

RETAIL RIPOFF

Set Your Designs on This Menswear Trend

BY TONIA COOK KIMBROUGH

Menswear designers have finally embraced embroidered embellishment. Swirls, paisleys and even skulls now stitch their way across many fine men's button-down shirts. Some versions are tone-on-tone with subtle appeal, such as this month's inspiration garment, which is a Robert Graham white-and-pale-blue embroidered "Beat" shirt from Nordstrom. Others, like Michael Kors' paisley-embroidered shirt at Bergdorf Goodman, utilize contrast – in this case, black embroidery on a crisp white shirt.

The trend definitely fits a niche with corporate clients seeking standout apparel. We asked Drew Coufal of Sew & Sew Embroidery in Kent, OH (which specializes in contract embroidery, along with award-winning digitizing, puff, appliqué, rhinestone, sequins and full-finishing options), to recreate the look for the wearables market.

Any retail re-creation should begin with the right garment. For this project, Coufal recommends "a premium woven or perhaps a camp shirt as the closet shirt match. Our sample mockup was based on SanMar's (asi/84863) item S614. Although it is not exactly the same as the original shirt, it is relatively close in look."

The fabric type is as important as the style

when selecting a garment intended for significant decoration. "With all of the stitches this type of decoration creates, try to choose a material that will support a high stitch-count logo and not pucker after several washes," Coufal says. "Try to avoid anything too light-weight or too thin; I'd recommend using a medium-weight tearaway backing and not using anything that requires cutaway backing, which would leave a patch-like feel behind the shirt."

With multiple re-hoops required, a contract decorator with the proper equipment will be essential. Coufal also suggests talking with clients about the embellished design on the retail shirt they wish to mimic. What graphic elements inspired them to choose the garment as a jumping-off point? Then marry those elements to the client's unique needs. "Many corporate logos require very specific logo guidelines that must be followed exactly," Coufal says. "Keep the corporate logo per these guidelines, and incorporate the decorative swirls to fill in the rest of the embellishment, trying to keep the main logo still visible on the shirt."

For this project, Coufal recommends placing the logo on the shirt's left chest and then adding the embroidered swirls around the

Menswear has embraced embroidery, as seen in this "Beat" shirt, available from Nordstrom.

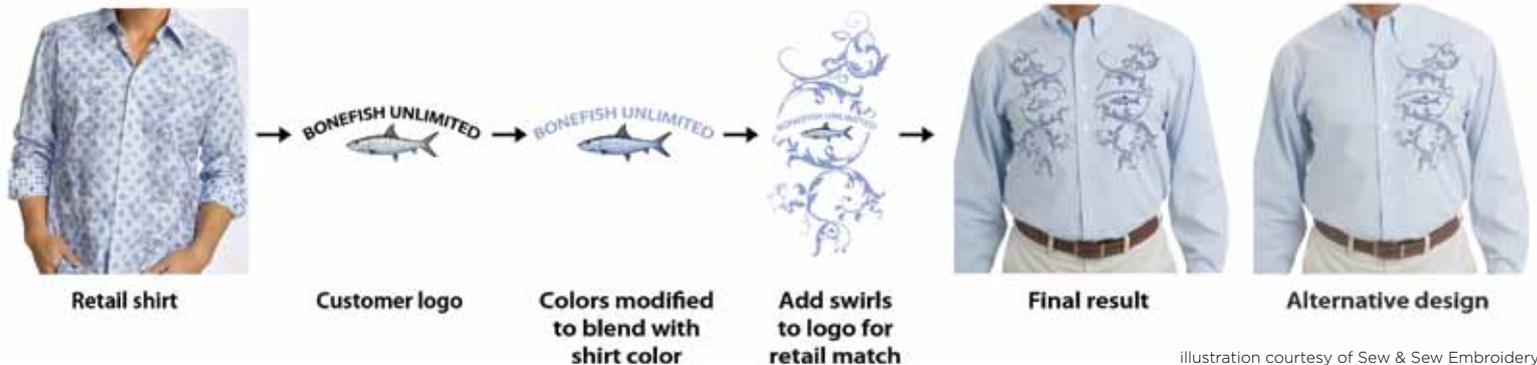


illustration courtesy of Sew & Sew Embroidery

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Drew Coufal, Sew & Sew Embroidery

brand identity. “Depending on the client’s budget, add more scrolls to the shirt, such as on the back yoke or up around the shoulder area for an even more dramatic retail look,” he says. “Try to keep it balanced by mirroring the images on the left and right sides of the shirt. Personally, I’d keep the client logo on the shirt to no more than a couple imprint locations, but you can get away with repeating the logo with the swirl pattern, especially with tone-on-tone threads.”

For more authenticity, Coufal recommends a cotton thread, commonly used by brands like Abercrombie & Fitch and Hollister. A rayon thread will also work for a softer look. Which-

ever you select, “Try to keep the color match a few shades darker or lighter, depending on the garment color used, so that the logo is still visible as a tone-on-tone effect,” Coufal says. “The more shades you vary from the main shirt color, the more visible the logo will be.”

Take the design even further with a motif fill pattern within the swirl, adding a different look to the logo. “Most digitizing programs have standard motif fills, and some allow you to create your own motifs for a completely custom look,” Coufal says. “Also consider using a bean (or triple-run) stitch with this application; this is also a commonly used technique in the retail markets.”

Finally, remember that presentation matters when selling upscale embroidered shirts. For a flawless impression, Coufal looks to finishing touches like individually folding and bagging each shirt. Most importantly, understand the final destination of the product. “Is it going direct to your contact or being sold online in a corporate store? Is it a special item for an event and being shipped direct to the event?” he asks. Once you know these details, you’ll be able to fashion a fantastic presentation to make this retail-inspired garment generate maximum appreciation. ■

Tonia Cook Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.

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