



Lovely leather

Leathers at Lineapelle were exquisite. European tanners cannot compete on price alone and have responded not just with innovation but with top quality appearances that are almost impossible to emulate. Real vegetable tanned leathers, super soft with a great hand were softly tinted as if with water colours leaving the natural grain to show through. Tactile quality is paramount and there is an ultra soft feel and sensual handle to everything.

Leathers are also ultra-light even if they appear bulky, as in those from Valpel that look as if they were inspired by a turtle crossed with bubble pack; there are huge open bubbles, raised up and polished to make a very noticeable leather for bags. Surfaces are no longer over-detailed and decorated. If there are embosses and prints they are inspired by nature or classic materials such as damask and lace.

Animal prints are back, with everything from crocodile to alligator and water snake. Rather than harking back to the 1980s, they are much softer and have been made more 'natural' through the use of multiple treatments. There can easily be three or four of these, with print, embossed and cut surfaces all together. Instead of competing, these multiple treatments create an overall harmony. We still have multi-colour reptile prints but on a creamy background with shaded prints rather than brash contrasts.

Print effects are created by removing patterns rather than adding them. Pony is still there, burnt and cut out with classic Arabic or baroque paisley designs, and mostly tone on tone. Even textiles are punched and cut or burnt out so the pattern is on the underlying material. Geometrics reflect the 1960s but are smaller and more wearable. Men's shirting stripes are used for big cotton bags, while red and white polka dots on heels match patent leather uppers on sandals.

The trend area divided colours into four groups

'Still City' is neutrals—especially faded whites and sands—with a touch of green or grey blue. They are brightened with metallic accents in copper, gold and silver, softly sprinkled so that they are sometimes almost not seen. Even on all-over metallic finishes the real leather still shows through the coating.

'Airy City' is suddenly bright for young and sporty shoes, though creamy and nude or natural tinted pastel colours predominated, with primrose yellow, rose of Sharon and porcelain blue for accents.

'Perfect City' has rich bright colours that are strong without being lurid, with the all-important brightness provided by the accent colour. Here warm olive, golden yellow and reds work with brown and blue.

In 'Sunny City' we have the ever-popular spicy colours. Here, there is a purple tinge influenced by aubergines and red wine, with more greenish tints on the right coloured leathers.

Summer 2007

The first impression is how white, clean and fresh everything is. While we still have bright colours, there is a full spectrum of whites, from icy white, through cream to whitened pastels. White leather is used for soft slouchy fashion bags but with a difference when the cut edges show through with another colour (Victoria). From Mastrotto's new Vanitas collection strong colours such as yellow, sage and brown have been very much whitened on the surface to create warm, comfortable pastel shades, showing the real leather colour behind. They look very good when the bright raw edges show up on sporty shoes or casual sandals.



Gacho-style embossed flower patterns from Bizzaro

Mastrotto polka-dot shoes and bag

Cream Caravel boot

Graduating on from the whites are the soft putty leathers, with sands and browns following closely behind. At Rino Mastrotto these naturals looked very good in the new Yak leather, which looks like a piece of paper that has been screwed up, thrown away and opened out and flattened again with lots of natural folds and creases in the finished leather.

The look of natural leather is still very popular, not just in colour but often in a soft matt hand. Mastrotto makes mainstream commercial leathers and its 'natural' leather has a slight emboss and very soft feel. Colours are rich and warm sand, brown and rusty red. Old looking leathers are also doing well. Borge's popular Kalahari now comes in a new edition called 'Old Kalahari' with a new treatment giving a used look.

Fresh bright sporty leathers have sporty treatments too. Nubuck from Vesta was all-over perforated for a fresh summery look. Alternatively there are bright and glittery looks, glossy and glazed finishes, light reflecting and subtle pearlescent surfaces or semi opaque white overlays that can still be rubbed off. Metallics are applied all over as a soft wash. Suede is super soft and printed with a subtle gold wash for a feminine look. Vesta's 'Pemba', on the other hand, is colourful and brash with a strong pebble grain finish in sporty colours such as blue, red, sand, pastel green and rosy lilac.

Other treatments include embossing, laser cutting (increasingly popular) and gacho-style raised embossing (Bizzaro). Applications of self-leather flowers create all over patterns, while cut outs make the leather look more summery. Designs are floral, damask and Arabic geometric. Treatments such as these were especially promoted for the perennial Western boot look, with a highly decorated shaft and a plainer vamp in the same base leather. 



Vesta's colourful leathers come in a wide range of colours and treatments with the 'Pemba' range (above) offering a pebble grain finish in an array of sporty shades.