

Treasure Hunting

The recent IFFE in New York rewarded those who dug into the show's offerings

By HEIDI PETELINZ BENSON

NEW YORK — If you're new to the world of textile trade shows, the International Fashion Fabric Exhibition at the Jacob Javits Center April 18 through 20 was a good place to start.

With about 300 vendors specializing in everything from buttons to bamboo blends to faux fur and fun fleece, IFFE offered a thorough overview of the news in this market segment—and, if you skipped the feather, lace, ribbon and trim vendors, you could cover the show in half the time and still unearth a few treasures. Here, some of our finds:

SOMMERS PLASTIC PRODUCTS featured a realistic-looking, two-way-stretch "leather," called Pleasure, that can be dry-cleaned or tossed into the wash. Designers can work with either the "suede" or "tanned" side and choose from black, red, wine, chocolate or beige. Good luck convincing customers it's polyurethane!

Next door, **JIANGSU SHENLI** showed a line of sporty micro fleece engineered to wick perspiration, shed static, block UV rays and "get over the mugginess of regular synthetics." Samples revealed one secret: tiny aerating perforations that doubled as decoration.

If it's silk you're after—for suits, ties or almost anything else—take a look at what's coming out of Korea. In **GYEANG SILK** and **CHIN BI TRADING CO.** displayed silk neckties with stitched-in designs. **SILKLAND** specialized in bamboo/silk knits and wovens (used increasingly for shirting, socks and even uniforms, since they're more durable and, more important, antibacterial). **SU AN TECH CO.** showed a checked jacket as well as silk seersucker shirts with traditional Korean jacquard designs in the linings.

For silk look-alikes, try China-based **ZHUCHENG FUJIBO FABRIC CO.** Its 60-count, double-mercerized cotton is guaranteed not to pill. At **JIANGSU NANZHOU**



YIFENG TEXTILE, ultra-thin mercerized denim samples were hung by the dozens. **JIAHAODA YARN DYED MILL** showed a dizzying array of cotton gingham, oxford and poplins, as well as what the booth's rep described as "twisted cotton" shirting.

Nick Jing, who reps **SHANGHAI TIGERLU INTERNATIONAL**, said, "Buyers were looking for all-natural fibers, as well as special finishes," such as complicated embroideries (yes, even for men's wear). For pants, **KANGYUAN** had an impressive selection of cotton twill, canvas and rip-stop cottons.

The best part of the IFFE show is always the quirky little inventions making their market debut. Case in point:

YNC ZIPPER CO. had a wall of novelty zippers that begged to be tested. Director Eddie Cho was particularly proud of his line of "water-block" zippers that lock quietly behind silicone flaps. Others had reflective finishes or logos written horizontally—sure to turn heads!

GLOBAL LEATHERS also had some interesting distressed metallic skins. And owner Paul Crystal said his matte croc on lamb and the white baby calf were doing well at the show.

Buttons are big this year, according to Ally Pang of **BUTTONS INTERNATIONAL**, who probably meant it literally, judging from the size of some examples at her booth.

The showstopper? **ALEXANDER HENRY FABRICS'** psychedelic cotton prints that replayed London circa 1960 along with Peter Max-style peace gestures, Robert Indiana-style candy-colored numbers and Andy Warhol-style floral repeats. (Then there were the provocative female or male pinup prints ... but that's another story.)

The Mighty Oak

In North Carolina, Cone Denim celebrates White Oak, its 100-year-old plant

NEW YORK — In today's textile market, operating a plant that's still going strong at age 100 seems well worth the weeklong party Cone Denim threw at White Oak, the Greensboro, N.C., denim mill that's been in use since its founding.

The fun and games got their unofficial start on Friday, April 22, with an on-site celebration for corporate personnel. "There was lots of nostalgia—they watched a 1939 film of area denim facilities," said Delores Sides, Cone's director of corporate communications. "It was a chance for people who aren't directly involved in manufacturing to get a feel for it."

On the following Monday, Cone invited area officials for the grand opening of its White Oak Archive and Design Studio—a collection of vintage denim and jeans available to working designers—adjacent to the on-site museum, which opened in 1996. Tuesday was dedicated to customer tours of the 1.6 million-

square-foot facility, which also gave those same customers a chance to check out the newly launched White Oak brand of vintage-inspired premium denims.

White Oak itself got going in 1905 when brothers Moses and Ceasar Cone, who'd started making textiles in 1891, decided to build their third plant, which would be their first dedicated exclusively to denim. Unusual for the time, White Oak was designed as a vertical operation that included everything from yarn to finishing. Ergo, it became the place where the company did its experimentation with denim weaving and processing; it was at White Oak that Cone first used a continuous indigo dye range and first wove denim on shuttleless machines.

Last year, White Oak—along with the rest of Cone Denim—became part of Wilbur Ross's International Textile Group, which currently operates in Mexico, Turkey and India, and is expanding into Guatemala and China. ■

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