

LA Textile Show spring/summer 2012

Textures abound

In the face of rising cotton prices, creating a soft handle using other fibres or finishing techniques can help knit companies maintain quality while addressing costs. **Kathlyn Swantko** reports

Soft, surface interest textures, loose sweater knits, new burnout technologies and vivid coloured patterns and prints characterised fabrics on display at the Los Angeles International Textile Show.

Following closure of the GlobalTex show late last year, attendees came out

in droves to attend the only remaining West Coast textile show, held at the California Market Center, and to see the latest fashion fabric developments for spring/summer 2012. An additional incentive for this season's L A Textile Show was a renewed interest in

bringing garment manufacturing back to California.

Show organisers reported an increase in exhibitor numbers and were also very excited about a 25% increase in the number of attendees, compared with the September 2010 show.

"There was really great energy that lasted throughout the show," said Oscar Rodriguez, show producer. "Exhibitors seemed thrilled with the attendance. We look forward to increasing the number of resources available to our attendees and continuing the great momentum we saw at this show."

Lenzing Fibers held its second Innovation Pavilion at the show, encouraging the participation of several of its key mill customers. "It's great to see the growth at this show," said Tricia Carey, USA merchandising manager for Lenzing. "There is a wonderful synergy of resources here. We had 22 mill partners participating in our Lenzing Innovation Pavilion, who were all pleased with the flow of traffic. We look forward to continuing our partnership and growing with L A Textile."

John Marshall of JM International concurred: "This has been amazing for us. Many of my clients from New York, Los Angeles, Texas and Mexico wrote sample orders. It's been my best show in years."

Those attending the show were excited to see the variety of new fabric resources that were available. Serena Abel of the Splendid & Ella Moss design team said: "We come here to find affordable, unique fabrics for kids. This season, we found some great new vendors carrying soft, easy knits."



Brightly coloured geometrics, florals and foil print fabrics in nylonspandex from SporTek International

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Other major brands at the show included Sanrio, Rock and Republic, Jigsaw, Rodarte, Vince, 7 For All Mankind, Wren, Whitley Kros, Splendid/Ella Moss, Trina Turk, Joe's Jeans, Joie, Splendid, Lauren Conrad for Khols, BCBG/Max Azria, ABS by Allen Schwartz, American Apparel, the Disney Store, Forever 21, Ella Moss, Alo Sportswear, Midori, Jessica McClintock and Karen Kane.

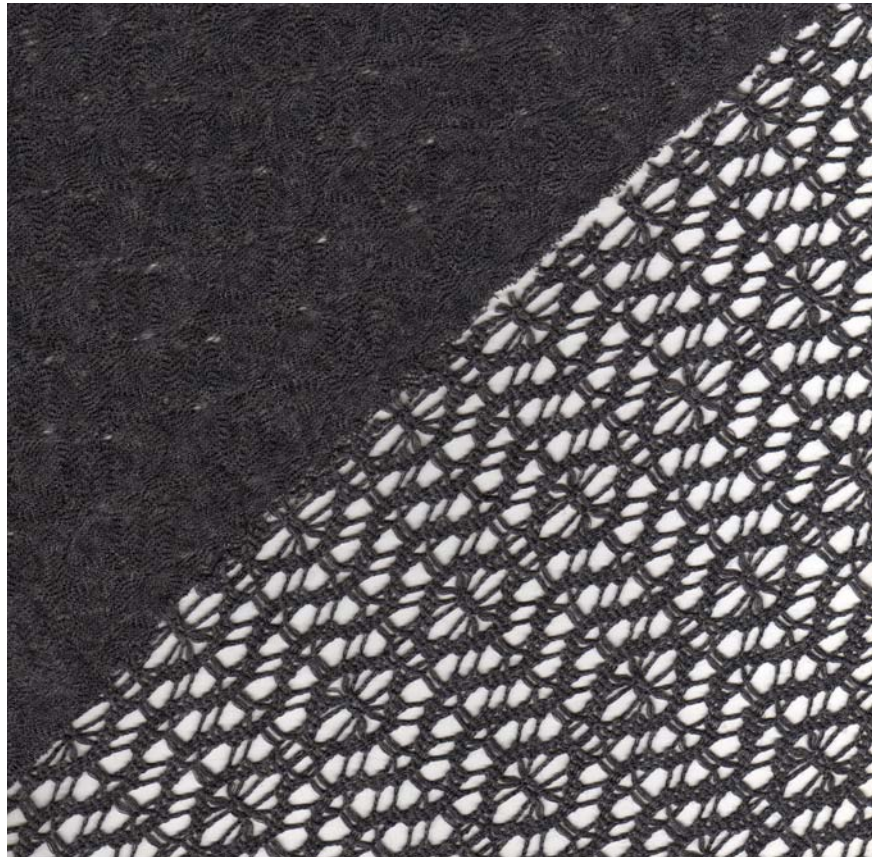
Apparel manufacturers attending the show were looking for cost effective ways to create their collections. Specific trends included garment dyeable fabrics, lightweight fabrics, soft sweater knits, sheer weight fabrics, tri-blend fabrics (poly/cotton/raion blends), anything with a sheen or shine that creates a pattern or highlights a texture, heathered fabrics created through the use of cationic dyestuffs rather than using the more expensive heathered yarns and geometric print patterns.

More than ever before in the history of the American knitting industry, American mills are using their knowledge of technical production processes, along with the ingenuity they've cultivated over the years, to create new and interesting looks in their fabrics.

One of the ways that fibre producers and mills are dealing with the issue of rising raw material prices is to move towards lighter weight fabrics. David Sasso, vice president of international sales and marketing for Buhler Yarns said: "High cotton prices will be a continuing problem until the next cotton crop later this year. Because of this, there is a tendency towards the production of lighter weight fabrics. We need to be very smart about our strategies to keep costs down."

Another solution to this problem involves blending. Nori Hill, design director for Texollini, explained: "Blending is key. Hand is very important. We're using a lot of soft fibres to achieve a soft hand. And a lot has to do with the finishing of the fabric."

Increasing numbers of companies seem unhappy with offshore production. The California Fashion Association



SG Knits raschel knits in 100% rayon

sponsored a seminar at the show focused on this topic, which was well attended.

"We haven't sold to a retailer with more than 115 stores in over 10 years," said Brian Meck, vice president of marketing for Fessler USA. "But, we just picked up a new account with 300 stores. There is definitely a renewed interest for Made in America."

Due to tight budgets and escalating raw material costs, many knitting mills have looked at their existing processes to create newness. Some have discovered that just tweaking some of their current technologies has led to development of new and interesting textures and surface interest fabrics. Several of these technical advancements involve manufacturing/production, modifications in fabric constructions and innovations in dyeing/printing/finishing.

Barbara Montz, representing GreenSpun Knits, Manoir, Layfayette Textiles and Glenoit Mills, explained: "Price increases have often led to the development of new innovations. While we don't have the budgets to

create lines anymore, customer relationships and partnering can create new developments that customers want to buy. We have discovered that we can use technology that's already available, but use it in a different way to create a different fabric look."

Newness can also be accomplished through the selection of certain yarns or dyestuffs to create a contrast or interest in a fabric. Sandy Kitto, sales agent for Unifi, FilSpec and Nilit yarns explained: "Fabric sheen, which is very popular right now, can be created through the use of bright yarns to design a pattern or highlight a texture. Taking advantage of various dyeability properties can also create newness, as well as by blending different fibres' contents."

Ted Kronfli of Antex Knitting agreed. He said: "The technology is expanding every year. The yarns, the fabric constructions, and the customer have everything to do with how we create the end fabric. You tell us what you're looking for, and we'll find a way to make it."