

Integral technology

Integrating technology into yarns rather than relying on finishes to impart technical properties to fabrics was a key theme at Outdoor Retailer Winter Market. **Kathlyn Swantko** reports

Lifestyle garments and technical fabrics using technical yarns were seen as key trends at the Outdoor Retailer Winter Market (ORWM) 2013 show, which ran from January 23-26, in Salt Lake City.

While lifestyle clothing isn't new, this season the lifestyle clothing discussion became more specific and fresh. The newly named category, Lifestyle Layer, is especially suited to the outdoor, active and travel markets and could generate interest and sales at retail. This category also offers new opportunities for manufacturers of knitted product.

"Our customers realise that apparel products are worn more for everyday wear than for high energy endeavours," explained Chris Parkes, Concept III principal and national sales manager.

"Approached as a separate category, second layer or Lifestyle Layer products, as we're calling them, can create high volume at retail. We are calling attention to this mid-weight category for both

knits and wovens, natural and synthetic. Consumers are using these layers in all aspects of life and we need to continue to develop fabrics to fill this need."

"One innovative direction these brands are moving in is seamless knitting, which provides ways of combining function with fashion"

According to ORWM, the interest in lifestyle apparel was also evidenced by the appearance of lifestyle-based apparel companies like Puma, Reebok, Holden

Outerwear and Neff, who were among 177 new exhibitors at ORWM 2013.

Technology using technical yarns was also a major knitwear trend at the show. Daniel Kadisha, president of the Long Beach, California-based Texollini, said: "As a whole, technology is a trend, whether it's using Outlast, Celliant, or Emana yarns, or smart textiles."

Knitting International looks at a variety of exhibiting companies that promoted technical yarns, lifestyle fabrics, or both, as their latest developments at ORWM 2013.

Concept III Textiles has taken a lead by designating Lifestyle Layer as a distinct category. The company defines Lifestyle Layer as a comfortable piece that isn't next-to-skin, but isn't outerwear either. The intermediate layers are styled looks that are often worn throughout the day. Although Lifestyle Layers are inspired by outdoor/active performance fabrics, they have a particular texture, colour, pattern and/or styling. The garments can be worn alone, but are usually layered over a baselayer like a T-shirt or polo.

Made from fabrics that are lightweight, supple and soft, and often brushed on the inside, a Lifestyle Layer is not as dressy as sportswear, nor as casual as sweat-shirts. Mr Parkes said: "Lifestyle Layers include everything from a feather-weight, fitted, stretch down vest to a Merino/Tencel flyaway travel jacket to a simply styled, light fleece with unusual texture and colour."

Optimer Brands, maker of dri-release, also sees lifestyle as a category that comes up frequently with fitness and yoga brands. Lee Thompson, sales director for dri-release, said: "More companies are designing additional 'cross-over' apparel options that help to reinforce their position as lifestyle brands. One



Cordura AFT (air flow technology) fabrics, developed by Tiong Liong



GFusion piece-dyed knit fabrics from Guilford Performance Textiles

innovative direction these brands are moving in is seamless knitting, which provides ways of combining function with fashion.”

Dri-release has been working with its spinning partner in Turkey to develop a new version of dri-release, ideal for performance seamless apparel with natural aesthetics, according to Mr Thompson. “dri-release Tencel with nylon is a patented blend of nylon and Lenzing’s Tencel, which offers maximum comfort and performance with a soft luxurious feel. These fine count Siro spun yarns are available in both S and Z twist for a wide range of seamless applications.”

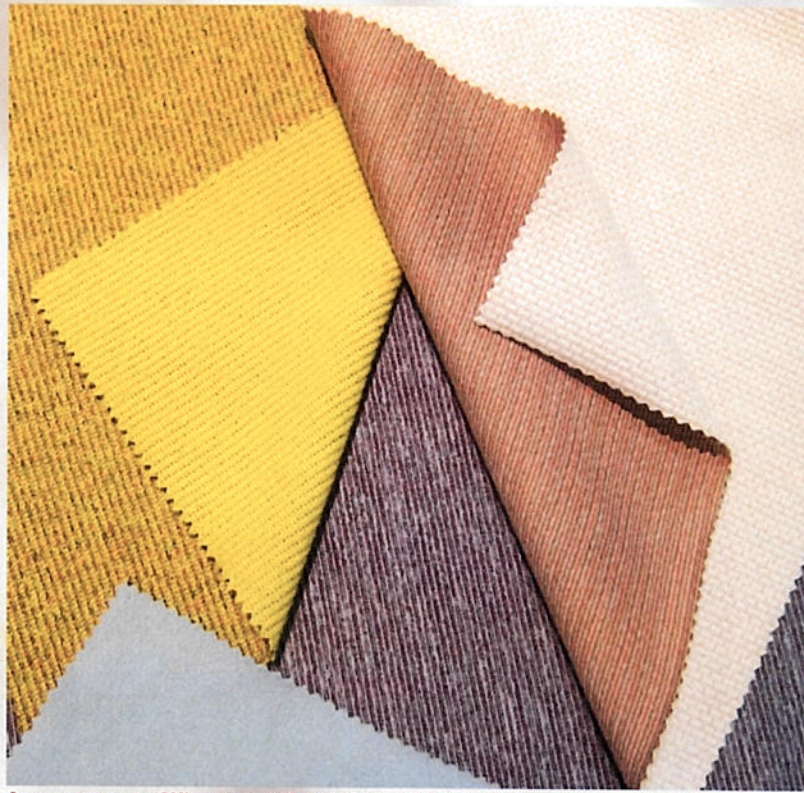
Guilford Performance Textiles, the Wilmington, North Carolina-based vertically-integrated textile mill and now part of the Lear Corporation, uses its state-of-the-art fabric formation and finishing capabilities to create an innovative dyeing process. At the show, the company presented its new GFusion knit fabric, which gives each garment a particular appearance that can be used for a variety of applications including active, lifestyle, and training apparel.

Devin Warren, director of marketing and strategy at Guilford, said: “Using this process, the fabric is not printed. Instead, it is a piece-dyed fabric that gives a tie-dyed appearance to the knitted fabric. GFusion can be achieved on any type of fabric, but is particularly effective on polyester-based fabrics, with or without elastomeric yarns.”

According to Mr Warren, the GFusion dyeing process saves energy that would have been used during a traditional heat-transfer printing process.

Texollini, the Long Beach, California-based vertically integrated circular knitter, featured several new fabric developments, containing blends of innovative technical yarns including filament poly/Outlast/cotton; Tencel/Outlast; and spun or filament Celliant for fine gauge knits that appeal to a variety of markets.

Although premium yarns are being used, Texollini created these innovative fabrics in a variety of constructions because its customers have been requesting more technology, and have been sampling the fabrics for a variety of applications. According to Mr Kadisha,



An assortment of Kingwhale Lifestyle Layer fabrics with brushed backings from Concept III Textiles

if a customer is willing to spend a premium for a highly technical fabric, it makes sense to have the technology included in the fibre itself, rather than applied as a finish.

“The newly named category, Lifestyle Layer, is especially suited to the outdoor, active and travel markets”

Cordura presented three examples of its new Cordura AFT (air flow technology) fabric collection from Tiong Liang. Included in the line is a family of 200 denier PU coated polyester and PU coated nylon, both designed to be laminated with 3D mesh (spacer fabric) for hybrid and running shoes. Also included in the collection were non PU coated 150d and 300d DTY-based (drawn textured yarn) polyesters with

a softer hand that can be foam, felt, or 3D mesh laminated, and are ideally suited for outer-shell laminated fabrics, as well as inner shoe linings targeted for hiking and running shoes. The third group is a 210-250d high tenacity polyester, designed for spot PU felt lamination, and ideal for outer shell fabrics, as well as inner membrane waterproof boot technologies.

Draper Knitting, which specialises in knitted fabrics for fashion, performance, industrial and safety applications, featured a variety of technical fabrics that addressed therapeutic or wellness properties in fabrics. In 2008, Draper Therapies began manufacturing a number of fabrics for consumer products targeted towards body, equine, and canine therapy, which have become a major part of its business.

At ORWM’13, Kristin Draper, president of the company, said: “There are two buzzwords that I see as important for today’s knitted fabrics, Celliant, blended with either wool or Tencel, for wellness properties, and fine gauge wool fabrics for comfort.”