

# S·T·I·T·C·H·E·S

Embroidery's Voice & Vision

September/October 2014

## THE FASHION ISSUE

Get inspired by new  
imprints, colors  
and textiles

- \* Construct elaborate embroidery
- \* Use eco-friendly and recycled materials
- \* Pair deep golds and reds
- \* Layer on the bling

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Design: Hillary Glen  
Photography: Mark Pricskett  
Apparel: Shockwaves Promotional Apparel (asi/87144)  
Creative director and stylist: Conrad Booker  
Hair and makeup: Marnee Simon  
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In this month's "Problem Solved" section of our "Interact" department, **NIAMH O'CONNOR**,

art director and evil genius at UrbanThreads.com, weighs in on a common embroiderer dilemma: "How do I shape up my showroom?" "At UrbanThreads.com, we have a digital showroom," she says. "Having a few 'wow' pieces is key. Your clients may never go for a one-of-a-kind embroidered blazer, but it shows the sky's your limit. Go over the top on your showcase, and your clients will think, 'Wow, if they can do that, my hoodies will look great!'"

In this month's "Expert Weigh-In" section of our "Interact" department, **MICHAEL SAVOIA**, critic at Providence-based Rhode Island School of Design, talks about the Digital Embroidery class that he teaches and more. "I'm able to show students how embroidery is done today, and how embroiderers operated back in the 1700s," he says. "I show them the complete range of embroidery, from hand and hand-guided to computerized. I want them to have a good background in how embroidery is created in today's market. I show them a large quantity of my samples and I select examples of historic document embroidery with the curators of the RISD museum collection, who then graciously present the pieces to students with a wonderful dialogue of how things were done on pieces ranging from the 18th century to present."



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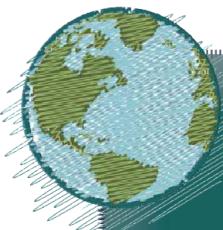


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In this issue's "Ask an Expert," **KRISTINE SHREVE**, director of marketing for EnMart and Ensign Emblem, offers advice on how to ensure your clients give you the possible artwork for their projects. "The first way to help your customers understand the importance of quality artwork is to hit them in the wallet," Shreve writes. "The reality is that artwork that's poor quality or not in a useable format will end up adding cost to the finished product. Time spent creating new artwork, or recreating artwork that isn't in a useable format, is also time taken away from production, which slows down delivery time. Many shops also do, and should, charge additional fees if they have to spend time cleaning up or creating artwork."

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Read about RISD graduate Margaret Goldrainer's design aesthetic and principles.

## The Life Artistic



Every year, we at *Stitches* look forward to The Fashion Issue because we have the opportunity to showcase the über-creative side of our decorator and apparel designer readership. In this year's amazing cover shoot (turn to page 48 to check it out), we feature six veteran and new designers. To kick off this issue, we asked our designers to tell us what inspires their work:

**Mariana Leung**, owner of Weng Meng Design Studio in Manhattan: "My items are built-up sculpture pieces. I build the embellishment as I go. I sketch first, and when I'm doing small work it's more organic. I've used old photo film, melted sequins, vintage fabrics and ancient kimono fabrics. I like repurposing things – it's more eco-friendly and results in a smaller footprint."

**Tamar Ariel**, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) graduate: "Complexity through simplicity. I'm attracted to the beauty of simple patterns and color, and I explore those possibilities."

**Greg Gaardbo**, creative director and owner at Shockwaves Promotional Apparel (asi/87144) in Des Plaines, IL: "We've gotten into sublimation and Hotfix sequins – pairing them in mixed media."

**Pamela Ptak**, designer and founder of Riegelsville, PA-based Arts and Fashion Institute: "The fabric often calls me first – I find the one piece that wants to be in production. I hold it up to different fabrics to see what works together, almost like finding that perfect someone to talk to at a party. Then, I fill it with wondrous bits I've collected."

**Conrad Booker**, Philadelphia-based designer and artist: "My design aesthetic is deeply rooted in the transformation of ordinary, common and otherwise everyday objects into wearable works of art. There's something satisfying in elevating common, discarded and devalued objects into what's unique, wearable and couture."

**Margaret Goldrainer**, RISD graduate: "I love the art of the muse and the spectacle – I need both to inspire and stimulate me. I love creating a character and telling a story. Clothing, hair, wigs, makeup, accessories and styling – the culmination of these things enables the artist to transform, create and tell a meaningful story."

Be thrilled and inspired by this issue!

*Nicole M. Rollender*

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# INTERACT

Compiled by Sara Lavenduski and Patricia Cangelosi

## ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



### Get Your Stitch Report

*Stitches* Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel brings you a behind-the-scenes look at our big fashion photo shoot. She also talks with designer and Rhode Island School of Design graduate Margaret Goldrainer about the look she shared for the issue. Watch on *Stitches.com*.



### Podcast: Digitizer's Dream Client

*Stitches* Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel chats with Erich Campbell, digitizer at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. ([asi/700415](http://asi/700415)), about solving issues punchers have when working with embroidery shops and end-users. Listen on *Stitches.com*.



### High-Fashion Slideshow

Check out behind-the-scenes footage of our fashion shoot featured in this issue. Watch the slideshow on *Stitches.com*.

## SOCIAL FEEDS



**What popular fashion trend or embellishment will soon go by the wayside? Conversely, are you seeing anything coming down the pike that's going to become super-popular?**

#### YOU ANSWERED ERICH CAMPBELL

Neons, at least among the university students in this area. They've come and gone in quick succession.

#### KRISTIN CHELBERG WILLIAMS

Mixed-media designs are trending up, including the use of chenille for something other than varsity jackets. Plain old tackle twill seems tired. Sublimated twill is big too. Lucky for us, these are all things we produce in-house!

#### Posts from *Stitches* magazine:

**STITCHES MAGAZINE**  
Were you a fan of Calvin and Hobbes? This hand-embroidered scene is sure to wow you. [bit.ly/1mzBDVT](http://bit.ly/1mzBDVT)

**STITCHES MAGAZINE**  
A Philadelphia woman received honors for her traditional Ukrainian embroidery. There's a nice slideshow of her work with the article. Check it out. [bit.ly/1pB2X](http://bit.ly/1pB2X)

**STITCHES MAGAZINE**  
Interesting story about a struggling embroiderer being pushed out of the American flag business by discount store demands. [bit.ly/1xGtzXo](http://bit.ly/1xGtzXo)

**STITCHES MAGAZINE**  
What's one word that successful entrepreneurs never say? Read this insightful article written by a top dog and find out: [bit.ly/1n61chC](http://bit.ly/1n61chC)



**@MASHABLE**  
A new Adobe Flash security hole means it's time to update again: [on.mash.to/1mggmB3](http://on.mash.to/1mggmB3) But this is no #Heartbleed.

**@EMBROIDERYCOACH**  
How To Create A Simple System For All Of Your Embroidery Business Information: [tinyurl.com/p4uk3ckion](http://tinyurl.com/p4uk3ckion) [pic.twitter.com/hZoZrJtbmD](http://pic.twitter.com/hZoZrJtbmD)

**@VERNONCOMPANY**  
"Once employees understand the brand, it is critical to provide them with tangible ways to be brand advocates." [bit.ly/1ajcC4r](http://bit.ly/1ajcC4r)

**@ADVERTISINGWEEK**  
The Future of Cashless Payment [po.st/Fi71Rx](http://po.st/Fi71Rx)

**@ASICENTRAL**  
See a little behind-the-scenes action from the #ASIPromobile [ow.ly/yXD57](http://ow.ly/yXD57)

**@BOOKERPROMOTIONS**  
The problem with Web branding surveys: [ow.ly/2JENIX](http://ow.ly/2JENIX)

**@4IMPRINT**  
This USB hub is a great addition to anyone's computer bag: [4impr.it/wThO](http://4impr.it/wThO)

**@MARKETNGTIDBITS**  
The Secret To Getting Found On Page 1 of LinkedIn Search [bit.ly/1nTrBf3](http://bit.ly/1nTrBf3) #socialmedia #smbiz

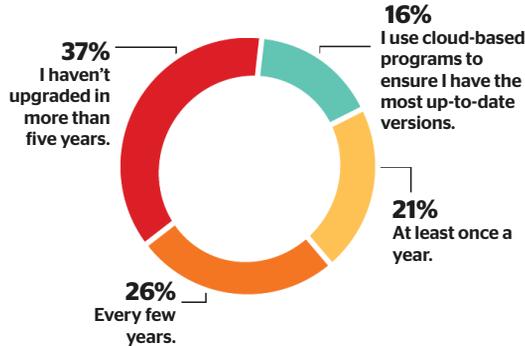
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**@TAMICANN**  
3 Lessons from #Millennials by @mstribling [bit.ly/1rPneZy](http://bit.ly/1rPneZy) [pic.twitter.com/ROWv8TM](http://pic.twitter.com/ROWv8TM) VCr

## INDUSTRY POLL

At *Stitches.com*, we recently asked:

### How often do you upgrade the software in your shop?



## BLOG EXCERPT

### DecQuorum What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say



EnMart started using social media in 2008. Our first blog started in 2006. I've written close to 700 blog posts for the two EnMart blogs, EmbroideryTalk and SubliStuff. I've tweeted 4,933 times on behalf of EnMart and probably written almost that many status updates since we joined Facebook in 2009. That's a lot of words, a lot of time spent thinking up things to say. ... Even writers run out of words every once in a while. ...

What do you say when you have nothing to say? ... When your own words fail you, borrow words from someone else. Not in a plagiaristic way, but in a sharing or retweeting way. If someone else has provided information or said something that you think is relevant to the interests of your followers/fans/friends, share the post or tweet it on your feed.

Scan this code to read the entire blog entry by Kristine Shreve, director of marketing at EnMart



# Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – [Pinterest.com/stitchesmag](http://Pinterest.com/stitchesmag) from the *Digital Design and Appliqué & Multimedia* boards.

## From the Board: Digital Design



This 100% silk scarf (004SSD-6\_36) features a custom full-color digital print from Buffalo Bay (asi/42416; circle 76 on Free Info Card), [buffalobay.com](http://buffalobay.com).



This performance polo (A1SJBP) is made of 100% spun polyester and features a sublimated print from Vapor Apparel (asi/93396; circle 77 on Free Info Card), [vaporapparel.com](http://vaporapparel.com).

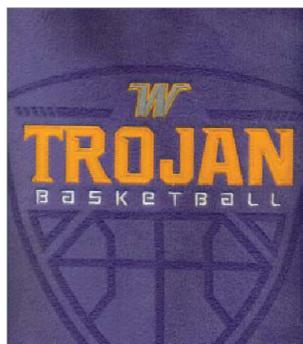


Sublimated unisex scarf (580032S) is made of recycled polyester microfleece from Boardroom Eco Apparel (asi/40705; circle 78 on Free Info Card), [boardroomecoapparel.com](http://boardroomecoapparel.com).



Sublimated socks can include unlimited graphics and colors from OT Sports (asi/75265; circle 79 on Free Info Card), [otsports.com](http://otsports.com).

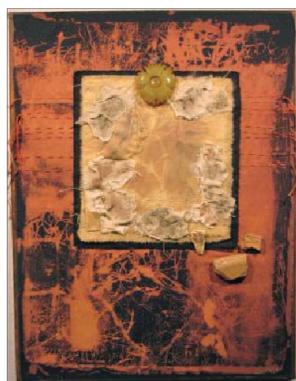
## From the Board: Appliqué & Multimedia



This print combines laser etching and appliqué from Dubow Textile (asi/700107; circle 80 on Free Info Card), [dubowtextile.com](http://dubowtextile.com).



No-sew twill names give the look of appliqué with a heat press from Dalco Athletic (circle 81 on Free Info Card), [dalcoathletic.com](http://dalcoathletic.com).



"Of the Earth" - 14" x 18" canvas-mounted, hand-stitched multimedia piece made with discharged fabrics, silk, wool, cotton and ancient pottery shards by fiber artist Sally Dutko, Ithaca, NY, [sallydutko.com](http://sallydutko.com).



This multimedia creation features embroidery in metallic thread, appliqué and screen printing from Shockwaves Promotional Apparel (asi/87144; circle 82 on Free Info Card), [shockwavesapparel.com](http://shockwavesapparel.com).

Visit Stitches' Pinterest page – and all of our great boards – at [Pinterest.com/stitchesmag](http://Pinterest.com/stitchesmag).

# INTERACT

## Letters

*We asked: What are some top reasons why new decorating shops don't survive?*

### Laser Focus

A problem I see in many struggling shops is a frazzled owner pulled in many directions without mastery of any one thing. Customers want to buy from the very best, and if you're not it you have to lure them in with lower pricing, Saturday deliveries and other painful concessions. My advice is say no to the opportunity for a nice sale that requires you to buy another machine, learn a new technique or spend a lot of money until you're a master at your core product. Once you reach excellence in both the artistry and business process that supports it, then it's time to consider something new. It's painful to say no, but a good profit margin and low stress in the long run demand it.

**Cory Dean**

*Artwork Source, Tacoma, WA*

### Money Smart

Financing seems to be one of the largest, if not the largest, issue in startups. Because there's no real barrier to entrance, I think it's very easy to underestimate what the venture will cost. It's often difficult to gauge the time and expense associated with growing your account base and sales to support the overhead. Planning must be in place to weather that storm financially. The easiest way to combat this issue is to gather as much of an industry education as you possibly can before jumping into the mix.

**Andy Shuman**

*Rockland Embroidery Inc.  
(asi/734150), Tipton, PA*

### Big Savings

A big problem is lack of sufficient capital to keep the shop operating while the owners

build the business. Save, save, save and save some more before you start out, and don't use credit cards to fund it.

**Jane Swanzy**

*Swan Marketing LLC  
(asi/700627), Houston*

### Keep It Simple

They have no way of keeping track of their orders. This can be done with simple spreadsheets and clipboards hanging in key areas. It's a simple method, but it works and can be done very simply and inexpensively for the new startup or even the struggling shop that has no money to purchase tracking software. I find in my trainings that the simplest method is the one that helps the most.

**Joyce Jagger**

*The Embroidery Coach  
(asi/540389), Binghamton, NY*

### Come On Out

I've seen many good people start up a small screen-printing or embroidery shop, and then spend all their time stuck behind the machines. They say to themselves, "I have to pay for this lease, so I need to run the machine." Your business plan needs to include sales and marketing to the customers you seek. Also, don't try to be everything to everybody – find your niche and focus on it!

**Dana Zizzo**

*Jetline Inc. (asi/63344), Gaffney, SC*

### Have a Plan

In my experience, the number-one reason is lack of planning. Without detailed planning for financial needs, marketing requirements and industry and equipment education, the venture has a poor chance of succeeding from the start. The solution is researching and learning the industry, as well as accurate financial projections to ensure adequate startup capital.

**Dave Barrett**

*RiCOMA International Corp.  
(asi/18200), Miami*

### VOILA!

## The Best Piece I Ever Embroidered



I found this jacket on the dollar rack at a local thrift shop. The flower is a dogwood by Erich Campbell, embroidery digitizer/designer and e-commerce manager at Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415) in Albuquerque, NM. Underneath both the front and back, I "trapped" some luxe cone knitting yarn with topping, and then hooped in an 11x14 plastic hoop wrapped with light sponge for stabilizing without backing. The front was embroidered with a 7.5" square hoop and topping over the yarn to hold it down. I put the luxe on randomly by cutting it into many pieces. Then, I stood on a stool and dropped the yarn so that little tails stick out from the design, creating the fringe. The trim and the button covers were created from a complementary madras plaid cut on the bias and then gathered and stripped on the unsewn edge to mimic the luxe in the design. This was a fun project and I love a dollar find!

Submitted by Carolyn Cagle, owner of Strikke Knits Custom Mittens & Embroidery, Stacy, MN; [strikkeknits@gmail.com](mailto:strikkeknits@gmail.com)

### TALK TO US!

Talk to us! Tell us what challenges you're facing in your shop. React to a story you've just read in *Stitches* or on our Facebook page. E-mail us a shot of the latest and greatest embroidery design you've just run. We can't wait to hear from you, so send letters to the editor to [nroller@asicentral.com](mailto:nroller@asicentral.com).

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# Full House



# = No Brainer

“It was an all-encompassing experience that enabled me to compare products that I plan on purchasing in the venue. I also learned more than a few tips that I can use during the course of a business day. It more than paid for itself.”



**No Limits**





## Find Your Zone

SGIA's Zones aren't for the imaging weak. They're packed full to the brim, crammed with industry experts who will leave you with more understanding of the industry than you ever thought possible from just one show.

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- Color Management
- Textiles
- Sustainability

Overwhelmed? Don't be. Find your zone and prepare for imaging overload (in a good way, of course.)

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One Zone, all garment, all the time. Get a first-hand look at digital garment decoration technologies and identify a solution that fits your needs. See the latest screen printing and special-effect techniques, and add a little flare to your business.

### Color Management & Workflow Solutions Zone



Expand your capabilities by focusing on color management tools and techniques, as well as RIP and third party software solutions. Attendees can develop new relationships by joining any of the presentations during show hours.

### Digital Textile Printing Zone



Consider this the Textile Printing course you never knew you needed. You'll hear about the technical and design requirements, recommended workflows, color management tips, finishing techniques, and recommended best practices for a variety of ink and fabric combinations.

### Sustainability Zone



This is the place to focus on sustainable business solutions. Increase your understanding of best practices through great success stories on energy reduction, recycling programs, and much more. Become inspired! Attend presentations that you can take back to your staff... and begin your sustainability journey.

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## The Next Level of Education

You've heard the saying, "Take your business to the next level," yes? Well, if you're at SGIA's Expo educational events, consider this: You've arrived.

Whether it's:

- The classic Expo education sessions with industry experts
- The free presentations in the exciting Zones presented by the people who do it the most
- The SGIA & FlexTech Printed Electronics Symposium
- Or the highly relevant Keynote presentation

The Expo is the way to reach the next level, like, now.

And don't discount the incredible networking opportunities — you'll be at the Expo with some mix of more than 18,000 of your industry peers — making it easy to discuss your new-found imaging acumen with colleagues and potential clients. And, then you can seek out exhibitors on the show floor to go to the next, next level.

### SGIA's Classic Expo Sessions



Wednesday and Thursday,  
October 22–23

SGIA's professional-level educational sessions offer a the perfect mix of topics to meet the needs of your business. Customize

your education line-up or choose from one of SGIA's educational tracks tailored for your imaging community.

### Zone Presentations



Wednesday–Friday,  
October 22–24

Our sales-free Zones with educational theaters are the perfect place to ask questions, hear about new equipment and even attempt new applications.

"We always learn something new and exciting at [the] SGIA Expo, and we have owned a digital printing company for 25 years. The SGIA Expo is the best."



“The SGIA show is a great place to get re-motivated about your business. Seeing all of the equipment at work and networking with other like-minded people gets the ideas flowing for where you can take your business”

## Networking, Expo Style

SGIA social events are the perfect place to mix a little business with pleasure — before you head out to the Strip or take in the Vegas sights. Talk with industry peers, compare notes with colleagues, and maybe even meet new business contacts.

### Improve Innovation & Differentiation with Stephen Shapiro

Thursday, October 23, 2014  
8:30–10:00am  
Las Vegas Convention Center  
\$30 Member/\$40 Nonmembers  
(Starting October 1 — \$33 Members/\$45 Nonmembers)

As a leading keynote speaker, author, and advisor on innovation, Stephen Shapiro has developed a proven approach for increasing speed, reducing risk, and improving innovation ROI 3x to 10x. Shapiro turn heads, opens minds, and captivates audiences with his provocative results-focused content. His work has been featured in The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, CNBC and ABC News. Come see him at the Expo, and get breakfast, too!



### Reception Row



Hit SGIA's Reception Row before you head to the Vegas Strip! Network with your colleagues, clients and potential customers, courtesy of SGIA's community-building receptions for seven communities in the industry:

- Garment Decoration
- PDAA and Graphic Installation
- Latin America
- Canada
- Graphic Printer Member
- Printed Electronics & Industrial
- Pro Imaging Golf Championship





## Simplifying SGIA Expo Travel

### Book Your 2014 SGIA Expo Hotel Now!

SGIA has excellent rates for Las Vegas hotels during the Expo — offered exclusively by our official housing partner, Travel Planners.



We guarantee:

- Automated rate checks to make sure you're getting the lowest rate
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- Onsite support if needed

Please note: Please be aware that SGIA has carefully chosen Travel Planners as the official, exclusive, housing partner of the 2014 SGIA Expo. Please disregard any solicitation from other companies claiming to be SGIA's housing company. Unfortunately we have no authority over these unethical companies, and entering into financial agreements with such companies can have costly consequences. These solicitations may happen more frequently as we get closer to the Expo.

### Transportation from the Airport

**Taxicabs:** The cost for a taxicab ride from the airport, or from a hotel in our block, to the Convention Center ranges between \$20.00 and \$28.00.

To ensure the shortest, most direct route, it is recommended the taxi driver be asked to use the "Paradise Road route." Taxicabs are available on the east side of baggage claim, outside door exits 1-5. Airport personnel are available on the taxi curb to assist passengers. Taxis will not accept credit card payments. There is a \$3.30 charge on all fares originating at the airport. The maximum number of passengers allowed in any taxi is five (5) including infants and children.

**Airport Limousine Service:** A variety of shuttle/limousine services are available at McCarran and are located on the north and west sides of baggage claim, outside door exits 7-13. Please note that there are both group shuttle and "for-hire" stretch limousine services. All shuttle companies operate seven days a week.

The Convention Center is about 20 minutes from the Las Vegas airport.

### Hotel Shuttles

Shuttle service will be offered to and from the Convention Center for the following hotels. All other hotels in the SGIA block are within walking distance of the Convention Center. Flyers will be available at the front desk of the hotels that are part of the shuttle service to the Convention Center.

**"A show that had your head spinning on making more from a great industry."**

Specialty Printing & Imaging Technology

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### Unparalleled Business Connections

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# I INTERACT

Expert Weigh-In



*Michael Savoia, critic at Rhode Island School of Design, talks about the Digital Embroidery class he teaches, what students need to know about embroidery history to succeed today and how the industry should work to educate next-generation embroiderers.*

**I teach different aspects of embroidery at Providence, RI-based Rhode Island School of Design.** I'm what's known at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) as a critic. I teach computerized embroidery and give workshops and tutorials on different aspects of embroidery. I also host independent study sessions throughout the year.

**I enjoy bringing embroidery to students in a variety of majors.** My class is held during RISD's Wintersession. Half of my 14 students are textile majors and the other half can be any major. The first 14 students who register get the seats in class, and the rest are put on a waiting list. Each major seems to have its own way of interpreting embroidery for their creative needs. Apparel students in particular are very savvy when it comes to embellishment.

**My Digital Embroidery course incorporates Pulse Microsystems software and single-head Tajima machines from Hirsch International (asi/14982).** The course is called Digital Embroidery. Students learn to use Pulse software and a single-head Tajima embroidery machine. We use a border sash frame for all our work and students interpret their artwork in the software by scanning imagery and working over it in Pulse or by using Adobe Illustrator and creating vector files, and then bringing them in to Pulse.

**It's important to experiment with the different capabilities of the embroidery and digitizing software to know**

**what's possible.** You need to experiment with the tools in the software to learn the many different choices one has in articulating a design and to sew samples, samples and more samples before sewing out the finished concept. Playing with density, pull comp and stitch selection is key to understanding how to best use the software.

**I'm able to show students how embroidery is done today, and how embroiderers operated back in the 1700s.** I show them the complete range of embroidery, from hand and hand-guided to computerized. I want them to have a good background in how embroidery is created in today's market. I show them a large quantity of my samples and I select examples of historic document embroidery with the curators of the RISD museum collection, who then graciously present the pieces to students with a wonderful dialogue of how things were done on pieces ranging from the 18th century to present.

**It's important that students learn how to be an integral part of the working world. I want them to be comfortable knowing enough about the process so that they can be a valuable part of a company.** Embroidery has become a huge part of not only the apparel industry, of course, but also the home interior sector. Many companies do not know how to critique a source that's doing embroidery for them in India, for example. My course gives students the knowledge to seek a more refined product.

**I focus on embroidery as a decorative arts discipline, not just a commercial endeavor.** I view embroidery as part of the decorative arts tradition. Dressing models and furniture or, in some cases, making fine art out of this process is where I concentrate. I know many people use it for commercial purposes or to promote a business or organization with a logo; that just doesn't happen to be my focus.

**Companies within the embroidery industry should support the education of the next generation.** I'd like to see the major vendors and suppliers in the industry support education. Art schools need machines and software so that an expanded knowledge can be more available to textile and apparel students. The possibilities they have in turning the industry upside down are endless. By getting quality equipment and software to students, equipment and software providers can expand their market in the years to come as students begin to seek out ways of achieving their entrepreneurial goals.

**I have a lot of industry experience that can be a valuable asset when imparted to my students.** I want my students to walk away from their interaction from me having benefited from my insight that has come from working in the interior design industry for many years in different positions, which gave me the knowledge of how to work with a specific clientele. It took me quite a while to figure everything out, but I've been greatly rewarded because of my discipline and my passion for my industry.

## Problem Solved

**Q** *My showroom has all the basic blanks: T-shirts, polos, hats and a few hoodies and jackets. I want to wow customers with my selection. What kinds of staple items should I also show? And what's the best way to find items that are also trendy and colorful to appeal to even more buyers?*



**Samanta Cortes, Fashion Design Concepts:**

The key isn't the amount of merchandise you carry; it's how you merchandise (display) it. Showing off a few basic items with color cards and some finished products could create an amazing showroom section that's perfect for receiving potential clients.



**Lee Romano Sequeira, Sparkle Plenty (asi/88442):**

For us, this is an easy one! We'd say that besides offering a variety of apparel (totes, caps, tees, hoodies, yoga pants, etc.), always add a bit of sparkle and have a few

pieces that show an assortment of rhinestones, rhinestuds and, for high-end clients, Swarovski crystal. Bling is always in season, and the demand is hotter than ever. We also love to play the middleman for promotional products distributors. All we do is bling, so sparkle is our specialty.



**Howard Potter, A&P Master Images (asi/702505):**

Your showroom is everything. It's like your website in that it's a way to wow your customers along with showing why they're paying what they're paying to work with you. We group blanks from separate

suppliers in individual sections, and our counter has A&P logoed apparel in it for us to give away to our customers.



**Erich Campbell, Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415):**

In our showroom, we have popular choices for apparel, accessories and hard goods. We rotate displays of new decoration styles and techniques as well as garment offerings to expose our customers to the options our distributors offer. Watch trends in retail markets, online and listen to our customers to find our new offerings. You'd be surprised how well it works to simply

asi/18205




Wooly Thread : 2/32, 2/48



Polyester Embroidery Thread : 75d/2, 120d/2

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# INTERACT

## Problem Solved

keep tabs on what forward-thinking customers request and make sure we track those items down. When we create something that we think would appeal to

our buyers beyond the original customer, we purchase and decorate extras for showroom displays. Be aware of your core customers' needs and wants. Follow trade

magazines and suppliers' blogs as well as the retail world: trends will surface and you'll be ready to serve them up to your customers.



### Niamh O'Connor, UrbanThreads.com:

At Urban Threads, we have a digital showroom of sorts, with what we call our "Lab" projects, at our Urban Threads blog. Basically, I think having a few couture "wow" pieces is the key. Even though your clients may never go for a one-of-a-kind embroidered blazer or whatever it may be, it shows the sky's the limit when it comes to your shop's talent. Go over the top on your showcase pieces, and your customers will think, "Wow, if they can do that, my hoodies are going to look great!"



### Dave Barrett, RICOMA International Corp. (asi/18200):

I think selection, while important, is not the key to appealing to customers. Your samples should be decorated with colorful and unique designs that give your customers ideas for their own products.



### Mike Angel, Melco Embroidery Systems (asi/541224):

I have been helping businesses get started in the decorating industry since 1998. One thing that has remained consistent among the businesses that succeed is maintaining the discipline to balance their product offerings. There are two areas of discipline:

- Products and services that are competitive and low-margin, but generate cash flow
- Products and services that are high margin, but lower volume.

I've seen many businesses chase trophy accounts, large volume yet low margin offerings that eat up their time and money with no profitable return. Successful businesses balance volume accounts while also targeting niche markets that may be less volume but generate higher margins. My advice is to do both.

**HAVE A PROBLEM YOU NEED SOLVED?**  
Send your question for the *Stitches* Editorial Advisory Board to [nrollender@asicentral.com](mailto:nrollender@asicentral.com).

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# Phil Stitch Answers



## Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the 2014 Sourcing Guide, write to: *Stitches*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Trevoise, PA 19053. Or fax your question to (215) 953-3107. For the quickest response, e-mail [askphil@asicentral.com](mailto:askphil@asicentral.com). For RN inquiries, visit [www.stitches.com](http://www.stitches.com).

com for the RN Database link.

P.S. If you join ASI with the brand-new *Stitches* Membership Package, you'll be able to immediately source printable products from every ASI supplier member with ASI's ESP Buyer's Guide. Plus, increase sales with your own e-commerce website full of T-shirts, blankets, caps, bags, plush toys and other embroidery-ready items. Call (877) 276-0292 or visit [www.joinstitches.com](http://www.joinstitches.com) to get started!

## I'm in need of a moisture-wicking polo with a snap placket and no pockets for a beverage company. Please help!

- Stefanie

Oh, snap! Head to PVH Corporate Outfitters ([asi/75633](http://asi/75633)); (800) 999-0146; [www.pvhcorporatoutfitters.com](http://www.pvhcorporatoutfitters.com); the Men's Performance Polyester Pique Polo shirt (13Z0075) and the Ladies' Pique Polo Shirt (13Z0081) have the features your client needs.

Or, check out the two-toned Men's Crossover Performance Polo (TPS-1) and the Men's Epic Performance Polo (GPQ-1), as well as the ladies' companion versions (TPS-1W and GPQ-1W) from Stormtech Performance Apparel ([asi/89864](http://asi/89864)); (866) 407-2222; [www.stormtechusa.com](http://www.stormtechusa.com).

Finally, get inspiration from Ash City USA ([asi/37127](http://asi/37127)); (866) 274-2489; [www.ashcity.com](http://www.ashcity.com); here you'll find the Quick Dry Performance Polo (78682), the Men's Rotate Quick Dry Performance Polo (88683) and more.

## I've always read your column and enjoyed it but now I need help. I'm looking for fanny packs for a sorority group of women. Can you help me?

- Cinda

"Waist" no time helping these ladies! Start with Apollo Group ([asi/73392](http://asi/73392)); (800) 982-2146; [www.apolloemb.com](http://www.apolloemb.com); product BG-50 is a 100% polyester, three-

pocket fanny pack available in six appealing colors. Next, zip over to Justin Case ([asi/63698](http://asi/63698)); (877) 761-8998; [www.justin-casepromo.com](http://www.justin-casepromo.com); and check out the Hydra Bottle Fanny (OB343), an innovative pack that features a padded water bottle holder. The Medium Obus Go Fanny (OB341) has a padded pack for comfort and is an ideal option for people on the go.

You can also find over a dozen options – from pretty and petite to practical and even camo – at Atteff International ([asi/37455](http://asi/37455)); (888) 828-8333; [www.atteff.com](http://www.atteff.com). Happy packing!

## Can you please find me a smock or apron for children who love to make messes? They're learning to paint, and the teacher wants to keep their clothes stain-free while advertising her services. - Dionne

Keep them clean with ERB Safety & Fame Fabrics ([asi/51204](http://asi/51204)); (800) 800-6522; [www.e-erb.com](http://www.e-erb.com); the Child Cobbler Apron and Child Bib Apron are two fabulous options made of poly/cotton twill.

Or, check out several mess-proof garments from FIEL- Fairdeal Import & Export ([asi/53509](http://asi/53509)); (800) 851-3435; [www.fiel.com](http://www.fiel.com). The Twill Junior Smock with 2 Pockets (KD2SA), Twill Kids Apron with 2 Pockets (KDBA6), Nylon Crafts Apron (KDBA7) and others will surely help this teacher maintain her sanity while the kids show off their skills.

## My client is looking for a diaper bag. It needs to be available in pink and blue. Please let me know if you find anything. - Ellie

Carry the baby essentials in the stylish diaper bag (15300) from Norwood US ([asi/74400](http://asi/74400)); (877) 667-9663; [www.norwood.com](http://www.norwood.com); the two-toned beauty features long handles and includes a striped changing pad in a matching color. It's available in light blue, light yellow and pink.

You may also want to check out D&S

Specialties ([asi/48030](http://asi/48030)); (800) 494-5247; [www.dands.biz](http://www.dands.biz). This supplier carries the Precious Cargo Diaper Bag (CAR25), which is designed to hang on a stroller and can carry many items in its spacious main compartment.

## Do you have a source for ladies' leggings in fun solid colors like pink, yellow, blue, etc.? I appreciate your help! - Faye

Get a leg up on the competition with American Apparel ([asi/35297](http://asi/35297)); (213) 488-0226; [www.americanapparel.net/wholesaleresources](http://www.americanapparel.net/wholesaleresources). The Nylon/Tricot Legging (RNT38) is available in cobalt and magenta.

Assertive Creativity ([asi/37166](http://asi/37166)); (347) 350-6349; [www.assertivecreativity.com](http://www.assertivecreativity.com); carries dozens of women's leggings in colors like yellow, bright pink, turquoise and mint. Finally, stretch to Rivers Garment Inc. ([asi/82571](http://asi/82571)); (562) 968-0917; [www.riversgarment.com](http://www.riversgarment.com); for the nylon/spandex Ladies' Solid Stretch Leggings/Full-Length Tights (RPJW0015), which come in assorted colors and are dry-wicking and antimicrobial.

## My client needs some spiffy tennis skirts for a women's tennis league she works with. Can you help? - Maggie

Serve your client with the nylon/spandex Martina Skort (016) from Brandwear ([asi/41545](http://asi/41545)); (303) 733-0410; [www.brandwear.ca](http://www.brandwear.ca). It's available in black or black/white in nine sizes, and is ideal for many women's sports, including tennis.

Another smart option is the Compete Performance Tennis Skirt (W0904) from Sports One Group ([asi/50240](http://asi/50240)); (866) 264-9175; [www.sportsonegroup.com](http://www.sportsonegroup.com); this sporty staple features Lycra/polyester construction, asymmetrical pleats and two-tone trendiness.



By Theresa Hegel

## InkSoft Recognized For Revenue Growth

Software developer InkSoft Inc. was the top honoree this year in a list of fast-growing New Mexico companies with less than \$10 million in revenue. Each year, the nonprofit Technology Ventures Corp. names the Flying 40, a compilation of thriving businesses in several revenue categories.

InkSoft also was recognized for having the highest percentage of revenue growth of all companies on the Flying 40 list. The developer – which offers a comprehensive business suite,

including an online designer, e-commerce platform and other business tools – grew its revenue from just \$3,700 back in 2009, its first year of operations, to \$2.5 million last year.

“We expect to reach \$3.7 million in revenue this year,” founder and CEO Scott Allen told the *Albuquerque Journal*. “We’re also developing more software to expand into new markets, such as printing on coffee mugs, smartphone cases, mouse pads, signs and banners.”

Visit [www.inksoft.com](http://www.inksoft.com) for more information.

### American Apparel, alphabroder Team Up

*Stitches* Top Apparel Supplier alphabroder (asi/34063) has partnered with American Apparel (asi/35297), another supplier from the magazine’s 2014 Top 25 list. The agreement allows American Apparel, known for its domestically made, fashion-forward styles, to become more widely accessible to a national wholesale audience, the companies say.

“We’re extremely excited about this venture and are looking forward to leveraging the solid relationships alphabroder has already built with customers in the promotional apparel industry,” says Ray Hughes, distributor relations for American Apparel.

He adds that the company has made it a goal to bring more retail-inspired apparel to the advertising specialties marketplace, and that alphabroder’s vast distribution network will help American Apparel meet that goal.

David Clifton, chief marketing officer for alphabroder, says his company is also excited

about the partnership. “Our customers frequently tell us that choice of brands and styles is critical to their business, and adding American Apparel to our industry-leading product assortment definitely delivers to their needs.”

Customers in the U.S. can shop for more than 40 styles from American Apparel by visiting [www.alphabroder.com](http://www.alphabroder.com) or calling the customer service department at (800) 523-4585.

### Georgia Tops for Business

Georgia is the state to be when it comes to commerce, according to a study from CNBC. Thanks to its large, educated workforce, a rebounding housing market and a strong infrastructure, the Peach State finished first in CNBC’s 2014 list of best states for business. Georgia has always been among the top 10 since CNBC started ranking states in 2007, but this is the first time it took the No. 1 spot.

Every year, the Top States for Business study rates the nation on more than 50 metrics in 10 categories of

competitiveness – workforce, cost of doing business, economy, infrastructure, quality of life, technology and innovation, business friendliness, education, cost of living and access to capital. CNBC says it holds each state to its own standards by weighting categories based on how frequently they appear as a selling point in marketing materials.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal wasn’t surprised by the study’s findings. “As more and more people see Georgia’s successes and consider it for an expansion or relocation, I think more rankings will put Georgia on top,” he said.

Texas nabbed the No. 2 spot in CNBC’s list. The Lone Star State added more than 300,000 jobs in the last year. It also boasts a strong economy, a thriving technology sector and robust access to capital. Rounding out the top 5 are Utah, Nebraska and North Carolina.

At the bottom of the pile were Connecticut, Alaska, West Virginia, Hawaii and Rhode Island.

## Event Calendar

Sept. 8-11, Milwaukee; Chicago; Indianapolis; Louisville, KY

**Advantages Roadshow**  
(800) 546-3300  
[www.advantagesroadshow.com](http://www.advantagesroadshow.com)

Sept. 17-20, Las Vegas  
**Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show**  
(678) 285-3976  
[www.lvsouvenirshow.com](http://www.lvsouvenirshow.com)

Sept. 26-28, Fort Worth, TX  
**ISS Shows**  
(508) 743-0532  
[www.issshows.com](http://www.issshows.com)

Oct. 19-22, Marlboro, MA  
**New England Apparel Club Show**  
(781) 326-9223  
[www.neacshow.com](http://www.neacshow.com)

### Small Business Confidence at Six-Year High

Small-business owners are feeling pretty confident this year, according to a survey from Wells Fargo and Gallup. In fact, optimism among small-business owners is at the highest level in six years.

The quarterly survey of small-business owners, conducted at the beginning of April, shows that the overall Wells Fargo/Gallup Small Business Index score moved to positive 47 in April, up two points from January.

The survey reported that one reason businesses’ outlooks have improved is companies are more positive about their ability to obtain credit.

## Metal Band Animates Embroidery In Latest Video

Nicos Livesy, a freelance animator and member of the London-based heavy metal band Throne, had a great idea for a music video: a stop-motion animated sci-fi short, rendered entirely in machine-embroidered denim rectangles. Seven months, a successful Kickstarter campaign and about 45 million stitches later, that dream became a reality.

The video for the single, “Tharsis Sleeps,” depicts the band as a trio of astronauts who must drop an atomic bomb into a volcano on Mars in order to raise the planet’s temperature to make it habitable for human life. Livesy says he got the idea for the video from the embroidered patches heavy metal fans sew on their clothes to support their favorite bands.

Creating the video was a painstaking



process. “The animation was all drawn into the computer frame by frame using a tablet,” Livesy told *Dezeen*, an online architecture and design magazine. The video’s 3,000 frames were then digitized using software provided by Wilcom, sewn with three 10-needle machines lent by Brother using thread donated by Madeira. Each frame was shot under a rostrum camera and imported back into the computer for video editing, he explains.

The very cool completed music video is available for viewing online at [vimeo.com/97718226](https://vimeo.com/97718226).



## A Stitch Doing Time

Beautiful, intricate needlework isn’t the first thing that comes to mind when you think of prison life, but inmates across the U.K. are learning to sew, quilt and hand-embroider, thanks to the efforts of skilled volunteers with Fine Cell Work, a social enterprise created in 1997. The prisoners are paid for their creations, which include embroidered cushions, quilts, tote bags, wall hangings and furniture covers. Prisoners’ pieces grace Kensington Palace, the mayor of London’s residence and Dover Castle, among others. Fine Cell Work is meant to foster hope, discipline and self-esteem, giving inmates a purposeful activity to pass the time spent in their cells.

For many prisoners, the rewards are immeasurable. A former inmate named Martin told the *Eastern Daily Press of Norwich* that Fine Cell Work may have saved his life. He had been serving an 18-month sentence in Cambridgeshire when he joined the sewing group, knowing little more than how to reattach a button. Soon, he was teaching other inmates how to sew. “It gave me such a lift to be told something I had done was fantastic,” he says. “If it wasn’t for Fine Cell Work, I would have gone into a depressive state.”

Martin was released from prison with enough money to buy some new clothes and the skills to start a new career. He is currently employed making curtains and blinds for hotels, plus takes on commission needlework.

## South African Artist Explores Fairy Tales



South African artist Hannalie Taute stitches haunting images onto smooth, black rubber. In her award-winning series, *Rubber Ever After*, she uses fairy tale motifs to delve into her connection with her spouse, children and inanimate objects. The “ever after” title stems from rubber’s resistance to decomposition.

“I’ve been exploring the theme of ‘relationships’ and ‘play,’ trying to figure out the psychology behind them – especially relationships with toys and dolls,” Taute told South African newspaper *The Times*. “A lot of inspiration came from books and stories. As Margaret Atwood once said: ‘In the end, we’re all just stories.’”

Taute has been working with rubber since 2012, when she started making toys from the durable material to earn money. A client’s request to embroider her child’s name on a toy inspired her embroider intricate artwork onto the medium. The *Ever After* series includes depictions of a queen wearing a doily crown. *The Times* describes the collection as “invigoratingly new,” creating an overlap between the sinister and the whimsical.

### SALES

## Jumping Through Hoops

Hubband-and-wife team James Urbanoski and Michelle Wood, of Carlsbad, CA, like to keep busy. They take their mobile business, Threadneedle Embroidery, from horse show to horse show, following the Southern California equine circuit nearly 42 weeks out of the year.

Certain weeks are busier than others, however. A few times a year, Threadneedle will take on large orders like completing 150 custom jacket backs, with stitch counts as high as 35,000, over a weekend. Even with the help of a temporary worker, it's a lot of volume to slog through. "Any other embroiderer would

think that we were absolutely insane," Wood says. But, "At the end of the show, the cash register looks really nice. ... Sometimes you have to work harder for your money than other times."

Threadneedle, started a quarter-century ago by Wood's parents, serves the English riding, hunter-jumper, dressage and sport horse communities, sewing logos on jackets, hats, saddle pads, blankets and more. "They're addicted to embroidery," Wood says of her clientele. "It's fantastic." Though the work requires some specialized knowledge, like techniques for working with thick saddle pads, it's not too different from other niches, Urbanoski

says. "Big picture, they're a sports team like any other," he says of riders.

Wood says the secret of their success is treating clients like stars, whether or not they happen to be famous – not such an unusual occurrence when you service a high-priced hobby in SoCal. "I want to treat everyone the same," she adds. "I think they get that. ... I spoil my customers terribly." That spoiling, which includes a commitment to next-day service whenever possible, has made for a lot of repeat clients, plus plenty of referrals, the couple says.

Visit [www.threadneedle-emb.com](http://www.threadneedle-emb.com) to see how the company markets itself.

### MARKETING

## Primed For Success

Employees at Seattle-based Zoom ID were a little surprised when NFL Hall of Famer Deion "Prime Time" Sanders called the company's customer service line, but that didn't stop them from whipping up a rush order of custom varsity jackets for the style-savvy retired athlete and coach of Prime Prep Academy, a Dallas charter school he co-founded.

"He called us back and said [his jacket] was the coolest thing he ever saw. ... Of all the things he's ever worn, this one got the most cool comments from friends," says Cory Dean, owner of Zoom ID and several other narrowly focused companies that collectively bring in more than \$15 million a year and provide everything from digitizing to custom patches and lapel pins.

It was the embroidered patch business, HPI Emblem (asi/62066), that led Dean to branch into custom varsity jackets. "It's a natural progression from patches," Dean says. "We're always moving up to a higher-value product and trying to make it easy for our customers to do complicated things."

Many dealers had given up on varsity jackets because it was too complex to customize patches and sew them individually onto the jacket, Dean says. Zoom ID developed an online designer app and streamlined the manufacturing process, trimming weeks off traditional lead times, while still custom-making each jacket in three weeks, according to the company's website.



NFL Hall of Famer Deion Sanders shows off a letterman jacket he customized using Zoom ID's online design app.

Sanders was so impressed with the quality of Zoom ID's work that he volunteered to promote the company. In a testimonial video on Zoom ID's home page, the NFL network analyst, clad in a red-and-black letterman jacket, sings Zoom ID's praises, calling his decision to place an order with the company "a no-brainer." Zoom ID is negotiating a partnership with Sanders.



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## Growth Spurt

Just two years old, Embroidered Apparel Solutions is already outgrowing its Pittsburgh digs, tripling revenue in that short time – from just under \$80,000 in 2013 to nearly \$250,000 in sales this year. “Our customers refer to us as the biggest small company they’ve ever seen,” says Kevin Orga, owner of EAS. “For having only two six-heads, we probably turn around as much work as people with 24 heads.”

EAS is poised to move into a new space, 50,000 square feet – one floor of a five-story building in town. The move gives the company room to expand. Orga eventually

wants to have around 50 to 60 embroidery heads in his shop. Once EAS reaches that threshold, he says, the company may look into adding screen-printing presses to the mix.

Orga attributes the company’s success to providing quality products with a quick turnaround time – generally three to five days from order to completion. EAS is able to pull off such feats due to its streamlined, efficient work flow and nimble scheduling, Orga says. Where other shops “make a schedule and stick to it, we’re the exact opposite,” he says. “The schedule for tomorrow may be 100% different by the

end of the day today.”

Orga isn’t expecting the company to continue to triple in revenue every year, but the industry veteran is confident about the future of EAS. “As long as we keep making steps in that positive direction, we’ll be doing well,” he says.



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# Strategy

WEB

## Worth A Dang

They call it the Dang Chick Nation, and that legion of enthusiastic, online fans is part of what has made Georgia-based apparel company Dang Chick so successful. “The brand has really taken off,” says creator Stephanie O’Connor. “I think a lot of women can relate to it.”

Five years ago, O’Connor wanted to create a line of cool, comfortable T-shirts that would give women an extra boost of self-confidence and attitude whenever they slipped one on. Her husband, Tim, came up with the name: “When you walk into a room, you want people to say, ‘Dang chick, you look good,’” O’Connor explains. Though the brand is always coming up with new designs, the simpler, classic looks tend to be the most popular: a shirt with a large star that proclaims “dang cowgirl,” for instance.

In its first three years, Dang Chick doubled its sales volume every year. Now, Dang Chick is sold in more than 2,300 retail locations, and the company counts custom work as a significant part of its



revenue stream. Dang Chick also has expanded beyond T-shirts to become a “lifestyle brand.”

What separates Dang Chick from other T-shirt companies out there is the fans. Women – from cancer survivors to mothers of special-needs children – share their inspiring stories and rave about how the brand helps them through the day. Dang Chick engages its 22,000 Facebook fans with fun contests, like asking women to send in photos sporting Dang Chick gear for a chance to win a free shirt. “We get hundreds of women sending pictures,” O’Connor says.

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# DECORATING SOLUTIONS

## Five Steps

By Tonia Kimbrough

### Create a Fashion Rhinestone T-shirt

Learn how to create a fashion-forward rhinestone design for a women's T-shirt using FashionMommy's process.

1

#### CONSULT WITH YOUR CLIENT.

Ask about the garment's purpose, durability required and budget. **Tip:** Fashion Mommy uses round Hotfix rhinestones for garment application; there are a variety of stones at various price points.

2

#### CREATE THE ARTWORK.

You can use stock vector clipart and fonts you've purchased for use in your shop, or you can draw your own artwork. There are various software programs on the market that facilitate this process. Fashion Mommy uses R-Wear Studio from Roland DGA. R-Wear also allows you to create a rhinestone pattern for your design using different colors and calibrated sizes of standard stones. For this design, Fashion Mommy used ss6 and ss10 size rhinestones in six colors. Get your client's approval.

3

#### PRODUCE THE RHINESTONE TEMPLATE.

R-Wear studio will output to either an EGX-350 rotary engraver or GX-24 vinyl cutter for rhinestone template creation. If you're using the EGX-350, load the machine with the template material and a rhinestone cutter blade. Then, the machine cuts calibrated holes into the material creating the rhinestone pattern. If you're using a GX-24 machine, load either rhinestone stencil or Sticky Flock material and a 60 degree blade. The machine then cuts calibrated holes into the material creating the rhinestone pattern.

4

#### PRODUCE THE RHINESTONE TRANSFER.

Use Hotfix rhinestones in the required sizes/colors for the design. Hotfix stones are pre-glued with a heat-activated backing. You'll also need transfer tape, a rhinestone spreader and a good set of tweezers. Spread manually with the rhinestone spreader onto the template using the correct colors. Once the rhinestones fall into place, apply the sticky transfer tape over top and the rhinestones will stick to it. Repeat this process for each layer of the design.

#### TIP:

"Cotton/poly blend fabrics work the best," says Angela Lloyd-Fiorelli of FashionMommy. She also prefers to use a heavier-weight T-shirt so the rhinestone design retains its shape.



5

#### HEAT-PRESS THE TRANSFER TO THE GARMENT.

Apply at 360 degrees for 20 seconds with firm pressure. Two Teflon pressing sheets are part of the FashionMommy process, using one sheet in between the T-shirt and one for the top of the shirt.

FashionMommy; circle 106 on Free Info Card or call (925) 679-9420.



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# DECORATING SOLUTIONS

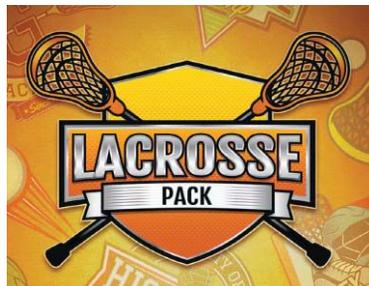
Decorating & Fabric Trends

## Lock In Lacrosse Sales

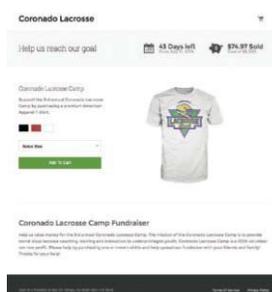
With rapid growth in lacrosse participation across the U.S., there's opportunity to outfit players and provide fan wear for team clubs and fundraising. A record 746,859 players competed on organized lacrosse teams in 2013, as reported in the annual U.S. Lacrosse Participation Report, with youth participation topping 400,000.

A new ClipArtBoom Lacrosse Designs collection, which includes images of balls, sticks, helmets and more is an easy way to take advantage of the trend. The premium vector graphics require minimal design time. The package includes 35 black-and-white clip art files and 35 black-and-white and color interactive design templates in styles for today's market. The lacrosse clip art, backgrounds, colors and 35 design fonts put compelling graphics at your fingertips.

All designs and templates are available in .eps, Adobe Illustrator and CorelDRAW formats. Everything is royalty-free with unlimited usage. These designs are ideal for screen printing,



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The RIP software included with the DTG M series direct to garment printers is now approximately 30% faster, further increasing the shop's productivity. The new application can queue an entire days jobs, leaving the artist free to do other things while an operator simply advances from one job to the next.

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## Knock-Out Neon Continues

As a continuing fashion trend, neon apparel and decoration has kept demand hot. Decorators can satisfy customers with two new choices in materials for two popular applications.

For heat press, Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475) offers Spectra Bling cutter material in six fluorescent colors. Whether used against a black, white or complementary bright garment, this durable vinyl packs a wow factor. New colors include yellow, purple, pink, orange, green and blue. It's ideal for dance, cheer, collegiate and sports.

For embroiderers, Madeira USA added new neons to its collection of 100% polyester Polyneon brand of embroidery threads.



MADEIRA USA LTD.; CIRCLE 109 ON FREE INFO CARD.

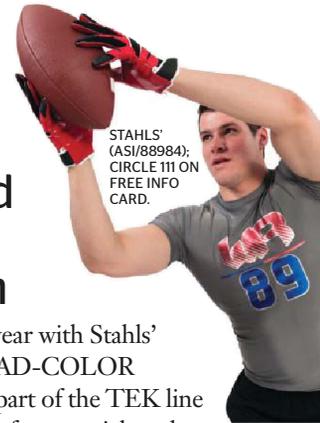
IMPRINTABLES WAREHOUSE (ASI/58475); CIRCLE 110 ON FREE INFO CARD.

Alice Wolf, marcom director for Madeira USA Ltd. , says, "Madeira added five new fluorescent colors, among the 62 new solid polyester colors. With 24 fluorescent polyester colors, we can better support those markets – children's wear and active – which embrace the bright appeal of neons."

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Peep-up sportswear with Stahls' (asi/88984) CAD-COLOR FoilTEK. As part of the TEK line of printable heat-transfer materials, colors include metallic gold, silver or white, and silver or gold shift. The colors shift and shimmer depending on the viewing angle. Lightweight with a soft hand, this material has four-way stretch and rebound for imprinting high-performance sportswear.

The technology is the patented STiX2 adhesive. Short for "sticks to anything," STiX2 adheres to a wide range of materials at a temperature range of 250-300 degrees for application to heat-sensitive fabrics.



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# DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Machine & Software Updates

## Web Portal Enables Remote Control



WORKHORSE PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 112 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 727-8520.

Screen printers and production managers can now track press production and jobs on Workhorse Products' Sabre automatic press in real time from any Internet browser thanks to the new Web portal feature available as part of the Sabre control panel tablet.

The Web portal, which is linked to the press tablet, displays jobs that are in the queue, in production, paused and finished. For each viewable job, all the specifications are available including artwork, number of colors, print and flood strokes, ink type, indexing, flashing and total finished prints. Any specification can be changed in the portal.

A manager can set up jobs, monitor progress, troubleshoot problems and check maintenance status. The Web portal keeps track of an unlimited number of Sabre presses and jobs. Anyone with authorized access can view the portal and use all of its functions. This service comes with the purchase of any Sabre automatic press. For more information, visit [www.workhorseproducts.com](http://www.workhorseproducts.com).

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## Startup Manual Press

The affordable Kruzer, a M&R entry-level manual screen-printing press offered by GSG is ideal for startup shops, and for small and mid-size automatic shops in need of a manual press. This six-color, four-station press has a lever-adjusted, off-contact system for vertical operation. Features include tapered-roller-bearing-supported upper/lower carousels; precise micro-registration system; and machined center shaft. The Kruzer is designed/disassembled to fit through a 31" doorway. Side screen holders and solid aluminum, low-profile, rubber-coated pallets are standard. The maximum frame size (23" x 31") fits most automatic presses.



GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS GROUP; CIRCLE 113 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 366-1776.

## Artist Plus Offers Digitizing Features

Artist Plus is an embroidery software program that falls between the Maestro and Illustrator Extreme levels of the Tajima DG/ML by Pulse family. It offers many tools to speed up everyday digitizing functions. The Auto Color Blend tool combines two stitch colors together to create a beautiful effect. The Radial Fill tool repositions the center point of a segment and creates concentric circles of stitches from center out.

One of the most popular features is custom cornering, where corners are adjusted with your mouse. Line Carving is a great way to add 3-D effects to designs while reducing stitch count. Other features include carved fill pattern editor, region carving, programmed stitch editor, satin swirl and graduated density. Artist Plus can be purchased alone or as an upgrade.





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# DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Saving 9

## Maximize Productivity With Air Fusion

Incorporating the latest technology, Hotronix offers the Air Fusion, an auto-open, auto-swing-away heat press. Powered by an air compressor, this push-button heat press has innovative features designed to increase production while decreasing operator fatigue.

With the patented Auto Adjust Pressure, up to four pressure and time settings can be programmed, allowing the user to select the appropriate application based on the garment. This makes it easy to switch between garments of different thickness such as T-shirts and hoodies.

Also increasing the ease of use is the fully threadable lower platen. Garments are positioned on the lower platen and can be rotated from front to back and side to side, making it easier to put heat-applied graph-



HOTRONIX; CIRCLE 114 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 727-8520.

ics in hard-to-reach places.

The exclusive auto-open, swing-away upper platen provides a heat-free workspace for safer two-hand operation. With the touch screen, the operator can digitally set the time, temperature and pressure. There are dual time settings for two-step applications: preset programs for an energy-saving sleep mode and a production cycle counter.

The Air Fusion stand height is adjustable, making it ergonomic even when used by more than one person.

## Product Pick



GREAT DANE GRAPHICS; CIRCLE 115 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 829-0836 TO LEARN MORE.

Great Dane Graphics and Graphic Elephants Inc. have launched Operation Screen Print, an educational series geared to provide comprehensive beyond-the-basics training in screen printing's most challenging applications.

The first mission is "Killer Black Shirts."

From creating the proper artwork to separating and printing positives to preparing screens and printing, you'll be equipped with the know-how to successfully meet this specialized objective. Award-winning artists and screen printers Dane Clement and Lon Winters have pooled their more than 60 years of experience to put together a complete arsenal of tools for a thorough, multifaceted training experience in a single package.

In addition to an illustrated, full-color, spiral-bound training book with step-by-step instructions and how-to information, the kit includes two DVDs with five hours of video tutorials covering every aspect of the process. It also contains five film separations of the tiger image and a printed sample to compare it to so you can practice what you've learned. Visit [www.greatdanegraphics.com](http://www.greatdanegraphics.com) for more information.

## Quick Tips

1

**Direct-print numbers without having to invest in specialized equipment or attachments.**

Dalco Athletic

has added three new styles of numbers to its library of die-cut screen printing stencils. Athletic narrow, antique and shock fonts are now available in 1" to 12" inch sizes, making this economical approach to team numbering even more appealing by expanding the variety of looks you can offer.



DALCO ATHLETIC; CIRCLE 81 ON FREE INFO CARD.

2

**Strengthen your adhesive.** Try TEX Web pallet adhesive, available exclusively from GSG. It's a production-friendly, web-type adhesive that sprays easily and evenly on pallets.

The pressure-sensitive formula holds even heavier fabrics firmly while allowing for repositioning without loss of tack strength.



GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS GROUP; CIRCLE 113 ON FREE INFO CARD.

3

**Release pallets more quickly.**

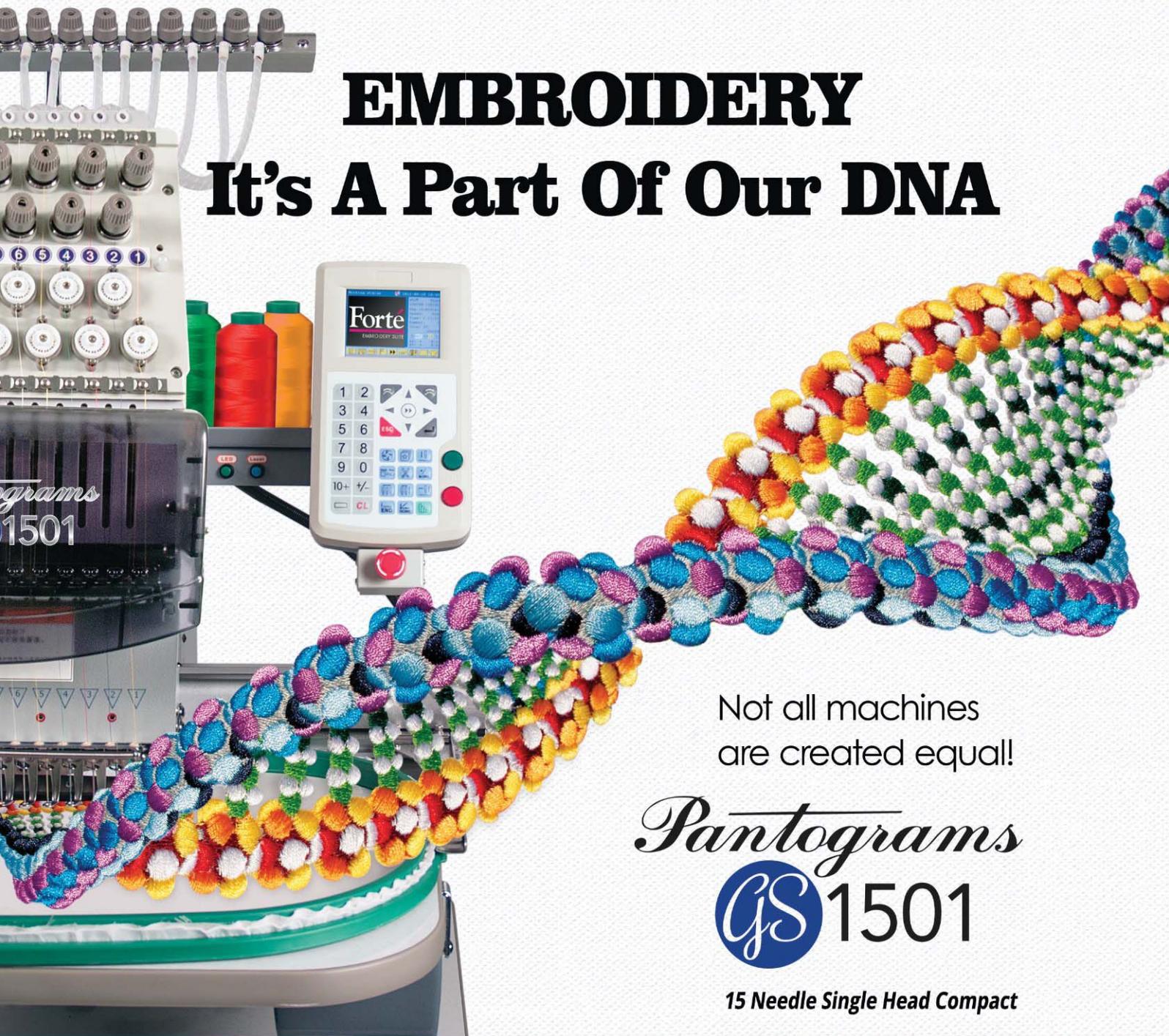
With the new Mach manual quick-release pallet from Workhorse Products, it's now faster and easier to set up samples on the manual press and then switch them over for production on an automatic.



WORKHORSE PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 112 ON FREE INFO CARD.

# EMBROIDERY

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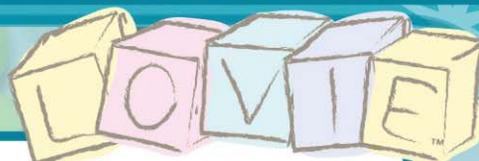
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# Look Book

## Runway Trends

By Mariana Leung, designer and publisher of Msfabulous.com  
Photos by: Mariana and David Tak-Wai Leung

### New York Fashion Week

At New York Fashion Week, designers brought opulence to the runway. All types of garments, including evening gowns, became embroidered works of art. Angel Sanchez, Monique Lhuillier, Dennis Basso and Badgley Mischka used both simple decorating techniques and the piling on of a dense mix of materials to create lavish embellishments. *Stitches* visited the runway to scope out fashion collections that stood out for their stunning embroideries this season.



**TIP:** Layering pieces in the same hue for a monochromatic look is a great way to showcase texture. Without the distraction of color, the contrast of embellishment to fabric is emphasized even more. This is particularly effective if you use dimensional materials on fabrics like tulle or organza. Matte to shine, sheer to woolly and even black on black will always look sophisticated.

Angel Sanchez showcased a sleek, elegant collection of evening wear at his fashion presentation. The group was a study in pairing many textures of black. The designer made fantastic use of sliced leather fringe, which was featured as a bodice, twisted over shoulders and overlapped on others. The leather strips were also knotted into rosettes, and this stunning technique embellished everything from vests to cape fronts to skirts. The black palette was given a lighter touch with sheer black fabric and reflective silver fabric and silver jewelry. For example, Sanchez embroidered long lines of black sequins over one sheer gown to echo the look of the long leather strips.



Monique Lhuillier's fall/winter collection was a play of light and darkness. The designer snuck in dark motifs that included hidden skulls in her prints and embellishments. For contrast, Lhuillier, who has a great eye for using delicate embroidery, showcased opposing angel-inspired looks. This season, she used scrolling motifs of threadwork and beading, and some designs were accented with small crystals. Lhuillier showcased dresses with the embroidery in a contrasting color for a dramatic effect, along with garments that had a mix of sheer and shiny beads embroidered in loops that moved when the models walked.

**TIP:** Stay fresh by updating classic embroidery techniques with a twist. Modernize a traditional pattern with an unusual element, which could be achieved by adding an unexpected material into the embroidery. You can also incorporate graphic items in stark contrast to the motifs one usually sees on a garment.

# Look Book

## Runway Trends

DENNIS BASSO



BADGLEY MISCHKA



Dennis Basso was inspired by modern art for his fall/winter 2014-2015 show at New York Fashion Week. The designer's runway was the gallery for sweeping gowns that served as canvases. The best dresses of the collection used large graphic brushstrokes as abstract art prints. The embroideries incorporated a dense mix of jewels and sequins. Basso's key technique was to mix contrasting colors like red and blue or black and white to achieve a painterly effect on the garment. The irregular pattern made from the contrasting colors complemented the big, bold prints. Basso piled on rich fur accessories to complete the opulent, upscale look.

**TIP:** Pick one detail from your garment and over-embellish it. A collar or neckline only assumes a small area of fabric so you can afford to embroider it heavily with more expensive materials. If you choose to embellish part of the garment or accessory that frames the face, you'll create a lasting impression for a viewer because contrasting and densely embroidered areas have a luxurious look.

Gustav Klimt and the opulent palette of Vienna at the turn of the century inspired Badgley Mischka's collections. The clothing silhouettes, though, echoed 1950s chic. This collection heavily featured metal and gold, along with rich furs draped over luxurious tweed and silk. Warm shades of yellow and rose gold shimmered in brocade, embossed metal motifs and shiny embroideries. Even the models' tights were printed with intricate patterns and their manicures' metallic silver paint was trimmed with jewels. The aristocratic look was enhanced with flower-shaped embellishments, and the sculpted pieces were further decorated with faceted and cabochon jewels. Badgley Mischka also used embossed metal spiral trims, square gold plates and extra-long bugle beads to emulate the motifs found in Klimt paintings.

**TIP:** A guaranteed way to make a garment look expensive is to embellish a fabric that already has an ornate texture. To try it: Build up shine onto lace patterns or add extra details to brocade. Layering on to materials that have height and dimension emphasizes the feel of artisanal techniques. When you accent the rich look of metallic trims with additional jewels, you achieve a look that's truly decadent.

# Trends

By Alissa Tallman

## APPAREL

### Leather Jackets

There's a plethora of leather jackets up for grabs this season. You'll definitely want to show clients the styles being offered, from cute cropped numbers to romantic knee-length designs, not to mention the variety of leather types available, from suede to lambskin.

"The must-haves are jackets that mix rocker style with street style. Last season, we saw cropped, boxy jackets, which you can now easily add a leather version of to your wardrobe," says Monika Rene, customer service representative at Bishop, The Garment Co. (asi/40585). She notes the many types of leather making a major hit with consumers: "Leather can be any texture or thickness this season, even distressed or worn in."

Color, Rene says, is another important attribute. "Colors can be bright or neutral, from red and yellow to the timeless and classic black," she says. "Biker jackets have always had a point to make with their metal and zips, but this season they're making waves with color."



Take a look at Nucom/Burk's Bay (asi/74600; circle 83 on Free Info Card) for several leather items, including this women's jacket (9201).



PHOTO: ARJUN NEVADER

This beautifully crafted goatskin Classic Naval Aviator's Flight Jacket (Z21A0241) from Cockpit USA (asi/43022; circle 84 on Free Info Card) includes a mouton shearling collar, embroidered squadron patches and front pockets.

#### ◀ Apparel: Leather Jackets

Diesel Black Gold was one of several fashion houses that exhibited leather jackets prominently in its fall/winter 2014/2015 lineup. This particular jacket was showcased during New York Fashion Week and demonstrates the gorgeous array of glam and sparkle embellishments that bedeck the latest designs.



Nucom/Burk's Bay (asi/74600; circle 83 on Free Info Card) carries this men's top-grain leather vest (0710) that includes hand-warmer pockets, adjustable side lacing and inside the breast pocket.

# Look Book

## Trends

### COLOR

## Lime

During Fall/Winter 2014/2015 Fashion Week, lime bridged the ever-popular neon/pastel gap in the collections of Armani, Kenzo and Gucci.

“Lime is a color driver that’s approachable, earth-friendly and fresh,” says Laura Symes, Carhartt textile designer for Broberry Mfg. Inc. (asi/42057). “It’s complimented well by monochromatic grays and tans and is used as a great accent color in plaid, print and colorblocking patterns.” Symes says there’s a new customer demand for lime, as they “gravitate toward lime in all markets, from activewear to workwear and home interiors.” She suggests implementing lime in different ways: “Integrate it as an accent or ‘pop’ color in a plaid or print pattern.”

Michael O’Leary, account executive for McKlein Co. LLC (asi/70053), also loves lime. “Inspiration for fall’s fashion collections has been influenced by nature’s early autumn palette, where prominent, deep hues are beautifully juxtaposed with bright, contrasting colors like lime,” he says. O’Leary likes gray as an ideal partner color: “Lime accessories act as a zesty complement to deep cobalt blue, dark plum red and warm gray.”

PHOTO: ANTONIO DE MORAES BARROS



Landway (asi/66238; circle 86 on Free Info Card) offers this lightweight windbreaker (7580) that includes a wind- and water-resistant polyester shell, cool mesh lining and stowable zippered hood; decorated by Milwaukee-based Visual Impressions (asi/743500; circle 87 on Free Info Card).



The Mountrail jacket (10111-382) from Broberry Mfg. (asi/42057; circle 116 on Free Info Card) is made of 100% nylon and includes a front storm flap, three-piece hood and two interior pockets; decorated by decorated by Nina Sheets, owner of Anderson, IN-based All-Star Embroidery & Awards (asi/515834; circle 117 on Free Info Card).



This zig zag drawstring backpack (ZGZGBKSK) from Crown Products (asi/47700; circle 85 on Free Info Card) features a large main compartment, 5" side pocket and top carry handle.



Castle Merchandising (asi/44315; circle 88 on Free Info Card) distributes this cork-banded women’s lime watch (ST-1057GNCK).

### ◀ Color: Lime

Kenzo unleashed several succulent separates in lime during Paris Fashion Week, including this uniquely embellished striped top and matching skirt. Neon hues make for a splendid match with geometric-based prints, especially when neutrals are involved.

# Trends

## EMBELLISHMENT

### Patches

Patches and emblems are notable embellishments at the fall/winter 2014/2015 fashion shows, especially in the latest collections from Libertine and Katrantzou. This type of embellishment is front and center partly because embroidery itself is a key trend this season.

Michelle Serrano, marketing coordinator for World Emblem (asi/98264), says the current ways in which patches are implemented into apparel design have been revamped. "Patches don't necessarily have to be used solely on a uniform or as a focal point on a promotional garment but can be used in many ways in one's everyday wardrobe," she says. Patches are also multiplying – one patch just isn't enough to decorate garments this season. "Over single pieces of apparel, you'll see winter coats and jackets decorated with various patches," she says.

For Serrano, it's more about how patches are featured than about what's depicted on them: "What makes the current patch trend unique is not the patches themselves, but rather the manner in which modern fashion stylists, designers and apparel decorators are choosing to interpret them."



This retail denim jacket features embroidered patches by Penn Emblem Co. (asi/77120; circle 89 on Free Info Card).



This pair of retail jeans features custom embroidered patches from World Emblem (asi/98264; circle 91 on Free Info Card); jeans decorated by Jane Swanzy of Houston-based Swan Marketing LLC (asi/700627; circle 92 on Free Info Card).



PHOTO: NELSON BARNARD



This sharp letterman's jacket was embellished by Waco, TX based Graham Embroidery (asi/57529; circle 90 on Free Info Card).

◀ **Embellishment: Patches** Libertine featured an impressive array of patch-attached apparel during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. This superb men's sports jacket displays this imprinting trend boldly.

# LOOK BOOK

## Showcase: Women's Apparel

This fall offers an array of new styles and designs in women's clothing and accessories and in numerous categories, from outerwear and athletic gear to corporate apparel.

Elson Yeung, product line manager and designer for Ash City USA (asi/37127), says color embellishments are hot. "We see an increased use of athletic detailing and color 'pops' in women's apparel," he says. "Implementing that 'pop' of color on trims, zippers, zipper pulls and stitching emphasizes the garment's flattering shape or silhouette and brings out the design of the style lines to the forefront." Yeung says this trend is also on-point with current promotional apparel offerings. "Such designs create visual appeal, and they also emulate a retail-inspired look," Yeung says. "Women's wear is evolving."

Jennifer Tsai, vice president of operations and Lilac Bloom designer for Tri-Mountain (asi/92125), also points to bright colors. "We're seeing vibrant hues and color combinations (think magenta, orange, yellow and green)," she says. "Apparel in bold, bright colors is a great way for companies and employees to get noticed, especially during tradeshow and events." Tsai includes knits as another mainstay: "'Cozy' is a buzzword at the pre-fall shows."



Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; circle 93 on Free Info Card) distributes this attractive short-sleeve V-neck (LB002); choose from grenadine, berry, black or pewter.

This soft fleece jacket (026) featuring contrast paneling is available from Brandwear (asi/41545; circle 94 on Free Info Card) in several color combinations; decorated by Kellie Gibson of Denison, TX-based Kellie's Kreations.

Look for this flowy cutout tee (8871) with cut-out back from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 95 on Free Info Card); decorated by Oakland, CA-based Forward Printing (asi/700635; circle 96 on Free Info Card).

Ash City USA (asi/37127; circle 97 on Free Info Card) distributes this sporty fleece jacket (88697/78697); decorated by Janelle Bolt of Dundee, OR-based Busy Hands Embroidery (asi/702525; circle 98 on Free Info Card).

You can find this long-sleeved V-neck tee (DT5201) at SanMar (asi/84863; circle 99 on Free Info Card); decorated by Kellie Gibson of Denison, TX-based Kellie's Kreations.

## Niche: Purse and Tote Trends

The fall and winter 2014/2015 fashion shows turned out a multitude of purses and bags that rivaled those of previous seasons as far as imaginative design and color and style availability. If a client is investing in a handbag or tote this year, whether for an employee gift or a promotional event, there are a few specific trends you'll want to recommend.

Jessica Brown, senior director of luxury goods for Rymax/Brainstorm Logistics (asi/41515), says intense color is a major trend this season. "Rich tones are popular, such as deep coffee or reds," she says. "Pops of bright colors like deep pink and raspberry will also be prevalent, both as standalone colors and in colorblocking." Brown also points to quilted textiles, "whether it's the traditional square quilt that's seen in Michael Kors handbags or a more modern take like the new rose-quilt pattern from Kate Spade," she says. Bright hues and quilting represent notable revamps on these tried-and-true styles. "When trends are updated, it breathes new life into the classics," Brown says. "You can reach a newer client base and retain customers who've been buying these bags season after season."

KayLee Wheeler, product designer at Vitronic Promotional Group (asi/93990), seconds the motion for neutrals: "We see a growing trend in neutrals that feature a pop of color, specifically blue." Blue-themed bags are ideal for promotional opportunities: "They're great because a majority of businesses have blue in their logo," she says. Wheeler also cites functionality as another major trend because it focuses on a busy lifestyle. "Ensuring that you have products with functionality and purpose will have a considerable impact on what your clients buy," she says.



This amazing holographic bag is available from LBU Inc. (asi/65952; circle 100 on Free Info Card).

Vitronic Promotional Group (asi/93990; circle 101 on Free Info Card) distributes this reversible hobo tote (A292) in a variety of prints and colors.



Take a look at Dominie LLC (asi/50306; circle 103 on Free Info Card) for several transparent bag designs, such as this one in pink (DHNDBG-VPNK-G).



You can find this leather tote (Michael Kors Jet Set Center Stripe Medium Tote) at Brainstorm Logistics (asi/41515; circle 102 on Free Info Card).



Clava American (asi/45335; circle 104 on Free Info Card) distributes this striped market tote (88-8012).



This charming retro tote (1095) can be found at Gemline (asi/56070; circle 105 on Free Info Card). Choose from several colors, including white/gold, kelly green and Santa Fe red.

# THE ARTISTIC FEE

SIX DESIGNERS TURN  
DECORATED APPAREL  
INTO AN ART FORM  
— AND COVER THE  
SEASON'S HOTTEST  
EMBELLISHMENT  
TRENDS.

BY SARA LAVENDUSKI,  
RACHEL ABRAHAM AND  
CORRIE PURVIS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
MARK PRICKSETT

Elaborate embroidery. Oversized sublimated prints. Jewel and beaded embellishments as neck pieces. Leather and textile manipulation. Recycled materials nestled next to luxe fabrics. This season, all eyes are on decoration, textile manipulation and re-use of ordinary materials.

Both veteran and new apparel designers and decorators flex their creative muscles, showing how they find inspiration in both likely and unlikely places and objects, and in colors and things that do and don't seem like they fit together. "I'm compelled to buy fabric that's beaded, matelassé and Chanel-like silks," says Pamela Ptak, designer and founder of the Riegelsville, PA-based Arts and Fashion Institute. "And I love anything black and white. Black especially is the color of luxury couture in New York."

Mariana Leung, a former apprentice of Vera Wang and Oscar de la Renta, says one of the many reasons couture and custom couture comes with a high price tag is that "a lot of people work on these pieces," for a long period of time, she says. "It's a painstaking process — and a large pool of our clients can't necessarily afford them. To broaden my customer base, I'm looking to make more couture pieces at affordable prices."

In this fashion spread, which is inspired by an art gallery wall setting as background for the wearable art, you'll meet six talented designers with such different and unique points of view who create haute and ready-to-wear apparel with their wearers always in mind. Get ready to be inspired, and to learn a design and decorating tip or two, from their standout work. —*Nicole Rollender*



Philadelphia-based artist/designer Conrad Booker spun his love for ordinary objects with inspiration from the Balmain fashion house to build this bold silhouette: “The things that inspire me right now are everyday common objects that I find in my travels,” he says. “I’ve wanted to make something wearable out of straws and this project gave me that opportunity.”

The drinking straw bodice has a quilted interior lining. “I quilted the lining directly to the bodice,” Booker says. “I used a French method of lining jackets and one used by Chanel in her classic jackets.” His biggest challenge was in quilting the lining directly to the inside of the bodice. “By combining the shelves with the front and back bodices, I was able to solve this problem,” he says.

The pencil skirt, made from translucent plastic sheets and leather cuts, was fused together using heat and pressure, resulting in a plastic that can withstand machine sewing and wear. “The leather circle appliques are first machine-stitched onto each pattern piece, and then assembled and finished with additional leather circles to create a seamless pattern along the seam edge,” Booker says.

Booker accented the hand-cut and sewn leather belt with gold door hinges. “This centerpiece took me two weeks to make,” he says. And those glorious shoes – Booker whimsically decorated off-the-shelf kicks with rhinestones, gold chains and toy dragons.

#### WHAT'S YOUR DESIGN AESTHETIC?

CONRAD BOOKER: “My design aesthetic is deeply rooted in the transformation of ordinary, common and otherwise everyday objects into breathtaking wearable works of art. There’s something so satisfying in elevating common, discarded and devalued objects into something unique, wearable and couture.” – *Corrie Purvis*



**D**esigner Mariana Leung, owner of Weng Meng Design Studio in Manhattan, found inspiration for this pale pink printed top and feather collar in a photo posted on Facebook: “An 1800s photo of a Native American chief with a full headpiece,” says Leung, who chose a base of lightweight Georgette fabric with a modern print. “I made it into an updated poncho with an easy shawl silhouette,” she says. “I hand-sewed white feathers on the collar in layers. I also hand-cut leather feathers and combined them with the actual feathers at the top.”

The matelassé fabric that Pamela Ptak, designer and founder of the Riegelsville, PA-based Arts and Fashion Institute, used to create these colorful pants “is a beautiful double cloth with two different weaves made on a jacquard loom,” she says. Matelassé has a distinct natural lift and swirls already in the fabric. “Tip: Don’t create too many seams because they can hide the fabric’s beauty,” she says.

#### DESCRIBE YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS.

**MARIANA LEUNG:** “My inspirations are very abstract. I’ll see a photo, or different colors and textures. I like to gather fabrics to see if they work together, and I’ll look at the direction it’s going in. I don’t like to be too matched or organized. My items are more like built-up sculpture pieces. I build the embellishment as I’m going. I usually sketch first, and when I’m doing small work it’s much more organic. I’ve used old photo film, melted sequins, vintage fabrics, ancient kimono fabrics. I like repurposing things – it’s more eco-friendly and results in a smaller footprint than most fashion design.”

**PAMELA PTAK:** “The fabric often calls me first. I look around a fabric shop to find the one piece that wants to be in production. I hold it up to different fabrics to see what works together, almost like finding that perfect someone to talk to at a party. That’s where it all starts. Then I fill it with wondrous bits I’ve collected.” – *Sara Lavenduski*



Rhode Island School of Design graduate Tamar Ariel, a recent recipient of a BFA in Textile Design, made this T-shirt dress out of a synthetic cream-colored mesh and viscose rayon embroidery thread. The house pattern is a particular favorite of the promising designer, and has become a common motif in her work. “I designed the house pattern after spending a summer at home, in suburban New Jersey,” she says. “I spent those months designing punch card patterns for my new knitting machine at the time, and a simple house pattern emerged from spending mornings running around my town, passing house after house. I’ve used this pattern with other fabrics and techniques, such as knitting and printing for my degree project, and can’t seem to get enough of it.”

She used a 15-needle digital embroidery machine to create the dress. “I programmed and designed this simple geometric house pattern on Pulse embroidery software,” Ariel says. “Then I spent about four days sitting next to the machine, switching out thread in order to diverge from creating a specific color pattern. After embroidering on the mesh, I cut and sewed the fabric into a basic long T-shirt dress.”

#### WHAT’S YOUR DESIGN AESTHETIC?

**TAMAR ARIEL:** “I’d describe my design aesthetic as complexity through simplicity. I often find myself being really attracted to the beauty of simple patterns and color, and I spend a lot of my time exploring those possibilities.”

— Rachel Abraham



This dress' focal point "has a fish-scale look, almost like the tail on a fancy floral mermaid," says Pamela Ptak, designer and founder of the Riegelsville, PA-based Arts and Fashion Institute. "I wanted to take the look in a direction far away from all black." Ptak started with a small piece of lace from a New York wholesale source that sells small pieces of high-end fabric at a slight discount. She then sewed it to a wool knit dress and added Aurora Borealis flower-shaped crystals from Swarovski, as well as delicate aqua blue mother-of-pearl shell paillettes, all hand-sewn onto the bodice, which is made of a slightly stretchy, comfortable wool knit.

"The little pieces of fabric you can buy at a discount are great for giving a dress some pop without overdoing it," Ptak says. "This is really important when you're designing custom pieces for women who have the opportunity to wear such items." Ptak also varied the beading design, which she did by hand to give it an original look that doesn't overwhelm the viewer's eyes.

**WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?**

**PAMELA PTAK:** "Hand-sewing the beads and shells takes hours. Also, when you're doing this, you should take the beads off when it's time to sew the pieces together, and then rebead them once you're finished sewing. Otherwise, if you try to sew around them, it will create shoddy, zigzagging seams. Sometimes you can just cut the threads, but then the whole string of beads comes off. You might have to break them with a hammer to get them off. It's painstaking and takes a lot of time, but it's worth it." — *SL*



Recent Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) graduate Margaret Goldrainer's "Canvas Dress" takes shape via the inspiration of French

New Realist artist Yves Klein. This dress is essentially a walking version of his painting, "La coulée bleue," and was constructed using medium-weight canvas and cream-colored velvet. "The velvet was very textured with the pile running in various different directions," Goldrainer says. "I backed the velvet with the canvas, but didn't bond the two together."

The "Canvas Dress" was the first look she created for her RISD thesis collection, and it served as a foundation for her other silhouettes. Her biggest challenge, however, was mastering the blue pigment she used to paint the center panel. "It's toxic and unforgiving," she says of the pigment. "I had to suspend the pigment in a gel medium and mix it with a fabric paint medium, making it safe for use. Then I went back and forth, adding pigment and gel medium, striving to create the perfect consistency and blue color. Finally, I painted the center panel."

#### WHAT ARE YOUR INSPIRATIONS RIGHT NOW?

**MARGARET GOLDRAINER:** "I've actually been thinking about poodles a lot lately. I'm infatuated with standard poodles and the 'poodle cut.' They're beautiful, intelligent, elegant and eccentric creatures – everything that I love ensconced in a ball of fur. I also love the late artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, Fran Drescher as Fran Fine on *The Nanny* and Faig Ahmed, one of my new favorite artists." – CP



WATCH A BEHIND-THE-SCENES VIDEO OF THE LIFE ARTISTIC SHOOT.



**G**reg Gaardbo, creative director and owner at Des Plaines, IL-based Shockwaves Promotional Apparel (asi/87144), created this all-over sublimated print of “Blue Dancers” by French artist Edgar Degas, known for his drawings, paintings and sculptures of ballerinas. Gaardbo used Adobe Photoshop to create this repeating, eye-popping design on a V-neck T-shirt dress from Vapor Apparel (asi/93396). “Recent demand is trending toward more minimalist designs, rather than over-the-top multimedia and bling,” Gaardbo says. “We want to get clients more interested in sublimation. The key is to have a wide selection of sublimation-friendly garments. If it’s got more than 50% or 60% polyester, we’re all over it.”

**HOW DO YOUR DIFFERENT EMBELLISHMENTS EVOLVE?**

**GREG GAARDBO:** “We’ve really gotten into sublimation and Hotfix sequins, often paired together to make mixed-media designs. There’s so much we can do. We can even subliminate the sequins and then put a clear gel on top.” — *SL*



## ABOUT THE SHOOT



Conrad Booker, a Philadelphia-based artist and designer of ultra-creative apparel and accessories, conceived, designed and stylized the apparel in “The Life Artistic.” Here’s what Booker had to say:

## WHAT WAS YOUR CONCEPT FOR THE SHOOT?

“The main challenge was that I had six designers’ looks, including my own. We have six different opinions and design views. We also all incorporated the season’s various embellishment trends into our looks: leather, hardware, feathers, all-over prints, bling and so on. What I did was imagine a woman, an artistic entrepreneur who might own an art gallery, and I used each designer’s look to cultivate the look of what this businesswoman might have in her wardrobe. I styled the looks to talk to each other, while retaining each designer’s point of view. For Pamela Ptak’s mermaid-inspired dress, I added a piece of fur and a brooch at the bottom of the dress to further unify our woman’s aesthetic of out-there wearable art. The truth is couture and street talk to each other: Couture is fanciful sometimes, and the street is what people are wearing. So I considered that as well.”

## HOW DID YOU APPROACH A SHOOT THAT FEATURED SO MANY DIFFERENT EMBELLISHMENTS?

“Bringing in those embellishments together was interesting – I looked at each piece of apparel and how it was decorated and considered how and where it might be seen or worn. For example, when I added the fur to Ptak’s dress or I made Greg Gaardbo’s original sublimated T-shirt dress into a chic top and skirt, the embellishments also started to speak a slightly different language. In general, embellishments speak a universal language about who the designer is and who the wearer is. That’s why imprint choice and placement are so important – they speak to wearers and viewers.”

## TELL US ABOUT THE LOOK YOU CREATED.

“In creating this look, I inserted myself into the world of the shoot. I thought about the woman we were designing for. Who are her friends? I became one of her designers and created a Lady Gaga-inspired look of over-the-top creativity, where I elevated the value of ordinary objects like straws, and juxtaposed them with leather and hardware.

So imagine yourself in your client’s world: Who’s wearing the look? Where are they going? What are they using the apparel for? What’s their job function? Also, when you’re decorating, think outside the box – what other materials can you use? Colors? Placement. It’s all about innovation.”

# Best in SHOW

Score sales with this season's top apparel, accessories, color and embellishment trends.

BY RACHEL ABRAHAM AND CORRIE PURVIS

## TRENDY SPORTSWEAR

Designers like Stella McCartney and Alexander Wang have moved sportswear off the courts and on to the catwalks; dressing for the gym is no longer just for fitness, but also for fashion. High-end athletic apparel can be worn on any occasion because wearers want to be comfortable and stylish. Here's a decorating tip for items that stretch, like yoga pants: "The back yoke area is great for embroidery placement because it won't interfere with the wearer during yoga or exercise," says Geri Finio, owner of Anne Arundel County, MD-based Studio 187 (asi/604320).



A pair of navy lounge pants (1987) from Americana Sportswear (asi/35722; circle 119 on Free Info Card) allows you to stay comfortable while looking casual; decorated on the back of the pants by Geri Finio of Studio 187 (asi/604320; circle 120 on Free Info Card).



This coral burnout sweatshirt (W1162) from MV Sport (asi/68318; circle 121 on Free Info Card) is the perfect combination of sporty and trendy; decorated by Howard Potter of Utica, NY-based A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 122 on Free Info Card).



Trimark Powered by Leed's (asi/66888; circle 118 on Free Info Card) carries this red track jacket (TM12313), ideal for the outdoors or to wear on a rainy day.



At MERCEDES-BENZ FASHION WEEK IN BERLIN, sportswear was everywhere. Designers paired hoodies and jackets with trousers and boots to create a sporty-casual look.

# MODERN URBAN

Prints and geometric patterns are a bold way to assert your client's message and style this fall. "This year, I've seen much more mixing of prints than I have in the past: floral with stripes, polka dots with stripes, tribal with tie dye and animal with geometric," says fashion blogger Shelly Stuckman of Arizona Girl.

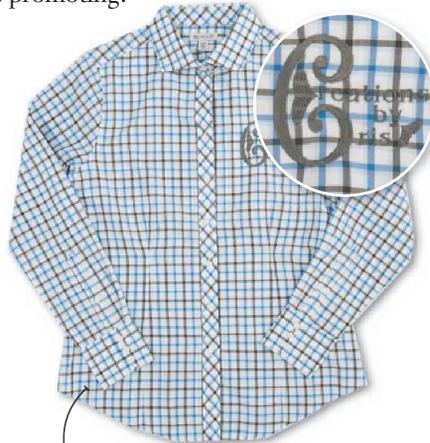
A main concern for decorators when working with patterns is logo placement. "Working with woven material like plaid allows for easy alignment, while still presenting a fun design challenge," says Crystalee Hoge, owner of Springfield, TN-based Creations by Cris. "Make sure your client's design is lined up with the pattern beneath." Otherwise, the viewer's eye will be drawn to the fact the logo slants rather than the design and company logo you're promoting.



Singer **RIHANNA** exemplifies modern urban with cheeky fish-net tights, cheetah-print T-shirt and a leather jacket.



This amethyst nylon bag (RSANC501) from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 123 on Free Info Card) is an excellent modern urban accessory; decorated by Lois Malone of Medford, OR-based Master Stitch.



This check-pattern shirt (RH75) from SanMar (asi/35297; circle 99 on Free Info Card) can be worn to work or on a night out, as its geometric pattern makes an energetic statement; decorated by Crystalee Hoge of Springfield, TN-based Creations by Cris.



Floral-printed leggings (ASYL-506011) from Assertive Creativity (asi/37166; circle 124 on Free Info Card) are a fun way to stay comfy and maintain an animated look; decorated by Sylvia Baeringer, Phenix City, AL.

# SHEER EVENING

Lace tops and mesh insets can turn a plain and simple outfit into something edgy and on-trend. "The fabrics are soft and lightweight and can easily be worn as a tank, with or without a jacket," says Crystalee Hoge, owner of Springfield, TN-based Creations by Cris. "And for embroidery, I use a tearaway stabilizer on these sheer, lightweight fabrics, as a cutaway will add more bulk."

American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 123 on Free Info Card) features this sheer jersey chemise (6364), which can be worn as a tank top, or even a short dress; decorated by Crystalee Hoge of Springfield, TN-based Creations by Cris.



A burnout long-sleeve T-shirt (82010) from Ouray Sportswear (asi/75402; circle 125 on Free Info Card) provides a bit more coverage for cooler weather; decorated by Geri Finio of Anne Arundel County, MD-based Studio 187 (asi/604320; circle 120 on Free Info Card).

This cobalt burnout tank (AA2641) from alphabroder (asi/34063; circle 126 on Free Info Card) gives wearers a simple way to achieve this sheer look; decorated by Howard Potter of Utica, NY-based A & P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 122 on Free Info Card).



# COLOR CRASH COURSE: GOLD AND RED

**Why we love them:** Deep reds like crimson and burgundy are everywhere this season, especially in velvet, leather and wool. “Red and gold are very rich and represent the essence of fall and winter, so it makes sense that they’re the season’s colors,” says fashion blogger Shelly Stuckman of Arizona Girl. “They look amazing together.”

**How to wear them:** Red tops like sweaters and knits are bold, another trend this season. Complete the look with a gold necklace or cuff bracelet.

**Play well with:** Black, dark blues, gray, prints and even each other.

The gold pocket watch necklace (57231) from Hampden (asi/59473; circle 127 on Free Info Card) is a fitting accessory with a touch of character.

Vitronic Promotional Group (asi/93990; circle 101 on Free Info Card) distributes this red leather tote bag (A454) combining this stunning color and a sturdy material.



This red crewneck T-shirt dress (RSA2314) from American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 123 on Free Info Card) shows off a flirtier side of this trend; decorated by Stephanie Concialdi of Houston-based Rockin' R Rhinestones.

# 1960s MOD

Sixties mod is all about bright, colorful prints and standout silhouettes. It's a playful and fun way to make a statement. “You can embellish these garments with bright or pastel threads, or even solar-activated colors,” says Nancy Zander, owner of Bakersfield, CA-based Seams by NAZ.



Tri-Mountain (asi/92125; circle 93 on Free Info Card) carries this charisma turtleneck (607).



These stylish sunglasses (SUN717) can be found at The Corporate Marketplace Inc. (asi/46743; circle 128 on Free Info Card).



American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 123 on Free Info Card) carries this interlock mini skirt (RSA7303); decorated by Nancy Zander of Bakersfield, CA-based Seams by NAZ.

## SHEARLING FUR

Fur and shearling have made a fierce comeback on the runway. This classic trend is the epitome of glamorous and chic. Your clients will be cozy, comfortable and stylish with the eclectic mix of apparel and accessories like coats, jackets, vests, sweaters and gloves. "You can place a full-color or tone-on-tone logo as a left-chest design in leather and it won't compete with a fur-trimmed collar," says Nancy Zander, owner of Bakersfield, CA-based Seams by NAZ.



Reed Sportswear (asi/81172; circle 129 on Free Info Card) carries this warm jacket made of weather-resistant suede with faux-shearling lining; decorated by Nancy Zander of Bakersfield, CA-based Seams by NAZ.



This cool, vintage-inspired Top Gun flight jacket (W201036) is available from Cockpit USA (asi/43022; circle 84 on Free Info Card).



This attractive insulated bomber Hutton jacket (99538) can be found at Trimark Sportswear Group Inc. (asi/92122; circle 130 on Free Info Card).



A chili red, like this full-zip fleece hoodie (5125) from Charles River Apparel (asi/44620; circle 131 on Free Info Card), is one example of all the different ways fur can be worn; decorated by Lois Malone of Medford, OR-based Master Stitch.

## KNITS

Knits offer wearers the ultimate comfort this season. They come in a variety of styles such as oversized sweaters, cardigans, dresses and scarves that are perfect for layering. "You can get away with exotic and distressed designs as long as you pay attention to what colors you use in the design and how many locations you imprint on the piece," says Howard Potter, CEO of Utica, NY-based A&P Master Images (asi/702505). "You can screen print, laser and embroider all of these pieces."



This comfy burnout crewneck sweatshirt (W1255) is available from S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 95 on Free Info Card); decorated by Lois Malone of Medford, OR-based Master Stitch.



Fashion Biz Wholesale (asi/53731; circle 132 on Free Info Card) carries this classic V-neck pullover (LP3506); decorated by Howard Potter of Utica, NY-based A & P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 122 on Free Info Card).



This bella + canvas unisex triblend crewneck sweatshirt (3901) can be found at S&S Activewear (asi/84358; circle 95 on Free Info Card); decorated by Howard Potter of Utica, NY-based A & P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 122 on Free Info Card).

Veteran puncher Bonnie Landsberger digitized this proprietary work while employed with Write On Embroidery back in 1996. Here, the design, which had to match the original artwork exactly, is sewn onto the back of a denim jacket. It has a stitch count of 60,168 and used six colors, but had 12 total color changes. It took about two weeks to digitize, she says.



# POWER PUNCHERS

Converting designs into stitches is both a science and an art, according to the professionals. The best digitizers are creative and methodical - and are always pushing themselves to further their craft.

By Theresa Hegel

**B**ack in the early 1990s, Lee Caroselli Barnes, owner of Balboa Threadworks Embroidery Design, received a commission to custom-digitize the U.S. Postal Service's Elvis stamp. Barnes and her late brother, Keith, were the cleanup crew. The art had originally been sent to a Japanese firm for digitizing, resulting in an unwieldy design with 210,000 stitches and 28 color changes. "They were going to scrap the job because it didn't look like Elvis Presley," Barnes recalls.

Balboa was able to digitize the king of rock 'n' roll with fewer than half the stitches – just 92,000 – using six colors. The award-winning, photorealistic design that resulted was a game-changer for the industry, Barnes says. "To have a design as large as that one was with that many stitches that lined up perfectly and could be done with only six colors is just phenomenal," she says. "It did show people what could be done. ... Of course, we've taken it further than that since then."

The Elvis stamp is an iconic example of what digitizing is all about: an accurate representation of the submitted artwork that sews out quickly, cleanly and efficiently. Digitizing is a marriage of technical know-how and creative problem solving, both a science and an art, expert punchers say.

Good digitizers understand the physics of their machines and are able to work around the limitations of embroidery to create production-friendly files that aren't too dense, have a minimum of color changes and trims, and a low likelihood of thread breaks.

Great digitizers, however, see embroidery's natural qualities not as limitations, but as opportunities, playing with light and layering to create dimensional art – a sort of low-relief sculpture in thread. "You're building on layers, and if you don't build on layers, you're going to end up with something that has no life to it, no pop," says Jay Fishman, owner of Ohio-based digitizing firm Wicked Stitch of the East. "What separates the professionals from the amateurs is that they really know how to bring life to a design." *Stitches* talked to some of the best digitizers in the field to find out what makes them tick and determine the qualities every digitizer



Cory Dean, owner of Artwork Source, shows his whimsical design as an example of the high-quality digitizing his firm produces.

needs to succeed.

### ATTENTION TO DETAIL

If you want to sew out a circle, you digitize an egg. That's punching 101: What you see on your computer is likely not the same as what sews out. "You have to get past the perfection on the screen," says Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager at Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415) in Albuquerque, NM.

Understanding and compensating for that distortion is something that comes from a thorough knowledge of the tools of the embroidery trade: fabric, thread and machine. Having a scientific mind and a keen attention to detail doesn't hurt either. "There's a lot of testing and a lot of trial and error that has to happen," Campbell says.

The best digitizers never stray too far from the production side. Even experienced digitizers, who can calculate pull compensation in their sleep, should spend some time watching their designs in action, experts say. "If you get off the machines for too long, you get rusty," Campbell says. "The magic hasn't left for me. Watching that machine take off and essentially execute my commands is great. Seeing how it runs in real time – that kind of feedback can't be beat."

That immediate feedback is why every puncher at Artwork Source, the Tacoma, WA-based quick turnaround digitizing ser-

vice founded by Cory Dean, is equipped with a single-head embroidery machine and must stitch out designs on the fabric specified by a customer before finalizing a job. "That was a huge expense for us, but we said we must have that," Dean says.

Real-world experience keeps digitizers from creating "bulletproof" designs. Too much thread density will cause production problems, with fabric bunching or embroidery dishing in, issues not readily apparent on a screen. Even without the production issues, those unnecessary stitches translate to a higher cost in time and materials.

Digitizers also have to make judgment calls about when to favor color registration and when to favor speed – a big factor in production-friendly designs, Dean says. "It's a delicate balance," he adds. "It's something that takes years of running machines to understand."

### AN ARTISTIC BENT

One of the biggest misconceptions about digitizers, especially by embroiderers just entering the field, is that the job is somehow automatic – a simple conversion. "They think that all we do is scan the artwork and save a data file," says Bonnie Landsberger, digitizer and owner of Moonlight Design in Cannon Falls, MN. She's had clients make paradoxical requests for pictures of the finished design before they're willing to

## Digitizing

confirm a job – not understanding that the work can't be done until clients provide clear instructions and finalize the details of a job.

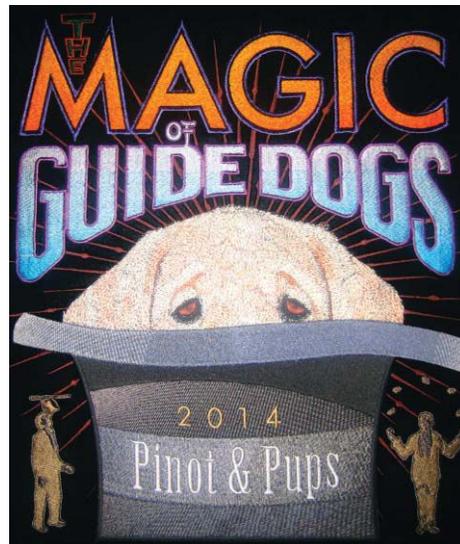
Real digitizing takes time, skill and creativity. It's an interpretation of the original artwork, not a reproduction. That's why, regardless of a logo's simplicity, no two stitch files turn out the same; every digitizer has a unique approach, says Karen Habe, co-owner of Quality Punch in Torrance, CA. "Being artistic in digitizing is about selecting the right colors of thread and putting them together in the most pleasing way," she says. "Even the simplest logos require some artistry."

The more complex a design, the more interpretation is needed. Fishman recently received a full-back design to digitize: a man in a kilt with bagpipes, holding a bear and cougar by chains. The original artwork had at least 50 colors, 20 of which were different shades of green. Fishman returned to the customer to ask how many times he wanted

to rethread his 15-needle machine. After some back and forth, Fishman was able to simplify the design, editing it down to 15 colors. "It's not just so simple that you're coloring a piece of artwork by number," he says. "If we don't put in the time to plan the design and think about it, we'll spend twice as long digitizing it and getting it correct."

Ask any digitizer worth his or her salt about auto-digitization features, and you'll get a range of responses, from disgust and derision to outright horror. Dean sums it up succinctly: "Van Gogh didn't use auto-paint."

Leaving the decision-making up to a computer program limits creativity and often ends up costing more time than it saves once you factor in how long it takes to edit out mistakes. Most professional digitizers are even skeptical about preset functions that, for example, choose the type of underlay for a design. "If you don't know what you're doing and you don't know what to look for,



Quality Punch digitized this artwork for a fundraiser to benefit guide dogs for the blind. Making sure the design looked fantastic was of paramount importance, co-owner Karen Habe says, because jackets bearing the design would be part of an auction. Thread Marks, the Oregon shop that hired Quality Punch, reported later that the jackets ended up being sold off for \$1,000 each at the fundraiser.

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but you know how to press buttons, forget it," Fishman says. "We just don't use auto functions because we can't control them. We need to be in control."

### A CURIOUS MIND

The best digitizers are always on their toes, keeping up with the latest developments in fabric, software, thread, stabilizers and other products. "The learning never really stops," Landsberger says. "There are constant changes in materials that require observance and learning to keep your skills up to date."

An insatiable curiosity is what spurred Barnes, digitizer and owner of California-based Balboa Threadworks, when she entered the field. She and her brother broke all the established rules of digitizing because, as Barnes says, they didn't know any better. "We experimented, pressing every button, wrong or right, to see what the equipment would do," she says. "We had to learn to think outside the box."

# Williamstown

## WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT WHAT YOU GET

When you receive a stitch file back from your digitizer, sometimes the letters look "bouncy" on screen, like this virtual sample provided by Jay Fishman, digitizer at Ohio-based Wicked Stitch of the East. Once it's stitched out, however, the text will be level and even. The distortions you see onscreen are how the digitizer compensates for the way the thread pushes and pulls at the fabric. Without pull compensation, the stitched-out design could have gaps or other issues. In general:

- **Vertical letters appear taller and thicker on screen.** When they stitch out, the letters push down.
- **The rounded parts of letters pull up.** Though most digitizing software has automatic settings to handle pull compensation and choose the right underlay for a particular fabric, few professional punchers use them. "Software isn't as elegant" as making those decisions yourself, says Erich Campbell, digitizer at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415).

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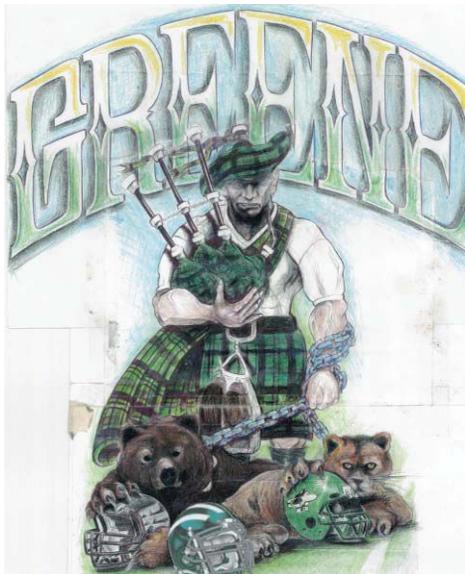
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The realities of production-oriented embroidery often mean complicated artwork must be simplified. The original design used at least 50 colors, roughly 20 of them different shades of green. When Jay Fishman of Wicked Stitch of the East digitized the art, he edited it down to 15 colors so the decorating shop wouldn't have to rethread its machines in the course of sewing. Photos courtesy of Lynn Promotions, Upland, CA (asi/257415).

With the iconic Elvis stamp and a slew of other custom painterly designs in the decades that followed, Balboa Threadworks has pushed the limits of artistic digitizing, “blending” thread by digitizing in light, precise layers that allow colors to bleed through. The light layers also eliminate the need for pull compensation or changing settings based on fabric type, Barnes says. Her method goes against the grain of traditional digitizing, which she calls “regimented” and “secretive,” more about fighting the machine than working with it.

As Barnes sees it, digitizing comes down to one scary word: physics. “The main rules come from the machine itself, the things it does day in and day out, whether you like it or not,” she adds. “If you know that certain things will happen every time, you have two choices: You can work with that and design around it, and use that for consistency, or you can fight it. I’ve found that if you fight it, you’ll win 10% of the time, and the machine wins the other 90%.”

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

One of the most critical traits of a good digitizer has nothing to do with technical skills or a creative mind. Like any other service-

oriented industry, it’s about being timely and responsive. “It’s important to be able to communicate and also not trying to be everything to customers,” says Joanna Grant, vice president of graphic production and support services at Affinity Express (asi/33149) in Elgin, IL. “Not everything can be done in thread. Sometimes that means being honest with a customer, saying, ‘This isn’t going to look very good.’”

It’s also important to offer consistent, quick delivery. “Customers need to know when they’re going to get [the design],” Dean says. “The industry is so rush-rush these days that it’s a pretty important attribute.”

Ultimately, embroiderers should be looking for the whole package when seeking out a digitizer or digitizing service. It’s about establishing a long-term, professional relationship with someone skilled and reliable. It’s not like shopping for a TV, a bargain-hunt for the cheapest product. “You’re buying someone’s talent,” Fishman says. “You’re not buying something lying on a shelf. We’re trying to teach people what quality is again.”

**THERESA HEGEL** is a senior staff writer for *Stitches*. Contact: [thegel@asicentral.com](mailto:thegel@asicentral.com); follow her on Twitter at [@TheresaHegel](https://twitter.com/TheresaHegel).

## ADVICE FOR EMBROIDERY SHOPS

As much as they enjoy working with decorators, digitizers have common gripes about the experience. Here are some dos and don’ts every shop should heed.

**1. Don’t digitize if you don’t love it.** “If you don’t like doing it, it’s painful,” says Erich Campbell, digitizer for Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415) “If you’re doing it as a cost-cutting measure for your shop, but you hate it, don’t do it.” Hire a digitizer or a service, and use the time you save to boost your sales, for example.

**2. Do understand the basics.** Every embroiderer should be able to edit a stitch file to ensure it runs smoothly, experts say. Veteran digitizer Lee Caroselli Barnes likens it to managing a restaurant: You don’t have to be a chef, but you need an understanding of the culinary arts to ensure you’re serving quality food. “It’s dangerous in any business to be the owner and have a part of the business that you have no control over,” she says.

**3. Don’t skimp on cheap software.** If you’re outsourcing your digitizing, you don’t have to have the highest-tier digitizing software in your shop, but you shouldn’t just grab the cheapest version either, says Cory Dean, owner of Tacoma, WA-based Artwork Source. Instead, look for the lower level of the professional software, he advises.

**4. Do provide context.** The more information you can give your digitizer, the better job she can do. The design may be slightly different depending on the color and type of fabric being used. Plus, caps require different settings than flat garments.

**5. Do educate your customer on embroidery’s limitations.** “There’s a huge difference between ink and embroidery,” says Karen Habe, co-owner of Torrance, CA-based Quality Punch. “Where ink can print the tiniest text and it will be readable, a thread just can’t match it.” Most digitizers recommend designs where text is no smaller than 5mm, or about 0.2 inches high, to keep a logo looking crisp.

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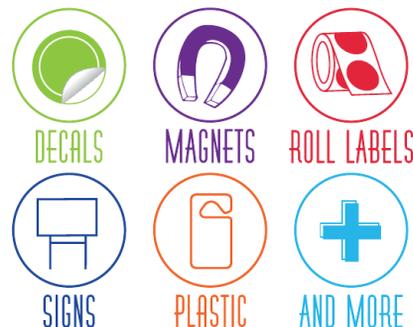
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## needle watch



### Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the September/October needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or e-mail address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at *Stitches*, Attn: Needle Patrol, 4800 Street Rd., Trevose, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the September/October needle are due by October 27, 2014. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Madeira USA, Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the November issue.



### Slick Likes Online Design

In the July issue, Slick hid in the "Annual Software Guide" underneath an image of GROUPEStahls' Cadworxlive.com, a Web-based graphic design service for garment decorators. Lidia Knapp of Almena, KS-based LMK Custom Apparel & Promotions was chosen at random from a grand total of 33 responses. As this issue's winner, Lidia will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!

## COMING NEXT ISSUE

### What's coming up in November *Stitches*

by Nicole Rollender



### Big Decorating Challenge

See what decorator takes home the gold in *Stitches*' first-ever Big Decorating Challenge, where shops competed to create a new logo and complete apparel solution for a fictional gardening shop and nursery. The competition was fierce, and you'll want to see the creative ways the top decorators pushed their skills to the limit.

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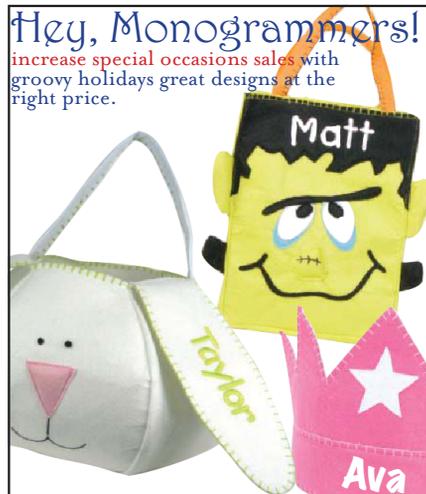
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# ASK AN EXPERT

By Kristine Shreve

## LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn about how your shop can set up a killer e-commerce website.

**Q** *I honestly can't believe some of the artwork that my clients bring in to me, sometimes a penciled logo on a piece of scrap paper – and then they want a finished logo sewn from that scrap on 500 polo shirts in less than a week. I don't want to lose the business, but I can't fulfill these sorts of orders. How do I get my clients to submit good artwork to me?*

Anyone who decorates for a living knows that artwork is one thing that can make your job easier or more complicated. The quality of the artwork used to create decorated apparel or accessories matters. Because we do this work every day, we understand the difference artwork makes in the time it takes to do a job and the quality of the job produced, but the same can't be said of our customers. That's why part of a decorator's job, whether we like it or not, is to continually educate our customers about what sort of artwork we need to create a great finished product and why we need it.

The first way to help your customers understand the importance of quality artwork is to hit them in the wallet. The reality is that artwork that's poor quality or not in a useable format will end up adding cost to the finished product. Time spent creating new artwork, or recreating artwork that isn't in a useable format, is also time taken away from production, which slows down delivery time. Many shops also do, and should, charge additional fees if they have to spend time cleaning up or creating artwork. Letting your customer know that artwork that isn't up to

standard will cost them both time and money may help motivate them to improve their artwork submissions on future orders.

While you're educating your customers about why quality matters when it comes to artwork, you might also teach them what constitutes artwork in the first place. Almost every decorator has had the experience of being handed a napkin with a coffee stain and some stick figures and being told it's the art to be used for the project. This isn't artwork; it's a concept and while concepts are a necessary part of the creative process, they're nowhere near what's required when considering artwork for decoration. If you get handed a concept and told it's art, make sure you spell out for your customer what you'll charge to turn their concept into actual useable artwork. You should also explain how this will impact final costs and delivery time.

Another useful thing for those who are submitting artwork to you to know is this: Poor quality art generally results in a poor quality finished product. Badly done artwork can be reworked or recreated, but that costs time and, most likely, money, and the end result may still be poor

quality unless the artwork is completely redone. When your customer brings you standard artwork, do more than just tell them it's standard. Explain why it won't work for the intended purpose, and explain what will work and what's needed. Spending a few moments educating your customer will pay off in time saved when you get artwork that's immediately ready for use.

Always remember that educating the customer is important. Explaining what quality artwork is and how it impacts the price, production time and finished quality of the product doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming. A short explanation could include things like defining terms such as camera ready or vector art. You could explain the forms of artwork that result in a good finished product and why a .pdf isn't generally one of them.

It may only take five minutes to help your customer understand what requirements need to be met for artwork to be considered good quality, but the benefits will last the entire life of your relationship with that customer. Explanations can also help the customer see that you're not being difficult or draconian in your insistence on certain artwork standards,

since they'll now understand why you're requesting what you're requesting. The explanation you give doesn't have to be technical or long, but helping your customer understand the creation process will also help that customer see why quality artwork is important and necessary.

One final idea is to create an artwork tips sheet (and extra artwork charges) that you post on your website, hand out in your shop or e-mail to new customers. This should help set artwork expectations from the beginning, and will help to weed out clients who want to submit poorly executed art from the start of your business relationship.

**KRISTINE SHREVE** is director of marketing for EnMart and Ensign Emblem, and regularly writes about embroidery, sublimation, decoration, social media and business. Besides her DecQuorum blog on *Stitches.com*, she also writes for the EmbroideryTalk Blog at <http://blog.mymenart.com> and the SubliStuff blog at [www.sublistuff.com](http://www.sublistuff.com). Contact: [kristine.shreve@mymenart.com](mailto:kristine.shreve@mymenart.com).

## GOT A DECORATOR DILEMMA?

E-mail your question to [nrollender@asicentral.com](mailto:nrollender@asicentral.com). We'll request your permission to print your question and our expert's response in *Stitches*. Note: Unfortunately, we're unable to answer each individual question.

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