners with the **Lover Letter to Los Angeles** project, the line's designers had more creative freedom.

"We can explore different treatments and different washes that we initially couldn't do," Gonzalez said.

The entire Fall/Winter 2020 line of **Spirit Jersey** was made in Los Angeles, and about 95 percent of the line's Spring '21 line is made in L.A. Los Angeles artisans also created special effects for the line such as airbrushing and studding garments with brushed nail heads and rhinestones.

Core price points for the tops range from \$84 to \$150. Special pieces, such as an organza duster, run up to \$500. Other styles in the **Love Letter to Los Angeles** line include sweat shorts, sweatpants and crop tops. Colorways range from dusty pinks to royal blues and black. The collection also has unique styles such as a top made from different quilt fabrications to make a garment that comprises an array of separate pieces.

The company plans to write more love letters to places outside Los Angeles. An upcoming collection will send love to New York City and its environs. ●



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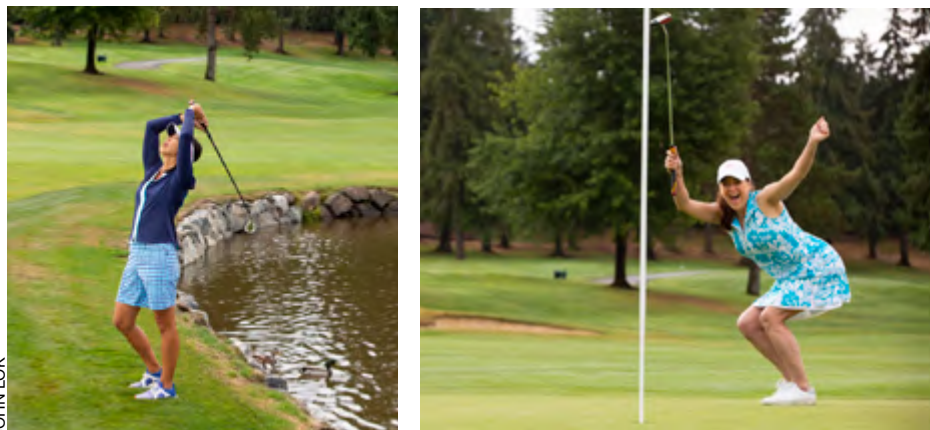


Shelley Carlson



Torrie Dorrell

Teresa Gallo



Cindy Lohman

Teresa Gallo

As Golf Interest Booms, Kinona Welcomes Women to the Green

For its Fall 2020 campaign, Rancho Mirage, Calif., golfwear brand Kinona relied on real golfers rather than professional models for its photo shoot at the **Glendale Country Club** in Seattle. The nod to recognize female golfers signifies the hope that Tami Fujii, co-founder and chief marketing officer, holds for the future of the sport as more women hit the green due to a rise in the popularity of golf and other outdoor activities during 2020.

"Our consumer wants to see that our models are bona-fide golfers. There is some authenticity there. It goes a long way telling our story, and it's part of our values," Fujii said. "What I am hoping for, from an industry perspective, is that this allows the golf industry, which has been historically a very male-dominated sport, to take these new golfers and take this moment to pause and reassess some of the old rules around the game and the sport."

Designed around a concept of creating pieces that can easily fit within a woman's current wardrobe, in addition to transitioning from the home office to the golf course, Fujii and co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Dianne Jefferies Celuch adhered to a palette of easy blues, pinks, black and white.

"We didn't want to do some kind of wacky color palette that made it hard for people to really commit to an entire outfit," Fujii said. "We didn't want to sit on a bunch of inventory, because we didn't know what would happen. Being able to be really smart about it

and a little less seasonal was our inspiration."

The brand manufactures its goods in the Philippines with Italian fabric from **Carvico Jersey Lomellina** and has increasingly been investing in a more-sustainable approach. Kinona uses Econyl recycled-nylon yarns in approximately 40 percent of its products. They are sized XS-XL, with XXL arriving in April 2021, and are wholesale priced at \$50 to \$75.

"We continue to use a lot more of their recycled yarns to make sure we are supporting the environment and making sure that we are doing our part," Fujii said.

The Fall collection was planned prior to the coronavirus outbreak and edited following the pandemic's onset. After a quiet March and April, by May, golf started to see a rise in popularity due to its traditional format, which naturally allows for social distancing.

Through the pandemic, Kinona also experienced a shift in its business model. The company formerly had a 70:30 wholesale-to-e-commerce ratio, flipping to reflect an 80:20 online-to-wholesale figure as traffic to kinonasport.com grew. This burst of interest in golf has led Kinona to sell out of its Fall 2020 collection.

"We've found that people who have not been in the sport are now getting into the sport, or people that were very casual golfers are starting to pick it up again," Fujii said. "That has been the best news."

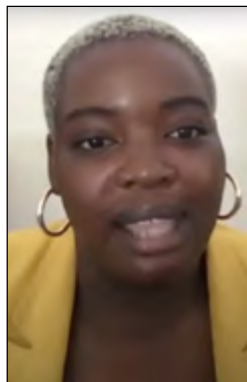
—Dorothy Crouch

Sustainable Fashion Forum's Frank Talk on Diversity and the Environment

Fashionindex, a New York-headquartered source-book publisher and consulting company, recently produced a series of **Sustainable Fashion Forum** panel discussions at the Oct. 7-9 virtual edition of the **LA Textile** trade show called **CMC Uploaded**. The goal of the panel was to keep issues of sustainability and diversity in the fashion industry top of mind for professionals in the business.

Panelists urged the fashion industry to maintain a serious approach regarding issues surrounding diversity. Valerie Equavoen, founder of the **On A Curve** platform, which advocates for diversity in creative businesses, said broken promises by companies that expressed intentions for continued support of social-justice causes have left many skeptical. Companies had expressed support for Black Lives Matter after the murder of George Floyd but still have not changed their business practices to align with their initial publicly made statements and connection, she said.

"There were no Black people on leadership teams at brands. We've heard complaints from Black employees about micro aggressions, about the lack of pay, about the discrepancy with the way they are treated," she said. "It's one thing for a brand to say externally we condemn all of these societal injustices about racism and look at our diverse marketing campaign; it's



Valerie Equavoen of On A Curve advocates for diversity in creative businesses.



Runa Ray of Runa Ray strives for circularity in her sourcing.



A Runa Ray dress uses all natural, recyclable fabrics.

another thing to have that be a practice. Brands can do that by changing the people in their company."

At another panel, designers and sustainability directors talked about sustainable sourcing and reducing their carbon footprints. For Annie Agle, director of impact and brand for **Cotopaxi**, an outdoor-gear company organized as a benefit cor-

poration, an important facet of her mission was relying on sourcing options derived from repurposed fabrics.

"We know that 90 percent of our carbon footprint of any piece of apparel we produce is created before the product is cut and sewn, which means the raw material you work with is probably the most critical sustainability decision you make when designing a product," she said.

Julie Verdugo, director of sustainability and social impact at the **Free People** brand, said making the best sustainability decisions comes with working with the right partners. "You have to have the humility to say, look, we're trying to be better and we want a better solution," Verdugo said, "so our design and sourcing teams can go to those partners and say, here's exactly what we're looking for and approach them with humility."

Runa Ray, creative head and founder of the **Runa Ray** brand, said that she strives for circularity when she sources fabrics. "I believe in using natural fabrics. For me it's about giving back to the soil so it gets to be fertile and goes back into being a crop," she said. "The other important thing in sustainability when developing a product is how easy is it going to be for me to dismantle for recycling."—*Andrew Asch*

3D-Focused Discussions Deliver Optimism and Education at PI Apparel EU

As the apparel trade-show industry continues to incorporate virtual experiences into major events and smaller productions, many of the major players in this arena have returned to the calendar in some capacity. For **PI Apparel** producer **MarketKey**, this has led to an offering of webinars, online roundtables and virtual apparel-technology events that follow a similar model to its conferences held on-site in cities including New York, Hong Kong and Los Angeles prior to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During its Oct. 19-20 run, the virtual conference connected brands, decisionmakers, technology-solutions providers and garment-industry leaders to engage in panel discussions, participate in roundtable meetings and network. David Wilcox, head of communications for PI Apparel, felt that despite the current uncertainty regarding the continued course of the pandemic and its effects on the apparel industry, unveiling new advancements in technology cultivated optimism for the fashion business so it could move forward.

"The reaction to this year's event has been really positive. There was a great atmosphere in the rooms, and the speakers kept the energy going throughout," Wilcox said. "Digitalization of assets from product creation through to the sales floor is not only possible but necessary for the industry to come through these times stronger."



Andreas Seidl, CEO of Human Solutions, emphasizes that utilizing 3D technologies is a change process in how a company works.

Prior to the fashion industry's adoption of these fresh, innovative technologies, garment-business leaders must understand their purpose. During the session "3D—A Process, Not a Tool. How 3D Implementation in the Design2Sell Process Works," Andreas Seidl, chief executive officer of the Kaiserlautern, Germany-headquartered software-and-consulting firm **Human Solutions**, emphasized that utilizing 3D technology successfully is much more than simply purchasing new products and expecting increased efficiency.

"We are looking for a new 3D workflow, and each company starting with 3D is redefining its own process," Seidl said. "This is a very important change process inside the company. It's more

than buying a tool and using it. It is a change process, and all people must be involved in the process."

Supporting this sentiment during another panel, **The Fabricant** founder Kerry Murphy explained that while restrictions on events due to the coronavirus pandemic led fashion to explore digital-show options, there is a disconnect regarding the apparel industry's understanding of these processes. As a leader in the photorealistic 3D-fashion-design niche, Murphy hoped that this period of growing pains would yield greater understanding by brands and designers to recognize the arduous work that this technology demands.

"The biggest realization [by designers] was that 3D is not just a few clicks of a button and you have beautiful renderings coming out," Murphy explained. "It's quite a complicated process, especially if you have zero knowledge of it. It's a new mindset and new skill set."

On the calendar for PI Apparel is a New York-based virtual event focused on the supply chain, which will be held Nov. 9-11. Additionally, MarketKey will host its next PI Apparel Spotlight event Nov. 5, when the focus will be placed on "Sustainability in Education—The Educators' Summit 2020."

"Our online Spotlight series continues with a deep dive into education in November, so we look forward to that and the future of online events running in addition to our physical events," Wilcox said.—*Dorothy Crouch*

TECHNOLOGY

SML *Continued from page 1*

of SML will be able to use this digital service to evaluate how a myriad of buttons, heat transfers and tags would look on a specific item—rather than making physical samples of the item—and then testing out how a number of different details would look on the physical samples.

Moskovciak said that SML's service was a crucial step because the fashion business is increasingly shifting to developing more of its work online. Details such as trims, buckles and labels also need to be part of this technological pivot, he said.

"Given today's complex landscape of remote workforces, the challenges within the supply chain and logistics and the increasing demand for more-virtual, touchless experiences, 3D- and AR-technology adoptions have and will only continue to grow as a critical tool in retail's arsenal," he said.

Digitiz3D is an internal platform leveraging existing 3D and AR technologies that can be used in a couple of ways. Customers could use the 3D asset in a completely virtual environment. If they use an application downloaded from SML, they can use Digitiz3D with a physical garment. Here, the user would aim a phone or tablet over a specific part of a physical garment, then, by operating Digitiz3D's AR capabilities, they can see how a button or a trim would look on a garment. The 3D assets will be made available from a library that SML will offer clients, Moskovciak said.

"You got to figure out the next step. Where is that label going to be placed?" Moskovciak asked. "What type of style,



The Digitiz3D allows clients to customize its trims, labels, tags, buckles, buttons and packaging virtually.

color, finish of hardware looks best? This is where our digitized software comes into play. We develop the assets onto our platform for customers. You have a pair of jeans, you can take hardware, buttons and rivets and you can apply different buttons to where the jean button goes."

Digitiz3D also digitally streamlines another aspect of design, thereby rendering physical samples unnecessary, said Eric Rhyner, SML's vice president of operations for



With 3D software, a designer can choose from an array of options—no physical samples are needed.

the Americas. SML's clients can use the company's digital library to work on a garment totally virtually. With this option, the platform would complement 3D-modeling software, Rhyner said.

"Where this really shines is where you are working with designers and brands who are utilizing garment 3D-modeling software that exists today," he said. "Our assets can be brought into the 3D-garment design that they have made." ●

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MEN'S APPAREL



Swet Tailor turned to pro football players to inspire its line of contemporary, comfortable clothes.

High & Mighty Seeks to Elevate Big-and-Tall

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

In the past few years, advocates of women's plus-size fashions have demanded respect for their fashion category. **Swet Tailor**, a Los Angeles-based knits brand, has similarly demanded equal time for the men's big-and-tall category.

Swet Tailor recently released its High & Mighty line, which co-owners Adam Bolden and David Kranz made for those wearing 3XL–5XL sizes and waists ranging from 40 to 56 inches. It is sold on the label's direct-to-consumer site, *swettailor.com*. Bolden and Kranz are forecasting more support from a market that is underserved yet is considered to have high demand.

A 2019 study from market-research company **The NPD Group** noted that 11 percent of American men would fit into big-and-tall sizes. However, the group of specialty shops and fashion lines serving this market has always been small. Bolden and Kranz also contend that few big-and-tall labels try to offer anything stylish. They hope to serve a consumer niche that would eagerly support companies who take their fashion needs seriously.

For proof of a robust market looking for brands, the Swet Tailor owners point to the support they have gotten from some of the most sought-after denizens of the big-and-tall world—football players.

In 2019, they gave High & Mighty clothing to a stylist working for Nick Foles, a quarterback for the **Chicago Bears National Football League** team. News spread quickly in this exclusive group. Bolden and Kranz claim that 5 percent of their investor funding comes from NFL players including Mark Sanchez, a retired quarterback for the **University of Southern California Trojans**. He later played for the Bears, **Dallas Cowboys**, **Denver Broncos** and **Philadelphia Eagles**.

The inaugural line for High & Mighty, released on Sept. 5, includes pants, polo shirts, hoodies, and the collared, long-sleeve Mindful shirt. Pants come in three colors: black, navy and gray. Polos are available in black, gray, navy and white. Hoodies offer a wider range of colors including pearl blush, army green and light blue. Retail price points range from \$69 to \$108.

Working with athletes was a natural step

for Swet Tailor, Bolden and Kranz said. The line was introduced in 2015 when the brand's co-owners noted a spike in popularity for athleisure clothing. They hoped to develop styles that offered the feel of sweatpants and hoodies but looked like contemporary clothes, Kranz said.

"We know that guys are not the most fashion forward," he said. "So we went after wardrobe basics."

They got to work on what would later become the focus of the Swet Tailor line—its All-In pants, intended to have the silhouette and look of a traditional five-pocket jean. The cotton/spandex-blend fabric used to make the All-In pants made it feel like a sweatpant. Swet Tailor later tried a similar design for its Mindful shirt, which uses a cotton/rayon blend. It has the exterior look of a woven shirt but the interior feel of a knit garment. Kranz and Bolden hoped that their garments would fit into a brand credo. "There are three pillars to the brand," Kranz said. "Comfort, style and quality."

They later exhibited the brand at fashion trade shows such as **Project** and placed it in prominent men's shops such as **Mario's** in Seattle and the **Fred Segal** shop in Malibu, Calif. The Swet Tailor brand reported that its emphasis on comfortable clothes has served it well during the COVID-19 pandemic when people have mostly stayed at home.

For its September e-commerce business, the brand has estimated that its sales increased 60 percent in a year-over-year comparison with September 2019. The brand also noted that its wholesale business increased 25 percent in July. It is estimated that 20 percent of Swet Tailor's online sales come from its new High & Mighty line. Following the line's introduction, the entrepreneurs hope that strong brand loyalty kicks in and provides a platform for the company to grow.

They also hope that their fashion venture might serve as a source of self-esteem and dignity for the men wearing the brand. It's the reason why they called the brand High & Mighty. "There's a problem that big-and-tall has," Bolden said. "There's a negative connotation. We wanted to give it a positive connotation."



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