



OVERALL MOOD OF SHOW WAS UPBEAT

The 11th session of SPINEXPO New York was held on 16-18 July, 2019 at the Brooklyn Expo Centre, Greenpoint, New York and played host to 75 exhibitors, including 25 knitwear manufacturers. The ambience was particularly pleasant and the visitors were happy, despite a difficult interior textile market divided between the established, generally major brands, whose priority is to stay competitive while maintaining attractive prices, and the brands launched by contemporary designers, who seek instead to assert their specific identity while moving upmarket and are looking for suppliers who can help them produce more affordable ranges but are willing to accept higher cost prices.

The overall mood of the show was upbeat and it seems the American customers are still in the mood to buy. Pricing was a major deciding factor but the quality of the clientele was very good as most people came to do business rather than simply to browse. Generally, the mood amongst clients seemed more positive, but the exhibitors were rather less dynamic given their own business situations.

Conversations centered around the current insecurity, negotiations between the USA and China, potential obstacles and tax rates, although this issue did not appear to affect the mood of the buyers, who seem to adapt from day to day and have decided to carry on working much as before. As for the Chinese suppliers, after concentrating on their booming interior market last year, they are once again focusing their attention on the export market, which guarantees them more secure conditions of sale and enables them to continue sourcing more inspirational products. Most of the major players came to the show to see the yarn vendors but some were very interested in the private label type of business where

they can just take designs directly from the knitwear manufacturers and place orders, provided they are happy with the prices.

One surprising development to note in terms of the clientele coming to SPINEXPO™ is the emergence of younger designer brands. They came to the show seeking quality products and good designs. Many of them were especially excited by the fact that some knitwear manufacturers can offer design services in addition to development and production. The price point for them is quite high-end, so they were unconcerned by development costs and FOB prices but were especially focused on the product quality. This shows that the younger brands are already starting to accept “made in China” with quality.

In 2019 buyers have focused resolutely on fancy yarns, visually interesting and attractively priced. The notion of price, which was not the most important factor in 2018, has been key in 2019. The knitters, whose collections feature elaborate designs, have not been popular with buyers, who wanted more basic styles using fancy yarns in compositions that allow for a lower purchase price.

The market is divided into two distinct segments. There are the established brands that are searching for attractive prices and the new, more exclusive brands, which remain relatively modest in terms of size and offer their clients more personalized, high-end products, in innovative materials and blends, aiming for a targeted distribution based on smaller volumes. The visitor structure is changing and we welcomed a higher number of new companies and designers who are setting up on their own, but fewer representatives per company for the established brands. The American market continues to evolve and innovate and is now segmented between the major chains and the contemporary brands that operate on a smaller scale with higher-end and more personalised products. The challenge for the suppliers is to adapt to a local market that is changing every year, sometimes by 180 degrees, and whose versatility is becoming a destabilising factor for suppliers who depend on their production facilities.

Visitor numbers are stable compared to the previous year (1015) and we feel neither euphoria nor negativity, but accept the market as it is, a working environment conducive to discovering products to inspire the retail market. The traditional products, including flat-knit, sophisticated cashmeres and merino wools, have not been popular this season; rather it is all the fancy yarn manufacturers who have been the big winners.

Many fashion brands are starting to produce their own loungewear lines and are looking at sweaters instead of cut & sew garments, which do not offer the luxurious fibre options with the ability to customise stitches that sweaters do. People said they were especially attracted by the style and the yarns from the home section, not only because of the colour palettes and the simplicity of the garment designs, but also by the silhouettes. They said they were inspired by the pattern blocks because they can be worn by many body types and shapes for many different occasions. The general trend towards easy/comfort dressing is leading people to search for yarns and designs that are not only simple and elegant, but can mostly be worn for a long time with no trend-driven expiry date. As well as fashion brands branching out into loungewear, there were smaller brands focusing solely on the aspect of wellness, including yoga wear and athletic leisure wear. The home textiles developed by Steven OO of Meridian Knitwear for Shima Seiki's Barcelona ITMA show were very well received and some of the home textile brand manufacturers who visited SPINEXPO mentioned that they want to start working in this direction to develop knitted home textiles.

Home was without a doubt a success, maybe even more so in NY than in Paris, because Americans prefer casual fashion to the more intricate designs. SPINEXPO™ will definitely explore these lines in more detail for the next Spring/Summer session. This project was also a very good



way to keep SPINEXPO's exhibitors happy because their yarns were displayed in an optimal light without other spinners' yarns being mixed in.

Sustainability/Natural with Performance was still a topic on the mind of most brands, but they are no longer looking for the typical organic cotton/linen, 100 percent natural fibre yarns. They are all looking for natural yarns with a tech/performance aspect. Most brands don't want 100 percent natural or 100 percent synthetic if price is not the sole driver for decision-making. Clients still mainly want the content to be natural, but many of them are looking for blended natural fibres with recycled fibres or performance aspects like UV protection and wicking ability. This is in line with SPINEXPO's opinion that the notion of "sustainability" used to market products is a misconception and that there is a lot more to the concept than just the word.

Of the garments displayed for the main trend, the pieces that drew most attention were those that combined fashion and functionality. Pretty for the sake of being pretty is no longer on the radar for the American clients. They loved the Refuge menswear because it had stitches that were padded and looked very technical. The garments were fashionable but still wearable. The plaid coats were also well received as they provided an alternative to the traditional woven tweeds that can only be found in wovens. Visitors were attracted by styles that provide fashionable design details with a performance touch.

SPINEXPO™ remains a "must-visit" show for all buyers who are looking for innovative products at affordable prices. The event mainly showcases the New York brands and those situated in the Eastern part of the United States. The "pop-up" designers from the West Coast of the United States are too small to be able to travel easily so we continue to tell them about products and trends and look forward to welcoming them when they can afford to make the trip.