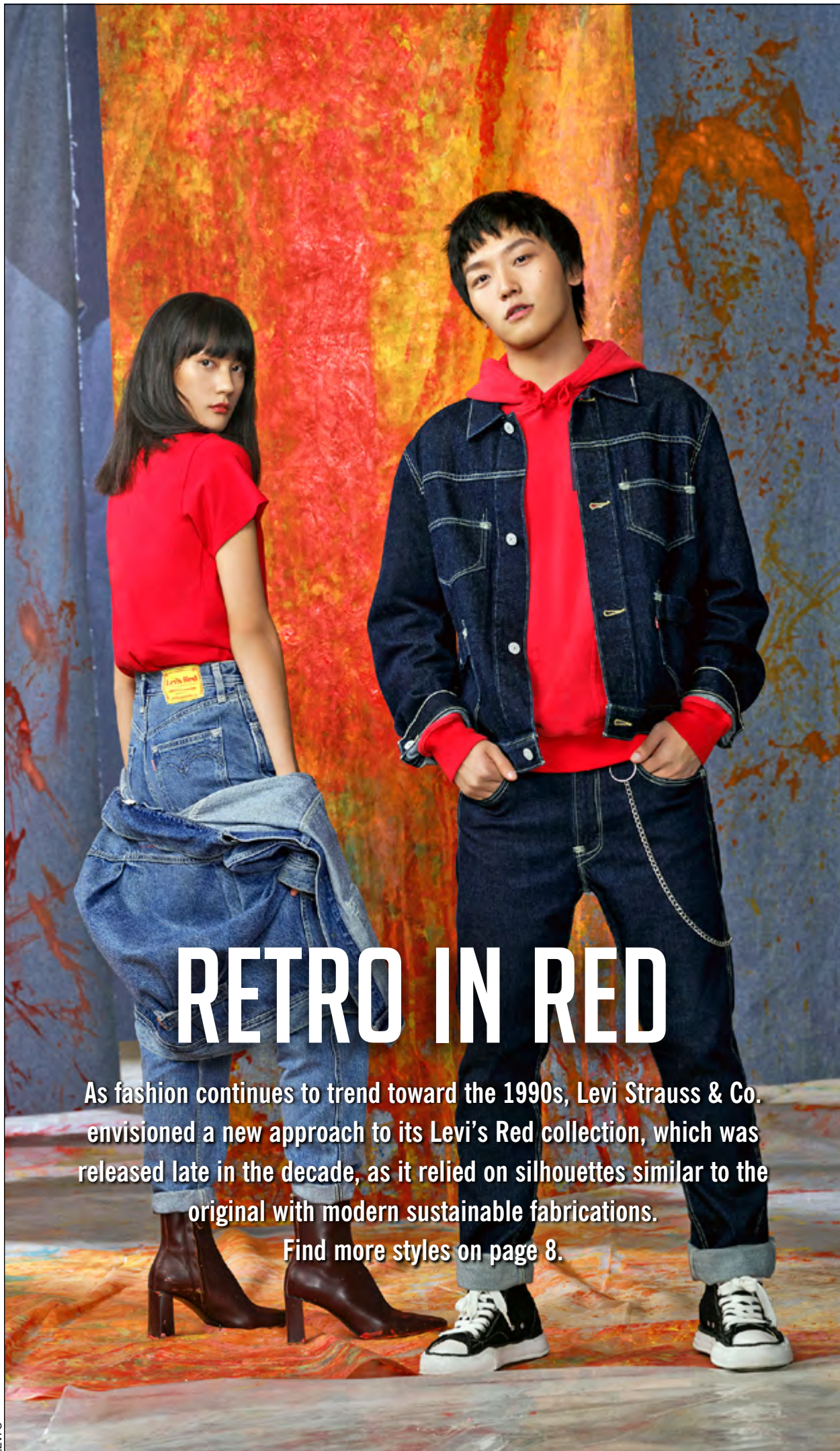


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RETRO IN RED

As fashion continues to trend toward the 1990s, Levi Strauss & Co. envisioned a new approach to its Levi's Red collection, which was released late in the decade, as it relied on silhouettes similar to the original with modern sustainable fabrications.

Find more styles on page 8.

INDUSTRY FOCUS: FINANCE

Where Should Fashion Businesses Focus for Smart Economic Recovery?

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

With the world turning over a new, progressive leaf following the COVID-19 pandemic, optimism seems to be on the trend calendar for 2021. As vaccines are distributed to more people, extreme measures of caution are beginning to dissipate as the general public exhibits an increased feeling of safety.

Economists have forecasted a strong final half of the year, which will welcome in an era that some financial experts predict will be the second occurrence of the Roaring Twenties, with consumers set to begin buying again. Within the apparel industry, from retail to manufacturing, there have been many investments made to prepare for a post-pandemic market with

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DENIM

Saitex's Sustainable Plant Aims to Help Bring Back U.S. Manufacturing

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

The Vietnam-headquartered company **Saitex** recently opened a denim facility in Vernon, Calif., just south of downtown Los Angeles. **Saitex USA**, a 52,000-square-foot denim plant, will serve as a factory of the future, said Sanjeev Bahl, the company's chief executive officer and founder. Saitex has been running Vietnam-based factories since 2005. Its parent company is the Malaysia-based holding company **Saitex Holdings**.

The Saitex facility in Vietnam has been acknowledged as a pioneer in sustainable denim production. It has also received praise for environmental and social programs such as planting mangrove forests in Vietnam as well as developing Re-kut, an initiative that creates factory jobs for disadvantaged

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INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Economic Report Details Pandemic Devastation to Creative Industries

A recent report from the **Otis College of Art and Design** provided details regarding how California's creative businesses, including fashion, were dealt major setbacks during the spread of COVID-19 and how these industries were faring just before the pandemic.

The 2021 "Otis College Report on the Creative Economy," which was produced with the independent research-and-consulting firm **Beacon Economics, LLC**, found that between February and December 2020, total job losses in the creative economy workforce were 13.3 percent across California and 23.5 percent in Los Angeles County. Creative-economy jobs also include those in the entertainment industry.

In a seminar on the report's findings that was hosted via **Zoom** on Feb 25, Otis President Charles Hirschhorn said that the report's findings had historical importance.

"We're living in extraordinary times. You'll see in this year's report that the creative economy has shrunk for the first time since the Great Recession of 2008," Hirschhorn said. "You'll find evidence of the growing importance and strength of the cre-



This rendering shows how Otis intends to reopen its fashion-department studios, allowing for proper spacing between students while also openness for instructor feedback and collaboration.

ative economies alongside the destruction and disruption that the pandemic has created."

Democratic Los Angeles Congresswoman Karen Bass also spoke at the seminar. "It's no secret that COVID has devastated parts of our economy, but the job losses in the creative economy have been especially dramatic, and outside of Los Angeles it's been relatively un-

known," Bass said.

Bass and some of her colleagues in Congress have sought to support creative workers by increasing Paycheck Protection Program funds for creative-economy businesses and by extending financial support to creatives.

The report took its pandemic-year data from the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**. However, it derived its most-detailed snapshots of individual creative industries, such as fashion, from 2019 BLS data, which reflects the most-recent information.

While fashion remains one of the strongest creative industries in the state and Los Angeles County, the report found that the fashion industry's employment numbers were declining before the pandemic.

In 2019, it found that fashion businesses, ranging from retail to design and production, employed 108,142 people across the state. These employment numbers were down 15 percent compared to 2014 numbers. The largest decline came from apparel manufacturing, which reported a decline of 20,730 jobs, or a decrease of 38 percent, between 2014 and 2019.—*Andrew Asch*

Inside the Industry

The **United States District Court for the Northern District of California** on March 30 dismissed a challenge by the International Fur Trade Federation to the San Francisco ordinance that bans fur sales, manufacturing and distribution. The ban passed in 2018 as an amendment to San Francisco's health code. A previously filed complaint by the IFF was dismissed by the court in July 2020, but the trade organization began an amended challenge, leading to this week's dismissal. In his ruling, Chief U.S. District Judge Richard Seeborg wrote, "[A] plain reading of the ordinance does not support IFF's interpretation. It has selectively, and misleadingly, quoted the ordinance as if it bars only the sale of fur products when, in fact, it also makes it unlawful to 'offer for sale, display for sale, trade, give, donate or otherwise distribute' fur products."

Informa Markets Fashion confirmed that it would return to Las Vegas Aug. 8–11, with Sourcing at MAGIC beginning Aug. 8, while MAGIC Las Vegas and Project Las Vegas will start Aug. 9, all at the Las Vegas Convention Center. The announcement of the Las Vegas show dates was accompanied by Informa announcing its Destination: Miami by Coterie, which will be hosted at the Eden Roc Hotel July 10–12 in Miami Beach, Fla., during Miami Swim Week, which is scheduled for July 7–13. "We serve the diverse needs of the global fashion community through a variety of locations, event formats and sizes," Informa Markets Fashion Commercial President Kelly Helfman said in a statement. The Sourcing at MAGIC show will run concurrently with the complementary virtual offering Sourcing at MAGIC Online.

International Market Centers announced the launch of its Las Vegas Apparel show, which will be hosted Aug. 8–10 at the show producer's new Expo at World Market Center Las Vegas. The new site opens later this month in downtown Las Vegas. IMC's new show will focus on young-contemporary fashion in addition to shoes and accessories. "Attendees can expect the hospitality, atmosphere and pace of an Atlanta Apparel market staged in a new, dynamic and purpose-built trade-show facility," said Bob Maricich, IMC's chief executive officer. Produced with an intimate approach to trade-show production, IMC estimates that the inaugural August edition of Las Vegas Apparel would feature around 150 brands.

Dallas Market Center, the Dallas wholesale marketplace and business-to-business trade center, reported that its recent March in-person market was the best-attended spring show in more than a decade. Buyer attendance during the March 23–26 event was up more than 23 percent compared to the 2019 March market, said Cindy Morris, Dallas Market Center's president and CEO. "Dallas is a national marketplace welcoming buyers from across the country and where more business is being done than at any other venue," Morris said. "Historic numbers of new buyers are coming, matched by an expanding number of exhibitors." Buyers from all 50 states attended the market, which maintained health-and-safety protocols.

OBITUARY

Jessica McClintock, Owner of the Eponymous Label of Formalwear

Fashion designer Jessica McClintock passed away on Feb. 16, according to a notice that was published March 12 in the *SF Gate*. Once the owner of the **Gunne Sax** line of bohemian-style dresses that were popular during the late 1960s and 1970s, McClintock was known for her calico and lace details. She eventually channeled the Gunne Sax

brand into her eponymous line of formalwear, which became popular among teenagers and young women, who wore her designs to proms and weddings. Last year was the designer's 50th business anniversary.

According to the *SFGate*, McClintock said, "Romance is beauty that touches the emotional part of our being," and the de-



Jessica McClintock

signer infused romantic elements into each of her products to bring touches of it into the everyday lives of her customers. The **Jessica McClintock** brand eventually expanded into a global brand, growing to include additional categories such as fragrances, accessories and home goods.

McClintock was born on June 19, 1930, as Jessica Gagnon in Presque Isle, Maine, and later relocated to San Francisco. Her first marriage left her widowed and a second ended in divorce. She is survived by her son, Scott, with whom she founded the **Scott and Jessica McClintock Foundation** in 2018. The organization aids global environmental efforts to protect nature by supporting groups including the **Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee**, the **Natural Resources Council of Maine**, **Save the Rhino**, the **Mountain Lion Foundation**, the **National Marine Mammal Foundation**, the **International Anti-Poaching Foundation** and **Friends of Katahdin Woods & Waters**.

—*Dorothy Crouch*

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After 30 Years, Asher Fabric Concepts Continues to Drive Innovation

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

When Asher Shalom visited some family members in Los Angeles in 1988, he surveyed the metropolis's fashion scene and saw an industry that had excelled at milling fleece and denim, but he thought that the city's business had been coming up short in milling novelty fabrics. Shalom had fallen in love with Los Angeles after visiting from his native Israel and wanted to move to the City of the Angels. He believed he had something to add to the city's fashion business through his background in fabric engineering. He started the novelty mill **Asher Fabric Concepts** in 1991.

After three decades in business, the idea of building a niche in domestically made novelty fabrics has paid off for Shalom, the company's president and chief executive officer.

Businesses are increasingly investing in domestic manufacturing in order to develop an edge in speed-to-market capabilities. During the pandemic, more consumers started relying on many of the fabrics manufactured at Asher such as knits for athleticwear and loungewear.

"2020 was one of our best years," Shalom said. "One of the reasons is that people were staying at home. They were wearing sweatshirts and loungewear. We have super-soft fabrics that brands are screen-printing on."

The company also mills fabrics for dress knits, swimwear, sportswear, sweater knits and lingerie. A year before the pandemic, Asher Fabric Concepts developed fabrics for use as post-medical-procedure supplies.

The company also has increased its commitment to milling fabrics in-house. It acquired eight additional leading-edge knitting machines from **Tricots Liesse**, a Canadian knits manufacturer that went out of business in late 2020, said Yael Shalom Ohana, the company's president of sales and Shalom's daughter.

"When we have customers who need fabric immediately, we can accommodate their needs and make their deliveries happen," Shalom Ohana said.

Asher Fabric Concepts was also able to ride the wave of another increasingly prominent trend. Brands hope to define



To meet the needs of its customers increasingly concerned about sustainability, Asher has produced a sale of 400 of its archived dead-stock fabrics. Samples can be viewed in a tent located outside of the Asher Fabric Concepts showroom (right) in Los Angeles' Boyle Heights area. The sale runs through April 15.



themselves as unique through exclusivity in product. The company is able to offer its clients such an edge. It works with clients to develop unique designs, Shalom Ohana said.

"They get a great reaction with something fresh and new and unique that complements their individual brand aesthetic," she said.

Asher Fabric Concepts has an inventory of more than 500 different yarns. One of the company's guiding programs was to take fibers that would seemingly clash and then build a unique fabric out of the contrasting materials. Price points range from \$4 to \$8 per yard for jersey fabric and \$7 to \$10 per yard for French terry and fleece.

The company works with the trend forecaster **WGSN** on guidance for style inspiration. Shalom also uses his own creativity and background in fabrics engineering to develop knits with a specific customer in mind.

"We try to come up with an interesting sample," Shalom Ohana said. "[Brands] adapt it to their own lines. Each development is tailored to the brand's own exceptional

aesthetic."

Shalom Ohana estimated that 25 percent of their customers are emerging brands. Some of the brands that the company started working with since they launched include high-end Los Angeles labels such as **Cotton Citizen**, **Sundry** and **Velvet**. It also looks to be flexible with minimums. "Whether it's two rolls or 40 rolls, we try to accommodate every customer," Shalom Ohana said.

Sustainability has increasingly been a concern for Asher Fabric Concepts' clients. The company has a lot of recycled cotton in stock. In the spirit of supporting sustainable fabric, Asher has produced a sale of its archived dead-stock fabric.

"We are encouraging our customers to repurpose these 400 styles of dead stock. Instead of knitting new fabric, use dead stock," said Shalom Ohana.

The dead-stock-fabric sale will run through April 15. Samples can be viewed in a tent located outside of the Asher Fabric Concepts showroom in Los Angeles' Boyle Heights area. ●

DENIM

Saitex *Continued from page 1*

individuals and people with different abilities. Bahl plans on offering Rekut programs at Saitex USA.

Bahl anticipates the U.S. facility will be one of the most automated clothing factories in the world. It's working to be certified by respected sustainability and fair-trade organizations such as the **Fair Trade Federation**. It also hopes to get certified as working from **LEED** environmentally sustainable buildings and is seeking classification as a B Corporation, which meets the highest standards for verified social and environmental performance. Current clients include well-known brands such as **Ralph Lauren**, **Madewell**, **Filson**, **Edwin USA**, **Outerknown** and **Atelier & Repairs**.

John Moore, the co-founder of Outerknown, said that he is working with Saitex USA to improve his brand's speed to market and quest to develop cleaner manufacturing. "We only work with makers who can deliver on our sustainability goals," Moore said of Saitex USA. "[It] allows us to move faster to work more closely with their team to deliver on our promises with more variety in our assortment throughout the year."

Outerknown's established programs will remain in Vietnam, though the brand anticipates developing new fits and washes at Saitex USA.

While environmental and social considerations are key to Saitex USA's mission, Bahl also opened the factory to have a financial impact. He forecasted that manufacturing is returning to the United States. Bahl said that consumers are increasingly demanding supply chains deliver fast speed to market.

"There is an appetite for just-in-time delivery," Bahl said. "There is a market that can support this venture. It's not like we're trying to create a new avenue for consumer behavior. That behavior exists. People prefer eating organic and local food. The localized movement is here to stay. The govern-



From left to right: Saitex founder and CEO Sanjeev Bahl with Saitex USA President Kathy Kweon at the Vernon facility, which at full capacity will produce 3,000 pairs of jeans per day; Senior Manager Martin Quispe will help lead a staff of 300 people; the Matrix laser cutter is just one of the advanced technologies Saitex USA will ultimately employ.



ment also is behind it. If you look at the Biden administration's plans, they definitely have a huge agenda to make locally. It's all timing. If you tried to do this 10 years ago it might have been more difficult. Today, the scenario is different, the landscape is different, and the opportunity center is different."

When Saitex USA is at full capacity, it will employ 300 people, said Kathy Kweon, president of the stateside company. Capacity will be 3,000 pairs of jeans per day and 15,000 per week. Bahl considers the Los Angeles factory a bit like a microbrewery, producing locally for people who live nearby. He's interested in building more Saitex factories in the United States; however, there is no timeline for that yet, he said.

"If you want to bring manufacturing back and make it profitable, there's a way to do it," Bahl said. "You cannot continue to do it traditionally. You need artificial intelligence, you need robotics, high-tech lasers and the system of hybrid manufacturing where you allow people to also participate on a new platform."

Saitex USA is currently the only factory in the world that uses the advanced Matrix laser-cutter machine, which is made by the Italian company **SEI**. It also uses washers made by **Jeanologia** and **Tonello**, as well as techniques such as semi-

automatic sewing and robotic spraying. In addition, it has implemented a state-of-the-art water-recycling system and incorporated a cloud-based digital platform.

Agreeing with Bahl are other industry players who anticipate the start of a wave of micro mills that could revive American manufacturing. Jeffrey Shafer, who has served as founder and CEO of the brands **Agave Denim** and **Bluer Denim** and is currently CEO of the women's performance-underwear brand **Branwyn**, spent years looking to manufacture sustainably in a smart and profitable way.

"Automation will bring manufacturing back to the U.S. It's important to be closer to the market to reduce your carbon footprint and be closer to consumers. This is for all kinds of businesses. Saitex is just the pioneer," Shafer said.

Scott Wilson, the president of **Tour Image, dba Ustrive Manufacturing**, a U.S. factory that received its **GOTS** certification for sustainable manufacturing in 2019, said that Saitex might encourage other stateside manufacturers to develop sustainable practices and become better environmental stewards.

"Organic, locally made products are the future," Wilson said. "Without it, there is no future." ●

B2B E-Commerce Marketplace Heats Up With Investments and Partnerships

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

The market for business-to-business e-commerce platforms has been heating up in the last year. The Los Angeles-headquartered technology company **NuOrder** announced last month that it had raised \$45 million in a round of funding led by venture capital firms **Brighton Park Capital** and **Imaginary Ventures**.

The recent round of funding is the largest in NuOrder's 10-year history, and it brings new directors to the company's board.

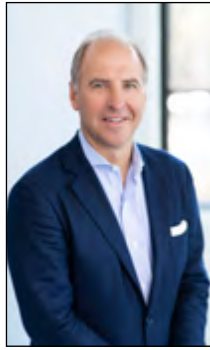
Natalie Massenet, Imaginary Ventures' co-founder and managing partner, will be joining NuOrder's board of directors. An e-commerce pioneer, in 2000 Massenet founded the digital retailer **Net-a-Porter Group**, which was known for creating shoppable editorial for brands. Massenet, who has also served as a former co-chairperson for the e-commerce platform **Farfetch**, said that NuOrder and B2B platforms are poised for major growth.

"There has been much focus over the last few decades on the consumer end of retail but little advancement in the ways the industry operates behind the scenes. NuOrder has built the much-needed technology to power wholesale, buying, merchandising and new payments," Massenet said.

NuOrder co-founders Heath Wells and Olivia Skuza said that Massenet would develop the company's presence in the luxury market and help develop it in the European Union market. Also joining the board is Mark Dzialga, founder and managing partner at Brighton Park Capital. He will consult on finance and digital payments, Wells and Skuza said.

A portion of the new funding will be directed to develop the platform. Payments and marketplace functionality will be enhanced, and visual technologies such as 3D, virtual reality and augmented reality might also be featured in the platform.

The ultimate goal is to develop NuOrder as a global B2B



Mark Dzialga



Natalie Massenet and Nick Brown



Olivia Skuza and Heath Wells

marketplace for brands and retailers to discover new trends and products and also process transactions.

NuOrder's new round of funding comes at a time when the company is enjoying a fast pace of growth. Adding to an existing roster of clients that includes **Nordstrom** and **Bloomingdale's**, in the past 12 months it signed the trade-show producer **Informa Markets Fashion**, which produces the sprawling biannual trade shows including **MAGIC**, **Project** and **Coterie**. NuOrder has also started working with the trade-show producer **Grassroots Outdoor Alliance** and the department store **Saks Fifth Avenue**.

However, the market for B2B e-commerce platforms is becoming more competitive. In 2020, **Joor**, one of the pioneering companies in the B2B e-commerce-platform space, announced that it would work with **Liberty Fashion & Lifestyle Fairs** to produce digital versions of the company's trade shows, which include **Cabana** and **Liberty Fairs**. Joor also announced that it would work with prominent e-retailers **Shopbop** and **East Dane**.

In January, **Emerald Holding, Inc.**, the parent company

of the major trade shows **Surf Expo** and **Outdoor Retailer**, announced that it had acquired **PlumRiver LLC** and its Elastic Suite platform, which offers a wholesale-buying process for brands and retailers, said Hervé Sedky, Emerald's president and chief executive officer, in a statement made at the time of the acquisition. "The acquisition of PlumRiver is a natural extension of our live-events business; we can now offer a complementary, year-round interaction and transaction platform."

The market is also developing with new players. **Faire** started in 2017 as an online wholesale marketplace for small-business owners and independent retailers. The growth of these companies is part of the digitalization of trade shows and the wholesale-showroom business that started more than a decade

ago but was greatly accelerated by the closure of in-person events during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There's a possibility that the e-platforms will help trade-show producers expand their businesses, said Ulla Hald, founder and CEO of **Faves**, which has offices in Copenhagen and San Francisco. The company builds digital tools for buyers to document and chart their businesses at trade shows. A major benefit to digital trade shows is that their proverbial lights never go off.

"They can stay open 24/7," Hald said. "Once you establish a relationship in real life, you can go to digital showrooms, and they can be accessible whenever you need them."

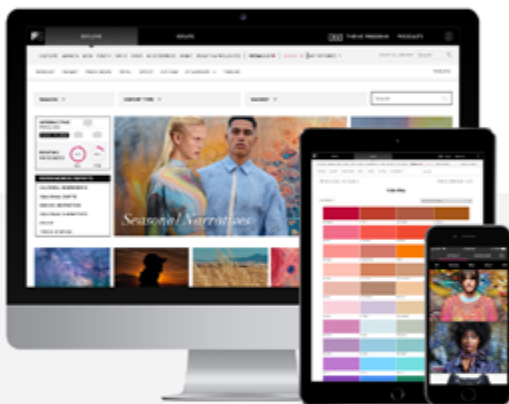
It's a valuable quality in a globalized market where a retailer in Asia might want to place an order with a Los Angeles-based brand.

The platforms will be able to give trade-show producers a whole layer of new information, Hald said. "Footprints are left on digital platforms. They know who is visiting and what was looked at. They will have access to a lot of information they previously did not have access to." ●



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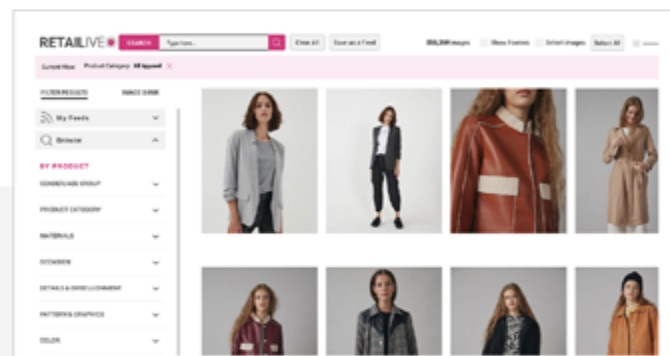
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Where Should Fashion Businesses Focus

Industry Focus *Continued from page 1*

brands securing financing in anticipation of growth, new factories opening to fortify domestic manufacturing and brands being positioned for initial public offerings.

With restrictions on gatherings continuing to ease, coupled with the confidence afforded by widespread vaccine distribution and a longing for normalcy following a year of distancing and isolation, consumers are ready to enjoy the simple pleasures of life again, which means fashion businesses must be prepared. As the apparel industry continues to heal, we asked financial-industry experts: *In what areas of their operations should fashion businesses focus for smart economic recovery?*

Darrin Beer Western Regional Manager CIT Commercial Services



With pandemic restrictions being scaled back, the opportunity for apparel companies to sell through physical retail stores is improving. Assuming case numbers continue to decline, we're likely to see an increase in third- and fourth-quarter sales as pent-up demand from shoppers is released.

Retailers' adaptation to e-commerce during the past year should fuel growth during the

second half of the year as digital-shopping demand will continue. In addition, there's a sense that people who are finally emerging from a long period of quarantine for work, family gatherings and socializing will want to update their closets, which should boost demand even further.

As the overall economy improves, supply-chain logistics is a key area companies need to focus on. Production demand from factories has increased, prices have risen, and clearing shipments through the local ports has been a challenge. Business owners should continue to manage expenses as business improves while focusing on selling to financially sound retailers.

Mark Bienstock Managing Director Express Trade Capital



As we begin the slow reopening process throughout the country, apparel-related companies need to reinvent themselves in order to properly compete in the new environment. It starts with technology.

Many of our clients have taken the lead and created virtual showrooms. It is clear that many retailers will be limiting the amount their buyers can travel for both safety and cost-savings reasons.

This provides those companies the opportunity of having a distinct advantage in selling their merchandise safely and cost effectively while providing a similar showroom experience. In addition, the days of many apparel companies being thinly capitalized is over. Those companies that are well capitalized or have significant support will be the survivors. Many retailers are requiring just-in-time inventory, and that requires significant vendor support. In addition, with the growth in online sales, maintaining a proper inventory level is paramount to future success.

Sydnee Breuer Executive Vice President, Western Region Manager Rosenthal & Rosenthal

After more than a year of mostly shutdown or extremely limited in-person gatherings, the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccinations and the hopefully continued decrease in COVID-19 transmission certainly is a welcome light at the end of a very long tunnel! However, the impact the pandemic had will leave an indelible mark on our evolving fashion



has taught us that businesses, in general, and fashion businesses, especially, need to be as nimble and as flexible as possible. The world's demands and needs are fluid and rapidly changing, so today's fashion entrepreneurs need to anticipate that change and respond accordingly and in real time. There is some expectation that there will be fairly significant pent-up demand and desire to shop and spend post-pandemic, but no one is certain how long that will last. And if so, what will the consumer want to buy? More products—or maybe more experiences?

The supply-chain issues that came to light during the pandemic taught us that just-in-time inventory may not be the answer it once was. But stocking inventory has its challenges and is also not the answer.

Fashion needs to be available when and where the consumer is and wants it. The omni-channel approach is here to stay—buy it where and how you want, pickup or delivery where and how you want. Fashion businesses need to continue to diversify their supply base so they are not too dependent on any one region of the world for product, they need to keep expenses controlled and as low as possible, and they need to manage their inventory levels. No matter what economic climate they find themselves in, these rules will hold true.

Gino Clark Executive Vice President and Managing Director of Originations White Oak Commercial Finance



crowding.

Be aware of the impact COVID-19 has had on institutions and services we once took for granted, and adapt as needed to employees' schedules to help accommodate related disruptions such as juggling childcare due to reduced in-class learning or increased commute times caused by dramatic cuts in public transportation.

Stay apprised of market trends and consumer demands as we emerge from "at-home chic" and return to the office and social gatherings. Now that Zoom meetings are so commonplace, new opportunities in professional wardrobes could prove profitable.

With the world's supply-chain disruptions continuing to command headlines, now is the time to expand your supplier network and reduce single-country reliance. Effecting change in this area is an arduous task that requires persistence and due diligence, but it will pay long-term dividends and lessen the impact of the future global supply-chain challenges.

Many retailers proved that having an online distribution stream is vital to their total revenue and future growth in a drastically reduced bricks-and-mortar environment. To confidently pivot your business to include e-commerce, work with an experienced lender who understands the apparel industry and can help you keep pace and expand in a fast-evolving marketplace while allowing you to stay focused on your designs and consumer demands.

needs and how we transact business. For example, after a year of Zoom calls where casual attire became the norm, will corporate executives return to wearing more-formal attire to the office or will new company policies not mandate it? Will the shopping-mall model survive given that everyone has conveniently had fashion delivered to their front doors for the last year?

If nothing else, this pandemic

Eric Fisch Senior Vice President, National Sector Head for Retail and Apparel HSBC Bank USA N.A.



The whole country is optimistic that the vaccine rollout will bring back a level of normalcy in the near future. We are already seeing an uptick of in-person shopping, which is a function of improving weather, vaccine roll-outs and lower positive-case levels nationally.

Our clients are planning with continued positive trends in mind. If that proves out, the stress points for business will immediately shift to the areas that they sought to shed in the

beginning of COVID-19. At the start of the lockdowns, two of the largest areas of liability were inventory and payroll. Companies desperately sought ways to liquidate the stock on hand or in transit and reduce payroll expenses.

With the potential rebound, companies now need to decide how bullish of a position they want to take on new inventory purchases, bearing in mind that the recovery may not be as linear as we all hope. Similarly, with malls and other retailers extending hours of operation from the condensed 2020 schedule, companies need to rehire staff and are hard pressed to quickly train and onboard the experienced employees they had before the pandemic. These are just two of the many pressing issues that each business is facing in 2021, but it's important to remember that these are challenges relating to how to best manage a recovery, which is certainly more welcome than the experience of the past year.

Joshua Goodhart Executive Vice President and National Sales Manager Merchant Financial Group



As more and more people receive vaccinations and gathering restrictions continue to ease, apparel businesses will start to get back to the new normal. It is my belief that you will see more stores opening as more consumers will start shopping again at retailers. Consumers will want to get out of their homes and be at the stores, especially as the weather warms up.

People will be looking for reasons to dress up for nights out, celebrate special occasions and just go out for a nice lunch or dinner with friends. I believe these trends by the consumer will only benefit apparel businesses and the economy overall.

Apparel manufacturers still must be smart and prepared. Overall, I believe most apparel businesses have been thinking ahead and are ready for a better overall market. They have learned lessons from the pandemic such as the importance of having a multi-channel sales platform, keeping expenses low, making sure you have all the working-capital support you need to expand and not speculating on inventory.

One thing I believe is that the online-selling platform will continue to evolve and expand. We hope that manufacturers have adapted to this side of the business. Most importantly, we hope that these apparel businesses have put in place all the proper contingency plans just in case there is another crisis of some sort down the road. I believe we are in for a big pickup in the apparel business shortly. Those businesses that have adapted to the changing times are the ones that will have the most success as the economy continues to reopen.

Rob Greenspan President and Chief Executive Officer Greenspan Consult, Inc.

As the COVID-19 cases continue to trend downward, our local, state, federal government and the Centers for Disease Control will create more opportunities for companies to increase operations by allowing more in-person business

to Ensure Smart Economic Recovery?

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whether that be retail, dining, sports and entertainment, or the like.

If you are a fashion manufacturer, importer or retailer, you should analyze all parts of your business operations to see how to proceed and build up to full strength. This should include evaluating your current personnel. You should determine who are your most-important employees and, conversely, who are your least important. You want to retain your most-important staff and, unfortunately, your least-important employees might not be needed going forward. Review your personnel plan and make any adjustments that you deem necessary. You should also consider if some of your staff could continue to work from home, whether that be full time or part time, and the remainder at your offices.

You should review and evaluate your current inventory positions. If you have carryover inventory either pre-pandemic or created during the pandemic, find the best way to get liquidity from it. Do not go forward with old inventory. Identify what needs to be sold or disposed of. Be careful about speculating on new goods as it will still be early in the process of businesses openings so play it safe until things are more normalized.

Another important area of your business to review is your facility costs. Do you need the same amount of space as you had pre-pandemic? With more and more people knowing they can work effectively from home either full time or part time, you might not need all the space you once thought you needed. This is a long-term decision that needs to be analyzed as your lease term comes due.

Lastly, during the pandemic some businesses survived because they had multiple revenue streams. You should continue to invest in ways to conduct your business effectively online or with other online e-tailers. You do not want to be dependent on traditional retail as your only revenue stream. Look for ways to diversify.

Martin Hughes
Apparel National Practice Leader
Moss Adams



While the vaccines are rolling out and restrictions are being removed, I would caution companies on being too optimistic as we clearly continue to go through some very challenging times. There is still a considerable amount of uncertainty out there with spikes occurring again in certain states and uncertainty in general around retail bricks and mortar and the consumer's confidence in going back into stores.

The revival of bricks and mortar to some semblance of what it used to be is going to take some time. My advice to our clients is that they continue to focus on their digital and e-commerce distribution channels. We have seen these grow by double digits in 2020, and this trend will only continue into 2021 as the consumer has become very comfortable buying online.

The fashion industry is continuing to change to a much more direct-to-consumer business model. Companies need to embrace this and provide their customers with a great online shopping experience and place importance on the core values of today's consumers when it comes to inclusion and social responsibility.

Managing cashflow is extremely important, and companies need to continue to curtail spending around the discretionary expense items and closely monitor payroll costs. Inventory management will continue to be very important, especially in the change to a DTC business model, where companies are going into production for inventory with no customer orders or bookings, which is very different from the traditional business model for companies in the apparel industry.

Richard Kwon
Executive Vice President and Portfolio Manager
Finance One, Inc.



As the U.S. delivers more than 3 million vaccines daily and vaccination rates continue to climb, consumers are becoming more optimistic about returning to a normal way of life, whether in socializing, planning vacations, in-office work or in-classroom education. Apparel businesses should experience a sales rebound in 2021 due to pent-up demand and as vaccines bring us closer to herd immunity. Demands for

even hard-hit apparel categories such as dresses and work-wear are coming back as consumers refresh their wardrobes for the new season with a more-confident outlook.

By now, apparel manufacturers and importers should have already adjusted their overhead and secured the liquidity necessary to navigate toward recovery. Inventory planning, sourcing and logistics should be the next set of priorities for these businesses during the recovery phase.

Anticipating consumer demand and predicting consumption patterns were impossible for many apparel businesses during the pandemic. Additionally, the pandemic has disrupted the supply chain and logistics globally. Among overseas suppliers that survived, many may seek more upfront deposits rather than extend payment terms. A sudden surge in apparel demand will compound production issues as factories will require additional time to bring output capacity back to pre-pandemic levels. Shipping delays due to container shortages and congested U.S. ports contribute to the logistics problems.

As long as COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rates continue to remain low and local governments avoid reimposing lockdowns or other restrictions, overall economic recovery should be steady. Switching gears from survival mode to improving competitive advantage and standing out, apparel businesses must strive to address the increased challenges brought on by the pandemic within inventory planning, sourcing and logistics in order to meet their buyers' needs of having the right mix of products, at the right price and quality, delivered reliably on time.

Robert Meyers
President
Republic Business Credit, LLC



The key operational areas for apparel manufacturing companies will be centered on supply-chain and inventory management. Both have been significantly impacted by successful and unsuccessful sales channels through this point of the pandemic recovery.

Manufacturers will face a combination of confirmed, speculative and non-reoccurring orders to contemplate over the next three to six months. Inventory-planning and supply-chain decisions will result from the confidence level of each individual business owner in many cases. If you don't have the inventory, you won't be able to handle the just-in-time requests that will inevitably arise. If you don't have a reliable e-commerce channel then you won't be able to profitably sell the unsold inventory.

There is no guarantee about consumer demand, and it has been reliably fickle in recent years. Of course, it will depend on the given category, but overall predictions of demand are just that and won't have much of a baseline to be statistically significant. I believe each owner needs to choose an acceptable risk threshold and adjust confidence levels accordingly as the recovery matures.

Lenders, lawyers and accountants all view new inventory more favorably than old inventory, so you need to plan your upcoming season based on how likely you will be stuck with it for next season. Lost revenue doesn't cost you anything, but aged inventory has holding costs and real negative financial impacts for your business. My advice is always to plan for a few scenarios and sense-check your sensitivity analysis with industry experts and friendly competitors.

David M. Reza
Senior Vice President, Western Region
Milberg Factors, Inc.



As the nation and world emerge from the COVID-19 "winter," business enterprises of every type and size will share a primary objective—ensuring the health and safety of all employees and stakeholders. If this goal is neither achieved nor sustained, then no organization or community will be able to enjoy complete fiscal health. In the interest of employee health and well-being, many fashion-industry companies have been

complying with or employing guidance from the CDC, state of California and other local municipalities.

Once a company has adopted and complied with the requisite health and safety protocols, it faces the challenge of navigating a changed landscape where the basics of doing business have been fundamentally altered. It's not simply understanding and abiding by pandemic-related regulations, but more intrinsically and irrevocably it's about understanding the changes in consumer and retailer behavior wrought by the accelerated application of technology.

While not intended as a pun, our topic that deals with "smart" economic recovery is right on point; in this case, smart as in "smart technology." Successful fashion vendors will have to up their digital game. In tandem with the traditional metrics of design and quality, customer data at both the retail and consumer levels will be the new currency helping fashion vendors compete for and win both virtual and physical floor space.

Improved digital capabilities for design, production, inventory management and fulfillment will be highly sought-after qualities by retail partners. At the same time, vendors cannot focus solely on internal improvements. Their digital assets also have to help their retail partners be more efficient, productive and customer centric.

Since this article is part of the "Industry Focus: Finance" series, I would be remiss if I did not remind all of the readers about the value of a healthy balance sheet regardless of the size of the business. If the pandemic has underscored anything, it demonstrates to all business operators that unexpected events can quickly reduce revenues to a trickle. A strong balance sheet with a current and lean inventory, clean and protected accounts receivable, and good vendor relationships will provide any company with the runway to weather most storms.

Kevin M. Sullivan
Executive Vice President, Wells Fargo Commercial Services
Wells Fargo



Since our economists at Wells Fargo continue to forecast a strong Q2 as the economy begins to open up again, I think it's important that apparel companies be prepared for a potential uptick in orders as consumers begin to act on pent-up demand. One of the biggest issues facing the industry right now is the ability to get product out of the **Port of Los Angeles** given the sizable delays that many companies are still seeing.

It's important that companies understand the impact that this can have on their ability to deliver product on a timely basis and develop a strategy to address the issue. Some companies are shifting ports of entry into the country while others who have access to production in Mexico are temporarily shifting production until lead times from China and other major sources of production normalize. We also see a strong back half of the year, so it's important for apparel companies to also ascertain proper staffing levels since many cut overhead significantly last year due to COVID-19-related sales decreases. ●



Levi's Brings Back the Levi's Red Collection

A 1990s fashion revival looks like it may be continuing the long run that has been going on for years. **Levi Strauss & Co.** recently announced that it would bring back its Levi's Red collection for women and men, which began as an experimental line that was first released in the late 1990s.

The Levi's Red collection "reimagines" the influential Levi's five-pocket jean, according to the San Francisco-headquartered denim giant. One of the most-noticeable reinterpretations of Levi's style is a new look for the trademark stitching on Levi's back pockets, which the Red denim features as a larger and exaggerated double-stitch design. Similar to many

1990s styles, Levi's Red champions a loose fit. However, the line also makes contemporary statements, such as using sustainable fabrics.

The new men's styles feature a looser fit of the Levi's 502 taper as well as a 505 utility bottom, which is a new Levi's look. Both styles are made from organically grown cotton. For the line's women's styles, there's a Low Loose Work-pant, which features a loose balloon leg and a low rise. This women's line also features a Loose Straight Jean with a high rise and a tapered leg.

Denim jackets appear in the new Levi's Red line as a

Lineman Chore Coat for women and the Padded Chore Coat for men. For men, there's also the padded, reversible Type I Trucker Jacket, with ecru-colored cotton-hemp denim on one side. It also features quilted red lining. For women, there's the indigo cotton-hemp-blended denim Gold Miner Type I Trucker Jacket with red lining and the three-pocket cotton-hemp in ecru. Retail price points for the collection run from \$198 to \$248 and have been available since March 19 as an exclusive on the Levi's app. The collection was made available on levi.com on March 30.

—Andrew Asch



Atlanta Apparel shines a spotlight on innovation and integrity in these five lines

Navigating the troubled waters of 2020 required some fancy marketing footwork by these intrepid brands, along with a solid focus on essentials to keep their businesses vital.

Brodie Cashmere

The luscious hand and brilliant and forward prints and colorations of Brodie Cashmere are a testament to a skillful partnership between this family-owned English business and its Mongolian counterpart. It is no wonder that these 100 percent long-fiber, pure cashmere and cotton-silk creations continued to sell well during 2020, with 2021 sales “well ahead” of last year. Using virtual marketing with look books and video, Brodie offers a range of hand-finished styles—all washable, except those with foil embellishment—from updated luxe modern to novelty to loungewear that are designed in Yorkshire and produced in Mongolia. As a “proud member” of the Sustainable Fiber Alliance, sustainability and improving conditions for its Mongolian partners are key for Brodie. What excites them this season? “The color and the fun.”



Dixie

“Staying positive and optimistic” and building an online presence has helped Italian fast-fashion brand Dixie successfully steer its way through the difficulties of 2020. Based in Florence, the company is renowned for refined and retro-inspired garments that made it a global presence in specialty boutiques everywhere but here. With new representation in the U.S. through the Uncommon Fashion Showroom, that has changed, to “great feedback.” Dixie was among the first in Europe, and now the U.S., to develop a fast-fashion immediate resource of made-in-Italy goods with weekly capsule collections. Dixie’s Fall 2021 collection is “deep and warm” with pops of fuchsia and chartreuse combined with earth tones “to make them pop.” Anticipated bestsellers are its “effortless and timeless” dresses, which pair exquisitely with Dixie’s coats.



enewton design

2020 was a “year of reflection” for jewelry maker enewton design. “We are making better decisions on the importance of quality and meaning over quantity,” the founders say. Designing elegant necklaces, bracelets, rings, and earrings for women, young adults, and children that support busy lifestyles and



can be worn through every activity, from swim to sleep, was just part of it. The company’s philanthropic initiatives, including Share Her Story about front-line workers and Shop Local, returning 20 percent of customers’ purchases to a local boutique of their choosing, not only served their community but built a stronger customer base, resulting in a “staggering online growth in 2020.” Currently showing Immediates, enewton design believes that bestsellers will be “meaningful pieces that represent personal stories, experiences, and reminders of what is truly important.”

Fanco

A brand dedicated to stylish young women, Fanco found that the best way to adjust to 2020’s changed circumstances was to “cater to our [retail] clients with key essential pieces that will keep their businesses going. Showing videos and different views of styling a piece really helped the clients understand and order our styles.” With a full-range “classic and modern” collection from top to bottom, Fanco “is excited to bring essential pieces that all young women need, but with unique fabrics plus vibrant colors.” Fanco currently is showing Immediates and samples for Fall/Winter. Known for its wovens, Fanco is bringing in a new knit line, complementing bestselling knit sweaters and dresses, as well as bodysuits, two-piece sets, and mini dresses. Hot picks include romantic prints and tropical pieces.



Musse&Cloud

The Spanish purveyor of exceptional leather footwear, Musse&Cloud is optimistic about a return to pre-pandemic shopping habits. “We think that more people will see value in higher-quality purchases.” Embracing the digital space, Musse&Cloud is reopening its direct-to-consumer sales channel and looking to spur business through drop-ship and open-stock offerings in addition to eliminating order minimums and case-pack requirements. New to Musse&Cloud for Spring/Summer are classic sneakers, usually the territory of its Emmshu line, but these use a rich, genuine nappa leather and suede. Fall/Winter will include boots in “fresh yet subtle” tones of expected bestseller cream plus bone and military green, some with robust lug soles and new custom tread patterns—“our fresh spin on this hot trend.”



See these brands and many more at Atlanta Apparel April 13–17, 2021. Visit Atlanta-Apparel.com/April for more information.



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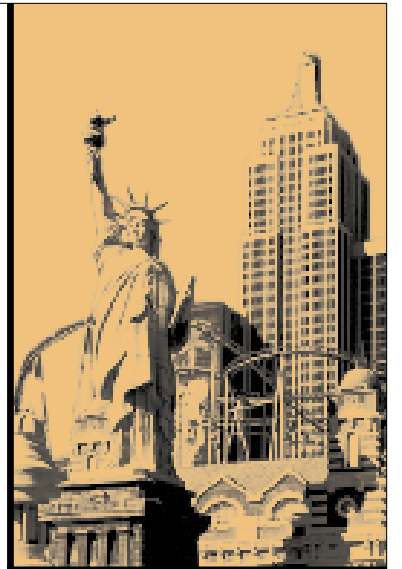
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NEWS

Matthew Mathiasen Promoted to CMC Senior Events Manager

Downtown Los Angeles' **California Market Center** recently announced the promotion of Matthew Mathiasen to the role of senior events manager. A fashion and events veteran, the role is a natural fit for Mathiasen, who has spent much of his career devoted to this space, most recently as the CMC's manager of buyer and community relations, a position that he fulfilled since joining **Brookfield Properties**, the site's property manager, in 2018.

"I am excited to take on this new role at the California Market Center and to continue the path forged by our Director and former Senior Events Manager, Moriah Robinson," Mathiasen said. "Our three-building campus has been undergoing renovations directed by Brookfield Properties for a couple years and we look forward to hosting many industry and community events that will drive both commerce and traffic into the Fashion District. The CMC is the original West Coast hub for creatives, and we plan to keep this focus as we re-open Buildings A and B later in 2021. We

have already launched Building C for Fashion Showrooms and Creative Offices with a positive response from the industry."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mathiasen became a familiar face as the CMC shifted its events focus from on-site shows to a virtual offering called **CMC Uploaded**. Introduced in August for **Los Angeles Market Week**, CMC Uploaded saw Mathiasen as the host of an event that featured chat sessions with showrooms, sales representatives and brands. The success of CMC Uploaded was clear as Mathiasen's natural hosting capabilities shone through during the event. Expanding this digital offering into five subsequent CMC Uploaded editions, the market center also incorporated the virtual talk-show format into its biannual fabrics show, **LA Textile**, for its October and February editions.

A graduate of the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising**, Mathiasen worked previously with **Brilliant Earth**, **Pale Violet**, **Betsey Johnson**, **Elmer Ave.** and **UBM**.—*Dorothy Crouch*



Matthew Mathiasen

CGS Welcomes Daniella Ambrogi as Global Marketing Director

New York-headquartered **Computer Generated Solutions** recently announced the hire of Daniella Ambrogi as the company's global marketing director. In her role, Ambrogi will be responsible for CGS' global marketing strategy for fashion, footwear, accessories and consumer-lifestyle goods.

"[CGS] is a very innovative company. It is always looking forward in R&D and developing solutions. When I was approached, I was very interested because it has the industry I love—fashion, apparel and accessories, and footwear," Ambrogi said. "That is where I spent my whole career."

A board member of the **Sewn Products Equipment & Suppliers of the Americas** and the **Americas Apparel Producers Network** technology committee, Ambrogi worked previously with the technology firm **Lectra** as the vice president of marketing in North America. Ambrogi's appointment at CGS comes at a time when the fashion-and-apparel industry is still adapting to the adoption of necessary technologies. CGS has positioned itself for continued

growth as demand for supply-chain digitization increases, according to Paul Magel, president of the CGS applications division and a longtime associate of Ambrogi.

"Daniella brings a wealth of experience in the fashion and technology industries and has quickly taken the reins of marketing the BlueCherry suite of solutions in this critical time," said Magel. "She joins CGS at the perfect time as we are repositioning our solutions for the new normal that is in front of us."

This optimism is shared by Ambrogi, who emphasized the urgency of the apparel industry to embrace solutions that will streamline business.

"It's really important to have a single platform. First, you're only dealing with one vendor, and second, everything connects seamlessly. When you have a company such as CGS that you can connect design to sourcing with one single platform, there are so many benefits to it," Ambrogi said. "If you have the opportunity to have your supply chain connected end to end it will pay off."—*D.C.*



Daniella Ambrogi

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Jobs Available

* PATTERN MAKER NEEDED *

Established apparel company located in Bell, CA looking for a freelance patternmaker to help with pattern work overflow on an as-needed basis. Most of our work is for Junior, Missy & Plus (all Women's). We work mostly with knits (Hoodies, Casual Tops, Bottoms such as Joggers), though there is sometimes the need for slightly more complicated Woven Tops, Tanks, etc. At this time, we are looking for 1st patterns to be delivered with a 1st pattern card. We have blocks and pattern card templates that we can provide. We hope that patterns are as close to fit approved as possible, with minimal corrections, so we would need to discuss with the individual patternmaker how corrections will be handled from there.

We're looking for a candidate who is exp. (5+ years), though skill can make up for lack of exp in the right situations. Due to the pandemic, work turned in electronically is preferred. Patterns would be in DXF format, and 1st pattern cards in Excel format.

Please send your resume to: atwa.cf.mc@gmail.com

* FASHION SALES COORDINATOR *

LA based fashion clothing brand is looking for apparel in-house Fashion Sales Coordinator with minimum 8 years road & market experience.

- Responsible for sales planning and able to achieve set goals.
- Clear understanding road sales and maintaining tradeshow.
- Must also be able to work closely with the Sales team to assess the progress of the department and develop Sales strategy accordingly.
- Familiar to California Customer Base and actively perform action plan.
- Able to maintain Company Assigned client list and maintain from A to Z
- Knowledge of NuOrder & Apparel Magic is a plus.
- Must have Showroom experience and strong sales tactic and skills.

Email: lafashiondesign@yahoo.com

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