

SPECIAL SECTION **WWD** Studios
POWERED BY:

Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary

Clockwise from left:
Runway looks from
Jeffrey Taylor, Jiyeon
Lee, Jacqueline
Chen, Kara Kroeger.

SUPIMA'S
ANNUAL DESIGN
COMPETITION
MARKS ITS TENTH
ANNIVERSARY:
STUDENT
DESIGNERS
LAUNCH CAREER
PATHS; SUPIMA
ELEVATES
CONSUMER
ENGAGEMENT
WITH CAMPAIGNS;
SHARES HISTORY
OF SUPIMA
COTTON; AND
EXECUTIVE
INSIGHTS FROM
SUPIMA.



CREATING LEGACY

There's a lot to love about Supima.



Our iconic Men's Performance Polo and Women's Oxford Shirt—
now in 100% Supima cotton.

*Brooks Brothers congratulates
Supima on the 10th anniversary
of its Design Competition.*

BrooksBrothers.com/SupimaWWD



Brooks Brothers

SUPIMA[®]
WORLD'S FINEST COTTONS

Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary

SCAD's Jeffrey Taylor
(third from right)
wins the 2016
Supima Design
Competition.



INCUBATING TALENT: SUPIMA'S ANNUAL DESIGN COMPETITION

THE COMPETITION CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY.

SINCE its inception in 2009, the Supima Design Competition has not only evolved into a program that serves as a bridge between academic coursework and the realities of the runway, but also as a launchpad for new fashion talent.

The competition, an annual event that spotlights emerging design talent, celebrates its 10th anniversary this year for Supima, a nonprofit organization that promotes Supima cotton. This year's competition will be held on Sept. 7 at Pier 59 Studios in New York.

The event began as a local design contest that has since evolved into an international affair. Today, the show includes a New York Fashion Week-sanctioned runway show for the fall event and, for the

third consecutive year, an additional presentation of the collections will be shown during Paris Fashion Week.

In its early years, the contest was an open call for design talent and provided an opportunity for Supima to work with budding designers. In its fourth year running, Supima partnered with design schools, which was a turning point for the competition. The new partnership allowed Supima to work with top talent from each school in addition to teaching classes, donating fabrics to fashion departments and opening up a new level of collaboration with young talent in the design sphere.

Universities included in this year's event are: Drexel University; Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising; Fashion Institute of Technology; Kent State University; New School's Parsons School of Design;

Rhode Island School of Design, and the Savannah College of Art and Design.

"This really started from a perspective of finding a way for Supima to give back to the industry and play a productive role in supporting emerging designers and design schools and that community," said Buxton Midyette, Vice President of Marketing and Promotions at Supima. "The competition had its genesis as a fabric show, where the best mills from around the world were gathered here in New York twice a year to showcase the latest in fabrics."

Each school selects one graduating senior to represent the university as a finalist to compete. Winners receive a \$10,000 cash prize as well as exposure to top fashion industry executives, fashion press and social media influencers.

The 2017 finalists include: Lela

Thompson of Drexel University; Elizabeth "Nancy" Hennessey of the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising; Alyssa Wardrop of the Fashion Institute of Technology; Sarah Johnson of Kent State University; Margaret Kwon of Parsons The New School; Abigail Griswold of the Rhode Island School of Design, and Alexandra Pijut of the Savannah College of Art and Design.

The panel of judges is comprised of professionals from the fashion and media world that collectively select the winner. Judges for the 2017 competition will be announced in July.

"We're so fortunate to have the design schools as partners," Midyette said. "That has been one of the most fruitful relationships that we've developed over the past decade. We absolutely love the creativity, hard work and passion they bring into preparing designers to go out into the industry." Midyette added that the competition "helps bridge the academic experience that the schools provide to transitioning their graduates into the industry by providing a very supported environment."

Each university arranges mentorships for its finalists in addition to Supima's design mentor, Bibhu Mohapatra, a CFDA Award-winning designer, who has worked with the brand for last three years. Participants are required to create five looks for each type of Supima fabric: shirting; knit; velveteen; twill, and denim. Finalists must design one look for each fabric, amounting to a collection of five looks.

"Whether they win or lose, they've done their best work and they end up with a portfolio that opens all kinds of opportunities for them to progress in whatever career path they choose, whether it's to ►

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF THE SUPIMA DESIGN CHALLENGE

INSPIRATION KNOWS NO BOUNDS

FIT is honored to celebrate Supima's 10-year sponsorship of this outstanding competition and offers congratulations to the current student nominee Alyssa Wardrop. We extend our gratitude to Supima for its ongoing commitment to higher education.

Dress designed by Nnamdi Agum, FIT's finalist in the 2015 Supima Design Competition.

Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary

work in a major fashion house or to start their own brand," Midyette told WWD.

Forgoing typical eveningwear fabrics such as taffeta and silk, the unconventional nature of Supima's textiles challenges students to rethink traditional eveningwear. Judges look forward to seeing students' variations with embellishments, manipulations of fabric or unconventional designs in knitwear.

"These fabrics are really beautiful fabrics and once they're kind of disconnected from their predominate use, whether it's knits for T-shirts or denim for jeans, once you've kind of set that aside and just look at them as fabrics, all kinds of different possibilities open up," he said.

Past successes include Jeffrey Taylor of the Savannah College of Art and Design. Taylor was recently featured in Teen Vogue and has been touring to showcase his collection to prominent industry members.

Competition alumna Abbey Glass, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, went on to start her own contemporary women's ready-to-wear and custom clothing business based in Atlanta. Glass designs the namesake collection and runs a team of six with the help of her mother. The brand's apparel is sold to

approximately 40 specialty stores across the country. In March, Glass opened a flagship retail store at Atlanta's Ponce City Market; the shop was mentioned as a "notably cool place to shop in Atlanta" in the June issue of Elle Magazine.

Duston Jasso, a 2016 Supima student participant and graduate of the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, said his experience with the Supima Design Competition "was a dream come true; it was so surreal being able to show during New York Fashion Week. It was a dream of mine since I was 10. The program was life changing...to not even be out of college at FIDM and to receive this opportunity was mind-blowing. It was such a beautiful, meaningful, educational experience and opportunity."

"Supima is such an amazing organization and they have helped me immeasurably to launch my career," Jasso added. "The program was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I would not trade for life's most precious jewels."

Parsons School of Design said it looks forward to the success of its recent graduate Margaret Kwon, who is competing as a finalist in this year's design competition. The school also said it "congratulates Supima on [the event's] anniversary of



Design by
Jacob Blau of RISD,
Supima Design
Competition 2016

Design by
Duston Jasso
of FIDM,
Supima Design
Competition 2016



"We absolutely love the creativity, hard work and passion they bring into preparing designers to go out into the industry."

— BUXTON MIDYETTE, SUPIMA

their design competition. Supima's commitment to producing equally strong and soft cotton fabrics enriches the possibilities of our design students to create beautiful and lasting garments."

Drexel University, the newest participant in the competition, said it too was looking forward to their students' participation in the event. "There are more competitions for students to consider than ever before," said Lisa Hayes of Drexel University. "As a student, having your work showcased can serve as a springboard, but you must

choose wisely as the commitment is huge if you wish to succeed."

"Students enjoyed Supima's visit to campus where they learned about the luxury cotton and the benefits of incorporating it into their design process now and in the future," Hayes explained. "They could relate to many of the brands and were particularly impressed with the hands-on approach to working within the domestic supply chain. Hearing stories about how Supima works with American growers in particular is important to this generation of young designers."

It's important to note that past participating finalists have developed career paths that include starting their own labels or working for companies and brands such as Calvin Klein, Theory, Ralph Lauren and PVH. Companies sponsoring the event include Brooks Brothers, AG, Corso Como, Uniqlo, MAC, Olah Inc., Olympias, Aveda, Kurabo and Albini.

"They all start with the same five fabrics but they all end up in very different places," Midyette said. "It's really impressive to see [the students] bring their creativity to this challenge." ■



CONGRATULATIONS TO SUPIMA ON 10 YEARS OF STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

ENHANCING THE FABRIC OF FASHION

SCAD is honored to be part of the 10th annual Supima Design Competition and shares its mission to introduce next-generation talent to the fashion industry. Two prime examples are the most recent winners, Kate McKenna-Schliep in 2015 and Jeffrey Taylor in 2016, each graduates of the top-rated SCAD School of Fashion.

Find your style at scad.edu/fashion.

SCAD The University for Creative Careers
ATLANTA HONG KONG LACOSTE SAVANNAH eLEARNING

Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary

A STORY THAT FINDS ITS ROOTS IN HIGH-QUALITY COTTON

SUPIMA COTTON IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S
LARGEST PROVIDERS OF PREMIUM PIMA COTTON.

TRIVIA TIME: What does the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Coco Chanel muse Suzy Parker and the current Casper mattress craze all have in common?

All three played a role in the development and current use of Pima cotton. Specifically, a premium variety of the cotton called "Supima" cotton that originates solely from California and parts of the Southwestern U.S. and is found in Brooks Brothers shirts and Levi Strauss & Co. jeans as well as home goods products such as high-end sheets and pillow cases.

Supima cotton garners one percent of the cotton market, is noted for its "soft durability" and is utilized across the fashion apparel, accessories and home goods markets. The cotton is marketed by Supima, a not-for-profit organization that represents Pima cotton growers in the U.S. Supima cotton is positioned as a premium, American-grown extra-long staple, or ELS, cotton that is popular among brands, designers and retailers who utilize the material for its strength and softness.

Supima is the marketing and promotional organization for the American Pima cotton industry. Supima generates awareness and demand for the premium extra-long staple cotton grown on over 600 family farms in California, Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas.

The origins of Supima – the non-profit organization – and Supima cotton can be traced back more than 100 years ago when Pima cotton was first discovered in 1911. Its crop remained small until the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. commercialized the durable and lightweight fiber for use in tire cord for its automobile tires. When Goodyear began to use Pima cotton regularly, the company bought up to 16,000 acres of arable farmland in Arizona, which significantly expanded Pima's use in automobile, bicycle and airplane wing tires. By the Fifties, there was a demand for high-quality U.S. Pima cotton

outside of the industrial arena.

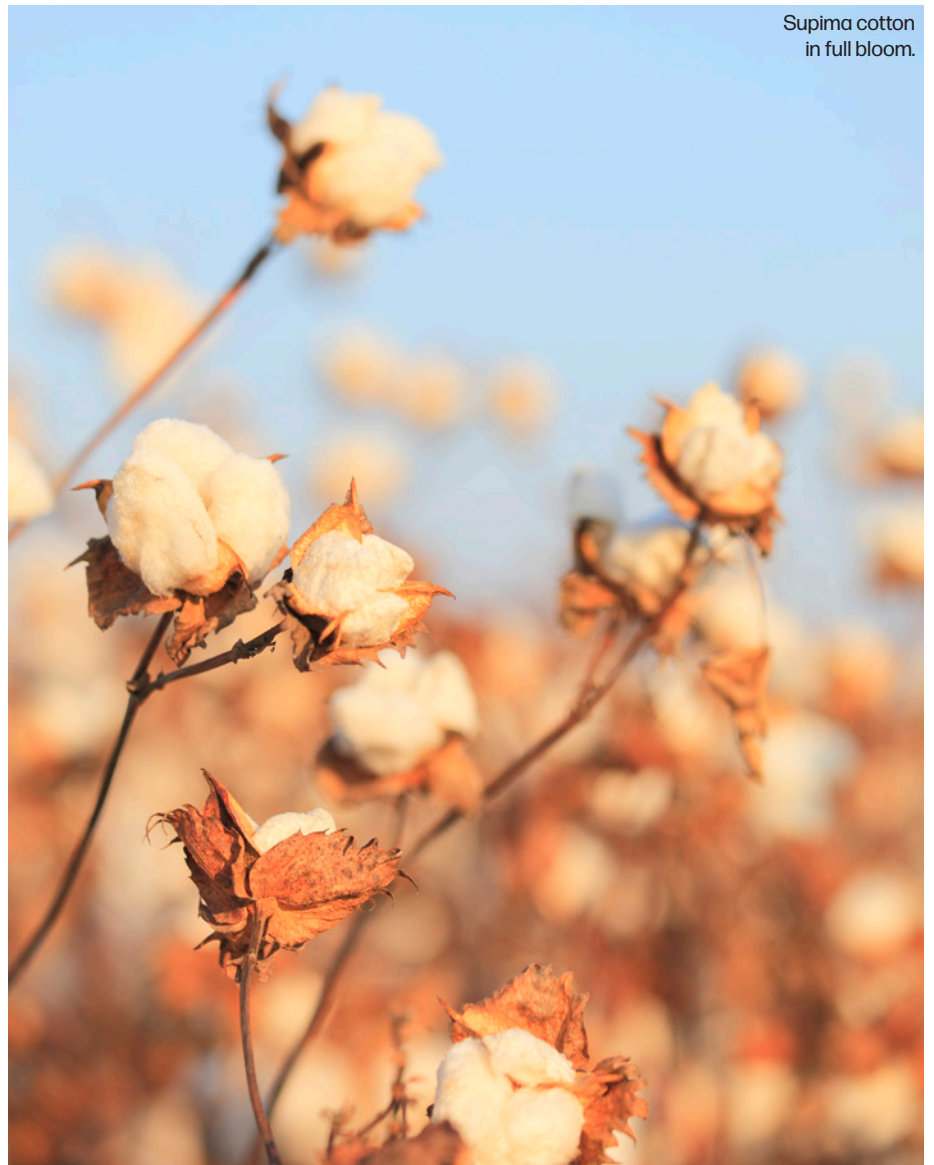
The strong demand for Pima cotton led to the establishment of the Supima Organization, which was founded in 1954. Soon after its formation, the organization shortened its name to Supima, which is a merging of the words "Superior" and "Pima."

Buxton Midyette, Vice President of Marketing and Promotions for Supima, said this is "a unique story for luxury fibers because [Pima] is tough stuff. It was tire cord." There were eight pounds of Pima in every single Model T tire and the fiber was used in the fuselage of the plane for Charles Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic, according to Supima.

Supima cotton's exceptional softness is due to its extra long fibers that allow for a softer, finer fabric than standard cotton, and its noticeable luster is the result of a smoother and cleaner yarn. The longer fiber length enables it to be spun more tightly, which creates finer yarns. As finer yarns can be woven together more securely, the material is significantly more durable and less prone to pilling and shrinkage as compared to its competitors in the market. Supima cotton's thin fiber density also allows dyes to absorb more evenly, which creates deeper, more saturated colors that fade less quickly over time.

In the late Fifties, the organization's first advertising campaign aimed to solidify Supima as "America's luxury fiber" by using supermodel and Coco Chanel muse Suzy Parker in its advertising. By the Eighties, Supima cotton was so high in demand in the U.S. market that it launched its international export program, which soon became a choice material for Swiss and Italian shirting mills and high-end spinners.

The organization's continued success led to the launch of Supima's licensing program for textile mills, manufacturers and retailers worldwide, that enables all entities to manufacture with Supima cotton and become licensed to gain full access to the Supima brand, which has grown to more than 400 licensees. Brand partnerships include



Supima cotton
in full bloom.



Harvesting in
California's San
Joaquin Valley.

"For each and every [partnership], the Supima name stands alone as a unique identifier that brings value to their brand."

– MARC A. LEWKOWITZ, SUPIMA

THE FASHION SCHOOL AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY *applauds SUPIMA as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of its design competition*

At the Fashion School at Kent State University, fashion design and merchandising majors get a chance to showcase their talent and innovation in real-world settings. This energized atmosphere has earned the school a consistent ranking among the best fashion programs nationally and globally.

The school's unique resources include the TechStyleLAB, equipped with an array of digital design and production technologies and a dedicated fashion library with nearly 4,000 print and multimedia titles. The Fashion School shares its Rockwell Hall home with the closely linked Kent State University Museum, which houses one of the largest fashion- and design-focused collections in the country, and is a short walk from the Fashion School Store in downtown Kent, a "live retail laboratory" and boutique selling faculty, student and alumni designs to Northeast Ohio.

Study Away – the value of global learning.

Beyond the Kent Campus, students hone their professional skills through immersive industry internships and expand their creative worldview via study-away options in New York, Florence, Paris and Hong Kong. The Fashion School at Kent State is the only U.S. fashion school that requires all undergraduates to complete both an approved internship and study-away experience prior to graduation.

More than 85 percent of the school's graduates find employment in their field in less than a year, and more than 3,000 alumni can be found throughout the industry working for the world's most recognized brands.

- The Shannon Rodgers and Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Design and Merchandising at Kent State University was established in 1983.
- Named an Ohio Center of Excellence by the state Board of Regents
- A member institution:
 - » The Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)
 - » International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI)
 - » National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD)

The Fashion School created the first Master of Fashion (M.Fash.) in Fashion Industry Studies program in the United States. The program incorporates all facets of the fashion industry as a lens to investigate innovation through practice.



The Fashion School

WWW.KENT.EDU/FASHION

Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary

companies such as Brooks Brothers, Uniqlo, Banana Republic, Michael Stars, Splendid, Lacoste, QVC and Levi Strauss & Co. "For each and every one of them, the Supima name stands alone as a unique identifier that brings value to their brand," said Marc A. Lewkowitz, President and Chief Executive Officer of Supima.

In the early Aughts, Supima cotton entered the premium denim market when leading denim mills in Japan, Italy and Turkey looked to Supima for a sturdy, luxurious material. Today's "third wave Millennial brands," such as 3x1 and Stance, are also partnered with Supima, leveraging its high quality and performance to enhance the positioning of their brands. "Millennial brands want to create the best. Their whole initiative is to make an amazing product and to use amazing products to make that product," Lewkowitz said.

As a result, denim has become an important segment for the brand. "Denim has been a great area of growth for Supima. It's kind of unlikely because usually in apparel you think about Supima you think about dress shirts or T-shirts, but

denim has been a very exciting area for us. People pay attention to what their jeans are made of and Supima is as premium as you get in terms of the those materials," Midyette told WWD.

And, Supima cotton extends beyond apparel, as it has also become a popular choice for sheets, towels and home market products. The mattress brand Casper, who selected Supima cotton for its sheeting, touts the cotton as "soft, breathable sheets that are engineered with one of the longest cotton fibers in the world" and Casper praised the fiber for its "soft, crisp and airy" texture. Casper selected Supima cotton for its durability that prevents the material from pilling or wearing thin and its unique ability to improve with every wash, according to Casper. The firm considered cotton type, staple length, yard, weave, thread count and functionality prior to embarking on a partnership with Supima.

Sustainability is another defining characteristic of Supima cotton as all Supima cotton growers participate in Cotton Leads, a program committed to responsible cotton production. Many also participate in the

Better Cotton Initiative, which aims to enhance global cotton production for the supply chain.

The commitment toward responsible cotton production comes as the global cotton market is projected to show a gain in the 2017-2018 growing season, and niche commodities such as Pima cotton face high demand in the market.

"Supima growers are at the forefront of technology and agricultural practices to improve the quality of their cotton while minimizing the impact on the environment," Midyette told WWD. "All Supima falls under the Cotton Leads program that cover the U.S. and Australian cotton producers showing the efforts being made by the industry to continuously strive

for improvements in the reduction of resources while increasing the outputs and improving the environment."

Supima cotton is a natural, renewable and biodegradable premium fiber that is grown in compliance with strict United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. environmental protection agency standards as well as California EPA standards. It is grown in desert environments that have some of the highest standards of control and oversight on agricultural production in the world, according to the brand.

Midyette added. "Furthermore, the higher strength of Supima results in garments that will wear better and last longer. As with all cottons, Supima is 100 percent bio-degradable." ■

"Supima growers are at the forefront of technology and agricultural practices to improve the quality of their cotton while minimizing the impact on the environment" – MIDYETTE TOLD WWD



Supima cotton field
in California's San
Joaquin Valley.

The SUPIMA® Design Competition

Bridging the gap between classroom and runway.

FIDM

Campus Wide Influence

Supima opportunities are unexampled for FIDM students and unique for FIDM Faculty and staff.

Since becoming involved with Supima, student awareness of Cotton's deployable role in multiple design worlds has increased immensely at FIDM.

Students in our Advanced Fashion Design classes and the Textile Design population are now keenly aware of its wonderful properties and employ cotton in their design projects. For example, Supima cotton plays a big part in our annual "Chairing Styles" project that brings 3 design disciplines together to create an exhibition of textiles, furniture and fashion design (30 student designers participate.)

The textile students design and print Supima cotton with their textile designs. This lays the foundation for the assignment. The interior design students then use the cotton for their chair creations and fashion design students create cotton fashions.

The Supima Design Competition

The big door into the fashion world that Supima opens for aspiring fashion designers has a tremendous impact on student lives.

This quote from Duston Jasso, our 2016 student



Below: FIDM Campus
Los Angeles
Right: Finalist
Nancy Hennessey

participant in the fashion design competition is proof of Supima's enormous influence: "My experience with the Supima Design Competition was a dream come true, it was so surreal being able to show during New York Fashion Week. It was a dream of mine since I was 10.

The program was life changing... to not even be out of college at FIDM and to receive this opportunity was mind blowing. It was such a beautiful, meaningful, educational experience and opportunity. Supima is such an amazing organization and they have helped me immeasurably to launch my career. The program was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I would not trade for

life's most precious jewels."

Extending the design competition's wonder into an exhibition in Paris adds the element of "exceptional significance" to Cotton's place on the world's design stage.

For more information visit our program's website:
fidm.edu



Parsons

Student Enrichment

Supima cotton empowers young designers at the Parsons School of Fashion.

Parsons School of Fashion congratulates Supima on their tenth design competition. Supima's commitment to producing equally strong and soft cotton fabrics enriches the possibilities of our design students to create beautiful and lasting garments.

Congratulations to Parsons BFA graduate Margaret Kwon (pictured here) on being selected as this year's design competition finalist.

For more information visit our website:
newschool.edu/parsons

THE NEW SCHOOL

PARSONS



Right: The New School's New York building.
Above: Finalist Margaret Kwon



Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary



Images from the "Everyday Reimagined" campaign 2017. CLOCKWISE: 3x1, Stance, Casper and Everlane.



SUPIMA CAMPAIGNS ELEVATE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

THE COMPANY'S 2017 ADVERTISING
EMPHASIZES PRODUCT QUALITY.

FOCUSED ON A HIGHER degree of consumer engagement, Supima's 2017 advertising campaigns showcased a series of creative collaborations with brands across the apparel, accessories and home goods markets. The recent outdoor campaign, "Bursting Into Bloom," was developed by Brooks Brothers to

promote their Supima collection.

The placement and positioning of the Supima promotional campaigns comes as consumer preferences and behavior are shifting. Shoppers are gravitating toward authentic brands and higher-quality products. For example, Supima's "Everyday Reimagined" campaign, which introduced its "art not ads" philosophy, was led by Graj + Gustavsen, a consulting firm and

creative agency and together with the other campaigns emphasize a shift toward product quality, highly saturated color and artistry.

Meanwhile, the Brooks Brothers Supima campaign "Bursting Into Bloom" aims to leverage out-of-home marketing by running ads across New York City commuter rails, subways, buses and outdoor properties, in addition to appearing on Outfront Media's digital canvases. The approach is strategic and tactical with the ads placed on bus wraps and on Penn Station's digital network, as well as a shuttle train wrap in Time Square, Grand Central Station and other urban panels throughout the city. The campaign features the Brooks Brothers' Supima cotton shirts and performance polo products in highly saturated colors. Brooks Brothers took the creative lead for the campaign.

Jodi Senese, Outfront Media's Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, said that "innovative brands like Brooks Brothers have been leveraging out-of-home advertising for decades to make a splash in the New York market ahead of busy shopping seasons. Outfront Media's unparalleled presence in New York and creative canvases makes us the premiere platform for brand stories."

Lou Amendola, the Chief Merchandising Officer of Brooks Brothers, said, "Brooks Brothers is proud to share our voice announcing our new summer collection and campaign featuring Supima cotton. This combined effort allows our company to capitalize on Outfront Media's

out-of-home market and increase our visibility and build a stronger brand awareness with consumers."

Supima announced its "Everyday Reimagined" campaign earlier this year, which aimed to enhance consumer engagement and position Supima as a "luxury ingredient" for upscale brands and designers. Each brand selected for the campaign is e-commerce based and narrows a focus on high design standards, quality, durability, attention to detail and transparency, Supima said.

The campaign highlights Supima's dedication to product quality. Featured brands Everlane, luxury denim brand 3x1, Stance and Casper showcase Supima cotton through a series of still-life images under the artistic direction of Scheltens & Abbenes, a photographer and artist duo based in Amsterdam, a firm recognized for its abstract style.

Ashley Graj of G+G said, "We wanted to engage the consumer, rather than sell them." Peter Carberry of G+G added, "Our goal was to deliver an artful campaign that transcends traditional advertising while also providing context to the shared values of Supima and its partners."

Buxton Midyette, the Vice President of Marketing and Promotion for Supima, said, "We are thrilled with the way the campaign has come to life. It captures the innovation and attention to detail that make our partner products exceptional."

"Everyday Reimagined" will run in New York Times' T Style Magazine through 2017. ■

Drexel

Fashion Fusion

This year's contestant reflects the university's interdisciplinary approach.

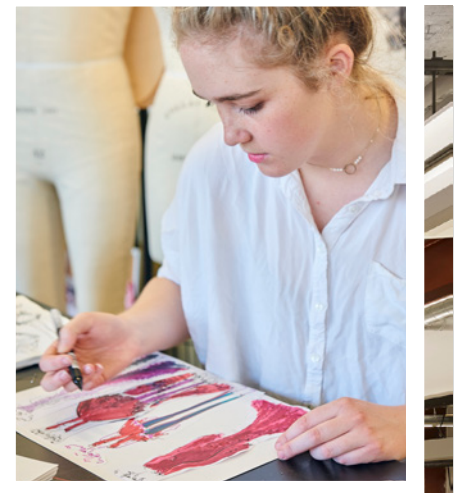
Congratulations to Lela Thompson who is representing Drexel University in this year's Supima Design Competition. Lela is a 2017 fashion design graduate. She is a talented and creative designer intrigued with the "surface" of both wovens and fully-fashioned knitwear. She moves gracefully between craft, technology and precision in all she does. Her work is exploratory yet polished. Lela has been experimenting with innovative ways to transform Supima's cotton qualities and we are looking forward to seeing her collection in September!

We also congratulate Supima on celebrating their 10th design competition. Although this is our first year participating, it has already been an exciting journey. We attended the show last year during Fashion Week and it was truly amazing- a wonderful opportunity for students to transform the cotton fabrics in any way they could imagine. Supima thank you for supporting the next generation of designers!

The Fashion program at Drexel University's Westphal College of Media Arts & Design embraces an interdisciplinary approach to design. Students experience the fusion of art, design, science, technology, and commerce in Drexel's state of the art URBN Center. Visit our Shima Seiki Haute Tech Lab, where



Main: Drexel's campus.
Right: Finalist Lela Thompson.

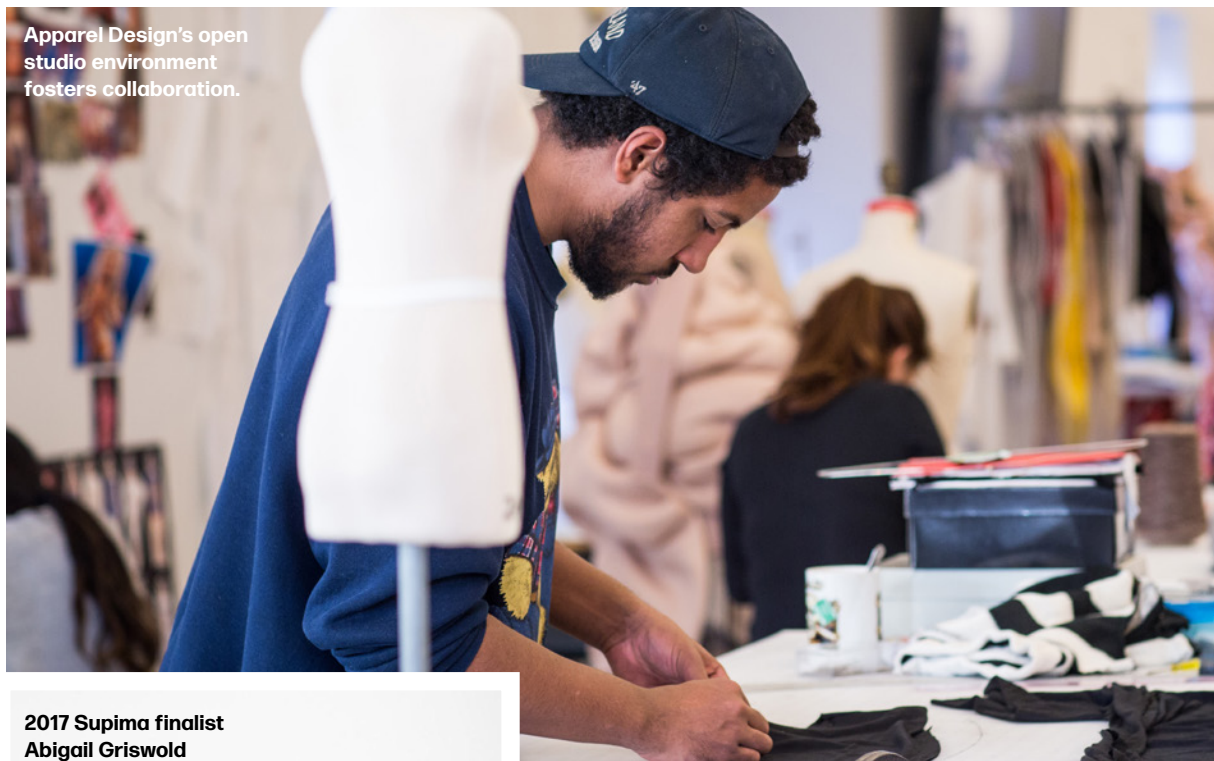


students and faculty conduct research on the design and manufacturing of smart textiles, or the Fox Historic Costume Collection, featuring the recent 800 piece James Galanos Foundation donation. Graduates from Drexel's Bachelor and Master's Fashion Design programs are innovative practitioners and collaborative communicators who are empowered to confront global challenges in contextual design.

For more information visit our program's website: drexel.edu/westphal/academics/undergraduate/FASH/



Apparel Design's open studio environment fosters collaboration.



2017 Supima finalist
Abigail Griswold
[BFA '17 Apparel Design]



RISD's riverfront campus in Providence mixes the historic with the contemporary.



RISD

Apparel Design at RISD

Championing innovation and originality, Apparel Design at RISD is home to strong, inquiring creatives.

Students develop their own voices and directions through immersion in a thorough investigation of their craft. Professors work to help students develop insightful, artistic minds and become confident, creative decision makers able to navigate the future and their own careers.

Placing high value on the importance of creative individuality, Apparel Design professors assign a broad range of studio projects intended to help students develop their own systems of practice. The connections fostered with visiting professionals—who are leaders in design thinking—underscore Apparel Design's mission to provide a fertile space for robust discovery.

For more information, visit: risd.edu.



Supima's Annual Design Competition Marks 10th Anniversary

SUPIMA PROGRAM FUELED BY HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCT DEMAND

BUXTON MIDYETTE, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS AT SUPIMA, SHARES HIS INSIGHTS ON THE ORGANIZATION'S LICENSING PROGRAM.

Supima's licensing program enables textile mills, manufacturers and retailers worldwide to gain full access to the brand by becoming Supima members. The organization's trademark brings value to brands by giving them a greater reach through partnership advertising campaigns. Brands also benefit from Supima's long-standing resonance with consumers.

Here, Buxton Midyette, Vice President of Marketing and Promotions at Supima, explains how Supima adds value to brands throughout the textile manufacturing supply chain.

WWD: Why did Supima decide to launch a licensing program?

Buxton Midyette: The Supima licensing program began with a core group of companies in Japan. Our customers there had asked Supima to put the use of the trademark under license to protect it, allowing them to promote it more exclusively to consumers.

Since its inception in the 1980s, Supima's licensing program has grown into a network of over 400 retailers, brands and manufacturers in 39 countries.

In the U.S., home fashion brands were the first to embrace the Supima licensing program. Legendary brands like Charisma found it a great way to differentiate their product from that of their competitors. It did not take long for apparel brands, particularly in the men's shirting category, to figure this out. Very quickly, Brooks Brothers, Lands' End and others became licensees.

WWD: Which participating brands or sectors have experienced substantial growth? What factors are driving growth?

BM: Supima is truly having a "moment" right now. We are seeing unprecedented interest in companies using Supima, as well as branding their products to tell the

story. This interest spans product categories from socks and underwear to T-shirts and jeans, and even extends to outerwear and evening wear. I attribute it to three factors: a return to quality, the success of Supima partners and the shift toward American-grown products.

After years of price deflation in the apparel and home fashion industries, there is now a resurgent focus on quality. Supima, because of its natural softness, strength and lasting color, improves product performance and allows brands to tell a credible quality story to their customers.

Partners such as Brooks Brothers, Uniqlo, Lands' End and Casper have had incredible success with their Supima collections, experiencing growth which outpaces sales in other categories. Other brands see this and want to join in. The beauty of this is that all brands, even in the same product categories, tell the Supima

story differently, in their own voice. This serves to build more awareness of Supima, and that benefits all licensees.

Consumers are looking for American products in the marketplace. The fact that Supima is grown by 600 family farms in the west and southwest resonates with [consumers]. Brands like it because, even if the product needs to be manufactured abroad, they can point to the American origin of the cotton.

WWD: How has the growth of e-commerce affected Supima?

BM: The shift to consumer purchasing on the web has been extremely positive for Supima. There are so many ways on the web to tell the story of Supima's benefits, including explanatory videos, detailed descriptions and product glossaries. It is a very rich and compelling environment for storytelling.

Social media is another new way for Supima to engage with brands and their consumers, as it can be used to showcase the product in a lifestyle framework while explaining its advantages. It takes a luxury raw material and puts it into a context that consumers can relate to, whether it's through an influencer they follow, or an image shared by a brand they like.

WWD: Why have brands chosen Supima to tell their story and how does the program help tell the story of their products?

BM: More than ever, consumers are interested in the provenance of their products. You see this clearly in the farm-to-table movement. Well, there is also a farm-to-closet phenomenon occurring right now. Brands are working hard to give their customers this information, and this is a big area where Supima can help.

We provide our partners with video and photo images of Supima cotton in the field, assist with proofing copy that describes the benefits of Supima, conduct training sessions, and create training videos to educate sales associates about Supima. We love working with brands to help them tell the Supima story.

WWD: Who are Supima's longtime partners and how has their leadership influenced the evolution of the program?

BM: Supima is fortunate to have a great

family of brands which serve a diverse clientele with a wide array of Supima products. There are certainly a few brands that have led the way with their own respective customer groups.

Brooks Brothers has an all-encompassing 360-degree campaign that shares the Supima message across all channels: web, social media, print and outdoor, as well as store windows and floors. It has driven their sales immensely.

Uniqlo set the bar in terms of store floor display, with bold signage that tells their customers the advantages of Supima in multiple ways, [with] text [and through] dramatic images.

Lands' End brought its decades of experience in catalog sales to the web and innovated how Supima is sold online by creating an online shop for Supima across all product categories.

WWD: How have new wave brands successfully engaged consumers through the program?

BM: All millennial brands have one thing in common: storytelling. But they do it in different ways. Millennials want to know how things are made. Casper uses video to great effect to share how they select Supima for their sheets.

In terms of radical transparency, Millennials care where product comes from. Everlane showcases the factories where their Supima T-shirts are made, and 3x1 has their denim cut-and-sew room in full view on their sales floor.

Millennials don't want to feel like they are being "sold to". Stance connects to its customers through deeply trained and friendly in-store brand ambassadors who help customers find the right sock, or invite them to hang out and enjoy the relaxed vibe.

WWD: How does the licensing program support the current move to transparency?

BM: No one can use the Supima trademark without a license. Supima licenses the entire supply chain, from the spinner to the weaver/knitter to the manufacturer to the brand and retailer. To obtain a license, you must source Supima inputs from a licensed supplier and then apply to Supima for permission. As part of the license, Supima requires companies to show proof of their purchase of Supima input. ■

Bespoke 3x1 jeans
made with premium
Supima denim



SUPIMA[®]
WORLD'S FINEST COTTONS

Supima inspires...
innovative competitions like this
innovative students like these
innovative companies like ours.
Congratulations
and thanks for inspiring all of us.

WELSPUN

COMFORTING THE PLANET™

makers of fine Supima cotton
bed and bath linens tracked by
our unique, patent pending fiber
tracking and verification process.

AUTHENTIC
WEL-TRAK[™]
FIBER
traced - tracked - trusted™

SUPIMA
2017
DESIGN
COMPETITION

10

YEARS HELPING NEW TALENT TAKE OFF FROM THE RUNWAY

Welspun USA
295 Fifth Avenue
Suite 1118
New York, NY
10016
welspun.com

© 2017 Welspun USA Inc.