

The golden touch



Liberty

It was said in Greek mythology that everything King Midas touched turned to gold. And you wouldn't be blamed for thinking that King Midas had been using his golden touch all round the Lineapelle Fair. Pale white gold and silver are next summer's neutrals, if the trends there were anything to go by. There were metallic touches on everything, from leather to solings. There was crinkle metallic, mirror metallic, crack metallic and metallic wash on jute. There were metallics and pearly finishes in both bright and pastel colours too. Rino Mastrotto made them look sporty and unisex with all over perforations in different sizes and shapes (round and squares). There was even double face metallic from Ambassador, gold on top of drum-dyed brown suede so you can see the contrast edges when it is made up into bags or shoes. From CTC, softie gold leather with a crinkled and crack finish looks great on bags.

But not all is glitz and golden—natural, creased and wrinkled effects appeared on matt and shiny leathers too. Curacao from Vesta had darkened creases, but with a natural colour underneath. Natural coloured leathers from beige and cream through to light brown work perfectly with the metallic look and because it is not just restricted to leathers, there are all sorts of accessories with plenty of glitz and 'bling'. Buckles and chains were huge, and gold, whilst sandal trims were often designed with a touch of naturalness, with 'antiqued' rivets and studs and turquoise stones and 'jewels' with a natural, cracked antique look.

Following through from winter we can see ultra-soft and natural looking patents, in the simple classic 1960s shades of red, white and black. The important point about the new patent leathers is the extremely soft handle and the natural look. Often they are wrinkled and creased like the very attractive Hokkaido leather by Rino Mastrotto that was so soft it looked almost like coated Ciré nylon. Newer patent effects are what the Italians call 'Degradé' such as the 'Aral Degradé' by Overlord, a super soft patent in tonal shaded stripes, softly blending into each others, which is perfect for large bags (again), so that when the leather

is cleverly cut the bag can appear to be shaded from top to bottom. There are double- or triple-colour stripe combinations such as grey to slate in wide bands, or medium bands of rich amber through mid- to dark brown. Ambassador's Naplak Degradé, on the other hand, shades from pale gold to orange, or bright metallic fuchsia or peacock to silver white for bags. Actually white is a 'red' hot colour for next year, for both men and women—it often appears with pale gold or silver for women, and with darker stitching and details for men.

ACCESSORIES CONTINUE TO SHINE

Again, accessories are where the growth business is in leathers. While the footwear market is stable, big squashy bags and wide decorated leather belts are still a major trend. Colours are back in a big way too, but are softer than before. There is plenty of green and yellow next year, and the reds are more faded. Blue is coming back in a big way, and very dark midnight

Giardini



Ambassador



Omnipel



blue is replacing black. From Borge Garveri, a company that is doing extremely well with its bag business, there were new faded pastels in full grain chrome free leather, in pretty and commercial colours such as cream, pale green old rose and blue grey. Not only are crinkle effects in fashion for bags, but so are all sorts of mixed colours and layered looks. Popcorn leather by Prealpina lives up to its name with its heavily puffy surface which creates a 'popcorn' effect.

COLOURFUL COMPONENTS

Prelaminated EVA and sheet rubber may not be new, but Cauchos Karey from Spain made a great presentation with all the latest fashion colours and combinations such as fresh lime and yellow and a nice collection of rubber sheetings including new looks such as black rubber with a natural jute insert.

Vibram's new stripe sheeting is produced in half a dozen different stripe colours, all bonded together at the edges rather than by the traditional (and thicker) method of all being laminated onto a separate layer of rubber.

AVS (Air Ventilation System) is a new patent-pending insole system from Valfussbett with a sprung gel pad in the heel and an air intake at the back with air channels leading to holes under

the forepart of the foot. In winter the air is recirculated, so that the feet stay warm and dry, whereas in summer the valve at the back of the heel can be opened to allow fresh air to come in.

'Healthy', 'organic' or 'ecological' are the buzz words today, and not just in the tanning industry. Both textiles and synthetics are now being promoted as environmentally and animal friendly.

From Biologix, there was an anti-bacterial biopolymer for footwear that is naturally based (made from renewable vegetal resources) and is also biodegradable. Products such as these are ideal for babies' feet and are claimed to be non-allergenic.

L Protection by Gruppo Morón claims to be the first textile-based insole that is puncture resistant. These insoles can be used in all sorts of industries where metal is not allowed, for example in the security industry. Rather than Kevlar, the base material is actually very strong polyester.

NEW 'GREEN' LEATHERS

True organic leather (during the entire process starting with organically-fed cows) still seems to be almost unobtainable, but there are plenty of alternatives from fully vegetable tanned leathers to semi-alternatives. The organic 'look' is hot even though it is in sharp contrast to the metallics. Fresh, natural looking 'Brazilian' full grains in pale naturals and pastels change colour and patina with wear. Lindos leather by Lufuran is not just wet white, but also 25 times lighter than mineral or vegetable tanned leather—an important point when we are talking about the fashionable huge squishy bags that were all around the fair. And these leathers don't just come in naturals (beige) and faded colours (light rose), but also in bright shades too. From Prealpina, the GreenTech leather is produced with the wet white tanning method, using no chrome or heavy metals and, although not fully vegetable tanned, it has a similar look and natural feel. The company also claims that it does less damage to the environment than true vegetable tanned leathers and even the paper the swatch card is made from is produced using algae from the Venice lagoon, from renewable resources, and is acid and chlorine free, as well as pH neutral.

However, products are not everything—nowadays service must be tops. Italian tanners have realised that there is a big wide

Lufuran



world out there, and that just-in-time manufacturing is not just a European concept. Conceria Mastrotto has launched an in stock service of Vesuvio suede, with 80 colours available constantly in 1.2 to 1.4 thicknesses, that can be exported worldwide. This service means that companies can sample, and also make small runs, using any of these leather colours as the stock is constantly topped up as soon as a colour is sold out.

SUPERIOR SYNTHETICS

From Morón, Onmicro is a synthetic leather that is machine washable (up to 60°C) and can be high-frequency welded. Furthermore, as well as having the breathability of leather, it is also waterproof. As it is based on a microfibre structure, Morón says it is ecological, lightweight and resistant to chemicals therefore making it ideal for industrial and safety footwear.

Small runs with own design multi-colour and photo prints are now possible on all sorts of polyester materials using Colortex's new transfer printing technique. As the pictures are transferred at very high temperatures, they are extremely colourfast, even for injection processes.

Service to customers can also mean something as simple as making outsoles in a wider range of sizes, which Silga has done with its longstanding Pamir sporty cupsole that now comes in sizes 48½ and 50½ 🌐

Colortex's new transfer printing technique

