

Showtime Fabric Fair, June 2009

Showtime this season was unusually upbeat. Most vendors were saying that they believed that sales would increase in the second half of the year, and that their upholstery factories were seeing better than expected, though still soft, incoming orders in May. Of course one month does not a sales trend make –but as usual most fabric designers drew from common sources for inspiration, and thus there were definitely trends that were identifiable in the market.

COLOR:

Textured and layered neutrals predominated as designers gave manufacturers something to play it safe with in these challenging time. But there was plenty of accent color also. Shades of Orange were still very much on trend. Hues from clay-tiles to deep pumpkin and accents that tended toward coral were teamed with mid-tone browns, light blues, soft greys, and even fuchsia for a zesty infusion of energy. Wasabi green was used often as a counterpoint to browns and neutrals (similar to our recent Variations approach in the Norwalk showroom). Purple seemed to retreat a bit as an accent. We liked it used very subtly in soft lavender shown expertly by Wesley Mancini in the HOME showroom. On the other end of the purple color scale, magenta was trend forward as a punchy accent. We saw sapphire, navy, and royal blues all used in effective combinations with whites that ranged from cream to snow-- and perhaps more directionally paired with tans and greyed taupes. Generally both mid tone and darker greens as well as brighter yellows, that got a lot of attention from the designers last year, seemed to retreat this show.

PATTERN:

Pattern work was bigger, bolder, more open, and cleaner. Many mills featured prints and wovens in 27” square repeats. Those that had to be matched are intriguing and modern looking, but expensive to upholster. The ones that were engineered to be chopped will get more placements we suspect, and will look especially fresh and directional. Houndstooths (or is that Houndsteeth????) in ever scale, from mini to giant, were shown by almost every mill and must be considered very on trend. Clean iron-work, lattice, Greek key, and quatrefoil patterns were omnipresent in both print and woven fabrics. Suzani themes have reached the less trend forward mills now

and are being less faithfully interpreted –taking on a more floral and less tribal appearance—and perhaps becoming a bit more consumer friendly in the evolution. Tropical themes were prevalent, as mills were preparing their patterns for manufacturer’s Spring seasons. Paisleys in every form, shape, interpretation and scale were shown by virtually every mill. Sooooo many looked like knock-offs of best sellers from Golding, Swavelle, and Valdese in very old and anticipated jewel toned color combinations –thus it was a major editing process to separate the good, from the bad, ugly, and been-there-done-that! We saw beautiful stripes at many mills and truly any manufacture that doesn’t have a good selection in their collection at this point is missing a very directional boat. One emerging trend seemed to be the use of embroidery. The machinery that does this technique has become increasingly computer driven and thus is able to stitch patterns not envisioned before. Some designers are making subtle and beautiful uses of this technique—separating their work for the “Chinee” looking traditional designs prevalent in the hands of less forward thinking designers.

MATERIAL:

Mixed materials is where the interest lies in the most on trend patterns. While in general sheen levels are down a bit, with less silk and rayon shown, these materials were frequently used to add depth, texture or a contrasting sheen to an otherwise reasonable plain fabric. This mixing of textural materials was especially effective in many of the striking stripes we saw. The use of an outlining thread to highlight a pattern with a contrasting texture was directional. On otherwise fairly flat woven goods, the subtle outline with a chenille or lurex or twisted tread was frequently what raised the pattern for ordinary to extraordinary. Heavy weaves and fuzzy textures were down trending, while cleaner looks with luxurious hand and a drapeable weave were on trend.

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