

## RETAIL RIPOFF

# Bring Bohemian Flair to Decorated Apparel

BY TONIA COOK KIMBROUGH

**B**ohemian blouses with embroidered detail breezed into retail over the spring and summer. The trend continues into fall, with fashionable labels like Lucky Brand making eclectically-accented garments a central part of their seasonal lines.

So just what makes a look boho? Think easy-going, effortless style that has a bit of a vintage vibe. Peasant-inspired, flowing fabrics and ornate decorations add to the artistic look. Expert apparel decorator Drew Coufal, president of Sew & Sew Embroidery, defines the style as retro and free-spirited and recommends embellishment in the same vein. “Go with unconventional motif designs and bean-stitches,” he says. “For inspiration, look to online fashion websites and celebrities. Bohemian apparel is more than just a hippie look; it goes back to ethnic roots, so this influences some of the decorative and colorful elements as well.”

Your first challenge in recreating a look similar to the Lucky Brand shirt is sourcing a

*The Lucky Brand “Mena” embroidered smock top, available at top retailers like Nordstrom, offers up a modern take on vintage bohemian blouses.*



base garment. “In the ad specialty market, it will be a little difficult to find a lot of bohemian/peasant-style cut garments,” Coufal says. “Most vendors only carry options that serve as a corporate-style substitute, not necessarily a true bohemian cut. If the client demands a true boho look, you might have to turn to retail. However, if your client is more flexible, choose a less-fitted ladies’ top from your promotional apparel supplier. Anything with a scoop neck or ruffled trim would be a good starting base. Since the boho look is free-flowing in nature, source more casual apparel that is lightweight and comfortable.”

The trend also relies heavily on earth tones. However, you can choose any color story your client requires and still pull off the style. “Even a solid black top can be called a bohemian shirt if the cut is in line with the hippie style that is boho,” Coufal says, adding that patterned fabrics can work well too. In reproducing the look of the Lucky Brand shirt, Coufal chose solid colors of the Emily Burnout tee (8660) from Bella (*asi/39590*; circle 92 on Free Info Card).



*Expert decorator Drew Coufal, president of Sew & Sew Embroidery, shows how a garment like the Lucky Brand tee can serve as motivation for bohemian-inspired promotional apparel.*

For decoration, he focused on the motif-based pattern around the neckline that appears in the Lucky Brand original. “Our version incorporates the business name Pickled Paws along with a pawprint motif to tie the entire look together as it wraps around the neckline,” he explains. “We also added a few rhinestone highlights for a one-of-a-kind piece.”

Not every client will be a good match for a boho-inspired promotional apparel program. Coufal suggests targeting clients who are forward-thinking in their marketing with liberal policies regarding the reproduction of their logos. “A small-business owner will be much more receptive to this style,” he says. Or, seek clients approaching younger audiences. Teens and college-age markets welcome looks that are individualized and a bit retro.

When you find the right client for the concept, consider opportunities to upsell the program. “This is a complete fashion style for women, not just a decorating process with embroidery or screen print,” Coufal says. “Accessories are part of the look, so recommend additional items to complete the boho style.” Scarves, tote bags, belts and vests all work as boho-appropriate accents. ■

*Tonia Cook Kimbrough is a contributing writer for Wearables.*

## THREE TIPS FOR DECORATING, BOHO STYLE

Drew Coufal, president of Sew & Sew Embroidery (a contract embroiderer that also specializes in digitizing, puff, appliqué, rhinestone, sequins and full-finishing options), offers these three tips for working with heavily patterned or flowing boho motifs in imprinted apparel:

1. Tonal thread or print colors are an excellent choice for this style; making the tonal colors a few shades lighter or darker will give the logo more contrast and visibility.
2. As the design and motif patterns you use become more complex, you can utilize more places to add in the company name, logo or other taglines.
3. To create an almost subliminal or hidden pattern of marketing and branding phrases for your client, follow the flowing lines of the motifs and material with the logo you design.