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PHARRELL WILLIAMS LINKS WITH MOYNAT TO CREATE A CAPSULE LINE OF BAGS INSPIRED BY VINTAGE STEAM LOCOMOTIVES. PAGE 7



MIAMI VIBE

LE BON MARCHÉ IS TO COLLABORATE WITH THE WEBSTER MIAMI ON A LIMITED-EDITION COLLECTION OF ALL-WHITE ITEMS. PAGE 2



FRESH START

SONIA RYKIEL'S NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, JULIE DE LIBRAN, TALKS ABOUT HER VISION FOR THE BRAND AND HER FIRST SHOW SEPT. 29. PAGE 7

WWD

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Floral Arts

Consuelo Castiglioni's artful ways swing from plain to intensely decorative. Her spring Marni collection started in a state of austere chic before exploding with ebullient florals, vivid embellishments and intricate cuts. Here, a transitional beauty: a dress with a raw cotton slip bodice and decorative skirt. Flowers have figured prominently in Castiglioni's work from the start. As part of the house's 20th-anniversary festivities, the designer opened a pop-up flower market after her show and discussed the project and its charitable endeavors. For more on Milan, see pages 4 and 5.



SPRING 2015
MILAN
COLLECTIONS

PHOTO BY KUBA DABROWSKI

PRaise FEMININE STYLES

Milan's Seventies Vibe Leaves Buyers High

By WWD STAFF

MILAN — There's nothing like a touch of the Seventies and the Age of Aquarius to let the sunshine into retailers' moods.

The Seventies vibe all over the Milan runways this season was a hit with retailers, who praised the easy yet feminine designs — pants were a rarity — and a heightened play on Italian craftsmanship. Colorful maxidresses, hip-hugging flared trousers, patchworks, floral and geometric prints, transparency, organza, lots of suede — often embellished — and fringe trims were some of the main trends this season.

The tinge of retro and the continued development of up-and-coming designers left retailers more upbeat about the Milan collections than they have been in several seasons. A shorter show calendar also helped improve their attitude toward Italy's fashion capital.

"I strongly feel that Milan is on the up-and-up," said Averyl Oates, fashion director at Galeries Lafayette. "Luxury houses and newer designers delivered positive, fresh collections. Despite the difficult economy, we are projecting an increase in spend, also to allow for an injection of new brands in our Italian portfolio."

Ken Downing, senior vice president and fashion director at Neiman Marcus, agreed. "I am very enthusiastic about Milan this season. I thought that designers gave us all of the trends that we were seeing emerging from New York to London. I thought the shows looked fantastic. There is a lot of great product here," he said. "The nice thing is that there was a consistency around the entire week — this message of the romantic, free-spirited Bohemian girl. Milan is having a real moment again. It's nice to see it."

Downing cited Marco de Vincenzo, his "top collection," and Bottega Veneta, Etro and Emilio Pucci among his favorites. SEE PAGE 12

Study Finds Retailers Lack Mobile Strategies

By RACHEL STRUGATZ

A DISCONNECT between online retailers and their mobile strategies — or lack thereof — might hurt sales during a fast-approaching holiday shopping season.

In the 2014 Holiday Retail Audit, released Monday by eBay Enterprise, a commerce and marketing provider under the eBay umbrella that works with retailers and brands, mobile is still an Achilles heel for retailers — despite it being the fastest-growing commerce channel.

The study looked at 1,000 online retailers with revenues from \$5 million to \$250 million, with many participants reporting insecurity about mobile strategies. The eBay study follows similar ones in recent weeks that have shown many retailers' mobile strategies lag — even as they admit that mobile is driving an increasing percentage of their online revenues.

Mobile commerce is forecast to hit \$100 billion in sales this year, with one third of all e-commerce purchases expected to come from a smartphone or tablet.

Despite the growing importance of mobile, the eBay study found that retailers ranked it only ninth in terms of priority for holiday investments.

"Two-thirds of online retailers don't cite mobile as a source of investment, but it's the fastest-growing area of commerce," Craig Peasley, head of product marketing at eBay Enterprise, told WWD, noting that 68 percent of online retailers did not express plans for either new or continued investments in mobile for the holiday season.

Price, customer service and marketing ranked as the top three areas of investment, followed by

SEE PAGE 8

TEXTILES

Italian Mills Count on Innovation

By EMILY BACKUS

MILAN — Italian high-end fabric manufacturers showing collections for fall 2015 at the Milano Unica trade fair were optimistic and aggressive about making the most of fresh economic gains in the sector following two years of tough business conditions.

"In the 30 years I have worked in this sector, I have never seen a push as strong as this toward innovation," Silvio Albini, president of Milano Unica and owner of the Albini Group textile company, told a packed audience at the Sept. 9 inauguration of the three-day show.

Italian textile production saw a 7.6 percent increase for the first half of 2014 compared to the same period in 2013, according to the Italian textile and fashion federation Sistema Moda Italia. Sales for Italian textiles gained 4.8 percent from January to June.

Production growth for five consecutive quarters followed two straight years of contraction that prolonged the wallop of the global financial crisis that torpedoed production by 30 percent in the first quarter of 2009 year on year.

"Now that we have favorable winds, we need to exploit them," urged SMI president Claudio Marenzi.

He saw strong export growth within the European Union and contraction in non-European Union developing markets, like China, as reason to push European integration and peace in Ukraine, since Russia is a critical European trade partner.

Pier Luigi Loro Piana, president of the Ideabiella luxury wool fabrics area of the fair and deputy chairman of the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton-owned cashmere and luxury wool giant Loro Piana, agreed that peace in Ukraine could help Russian sales for Italian top-end wool fabrics, potentially pushing growth in the sector over the 5 percent currently expected for 2014.

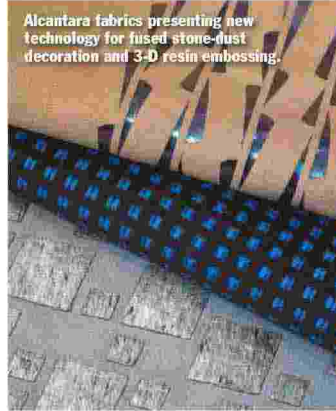
"There would be room for more optimism depending on what happens politically," Loro Piana said.

Restoring the euro's original exchange rate from its introduction 15 years ago, however, remains the "most important" battle horse for growth, in his opinion. The euro made its debut at \$1.17 on Jan. 1, 1999, and currently trades at \$1.29.

Loro Piana said as part of LVMH, he could not disclose financial figures, but that he was "satisfied" with on-target gains and a strategy that had not changed since the French group bought out the house in July 2013 for 2 billion euros, or \$2.58 billion at current exchange.



Weather-resistant fine wool Chamonix fabrics from Vitale Barberis Canonico with polyester satin reverse for unlined jackets or coats.



Alcantara fabrics presenting new technology for fused stone-dust decoration and 3-D resin embossing.



The Woolmark Co. stand during the Milano Unica trade fair.

"The path is to not change paths," he said.

Lorenzo Bonotto, commercial director and member of the family that owns and runs creative textile specialist Bonotto SpA, said his company laid off 25 percent of its workforce in 2010, but has flourished since by repositioning its mix of fabrics by raising its creative content. "We invest 8 percent of our turnover in research and development," said Bonotto. "We change about 95 percent of our collection every season."

Company sales returned to their 2007 peak in 2013, and will see a 20 percent increase this year to 36 million euros, or \$46.5 million at current exchange rates,

Bonotto forecast, noting that clients include Tory Burch, Theory, Diane von Furstenberg and Alexander Wang.

Bonotto said contrasting fibers, materials and effects marked a major trend for the season and showed samples of black suede woven with shiny patent leather, cellophane with wool, bronzed foil with chenille and patterns alternating opacity and transparency. Bonotto also features a line of artisanal fabrics made on old shuttle looms from pre-World War II.

Alcantara, a specialist in a high-end suedelike synthetic fabric, saw sales grow 25 percent in the first eight months of 2014 compared to the same period in 2013, according to fashion division direc-

tor Michele Filipponi. Last year's sales were 110 million euros, or \$129 million, a 20 percent increase over 2012, he added.

Filipponi said Alcantara beat tough market conditions in recent years by repositioning in the luxury market. He showed a capsule women's collection designed by Yohji Yamamoto presented in March at the Italian embassy in Tokyo with versatile applications from a rust-colored knit dress to a dusty-pink floral print jacket. A new technology allows shimmering stone dust to be fused and attached to the material in rigid, custom shapes, like flat stones or beads.

Technical innovations in superfine merino wool fabrics for high-end men's garments were illustrated by Birgit Gahlen, who heads product development for The Woolmark Co., promoting Australian merino wool on behalf of farmers. Australia provides 90 percent of the world's supply of merino wool, ac-

7.6%

INCREASE IN ITALIAN TEXTILE PRODUCTION FOR THE FIRST HALF.

According to Woolmark's chief marketing officer Bob Langtry.

Gahlen pointed to the "Traveler" trend — the introduction of new elasticizing and water-resistant finishes or bonded membranes that render traditional fabrics high performance and low maintenance. Subtle color mixes and patterns, like small checks, are pushing more casual, versatile applications for top-end men's suits.

"Men need multifunctional garments that can go from the bicycle to the office or meetings," Gahlen said.

Performance finishes and bonding treatments featured across collections of luxury wool makers, including Reda, Vitale Barberis Canonico, Botto Giuseppe, Larusmiani and Marzotto.

This edition marked the first time Milano Unica allowed a select group of non-European exhibitors to show their wares. Kenji Tsuboi, manager of European and America sales for wholesaler Takisada-Osaka, was one of 25 Japanese exhibitors selected for the Japan Observatory.

"We have been working in Italy for more than 15 years," Tsuboi said. "Normally we have an Italian agent traveling to see customers. Today more than 50 customers have come to our stand, and not just Italians — from the U.S., the U.K. and Switzerland, too."

