

## MATERIAL WORLD NEW YORK

# East Coast wakes up to eco-textiles

The recent Material World show in New York excited buyers and exhibitors with a new emphasis on eco-fabrics as the LOHAS (lifestyle of health and sustainability) consumer market starts to blossom.

By Kathlyn Swantko.



The focus on Eco-friendly products as an important textile trend was the major draw for visitors attending the recent Material World New York, held at the Javits Convention Center with the interest generated by the scheduled 'eco-seminars' spilling over onto the trade show floor.

Neil Hogan, of Manoir, Inc., a Quebec, Canada producer of organic knits, said, "This show has been amazing for us – the best show we've ever done! It's been non-stop! We've made hundreds of new contacts and the show's focus on eco has really been a big help to us."

This show brought with it a newly identified eco-friendly consumer, identified by the acronym 'LOHAS' (lifestyle of health and sustainability). Stuart McCullough, executive director for the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI), said, "There is a LOHAS consumer out there, which is a growing segment in today's marketplace. The overall LOHAS movement is very good for us, because wool is natural, sustainable, renewable, biodegradable, and a very clean product, made without the use of chemicals – so we support the LOHAS consumer."

Based in Los Angeles, California Label Products showed its current collection of eco-friendly labels made from recycled paper with hemp string, cotton twill, organic cotton, hemp, cotton canvas, and perhaps the most interesting – seed paper. According to Tasha Garfield, creative director of product development, this paper label has real seeds embedded into biodegradable paper, which will actually produce a live plant. When the paper label is planted, the paper breaks down, allowing the seeds to germinate into a lettuce plant.

California Products believes that using an environmentally friendly label on a garment will actually help the manufacturers sell their green products, and at the same time contribute to saving the planet. Garfield explained, "It is our commitment to support the truly organic manufacturers, who believe in and are dedicated to 'going green' and protecting the environment. I want our labels and tags to reflect what the garment is."

Another West Coast company supporting the eco movement with their trims is Los Angeles based, Woven Edge Braids. Woven Edge is a distributing company that carries all items in-stock in its Los Angeles warehouse. The company's mill, Yu Shin Development Company, is located in Taiwan, and maintains hundreds of needle looms and broad looms that weave a variety of narrow fabrics, such as woven labels, jacquard ribbons, grosgrain ribbons, jacquard elastic, etc.

At Material World, the company featured a

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Eco-friendly ribbon, made from recycled polyester from Woven Edge Braids, Inc.

selection of eco-friendly ribbons, made from recycled polyester. Sean Wang, Woven Edge Braids' Taiwan mill representative, said that upon request, any or all of the ribbons and braids in the company's collection can be made using recycled polyester yarn.

## Fountain Set notes bamboo interest

Fountain Set (USA) Inc., which is a subsidiary of Fountain set Hong Kong, is a major fabric supplier to garment manufacturers in over 40 countries and has recently spent a large amount of money on new waste water treatment facilities (see page: 29).

Josie Hua, marketing manager for Fountain Set (USA) Inc., said, "The company is really dedicated to the whole environmental movement. At Material World last year, our dedicated booth space for eco fabrics represented only about a third of a rack on one side of the booth. This year, however, our 'green' fabrics make up about 50% of the entire booth."

Regarding the attendees at the show, Josie noted, "Everyone is asking for eco-friendly! They are looking mostly for bamboo and organic cotton. I see it as a whole social movement that is only going to get bigger!"

Josie believes that in spite of the positive movement towards protecting the environment, there are still many challenges ahead. She said that consistency is a problem in the use of vegetable dyes, and sees a movement toward low-impact dyes from the major dye-stuff producers as the more obvious route. Other important considerations are the "undefined compliance issues, which are very complex."

Quebec-based knitter Primotex agreed with Fountain Set that interest in sourcing sustainable fabrics was high. Company president John Zito, president, said that visitors his booth were looking mainly for performance and eco-friendly fabrics. Of particular interest were organic cotton knits,



Above: Eco-textiles displayed in the Design Centre.

Below: Organic quiltings created a stir at the Michael Miller booth.



bamboo, organic cotton/bamboo/Lycra blends, 100% Repreve, and Repreve (recycled polyester) blends.

Cotton and cotton blended prints were offered by Michael Miller Fabrics for use in the quilting market and the company said its new organics collection created a stir. This line included 100% organic cotton, and organic cotton/post consumer polyester blends, which are dyed with natural dyes and tea dyes. Robin Mandelbaum, of Michael Miller Fabrics, explained, "We consistently heard comments from customers about the plush softness of our organic sherpa fabrics. They also liked the fact that we carry coordinated check

trims and coordinated ruffled rick-rack that are also organic. And, even the slightly higher price points on the collection didn't seem to be a deterrent."

Tennessee circular knitter United Knitting is the exclusive knitting partner for 'Cocona', the activated carbon fibre an, according to Jerry Miller, president of the company, attendees were interested in the company's broad array of eco-fabric knit constructions, made from 100% Repreve and blends, 100% post consumer polyester and blends, and Cocona blended fabrics.

Miller discussed the challenges ahead for the eco-movement, involving water usage, energy usage, social accountability, the safety of raw materials, and the impact of each on the environment. He stated, "The important thing is to minimise the impact on the environment. But, it seems the more you do, the more problems and challenges you have. Transparency is what's going to be really important going forward. There is a need to look at the whole life cycle of the garment. There is a need to rate everything. And, every segment of the industry needs to know and understand that rating, whatever it ends up being."

## US spun organics

Natural Fiber Mills was a new exhibitor at the show and is a new division of parent company Clovertex LLC, which manufactures specialty yarns. The South Carolina company's first line is an organic fabric called 'EcoShade', which is manufactured using 100% organic fibre and the finished fabrics are dyed using an eco-friendly process and sources its organic cotton from the USA and from Turkey.

The company offered a range of fine jersey knits in Nm 30/1 ring spun 100% certified organic cotton along with 1X1 and 2X1 ribs, stretch single jersey (5% spandex) and French terry in Nm 20/1.

There were more than 50 mills showing collections made from organic cotton, bamboo and soy or other sustainable or renewable materials at the show with exhibitors from Africa, China, India, South Korea and Argentina. West Coast exhibitors noted that there is now greater demand from buyers on the East coast as the demand for sustainable products continues its upward curve.

For the next edition of Material World held between 8 – 10th April 2008 in Miami Beach, Florida, the fabric and sourcing resources will spotlight four key growth areas: 'Eco-friendly', 'Performance', 'Technology solutions' and 'Sourcing solutions'.