

Show attendees viewing the 'Touch and Feel' trend displays and vignettes in the main lobby



FABRICS DAZZLE IN LA

Business was brisk at the Los Angeles International Textile Show despite fewer European exhibitors than usual due to the weak dollar. **Kathlyn Swantko** reports from the show

A sense of excitement and the need to search for a special fabric that provides that "something new and different" quality, drew a wide range of traffic to the Los Angeles International Textile Show. New this year was a beautiful display of formal dresses, designed by Los Angeles (LA)-based designers and featuring French laces from Solstiss-Bucol.

The show, held in April at the California Market Center, provided a wide range of fabric offerings. On the performance side, organic and other eco-friendly textiles were the highlights. On the fashion side, the trend involved anything containing

lurex yarns, as well as soft fabrics, made from Micro Modal and viscose blends. The Allegrì Group, one of only a few Italian companies exhibiting at the show, sees Modal jersey as an important fabric for the dress market. In prints, the focus was on bright and cotton-candy colours. Subdued tones combined with special finishes provided glittery and holographic effects and other shiny looks. Photographic and mosaic prints also generated interest.

According to show organisers, the event attracted a broad range of designers and retailers, including representatives from Adidas, American Apparel, BCBG, Chinese

Laundry, Forever 21, Jessica McClintock, Jones New York, Quicksilver, Rampage, Nordstrom and Citizens of Humanity.

"As the influence of California fashion continues to grow on an international scale, so does the quality of attendees," said Joanne Lee, director of CMC Events.

"Overall, we heard very positive comments from both new and returning exhibitors, who were pleased with the cross section of customers the LA International Textile Show received."

Although no attendance figures were released, the traffic, at least visually, appeared to have increased

over recent shows. However, this could have been somewhat deceiving, because most exhibition space is now concentrated into booths and showrooms on the 13th floor. This new layout may have maximised efficiency of traffic flow there.

Fewer European exhibitors

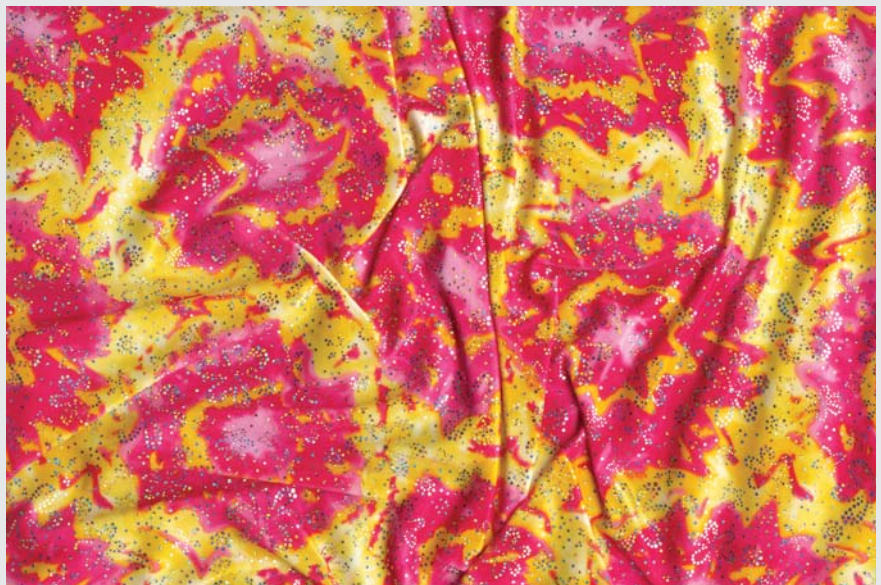
The European Pavilion, which for years has been located in the Fashion Theatre and used by both the French Espace Textile group and a contingent of Italian exhibitors, was noticeably smaller than at previous shows. The downsizing was primarily due to the Italian Trade Commission and its members deciding not to exhibit this season. The Euro's strength, which makes it difficult to compete in dollar-based countries, may have played a role in the Italians' decision not to participate.

There were other concerns expressed by some exhibitors about signs of uncertainty and instability in the market caused by on-going pressures from China and south-east Asia. Many companies have chosen to establish sister relationships with companies in south-east Asia for fabric production and are warehousing product in the US as a way to offset pricing issues. Leslie Lesh from LA-based SporTek/Yasha Fabrics, a new exhibitor at the show, said: "The market is looking for a sense of direction right now and across the board there are questions about how the rest of the year is going to be. There is a lot of pressure on the dollar and the market could be looking at a possible recession."

In spite of these on-going issues, exhibitors seemed pleased with the overall traffic and interest generated by the show. Many said they were busy from the opening to the end of the three-day event. They were also pleased with the quality of customers visiting their booths and showrooms.

Fabric developments

Liebaert, a longstanding Belgium-based circular knitter and warp knitter, services primarily the high-end intimate and lingerie markets.



Deep purples and ripe raspberry hues feature in Pine Crest Fabrics's summer 08 collection where the emphasis is on co-ordinating foils and holograms

CIRCULAR KNITTING MACHINE

- INTARSIA KNITTING MACHINE
- 23 COLOUR YARN GUIDES / 7-12 GG

For Fashion & Design Oriented Sweater



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However, it also provides technical textiles for the activewear, medical, automotive and industrial markets.

At the show, the company featured very fine, 80-gauge raschel knits. It also showed 40-gauge tricots, a number of jacquard circular knits and circular knit spacer fabrics. Michael Floru, vice president of marketing and sales, explained: "We chose to do circular knit spacer fabrics over warp knit spacer fabrics because of the flexibility. By doing the circular knit spacers we are able to use a wider range of yarns including microfibre, Coolmax and Tactel."

Liebaert has established itself as a creative company and because of its flexibility it has the ability to handle very small customers, particularly those in the French market, as well as large customers such as Victoria Secret, Marks & Spencer and Vanity Fair.

Another leading manufacturer of high-end fabrics is LA-based circular knitter, Design Knit. The company prides itself on providing high quality, knitted fabrics at affordable prices and uses a broad range of fibres in the development of its specialty knit fabrics, explained Shala Tabassi, lead designer and founder of the company.

"Every couple of months I develop new lines and I research everything prior to creating something new. I meet with the yarn and fibre suppliers to gain an understanding of their latest innovations. Currently we are doing bamboo, blended with organic cotton and organic Supima cotton. We also do wool blends, linen blends, Tencel blends, cashmere blends and Modal blends, some of which have a touch of lurex because shiny, luxury type fabrics are a key fashion trend right now. Our new 80 Micro Modal/20 silk knits have also become very important and we will be doing 100% silk knits in the near future."

Dazzling colours

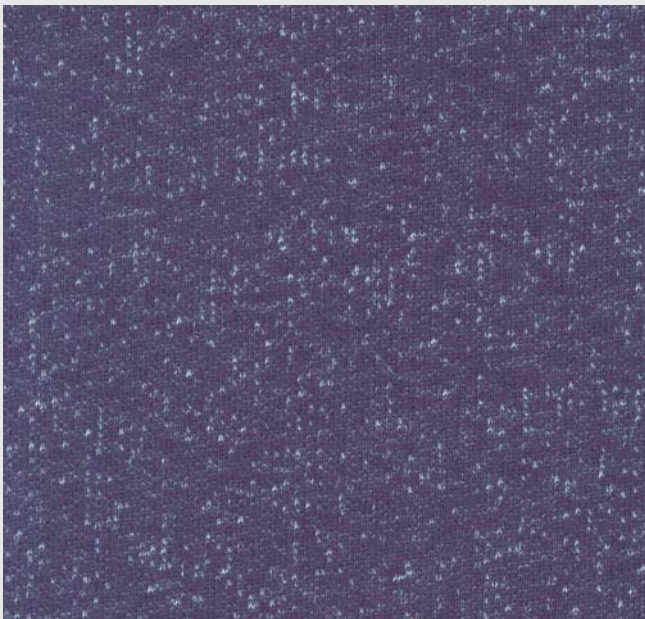
Pine Crest Fabrics, based in Portland, Oregon, is a textile distributor for the gymnastics, dance, swim and surf markets with 4-way stretch sublimation printed fabrics. It sources ten knitted base cloth fabrics, consisting mainly of nylon/spandex and polyester/spandex blends, from Korea and other parts of Asia. To better service its customers, Pine Crest has a complete art studio, located in Los Angeles, incorporating a full print library where custom-designed artwork is available. The company offers custom-designed prints, printed on any of its base cloths, with or without special iridescent hologram or foil finishes added.

Kelly Langlois, sales representative for the company described this year's trends. "Key features for our 2008 collection include brilliant, dazzling colours that are sure to get noticed. Deep purples, turquoise and ripe raspberry hues head up our collection, with an emphasis on fun, co-ordinating foils and holograms."

Roopa Knitting, a Toronto, Canada-based circular knitter specialises in technical fabric production using the major branded yarns for the performance sportswear market. The company offers flexible minimums as low as



Design Knit stand featuring the latest fabric trends



Roopa's salt-and-pepper fleece

260 yards/colour, according to Amit Thakkar of Roopa.

"The low minimums allow our customers to work with a lower investment and lower inventory, while our quick turn-around time [10-15 working days] allows our customers the opportunity to capitalise on market trends."

The company produces a lot of 3-end fleece, tumble dried fleece and pre-shrunk, sueded fleece, said Ms Thakkar. Following the eco-friendly trend, Roopa featured organic cotton and cotton/bamboo blends at this season's show. Another product that attracted attention was Roopa's salt-and-pepper fleece, she added.

"This fleece is sort of a melange look. It's melange, not by the yarn, but by the way we knit it. It's a 70 cotton/30 poly blend and it's a 3-end product that has been tumble dried and sueded." **KI**



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