



Metal trims by moro minuterie

Desert leather by Dallas



Laser cut from Carbipel



Pleated side leather by Dingo

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS CREDIT: PENNY LEESE

Date with destiny

The range of new leathers on offer to footwear manufacturers at the most recent edition of the Lineapelle exhibition in Bologna included a few surprises, as Penny Leese reports.

Although the Lineapelle fair has got smaller, it is still the place to go to see the world's most beautiful leathers. Exhibitors can still surprise with their innovation and new leather effects.

Fashion colours and trends in leather

Leather for autumn-winter 2010 are generally darker, richer and more subtle than before. Metallics and shine are still there but much more wearable, not so partyish and more for all-day wear. Black or dark purple leather can have a faint sheen or wash of dark metallic, like old gold or dark pewter.

Dressy leathers are pleated, ruched, elasticated and quilted, to give a raised, 3D effect. The trend area displayed some of the best leathers and effects from previous seasons, too, since change is gradual. Animal prints and reptile snake embosses are still going strong, as are decorative laser cutting designs. Fur is on its own or interlaced with leather. Old and used leathers are no longer dirty and cracked, they have a soft polished and waxy handle, ready-to-wear, comfortable and not so abraded and worn-out looking.



Decorated cowboy boots from Masini

Winter colours when not black or dark brown are in the neutral spectrum of grey, beige and dirty violet. Brighter colours are rich and saturated, with shades of red and purple the most common. Bright touches from the 1970s appear in fire red, electric blue and sunshine yellow.

Shoe designs on display

At Lineapelle you can also see the latest concepts that various shoe designers have put together using leather from the tanneries that exhibit there. Among the offerings from Italian designers were diamanté stud and rivet decorated cowboy boots, over knee boots and riding boots. For dress shoes, high heels and slimmer platforms are still prominent.

For men's dress shoes there was more colour and shine, with soles tinted to match. Welted looks are back, on classic calfskin English brogues, but also on pull-on engineer boots and lace-up work boots, which have an old, handmade effect with



Silga was requested by the military to make desert camouflage soles to match the uppers

practical roomy turned up toes and heavy soles. For smarter casual wear, desert boots get a touch of contrast colour with the laces and stitching. Italian girls' shoes are often printed and also decorated with touches of metallic.

Biodegradable and environmental

Many companies are paying more than lip service to the environment. Vibram, for example, showed work in progress. The sole specialist's research and development laboratories are working to develop a



Matt green imitation snake by Dolmen



Embossed leather from Borge



Crepe look soles by Argus

Contrast stitch and welt make these desert styles different in Dolmen leather.

biodegradable sole in accordance with EN standards (14855-2005). They are working on polymers that will be totally biodegradable and recyclable, easily mouldable and available in different colours. However, like many of these environmental materials, it is difficult to get technical specifications high enough for the technical outdoors or safety soles, so in the beginning these soles will be for the lifestyle market. Another project aims to make an oil-free rubber sole, using 100% natural rubber and replacing the usual petroleum plasticiser with soya bean oil. Vibram is still working on it to keep the levels of traction and durability high as well.





Wooly felt from Bigagli, 90% wool.

Wool sounds like a nice environmentally friendly textile, but for the real hard-core greenies, it needs to be pure wool. Some strict vegetarians will not wear leather or sheepskin, so they need knitted wool pile instead as a lining for warm winter boots. The problem with wool pile is that the backer needs to be strong enough, which means usually it is made of polyester or another synthetic. One company which works with pure wool and natural vegetable dyes, Lanificio Guasti, has overcome this problem by making the backer in pure silk, so that the fabric is totally natural. Bigagli's wooly felt is 90% natural wool (10% polyester); the company calls it an ecological line that is environmentally friendly and recyclable. At Lineapelle it showed a totally new felt product (made just two weeks before the fair by mixing natural unbleached wool with lactose fibres) in one colour only, cream.

Toning down the heavy metal

Green Tech makes metal-free leather in Italy, from wet white skins, with the shavings going for use as fertiliser. The base leather colour affects the final colour of the leather. The white, for example, is a rich warm ivory tone rather than optic white. The company has a certificate to say it has been doing this for 10 years.

Nuova Empresa's new Techno Eco leather is environmentally friendly in that it is heavy-metal free. Most metal-free leathers tend to be highly absorbent which means heavy leather and wet feet in the winter. The new Techno Eco leather is water-repellent, breathable and thus also compatible with membrane technology.



Sculpted leather by Joao Carvalho



Printed cowhair by Carbipel

Suede trims by Em

Leather trims by Em

More than price

Material suppliers from South East Asia showing at Lineapelle know that they need to meet EU environmental controls to sell shoes or leathergoods in Europe. So at Lineapelle you can see high quality and innovation from Asian suppliers who are not trying to compete on price alone.

For example, Yofitex microfibre is heavier, smoother and more tightly woven than much of what is sold in China, and the colour card is updated with fashion shades. Aminah from Taiwan now offers its fancy printed and embossed decorative leathers on calfskin base, as well as the traditional pigskin base, in response to customer demand. There are several countries now where religion creates strong resistance to both working with, and wearing, pigskin.

The price is similar since the major part of the cost is the fancy multiple treatments on the leathers.

Details and trims

Boots (as well as bags and belts) in the Bologna and Florence shops are smothered with metal studs and rivets; and this trend is set to continue. Rivets on boots are often mixed in shape and size, with different antique colours mixed too. Buckles and rings appear on all types of leathergoods, while stones are more matt and natural looking with irregular shapes and sizes, but usually extra-large.

At the same time, technical trims like those at Hawaii are moving away from metal to hard wearing composites, which, of course, are not only rust free but lighter in weight and ideal for safety boots and going through metal detectors, especially when combined with non-metal safety toes too.

For fashion shoes and boots, there are soft trims with a 3D effect, raised and with a lot of shape, buckles and bows, sometimes mixed with fur and studs. Thunit-type resin soles are a

fashion item at Prialpas. Stardust comes in the latest shades such as bordeaux and violet with a faint metallic sheen. These soles have a leather look and feel too, extremely flexible and soft since they use an elastic rubber compound, following the comfort requirements of today. The company exports the material in entire sheets to sole makers all over the world. Soft natural crepe rubber is back in fashion, and moulded rubber soles recreate this surface look for fashion. Sporty rubber commando soles get tinted with a semi-transparent, uneven touch on rubber and welts, to match the upper leather as shown by tanner Dolmen.

The next edition of Lineapelle will be held on March 16-18, earlier in the year than usual.



Sole by TP Fondi

Large natural stones by Em