

Elaine Lai

Apparel Product Manager, Designer & Product Development Leader

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Creative and results-driven apparel product management leader with deep experience across streetwear, licensed sportswear, cut/sew fashion, and activewear. Expert in end-to-end product development—trend research, concept creation, technical design, sourcing, and production. Skilled in managing cross-functional teams, creating SMUs, and collaborating with major retailers and professional sports leagues (MLB, NFL, NBA, NCAA). Proven ability to deliver high-quality, market-ready apparel with strong vendor relationships and technical precision.

CORE SKILLS

- SMU Development & Buyer Collaboration (Retail + Major League Sports)
- End-to-End Product Development (Concept → Production)
- Team Leadership: Designers, Sample Rooms, Pattern Makers, Sewing Floor
- Domestic & International Sourcing + Factory/Vendor Relations
- Fit Sessions, Technical Specifications, Sample Approvals, production management
- Adobe Photoshop & Illustrator • Web PDM • Microsoft Excel/Office • Clo3D • Gerber

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SNIPES USA – Bensalem, PA

Apparel Product Manager (08/2024 – Present)

- Lead private-label apparel development from trend research through production.
- Manage product lifecycle including fabric sourcing, technical design, and supplier negotiations.
- Drive cross-functional alignment with merchandising, marketing, and production.
- Oversee fit sessions, technical specifications, and final approvals.
- Build strong relationships with global suppliers to optimize cost, timelines, and quality.

SWITLIK SURVIVAL PRODUCTS – Trenton, NJ

Technical Apparel Designer (08/2023 – 08/2024)

- Digital pattern drafting and design using CLO3D and Gerber.
- Designed and developed aviation, military and marine technical apparel, including antigravity and anti-exposure suits.
- Gained expertise in breathable, water- and fire-resistant garment construction, seam sealing/hot taping, and FR textile science.
- Lab testing, construction, fitting, and revision of engineering samples.

FANATICS, INC. | MITCHELL & NESS – Philadelphia, PA

Senior Apparel Designer & Product Developer (05/2016 – 04/2023)

- Developed men's and women's licensed jerseys & lifestyle apparel for MLB, NFL, NHL, NCAA, and NBA.
- Built tech packs, artwork, specs/grading, prototypes, and production files.
- Managed fabric approvals, trims, lab dips, and strike-offs for historical accuracy.
- Coordinated daily with factories to ensure efficient, high-quality production.

ETHIK CLOTHING CO. – Philadelphia, PA

Director of Product Development (05/2020 – 06/2021)

- Oversaw product development, sourcing, and production for seven flagship stores and key wholesale partners including Macy's and Zumiez.
- Led development of core streetwear categories—hoodies, tees, outerwear, fleece, and accessories.
- Standardized fit blocks, specs, and processes to improve efficiency and product consistency.
- Managed domestic and international factories, negotiating costs and ensuring quality.
- Partnered with design and graphics teams to uphold brand identity rooted in NYC skate and underground culture.
- Directed fabric/trim sourcing, lab dips, and approvals to meet aesthetic and performance goals.

ADIDAS GROUP | MITCHELL & NESS Sports Licensing Division – Philadelphia, PA

Apparel Developer (05/2016 – 01/2017)

- Developed licensed NFL, NHL, MLB, and NBA apparel.
- Led artwork, cut & sew development, and technical communication with overseas factories.

TOUGH LUV CLOTHING, LLC – Los Angeles, CA / Philadelphia, PA

Founder & CEO (2005 – 2019)

- Grew startup from \$5,000 investment to \$300,000+ in first-year orders.
- Designed and manufactured apparel sold in 700+ Hot Topic & Torrid stores.
- Managed sourcing, production, sales reps, showrooms, and trade shows.

ACTIVE APPAREL, INC. – Torrance, CA

Lead Designer (2008 – 2010)

- Designed knit/woven tops & dresses, leading fittings, tech packs, and production.
- Oversaw patternmakers, sample sewers, cutters, and production teams.

LA MOVERS, INC. – Gardena, CA

Lead Designer (2007 – 2009)

- Led private-label development for major retailers.
- Managed design, fittings, and monthly buyer collaboration in NY.

SPLENDID – Los Angeles, CA - Associate Designer (01/2007 – 12/2007)

AG JEANS – Los Angeles, CA - Assistant Designer (01/2006 – 12/2006)

EDUCATION**

- Certifications: Clo3D & Gerber Accumark
- County College of Morris – A.A.S. Graphic Design
- OTIS College of Art & Design – Fashion Design
- Central Saint Martins, London – Certificate in Experimental Fashion Design