

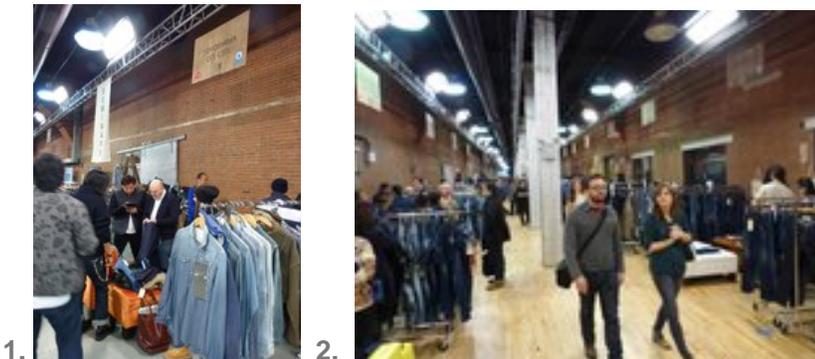
KINGPINS

Retailers, Brands Brave Snow to Scout Denim Trends at Kingpins

By Alison A. Nieder | Thursday, January 30, 2014



WINTER BLUES: A sudden snowstorm in New York kept designers, fabric buyers and sourcing executives inside shopping the Kingpins trade show, held at The Tunnel on New York's West Side.



1. GOLD STANDARD: Adriano Goldschmied, designer of G oldsign denim, was among the designers shopping the Kingpins trade show.
2. Kingpins boutique denim trade show in New York.

NEW YORK—Despite large snow drifts and icy roads, retailers and brands turned out to hunt for new denim resources at the recent Jan. 21–22 run of the **Kingpins** boutique denim trade show, held at **The Tunnel** in New York's Chelsea district.

Adriano Goldschmied, designer of **Goldsign** denim, and his daughter, Marta Goldschmied, co-founder of the **Emm Gold** streetwear brand, were among the designers shopping the show. Other companies in attendance were **Target**, **Lucky Brand Jeans**, **Bella Dahl**, **Lane Bryant**, **Ralph Lauren**, **Chico's**, **Madewell**, **Express**, **LF Stores** and **Quiksilver**.

"I was surprised how busy we were. We definitely had the key retailers and brands," said Jean Hegedus, global segment leader for denim for **Invista**, makers of **Lycra**. Invista was showing the latest developments

in performance denim using Invista's **Toughmax**, **Coolmax** and **Thermolite** fibers, as well as denim with improved stretch and recovery properties made with **Lycra DualFX**, a blend of Lycra and Invista's **T400** fiber.

Kingpins founder Andrew Olah was pleased with the turnout. "We had a typhoon at the Hong Kong show and had to lose half a day. Now we have a snowstorm, and we stayed open," he said. Olah pointed to several exhibitors who were busy landing orders throughout the two-day show.

"**Fen** had 55 sample orders in two days," Olah said. Alan Wong, vice president of marketing for the Hong Kong-based denim mill, confirmed the tally, adding that he had 70 orders after the Kingpins show in July.

At the **Union Knopf** booth, Managing Director Eberhard Ganns said the snow affected traffic, but the mood among the designers at the show was good. "The people who found their way here, they are in a good mood," he said. Designers and brands are starting to look for higher-end product, Ganns said. "Some are 'uptrading'—the quality is getting better. The price war has slowed down. It's more about quality." Having plenty of fresh merchandise helped. The 103-year-old German trim manufacturer releases new products each season. "That's the way we do business," Ganns said.

Jack Mathews, vice president, marketing and sales, for **American Denimatrix**, a vertical jeans manufacturer with operations in Texas and Guatemala, agreed that the mood at the show was good, despite a less-than-stellar holiday sales season. "It's been pretty positive," he said. "A lot of them came off a holiday season that wasn't great—particularly in the teen section. [But] there's a return and resurgence in people looking in this part of the world. It's about speed-to-market."

Trends and new developments

Among one of the busiest booths at the show was **Cone Denim**, which was showing new developments from its U.S., Mexico and China facilities.

Kara Nicholas, vice president, product development and marketing, said the company has been looking at adding additional benefits and properties to denim. For example, a collection of performance denim blends fashion and function to incorporate strength into a more refined denim look.

The company is also continuing to develop new product using its recycled fiber yarns, including "Foodtray" black and "Water Cooler" blue, which take their colors from the recycled materials they are made from—plastic food trays and water coolers. Although sustainability is an "important story across all platforms and at all facilities," Nicholas said, "we knew we have to create beautiful fabrics on their own." At customers' request, Cone has also added a 16.5-ounce heavyweight selvage denim and more shirting-weight fabrics made in Cone's **White Oak** facility in Greensboro, N.C.

Other new products include denim made with recycled indigo that give the fabric a gray cast, closed configurations "where you don't have a lot of weft yarns coming through" and increased use of Cone's **S-Gene** dual core yarn technology, which improves the fabric's snap-back quality.

New developments at American Denimatrix included coated, laser-printed and screen-printed fabrications. "The laser is all about getting the whiskers to look real," said Ralph Tharpe, ACG product development for American Denimatrix. Laser finishing is also part of the company's sustainability efforts, Tharpe said. "It's the

right thing to do,” he said. American Denimatrix is also using **DyStar**’s pre-reduced indigo, which requires less salt. “It’s a more sustainable chemistry,” Tharpe said.

At the **Santanderina** booth, Heather Maldonado, co-owner of **Studio Bert Forma**, which represents the Spanish mill, was showing super-lightweight Tencel denims in 2.5 ounces and 4 ounces and a coated indigo fabric she called “Blue Blue.”

Taiwan mill **Hans Global** was showing an anti-static thermal fabric called **Seawool**, made from recycled polyester with an oyster additive. Hans Global Vice President Yo-Jung Chang said this was the company’s second time showing at Kingpins. The company specializes in fabrics that work well with denim.

Hans Global was part of a group of Taiwanese mills organized by the **Taiwan Textile Federation**. Wayne Chiang, founder of **469 Fabric Lab**, was at the show for his second time, showing his collection of denim jacquards and digital prints on jacquard. The latest collection features a mix of Eastern and Western influences, such as kimono patterns and Andy Warhol–inspired pop-art motifs.

Chiang is a second-generation textile maker whose father owned a spinning mill. After studying textile design and luxury-brand management, Chiang was looking for a new business opportunity. “I wanted to do something for the Taiwan textile industry,” he said. 469 Fabric Lab has worked with labels such as **J Brand**, **7 For All Mankind**, **AG Jean**, **Calvin Klein** and **Evisu**.

Several exhibitors were showing denim made with Tencel or **Modal**. Designers liked the soft hand and good drape of Tencel and Modal blends, but their mills were having difficulty working with the fabrics.

Invista’s Hegudus co-hosted a seminar at Kingpins with **Lenzing**, the Austrian fiber maker that produces Tencel and **Lenzing Modal**. The two fiber companies recently started working together to find a solution to several issues, including growth and seam slippage.

“Lycra and Lenzing saw a lot of our fiber ending up in the same product,” said Michael Kininmonth, Lenzing denim project manager. Designers wanted fabrics with “super stretch, super soft and super comfort,” he said. The problem, Kininmonth explained, is in the fiber properties of Lycra, Tencel and Modal. “Compared with cotton, you have a very smooth surface on the fibers,” he said. “That brings next-to-skin comfort and natural absorption, but it also brings a challenge when you need some friction on the yarn.”

Invista researchers in Wilmington, Del., began looking at the issue, and “we found **Lycra DualFX** could really make a difference,” Hegedus said. DualFX combines Lycra for stretch and Invista T400 for recovering and then wraps the two in cotton. “The greatest challenge with stretch is to get the recovery,” Mathews said. “DualFX is really a breakthrough.”