

CALIFORNIA Apparel News

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INDUSTRY FOCUS: SWIM

Growing Sustainability Trends in Swim Continue to Shift the Category

By Dorothy Crouch *Contributing Writer*

Swim was once a category dominated by wasteful practices while also promoting unrealistic body standards. Despite the close relationship swim customers enjoy with the outdoors, many swimwear companies relied on a fashion calendar that encouraged consumers to stock up with many suits for the season while these businesses engaged in manufacturing that could harm the natural spaces where their goods are used.

The swim business also relied on marketing campaigns that once favored unattainable model-type bodies, ignoring many potential customers. This atmosphere of exclusivity caused customers to attempt to fit into industry standards. There has now been a shift over the last decade; customers are now demanding the swimwear industry fit into their pref-

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TECHNOLOGY

SPESA L.A. Event Accents Worker Value as Technologies Advance

By Dorothy Crouch *Contributing Writer*

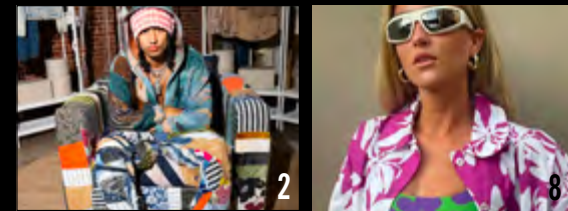
The **Sewn Products Equipment & Suppliers of the Americas** hosted its **Advancements in Manufacturing Technologies Conference** April 11 at the **California Market Center** in downtown Los Angeles, aiming to shift demand toward nearshoring options. SPESA President Michael McDonald has been a vocal supporter of gaining greater funding for the innovations in apparel.

“There are really cool startup technologies that could change the face of the industry, but you’re not getting **Microsoft, Dell, GE** or **Airbus** investing hundreds of millions or billions of dollars into the industry,” McDonald said during an interview with *California Apparel News*. “It’s all grassroots.”

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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IKEA—Nigel Xavier Earth Month Collaboration Promotes Eco

Earth Month 2024 might be finished, but **IKEA**'s April Open House in Los Angeles enlisted sustainability experts from different fields, including designer Nigel Xavier, to illustrate how to apply eco-friendly initiatives every day. Xavier reupholstered an armchair and created matching pants using textiles from the As-is section of **IKEA**'s Burbank, Calif., store. Items that are stocked in the Netherlands-headquartered **IKEA**'s As-is sections include discontinued goods, gently used products and components from past showroom displays.



Nigel Xavier attends the **IKEA** Open House in Hollywood, Calif., where the designer unveiled a couch and pants that were created using upcycled fabrics from the company.

"They reached out to me, and it was the perfect fit. They gave me the opportunity to take my creativity and bring my vision to **IKEA**," said Xavier. "[My vision] was to take the fabrics that they're not using anymore like tablecloths, pillow covers, curtains and things like that and patchwork them together onto one of my couches. I reupholstered a couch and created a whole

different world with it."

Although the event took place April 10 at **nya studios** in Hollywood, Calif., Xavier

hopes the collection serves as an inspiration for applying recycling, reuse and ecological awareness throughout the year to support a circular economy in fashion.

"Everything has more life to it, even when you're done with it," explained Xavier. "You just got to have that eye. You got to have that vision of what else you can see for it."

Xavier is known for his upcycling expertise, with a heavy reliance on denim, and secured his place as the season-two winner of **Netflix**'s "Next in Fashion" reality competition television series in 2023.

In addition to the Xavier collaboration, the **IKEA** Open House also featured collaborations with content creators Benji Le, who led planting demonstrations, and Nasim Lahbichi, who created plant-based **IKEA** dishes. **IKEA** also showcased its **TESAMMANS** limited-edition housewares collection, created with Dutch design studio **Raw Color**.

—Dorothy Crouch

Inside the Industry

Hollister has launched the Feel Good Fest Music Program, a first-of-its-kind initiative for the global teen retailer. The program focuses on bringing a diverse group of popular and trending musicians and **Hollister**'s feel-good spirit to live performances, social activations, merchandise, styling opportunities and more. The concert series will take place at dozens of high schools and other select venues around the country featuring performances by both viral and chart-topping artists like Benson Boone, Boys World, Claire Rosinkranz, Dylan Conrique, JVKE and WanMor. "Mental wellness and music are big priorities for our young-adult customers, and we are ecstatic to unite those two concepts in a cohesive, engaging and meaningful way," said Carey Collins Krug, chief marketing officer of parent company **Abercrombie & Fitch**.

Eastman, the specialty-materials company and creator of Naia cellulosic fibers, has formed a collaboration with Debrand, a next-life logistics company specializing in finding sustainable solutions to apparel waste for some of the world's top apparel and footwear brands. "We are committed to advancing sustainable solutions for the fashion industry," said Claudia de Witte, **Eastman**'s textiles sustainability leader. "Partnering with Debrand allows us to drive progress on our Naia sustainability goals, particularly mainstream circularity, by creating sustainable solutions for textiles that have reached end of life and turning them into valuable resources for Naia Renew fibers. This collaboration underscores our commitment to work closely with key collectors and sorters to drive the necessary infrastructure changes for advancing sustainability in the fashion industry."

TradeBeyond has announced its most powerful artificial-intelligence enhancements to date. Building on the company's strategic acquisition last year of Pivot88, a pioneer in AI-driven compliance and traceability solutions. "TradeBeyond has dramatically enhanced its market-leading chain of custody-management functionality," the company said in a release, "with an array of AI-powered tools designed to allow brands and retailers to more efficiently navigate complicated new global ESG regulations." Features include automatically checking scanned documents with multiple databases to identify blacklisted companies and other significant risks, complete chain-of-custody documentation prior to goods arrival, and AI-powered automatic notifications to both client and vendor identifying any missing pieces of information for immediate corrective action.

Possenja, a trailblazing newcomer in the cycling industry, has become Switzerland's first cycling brand to introduce the bluesign **PRODUCT** label, marking an important milestone in sustainable cycling apparel in Europe. These environmentally conscious, premium cycling essentials are now available on Digitec Galaxus as well as directly through **Possenja**'s website. This milestone underscores **Possenja**'s dedication to revolutionizing the cycling industry with environmentally responsible practices and options. "At **Possenja**, we are driven by a passion for sustainability and a desire to push the boundaries of what's possible," said **Possenja** CEO and co-founder Melissa Vostriakova. "Being the first Swiss cycling brand to offer bluesign **PRODUCTS** is a testament to our commitment to creating a happier, more sustainable future for all."

RETAIL

Marcum Symposium Promotes Optimism Amid 2024 Challenges

The **2024 Consumer Products & Retail Symposium** hosted by **Marcum Accountants and Advisors** afforded insights into planning for the most important seasons of the year, including back-to-school and holiday.

"There is plenty of opportunity to grow the business. It is up to the individual to figure out how and when they're going to do it," said keynote speaker Marshal Cohen, chief retail adviser with **Circana**, during "The Future of Retail" presentation. "It's about recognizing

there are things going on in retail that are optimistic."

One opportunity lies in the popularity of buy-now-pay-later financing, with 30 percent of consumers using this option. Forty-nine percent of shoppers ages 18–34, 35 percent of those 35–44 and 33 percent ages 45–54 have relied on BNPL. These numbers begin to fall among consumers 55 and older.

Despite Black Friday and Cyber Monday 2023 falling short of expectations, Cohen emphasized the importance of the last-minute



Marshal Cohen focused on methods for channeling retail challenges into opportunities for the second half of 2024, as he spoke during the **Marcum 2024 Consumer Products & Retail Symposium**.

surge in holiday shopping.

Andrew Rontondi, chief operations/information officer at **Dynamic Worldwide Logistics USA, Inc.**, discussed the state of the U.S. supply chain. Amid logistics challenges at the Suez Canal due to Middle East conflicts, a slowdown at the Panama Canal stemming from drought conditions and the September expiration of the International Longshoremen's Association contract, which affects East Coast and Gulf ports, Rontondi advised diversifying to the West Coast.

"The West Coast has plenty of space and no delays in the ports," said Rontondi during the April 18 event at the **E-Central Downtown Los Angeles Hotel**. "It's important for finance companies, manufacturers and importers to really plan. Two of our largest customers on the East Coast made a decision to move 40 percent of their product back to the West Coast." —D.C.

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2025



From eco-friendly initiatives to body positivity, what aspects of sustainability resonate most with your customers for 2024 into 2025?



Industry Focus

Continued from page 1

ferences for inclusive silhouettes, styles and representation in marketing campaigns in addition to greater adherence to sustainable practices.

California Apparel News asked swim-industry experts: *From eco-friendly initiatives to body positivity, what aspects of sustainability resonate most with your customers for 2024 into 2025?*

**Andréa Bernholtz
Founder
DRAYA by Swiminista**



DRAYA by Swiminista is renowned not only for its chic, comfortable and slimming designs but also for its unwavering commitment to ethical and sustainable practices. From its inception, Swiminista has dedicated itself to these principles—even our packaging is made from recycled materials and compostable products.

Growing up, I believed my family was poor simply because we recycled at a time when recycling and environmental consciousness were not widespread. My mother, ahead of her time, instilled these values in me, forming the foundation of who I am today. I have imbued my brand with this same love for the planet.

In the past, the terms “eco” and “sustainable” rarely conjured images of swimwear—or anything remotely sexy or chic and certainly not garments offering both slimming compression and comfort. Yet, at Swiminista, all of our swimwear is adjustable to create a customized fit for any body type, a key reason so many women return to us season after season.

DRAYA by Swiminista focuses on instilling confidence in women by creating designs that are not only comfortable and sexy but also mindful of environmental impact. For instance, it takes only 14 plastic bottles to produce one of our average one-piece bathing suits.

DRAYA by Swiminista was also created to maximize the utility of a customer’s wardrobe. Our motto, “Resortwear for Everywhere,” reflects our design philosophy. Items are not only swimsuits but also bodysuits, skirts that transform into dresses and clothing that transcends the resort to become integral parts of everyday life.

**Shantelle “S.LadyBug” Brumfield
Founder and Creative Director
Yarn Movement**



Traditional swimwear manufacturing often comes at a significant environmental cost, with synthetic materials and chemical dyes contributing to pollution and waste. In contrast, Yarn Movement champions eco-friendly materials, incorporating upcycled yarns and employing handmade crochet techniques to create swimwear that is not only stylish but also sustainable.

The ethos of Yarn Movement reflects a growing shift toward socially conscious consumption. As consumers become increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions, there is a rising demand for products that align with their values. Yarn Movement meets this demand head-on, offering high-quality, handcrafted swimwear that doesn’t compromise on style or sustainability.

Moreover, Yarn Movement’s commitment to affordability ensures that eco-friendly fashion is accessible to all. By providing competitive prices without sacrificing quality or ethics,

Yarn Movement sets a new standard for the swimwear industry, proving that sustainability and style can go hand in hand.

As summer approaches, Yarn Movement invites consumers to embrace a new era of swim and lifestyle fashion. Whether lounging poolside or catching waves at the beach, Yarn Movement promises swimwear that not only looks good but also feels good, knowing that every piece is a step toward a more sustainable future.

In a world where fast fashion threatens to drown out ethical alternatives, Yarn Movement stands tall as a symbol of change, offering a wave of hope for a more sustainable and stylish tomorrow.

**Holly Harshman
Co-founder and Creative Director
VYB Swim**



Customers who buy swimwear are increasingly looking for brands that prioritize sustainability initiatives. Some aspects of sustainability that resonate most with us at VYB Swim are:

1. Eco-friendly production with minimal waste. VYB uses dead-stock fabrics in our collections. We are lucky enough to have our manufacturing warehouse and factory in the same building as our offices in Tustin, Calif. These fabric rolls have never been worn, used or sold. We eliminate the need for producing more fabric, which would in turn create waste and use up more water and chemicals to treat and dye.

2. Fair labor practices. VYB values and ensures fair wages and safe working conditions for all of our workers.

3. Transparency. VYB is transparent about our manufacturing processes and sustainability efforts. By showing the process on our social channels, we gain the trust of our customers.

4. Carbon-footprint reduction. VYB takes steps to reduce our carbon footprint through sustainable packaging and offsetting emissions by engaging in less production overseas.

**Syncletica Maestas and Aida Moreno
Co-founders
Hola Swim**



Merging body positivity with environmental awareness in swimwear is not only achievable but also serves as a fantastic method to encourage self-confidence and ecological responsibility. Our experience shows that this is exactly what our customers are looking for.

Our swimwear is crafted from eco-friendly materials such as recycled nylon and regenerated polyester, which lessens the environmental toll of production and helps cut down on waste. At Hola, we’re committed to fair labor practices and sustainable manufacturing.

We provide an extensive selection of sizes to guarantee that individuals of all body types can find swimwear that’s both comfortable and confidence boosting. Moreover, Hola celebrates diversity by featuring all sizes and body types in our marketing.

We’ve also discovered that our customers prefer investing in high-quality swimwear that endures multiple seasons over inexpensive, disposable alternatives. By providing durable and adaptable swimwear, our customers can enjoy their swimsuits throughout the year. This practice decreases the volume of clothing that ends up in landfills while conserving resources.

**Debby Martin
National Sales Manager
L*Space**



Being more than a brand is important in today’s environment. Eco-friendly initiatives and body positivity are important to support within our swim industry. Swim can be for everybody and every body. Every brand has its own identity and how they support these messages, but both of these aspects are key to reshaping how we look at swim and the consumers who seek it.

Eco touches and expanded sizing resonate with consumers as the offering isn’t limited—they can be a part of the story, look and feel. As we all strive to take care of the Earth and our beaches, consumers become more involved in being a part of their community along with their favorite brands. Getting creative with Econyl, Repreve and working within ethical sources such as the Forest Stewardship are steps in the right direction to connect with consumers and provide a bright future along the coast.

**Melissa McGlynn
Senior Strategic Account Manager, Apparel
The LYCRA Company**



When we introduced our LYCRA ADAPTIV fiber, we solved a timeless consumer need—great stretch with no sacrifice in comfort, even when in motion, for any body size. Now we are bringing that innovation to swimwear with LYCRA ADAPTIV XTRA LIFE fiber.

As versatile as it is durable, it delivers dynamic comfort and longevity. The marriage of an adaptable, wider-fit window with resistance to aggressive swim environments such as chlorinated pools and sunscreen is an innovation that meets the moment. Here we have created a product offering that resonates because it means our customers can create swimwear that makes sizing more accommodating while promoting a truly durable product—one that simply lasts longer.

**Jane Preston
Category Manager—Swim, Footwear and Coastal Gifts
Surf Expo**



Seventy-five percent of our exhibitors are making a conscious effort to be sustainable, especially with packaging. For sure, using textiles made from fishing nets are at the forefront.

Exhibitors are using Instagram to highlight women and models who, in the past, would be considered too big to wear a bikini. These campaigns work as women see themselves in the pictures, proud and happy to be wearing a bikini.

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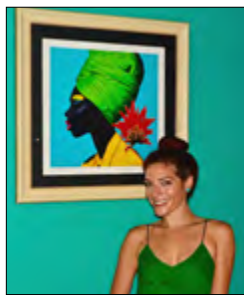
[#SeeYouAtSwimShow](https://twitter.com/SeeYouAtSwimShow)

From eco-friendly initiatives to body positivity, what aspects of sustainability resonate most with your customers for 2024 into 2025?

Industry Focus

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Lauren Quinn
Founder and Creative Director
Bromelia Swimwear



Sustainability is such a trending word, but what weight does it really have for our customers?

Consumers these days expect that at least part of their purchase is a conscious one because the word “sustainable” is something most name brands attach to products in all corners of the market. But what we find most impactful is a combination of body positivity with an eco-friendly kicker.

The term “sustainable” can be nebulous to a consumer as it isn’t something they can see or feel. But when they try on and believe in the product—and are then informed of its ethical roots—the experience becomes truly impactful.

Every woman has something they don’t love about their curves, but, by creating designs that help mitigate these discomforts as well as showing them on relatable models, a woman is guided more quickly toward not just body acceptance but also body empowerment.

Women are done with accepting that they all have to fit into the same teeny bikini or buy a one-piece that leaves them feeling like they gave up. Bromelia Swimwear’s focus is on relating to this woman and creating garments that allow her to be herself and not feel dread about it.

The sweet spot in this 2024–2025 season is when this gal learns that the swimsuit she is buying encompasses eco-friendly initiatives. This becomes not just an empowering purchase but also a mindful one—and that is a forever trend.

Devon Ranger
Show Director
Collective Shows



There is very good reason we are seeing sustainability efforts becoming more and more prevalent throughout the swimwear industry today. Swimwear brands have a responsibility to educate consumers on where materials are sourced and how they are made. That really sticks with consumers and retailers.

Take swimwear brand JOLYN as a perfect example. JOLYN uses

a SurfTec fabric made from recycled fishing nets, which has opened up new partnership opportunities and activations with content creators who choose to work only with brands who make sustainability a priority.

Swimwear brand Change of Scenery has also received a lot of intrigue around their sustainability efforts—everything is recycled, from their packaging to the fabric used in 100 percent of their swim collections.

Although it might not be the sole driver of consumer purchases, this topic remains top of mind for consumers. All of these reasons are why we have incorporated a “feel it” display into our shows, where attendees can learn more about the specifics of the fabrics behind the brands. Any brand putting themselves in a position to foster an industry in upholding sustainable practices is something that would resonate well with any consumer or retailer.

Erik Rosete
Founder and President
Art Hearts Fashion



Fashion upcycling is blazing a trail through the style world in 2024 like a wildfire of creativity. It’s not just a trend; it’s a movement sweeping through Art Hearts Fashion designers and beyond.

Imagine transforming forgotten garments into stunning new pieces, infusing them with your unique vision and flair. Upcycling is the ultimate fashion fusion of artistry, sustainability and love,

where every stitch tells a story of ingenuity and passion. It’s a revolution of inclusion, where everyone is invited to unleash their inner designer and redefine the boundaries of fashion.

Seth H. Schreiber
President
DRSTAR | Sands 51



In 2013, I resigned from my role as chief operating officer for A.H. Schreiber Co Inc., where I had worked for 25 years. We were producing between 13 million and 15 million garments annually across many platforms.

I privately purchased my Dominican operation and launched a new chapter in my life with DRSTAR. My mantra was, and has gained much steam over the

years, “If you can’t feel it, touch it, see it or understand it, don’t invest in it.”

We created a nearshore facility so the Western Hemisphere entrepreneurs could gain virtual ownership over their processes. Our client base reduced its carbon footprint and currently utilizes many U.S. resources, creating a more easily controlled environment.

My team has gained the experience over the years to be nimble enough to produce for many private-label better brands and bold enough to produce for big-box operations.

Judy Stein
Executive Director
SwimShow



Both sustainability and inclusive sizing have always been an integral part of SwimShow. Some of our veteran brands have championed the size inclusivity space for years, with a size range from XS to XXL. Today, we definitely see a rise in brands developing a range up to a size 24 and factoring in cup sizes for larger busts as well. Brands are making sure size inclusivity doesn’t compromise

styles that follow trends. You can find everything from a tiny bikini for every body type to fuller-coverage pieces in a full-size range.

Additionally, sustainability via eco-friendly fabrics is definitely on the rise with a large percentage of brands using fabrics that are made from recycled PET plastics, biodegradable materials and some even using organic dyes. We all look into what’s best for our diets with the food we eat, so why not do the same with the fabrics and brands we wear? With constantly developing research, we always strive to work with brands that are following in these footsteps.

Elizabeth Taylor
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Curvy Beach



As one of the first companies focused on string bikinis in large sizes, Curvy Beach has always stood for and been grounded in body positivity.

Since our inception in 2017, customers have shared with us their struggles finding swimwear that fits so they can enjoy the beach and let everything else go.

We actually expanded our sizing this year by going down a size

to medium, which is pretty much unheard of in the swim-fashion industry.

I worked for 15 years as a professional fit model in the garment center of New York City, helping brands with their plus lines. Often it was companies going up in sizing, never down.

Curvy Beach prides itself on being sustainable by using open-market fabrics, not producing any fabric of our own, and giving back to the community with our America-made factory, sewers and warehouse.

Going into 2025, I feel that sentiment is only growing and becoming more valid. We all deserve to feel happy and confident in our swimwear and beyond.

I’m grateful to have customers from all over the world in shapes and sizes I work with to make sure we are giving them what they need.

Sherry Wood
Director of Merchandising
Texollini



For 2024 and moving into 2025, Texollini customers are resonating strongly with sustainability initiatives that encompass a holistic approach, including environmental consciousness, ethical sourcing, social responsibility and inclusivity. This means brands that prioritize eco-friendly practices, source sustainable fabrics, support fair labor conditions, promote body positivity, and embrace diversity and inclusivity in their operations are the ones that are making an impression in the marketplace.

Our customers look to Texollini not only for eco-friendly fabrics but also for our sustainable practices at our fully vertical mill. Texollini prioritizes sustainability by reducing carbon emissions and minimizing waste while using renewable energy sources.

Our swimwear brands increasingly want representation of inclusivity. This means embracing diversity within their product offerings. Texollini makes investments in research and development of new swim collections every year, using sustainable yarns to create new Superfino jerseys, jacquards and other novelty stitches. Overall, our customers are looking to deliver quality products while partnering with Texollini to align with their values and contribute positively to society and the environment.

** Responses have been edited for clarity and space.*

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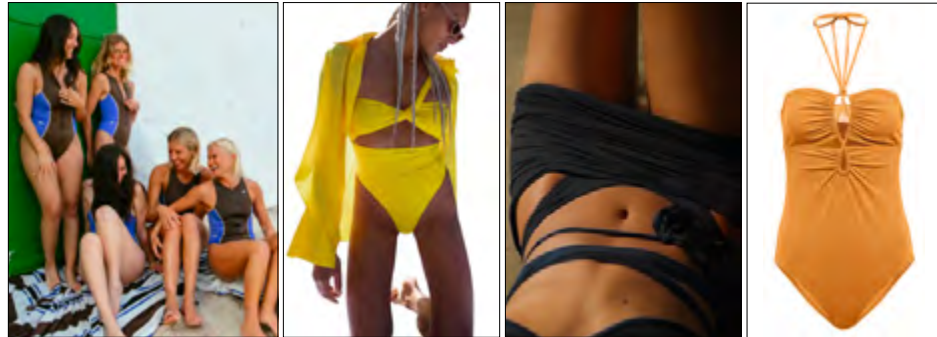
SS25 Swimwear: Fashion as Usual

By Peclers Paris

Swimwear keeps blurring the line between fashion and sportswear to become an integral part of a woman's wardrobe. It's a phenomenon that involves both the hijacking of sportswear-aesthetic codes and new ways of treating swimwear as a fashion item to be integrated into complete silhouettes.

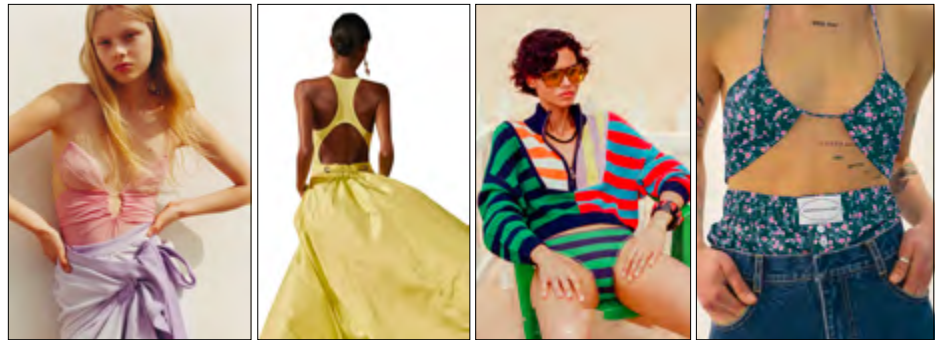
From twisted sports codes to couture-like swimwear

Couture and sports: an exchange of good practices



The de-compartmentalization of sports and casual wardrobes, already well established in ready-to-wear, is naturally reflected in the evolution of swimwear. Just as technical sportswear has become a fashion statement like any other, so sports swimwear is diverted from its primary use—the wetsuit in particular—for an aesthetic that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing in fine fabric versions with a play of topstitching and contrasting colors. At the same time, drapes and bows make up couture swimsuits to be worn for swimming or as a top with a skirt, dressy pants or jeans.

Think full outfit



It's the logical consequence of this de-compartmentalization—you build your outfit around your swimsuit. Inspiration comes directly from the catwalk, where, back from the '90s, sheer fabrics show the panties off, complete with bras looking like swimsuit tops. It's all about blurring the lines and revealing toned abs. In addition to the above-mentioned mix of swimwear pieces and dressier garments, you can also go for a total look with designated pieces that complement your swimsuit. Tops, skirts or light sweaters: outfits designed as modular sets to fit the various needs of the day step by step.

Color and prints: everything but neutral

Pastoral and tropical: Inspirations that tell a story



Fashion is all about storytelling. So, whether it's developing couture codes or sublimating sports codes, swimwear is becoming more and more narrative, inscribing itself in rich and precise universes of reference. This is particularly true of prints and color, with two main directions for SS25. The first evokes Polynesia, with graphic, brightly colorful prints, abstracted leaves and shells, or animal motifs. The second takes up the codes of folk illustrations, with soft color palettes and naive stylization, geometric compositions and a play on texture, with crochet and English embroidery as another way of playing with pattern in a more demure way.

Mix but do not necessarily match



Being bold and surprising when it comes to mixing and matching is another way to enhance the fashion potential of swimwear. In addition to the genre mixing already mentioned, achieving a sense of sophisticated clash is also about mixing the elements of an outfit without totally matching them. For example: mixing coordinated patterns in different scales, or contrasting patterns such as stripes with figurative prints, or bold color contrasts. Embellishments are also a way of creating points of rupture—beads, cords, applied motifs or sophisticated bows create a surprise, unexpected effect.

Peclers Paris is a leading lifestyle trend-forecasting agency focused on building brands through the expertise of an international team of designers, strategic planners, futurists and consultants. The company has headquarters in Paris, Los Angeles and Shanghai.

TRADE SHOWS

Functional Fabric Fair Highlights New Exhibit Based on NASA Technology

Functional Fabric Fair powered by PERFORMANCE DAYS wrapped up another successful show for product sourcing, networking, innovation and education April 17–18 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore. The show drew 2,100 attendees and featured over 260 textile suppliers from across the globe offering sustainable functional fabrics for the apparel industry's Spring 2025/2026 collections.

"This spring's event exceeded all expectations," said Steve McCullough, event director of the show. "The success of the first day laid a solid foundation for what led to be an unforgettable event."

The Trend Forum showcased a collection of 100 percent sustainable trend fabrics and accessories curated by a panel of experts. The Innovation Zone showcased never-before-seen products and technologies soon to hit the market, while the new Sustainability Lounge provided a collaborative environment shaping the future of sustainability.

The Outdoor Recreation Archive from Utah State University highlighted the trends and innovations of the 1990s, showcasing four different genres of outdoor clothing that



NASA Technology Transfer Program

emerged during this decade including urban outdoor, grunge, heritage and climb-inspired.

New to Functional Fabric Fair was an exhibition highlighting the NASA Technology Transfer Program, which ensures that innovations developed for exploration and discovery are broadly available to the public, thereby maximizing the benefit to the nation. Additionally, USU's Outdoor Product Design & Development student projects showcased revolutionary designs using NASA-technology patents.

—Christian Chensvold

SwimShow, Paraiso Miami Swim Week to Present Summer Fashion Summit

Summer comes early this year as the swimwear market in Miami shifts to June, a month earlier than previous years. As the first and longest-running swimwear-industry platform, SwimShow—which will take place June 1–3 at the Miami Beach Convention Center—looks forward to welcoming over a hundred exhibitors showing Spring and Resort 2025 collections.

The show promises an array of new brands and strategic partnerships aimed at both exhibitors and attendees, including free tickets to the Summer Fashion Summit in partnership with Paraiso Miami Swim Week, which brings together industry talks, panel discussions, keynote lectures with experts from the worlds of media, retail and consumer behavior right to the SwimShow floor.

Summer Fashion Summit is an exclusive two-day conference bringing together top industry players in swim- and resortwear, AI in fashion and sustainability solutions. Held June 1–2, the summit will feature panel discussions and master classes on current trends in summer fashion, sustainability, marketing and communications led by leaders in design, business, publishing, technology,



Summer Fashion Summit debuts

social media and PR.

Founded over 40 years ago, SwimShow continues to cement its position as a pioneering force in the industry. "SwimShow is dedicated to representing all swim tiers and categories," said Judy Stein, executive director of SwimShow. "Our platform has a proud history of collaborating with size-inclusive brands, trendsetters and sustainability pioneers. By bringing together this diverse array of brands, SwimShow endeavors to unite the swim industry within a single, cohesive space."—C.C.

TECHNOLOGY



Left: The 2024 SPESA Advancements in Manufacturing Technologies Conference drew attendees to the California Market Center for discussions with panelists including Ketty Pillet of Lectra (seated second from right). Right: tours of the Tukatech Innovation Center

SPESA *Continued from page 1*

McDonald further explained that apparel companies want to create a better apparel industry but don't know where to start regarding new technology.

"How do we build out a better waste-management system? What technologies exist to support a concept in circularity? AI and circularity are novel topics in our industry," McDonald explained. "A lot of the conversations I heard between people and the technology companies during the conference were regarding 'how can you help me collect data?'"

Attendees were also afforded the opportunity to tour **Tukatech's** Innovation Center and the vertical **US Standard Apparel** factory in Vernon, Calif., on April 12. Both Tukatech founder Ram Sareen and US Standard Apparel President of Manufacturing Marty Bailey participated in a panel covering "The Future of Garment Manufacturing in Los Angeles (And Beyond)" with Ilse Metcheck, founder of the **California Fashion Association**.

"The younger generation wants to be in fashion, but on the fashion side or technology side. In order to build a workforce to carry this industry forward, we have to incorporate technology that grabs people's interest," said Bailey in an interview with *California Apparel News*. "If you're helping companies to be successful, then you're helping members of the community, those professional apparel and textile workers, to be successful."

Panelist Stephanie Choi, chief executive officer of Los Angeles-based **Rewilder**, participated in the panel "Sustainability in Garment Manufacturing." Choi reflected on the conference experience and explained the pleasant surprise of discovering camaraderie with professionals from other areas of the apparel industry amid shared challenges.

"At the conference, I found there is this entire other world of people who know about [sustainability], have heard about it and care about it but might not have the same knowledge or background or experience working in the sustainability space. We're all a part of this in our own respective siloes," Choi said, speaking with *California Apparel News*.

The words of a fellow speaker and industry veteran resonated with Choi, "Ram said, 'We are so lucky to have all of these resources here, but everyone is so engaged in their own lane; we're slowly learning how to collaborate.' My hope for the future is to accelerate that collaboration, not be so secretive and be in service of something greater than ourselves."

As the apparel industry shifts to embrace a more collaborative course, Corinne Broth-

ers, owner and designer of Los Angeles' **Rule Design & Development**, also felt the change. Opening the conversation to include workers at every level of the industry left Brothers feeling hopeful after the event.

"Anybody that was promoting new manufacturing technology seemed open and engaged with pulling people in one on one," Brothers explained. "We also had representatives from the **Garment Worker Center**, who are on the frontlines of representing small businesses and garment workers. There is a barrier to entry, and creating a welcoming environment felt inclusive and engaging."

As workers fear threats to their jobs stemming from advancements in AI, panelists showed attendees how they can allay employee concerns through sharing plans for education and training.

"One of the most critical components to any of these systems, whether it's automated machinery, a unit production system or shop-floor control—without the engineering or the training you're left being inefficient with equipment or software that is designed to make it more efficient," explained John Robinson, senior strategic account manager with Alpharetta, Ga.-based **Aptean** during the session, "Supply Chain Efficiency Across the Board: From the Factory Floor to the Global Supply Chain."

Traveling from El Salvador, Alba Cruz, corporate engineering manager for New York-headquartered **Garan Inc.**, was interested in learning more about Tukatech's offerings. Cruz feels the potential for AI can allow workers to excel at their jobs and increase their skill sets. The technology needs human management to function, which means it will support worker advancement—not threaten it, according to Cruz.


"Instead of my operator sitting down and sewing, I am going to teach my operator how to feed the material into the machine, analyze information or perform quality control. This is going to challenge us to open our minds to bring up new jobs," said Cruz. "You will have to program it. There will always be human assistance."


AI's reliance on humans places greater value on workers as they increase efficiency. During "A Conversation on Industry Evolution Part II: Artificial Intelligence," vice president of marketing for Paris-based **Lectra**, Ketty Pillet, spoke about how these technologies can also reduce costs for apparel companies.

"Data learning helps us save—it's good for waste, but it's also good for the bottom line. When you save 2-3 percent of fabrics, you save money," Pillet explained. "That is hundreds of thousands of dollars for some companies." ●

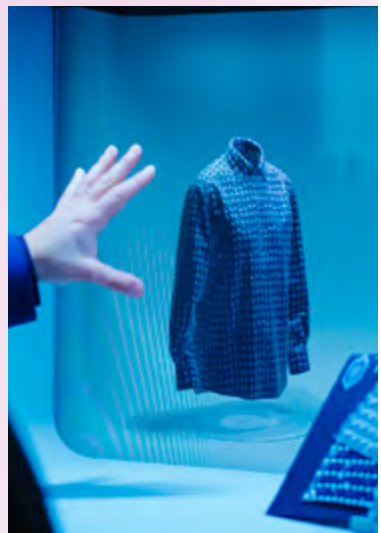


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Trade Shows SwimShow

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INDUSTRY VOICES

April Showers Bring May Flowers

By Beth Hughes Aafa Vice President, Trade and Customs Policy

When it rains it pours. We've seen a torrent of trade legislation introduced in Congress this spring.

As we celebrate World Trade Month, we welcome key trade policies being introduced by lawmakers.

Let's take a trip around the globe, starting in the United States.

A quick refresher: The apparel and footwear sectors face higher tariffs than most other industries, meaning the clothes and shoes you buy for yourself and your family cost more because of this hidden, regressive tax. Believe it or not, in many cases shoes and clothing designated for women cost even more because of tariff policy that is gender-coded! We know that trade benefits American consumers, workers and families, but the current U.S. tariff policy works against them by raising prices on everyday goods.

Just last month, representatives Lizzie Fletcher (D-Texas) and Brittany Pettersen (D-Colo.) introduced the **Pink Tariffs Study Act**. This bill examines how the U.S. tariff system creates a gender bias, and we trust it will be eye-opening for their fellow legislators.

In our backyard, Haiti has become an increasingly difficult place to do business due to the recent resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry and a surge in gang violence. Apparel production in Haiti creates more than 50,000 Haitian jobs and supports tens of thousands more Haitians and the communities in which they live. But the apparel jobs, and the communities they support, are now at risk because the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) and the Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP) acts, commonly known as HOPE/HELP, are set to expire next year. There is no question that Haiti is at a critical juncture. Congress has a great opportunity now to provide much-needed stability to the Haitian people and certainty to U.S. companies producing in Haiti by passing legislation for the long-term renewal of the HOPE/HELP programs.

Let's head across the Atlantic to the African continent. Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Jim Risch (R-Idaho) introduced legislation to extend the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) for another 16 years. Currently set to expire in September 2025, AGOA is a pivotal trade-preference program that provides duty-free access to the U.S. market, fostering economic growth and opportunity between the U.S. and eligible sub-Saharan African countries. U.S. apparel brands and retailers rely on AGOA to diversify their supply chains for apparel and footwear. As we fast approach AGOA's expiration date, we are hopeful that the **AGOA Renewal**

and **Improvement Act of 2024** will pass and be signed into law.

Let's move right along to the Indo-Pacific, where two key bills have been introduced. The first, the **U.S. Trade Leadership in the Indo-Pacific Act**, led by Representative Carol Miller (R-W.V.) is an effort to re-engage with our allies in the Indo-Pacific on trade by studying and recommending a strategy Congress can take to lead in the region. Two regional trade agreements—the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—are currently forging the way in the region without the United States. We're left out of key markets because we aren't negotiating meaningful and comprehensive trade agreements in the region. When we're left out, prices for American families rise, and job opportunities for American workers are lost.

The other bill that is long overdue is the **Generalized System Preferences (GSP) Reform Act**. GSP is designed to support

economic development in select developing countries by removing tariff barriers on qualifying products like travel goods while supporting worker rights, intellectual-property protection and the rule of law in these beneficiary countries. GSP has always had bipartisan support. But GSP's three-year lapse has been unexplainable and damaging to American businesses, American workers and beneficiary countries alike. Once renewed, GSP can have a very real impact on the cost and offering of everyday goods such as backpacks for schoolchildren.

Bottom line: U.S. policy that increases trade and reduces tariffs with our allies will help lower costs we're seeing due to inflation and provide new opportunities for American businesses and American workers.

Congress has a key role to play in trade policy, and it's a relief to finally see these four bills come out. Lawmakers must now see them through to the President's desk. The U.S. presidential election is around the corner. Campaign season will effectively halt legislating, so time is of the essence.

Here's hoping that April showers really do bring May flowers—and passage of these much-needed trade bills. And let's not place extra tariffs on anything because of pink, floral or lace.

Beth Hughes is vice president, trade and customs policy, at the American Apparel & Footwear Association, where she oversees Aafa's Trade Policy Committee and Aafa's Customs Group. She is also chief spokesperson for the Coalition for Economic Partnership in the Americas (CEPA) launched in November 2021. Follow on LinkedIn & X @BeffRae



Beth Hughes, Aafa Vice President, Trade and Customs Policy



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CHRISTIAN CHENSVD

CONTRIBUTORS
VOLKER CORELL
DOROTHY CROUCH
KELLI FREEMAN
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