

DNR

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Performance Review

The fabrics at Innovation Asia covered all the basics...and then some

By Marilise Gavenas

New York- Say what you want about globalization, but as of last week Asia and Europe were still on the opposite sides of the street.

On one side of Manhattan's West 18th Street, the 143 European Preview exhibitors at the Metropolitan Pavilion were showing expensive, fashion-forward fabrics (see story, page 114), while the 23 Innovation Asia exhibitors simultaneously were at the Amuse restaurant across the road concentrated on price-conscious, commodity textiles.

"We see lots of basics here," explained Valerie Goodman, a designer for Alan Stuart who'd shopped the show before. "We manufacture a lot in Asia so it's convenient for us to source there, since the fabrics can be shipped directly."

Tencel sponsors Innovation Asia, so, not surprisingly, most booths had a healthy selection of Tencel and Tencel Blends. For example: Dainong Corp. played up new Tencel/wool shirtweights. Mozartex dressed a mannequin in Joseph Abboud balmacaan to advertise the popularity of its 59/41 Tencel/polyester twill and **Nano-Pel**. Rajasthan Spinning & weaving pointed men's wear buyers toward Tencel/linen and Tencel/wool blends. And Chongbang touted its "Crystal Denim," which came in pure Tencel and Tencel/cotton blends that both claimed to prevent color fade-out.

Although Shinkong carried a selection of white-on-white cotton jacquard shirtings and Dainong offered a group of herringbone-based novelties, simple twills were the dominant fashion statement. In addition to its Abboud buy, Mozartex was showing twills that had already been bought by TravelSmith, Ashworth and Axis.

Likewise, brushed finishes and matte looks were the dominant visual and tactile effects. "We're trying a few novelty fabrics that are a little bit shiny," said assistant manager Jun-Kyu Kang, hastening to add that "we do a satin finish, so it doesn't look cheap-shiny."

Performance properties now seem to be taken for granted. Many mills had licenses from the likes of **Nano-Tex** and Invista, and the rest had come up with their own equivalents, so that virtually every booth could sell you some kind of anti-odor, anti-stain or anti-something-or-other fabric.

That includes one performance property that, so far, seems to be unique in the annals of men's wear.

At Chonbang, signage boasted that its new bamboo indigo denim group was "anti-bacteria, anti-moth" and anti- something called "hygroscopicity" (a word only really big dictionaries list as "humidity"). As to the exact meaning of the mysterious "hygroscopicity"- and why anyone would want to prevent it-general manager Jerry Yoo cheerfully confessed, "I have absolutely no idea."