

Pajar

Sorel

A warm and cosy winter ahead

Penny Leese

Putting footwear in a fashion environment is here to stay. Trade fairs that mix shoes and clothes in the same areas, in carefully selected, hardly renovated old industrial buildings are attracting customers away from some of the more traditional shoe fairs. Bread and Butter, Premium, and The Key To during Berlin Fashion Week each has its own feeling and atmosphere.

Warm and woolly

There wasn't much global warming to be noticed in bitterly cold Berlin where the authorities have stopped salting the slippery pavements so as not to pollute. And this cold climate was reflected in much of the footwear for winter 2010 on show, even from the southern neighbours. Fur—real and fake—was everywhere, even for sneakers; warm linings were peeping out of the top collars. Suddenly freezing for fashion's sake is no longer trendy and Canadian practical footwear designers have made their mark on European fashion with their boots that can keep feet warm down to -30°C . Sorel's classic boots with the

rubber shell foot part and leather shaft come in all new upper materials and often in limited editions. There is colourful wool tweed, and burnt out metallic cow hair, as well as sportier retro styling using the national maple leaf symbol. Pajar, also from Canada, was new to Europe last year and the boots have sold through very well, since these days customers are looking for sturdy, hard-wearing shoes that are value for money. They have waterproof membranes and warm linings all the way through. Warm and woolly tweeds and lumberjack checks didn't just appear as jackets at Bread and Butter; both tweed and chunky rib knits appeared as parts and collars to make shoes and boots cosy.

Bread and Butter is mainly a sporty, jeans-type fashion fair, for young people. Dressy at Bread and Butter can mean punky and gothic, or shiny pearlised basket boots like those from Diesel, the Italian jeans brand. Premium, the other major fair, concentrates on the high end, smarter labels, but there is a deal of overlap. The Key To is an environmentally friendly fair with a focus on all things organic and healthy.



Sneakers

Nat 2 won an Ispo BrandNew Award a while back for their canvas sneakers that have interchangeable uppers, and can transfer from sandals to high tops, with different tongues and collars. If a customer buys more than one pair, they can mix colours and components too. New in the line is the washed and old look, canvas uppers with a white chalky finish—a new product launched at the fair for as-soon-as-possible delivery. Whitened and chalky leathers were used on Quick's generally neutral coloured tennis shoes and basket boots, a novel effect created by the brightly contrasting rubber soles having a similar whitened and chalky finish too.

Fair trade has come to canvas vulcanised basket boots, too, Ethletics look classic but are made from organic cotton, and cemented with pure latex, made in Pakistani factories where the workers get a fair wage and conditions.

Artists

Artist collaborations have always been popular with sneaker and skateboarder brands—where famous graffiti artists have hand-painted shoes. Bloch has collaborated with a Japanese artist, Akira, who has added special details on their simple, high-level ballet constructed shoes, such as red lining, kimono-inspired prints and hand beading. The limited edition even comes in a Japanese red lacquer shoe box. Onitsuka Tiger makes the most of being an authentic Japanese brand: the new collection is again inspired by calligraphy masters and brush strokes, with

subtle prints on the clothing and the shoe's side flash both inspired by the calligrapher's splashes of water.

Flip Flops is no longer just a simple beachwear company selling colourful accessories; they have made their second season of a special high-end collection with fashion designer Kostas Murkudis, who is German of Greek descent. The luxe line costs from €150 to €500 in the stores. There is an EVA stack wedge made with layers of real Argentinian sole leather, an innovative concept that is already patent-pending. For winter this wedge has also been covered with suede or leather, but you can still see the lines underneath, so that it looks almost sculptural.

Dance

Bloch, the professional Australian ballet shoe maker, has added fashion to its line—ballet shoes that can be worn outdoors. But they are made in the same factory and still have all-leather uppers and linings. These "ballerinas" might look on the outside like outdoors shoes, but inside is where the difference is. They have maintained the authentic ballet shoe construction, and they are all totally moccasin construction with a smooth one piece lining and sock, or pure stitch and turn. Full comfort is the concept, and it is achieved, together with incredible flexibility at a high level. All the footwear is made in European leathers and comply with the REACH requirements. The same super-flexible stitch-and-turn construction has also been used for a new product in the line: long boots with heels. They naturally have leather soles, but are given function by their water-resistant treatment.



Technically speaking these higher heeled boots are made differently from normal boots in that the shank is much shorter, meaning that the forepart is totally flexible, as much as a ballerina.

Bloch was the innovator and designer of the original split-sole sneaker for street dance, 25 years ago now and much copied. The point of these shoes is that they can bend in half in the middle, also downwards so that the dancers point their feet up or down. These two-part dance sneakers have been launched in many exotic leathers, pearlised and printed. Each pair comes in a box with two totally different removable insoles. There is the original highly flexible one for jazz and ballet dancers. The more street version insock has a torsion bar in the shank area that acts as a shoe shank, so the same pair of shoes can actually be worn for more than pro dancing with incredible comfort but more torsional stability.

Natural and comfort is not just for the oldies: it is a clear trend. Real full-grain rich vegetable tanned leathers from Snipe were shown at this fair. Since the company was bought by Gabor the collection has become much wider and more strongly marketed. It is designed in Spain but made in Portugal, with typical Portuguese craftsmanship. The chrome-free upper leathers are sturdy and richly waxed, stitching is heavy; there are, of course, natural leather linings, real hemp laces and natural stitching on soles with lots of natural crepe rubber. Insocks can be turned over, leather on one side, warm felt on the other. From Danish Duck Feet, also at the same fair, the best-sellers are still the old classic natureform European made stitch-downs in such thick hide—unlined—that they

mould to the feet with wear, and when they wear out, the factory will stitch on another natural crepe outsole for you. For less hardy souls there are longer, warm-lined boots with wool pile, even in fashion colours like purple pull-up leather, but still with the traditional Danish natureform last and pure natural crepe veldtschoen sole.

Wood, another natural soling product, has had a resurgence, with both clogs and clog-inspired styling. There are real simple clogs on basic bottoms with uppers made of hand-screen printed leathers in a Pirmasens workshop by Kelbber, all the way to colourful suede shoes and boots on studded platforms with a cloggy feel. Some combine natural crepe and wood, a real wooden heel and a rubber sole for comfort and fashion with a natural look, as from Fly London.

Leathers look natural too. On women's shoes they often look very natural and little handled, with the genuine uneven leather structure showing through. Colours may be a bit brighter but still have a fruity or vegetable hue. For men, there is used, old-and-worn, or polished natural leather. The polishing is not to make a glossy look but to highlight details like the toe and heel, so the polishing is placed.

Wolverine achieves a real authentic feeling with its 1000 mile boot, made in the same quality of box leather and with welted construction as the originals from almost a century ago. The details are all the same, the only real difference is that the modern lasts are a bit wider for modern feet. These boots and shoes don't need to look old and worn—that can be created by the wearer over the several years that the boots are expected to last. 🐾