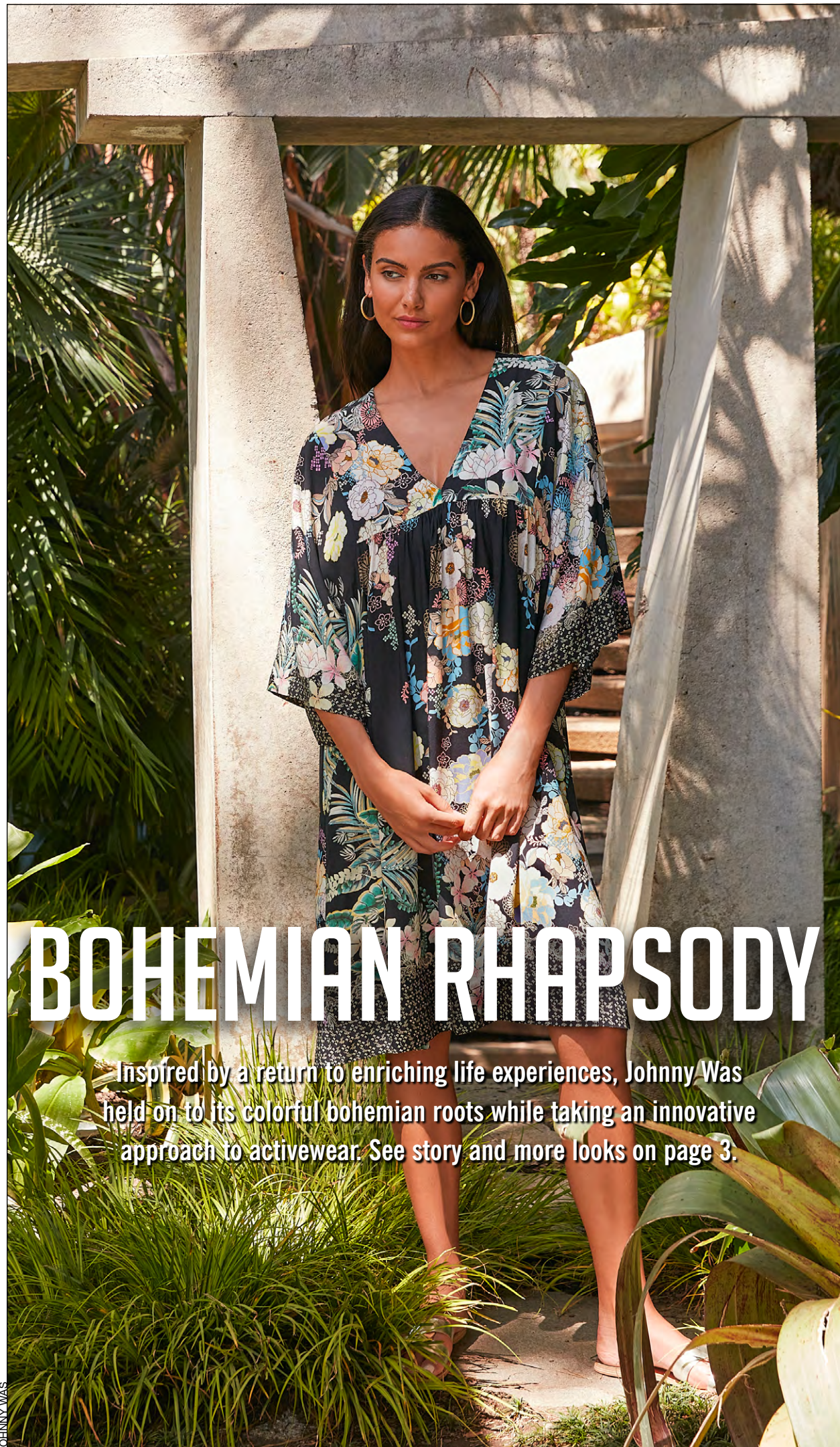


CALIFORNIA Apparel News

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 78 YEARS

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BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Inspired by a return to enriching life experiences, Johnny Was held on to its colorful bohemian roots while taking an innovative approach to activewear. See story and more looks on page 3.

JOHNNY WAS

INDUSTRY FOCUS: SUSTAINABILITY

It's Not Easy Being Green: Transparency Within the Textile, Apparel Industry

By Dorothy Crouch *Contributing Writer*

Sustainable commitments, manufacturing and offerings are now standard within the fashion industry as the once niche category of eco-friendly and ethical apparel has become an integral component of the garment business. While many companies make promises to include more-ecologically and -socially sound components of apparel making, their environmental, social and community commitments aren't always clear, which could result in accusations of greenwashing.

To relay an authentic commitment to sustainability, apparel businesses must not simply rely on a few green initiatives that can support an eye-catching marketing campaign. They must also continue to build a better industry through technology, investments in cleaner practices, support for workers throughout the supply chain and contributions to the development of a

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TRADE-SHOW REPORT

L.A. Market Rings In 2023 With New Lines and Innovation

By Betsy Zanjani *Contributing Writer*

Art and fashion converged at **Los Angeles Market Week** with a burst of creativity Jan. 15–19. The creative energy uplifted spirits, and the mood was positive and buyers motivated as they prowled the market's primary venues. Here are some highlights of the buzz-generating brands.

In an exclusive event at **The New Mart**, Marisol California hosted a fashionable cocktails and catwalk-buying event entitled "The 1102 Experience." In addition to the special pieces from the designer, collections from **Victoria Mozgovaya** and couture-like nonbinary creations by **Cross for God** walked the runway.

Aaron Gomez, Cross for God spokesperson, said, "L.A. has responded so well to this line," which is priced from \$100

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Timothy Snell Shares Details of Whitney Houston's Ascent to Fashion Icon

Following an intimate screening of the Whitney Houston biopic, "I Wanna Dance With Somebody," the artist's former stylist, Timothy Snell, shared fond memories of the icon. **Black Design Collective** co-founder Kevan Hall sat with Snell to discuss Houston's style preferences and the secrets behind her fashion choices.

"For the earlier looks, she worked with her mother [Cissy Houston], who was a singer and stylist," said Snell, speaking at a December event hosted by the BDC and the **African American Film Critics Association at AMC The Grove 14** in Los Angeles. "Marc Boucher is the one who created the signature Whitney look with the velvet dresses, the turbans and the W.H. monogram on the turtleneck from the video for 'All the Man That I Need.'"

Houston's elegant performance looks enhanced her appearance and complemented her body, with the artist often wearing long silhouettes. Her style was influenced by artists



From left, Black Design Collective co-founders TJ Walker and Kevan Hall with stylist Timothy Snell

such as Diana Ross and Dionne Warwick, Houston's cousin. While Houston wanted to appear "statuesque" and "striking," according to Snell, her fashion preferences also served her work.

"She loved the turtleneck because it kept her vocal cords warm. She didn't like to be cold," said Snell. "She wanted to create iconic

looks for herself that wouldn't be dated."

Despite Houston's access to avant-garde fashions from the world's most venerable designers, she valued classic styles and simplicity. According to Snell, Houston often chose "a tank top in her spare time or a crisp, white shirt—a button-down white shirt—and a pair of jeans."

"She appreciated luxury and the finer things in life, but her style was very simple," added Snell.

While Houston was also known for a minimalist approach to wearing jewelry, one of Snell's final—and most touching—conversations with the artist regarded a lost earring, which took place shortly before she passed away on Feb. 11, 2012.

"She asked, 'Do you think you can get me another pair?' I knew that I could, but before we got off the phone she said to me, 'I love you very much.' I said, 'I love you back,'" Snell added. "This is the gift that I got from her."—*Dorothy Crouch*

TECHNOLOGY

EBW Signs Up With Manhattan Associates to Transform Its Retail Experience

Everything But Water, the largest women's specialty-swim and resort brand, announced it has deployed **Manhattan Associates'** Manhattan Active Omni solution as part of its full-scale digital-retail-transformation project across its 85 U.S. locations. In order to stave off challenges such as inflation and supply-chain disruptions, all 10 of the top sportswear brands—including **Nike**, **Adidas** and **Lululemon**—are employing Manhattan Associates' technologies.

Manhattan Active Omni is the first platform to fuse order-management and store-fulfillment applications with next-generation

point-of-sale and clienteling capabilities into a single solution. It will provide EBW store associates with the tools they need to serve their customers regardless of channel by breaking down the silos between digital and physical systems, giving store associates a 360-degree view of customer information and the ability to transact against merchandise regardless of where the item may physically reside.

"Everything But Water was looking to digitally transform our shopping experience, and we found the perfect partner in Manhattan Associates," said Randall A.



Everything But Water joins the top 10 sportswear brands that employ Manhattan Associates technologies.

Blumenthal, chairman and CEO of EBW, in a release. "Manhattan's comprehensive, unified commerce platform allows our associates to deliver unparalleled, personalized service and advanced omni-channel fulfillment in stores and online."

"Manhattan's suite of retail solutions will help forward-looking brands like Everything But Water move closer to their customers and optimize their operating margins while doing so," said Tony DiPaolo, vice president of Retail Solutions for Manhattan Associates. "This powerful unified commerce suite combines point-of-sale, order-management, store-fulfillment and inventory management in a single, seamless application. Equipped with this solution, Everything But Water store associates can quickly and easily perform advanced retail functions like ship from store, as well as endless aisle and mixed-cart transactions."

Manhattan Point of Sale is always current and continuously adaptive and offers a single intuitive associate experience across any combination of Windows, iOS and Android devices in the store. Manhattan Active Order Management is a recognized industry leader for customer orders across all channels and geographies.—*Christian Chensvold*

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Inside the Industry

IMC has announced the launch of a much-anticipated new feature to its RepZio sales app. The new exhibitor-friendly feature debuted at Las Vegas market and incorporates market-badge scanning, creating a connection between market activity and RepZio customer data. "This enhancement," said IMC CEO Bob Maricich, "is part of IMC's larger plan to reframe our digital strategy to more closely align physical markets in Atlanta, High Point and Las Vegas with digital tools that deliver return on investment for our buyer and seller customers. This seller-focused solution is a great complement to a new buyer-facing app in development for launch in summer." RepZio, a patented B2B application, was acquired by IMC two years ago and receives frequent updating and enhancements.

USFIA, the United States Fashion Industry Association, has elected a new chair to the board of directors. Chris Lucas will take over from Anna Walker, vice president of public affairs for Levi Strauss & Co., who chaired the board since July 2020. Lucas is senior director and associate general counsel at American Eagle Outfitters. "Special thanks to Anna for her leadership over the past two and a half years, especially as we confronted the uncertainty of COVID and global disruption," said Lucas. Her experience in public policy focused USFIA's activities to offer the fashion industry the information needed to navigate the new normal of the past few years." Lucas's expertise reflects the USFIA's commitment to providing brands and retailers with reliable guidance on how to achieve solutions to trade and compliance challenges, the organization said.

Next Level Apparel has announced two major steps in continuing its commitment to ethical and responsible sourcing. Founded in 2003, NLA is a leading supplier of premium blanks and will begin expediting its requirement to have all suppliers utilize 100 percent domestically grown cotton beginning this month, ahead of its original goal. Supply-chain integrity will also be strengthened by new origin-testing protocols. "This is a significant advancement in our commitment to global social responsibility and builds on our aggressive supply-chain traceability priorities," said CEO Randy Hales. "This move complements our robust environmental, social and governance initiatives with regard to suppliers that violate our zero-tolerance policy of forced labor." The company works closely with organizations throughout the world to stand up for human rights and fight injustice, it added.

CIT Commercial Services, a subsidiary of First Citizens Bank, has announced the addition of Scott Shapiro as director and new business officer for the Western region. Shapiro brings 22 years of experience originating and underwriting asset-based lending and factoring facilities to middle-market companies. "Scott has a proven track record and has been instrumental in assisting companies achieve their growth objectives," said Mike Earnhart, senior vice president and Western region sales manager of CIT. "He is well-respected across the industry, and we are pleased to welcome him to our team." CIT is one of the nation's leading providers of financial services and lines of credit.

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Johnny Was Updates Its Bohemian Roots Through a Colorful Rhapsody of Optimism

By Dorothy Crouch *Contributing Writer*

For its Spring 2023 collection, the **Johnny Was** design team held onto the roots of colorful bohemian themes in florals, lace, eyelet details and embroidery but was inspired by a return to enriching life experiences. Described by the company as a celebration of “effervescent renewal,” these experiences include embarking on adventures through travel, local day-tripping and, following a successful Fall 2022 activewear launch, a great deal of self-care.

“The consumer comes to us for vibrancy and optimism, which is the core of everything we produce. It really is about boldness. Now that she is back to travel, we are feeling vibrancy,” according to Carrie Tanzman, senior vice president of merchandising for Johnny Was. “It’s really been a huge shift in the customer’s appetite from [the onset of] COVID versus post-COVID.”

A return to romance

While the word “bohemian” is often used to describe the Johnny Was style, the brand also features pieces that inspire feelings of Old World romance, and it is translating this theme into lace and eyelet details. This season, a fine filigree in cream lace is featured on the Tayla Maxi Dress, a long-sleeved silhouette with a complementary cream slipdress lining that nearly grazes the floor. The same fabrication was applied to the three-quarter-sleeve Betty Blouse with a ruffled, lacy col-

lar and pearl buttons. By applying lace details to the Sidney Cropped Baby Boot Jean, Johnny Was updates dressier denim with a dreamy touch.

“Those are vintage inspired though they look modern. This is the time of year when we start to grow our lace as well as our eyelet. We wanted to stand behind it with a modern approach,” noted Tanzman. “It’s really focusing on vintage mixing with modernity.”

The pieces fit well within an array of settings, and that is the goal, according to Tanzman. Johnny Was Spring 2023 pieces were created with details reminiscent of 1970s-era craftsmanship in mind, but they are meant to be worn everywhere.

“We love the idea that you can wear it to the beach or you can wear it to a wedding,” said Tanzman. “Of course, it’s all unique and artisanal, and it leans toward a resort brand, but there is so much in the assortment that has versatility. You can wear it day to night, and we are starting to home in on the versatility component to add more broad appeal to a greater audience.”

This theme of whimsy translates into additional styles that play off other themes such as the Western-inspired Liza Midi Dress in a multicolored rainbow of pastels. The piece features a surplice neckline and skirt in color-blocked hues of blush, yellow and mint with an overlay of a gray floral pattern in a crinkled silk with three-quarter, balloon-style sleeves. A similar approach was used to design the Serena Peasant Blouse, a sheer, pastel color-block piece with three-quarter sleeves and a sweetheart neckline that features long ties with tassel ends.

“This season, we’re really standing behind dresses. We feel there is a lot of opportunity in this category, and we’ve seen such success recently that we’re focusing on growing it,” said Tanzman. “We [also] never want to leave behind our blouse business. It’s the core of our brand.”

Actively embracing the new

Fall 2022 heralded in Johnny Was’s entrance into the activewear category, which has been successful and continued to grow for Spring 2023. An innovative approach to active, Johnny Was offers a reversible sports bra in the black and modern floral print Redland Bee style, as well as complementary high-waist leggings with pockets and a matching pullover and sweatshirt.

“In the activewear industry, the pant is bought 3 to 1 versus tops,” revealed Tanzman. “The customer can continue to buy her bottoms and have a reversible bra that can be worn with two bottoms, so it registers as two prints in each delivery.”

The Johnny Was team will continue to grow its active business with a tennis-pickleball collection that features skirts, polos and dresses. As the brand’s creatives look toward Fall 2023, they will also introduce an après-ski collection.

“The team designs with our women at the core of everything we do. Our goal is to ensure we provide a line that gives our customer happiness and confidence,” said Tanzman. “We want her to be excited to wear each piece’s design with such unique details. Every piece is created with our consumer in mind.” ●

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With sustainable messaging ubiquitous within the apparel industry, what actions can companies take to relay a true commitment to ecological responsibility?

Sustainability *Continued from page 1*

circular fashion economy. *California Apparel News* asked sustainability experts and apparel-industry leaders: *With sustainable messaging ubiquitous within the apparel industry, what actions can companies take to relay a true commitment to ecological responsibility?*

Daren Abney Director of Business Development for the Americas Lenzing Fibers



Being in the textile industry today means you should have some level of sustainability built into your company's strategy. The companies who take tangible action on addressing environmental and social responsibility are winning in

today's market.

Whether companies source certified materials, implement water-saving programs along supply chains or fund social-justice programs in their communities, the real key is cutting through greenwashing with transparent third-party verification to support communication and rebuild consumer trust.

Lenzing topped the 2022 Hot Button Ranking, reaching a "dark green" shirt for the third time in a row, but we also implemented a new circular-economy vision to reach 50 percent post-consumer recycled content in our TENCEL fibers with REFIBRA technology by 2024. This is a huge milestone in developing next-gen materials. Actions like publicly disclosing our list of suppliers and locations for dissolving wood pulp illustrate a real commitment to transparency.

By incorporating our fibers into their products, our brand partners are using TENCEL and Lenzing ECOVERO as credible ingredients to help them achieve their sustainable-material goals. In the end, any sustainable messaging should come down to one thing—reliable claims.

Kerry Bannigan Executive Director Fashion Impact Fund



Brands must understand that they are extracting from a deteriorating environment, and without actionable commitments to reduce overproduction the industry continues significant depletion of nonrenewable resources. Additionally,

the sector is operating with a lack of transparency and must address the information gap. There is a major disconnect between consumers' purchasing habits and their awareness of the disastrous environmental, social and economic impacts of the fashion industry. Easier access to reliable information about production processes for consumers should be readily available via product descriptions, labels and displays, including from materials, the makers, the supply chain and packaging.

Tricia Carey Chief Commercial Officer Renewcell



The first step is transparency. The industry still needs to get the basic facts right and then make them available. They must say, "This is what is in my product, this is where it came from, this is where it can go after use, and

this is how all of that affects the environment and communities." Transparency opens companies up to ideas about how to do what they do better, from within and without.

The second step is to sign deals with innovators. Most of the tech needed to effect massive positive change for this industry already exists; it is scale that is missing. Companies looking to demonstrate commitment can do so by actually putting pen to paper and promise to use innovative materials when they reach scale. That is how we get investment flowing and erode the competitive advantage of an unsustainable status quo.

Carlo Centonze Chief Executive Officer HeiQ Group



Preaching about sustainability and actually doing something about it are completely different. Fibers such as polyester and nylon, made from fossil fuel—a nonrenewable source—became widely popular for their resistance, convenience and affordability.

About 70 percent of all clothes produced globally each year are made from these fibers. These pieces have low recyclability and release plastic micro- and nanofibers into water streams during every wash.

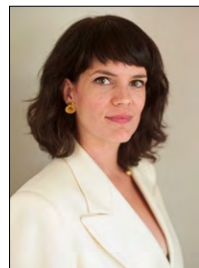
Cellulose is the most widely available biopolymer in the world that binds CO₂ from the atmosphere during its growth. Replacing polyester and using, for example, non-valorized agricultural cellulosic waste, reduces tons of CO₂ emissions from the atmosphere. In Higg Index terms, HeiQ AeonIQ has the potential for one of the lowest environmental footprints for textile fibers.

We don't need to cut a single tree as there is more cellulose waste available than the entire textile industry needs for annual fiber production. We just need to adjust and scale the supply chain while making it truly circular.

Our ultimate goal is to eliminate polyester investments within the fashion and apparel industries by 2035. Products must be either endlessly circular or fully degradable in just three months.

We have the technology. We have the resources. We can drive change.

Elizabeth Cline Director of Advocacy and Policy Remake



To be truly ecological and responsible, apparel companies need to do two things: Pay fairly everyone in their value chain and commit to sustainable growth that is not built around throw-away consumption and rewarding investors

over everyone else.

Younger generations entering the fashion industry expect it to run ethically. There is also a large and growing market for clothing made sustainably with living wages, and increasingly investors demand it. For those companies that begin to make the transition now, they will be ahead of regulation already in effect in California under the Garment Worker Protection Act and under consideration in Congress and in New York and rolling out in the EU under the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive.

What does fair pay have to do with the environment? Fair pay ensures that people care for their own environments and tackles overproduction by correctly pricing the fashion system and its resources.

Stacy Flynn Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Evrnu



It's important for companies to move beyond voicing commitments to enacting circular programs that lessen their environmental impact, backed by credible reporting.

Companies that sell clothing should take responsibility for the full life cycle of their products—tracing their supply chains, designing for longevity and ultimate disassembly, enabling and encouraging repairs, and having a pathway to responsibly dispose of pieces through takeback programs for resale or recycling.

There is a lot of innovation happening, and the industry needs to work cross-functionally to drive momentum, scale solutions and create tipping points for systems-wide transformation.

Betsy Franjola Founder Preface



The word "sustainability" has been used so frequently in the fashion industry that it has almost become synonymous with greenwashing in consumers' minds. Technologies such as QR codes and scannable clothing offer unique

tools to build confidence by providing data directly to customers.

Brands need to share the stories behind the

clothes and use textile advancements that set them apart. Find the most meaningful message for both the brand and the customer, stick to that objective and build the story over time.

Work closely with suppliers to understand their strengths and capabilities. Stick with a small group of reliable partners to ensure consistency and transparency throughout development and manufacturing. Lean into all the resources available to stay aware of scientific, social and political changes. Be honest about your intentions. Ensure decisions at every level support the brand's ecological mission, and share updates internally and externally.

Karri Ann Frerichs Founder and Chief Executive Officer Circular Fashion LA



We built our commitment to ecological responsibility directly into our corporate structure to ensure that profits share priority with our goals to be regenerative and directly benefit the communities in which we operate. In

January 2022, we became a California Social Purpose Corporation, which is similar to a Benefit Corp, and requires us to publish yearly impact stats that are relevant to our special purpose. We've also accepted the California Green Business Network's challenge to become a Green Certified Business by Earth Day 2023. Furthermore, we surround ourselves with mission-aligned organizations and collaborators and have been a part of the L.A. Cleantech Incubator network and programs since 2020.

Beyond certifications and corporate structures, transparency is the best way to demonstrate a company's commitment to environmentalism. The OuterKnown brand's transparency has always served as an inspiration, and the company has built it into their marketing. Brands that can weave the storytelling of their ecological benefits into their merchandising will ring more authentically to customers than those brands simply pushing products.

On pushing products—the business strategy of "planned obsolescence" is truly wreaking havoc on the environment. It used to be that consumers could expect home appliances, for example, to last 10 to 15 years but now face the frustration of appliances quitting after less than five. No reusable product that doesn't last beyond a handful of uses can ever be good for the environment unless a low-emissions takeback or recycling system is baked into the business model. This includes fashion. If brands can figure out how to honor the labor and materials that went into their products by extending the lifespans of their goods—and still see profits—that will be the Holy Grail of true sustainability.



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With sustainable messaging ubiquitous within the apparel industry, what actions can companies take to relay a true commitment to ecological responsibility?

Sustainability *Continued from page 1*

Jordana Guimarães
Co-founder
Fashionnovation



Companies must hold themselves accountable to the industry and consumers. Sustainability is a word that carries many meanings. To move the industry away from greenwashing, we must connect more with our peers to understand solutions that truly work and how real connection and collaboration yield accountability. You go much farther when walking together than when facing the road alone.

The final component is education—no matter how many years a brand has existed on the market, learning is something that should be a constant goal especially as new fibers, leathers and ways to ensure sustainability throughout the supply chain are made available.

Jean Hegedus
Sustainability Director
The LYCRA Company



Developing, communicating and executing measurable goals are key to demonstrating a real sustainable commitment. We recently published our 2030 Sustainability Goals and signed the Science Based Targets initiative Call-to-Action Commitment letter to get our emissions goals approved by the SBTi. We will report on our progress annually and believe this is one way to hold ourselves accountable.

All of our goals won't be linear, and it's important to be transparent about hurdles and share plans on how we will overcome challenges. Taking a broad-based, holistic view of sustainability that covers all aspects—from supporting employees and communities to how products are made, what they're made with and how to reduce their impact while keeping them in use for as long as possible—is key to telling the whole story.

Forging collaborations throughout the value chain is critical. We recently announced a collaboration with Qore, a joint venture between Cargill and Helm, to develop renewable LYCRA fiber made with a plant-based ingredient that is branded as QIRA. This fiber will be made with 70 percent bio-derived materials, which we could not have achieved working alone.

As we communicate with the consumer, it's important to ensure claims can be substantiated and are truthful and complete. This is essential to building trust and establishing an ongoing dialogue with consumers.

Jen Hodo
USA Business Development Manager
Sucharu Uppal
Joint President of Brands and Retail
Birla Cellulose



Credible and actionable commitment to sustainability must be holistic, collaborative and engage the entire value chain to create positive value for all stakeholders. Next-gen recycled and regenerative solutions allow companies to demonstrate their commitments via participation in the circular economy. Circularity being the key focus, we have several initiatives underway with in-house and industry-leading pulp innovators using chemical and mechanical recycling techniques, which are carried under our Liva Reviva brand in viscose and Lyocell.

To remain relevant, competitive and trustworthy, brands need to prioritize transparency. Consumers, investors, policymakers and other stakeholders are requiring increased accountability and disclosure. Birla Cellulose annually publishes our sustainability report, detailing our methodology, practices, achievements and aspirations. We have life-cycle assessments of our products, and third-party verified scores are available in the Higg Index MSI.

Traceability to source is the critical step before transparency. The Birla Cellulose blockchain-enabled platform called GreenTrack traces fibers from Forest Stewardship Council-certified forests to finished garments with the scan of a QR code. Supply-chain visibility empowers brands with the data needed to measure, define challenges and opportunities, and assess and mitigate risk. It provides data to substantiate consumer-facing claims.

Eddie Ingle
Chief Executive Officer
UNIFI



At UNIFI, we like to say we are “working today for the good of tomorrow,” and it's a message that resonates with our employees, key external stakeholders and the industry at large. Companies must adapt and adopt new methods, minimize waste production at every step of the process and aim to take us all one step closer to collective ESG goals.

To demonstrate commitment to these words, we invest in new equipment that uses less energy to make product. We develop innovative products like our SmartDye yarns that allow our customers to use less energy and dyestuffs when they make fabrics. The production and incorporation of REPVEVE fiber is a major steppingstone in the path to a more sustainable apparel cycle. We can create a future where waste is the exception—not the rule—when we all work together.

Jessica Kelly
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Thr3fold



What keeps most brands stuck is they lack a sustainability task force. Most brands have sustainable decision-making spread across three departments and three to four positions. These decision-makers need to be on one formal board that meets regularly and takes true action based on defined metrics. This board needs to be responsible for articulating the current state of the brand, setting a budget, reviewing and adopting innovative solutions and a timeline by which they are bound. If this doesn't change, brands will continue to greenwash.

Andrea Kennedy
Vice President of Sustainability
Material Exchange



For true sustainability commitments and initiatives to get off the ground, it's important to bring everyone at a company on board. Make sure the mission, processes and particulars are explained well internally so they're easy to understand. Stay away from super-tech-heavy or scientific words as people will excitedly share program objectives and details when they understand them and become experts themselves. Keep everyone updated on your sustainability-performance progress so they keep sharing the good work.

It's also important to avoid vague terms that can't be measured; they're a bit meaningless and lead to greenwashing. For example, at Material Exchange, we avoid describing a supplier's factory as “environmentally friendly.” Instead of using this type of description, we state the actions the factory has in place. We say they're a fair-trade facility with a closed-loop water system and zero-waste program, focusing on genuine information that can be fact-checked.

Optimism is contagious, and there is no room for negativity when working for positive change. Yes, there may be individuals who focus on what's wrong with solutions or how slowly progress is being made, but don't be disheartened. Sustainability work involves shifting years, decades, centuries of deeply ingrained stories and systems. Together, we're working on writing new stories and creating new systems. Collective slow and steady work, from all of us, will absolutely win the race.

Dr. Cindy J. Lin
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer
Hey Social Good



The demand for sustainability transparency is spreading like wildfire among fashion-conscious consumers and brands. There is a strong need to show that the design and production decisions made by brands and suppliers are truly creating a positive impact or, at minimum, reducing harm on people and the environment. To show true commitment to ecological responsibility, companies need to invest in meaningful environmental and social practices that are traceable.

Companies can do quite a bit to kick-start or continue their sustainability journey. A wide variety of social and sustainable practices exists for brands and suppliers to adopt; these include, but are not limited to: creating a sustainability-specific company mission that is linked to performance goals, reducing toxic-chemical use by starting to switch to plant-based dyes or glues, increasing the percentage of renewable-based fibers in the production line, and reducing cut waste. Companies would benefit from conducting an ecosystem review of their designs and production processes and committing to implementing alternative sustainable practices that reflect their social-good footprint.

Fabricio Mancebo
Chief Brand Officer
Belda Lloréns



There must be a complete commitment. Sustainability, in all its shades, must be part of the DNA of a company's business and brand strategies, to be worked at in all the different departments. We must integrate the SDGs in all possible areas while reducing the consumption of water, CO₂, energy and plastics and increasing the use of recycled materials, leading the way for raising a real circular economy.

Victoria Nelson Harris
Senior Textile Segment Specialist
Mimaki



Speaking to the apparel-printing industry—working with the right suppliers offering environmentally sustainable solutions—is key. Utilizing new digital-printing technologies, which reduce carbon footprint, water consumption and chemical use is a step in the right direction to create a better future now.

Samata Pattinson
Chief Executive Officer
Red Carpet Green Dress



We need radical transparency—credible, backed up and substantiated. This requires open conversations all along the value cycle, and it goes from factory audits and certificates to clear and honest product labeling, in addition to divulging what is not working and where we are truly focused for improvement. The recent Competition and Markets Authority Green Claims Code was developed to help consumers feel less confused or misled about the symbols and semiotics and for businesses to determine what is genuine or simply intended. We need to be able to compare apples to apples, but often its apples to oranges, and that can be confusing. We need truth and accuracy but also specificity.

Lewis Perkins
President
Apparel Impact Institute



It is tough for industry players, let alone consumers, to recognize legitimate marketing claims for sustainability, given how trendy and common it is to market companies and products as “sustainable.” Therefore, verified

impact is critical.

Companies need to not only measure their impact on the planet but also verify any claims for decreasing negative impact or for increasing positive impact.

In addition, they need to provide context against “what matters to measure” for the industry. For example, if you have reduced the amount of water used to make a pair of jeans, you need to benchmark against the average water used for conventional jeans as well as against industry goals. In this case, it may be the ecological goals for given watersheds by region. If you reduce water use in an abundant watershed, it’s not as big a deal as saving water where there is scarcity of available, potable water.

The same goes for CO₂ emissions, chemical management, biodiversity, land use and other nature-based targets. Measuring credible and verified impact—ideally by a third party—against agreed-upon industry targets is of the utmost importance.

Kirti Poonia
Co-founder
Relove



Launch a resale program that begins to take responsibility for your post-consumer waste. By doing this, you are extending the life of your garments, inviting your customers to be a part of the solution and even increas-

ing your revenue.

Alexa Raab
Director of Communications
CovationBio



Sustainability is more than a strategic plan; it’s fundamental to our products and reflects our values. Establishing measurable, actionable goals and transparently communicating progress are critical to seeing the re-

sults we need and providing a guidepost for other companies to achieve meaningful progress. We have aligned our sustainability targets with four United Nations SDGs that serve as pillars of our sustainability program, including commitments to climate action, regenerative agriculture and transparency throughout our supply chain. We are committed to providing data on our status on a regular basis and will issue our first sustainability report as CovationBio this year.

Emmanuelle Rienda
Founder and Creative Director
Vegan Fashion Week



Today, social and environmental commitments are necessities in building brand equity—but only if they’re authentic. As an entrepreneur, I would start by envisioning the company’s ideal position-

ing, mission statement and reverse engineering to create the perfect product with a true commitment to ecological responsibility. It is important for companies to be transparent and explain how environmental issues are addressed within the supply chain with the choice of raw materials, packaging, manufacturing, transportation and by including information on how the company is minimizing its environmental footprint or what the company is doing to help the communities with which they work. From a public-relations perspective, it is better to be upfront about negative situations and willing to take responsibility for mistakes made in the past.

To confirm that a company truly aligns with the stated values, I strongly recommend investing in product certifications in accordance with the SDGs to manage risk, embed innovation and credibly foster consumer trust—ideally, a well-rounded certification that includes efforts to protect humans, biodiversity and the environment. These factors will speak volumes about just how committed and responsible a company is, and it will accelerate the company’s adaptation to the new-climate economy.

Kutay Saritosun
Director of Brand Services and
Partnerships
Bluesign



With the goals to reduce carbon emissions to curb global warming, it is ever more important to map supply-chain partners to identify impacts. The proposed supply-chain due diligence act in the EU demands com-

panies to disclose their suppliers, look at the environmental and social impacts in the supply chain, and demonstrate a realistic action plan on how to reduce these impacts.

Similar legislative proposals also exist in the U.S. In that regard, a high level of transparency will be required to communicate environmental commitments, which will also require traceability systems such as digital product IDs to be implemented. Given the number of “green claims,” which are misleading to consumers, working with credible third-party certifications will also be mandatory to back up these claims. Though showing true environmental commitment is voluntary at the moment, once the proposed legislations are in effect, this will not be an option but will become a requirement. To achieve impact reduction in the supply chain, brands can partner with suppliers to invest in manufacturing-process improvements, increase resource efficiency regarding water and energy, and use clean, approved chemistry throughout manufacturing.

➔ Sustainability page 8

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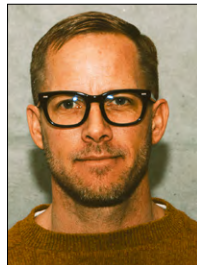
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With sustainable messaging ubiquitous within the apparel industry, what actions can companies take to relay a true commitment to ecological responsibility?

Sustainability *Continued from page 7*

Andrew Schulenburg
Marketing Director
Laguna Fabrics



Companies should research and align with some of the non-profit organizations that are leading science-based data collection and strategy on how the fashion industry can collectively reduce their social and environmental impacts. Not only do these organizations such as Textile Exchange, Higg and GOTS align with Laguna's internal goals, but consumers are also aligned with them.

Set realistic goals for your business and put a plan into action. Don't let perfection be the enemy of the good. Be authentic in your communication and use vetted third-party tools that measure impacts beyond CO₂. Textile Exchange's Climate+ framework focuses on soil, biodiversity and water.

Lastly, collaborate with value-chain partners and even competitors sometimes—this is a team sport.

Carolina Sister-Cohn
Global Marketing Leader, Textiles
Eastman

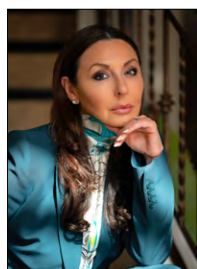


Third-party certifications, transparency and collaboration along the entire fashion value chain—from raw materials to retail brands—are crucial to better understand our impacts and how we can work together to improve processes and products for the industry, people and the planet.

As a producer of sustainable cellulosic fibers, we make sure that our products' claims are backed by third-party certifications. We prioritize collaborations with industry change seekers to ensure continuous improvement and transparency into the journey of our sustainable-fiber portfolio.

In 2022, we joined with the traceability platform TextileGenesis. We also participate in the annual Canopy Hot Button Report, which examines the production practices of global cellulosic-fiber manufacturers, including sourcing, chemical use, emissions and next-generation fiber solutions. It is important to not only enhance the sustainability of our products but also the environments we impact. We work closely with our pulp suppliers to restore environments and encourage the rejuvenation of forests.

Galina Sobolev
Chief Marketing Officer
StyleScan



Brands have more opportunities than ever before to implement sustainable initiatives and reduce waste. The key to fulfilling ecological responsibility is to digitally replicate physical activity

whenever possible.

Photo shoots have a significant environmental impact, and alternative technology such as StyleScan eliminates waste by dressing models digitally without physical samples. Visual presentation is one of the most important elements of merchandising. Displaying collections on models of different shapes and sizes without a physical garment establishes accessibility and facilitates sales.

Melodie van der Baan
Chief Executive Officer
Max Retail (formerly SwapRetail)



Brands can show their commitment to sustainability by utilizing modern technology around forecasting and shrewd negotiation with manufacturers to reduce overproduction. Both retailers and brands can improve sustainability efforts by lining up partners to help them rehome their excess inventory rather than burning or trashing it.

Robert Zoch
Global Content Manager
Kornit Digital



Apparel companies still rely on forecast-based production, with the baked-in assumption that inventories will be unsold, written off and discarded. Many still source materials and ship finished products thousands of miles from their base of operations. Many fail to capture a world of online data that can tell producers and brands what the people want and remain shackled by a "make it and hope it sells" retail model. None of this is necessary.

Capabilities for fast, high-quality, on-demand production of textile goods have matured and are prepared to meet the digital marketplace where it is now. Today's digital on-demand production technology empowers brands to make only what they sell without sacrificing quality, graphic design or profit margin, eliminating the need for overstocks. Because this model creates alignment between demand and supply, the energy, labor, materials and time involved are optimized and production becomes profitable almost anywhere. You can produce closer to the end consumer and mitigate supply-chain risks while bypassing the environmental costs of overseas-transport logistics.

Freed from minimum quantities, you can give consumers more control over apparel customization and personalization or create samples and test new collection concepts with minimal risk. Brands don't need to invest in capital equipment to achieve this efficiency. There's a growing network of digital-enabled producers ready to fulfill their needs on demand, and this production method delivers sustainable, responsible change for the long term.

Responses have been condensed.

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Fern Liberson & Co.



Victoria Mozgovaya



Alyson Eastman

L.A. Market *Continued from page 1*

up to \$2,000. Reacting to the show, Kristina Menajivar, owner of the **Mixxes** boutique, said, "I am always looking for something that will catch my eye. Cross for God is so special, like wearable art."

In the **Jamie Prince Sales** showroom, **Xenia Design** was being previewed. "This higher-end line sells so well across the country," said Prince. "It continues to blow out every season." For Fall, the use of brash color clashes and attention to details are what buyers responded to.

At **Cynthia Ashby** in the **Nina Perez** showroom, the hot item for Summer was the linen overall at \$115. This made-in-America brand uses all-natural fibers and is hand-dyed. As is the case with so much this season, "it's all in the details," said Perez.

Tom Keefer, general manager at The New Mart, saw an uptick in buyers. "There was a lot of positive energy throughout the week. It seemed buyers were scrambling for inventory, and tenants were optimistic."

From the penthouse of the **Cooper Design Space** housing **Brand Assembly** to the permanent showrooms below, January brought unapologetic look-at-me styles—ready to finally be out and be seen.

Cynthia Chamberlain, owner of **The Canyon**, was inspired by what she saw. "I always look forward to shopping Brand Assembly and seeing all these new and upcoming vendors. It was especially fun to peek at what's coming for Fall '23."

Creating buzz was Alyson Eastman, who was showing for the first time in L.A. Her collection wowed with orchid-fur apparel and metallic-washed leathers in emerald green. Items were made from recycled food-industry waste and priced at \$350 up to \$3,000.

Also new to L.A. Market was **La Fuori**, where designer Vidur Adlakha presented his High Summer collection. Intricate beading and embellishments enhanced floral print silks, organzas and linens priced at \$125 to \$299.

The buying team from **Jones & Co.**, Elizabeth Jones and Laura Schwisow, said,

"We are in here looking for elevated essentials. It's been a productive trip."

In the **Marco Lebel** showroom, the line **TAJ** met with great response. "We are having a moment with this collection," Lebel said. Inspired by Southern California, the chic printed dresses reflect iconic SoCal images and are priced from \$115 to \$200.

Margot Garcia, general manager at the Cooper, said, "The vibe we got this week has been all good. We saw a great group of quality retailers here, and everyone has been receiving positive feedback."

Throughout market week at the **California Market Center**, collections used everything from subtle updates in detailing to unexpected twists to deliver elevated style to everyday dressing.

The new line Victoria Mozgovaya reworked denim and twill styles in hot new colors such as orchid, pink and orange, then splattered them with multicolor neon paint for a glow-in-the-dark take on streetwear. "I am inspired by how powerful color can be in our emotions, moods and personalities," the designer said. "Through color, I look to empower people to express themselves." Prices ranged from \$95 to \$170.

Elevated-classic cotton silhouettes from **Terra** at the **Fern Liberson & Co.** showroom took on an artistic aesthetic reflective of the brand's Korean heritage with special touches and craftsman-like details. Shift dresses were priced at \$65. Thea Lujan of **Kiotti Santa Fe** said, "This is my first time at this market, and discovering this line has been great. My customers are artsy and like things that are unique."

Fenya V, a collection of everyday luxury items made in L.A., was receiving great response on its newest group of reversible neoprene jackets and coats all in bold sublimated prints of flowers and animal motifs priced from \$98 to \$160.

Expectations were for a somewhat quiet market; however, Matthew Mathiason, senior manager of events at the CMC, said, "We have more than met our expectations for turnout. Many of our showrooms had packed schedules all week, and we have great things planned for March." ●



La Fuori



Cross for God



Nina Perez

Chensvold Joins *California Apparel News* as Associate Editor

Christian Chensvold has taken the position of associate editor at the *California Apparel News* after 20 years contributing to the paper in roles ranging from retail editor to lead special-sections writer.

He recently returned to the Bay Area after two decades in L.A. and New York, where he wrote extensively for *RL MAG*, the magazine for the Ralph Lauren lifestyle brand, *L'Uomo Vogue* and the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*; ran the in-




Christian Chensvold

fluential menswear website *Ivy-Style.com*; and served as senior editor of the L.A.-based women's fashion and Hollywood magazine *Veni*.

"The Philosophy of Style," which collects 25 years of his writings on menswear history and gentlemanly topics, is forthcoming from **Antenna Books**, and he is presently revamping his website on masculine elegance, *Dandyism.net*, originally founded in 2004.

Apparel News Group



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With lackluster holiday 2022 sales signaling a slowdown in consumer spending on goods, what new challenges can the apparel industry expect, and how can businesses in this sector navigate the resulting economic hurdles?

As Manufacturers, Retailers, Consumers Enter With Caution, What Will 2023 Bring?

By Dorothy Crouch Contributing Writer

As inflation soared during 2022, speculation regarding an impending recession was rampant and consumers tightened their belts. Retailers hoped for a blockbuster holiday 2022 sales season to serve as an indicator of a healthier 2023, but projections missed the mark. Holiday 2022 sales totaled \$936.3 billion—a 5.3 percent increase over 2021—but couldn't reach the National Retail Federation's forecasted growth of between 6 and 8 percent.

Amid the Federal Reserve's .25 percentage point rate increase on Feb. 1 to between 4.5 percent and 4.75 percent, the U.S. central bank cautiously noted that inflation is slowly easing but emphasized significant challenges remain. With continued supply-chain issues, excess inventory, high customer-return rates and reduced consumer spending on goods, the apparel industry is facing additional challenges during the start of 2023. To prepare for the financial hurdles ahead, *California Apparel News* asked industry leaders: *With lackluster holiday 2022 sales signaling a slowdown in consumer spending on goods, what new challenges can the apparel industry expect, and how can businesses in this sector navigate the resulting economic hurdles?*

Darrin Beer
Western Regional Manager
CIT Commercial Services, a subsidiary of First Citizens Bank



Some apparel companies still burdened with higher inventory will probably discount product through the first half of 2023. Certain online businesses are also challenged with rising customer-acquisition costs related to heightened privacy laws and data-tracking limitations.

As apparel companies navigate these challenges and economic uncertainties, it's important to address slower-moving goods as the carrying cost is higher than a year ago. If you own a brand, this process will be more delicate as you will need to balance some discounting without diminishing perceived value.

It's also important to stay on top of the supply chain to ensure timely deliveries of new products. Being on-trend and managing expenses are equally critical. Despite these economic hurdles, apparel companies should collaborate strategically with trusted suppliers and committed financial partners and must continue to engage consumers, even if they are spending less. The apparel industry has always proven its ability to adapt to the economy and will do the same in 2023.

Mark Bienstock
Managing Director
Express Trade Capital



As a result of a difficult 2022 holiday-sales environment, apparel importers and manufacturers are facing dual issues going into 2023. First is bringing their inventory back to a more manageable level. Many companies were dealing with a logistical log-jam of too many containers arriving at the same time as well as missing the current season. This forced the retail community to postpone or cancel many orders. The importing and manufacturing trades are still carrying elevated inventory, causing added margin compression to their bottom lines.

Second, the rising interest-rate policy of the Federal Reserve to tame inflation is causing many in the apparel community to resize their respective entity structures as we are potentially heading into a recession. Cost containment through-

out the entire manufacturing and selling ecosystem will be paramount to come out stronger once economic recovery is underway.

Sydnee Breuer
Executive Vice President and Western Regional Manager
Rosenthal & Rosenthal



The new challenges facing the apparel industry are actually the old challenges many companies faced pre-pandemic, primarily building more demand among consumers. Gone are the pandemic days when shelves were bare and retailers were happy to take any inventory they could get their hands on.

With the supply chain now normalizing and a slowdown in consumer spending, apparel companies need to rethink their inventory purchases and quantities, right-sizing them to the current economic environment to be more aligned with projected sales levels for the coming seasons. While inventory is the lifeline of our industry, it is also the kiss of death if there's too much of it or the wrong product. Apparel businesses must control and continuously monitor their inventory. Additionally, expenses must be controlled, and the overhead structure must be in line with current sales levels.

We also are seeing and continue to expect to see a worsening credit environment in the retail sector. Now is not the time to take undue risk on retailers with weak capital structures.

Tae K. Chung
Senior Vice President, Business Development
Republic Business Credit



As the U.S. came out of COVID-19 restrictions, people started switching their spending habits to dining, experiences and long-awaited family vacations that were nonexistent during the pandemic. Our clients faced supply-chain issues, increases in oil prices, inflation and interest-rate hikes. In turn, people were spending more on essential needs.

We will face similar challenges in 2023 as we did at the end of 2022.

While oil prices, inflation and interest rates still play a major role, people will continue to tighten their belts and only shop for essential products. Additionally, new, growing COVID concerns and natural-gas prices have been hitting all-time highs, and people will be forced to choose between heating their homes, putting food on the table or fueling their cars. Inventory management is going to be a big component in navigating through upcoming economic challenges.

Gino Clark
Executive Vice President and Managing Director, Los Angeles Region
White Oak Commercial Finance, LLC



Manufacturers and importers can expect high returns and increased markdowns as retailers wrap up their year-end financial statements. It is important to remain diligent in reconciling markdowns and recovering any unauthorized deductions.

There are signs that the Federal Reserve's increased interest rates have been effective, but we still anticipate additional increases this year. Consumers will continue balancing their

discretionary income on competing items: higher grocery bills, dining out, vacations and soft goods, such as apparel.

Companies must efficiently manage their assets to ensure maximum performance. By focusing on narrowing the cash-conversion cycle, companies should be able to quickly react to performing trends. They may face balancing existing inventory and ensuring the correct inventory mix. As a rule, the first loss is generally the best loss if rebalancing is required. Ensure you maximize equity and liquidity to take advantage of emerging trends. This can be leveraged by securing a flexible lending relationship, one that understands your business and can help finance these growth opportunities.

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



Everyone is motivated to reduce inventory, but retailers need to avoid the impression of stale product. Last year's product needs to be gently woven into new styles to keep shoppers engaged.

Marketing spend is always a tempting target for cost reductions, especially as the costs of social-media ads continue to rise. Shifting some of this to tried-and-true methods such as catalogs and email can have immediate re-

sults at a lower cost.

Expansion and strategic growth in a period of uncertainty can propel a brand to the forefront and differentiate it from the competition. It can also stretch a company's resources when they are most needed. It's a delicate balance, but an eye on opportunistic growth when others are playing defense can accelerate a company's development.

Ron Friedman
Partner
Marcum LLP



During the second half of last year, apparel manufacturers were faced with supply-side challenges and high costs of containers to bring goods to the ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. In 2023, last season's merchandise must be liquidated to provide cash flow to produce and deliver new merchandise. Gross profits will not be the primary concern for manufacturers; moving older inventory at any margin is their top priority.

Projections and business plans are essential, and staying on-plan is mandatory for your business to succeed. A projection should provide you with the roadmap to move old inventory and bring in fresh goods. Your accountants should be guiding you through this process as you will need someone to challenge your assumptions for reasonableness and feasibility.

A final suggestion: Review your overhead and especially your payroll costs. We discovered during the pandemic that most companies are able to work with fewer employees and still get the job done.

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



Wholesalers and retailers are still navigating bloated inventory levels and production challenges from supply-chain issues. Retailers have taken a conservative stance in placing orders, which requires manufacturers to hold inventory much longer than they would like. This has created issues across the entire supply-chain cycle with continued working-capital pressure for many.

We see this trend continuing in the near future. There is a long way to go before we reach pre-pandemic levels of shoppers returning to the stores. People still prefer to buy goods online, but that trend is also slowing exponentially, which has caused issues with many DTC businesses. Consumers have reacted to this extremely uncertain economic time by taking a more conservative approach and keeping money in their pockets.

The apparel industry must take a conservative approach in response to the slowdown in consumer spending. It is imperative that businesses manage inventory accordingly and navigate supply-chain issues effectively. Now is not the time to take huge risks. Having a diversified channel of distribution and product sources is the best plan for success.

Rob Greenspan
President and Chief Executive
Greenspan Consult, Inc.



During Q1 and Q2, the apparel industry should expect continued slowing of shipments and a lack of significant orders from retailers for delivery. Optimistically, Q3 and Q4 will be better as eventually retailers will need new inventory for the

back end of the year.

Apparel-industry importers and manufacturers need to continue to minimize their overhead with cost reductions, whether in numbers of personnel or decreases in line size and product development. Apparel companies should manage their overhead so, at worst, they are operating at a breakeven level until business picks up.

During difficult times, managing inventory becomes a top priority. Managing goods that are placed into production is critical. Inventory speculation should be nonexistent. Turn your inventory, stay as liquid as you possibly can, and position your company to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

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



As the Fed continued its monetary policy to slow demand and reduce inflation, average U.S. consumers saw values of their assets decline and pandemic savings dwindle. While wage increases and a strong job market allowed

consumers to keep up with higher prices until now, consumers can become price-conscious and pull back if unemployment goes up and recession fears take hold.

Retailers that can analyze and identify desirable products in advance and have the products available on time by arranging with capable apparel manufacturers will stay relevant to the customer and thrive.

Companies must have liquidity and maintain a strong balance sheet. For apparel manufacturers, production and financing costs have been unavoidably increasing, impacting their bottom line. To protect profits, apparel companies can identify and capitalize on best-selling products for continuous sales, lower customer-risk tolerance to minimize losses from buyer insolvencies, and minimize compliance-violation charges or other frequent deductions from buyers by scrutinizing and updating procedures.

Thomas Novembrino
Executive Vice President
Gateway Trade Funding



Vendors, distributors and retailers that serve the apparel industry need to develop action plans to reduce their inventory stocks. When the economy is robust, controlling inventory is just a good business practice; however, over the years, retailers have relied on apparel vendors and distributors to maintain relatively high inventory levels to augment retailers' stocking needs to fulfill customer demand. In the long run, this is just not sustainable.

Cyclicalities are generally a reality of our economy and the apparel industry. For example, retailers reacted to the decline in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing their inventory stocks. When the economy normalized, retailers responded to augmented consumer demand by cautiously increasing the amount of inventory on their shelves, and apparel vendors cautiously augmented their production while distributors cautiously augmented their orders. Apparel firms need to stay lean with lower inventory but be ready to ramp up production quickly.

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



The average consumer spent the last quarter of 2022 under economic pressure—more expensive staples, higher interest costs and job layoffs. These negative metrics translated into less disposable income and discretionary spending. Many American households are already experiencing their own personal “recessions.”

With an economic slowdown—if not a recession—looming, apparel will face reduced demand, order deferral or cancellations and increased requests for markdown support from retailers. These challenges will require greater focus on asset management and operating discipline. Make sure your design, product and delivery conforms with or exceeds customer requirements. Enhance relationships with management above the buyer level. Tighten up your supply chain to bleed out extraneous costs.

Review your total SKUs and eliminate categories with lower order activity. Restructure jobs to allow for downsizing staff

quickly and to enhance profitability. Expect orders to be deferred and canceled, especially in view of excess retailer inventory. Retailers under pressure to report better results will increase their request for pricing support. Take reserves even on current orders and sales.

Kevin Sullivan
Senior Vice President, Regional Credit Manager, Commercial Services Group
Wells Fargo Capital Finance



In general, we saw large inventory build-ups due to deferrals, which has resulted in higher financing needs to support slower-moving inventories. We've stepped up to help many of our clients get through a somewhat challenging Q1, but the good news is that freight costs are beginning to normalize and margins appear to be coming back into line as we head into 2023.

What COVID-19 has clearly taught many companies is the inherent risk of having supply chains concentrated in one country. Many have successfully diversified supply chains to mitigate that risk. Operating expenses also remain a large focus. Whether it's right-sizing staff, seeking alternative sources of production or shifting from company-owned facilities to a 3PL model to provide greater financial flexibility, management teams throughout the industry are having to consistently rationalize all costs in an effort to maximize profitability in 2023.

Finally, it's never been more important to have solid consultants in the form of the right accounting firm, law firm and lending institution.

Marco Vinicio Valverde
Partner
Moss Adams



Apparel companies will be challenged to operate more efficiently and better understand the needs of their customer base more than ever. Companies will need to be able to manage the supply-chain issues, manage their production cycles, cut back on discretionary spending and manage the increasing number of product returns. The pandemic caused a spike in direct-to-consumer shopping but also an increase in the dilution percentages mostly due to higher return rates.

Companies can navigate these challenges by analyzing return data to better understand the customer behaviors and characteristics driving the issue. This will be beneficial in managing the production-cycle and supply-chain issues facing the industry. It will also better position companies to manage their inventories and maintain them at an adequate level throughout all of 2023. As companies look to minimize disruption, they should rethink their sourcing strategies and build more flexibility into their supply chains.

Kenneth L. Wengrod
Vice President of Global Trade & Foreign Investment
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce



An important factor that may facilitate business challenges is artificial intelligence to learn shoppers' behavior patterns, potentially reducing returns and chargebacks. Additionally, AI gathers data on shopper preferences and how often they make certain purchases. Businesses can anticipate shopper demand to create market opportunity. AI may help businesses reduce the potential for excess inventory.

Also, the purchasing strength of buyers over 50 may have been unfairly overlooked. This consumer base's confidence is due in large part to their disposable income and proves to be an attractive market for expanded sales for the right merchandise.

Additionally, 95 percent of potential customers are outside of our boundaries. Exporting is a great solution to expand market size and reduce the competitiveness of the U.S. retailer. Economic reports for 2023 indicate Western Europe will fare better than the U.S. in terms of a potential recession. The industry needs to understand the nature of these changes and find solutions to mitigate them and expand their profitability.

Michael Wildeveld
Director of Veld Mergers & Acquisitions
The Veld Group



For more-sustainable solutions, I'd look to the formation of strategic partnerships with participants in the value chain that stand to also benefit by leveraging one another's capabilities, client base, product line or distribution channels. The Holy Grail is for participants to tap into one another's strengths and convert each partner's loyal followers.

Nike and Foot Locker's initial partnership to make Air Jordan their “house brand” may be a wildly successful example of this. Nike and Foot Locker dramatically reduced their customer-acquisition costs while Michael Jordan's celebrity and legacy expanded. Each company's lifetime-customer value went through the roof with the frenzy of fanatical repeat customers. Ultimately, Nike's inordinate leverage allowed them to pivot to more of a direct-to-consumer strategy once their mission was accomplished. Their strong following of loyal collectors allowed them to take a page out of Rolex's book by creating an environment of scarcity to elevate their brand and maximize their average ticket on a pair of shoes.

Responses have been condensed.



Thriving in Challenging Times: Finding the Equilibrium

Navigating the apparel business has never been trickier. Trends appear and then vanish in a flash, the supply chain is shaky at best, and the dark clouds of inflation and interest-rate hikes loom overhead.

In times like these, sound financial advice is the greatest asset you can have, and it comes to you here courtesy of White Oak Commercial Finance. Gino Clark, Executive Vice President and Managing Director for the Los Angeles Region, gave us his assessment of the new year and what companies can do to thrive in challenging times.

What should companies be expecting as 2023 gets underway?

We're expecting the Fed to continue to increase interest rates as it tries to bring inflation down, but we are optimistic that the pace of the increases will slow. It's a real concern for companies, especially as revolving lines of credit tend to be on a floating rate. They need to anticipate that borrowing may be a little more expensive, and that just reinforces the theme that they really need to manage their assets efficiently.

How should they go about that?

Focus on the importance of converting assets into cash, making sure inventories are continuing to perform, turning over at least three times per year. One of my professors used to say, "In order to make your pile, you need to be in style." One of the most important things is to make sure your inventory is still in demand. Consumers are getting more selective in their purchases, so the companies with the most cash are most likely to excel by quickly taking advantage of new trends. And it happens very quickly these days.

Macroeconomic trends are outside everyone's control. However, they can always tap the power of their own creativity. Is that where they should stay focused?

Companies have three things that they have to balance: the sales and marketing, which is the creative and design part, then there's the sourcing, and finally the financial side. All three relate to each other, and in order to be successful you have to find the equilibrium between all three. That's the art, but given the headwinds that companies are facing these days, it's very hard to take a big gamble.

What are you looking for in a company?

We want to fund every stage of their growth. We want them to find something that's really working—good products and ideas and a positive contribution, making people's lives better in some shape or form. Then we're looking for a good business model and the ability to operate efficiently with a good management team

with a track record of success. What we're not looking for is companies sitting on a product that was really hot a year ago but the consumer no longer wants. It's not exciting for anyone to leverage that with financing.

How does an up-and-comer know when they should consider giving you a call and saying, "Look, this is my situation—things are good but I don't know what the next step should be"?



Gino Clark

We're not equity capital, so we like to come in during the second or third turn on a product. It's gained momentum, and you have the ability to double your sales in the next year but you've got limited resources. By leveraging your assets—converting the receivables and inventory to cash—

you can go out and potentially secure more product and fund this growth. So we may help the right company to double or triple their sales in a very short amount of time.

What's your advice for managing the maddening supply-chain issues of today?

It's really to just expect and manage through the various stages of the supply chain as they come. On the wholesale level we're seeing sales trends slow and inventories increase as goods finally reached U.S. warehouses, which puts a strain on a company's cash flow. We have some clients where retailers pushed out orders for as much as nine months. At this point, manufacturers have some decisions to make. They can either hold goods or sell goods at a discount to generate cash or even a deep discount and take a loss. But before they can make the decision they need to know what their capital position and liquidity are. If cash flow is tight, there is an old saying, "Your first loss is your best loss." With the current trends in the marketplace, these are the kinds of decisions you may be forced to make.

You stress the importance of good communication. Why is that?

At a time when there's a lot of uncertainty—and coming off of what we've just come off of—the entire key is communication. It's still a relationship business, so you need to know your relationships with your key buyers and understand the key metrics being presented to you. You're also quickly communicating with your suppliers regarding whether you need to slow down or speed up production and maybe ask for more time to pay for those goods. In times like these, you should rely on the relationships you've had in the past—now more than ever.



THREADS for Meaningful Change in 2023 and Beyond

By Chelsea Murtha AAFA Director of Sustainability

2022 saw an unprecedented level of policymaking that affected, and often targeted, the apparel and footwear industry. 2023 is shaping up to be an even busier year.

State legislatures are in full swing. Proposals to restrict chemical usage, mandate supply-chain due diligence and establish extended producer-responsibility schemes for packaging are among the items already introduced or eagerly anticipated. Despite a divided Congress, movement on items that would target manufacturing in China (e.g., the carbon border adjustment tax) could see bipartisan support. Plus, the European Union is moving at a clip with its own new regulations on circular economy, due diligence, deforestation and more.

The interest from policymakers is welcome.

The apparel and footwear industry has numerous voluntary standards and programs built by brands and stakeholders; however, these cannot wholly address areas where actual governance has been lacking. The need for policy and alignment that truly move the needle on key social and sustainability challenges is greater than ever.

While the industry is committed to working pre-competitively to achieve the highest ethical and responsible standards across global supply chains and production practices, companies alone cannot, for example, ensure the world will meet the targets set in the Paris Agreement or alter the geopolitical factors that enable forced labor.

Clearly we need new policies. The caveat is that new policies need to work. The volume of policies enacted, and the scope of its ambition, is not, in itself, a measure of progress.

The truth is, we already see unintended consequences of well-meaning (if not necessarily well-crafted) proposals. Legislation meant to protect garment workers in California and address longstanding issues with labor compliance in the Los Angeles Fashion District has, in the single year it has been in effect, led to an exodus of apparel manufacturing jobs. Workers who thought they were going to be better compensated now find themselves unemployed.

In another case, Maine has been forced to grant extensions to more than 1,900 companies related to reporting the concentration of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a class of chemicals used to provide water and stain resistance. State regulators were not prepared nor resourced for this charge. Thus, they were unable to produce final implementing regulations by the beginning of 2023. Now, concerned consumers and environmental advocates are angry about the delay; meanwhile, companies are deeply frustrated that they have spent significant resources trying to prepare for reporting instead of focusing on adopting PFAS alternatives. The industry's most inventive leaders—ready and eager to make changes—still do not know what is going to be expected of them and whether or not those expectations will be possible to meet. Meanwhile, Maine is not any better informed than it was about PFAS pollution in the state.

When poorly designed, policies are set up to fail. Worse, they divert resources away from successful or promising initiatives and instead create barriers to real progress on environmental and social issues affecting the industry.

Fingers are pointed and blame is assigned. Every party becomes more defensive and less willing to collaborate. Companies feel regulators make no attempt to understand how they actually work. Activists conclude they need to push harder and for an ever-increasing number of requirements. Consumers are left



Chelsea Murtha

in the dark, struggling to understand whether products are safe, sustainable or responsibly made. Actual progress remains elusive while frightening news about the scope and frequency of global crises intensifies.

Policymaking isn't easy. Instead, it is easy to get bogged down in the details of a proposal and forget to step back and ask, "Will this work?" We need effective policymaking, and the stakes are too high to allow for poorly designed policies to inadvertently push the industry backward.

To support the creation of smart, effective policies, the American Apparel and Footwear Association, along with the Accessories Council, the Council of Fashion Designers of America and the Responsible Business Coalition have developed the **THREADS** Sustainability and Social Responsibility Protocol, which identifies core tenets that will enable policymakers to develop practical, workable and effective regulatory proposals. The protocol's core tenets call for policy that is:

- Transparently Developed and Enforced
- Harmonized Across Jurisdictions and Industries
- Realistic in Terms of Timelines
- Enforceable
- Adjustable
- Designed for Success
- Science-Based

The protocol has been developed on behalf of thousands of brands and organizations. It is our goal that every stakeholder will recognize that policy crafted with these principles in mind has the highest likelihood of meaningfully and successfully addressing concerns regarding worker rights, environmental sustainability, chemical management and human-rights matters in global supply chains.

Quilting a mismatched patchwork of regulations will not stitch together the progress we need to see. As we evaluate future policy proposals, we will use these principles as a framework to assess their merits. And we look forward to working with policymakers to create effective policies that are consistent with the THREADS protocol.

As AAFA's Director of Sustainability, Chelsea Murtha serves as the association's advocate and spokesperson on matters of sustainability and product safety. She engages with Congress, the Executive Branch, independent agencies, as well as state and local legislatures and agencies and foreign governments on sustainability, product-safety and chemical-management issues important to the industry. Murtha is also the staff liaison to AAFA's Environmental Committee and Product Safety Council. Follow on LinkedIn. Find more about this project and others at www.aafaglobal.org and at #THREADSProtocol, #SmartSustainability on social media.



SHRINE OF HOLLYWOOD

At Shrine of Hollywood, Everbody Is a Rock Star

By Christian Chensvold Associate Editor

Perhaps nowhere more than in the rock star do life and art blend so harmoniously—with amps turned up to 10, of course. Liberated from a normal vocation with standards of grooming (“please do not use more than one can of hairspray per day”) and hygiene (“please do not come to work smelling like beer”), rock stars can dress however they want, and if anyone chuckles and asks if they’re in a band, they can honestly respond, “As a matter of fact I am,” followed by whatever hand gestures feel right in the moment.

It’s a lifestyle many of us dream of—and some actually live—and not only musicians. That’s why **Shrine of Hollywood** says it caters not only to rock stars but also “glamour icons and fashionistas of the 21st century.” And it’s been doing so since the 20th century—1994 to be precise—proving that in fashion, if you tap the right niche, you might just outlive the Rolling Stones.

There’s a hidden rock star in all of us, including Peter Graham Wright, who got a master’s in business at USC before going off to sell his own clothing on Venice Beach in 1989. He was self-taught in the craft of clothes making, first sewing and then manufacturing, and at night would prowling all the legendary rock ‘n’ roll clubs such as **The Roxy** and the **Whisky a Go Go**.

Along with partner Rhonda Bordenave, they opened a retail shop on Melrose in ‘94, which they operated until 2014. The internet changed everything for everyone, and when you cater to a niche as specific as Shrine of Hollywood, customers start appearing from every spot on a world tour. “We were so busy online,” said Wright, “I thought we were kind of wasting our time and could use it in more valuable ways with design and wholesale.”

Currently the duo operates a downtown L.A. showroom by appointment and sells online at *shrinestore.com*. Gothic may be the first word that comes to mind after spying models in black lipstick and the kind of long coats worn by Adam Ant in his “dandy highwayman” mode, but Wright considers the Goth vibe a subset of rock ‘n’ roll style. “When people ask what kind of clothes we make, I always say, ‘It’s Hollywood rock ‘n’ roll style that gets more glam or dark based on cycles.’”

The description is accurate, for only in L.A. do brocade frock coats, fingerless gloves, and sunshine and palm trees make perfect sense together. The Hollywood rock-star look, whatever the niche, is also impervious to extinction, and there aren’t many fashion tribes that can make that claim. “It’s been in fashion for the last 30 years so, who knows, why not the next 30?”

Anyone can put together a basic rocker look—all you need is a motorcycle jacket, jeans, T-shirt and **Converse** sneakers. But that’s more of a fan look. To make people ask if you’re

the lead singer in a band, you need ostentatious pieces with 18th-century touches like epaulets and buttons. And the right fabric is crucial: Wright spends much of his time sourcing damask, tapestry, brocade and velvet fabrics to make into jackets and pants. “My stuff isn’t all black, and the colors show up really well on stage.”

The ultimate stage, of course, is life itself, where each one of us gets to be the star. Style tribes from Goth to mod don’t seem to hold the same sway over young people these days, so while the internet may have brought Shrine of Hollywood a global customer base, it also may have homogenized tastes. Could the rock-star look face extinction after all?

“With the internet, people don’t really need to dress up and go out to a club to see a band. Up until the early 2000s there was a club every night of the week in L.A., but now maybe there are just a couple on the weekend. People don’t gather in person if they can gather on **Facebook**, but if you’re something like a mod, you have to dress in that fashion and have a get-together with your other mod compatriots in order to be mod,” said Wright.

It’s a kind of conundrum—in order to be part of a style tribe, you need a tribe. But Shrine of Hollywood is a bit different, catering to those staunch individual “glam icons” and “fashionistas” who prefer to be the only one working their look.

In the end, that’s how all fashion trends begin. ●

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The Garden Room boutique



Karl Marshall, fashion-show
producer

Dallas Apparel & Accessories Hosts Largest Market in Its History

By Betsy Zanjani *Contributing Writer*

They say everything is bigger in Texas, and that was certainly the case at the **Dallas Apparel & Accessories Market**, which ran Jan. 10–13. The 5 million-square-foot **World Trade Center** broke all records with the expansion of exhibitors and the addition of **The Goods by Brand Assembly**.

EVP of Retail Development and Leasing Eva Walsh said, “We have become the largest marketplace in the country by offering more brands to more buyers. This show was the largest in our history, and we welcomed thousands of boutiques as well as majors and multilocation retailers. We continue to see growth in first-time attendees and buyers from across the Southeast, upper Midwest and West.”

The energy was felt immediately as buyers worked the show from top to bottom. Both new and established multi-line showrooms were busy. The **L&A Showroom** was packed with buyers reviewing lines from six brands, from **Vintage Havana** sneakers to L.A.-based **Hidden Denim**, where hot styles were the blazer at \$30 and the jumpsuits priced at \$42. Another L.A. brand, **Recycle Karma**, saw strong response to its vintage brand of licensed tees. Showroom owner Marty Leon is continuing the business his father, Eddie, started 50 years ago. “My father taught me well,” said Leon. “I took what my father started and ran with it. My manufacturers listen to my feedback, and I work with them on design direction, knowing what my stores are looking for.”

Glitz and glitter was a central theme that resonated throughout the market, and glam with a capital G was the DNA at **Queen of Sparkle** in the **Reeves & Co.** showroom. Designer Jaime Glas takes it to another level: whimsical and full of humor. Donald Reeves, showroom owner, said, “The brand has garnered over \$10 million in sales in less than two years in business, and we can see why. It’s so special.” Patty Hoffpauir, owner of **The Garden Room** boutique in Austin, Texas, recounted a recent experience with the line. “It’s amazing. I sold six sweatshirts while unpacking the box—before they even hit the floor. People are ready for fun, color and sparkle. My customers love this line.”

At **Brad Hughes & Associates**, a new brand launched less than a year ago, **Emily Shalant**, is taking glamour to another level with easy luxurious separates meant to be

mixed and matched. Whether worn with a ball skirt or jeans, these knit tops feature pearls, crystal cap sleeves or snap-off marabou shoulders and range from \$130 to \$350.

The many new and temporary showrooms drew buyers including Michelle Labrier of the **Scarlet Peacock Boutique** in Amarillo, Texas. “We haven’t been at this show for three years, but we love being able to shop gift and apparel in one place.”

Kim Ahlers and her daughter Maddie, of **Kajoma’s Boutique** in Nebraska, were working Fall ’23 and found great reinvented denims at **Tribal of Montreal**.

Many buyers were in search of newness. Kristi Pittman, owner of **A La Mode** in Sioux City, Iowa, said, “Each market I try to find a new line. At this show I discovered **Weisinger Designs**, and I’m able to customize their jewelry specifically for my clientele.”

Among the temporary showrooms, many were young-contemporary fashion brands from Los Angeles, where the trend of sequins, embellishment and crystals took on a Western slant. Joel Lee, sales manager for **Peach Love**, said, “We definitely considered Dallas in the design process as this is a very important show for us and is an indicator of what the other markets will be like.” His rhinestone cowgirls speak to how Western is back for the trendy consumer regardless of what part of the country she’s in.

Brand Assembly showcased **Daniel X. Diamond** in its curated space. Daniel Musto and partner Lani come from a background in celebrity styling, and their rhinestone-fringed jackets can be seen on A-listers from Diplo to Gwen Stefani. The collection has now expanded to hats and boots, all with Musto’s mantra of “Bling It Out!” Jackets range from \$275 to \$475. Hillary France, founder and CEO of Brand Assembly, launched this pop-up showroom in Dallas to build awareness in this market. “There are many shades in the Western spectrum,” she explained. “We offer the contemporary side for our range of buyers.”

The show ended with cocktails and a fashion show in the atrium with the theme “Enter the Multiverse.” Produced by Karl Marshall, it presented all the pizzazz that was Dallas market. Models of all colors, sizes and ages were chosen by Marshall, who said he wanted to share the love. “I was thinking of the audience and wanted to inspire,” he said. And it did. ●

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Dallas Market Center

www.dallasmarketcenter.com

The Dallas Apparel & Accessories Market is held five times each year at the Dallas Market Center. Located in one of the country's fastest-growing regions, the Dallas Market Center brings together thousands of manufacturers and key retailers in an elevated trade-show environment. Featuring 500 permanent showrooms and over 1,000 temporary booths, including expanded contemporary lines and resources, the Dallas Market Center is where inspiration starts. Upcoming events include the Apparel & Accessories Market on March 21–24.

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www.iloestudios.com

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<p>RESEARCH MANAGER DESIGN ASSISTANT</p> <p>Must have at least 1-3 yrs exp. in a design role, excellent verbal & written communication skills, and ability to work independently. Must be detail oriented, organized, and able to manage multiple projects simultaneously. Must have excellent verbal & written communication skills. Must be able to work independently and manage multiple projects simultaneously. Must have excellent verbal & written communication skills. Must be able to work independently and manage multiple projects simultaneously.</p>	<p>PRODUCTION MANAGER</p> <p>Must have at least 5 yrs exp. in a production role, excellent verbal & written communication skills, and ability to work independently. Must be detail oriented, organized, and able to manage multiple projects simultaneously. Must have excellent verbal & written communication skills. Must be able to work independently and manage multiple projects simultaneously.</p>	<p>DESIGN ASSISTANT</p> <p>Must have at least 1-3 yrs exp. in a design role, excellent verbal & written communication skills, and ability to work independently. Must be detail oriented, organized, and able to manage multiple projects simultaneously. Must have excellent verbal & written communication skills. Must be able to work independently and manage multiple projects simultaneously.</p>

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