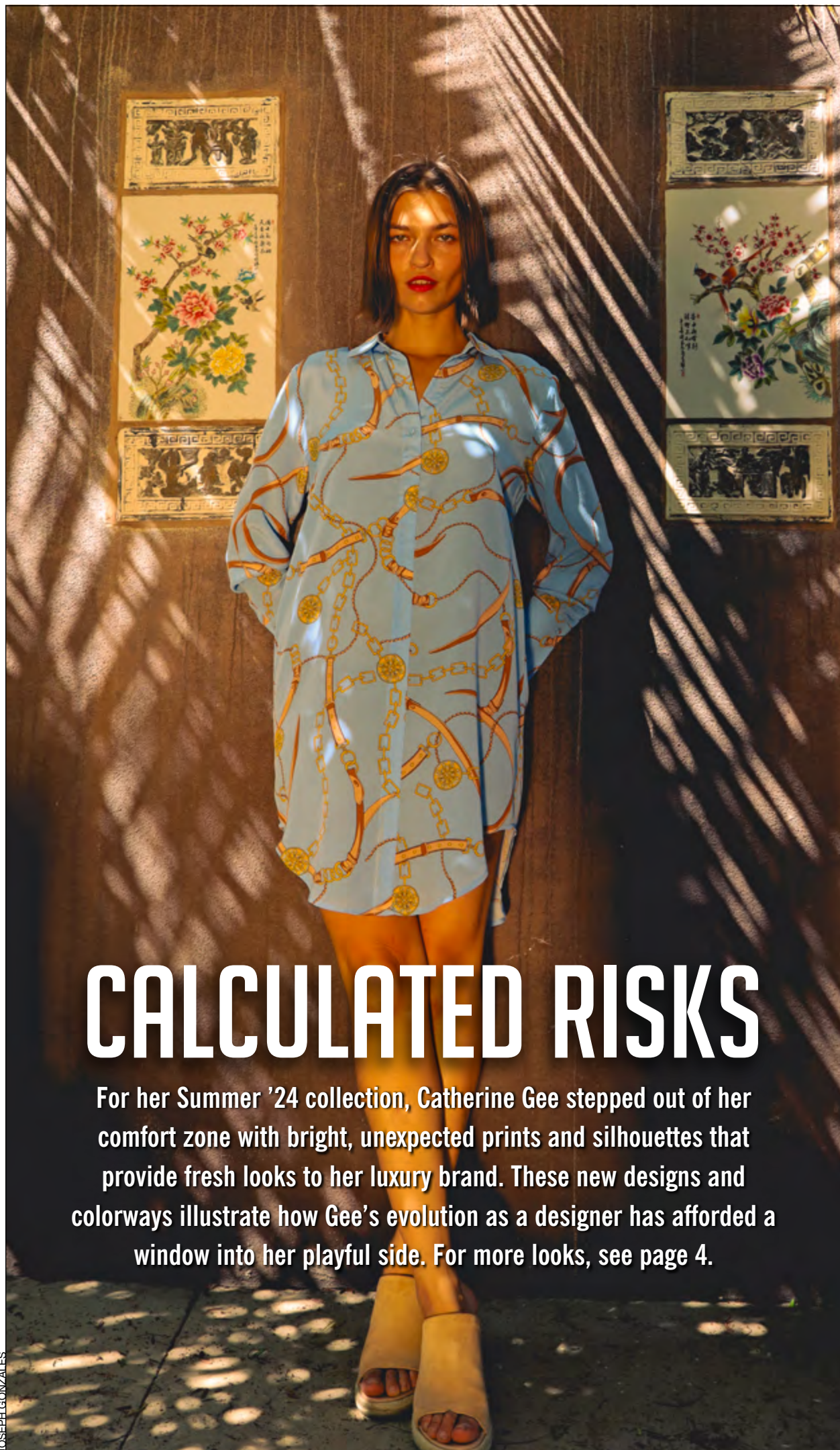


# CALIFORNIA Apparel News

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 78 YEARS

\$3.99 VOLUME 79, NUMBER 16 FEBRUARY 9, 2024



## CALCULATED RISKS

For her Summer '24 collection, Catherine Gee stepped out of her comfort zone with bright, unexpected prints and silhouettes that provide fresh looks to her luxury brand. These new designs and colorways illustrate how Gee's evolution as a designer has afforded a window into her playful side. For more looks, see page 4.

JOSEPH GONZALES

### TEXTILE TRENDS

## Hi-Tech Meets Perennial Classics Somewhere in Middle Earth

By Christian Chensvold *Associate Editor*

In ancient times, those who could see the future were personified as female diviners called "fates" who ceaselessly wove the great tapestry of reality as it slowly came into being, able to see the past, present and future, and all in "real time," as we say today. How fitting that they saw and took dictation on a textile, and yet how sad that the Norns of yesteryear have been replaced by robots and computers.

Then again, surely they saw this coming.

Spring has yet to be sprung, but already fashion folks are anticipating the verdant colors of the future, and color mappers are increasingly using artificial intelligence to help predict them. The following are two key color groupings as well as the kinds of patterns that fall within them. As always, the tug of war between constant change and perennial classics is what makes fashion what it is.

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### INDUSTRY FOCUS: FINANCE

## Fashion Seeks Financial Relief From the Fed in 2024

By Dorothy Crouch *Contributing Writer*

Fashion and apparel business owners hope that 2024 will be the year that yields positive momentum and economic recovery following years of inflationary pressures. Since 2022, business leaders in the U.S. have yearned for good news from the Federal Reserve, as the central bank charted a course to avoid a recession by increasing its rates, which led to a 22-year high in 2023 and now stand at 5.25–5.5 percent.

As fashion businesses and consumers wait to see how the United States' central bank navigates 2024, *California Apparel News* asked industry leaders: *When thinking about the potential for the Federal Reserve to cut rates in 2024, thereby moving inflation closer to the agency's 2 percent goal, what does this mean for the fashion industry?*

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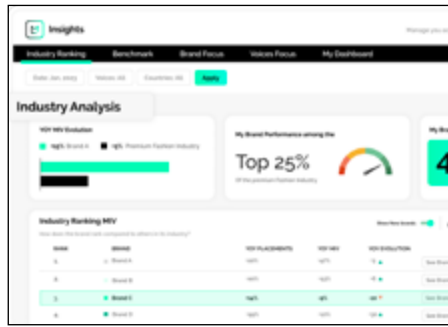
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# Lectra to Acquire Capital Interest in Launchmetrics

Lectra has announced it will acquire the majority of the capital and voting rights of Launchmetrics, a 9-year-old developer of an innovative cloud-based SaaS platform dedicated to brand performance for marketing and communications professionals in the fashion, lifestyle and beauty markets.

“Launchmetrics’ Brand Performance Cloud enables companies of all sizes to increase their brand performance across fashion, lifestyle and beauty industries through its innovative software, data and analytics,” Lectra told the *California Apparel News*. “Their unique all-in-one solution provides marketing teams a comprehensive toolset to manage the entire brand value chain in order to help professionals connect strategy with execution at any stage of their company’s growth journey.”

For 2023, Launchmetrics’s revenues are expected to be \$45 million, with an adjusted



According to Lectra chairman and CEO Daniel Harari, the acquisition of Launchmetrics naturally fits with Lectra’s approach to expanding its presence in the fashion market by covering additional strategic links of its customers’ value chain.

EBITDA of around \$5 million generated from some 1,700 customers in 20 countries, including prestigious fashion brands.

“Launchmetrics wanted to join forces with

the Lectra Group in order to accelerate the development of its offering on a global scale alongside a fashion-technology leader,” said Michael Jaïs, founder and CEO of Launchmetrics. “The alliance will enable us to enrich our respective offers with even more artificial intelligence and complementary data to provide our customers with a unique value proposition.”

“This acquisition naturally fits with Lectra’s approach to expanding its presence in the fashion market by covering additional strategic links of its customers’ value chain,” said Daniel Harari, chairman and CEO of Lectra. “Combining our existing solutions establishes the group as the only technological actor to support its customers from product development to production, then from collection management to marketing, e-commerce and traceability.”

—Christian Chensvold

## TRADE SHOWS

# SPESA Announces Advancements Conference With CFA

The **Sewn Products Equipment and Suppliers of the Americas** is headed out west, announcing its first-ever **Advancements in Manufacturing Technologies Conference** to be held in Los Angeles at the **California Market Center**. In partnership with the **California Fashion Association**, the event will take place April 11 and feature a full day of educational sessions and productive dialogue about how manufacturing technologies can drive the industry forward with a focus on efforts being made specifically in California.

The SPESA conference is known for providing a unique platform for speakers and attendees to engage in an open dialogue and learn about new ideas, solutions and technologies available for the sewn-products industry. The 2024 conference will aim to tackle efforts being made in the space of sustainability while also focusing on the always-popular themes of automation and on-demand manufacturing.

Recognizing its vast reach and understanding of the industry in California, SPESA has tapped CFA industry veteran Ilse Metchek to



Recognizing its vast reach and understanding of the industry in California, SPESA has tapped CFA industry veteran Ilse Metchek to support the conference by bringing together some of the city’s top industry leaders for the event.

support the conference by bringing together some of the city’s top industry leaders for the event. Established nearly 30 years ago, CFA represents manufacturers, suppliers, educational institutions, allied associations and all apparel-related businesses throughout California.

“One thing I’ve learned over the years working in the fashion industry,” said Metchek, “is that success and growth are only possible when we identify ways to work together. I’m confident that this event will serve as a launching pad for future collaboration between our two groups.”

“The value of the Advancements Conference isn’t just about the quality of content and information sharing that is generated during the event,” said SPESA President Michael McDonald. “There’s also significant value in the locations where these events are held. It’s a priority of SPESA’s to host events in markets where innovation and positive change are not only being discussed but are also actually being implemented. Los Angeles fits this strategic bill for us.”—C.C.

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# Inside the Industry

REPREVE, creator of the world’s leading recycled high-performance fiber, has just unveiled ReComfort, a filament yarn crafted to act and feel like traditional cotton, acrylic and rayon but made with more-sustainable materials. The new combination has key features including being soft to the touch and pill resistant. Optimized for REPREVE polyester, REPREVE nylon, standard polyester and standard nylon, this engineered thread requires less drying time and less processing time, both of which save energy. Launched in 2007, REPREVE has so far transformed billions of recycled plastic bottles into sustainable polyester, using cutting-edge textile technology to deliver better comfort, durability and functionality and becoming trusted by brands worldwide to help power sustainable commitments with the only traceable and certifiable eco-performance polyester.

**Complete Image Manufacturing**, located in the historic Eastern Market and serving the Detroit metropolitan area, has become the 70th TUKAcenter. CIM offers brands and fashion designers product development and manufacturing capabilities, including virtual sampling, training and demand manufacturing. Launched this month, CIM TUKAcenter Detroit is owned and operated by Milton Putman and Terra Carter, who will be highlighted in an upcoming documentary. “In the post-pandemic world, the need for a strong supply chain is even more transparent,” said Carter regarding the motivation for launching CIM TUKAcenter Detroit. “Sourcing state-of-the-art equipment and technology helps us to fuel a healthier supply chain,” added Carter, who has a supply-chain background and has spent over 20 years helping the people of Michigan through various outreach programs.

Is the supply chain set to unravel again or stay tightly and efficiently linked? The situation will be analyzed in detail at a panel discussion Feb. 28 at the California Market Center during the LA Textile show. Sponsored by the California Fashion Association and entitled “The Supply Chain Is Starting to Unravel Again,” the seminar will address container shortages, vessel delays, longer transit times and higher interest rates leading to shortages of capital, with a focus on smart preparation strategies. The panel will include Robert Krieger, president of Krieger Worldwide; Heather Litman, partner in Gruenfeld Desiderio; and Michael Earnart, vice president of First Citizens Bank. Ilse Metchek, president of CFA, will moderate.

**TradeBeyond** and its sister company **Pivot88** will showcase groundbreaking supply-chain solutions at the 2024 Product Safety & Compliance Seminar, being held Feb. 14–15 at The Westin Long Beach, Calif. The partners will demonstrate how they are reshaping retail supply chains with solutions designed to ensure sustainability and simplify compliance with global due-diligence laws, including UFLPA. Highlighted will be Pivot88’s AI-powered tools for supply-chain mapping, chain of custody and risk assessment. Representatives will also showcase how TradeBeyond and Pivot88 have aided top retailers including Under Armour and Hugo Boss in creating comprehensive supply-chain visibility and substantial cost efficiencies. TradeBeyond and Pivot88 encourage attendees to schedule a meeting time to better experience these advanced solutions.

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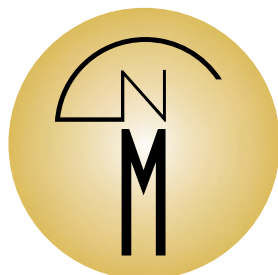
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JOSEPH GONZALES

## In Her Latest Collection, Catherine Gee Has Fun With Summer '24 Designs While Maintaining Core Style

Designs from Catherine Gee's eponymous brand have always signaled a blend of California coastal cool with elevated design sensibilities and a dedication to luxurious fabrications and manufacturing. The Santa Barbara, Calif., designer's Summer 2024 collection retains the luxury for which Gee has become known, but the designer stepped away from her comfort zone with bright, unexpected prints—such as ladybugs and butterflies—and silhouettes, such as the loose, long-sleeve Aussie Long Dress maxi that provides fresh looks for her brand.

"It feels good. It's important in design, life and work to take risks—calculated risks. I am not coming out with 30 new silhouettes, but they are a little more thoughtful," explained Gee.

These new prints and colorways illustrate how Gee's evolution as a designer has afforded a look at her playful side. The colors and patterns Gee uses for prints and color inspiration are often generated from unique sources, such as a picture of her own Peruvian quartz necklace that has been magnified to show the stone's formerly microscopic features. Other unique prints include a horse-halter image applied to Gee's core shirting design, the Daria, now in a shirtdress, and a sherbet swirl that appears on a shortened kimono, button-up shirt and long-sleeve Aussie Short Dress with scarf detail.

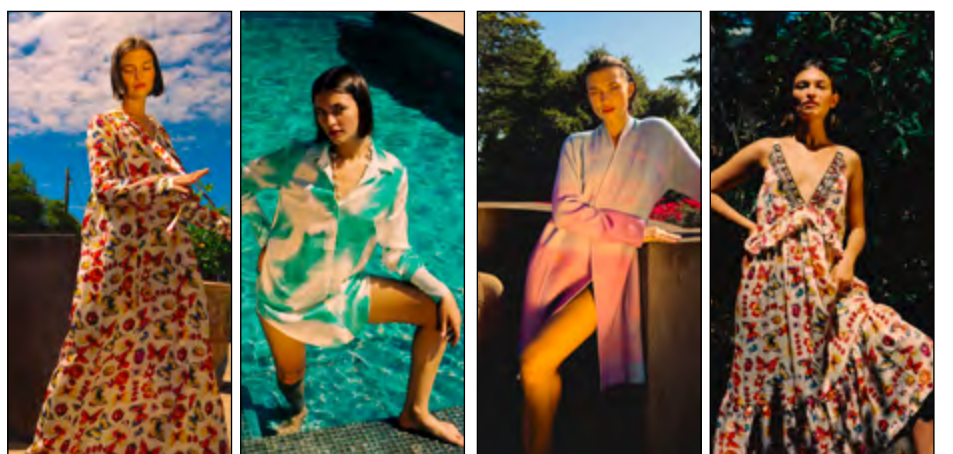
"I always like to have a motif that goes from collection to collection. The equestrians are art deco, and geometric prints like the one that morphed into the sherbet is very 1960s. The summer collection is a bit more retro, and I wanted that to come through on some of the dress silhouettes with a scarf," said Gee. "The blues from Spring and Summer really speak to each other but are vastly different. Blue is my favorite color, so there is that groundedness of what I wanted to do."

Within Gee's summer silhouettes there is also a nod to the whimsical with styles such as the Olivia Plunge Dress, a sleeveless, empire-waist silhouette with details in ruffle and lace. Gee also updated her cargo-pant design in a sky blue, pairing the designer's penchant for smart dressing with utility and fun.

Every **Catherine Gee** collection offers a glimpse at another facet of the designer's personality, allowing her clients to know more every season. These glimpses are part of who she is and also her design evolution.

"As a private person, outside of my brand, it is inevitable that my personality comes through season after season," explained Gee. "There is a feminine side and masculine side to all I create. My prints and colors illustrate the dualities of light and dark, stillness and movement. Every now and then, I insert a slightly twisted sense of humor!"

—Dorothy Crouch



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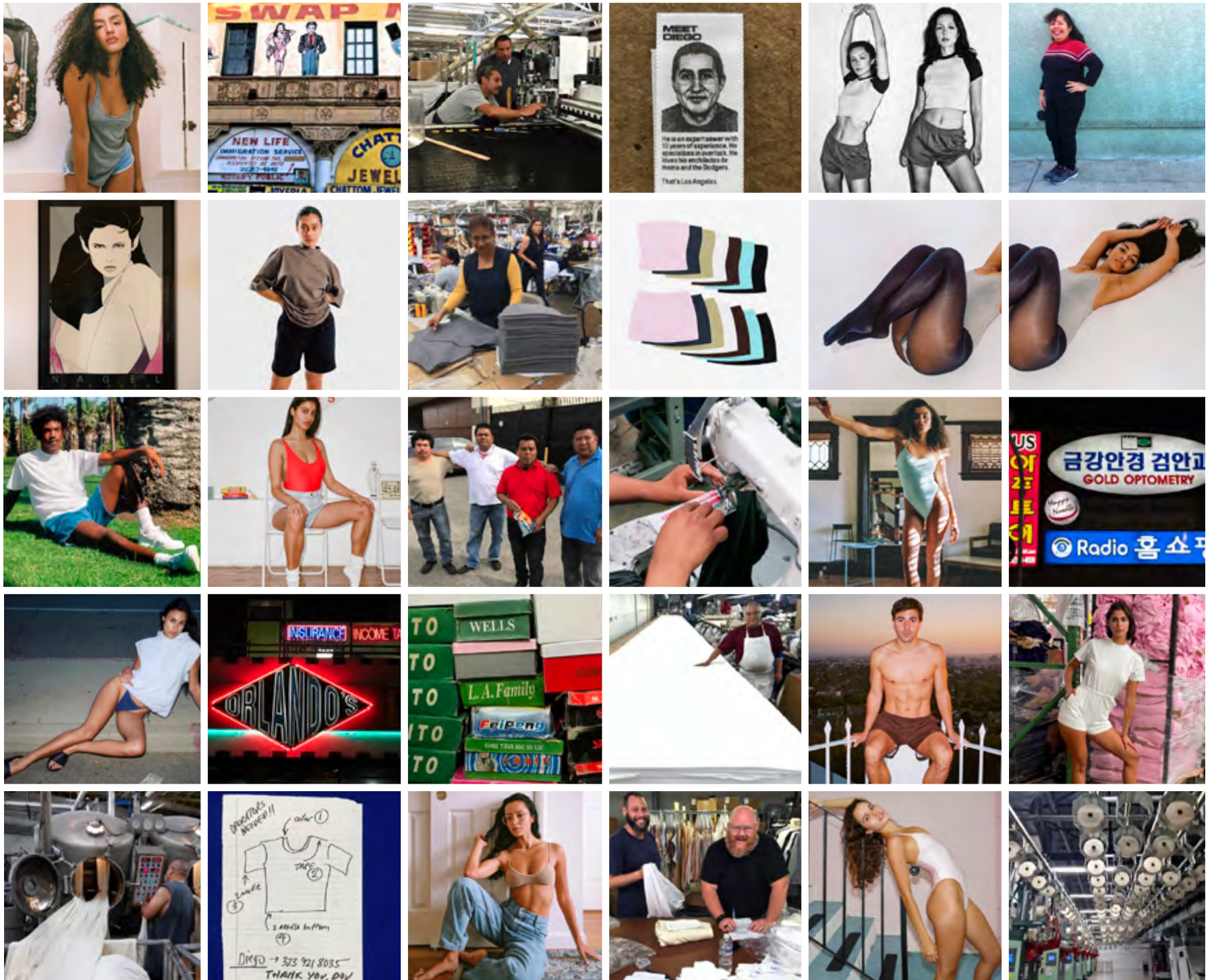
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**LOS ANGELES APPAREL**

*When thinking about the potential for the Federal Reserve to cut rates in 2024, thereby moving inflation closer to the agency's 2 percent goal, what does this mean for the fashion industry?*

**Finance** *Continued from page 1*

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



Many fashion retailers and manufacturers experienced a challenging year in 2023 as they continued to work through excess inventory levels. Additionally, several fashion companies had to deal with lower demand as consumers shifted

spending toward services and travel.

The consumer price index has fallen from a 9.1 percent pandemic-era peak in June 2022 to a much lower 3.4 percent level in December 2023. Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve is still trying to manage a delicate balancing act, working to engineer a soft landing for the economy while also achieving its 2.0 percent inflation goal. Many economists who were hoping for several rate cuts beginning Q1 now feel that reductions won't begin until late Q2.

Debt financing has become more expensive the last three years, a cumulative increase of over 5.0 percent. Also, many companies have carried higher loan amounts to finance excess inventories. Inventory management has always been a key in this industry and even more so lately. Supplier diversification is also important as there have been global disruptions and geopolitical unrest for the last few years.

Overall, the fashion industry has been very resilient in the face of constant change. While lower interest rates will be welcomed from the expense side, business owners must manage their companies with the expectation that retailers will continue to order conservatively until consumer demand improves. Manufacturers and retailers should be prepared when demand strengthens.

**Mark Bienstock**  
**Managing Director**  
**Express Trade Capital**



The data that have been coming out recently regarding both inflation and unemployment is most likely pointing to a reduction in interest rates during 2024. However, any potential reduction most likely will not happen right away. Therefore,

apparel companies should continue to be very lean on expenses and nimble when it comes to inventory levels and turnaround times. With the additional concerns developing for merchandise flowing through the East Coast ports, it is critical that importers plan for additional expenses and delays if they are bringing merchandise to the region.

It is also quite possible that the merchandise redirected to the West Coast ports will cause delays and additional expenses for many other importers as well. All of these items need to be configured into updated cash-flow projections to develop a conservative interest expense forecast for 2024.

**Sydnee Breuer**  
**Executive Vice President and Western**  
**Region Manager**  
**Rosenthal & Rosenthal**



Should the Fed cut interest rates in 2024 that would be a modicum of good news for the fashion industry. The increases in interest rates in less than 24 months surged borrowing costs across the board. These increases were

felt from commercial debt for businesses, including fashion businesses, to consumer debt such as mortgages, credit cards, etc. Therefore, any decrease in rates would translate to reduced borrowing costs and reduced interest expense.

The consumer landscape, however, is still rife with uncertainty. Despite inflation moderating, many consumers are still cash strapped with higher living costs such as gas, grocery bills, and mortgage or rent payments. Add to that the recent holiday season where credit-card balances increased in excess of an estimated \$55 billion in December over a year ago and consumers have even less discretionary spending. And, of course, increased sales for the fashion industry generally relies—and depends upon—good consumer discretionary spending.

With other input costs increasing, including transportation as a result of global unrest in general and the Red Sea–Suez Canal turmoil, in particular, as well as increased labor costs with minimum wages increasing, it's likely that any benefits businesses might see from a decrease in interest rates may be partially offset by these external factors and related cost increases.

The uncertainty surrounding consumer spending in 2024 along with increasing input costs makes it more important than ever to control operating expenses and have conservative inventory levels to be able to maintain or hopefully improve profitability.

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



There are several ways this type of significant decrease in inflation could impact the fashion industry. There is a great deal of cause and effect between the manufacturers and consumers that could produce favorable outcomes for everyone, such as

increased product availability and lower costs. A drop in rates and inflation will benefit everyone who spends money—whether that be on apparel or groceries and other goods and services.

The entire supply chain would benefit from seeing a decrease in material, production and financing costs. If those rates decrease and remain stable, fashion companies may be more inclined to invest in new product lines, marketing campaigns and store openings. With a healthier, more stable bottom line, retail companies will likely begin lowering prices for consumers, inspiring greater pur-

chasing power and consumer confidence.

With the cost of necessities also falling with inflation rates, consumers would have more disposable income to spend on fashion. This could boost demand for apparel, footwear and accessories, leading to increased traffic in physical stores and on e-commerce platforms.

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



Many economists projected a recession to hit in 2023 given the Fed's battle against inflation. Fortunately, the economy performed better than expected, growing at 3.1 percent for the year and the growth of inflation receding.

I recently attended a presentation by Dr. Jerry Nickelsburg, director of the UCLA Anderson Forecast. He is also generally optimistic about continued economic growth in 2024, stating he expects the Fed to keep interest rates unchanged in 2024, with a possibility of cuts toward the end of the year. This is all good news for the fashion industry.

Our advice to fashion companies is to keep an eye on unemployment figures and consumer spending. Negative changes to these indicators could impact the economy and therefore reduce discretionary income. More important than monitoring economic trends is knowing and anticipating the preferences of your customers. As such, we've seen successful companies increase their reliance on technology to monitor their KPIs in real time.

**Eric Fisch**  
**Head of Retail and Apparel,**  
**U.S. Commercial Banking**  
**HSBC Bank USA N.A.**



The year 2023 can be described in the apparel sector as the year of the great inventory reduction. Too much product was manufactured in 2022, forcing production cuts. The need for reducing stock is a perennial issue, exacerbated last year with

the steep rise in interest rates, making companies more sensitive to the monthly financing cost of all those full boxes on warehouse shelves. The industry is entering 2024 leaner and more disciplined on product with retailers taking a conservative stance on ordering for the second half of the year as well.

With expected rate reductions and a potential economic soft landing, this may result in wholesalers and retailers taking more risk on buying as the year progresses. This may not be a bad thing. An experienced fashion-industry chief executive once told me that, at a year-end budget meeting, his finance team proudly relayed how little excess inventory they had left to sell to off-price channels. The team was surprised to hear his negative response. In this executive's view, the tight inventory position meant the designers weren't taking enough risks creatively

and the sales teams weren't taking enough risks on stock levels and therefore may have missed sales. Obviously, there is a delicate balance so you don't end up with masses of discounted goods, but the notion that the industry this year may be collectively too conservative is worth considering. Reduced rates may be one piece of the puzzle to spur some healthy risk and creativity.

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



At Merchant, we believe there is much more optimism in the market for 2024 than there was for 2023. Interest rates are believed to be cut, which will give much-needed relief to business owners who have been paying the highest interest rates

in many years. In addition, it seems that the bloated inventory positions of both manufacturers and retailers from 2022 and 2023 are finally leveling off to a much more manageable position.

We don't believe apparel manufacturers are totally out of the woods. They must continue to focus on cutting unneeded overhead and properly managing their inventory so they aren't stuck with closing out merchandise that cannot be sold for a loss.

We have additional concerns about the troubles overseas suppliers have had as well. The apparel manufacturer must be sure to have a solid and reliable supplier who can deliver products on time and, most importantly, is open to working together if there is a retail pushback or hiccup. The retailer climate continues to be a watch, with some sectors and retailers continuing to struggle to stay afloat. With this uncertainty, credit protection for receivables has become paramount for apparel manufacturers.

There is still clearly a lot of uncertainty, and now is not a time to take risks. We believe we should have more clarity in the market by mid-2024, but that can change. The conflicts worldwide and the upcoming presidential election certainly will play a role in how the worldwide economy and apparel industry perform.

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

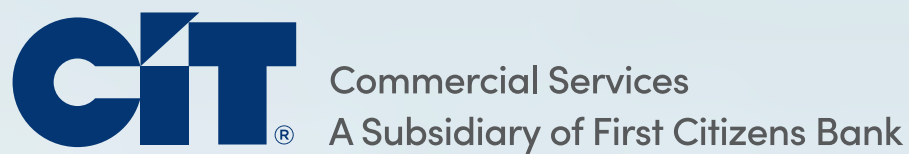


The Federal Reserve's dual mandate is to ensure maximum employment and price stability.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate remained at a low 3.7 percent, and the annual change in prices for all goods and services rose by 3.4 percent in December 2023. The Fed's tightening policies seem to have had the desirable effect of taming inflation without plunging the U.S. into a recession

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## Top Technology Solutions to Leverage to Keep Your Retail Business Competitive

By Sharon Gregory, CPA, Moss Adams  
Michael Parker, Consulting Partner, Moss Adams

In the fast-paced world of retail, technology can be a transformative force, reshaping the way businesses operate and consumers shop. Learn more about the technology your retail organization can leverage to help enhance visibility into your business, decrease risks of increasing cybersecurity incidents, accelerate productivity with artificial intelligence (AI), and more.

### Data Analytics

Being successful in the retail industry requires more than dynamic products and excellent customer service. Companies should leverage the vast amounts of data generated across the business and through your customer interactions to make better decisions around managing the business and engaging with customers.

### Customer Insights and Personalization

An advantage of data analytics in retail is deep insights into customer behavior. Retailers can analyze customer preferences, buying patterns, and feedback to create personalized shopping experiences.

Through data-driven personalization, retailers can court customer loyalty with:

- Targeted promotions
- Product recommendations
- Marketing campaigns

### Demand Forecasting and Inventory Management

Data analytics can help with inventory management and demand forecasting. By analyzing historical sales data, seasonal trends, and external factors such as supply-chain information, retailers can make sure they have the right amount of the right products at all times.

### Cybersecurity

Robust cybersecurity programs are essential for the digital technologies and online platforms used in retail. Everything in your business, including customer data and financial information, is a target for cybercriminals. The threat is increasing, and the risks of customer and financial impact is great.

#### Threat Landscape

Strong security protocols and frameworks are critical to preserving customer trust, securing financial transactions, and ensuring the overall resilience of retail operations.

#### Point-of-Sale Attacks

Cybercriminals often target POS systems to capture payment-card information during transactions. Weaknesses in these systems, whether in-store or online, can lead to significant data breaches.

#### E-commerce Vulnerabilities

With the rise of online shopping, e-commerce platforms have become lucrative targets. Retailers must secure their websites against numerous types of threats that can compromise customer data.

#### Ransomware Threats

Ransomware attacks can disrupt retail operations by encrypting critical systems and demanding payment for their release. This can result in financial losses, operational downtime, and damage to the brand's reputation.

#### Cybersecurity Strategies for Retail

Mitigate risks and maintain compliance with security, training, and other preventative measures.

#### Secure Payment Systems

Implement secure and compliant POS systems with end-to-end encryption to protect customer payment data. Regularly update and monitor these systems for vulnerabilities.

#### E-commerce Security

Utilize security solutions and protocols such as secure sockets layer (SSL) certificates for encrypted data transmission on your website to provide a secure way for customers to order online. Regularly conduct security audits and penetration testing to identify and address vulnerabilities in your e-commerce platform.

#### Regulatory Compliance

Know and adhere to industry regulations and compliance standards related to data protection and cybersecurity. This can protect your business from legal consequences and decrease the risk of a cyber incident that damages customer trust.

#### AI

Retail companies are constantly seeking innovative solutions to better engage with customers and meet their evolving demands. One transformative technology making waves in the sector is AI. With innovations such as generative AI, augmented reality, and machine learning for supply-chain optimization, AI can potentially enhance efficiency and tailor customer experiences.

#### Inventory and Supply-Chain Management

AI can potentially improve or provide better visibility into inventory management and supply-chain processes. Retailers can use predictive analytics to forecast demand, reducing the risk of overstock or stockouts. This can improve the efficiency of inventory turnover and potentially reduce costs associated with excess stock and lost sales. AI-driven algorithms also help in streamlining the supply chain by helping the business know what and when to order and managing costs and product availability.

#### Augmented Reality and Virtual Try-Ons

Customers use AR technology to virtually try on clothing and accessories or place furniture before making a purchase, potentially reducing returns.

Accurately mapping and adapting virtual items to the real-world environment can give customers a more realistic representation of products.

#### Dynamic Pricing Strategies

AI can help retailers implement dynamic pricing strategies based on market conditions, competitor pricing, and customer behavior. Algorithms can automatically adjust prices to increase sales and profits and remain competitive. Technology for the retail industry can foster innovation and efficiency, meaning retailers must adapt to stay relevant.

*Sharon Gregory leads the Retail Practice for Moss Adams and has practiced public accounting since 2001. She has experience directing all phases of audits, including control testing, fieldwork, report preparation and consulting for a variety of clients. Gregory works primarily with retail and e-commerce companies focused on apparel, consumer products, and hospitality.*

*Michael Parker has worked in the technology consulting industry for more than 30 years. He leads the Enterprise Systems Consulting Group at Moss Adams, where he provides consulting services related to enterprise resource planning, human capital management, client relationship management, and enterprise software to clients on a global and national basis.*

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*When thinking about the potential for the Federal Reserve to cut rates in 2024, thereby moving inflation closer to the agency's 2 percent goal, what does this mean for the fashion industry?*

### Finance *Continued from page 6*

last year, as many economists had projected.

The Fed is now signaling interest-rate cuts in 2024 and beyond to stimulate economic activity while aligning inflation with its 2.0 percent target. Lower interest rates may make borrowing more affordable, encouraging consumers to increase spending on discretionary goods like fashion apparel, while businesses increase production to meet demand. If the Fed's actions contribute to overall economic growth and confidence, it could positively influence consumer sentiment, further supporting the fashion industry.

Despite the Fed's uplifting decision to start lowering interest rates in 2024, the fashion industry is facing headwinds with uncertainty about inflation remaining elevated, geopolitical conflicts disrupting the supply chain and ever-changing consumer demands. To tackle these headwinds, apparel companies should focus on building resilience through cost management, inventory management and cultivating supply-chain partnerships vested in each other's success.

#### Abby Parsonnet Executive Managing Director, Head of Asset-Based Lending Webster Bank



Low interest rates clearly benefit the fashion industry from a few different perspectives. First and foremost, lower interest rates coupled with lower inflation—or lower than what we've recently experienced—will free up income to increase spending by the consumer, the primary driver for the fashion industry. In addition, the industry is capital intensive from the perspective of working capital, so lower interest rates will flow straight to the bottom line for companies who finance their inventory and receivables or put them in a position to better weather unanticipated increases in freight, duty or other costs. Fundamentally, the view that both interest rates and inflation are normalizing will likely bring stability to the economy, and that can only benefit the fashion industry and the consumer overall.

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



The likelihood and timing of cuts is dependent on incoming data, especially indicators of economic activity, the jobs report and the Consumer Price Index report. On a positive note, retail sales significantly outpaced 2022 results even when adjusted for inflation. However, 2023 Q4 gains, while better than expected, were down from Q3, suggesting some slowing of consumer spending at year-end.

If the Fed does reduce interest rates,

the impact should be positive in all sectors including retail, i.e., "a rising tide floats all boats." The Fed could still hold the line on current rates if the CPI and labor results are not favorable. In addition, consumer credit-card debt is up significantly year over year, which could impact new consumer spending. Further, a recent poll of CFOs reflects a cautious outlook on sales growth and even a "lean" toward YOY negative results. The neutral to negative outlook from the CFO community and uncertainty as to the Fed's future actions shows the news for the fashion industry is steady as she goes.

#### Kenneth L. Wengrod Managing Member Stealth Management Group, LLC



Consumer confidence is a pivotal force in shaping consumption patterns, particularly within the dynamic and ever-evolving fashion industry. The anticipation of rate cuts or shifts in the economic landscape can sway consumer spending in the discretionary realm of fashion, where purchases are guided by personal preferences, style trends and the individual's perception of their financial well-being. The ramifications of these economic shifts extend beyond individual consumer decisions, permeating into the day-to-day operations of fashion retailers.

This impact becomes evident in critical areas such as inventory management, sales projections and overall business performance. The fashion industry has grappled with challenges arising from the allure of readily available capital as instances of excessively low interest rates have posed difficulties, potentially leading to over leveraging and a prioritization of financial engineering over sustainable business practices.

To navigate potential rate cuts successfully, the fashion industry is advised to pivot toward providing genuine value and authenticity to consumers. Building a brand anchored in authentic craftsmanship, ethical practices and a profound connection with consumer values becomes increasingly crucial. Focusing on these aspects enables fashion businesses to cultivate long-term customer loyalty and resilience against fluctuations in interest rates.

Rather than viewing the accessibility of cheap capital solely as an opportunity for financial gain, the industry should prioritize sustainable business practices that deliver meaningful value to consumers. ●

*Responses have been edited for clarity and space.*





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**Think Pink Smartlink**

The new shade of pink takes its inspiration from digital worlds. It's a subtle hue referred to as "transcendent," bridging genders and realities as opposed to bright '80s pinks that shocked us into submission. That doesn't mean it can't find its way into traditional motifs, however, so look for it in florals and other classic patterns but with a hi-tech touch.

**Green Thumb**

If pink signifies the floral outpouring of springtime, then green symbolizes the earth from which it all comes. And while pink and green may be the quintessential preppy combination, like the ethereal pinks, these greens belong to the garden, but the garden of the digital imagination as much as Mother Earth.



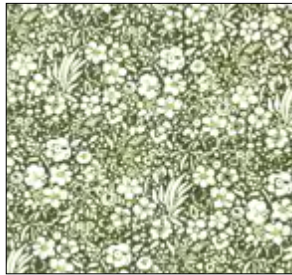
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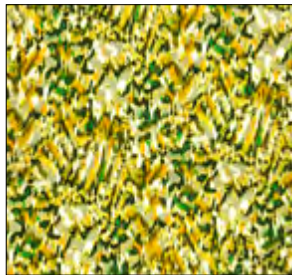
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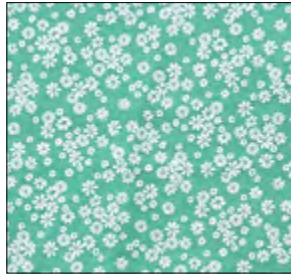
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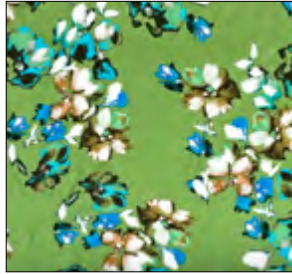
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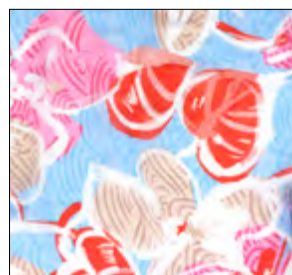
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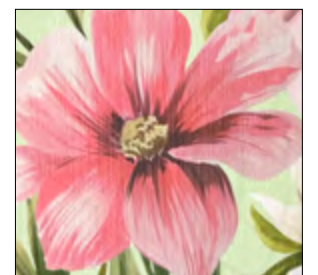
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*As AI continues to thrill technology enthusiasts, how do you feel it will advance this year to drive innovation in the fashion industry?*

## The Next Stages in Fashion Tech Will Prove AI Is a Friend, Not a Foe

By Dorothy Crouch *Contributing Writer*

There have been many discussions regarding the capabilities of AI. Within these conversations there has also been a lot of misunderstanding and inaccurate information regarding advancements in AI and how these will shape the roles and need for humans.

The fashion industry has been utilizing AI tools for many years, from on-demand solutions and personalization to analyzing data and predicting the next trends. Tools intended to aid humans—not replace them—can reduce errors, create

efficiency and clarify communication to streamline operations that will create a more sustainable fashion industry.

Reducing the fear surrounding the power of AI can be achieved with education, training and open discussions regarding how this technology can help rather than hinder human progress within the fashion industry. *California Apparel News* asked technology experts: *As AI continues to thrill technology enthusiasts, how do you feel it will advance this year to drive innovation in the fashion industry?*

**Shahrooz Shawn Kohan**  
Chief Executive Officer  
AIMS360



AI is a game changer for us at AIMS360 Fashion Business Software. This year, we are deploying AI for our fashion brands across both customer-facing services and back-office operations. The information is powered by our AIMS360

database. For example, consumers can ask AI bots for information about the brand's products, pricing and policies.

Behind the scenes, in the back office, AIMS360 has been able to set up AI automations for employees to help make quick decisions in production forecasting, order processing and shipping. As AI gets better training with improved accuracy, it can make the decision with less human oversight. Eventually, AI will become as good as the human in answering.

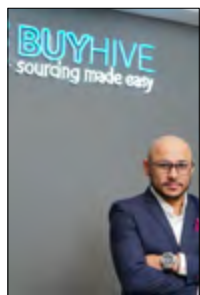
**Jason Wang**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Alvanon



We will likely continue to see many brands try to tackle the struggles of overwhelming product returns. With overall revenue dropping, companies will be looking to improve their bottom lines by eliminating returns where possible. I believe we will start to see many companies offering virtual-dressing-room solutions and sizing recommendation engines as possible solutions.

While the buzz on generative AI continues to dominate media headlines, industry-specific AI is shaping fashion's future through digital bodies. Technologies that allow apparel companies to produce the right goods, at the right time, in the right quantities are vital to a sustainable fashion industry.

**Minesh Pore**  
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer  
BuyHive



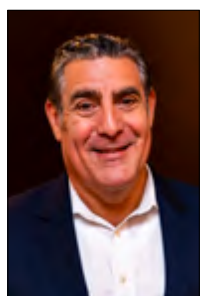
In 2023, the fashion industry began recognizing the substantial potential of AI. For instance, during AI Fashion Week, Maison Meta showcased fascinating AI-generated collections. The Accidental Cutting collection at London Fashion Week also

demonstrated AI's creative capabilities, creating designs at an astonishing rate of 150 per second. AI is increasingly becoming a powerful force in fashion, significantly impacting customer experience and retail strategies.

In the realm of AI integration, companies like Mango, Alibaba, Amazon and Zalando are leading by example. Mango's introduction of Lisa, a conversational AI platform, exemplifies the shift toward interactive, AI-driven customer experiences. Alibaba's AI language models enhance its business ecosystem, offering sophisticated tools for partner engagement and business strategy. Similarly, Amazon's focus on AI in its AWS services and Zalando's deployment of AI in fashion assistance highlight the industry's commitment to integrating AI into various aspects of operations.

The integration of AI with the expertise of sourcing networks like BuyHive heralds a new era in fashion sourcing. This blend of cutting-edge technology and human insight offers a comprehensive, efficient and innovative approach to navigating the complex landscape of the fashion industry. As AI continues to evolve, its partnership with seasoned professionals will become increasingly vital, driving forward a future of sustainable, responsive and trend-conscious fashion sourcing. This synergy not only enhances operational efficiencies but also fosters a more dynamic, creative and forward-thinking fashion industry.

**Paul Magel**  
President, Business Applications  
Division  
CGS



The events of the past year have unequivocally demonstrated the indispensability of real-time supply-chain visibility in today's dynamic business environment. With our sights set on the future of 2024, it has become

increasingly imperative for companies to proactively prepare for potential disruptions stemming from various sources such as regional conflicts, weather-related challenges and unforeseen circumstances.

A pivotal strategy in achieving the desired level of visibility lies in digitally connecting the supply chain. By seamlessly integrating brand systems with supplier systems, businesses unlock transparency and invaluable insights. The fashion industry has astutely recognized the significance of this connection, especially in light of recent experiences. In 2024, organizations are presented with an exceptional opportunity to seize the benefits of augmented visibility by embracing the transformative power of AI, automation and analytics.

This digital transformation promises to propel efficiency and endow brands with the ability to respond promptly and proactively as the need arises. By effectively harnessing the capabilities of AI, companies can make well-informed decisions anchored in real-time data analysis. The integration of AI technologies empowers brands to optimize their supply-chain operations, pinpoint and resolve bottlenecks, and streamline processes. Furthermore, this advanced approach generates intelligent forecasting, ensuring the seamless production and timely delivery of fashion-forward goods.

The undeniable expertise and profound understanding of AI-driven supply-chain solutions underscore the potential held by artificial intelligence in revolutionizing the fashion industry. By furnishing real-time visibility, optimizing operations and enriching decision-making, AI emerges as a force that drives innovation and nurtures agility within the fashion industry.

**Michelle Eichner**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Digitile



Amazon is trailblazing AI to solve one of online fashion's significant shopper pain points—finding the right fit. By analyzing customer data and feedback, Amazon has introduced personalized size recommendations, aggregated sizing reviews, standardized and auto-corrected size charts, and created a Fit Insights Tool for brands.

These are all AI-powered features designed to tailor suggestions to each shopper, provide more-reliable measurements, highlight potential issues for brands and reduce returns. This AI-driven transformation tack-

les an aspect of shopping that has challenged online retailers since consumers started buying online.

**Tirsa Parrish**  
Co-founder and Managing Partner  
Fashion Index



In the evolving landscape of the fashion industry, AI is poised to revolutionize customer experiences, particularly through the lenses of data analytics and trend prediction, creating a more personalized shopping experience. The advent of

AI-driven recommendation engines further amplifies the personalized shopping journey, analyzing customer data to suggest fashion items tailored to individual preferences. There has been an industry-wide shift toward customization, where brands leverage AI to offer personalized designs, sizes and colors, ensuring a unique and engaging brand experience.

Beyond the immediate customer-facing innovations, foundational advancements driven by AI are reshaping the industry's core. Predictive analytics empowers businesses to forecast sales trends, providing valuable insights without direct influence. Supply-chain optimization takes precedence, with AI playing a pivotal role in inventory management to mitigate overstocking and understocking issues. Quality control and sustainability are paramount, and AI automation will enhance manufacturing processes and aid in the selection of eco-friendly materials.

Fabric and material innovations will accelerate via AI algorithms, enabling the creation of textiles with garment-optimized properties. As more designers embrace AI-powered generative design tools, we foresee an upsurge in creativity, not only saving time but also organically inspiring innovation. AI will continue to transform market research and consumer insights, providing invaluable data for industry-wide strategies.

Fashion Index remains unwavering in its dedication to fostering a seamless, trendsetting and sustainable fashion ecosystem. Serving as a resource where new and emerging brands connect with industry leaders and professionals, we envision a future where innovation and sustainability harmoniously shape the fashion industry.



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*As AI continues to thrill technology enthusiasts, how do you feel it will advance this year to drive innovation in the fashion industry?*

**Technology** *Continued from page 12*

**Timothy Hogan**  
Fashion and Luxury Photographer



In fashion and luxury-goods photography, the nuanced judgment and aesthetic sensitivity of human creativity are essential, especially when leveraging artificial intelligence. While AI can enhance efficiency and offer innovative tools, the creation of captivating, high-end imagery fundamentally relies on the photographer's artistic eye, even when prompting generative-AI tools like Midjourney. These professionals possess an irreplaceable understanding of style, culture and emotional resonance, guiding AI to produce outcomes that meet the sophisticated expectations of the fashion industry.

Human photographers and film directors make critical decisions on composition, lighting and mood, infusing images with depth and meaning, ensuring they convey the desired message and emotion. AI acts as an assistant in this process, but it is the human touch that breathes life into the images. In the dynamic world of fashion, understanding trends and predicting future directions requires cultural insight and emotional intelligence that AI alone cannot replicate. Photographers interpret these trends through a human lens, creating images that resonate deeply with viewers.

As AI evolves within the fashion sector, the importance of human skill and aesthetic awareness remains paramount. It is the interplay between human intuition and AI's capabilities that will drive the industry forward, ensuring fashion photography not only meets but exceeds the high standards of beauty, innovation and style. This human-centric approach guarantees that fashion photography continues to be an art form that inspires and engages audiences globally.

**Ana Friedlander**  
Industry and Solution Strategy Director for North America—Fashion Retail Infor



When did you first notice the message, 'You may also want to purchase these items,' or 'Shoppers have purchased these other items when they purchased this, would you like to add them to your cart,' or even 'Based on your previous orders, you will need a size S'? This started almost 10 years ago. Now we have a name for it, AI—artificial or augmented intelligence—powered by ML, also known as machine learning.

The apparel fashion industry has come a long way in AI and ML since those days. In the last few years the industry has gone from personalized shopping experiences to tools that can assist designers by generating design suggestions through trend analysis. By analyzing vast amounts of data, AI algorithms can now predict upcoming fashion trends.

The collaboration between AI and human

designers can result in groundbreaking fashion concepts. More companies are adopting AI-powered predictive trend insights as well as virtual try-on experiences that allow customers to see how clothing would look in real time through their devices before they make a purchase. AI will continue to make fashion more personal.

AI doesn't end with the design aspect; its predictive capabilities extend to forecasting, not just sales trends but inventory requirements as well. By analyzing historical data, AI provides insights into the products that can perform well, enabling businesses to make data-driven decisions and still manage design trends.

The future of fashion is so embedded with everything AI has to offer, making all the tools essential to the industry's continued success.

**Alison Bringé**  
Chief Marketing Officer  
Launchmetrics



After turbulent hype cycles in recent years, the conversation around technology is calling for more-actionable implementation of pragmatic and impactful solutions. Faced with a challenging business landscape and ever-changing consumer preferences, brands will put even greater emphasis on practical tech to help drive results.

To successfully compete in today's economy, brands will need to reassess their priorities by keeping efficiency top of mind. To that point, more brands will continue increasing their investments in AI-powered solutions for practical business applications, fueling innovation going forward.

**Ketty Pillet**  
Vice President of Marketing, Americas  
Lectra



In 2024, generative AI will continue to drive explosive growth within the fashion industry to improve customer experience. Brands who adopt AI capabilities will reap benefits across the board. From increasing the production of personalized products to optimizing store layout and pricing, we'll see AI's true impact this year.

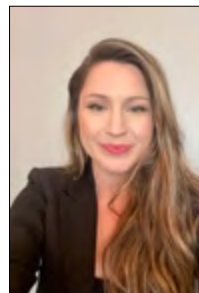
One major benefit of AI will be the impact it has on retailers' inventory-management process. The use of AI-powered competitive-analysis platforms to prioritize contingency planning will not only enhance sustainability efforts by eliminating overproduction but also ultimately increase retailers' profitability while driving growth by precisely managing prices.

To prepare for challenges and be alert to opportunities, leading fashion companies will likely prioritize contingency planning for the coming year. Given the current economic environment and unprecedented uncertainty companies are facing, the need to get merchandising right is even more urgent than usual.

AI will also drive on-demand production.

Personalization has been a priority for consumers and is a trend that is here to stay. In order to appeal to a consumer's individual desires, a retailer must shift from mass production to a made-to-order model, made possible by on-demand production. Retailers who leverage on-demand technology will be able to produce inventory after an order is placed, helping to appeal to customers' niche interests, all the while increasing sustainability efforts by eliminating waste.

**Victoria Nelson Harris**  
Senior Textile Segment Specialist  
Mimaki



AI in the fashion industry will enhance digital printing, empowering textile designers to swiftly define trends and create patterns, accelerating speed to market. The alignment of AI advancements with the fast pace of e-commerce and accelerated fashion trend cycles is evident.

Moreover, AI will accelerate on-demand digital textile printing, offering a sustainable opportunity within the fashion industry to print trend-driven supply in lower volumes, reducing waste and aligning with the industry's shift toward eco-friendly practices.

**Yazan Malkosh**  
Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
swatchbook



We've seen many brands wake up to the fact that the current AI technology still focuses primarily on conceptualization and predevelopment imagery. While that's certainly helpful early on, we still need a focus on the manufacturing aspect so those beautiful visuals can actually be manufactured.

This means much of the usefulness in the fashion AI space will be unlocked once we plug the development pipeline into that technology. In order to do this, brands and their supply-chain and manufacturing arms need to be using a digital pipeline in order for AI to utilize that content and implement it in a manner that reflects the needs of the brands and their customers.

Currently, most brands still haven't gone through digital transformation, which means they are still sketching in 2D and relying exclusively on physical samples or working in 2D or 3D and combining both physical and virtual samples. This transformation requires brands to transform their process, but suppliers must also create materials to provide digital fabric and the manufacturers must create the patterns to match the 3D designs, having that group iterate in virtual forms for the majority of the journey and only rely on physical sampling toward the end for finish, fit and feel.

AI will have a dramatic impact on shortening this design calendar while providing much more insight on sustainability, user trends and sales forecasting, but this true unlock starts with having a digital base to build on.

**Kit Kwok**  
Vice President  
TUKAweb



Major players in the industry, particularly prominent retailers, have already embraced AI and big data to forecast trends and enhance marketing strategies. Beyond the conventional applications, companies like Styku are leveraging AI to predict human physical-health developments, highlighting the vast potential AI holds within diverse realms.

Tukatech's integration of EcoShot allows 3D technology users to select from an array of AI-generated models that are suitable for e-commerce applications while eliminating photo shoots. Leveraging recent AI advancements in digital fabric creation, innovative brands and manufacturers can bring a product to market in a matter of days without physical sampling.

While concerns about job security linger in the wake of AI advancements, a nuanced perspective has emerged. Rather than displacing jobs, AI offers a unique opportunity to elevate roles to new heights. For instance, the prospect of instructing AI to generate patterns from images doesn't replace patternmakers; it streamlines the initial product development phase, allowing professionals to focus on refining and accelerating the creative process.

Embracing AI with an open mind and understanding its integration as an enhancement rather than a threat has the potential to revolutionize our approach to work. The acceptance and utilization of AI not only streamlines processes but also paves the way for a future where innovation in the fashion industry becomes synonymous with efficiency, creativity and speed.

**Ashley Crowder**  
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer  
VNTANA



AI can drastically speed up content creation. At VNTANA, we're harnessing the power of AI to automatically generate high-quality 2D renderings derived from 3D models. This not only accelerates the creative process but also offers significant cost savings for brands by eliminating the need for traditional photo shoots and physical samples. This innovative approach positions companies to expedite their time-to-market, marking a pivotal shift in the industry landscape.

*Responses have been edited for clarity and space.*

# Fashion



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*What is the most overlooked or underrated component of sustainability that brands, manufacturers and suppliers must prioritize to move the fashion industry forward toward a more sustainable industry?*



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## Environmental Damage in the Details: Why Is Fashion Missing the Eco Mark?

By Dorothy Crouch Contributing Writer

Much more work must be done to bring the fashion business current on the sustainability commitments that many companies have made, but there seem to be some missing elements to the work currently being performed. Although many in the industry approach sustainability with high hopes and good intentions, greenwashing is a challenge, and the business is nowhere near the levels of where it should be regarding responsibility, transparency and ecological alignment compared with the number of companies that claim adherence to guidelines that will clean up fashion.

As scientists, climate experts and activists continue to call for an acceleration of green initiatives to thwart the negative human impacts on the environment, important details are being overlooked as companies chart their paths toward cleaner approaches to making clothing.

*California Apparel News* asked sustainability experts in the fashion industry: *What is the most overlooked or underrated component of sustainability that brands, manufacturers and suppliers must prioritize to move the fashion industry forward toward a more sustainable industry?*

**Kerry Bannigan**  
Managing Director  
PVBLIC Foundation



As we navigate the path toward a more sustainable fashion industry, let's not underestimate the transformative power of prioritizing gender equality. From the boardroom to the factory floor, we must prioritize empower-

ing women, ensuring fair representation and fostering inclusive workplaces. Addressing this often-overlooked fundamental aspect is not just a social imperative but also a strategic move to fortify the industry's resilience and long-term sustainable ecosystem.

**Kay Bloomberg**  
Chief of Staff  
Aii



One of the most significant opportunities for greenhouse-gas reductions in our industry is diminishing the reliance on fossil fuels for thermal processes such as heating water for dyeing fabric and generating steam. We're

planning to deploy a notable portion of grant funding from our Fashion Climate Fund toward solutions that, when scaled, will help the industry phase out coal in favor of other fuel sources for thermal energy or minimize the need for thermal energy in the production process, such as waterless dyeing. Compared to innovations like new materials, which have their role to play in reaching net zero but will require massive investment to scale, coal phase-out and energy efficiency continue to be underrated when building out decarbonization plans.

**Tricia Carey**  
Chief Commercial Officer  
RENEWCELL



Adopting solutions that exist now, at scale. We do not have another five years to put off the large-scale substitution of traditional materials for next-gen alternatives—we need to move out of the capsule and into the core

collections. While we still need to invest in new technologies and continually improve processes and materials, we must not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

**Paola Corna**  
Co-Chief Executive Officer  
ACM



The priority for brands and suppliers should be to evolve toward new, more-sustainable production systems based on concrete and measurable actions. With this in mind, from an ESG perspective, certifications on processes

and products become crucial. At ACM, we not only seek to constantly innovate our products, offering a wide range of accessories sourced from recycled and recyclable materials—as of 2021, we are GRS certified, the most important international standard that recognizes the importance of recycling—plant-based, natural ingredients, and environmentally friendly options. But we also focus on a working environment that can meet these same dictates. For decades we have benefited from a water recirculation system that eliminates waste, and the company's energy needs are now fully covered by a photovoltaic panel system. Since last year, we have integrated an environmental impact certification, the WeImpact Index, and a social one, the HappyIndex AtWork, which are

key components to ensure sustainability that generates value for people, the territory and the market.

In fact, ours is a historic company that from father to daughters has handed down human values that are now fortunately part of the culture of sustainability and that we hope will be increasingly widespread, though it is certainly more difficult to measure and trace than supply-chain or technical performance.

**Mark D'Sa**  
Business Development Specialist  
Panda Biotech



Hemp's untapped potential as a resilient fiber alternative must be elevated in sustainability conversations. Industrial hemp can grow with two to eight inches of rainfall, nitrogen fertilizer and no herbicide. In its 120-day growth to

maturity and field retting, the plant sequesters carbon, and the bast fiber is durable and can blend with cotton, viscose, lyocell and other fibers.

At Panda's Wichita Falls, Texas, facility, bales of hemp straw from U.S. farmers and Native American tribes are decorticated, cleaned, refined and cottonized to deliver spinnable fiber that is biodegradable. The entire process is free of water, steam and chemicals and uses 100 percent renewable energy. There is zero waste, and nothing goes to a landfill.

Sustainability starts with the seed in the soil that grows the plant rich in bast fiber and moves through the textile and apparel-manufacturing process to the consumer. Our hemp adds durability to garments that increase longevity, helping extend the life cycle and curb post-consumer waste.

Panda Biotech navigates sustainability with clear transparency and communication through information sharing, collaboration and feedback from farmers, mills, retailers, brands and consumers.

**Karri Ann Frerichs**  
Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
Circular Fashion LA



There's a lot of interest and investment now going toward closed-loop textile recycling, which is great. However, recycling should be the last step reserved for end-of-life or zero-value clothing and textiles only.

More focus needs to be given to reuse, repair and redesign first, with recycling being the last step in the product's life cycle. Brands are rushing to collect, shred and recycle clothes into new textiles so they can start from scratch and make new clothes out of the fresh rolls of fabric. But many of those products being shredded still have inherent value, and their life cycles should be extended. The problem is, recycling is a high-tech process that can be automated with large machines and major capital investments, which investors love. Reuse, repair and redesign processes, however, are more hands-on and skills-based processes that require investments in human talent, and investors often turn their noses up at work that can't necessarily be automated by sexy machines and technology.

Reuse, repair and redesign processes are more economical, have a much smaller carbon footprint and are more environmentally friendly than recycling processes that, unfortunately, still have comparable carbon footprints to sourcing new materials. Reuse, repair and redesign are the unsung heroes of the sustainability movement and deserve more recognition, attention and investment.



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NEW for the Spring edition, introducing **Day 0 Conference: Behind the Seams Series**. Participate alongside industry peers and suppliers. Scheduled for April 16, 2024, a day ahead of the exhibit hall opening, the event includes a seminar, hands-on workshop, and roundtable discussions featuring top-notch professionals in our field. And yes, we've got you covered with breakfast and lunch! As you begin to register you will see two package options for purchase, please select the one that best caters to your needs.

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*What is the most overlooked or underrated component of sustainability that brands, manufacturers and suppliers must prioritize to move the fashion industry forward toward a more sustainable industry?*



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**Sustainability** *Continued from page 16*

**Jean Hegedus**  
Sustainability Director  
The LYCRA Company



At The LYCRA Company, we believe supplier engagement, especially for raw materials, is critical to meeting the industry's sustainability needs. For most companies, Scope 3 emissions—those from their value chains—represent the vast majority of their carbon footprint. When you consider the industry's need to reduce its emissions by 45–50 percent, selecting lower-impact raw materials made with clean energy sources is key to achieving those reductions. It is, therefore, essential to engage suppliers early on so they understand what is at stake and can begin planning to meet future customer and legislative needs.

One supplier that had the foresight to anticipate these needs is Qore, a joint venture between Cargill and HELM. Qore is building a site in Iowa to produce QIRA, the precursor to a key ingredient in LYCRA fiber. The site, which will be powered mainly by wind, will use dent corn to make the QIRA ingredient that ultimately accounts for 70 percent of LYCRA fiber content. By switching from a fossil-based input to QIRA, the carbon emissions of LYCRA fiber can be reduced by up to 44 percent. The QIRA site is due to come onstream later this year, and bio-derived LYCRA fiber will follow early in 2025. We're pleased to partner with Qore to make bio-derived LYCRA fiber a reality for the market. It's been a wonderful collaboration, and we're excited about the impact this new fiber can have for us and our customers.

**Eddie Ingle**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Unifi Manufacturing, Inc.



One of the biggest opportunities in textiles is the end-of-life value of a garment. At Unifi, we are prioritizing innovating systems and technologies to capture that value and give materials a second life.

Our Textile Takeback Program is a textile-to-textile recycling initiative with circularity in mind. It works by collecting, sorting and re-inputting used garments and pre-consumer textile waste into our REPREVE recycled-polyester process.

With millions of tons of textile waste discarded each year, Textile Takeback aims to transform the industry's take-make-waste model by providing a sustainable way to recycle landfill-bound textiles and create new products.

Circularity will be a key needle mover for the industry's sustainable future. To achieve our collective goals, we must all work together—brands, manufacturers, retailers—to advance industry infrastructure for products to enjoy second, even third, fourth and fifth lives.

**Jessica Kelly**  
Chief Executive Officer and Founder  
Thr3fold



Supplier and brand partnerships forge a strong and personal relationship with your suppliers. Visit often. Eat meals together. Meet their children. Then work together as a team to brainstorm ways you can find to reduce cost

and increase impact.

It is from the relationship that you build trust and also discover loopholes you may not have known or overlooked as normal but are the keys to your progress. The transactional relationship of brand and supplier we have reached today has created a shield for any responsibility when our decisions make a negative impact on the people in our supply chain. Through partnership-based relationships you learn that the seemingly small price decreases you are requesting to your cut-and-sew supplier get larger as they get pushed back to each tier of the supply chain until ultimately the farmer takes the biggest hit.

**Ngozi Okaro**  
Executive Director and Founder  
Custom Collaborative



Brands, manufacturers and suppliers should focus on producing less and embrace on-demand production and customization to minimize waste. This approach aligns with the longstanding “just in time” production model but adds a sustainability angle.

And, when overproduction does occur, fashion companies must pivot from discarding or destroying garments to meaningful collaboration with organizations like Custom Collaborative, which supports no- or low-income and immigrant women through training, mentorship and advocacy, equipping them with skills to thrive in the sustainable-fashion industry.

For example, in my photo that accompanies this comment, I am joined by Cristina Santos, a Custom Collaborative graduate. Cristina redesigned the jacket that I am wearing. It is a thrift-shop jean jacket that she embellished and sold for several hundred dollars.

By partnering with such organizations, companies can repurpose and sell excess products to promote sustainability and waste reduction. This approach fosters a culture of responsible consumption.

Finally, fashion partners working in sustainability should also share their best practices, including successes and failures. Most recently, the closure of the sustainable-clothing company Dai offers valuable insights. They openly discussed their experiences, what worked and what didn't, setting an important precedent for industry-wide learning.

**Alexandra Quinn**  
Chief Executive Officer and Founder  
Fashion Fwd



For decades the apparel industry has chosen to use the environment and, in particular, our waterways as a dumping ground for industrial hazardous chemicals, unhindered in many places. This has led to the continuous and ongoing

buildup of persistent hazardous chemicals throughout the environment. For the local communities living near manufacturing facilities and for consumers around the world implicated in this toxic cycle, water pollution has become a daily reality.

It has been increasingly recognized by governments, the business community and the general public that chemicals in everyday apparel products pose a risk to consumer health.

Also, consumers need to be aware that “organic” doesn't mean “nontoxic.” While organic fibers like cotton are certainly safer for farmers, nearby communities and the environment, the finished apparel item may still be full of hazardous chemicals when it reaches our closets. During the manufacturing stage, after the crop has been grown and harvested, harmful chemicals are frequently added to turn cotton fiber into a wearable material.

By contrast, organic food can be categorized as minimally processed and produced without the use of toxic pesticides, antibiotics, synthetic hormones, artificial ingredients, colors or synthetic preservatives. An Environmental Health Perspectives study showed that eating organic, even occasionally, dramatically reduced pesticide exposure in children and lowered associated cancer risk later in life.

With apparel, there is no such list of prohibited chemicals in the final product. Confusion about the difference between organic cotton and food has many consumers believing that organic clothing must be just as safe.

**Alexa Raab**  
Director of Communications  
CovationBio and Sorona



I think there are two critical components brands, manufacturers and suppliers must prioritize if we intend to truly achieve a step change in the industry. First, we must work to influence the mindsets and behaviors of consumers.

We need to move away from the ideas of fast fashion, disposable garments and “clothing hauls” and help connect purchase behaviors to sustainability. Second, we need to ensure sustainable clothing is accessible to the average consumer. We cannot make these garments so much more expensive or offer lesser performance than fossil fuel-based offerings.

**Raffay Rauf**  
Senior Manager Compliance, HSE and Sustainability  
Sapphire Mills



In the dynamic realm of sustainable fashion, the often-overlooked yet crucial component is the human touch. Brands, manufacturers and suppliers must shift their focus to prioritize the well-being and contributions of

the individuals behind the scenes.

At Sapphire Mills we have witnessed the transformative impact of emphasizing inclusivity and diversity. In our garment division, where approximately 70 percent of the workforce is comprised of women, heightened productivity and exceptional quality in workwear and tacticalwear have been observed. In our apparel division, the hiring of 300 employees who are deaf has not only cultivated a positive work culture but also demonstrated that diverse teams can outperform their counterparts.

The most underrated aspect of sustainability is recognizing the human thread within the fabric of the fashion industry. Fair wages, safe working conditions and community empowerment are not just ethical imperatives—they are essential for building a truly sustainable future. Our business case studies underscore that when people are valued they become an integral part of sustainable practices. It's time for the industry to prioritize this often-overlooked aspect and weave the human thread into the very fabric of fashion's future.

**Nicole Rawling**  
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer  
Material Innovation Initiative



Around 65–80 percent of the total environmental footprint from fashion brands comes from raw materials, with animal-based materials tending to be the worst in water use, biodiversity loss, eutrophication, GHG emissions

and environmental degradation. Synthetic alternatives to animal-based materials such as polyester and pleather are usually carbon-intensive, nonrenewable, nonbiodegradable, toxic and a facet of the petrochemical industry. Combined, synthetic and animal-derived materials are estimated to contribute approximately 10 percent of worldwide anthropogenic greenhouse-gas emissions.

With the provisional deal on the EU corporate sustainability due-diligence directive, approved in December, brands should be seriously considering how they can reduce their environmental impact through the use of materials. The CSDDD will require companies with more than 500 employees and a net worldwide turnover above €150 million [\$162.7 million USD] to disclose and miti-



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*What is the most overlooked or underrated component of sustainability that brands, manufacturers and suppliers must prioritize to move the fashion industry forward toward a more sustainable industry?*



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**Sustainability** *Continued from page 18*

gate their impacts on the environment. This is why brands, manufacturers and suppliers need to prioritize a transition to next-gen materials, sourced from abundant, renewable and nontoxic resources such as plants, algae, agricultural waste, fungi, microbes and captured CO<sub>2</sub>.

On average they offer around a 90 percent reduction in global-warming potential compared to animal-based materials and 40 percent compared to synthetics and require little or no biodiversity loss to harvest.

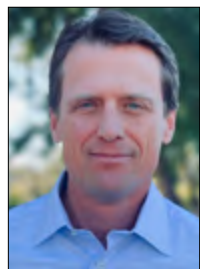
The next-gen-materials industry is growing, and brands should be paying attention. In 2023 alone a total of just under \$500 million was raised in 30 publicly disclosed deals, and the number of innovative companies solely focused on next-gen materials sits at 102.

**Sharon Rowe**  
**Founder and Chief Executive Officer**  
**ECOBAGS**



Building on the ground, face-to-face relationships. This takes time. Also, certifications are important but they can be a blockade to smaller brands that typically want to do what's 100 percent right but can't afford the costs. Certifiers need to revise their rates for smaller brands.

**James Schaffer**  
**Chief Strategy Officer**  
**Worldly**



We often underestimate the importance of primary data collection deep within the supply chain. This is pivotal given that over 90 percent of a company's carbon footprint stems from Scope 3, defined as indirect emissions associated with an organization's value chain, including upstream and downstream activities. Upward of 50 percent of Scope 3 emissions comes from deeper tiers of the supply chain. This is where consumer-products companies have historically collected very little primary data.

Despite regulatory changes including the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the proposed U.S. SEC Climate Disclosure Act, it's alarming that 45 percent of global supply-chain leaders lack visibility into upstream supply-chain operations. Understanding the true impact in the apparel supply chain is a challenge with historically unreliable, nonstandardized, and non-GHG protocol-compliant primary-data collection at the facility level. This results in a reliance on estimates, hindering the industry's ability to measure the impact of improvements in design, materials and manufacturing processes.

To propel our industry forward, we must shift the focus beyond "check the box"

compliance to embrace due diligence that considers both social and environmental impacts. To achieve this, we are going to need tools that provide accurate, reliable and actionable primary data within the value chain at scale.

As we navigate the evolving landscape, moving from annual assessments to ongoing monitoring and frequent tracking enables the industry to optimize opportunities for improvement. Armed with contextualized, actionable data we can make informed decisions, accelerating our progress toward a sustainable and equitable global fashion industry.

**Olivia Schott**  
**Creative Operations Manager**  
**Preface**



True transparency stands out as a crucial, often undervalued component in discussions about sustainability. Whether a brand is taking huge leaps or just modest steps to implement sustainable practices, honesty about the challenges and limitations they encounter is paramount.

Many brands shy away from making sustainability claims for fear of scrutiny, while others make vague statements lacking substance. The solution lives somewhere in the middle, where makers can proudly acknowledge their small wins while openly addressing their challenges and aspirations to be better.

**Carolina Sister Cohn**  
**Global Marketing Lead, Textiles**  
**Eastman**



One of the most relevant aspects of sustainability that brands should focus on more is the importance of honest, transparent, inspiring storytelling. If we want to make responsible clothing accessible, desirable and credible, it's important that we lead our customers through a clear, engaging journey that communicates our sustainability efforts effectively.

The starting point of this process relies on brands to first make conscious choices by selecting new, innovative ingredients that enhance the credibility and sustainability of their products.

With Naia from Eastman, we do this by offering manufacturers around the world a portfolio of increasingly sustainable yarns and fibers that are fully certified to third-party standards, from sustainable origins to positive end-of-life solutions.

The next crucial step in the process is helping brands effectively communicate the value and benefits of these ingredients to the consumer as well as the reduced impact on the environment. We help our brand partners craft a verifiable, transparent story that not only resonates with consumers but also builds trust.

Our Naia team aims to be the ideal fiber choice for a brand's collection while also serving as a partner to educate their customers and clarify the complexities of sustainability in a meaningful and understandable way. It's our mission to make sustainable fashion accessible to everyone, and achieving this goal requires us to be unified in our understanding and efforts.

**Andrea Venier**  
**Managing Director**  
**Officina39**



Sustainability is not a simple matter. Sometimes we believe the products that give the appearance of being sustainable are sustainable, but really the impact of a product must be measured scientifically. This is one underrated factor.

Then there is a lot of communication today, but before communicating it would be important to create correct and comprehensive education that can provide the tools to distinguish true sustainable products from greenwashed goods.

We need more education within the supply chain. Education on supply chain about sustainability—from the supplier to the brand, passing through the manufacturer—is the fundamental tool for correctly communicating information to consumers. Another theme is simplification of the standards and certifications that can permit more clarity about the message reaching the end consumer. In the fashion industry, there are currently so many different types of certifications in chemicals as well as all the other stages of the supply chain.

Presenting many certifications to the end consumer creates confusion. The result is again about the lack of education. The end consumer is inundated with many messages related to sustainability without fully understanding them.

Simplifying the certifications by grouping them into a clear system and standard would, in turn, simplify the final message, providing clearer and more unambiguous communication to the end consumer. The result would permit improvement of the understanding of the sustainability factor and would appreciate the added value of each individual item and product. But for that education must start inside the fashion industry.

**Nancy Williams-Painter**  
**Textile Designer and Engineer**  
**Hemp Fortex**



The most overlooked and underrated component of sustainability is transparency and the on-site visiting it allows. There are so many tools for sustainability, but some are not really up to date on all materials, and there is no substitute for simply going to fields and factories and checking them out.

A producer that is really committed to sustainability will welcome visits to their fields and factories, and it is always okay to ask. I walked our hemp fields with Eileen Fisher's sustainability expert, and it was a great learning experience for me. We welcome that scrutiny and expertise. We love showing people our solar-powered factory and our organic "lunch farm." Don't be afraid to ask suppliers to see everything.

For smaller or younger companies that don't have those resources or personnel, don't be afraid to ask larger companies for recommendations. Fashion runs on closely guarded secrets, but sustainability is an exception. Most large companies' sustainability teams are happy to help. Patagonia did their own systemic audit of all our processes to update The Higg Index, and they have been really open to sharing it. Sustainability runs on transparency.

**Sherry Wood**  
**Director of Merchandising**  
**Texollini**



One often-overlooked aspect is supply-chain transparency. Brands need to prioritize disclosing information about the entire production process, from sourcing materials to manufacturing, to ensure accountability and drive positive change in the fashion industry.

Supply-chain transparency involves openly sharing details about where and how products are made. By disclosing sourcing practices, manufacturing conditions and environmental impacts, brands foster accountability. This transparency allows consumers to make informed choices, encourages responsible practices and ultimately drives the fashion industry toward sustainability.

Consumers want to connect with the process by purchasing from brands that allow them to be part of the journey. Being mindful of every design, sourcing and production decision, explaining the process from concept through delivery, is a story that is key for customer engagement and connecting to the brand.

Texollini continues to experiment through smart technologies, modernization and investments with alternative, eco-friendly materials and manufacturing processes that use less water and reduce waste and chemicals.

Our fully vertical mill is tracked and monitored, ensuring continuous results of our commitment. Choosing sustainable fiber and yarn suppliers, we are constantly innovating bringing more products to market. Being in California, we have strict rules and regulations regarding the environment.

Our openness and collaboration with our brands are vital in all aspects, especially that they have full access to our fabrics and production processes. Our commitment is to build and maintain that trust to ensure we continue to pave the way as a leader in sustainable fabrics for all market categories. ●

*Responses have been edited for clarity and space.*



# BE MORE ON TREND

The Las Vegas destination for top young contemporary brands and unmatched hospitality returns in 2024 with more resources than ever before. Starting this February, buyers can source from even more top lines and categories with the co-location of Womenswear In Nevada (WWIN) alongside Las Vegas Apparel at The Expo at World Market Center. Plus, gift and lifestyle crossover brands will be on display in the permanent showrooms that make this market unique among Las Vegas Fashion Week offerings. Together, the collaboration will create a new and exciting destination, filled with resources and amenities for buyers to enjoy. Don't miss it!

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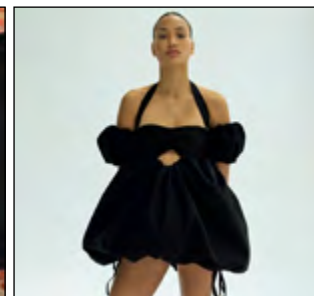
Mavi



Bella Dahl



Joe's Jeans



Jasmine Elaine

## Cautious Optimism at January Edition of L.A. Market Week

By Kelli Freeman *Contributing Writer*

This edition of **L.A. Market** was upbeat yet cautiously optimistic following a strong 2023. Buyers looked for unique pieces for Spring/Summer and received first looks at Fall. Trends included fitted and structured pieces, long skirts, summer linens and new details in denim. Vibrant florals and earthy, vintage '70s colors were in demand.

"Buyers who came to market were spoiled for choice among the plus or minus 500 brands in **The New Mart** and the plus or minus 2,000 brands within one city block, making their visit to L.A. both convenient and efficient," said Tom Keefer, New Mart general manager.

"Over 800 buyers made their way to our iconic fashion-district landmark and sampled over 500 premium fashion brands," said Margot Garcia, **Cooper Design Space** general manager.

"Our goal was to help make the market a productive and fun environment for showrooms and buyers, and from what we're hearing I think we accomplished it," said Ashley Sabo, **California Market Center** general manager.

### Variety at New Mart

New York-based **Joe's Jeans** offered new styles including double-buckle, wide-leg trousers and its updated Mia style with a wide bottom hem and distressed casual look, both priced at \$113. "We're also excited about our Trixie trouser, cropped and with a cuff bottom, priced at \$91," said Lauren Grant, West Coast account executive, specialty.

Los Angeles-based **Jasmine Elaine** was a new addition to

**The New Mart**. The brand of designer-quality dresses and gowns in silks and leather included a cotton-sateen balloon baby-doll dress with removable sleeves, halter strap and drawstring hem priced at \$150. "It's gorgeous, high fashion, sexy, versatile and timeless," said owner and designer Jasmine Elaine.

"We're seeing a return to the '70s colorwise with more-muted, warmer, muddier colors, which is also following design in furniture as well," said CC Gilmore, owner and designer of **Habitat Furnishings & Design** in Sedona, Ariz.

Frilly blouses ranging from \$20 to \$30 and midi skirts at \$27.50 by China-based **Pinch** were big performers at the **Sue Goodman Showroom**.

### Cooper Design Space on-trend

"I'm buying for Summer and a bit of Fall," said Heather Abbott of **Bella** in Bakersfield, Calif. "I fill in where I need to and try new items too. I particularly like **Adelyn Rae**, **Greylin** and **Z Supply**."

Top sellers for Inland Empire, Calif.-based **Billy T** in the **Niche Showroom** were the embroidered Hello Sunshine and '70s Love washed-denim tops priced at \$43.50.

The feeling was positive at the **Bella Dahl** showroom. "Big sellers include our soft-structured maxi skirt with high side slit priced at \$79 and clip-stripe elastic-waist pullovers priced at \$66," said Kasey McKenna, West Coast sales manager.

### Order writing at Brand Assembly

**Brand Assembly** was offering everything from kitschy

things offered by Burlington, Vt.-based **Commando** priced at \$12.50 to Los Angeles **Gold Hawk** silk camisoles selling for \$58-\$68.

A big performer for made in Los Angeles was **Fresh Laundry's** linen flair pant with cotton yoga waist priced at \$62.

**Fabrizio Gianni**, also made in Los Angeles, just relaunched after a COVID hiatus with six styles of denim pants including tech-stretch and crop-flair pull-ons priced at \$105.

New water-resistant metallic raincoats with a hidden cinch waist priced at \$66 by **Anorak** were big sellers.

"We had several brands that had their best January market to date with us," said Hillary France, CEO and co-founder of the show. "Even though there was chatter of business slowing in stores, there was still an optimistic outlook for 2024."

### Denim strong at CMC

The iconic denim and apparel brand **Levi's** had a pop-up at the CMC while Turkish contemporary denim and apparel brand **Mavi** moved in. Its All Blue Well Blue men's and women's capsule collection of denim shackets and pants using all biodegradable materials and priced at \$58 were hot sellers.

"I've always loved Mavi's attention to detail, fit and flattering, soft, comfortable fabrics with a perfect price point," said Amara Bessa, owner of **Kariella** in Ojai, Calif.

"Our women's showrooms met with a wide mix of key retailers from around the West Coast such as **Lulus**, the **Catalina Yacht Club**, **JB Elliot**, **Habit** footwear and accessories, **Sloan Boutique PDX**, and **Fiorina**, to name just a few," said the CMC's Sabo. ●

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## Impressions Expo Delivers With Innovations, Technology and Trends

By Kelli Freeman Contributing Writer

**Impressions Expo**, the leading trade show and conference dedicated to the decorated-apparel and imprinted-products industry, was held Jan. 18–21 at the **Long Beach Convention Center** in Long Beach, Calif.

“Impressions Expo surpassed our expectations. With engaging activations in the arena to impactful displays in the lobby, the excitement resonated. The Shop Talks, expo floor and conference sessions drew enthusiastic crowds, leaving both attendees and exhibitors delighted with the successful outcome,” said Kayla McGarry, associate show director.

### Trending in technology

Israel-based **Kornit Digital** showcased Apollo, which, said CEO Ronen Samuel, “enables you to print directly on any fabric without the use of water and convert it to the product you want, whether it’s a dress or a sofa bed.” Samuel added, “You can produce 400 garments per hour of the highest quality, requiring only one operator to run it.” The new technology enables consumer orders to be turned around within 24 hours.

**Epson America, Inc.**, based in Los Alamitos, Calif., highlighted its SureColor F1070 entry-level hybrid DTG and DTFilm printer, designed to open new doors for garment decorators, designers and artisan businesses wanting direct-to-garment printing. “It’s beautiful, library quiet and fits just about anywhere,” said Tim Check, senior product manager, textile.

Japan-based **Mimaki** released its new TXF30075 direct-to-film printer with two

printheads, which is three times faster than a one-printhead model. “You’re looking at about 66 shirts per hour for an 11x14-inch design,” said Victoria Harris, senior textile segment specialist.

Wilmington, Del.–**DuPont** showcased its pigment inks for DTF and DTG printing with its Artistri innovation. The inks, developed for the CobraFlex printer, ran the entire day each day throughout the duration of the event. “It was exciting to see people coming back hours later to recheck if the printer was still running and see how much was printed so far,” said Gabriela Kim, global marketing manager for DuPont Artistri.

### What’s new in Ts

Vernon, Calif.–based **US Blanks** made a big push on sustainability with 55 percent hemp and 45 percent organic women’s V-neck and crop tops. The company also displayed competitive cut, sew and garment dye with 25 styles including its long-sleeve, flame-resistant fabric, which passes requirements for workwear.

Los Angeles–based **Los Angeles Apparel** is developing a heavier, plush, puffy fleece for hoodies, crewnecks and sweatpants. “We think it’s going to be really popular for us,” said Briana Alvarez, production coordinator, private label, who added, “It’s 16 oz. versus our 14 oz., comes in dolphin blue and is 100 percent cotton, so it’s shrink-free.

“We’re excited to be going into the new year with our just released EcoMax Tee made with 100 percent recycled polyester and cotton scraps dyed without water,” said Jeaneviv Siao, marketing and events manager at Los

Angeles–based designed, dyed and cut **Bella + Canvas**. The brand also released a 6 oz. heavyweight T-shirt with a boxy and relaxed fit.

Sarah Spivey at **Spy V Style** in Irvine, Calif., purchases promotional products and apparel with Bella + Canvas for schools, restaurants and corporate. “I like the colors and that it’s a little more modern than the typical T-shirt with a softer feel and a nicer fit than the standard generic T-shirt.”

Winston-Salem, N.C.–based **Hanes Brands** introduced its CiCLO technology, which allows plastic-based fibers to behave more like natural fibers. There’s also been a rediscovery of the Hanes heritage Beefy T. “People are looking for something a bit heavier—6 oz. 100 percent cotton, more durable, but still a soft, relaxed fit and closer to the streetwear trend going on right now,” said Marcus Davis, product manager.

Montreal-based **Gildan Inc.** introduced six new styles and nine vibrant colors to the line including the Gildan 2000. Its new

soft-cotton technology in T-shirts is said to do just about everything 100 percent cotton does.

Canada-based **American Apparel** excited customers with freshly screen-printed T-shirts to promote its new campaign, Craft the Culture, in conjunction with its renewed partnership with **Live Nation** entertainment as its official printwear supplier.

“The original fashion basics all started in 2001. Last year we didn’t have a hoodie; now, we practically doubled the line and are coming back with a reflex fleece because it has recycled poly in it,” said Director of Brand Marketing Jean-Francois Bergeron. Bergeron also shared his enthusiasm about the campaign being included at a number of events from Chicago to Los Angeles.

Atlanta-based **Alternative Apparel** offered a newer fabrication with a tri-blend cotton including modal natural fiber derived from beechwood pulp, which allows the fabric to use cotton dyes with a soft, more opaque finish. ●



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During the Jan. 16–17 editions of Swim Collective and Active Collective trends in Y2K fashion influences ticked high, according to Devon Ranger, show director.

## Co-located Collective Shows Lead Buyers Through the Latest in Swim, Active

**Emerald’s Collective Shows—Active Collective** and **Swim Collective**—hosted the Jan. 16–17 edition of its semi-annual Southern California event at the Huntington Beach, Calif., **Paséa Hotel & Spa**. A reception and fashion show were produced on the evening of Jan. 16 to increase networking opportunities off the show floor and share a glimpse into the offerings from the event’s exhibitors.

“We’re proud of our brand rosters,” Show Director Devon Ranger said. “We introduced our very first male model to our runway featuring a new swim brand to the show—**Kolibri**. I hope that going into summer we can have some men’s active-wear brands.”

Ranger also shared a few of her trend insights from the show, noting Y2K fashion trends are ticking in active and

swim with chocolate brown standing out as “the color of the season.” Swim styles inspired by these trends included halter necklines and strapless bikini sets. Active styles included flares, wide-leg pants and updated tracksuit looks in “effortless, baggy” silhouettes.

“Buttery-soft fabrics make it a million times better. We’re seeing little hints of velour,” said Ranger. “Some of my favorite trends are tennis skirts and dresses expanding way beyond the tennis court or golf course.”

The key with selling swim and active pieces is choosing pieces that are versatile as consumers style these items outside the gym and beyond the beach in their wardrobes. They are pairing their sports bras with jeans and blazers or wearing strapless bikini tops with romantic maxi skirts, revealed

Ranger.

**BC Brands** President Danielle Lafleur, whose company includes **Bandier** and **Carbon38**, participated in the show as an exhibitor but also walked the floor with a buyer mindset for retail operations.

Lafleur sought relevant products from other categories such as sun protection, which can be merchandised alongside apparel in retail locations. She discovered **Bask Suncare**, **LÀ SOL** and **Seaweed Bath Co.**

“A big trend is wellness versus true active,” said Lafleur. “I was able to connect with a few really incredible sunscreen brands. We’ll look to potentially stock some of those on Bandier but also use them for upcoming marketing and activations.”—*Dorothy Crouch*



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**TRADE-SHOW REPORT**



Kingpins New York at Pier 36/Basketball City provided insight into latest innovations to push the needle on cultivating sustainable practices in denim making.

**New York's January 2024 Textile-Event Roster Attracts Attendees Keen on Green**

By Dorothy Crouch Contributing Writer

New York City was the destination for apparel professionals across different categories Jan. 17–25 as the 2024 sourcing event calendar began with a full roster of shows. **Kingpins New York, Texworld New York City and Apparel Sourcing New York City, Première Vision New York, and the New York Fabric Show** boasted exhibitor rosters to suit every design, fiber, fabric, production and manufacturing need.

Despite an array of offerings at many of the shows, one consistent theme played out across the board: ecological mindfulness. Whether attendees were concerned about working with partners within their North American regions or wanted to discover alternative, sustainable fabrics, visitors to the New York shows looked forward, through Spring/Summer 2025, to become inspired, cultivate a creative vision or establish a plan for success over the coming year.

**Kingpins makes it easier to make denim green**

The Jan. 24–25 Kingpins New York show at Pier 36/Basketball City on the west side of Manhattan was the first to be held during Kingpins' 20th-anniversary year in the city where it was founded. The show provided an intimate setting for denimheads from every facet of the denim category and region of the world to discuss their next steps toward creating products that are as eco-conscious as they are cool.

"It's important that we help the community discover new products and methods that will help them meet their sustainability goals," said Vivian Wang, Kingpins Show managing director and global sales manager. "At Kingpins, we look at trends a little differently. We look at the economic, technological and cultural drivers behind the trends. For example we hosted a panel discussion in New York that explored how denim fit is evolving and what is instigating that evolution."

This show also included a fresh layout. Kingpins' seminar space and coffee station, in addition to The Boxes—an innovation and trend installation—were centrally located

in the middle of the show floor. Exhibitor booths stemmed from this central meeting area. "This new layout brought people to the center of the space and encouraged traffic flow throughout the entire show floor," noted Wang.

The intimate nature that Kingpins provides allows today's denim experts and the next generation of bluebloods to come together with a common goal of advancing the industry. Deirdre Jennings, business development manager at **Sapphire Mills**, an exhibitor that served as a show staff uniform-sponsored supplier, noted the event's positivity and the opportunities it provides for building connections among like-minded denim professionals.

"The industry's focus on eco-friendly practices and materials was obvious, and we were pleased to showcase our developments in this area," said Jennings. "Attendees at Kingpins NY were actively seeking textures, naturals, softness and drape in fabrics. Notably, there was a keen interest in our latest sustainability initiatives at both the fabric and plant levels."

**A green scene at Texworld and Apparel Sourcing**

The co-located Texworld New York City and Apparel Sourcing New York City from **Messe Frankfurt Inc.**, with **Printsource New York**, hosted its Jan. 22–24 exposition at midtown Manhattan's **Javits Center**, providing opportunities for attendees to explore innovations in resources such as fabrics, trims, accessories, garments and print design.

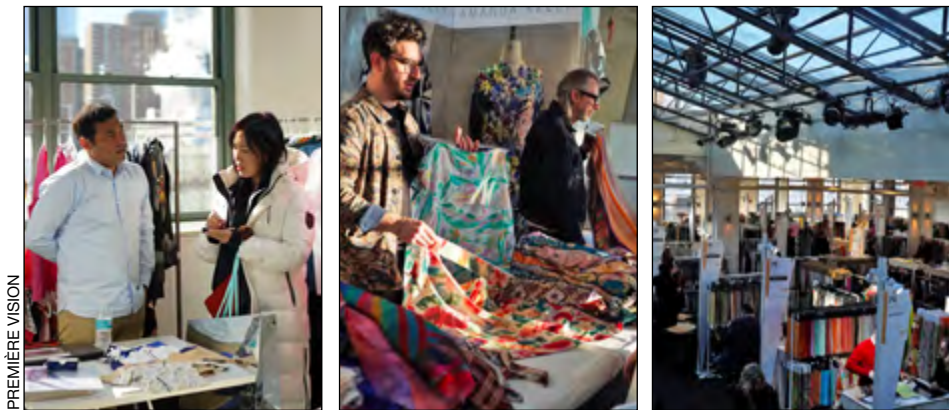
Partnering with the Milan-based educational institution **Arsutoria**, Texworld NYC produced a leather trend area. More than 200 material samples were showcased in the section to create a vision of aligning traditional craftwork with innovation.

More than 50 product categories were represented by exhibitors from countries including Korea, Turkey, Taiwan, Peru, China, Japan, India, Pakistan and the United States. During this edition of the show, attendance was up, exhibitors increased 10 percent and partnerships have grown, according to Walker Erwin, marketing manager of fashion and



Attendees headed to Texworld New York City and Apparel Sourcing New York City for fresh global offerings in fabrics, trims, accessories, garments and print design.

**TRADE-SHOW REPORT**



PREMIÈRE VISION

Première Vision New York used its “a better way” initiative to promote methods in sustainable sourcing during its Spring/Summer 2025 show.

apparel shows, who noted collaborations with SEAMS and the **Material Innovation Initiative**.

“We had a lot of new, special feature areas. Partnerships have grown a lot in the last year. We had the SEAMS Pavilion, which was U.S.A.-based suppliers and manufacturers. That was an area we’re looking to grow. Obviously since COVID we want domestic sourcing options.”

The Mii partnership yielded an exhibition of sustainable offerings including plant-based materials and alternative resources to build greener approaches to fashion.

“Regenerative fabrics were trending,” Erwin said. “We knew it would be popular, but it was interesting to see it come to fruition and see all the brands that are actually using them.”

**Première Vision in a new space**

During its Jan. 17–18 run, Première Vision New York produced its Spring/Summer 2025 show within a new downtown Manhattan event space, the **Tribeca Rooftop + Tribeca 360°**.

Première Vision’s “a better way” program, which was introduced during the July 2023 installment of the producer’s Paris show, was implemented during this New York edition to present greener sourcing options based on five pillars: social initiatives, impact of production sites, traceability, product-and-process compositions and sustainability, and the end-of-life of the finished product. “A better way” is designed by using information sourced from exhibitor surveys in addition to certification agencies including **ZDHC, GOTS, FSC and OEKO-TEX Standard 100**.

“A lot of people today think they’re doing sustainability. They do a little checkbox off of one sustainable criterion and say, ‘We’re a sustainable brand now, but they’re not,’ explained Michelle Tam, who manages visitors marketing for U.S., Canada and Mexico. “We had signs that differentiated our exhibitors that were part of the ‘a better way’ program so people could find the exhibitors and booths that offered sustainable fabrics.”

According to Jayesh Vir, president of the French textile firm **Green Whisper**, which offers fabrics made from banana fiber, the largest advantage that PV New York offers is accessibility in the “fashion capital of North

America,” which draws a number of United States–headquartered brands of different sizes.

“Sustainable textiles made from raw materials with zero impact on the environment. They were looking for alternatives to conventional sources like cotton, polyester,” said Vir. “Visitors had already done their homework before coming to the show. They have a clear idea of their requirement. As a result, we could make good quality contact and exchange. It was our first time at PV NYC and our experience was enriching. We had good quality contacts.”

**Fabric Show offers stateside sourcing**

The **Fabric Shows** hosted its New York Fabric Show Jan. 17–18 at the **New Yorker Hotel** in Midtown West on 34th Street. During the event, attendees found functional fabrics, sustainable resources, notions, trims and European collections. Exhibitors included the **Ermani Group, Telio, Products From Abroad, Junior Hagen, Carr Textiles** and **Jose Maria Ruiz**.

“At The Fabric Shows we focus on North America–based resources, and, at each of our shows we offer additional local resources,” said Susan Power, the show’s producer.

During the show, the **New York Embroidery Studio** hosted an interactive stand where attendees could have their event bags embroidered for a personal touch. Additional service providers included Brooklyn’s **MCM Enterprises** and **Spoiled Rotten USA** from the Bronx, which promoted local New York City production. **MMODE**, the Montreal-based organization focused on highlighting the region’s important brands.

Although the New York Fabric Show focused heavily on North American and local New York City–based resources, there was an international-sourcing presence. Blending a U.S. focus with a global reach allowed attendees a worldwide sourcing perspective within the intimate setting of The Fabric Shows’ model.

“While most companies are America based, our fabrics and trims are from around the world. Many of our U.S. and Canadian converters and importers have done the sourcing for buyers and bring them materials from the Americas, Europe and Asia,” said Power. “Additionally we welcome agents for European mills. NYFS also features a few select collections from India.” ●



THE FABRIC SHOWS

The January edition of New York Fabric Show provided attendees with opportunities to explore regional U.S. and North American resources in addition to select global partners.

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# A Shipping Tipping Point

By Nate Herman Senior Vice President, Policy, AAFA

2024 is starting off with a bang. The daily attacks on ships in the Red Sea, the most severe drought in the history of the Panama Canal, the looming expiration of the East and Gulf Coast ports labor contract governing some of the nation's busiest ports—all during an increase in consumer demand for clothing and footwear products.

Each of these issues alone should raise concerns for an industry reliant on shipping to move its products. Paired together, they present a dire picture for shipping in 2024, especially for an industry still battling inflation and a fickle consumer.

The Suez Canal, one of the world's largest gateways, has seen ship traffic drop precipitously since the start of attacks at the Red Sea. Instead, ships are doing something unheard of in decades, traveling around the southern tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope. This change adds significant costs in fuel and labor and adds weeks of delays multiplied by millions of containers of goods. These delays are creating knock-on effects, triggering equipment shortages as containers and boats are tied up for weeks longer than expected and worsening the carbon footprint by burning fuel for longer when we are trying to lessen that impact. And, on top of all that, traversing the Cape of Good Hope as winter approaches in the Southern Hemisphere will cause more delays as the southern passage becomes even more treacherous.

While the situation in the Panama Canal is not as unsafe, it is no less dire. Thanks to an unheard-of and unrelenting drought, the Panama Canal has again slashed the number of ships that can transit the canal to 24 ships, an over 30 percent reduction from the normal 38 ships a day. This does not even include the draft restrictions that have dramatically reduced the number of containers those ships can carry through the canal. To put this in stark terms, 791 fewer ships traversed the Panama Canal in the last quarter versus a year ago. Where are all of those ships going? Many had started to move to the Suez Canal, but with that option off the table some have started to go around Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. If anyone has read "The Wager," which I highly recommend, you would know that is no small feat, even in



Nate Herman



TOM FISK / PEXELS.COM

the best of weather. The situation has gotten so bad that one major carrier, Maersk, has announced it will instead move cargo by rail over Panama. That means it will empty ships on the Pacific side, load the cargo on trains, then reload the ships on the Atlantic side. I wouldn't want to do that with a few pounds of groceries let alone literally tons of in-demand consumer goods.

The labor contracts of dockworkers at all East/Gulf Coast ports expire on Sept. 30. Already the union representing dockworkers has threatened to strike if no deal is reached by the deadline. Yet the two sides are not even negotiating. As we saw on the West Coast last year, even if there is no strike we could see slowdowns and other work stoppages at the ports that were our industry's saviors during the supply-chain crisis. These ports now account for almost half of our product thanks to that very same migration from the West Coast over the shipping crisis.

The good news of increased consumer demand for AAFA member products is tempered by the fact that these products now must traverse this worsening logistics picture. The last supply-chain crisis did not end because the carriers, the ports and the railroads finally got their act together. Rather, the supply-chain crisis only ended when demand dropped as con-

sumers switched their buying patterns due to changing tastes and inflation, which itself was triggered by logistics-fueled cost increases.

We saw hot demand in 2022 that dropped suddenly to create massive inventory stockpiles in 2023. With those inventories now lowered to manageable levels and returning demand, we will be reliant again on an efficient logistics system operating at capacity.

Does the horizon look like a pileup of goods on the open sea? Rainy season usually starts in April in Panama. There could be a deal on a new East/Gulf Coast ports labor contract. The Red Sea crisis could fade, particularly if the global community unites behind a zero-tolerance approach to efforts to disrupt maritime shipping. And an economic recession is still a possibility. Only time will tell. But this time, develop contingency plans now for your cargo, no matter where you are going, and be prepared to respond quickly, utilizing all modes of transportation—ocean, air, rail and truck. ●

*Nate Herman leads the industry's policy work as Senior Vice President, Policy, at the American Apparel & Footwear Association. Follow with @HermanNate and connect on LinkedIn.*

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