

THE FASHION WORD AT FRANKFURT: **SUBTLETY**

Style goes black and white with flashes of silver and gold.

PHOTO: MESSE FRANKFURT/JOCHEN GÜNTHER



Villa Collection's (villacollection.dk) crisp summer look is achieved by white upholstery accented with striped pillows in Gray instead of a predictable Navy. Silvery lanterns – a luxurious take on the darker, multi-hued Moroccan versions – plus candlesticks and the Brushed Nickel frames of the accent tables contribute to a classic contemporary vignette for the Aalborg, Denmark vendor.

BY MARILYN NASON

While the euro/dollar disparity continued and rising fuel prices loomed, the 147,000+ global buyers and 4,600 international exhibitors (a jump of seven percent from last year) at Messe Frankfurt's annual Ambiente fair in February revealed a surprisingly positive attitude.

Why? All echoed the same succinct answer: Consumers are turning inward toward their habitat more than ever. Smaller retailers and boutique shop owners seemed among the most positive, pointing to the home as the universal sanctuary. "It's a more serious form of the cocooning movement of a few years ago," one buyer related.

Even with bank loan problems and a housing crisis softening the U.S. economy, at least 3,500 American visitors came to find items that might coax consumers to spend.

The most telling indications of how global insecurity is affecting decorative accessories were size and hue, or perhaps lack thereof. In the past, the European

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This unique black chandelier by jewelry designer Winnie Lui was a show-stopper from trendy design resource **Innermost** (innermost.co.uk) of London.

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Gleaming fire bowls shown with synthetic rattan outdoor furniture were the main attraction at the Breisach am Rhein, Germany-based **Casa Solarte** (casa-solarte.de) booth. The alcohol-based accents were enhanced with a choice of nickel or copper rims and heat-proof glass.

shows – from Paris, Birmingham, and Frankfurt to Cologne, Milan, and Brussels – often highlighted oversized, heavily embellished accessories, plus eye-popping colorways; this time the styles were more restrained.

Black and white clearly dominated in clean, contemporary, and natural lines. Although the “less is more” attitude was evident, the use of wood, ceramics, and stone was outstanding. These elements with their browns, beiges, and subtle gold tones were set against white backgrounds, particularly in upholstery. Color was the accent at this market, not the main story, with natural tones of Apple Green, Blackberry, and Sea Blue the most popular. In lighting, sizes and shapes were slender yet dramatic enough to achieve interesting silhouettes.

Cecilia Norman of Hamburg, who scouts products at European shows for several international catalog clients, explained, “Consumers feel safe spending money now on understated styles, knowing they can use them anywhere in the home with anything and they will always work.” She added that when the economy turns around, “then the outlandish looks will fit in far better than right now.”

“When in doubt, black and white with a dash of glass and crystal is the answer,” reported two interior designers from Berlin in assessing the direction of lamps and chandeliers. A majority of the lighting exhibitors were glad to oblige in nearly every price point.

Cool silver tones had emerged as a consistent element in all types of home décor products at the previous international shows, but this time they were combined with brass or other metals and paired with glass – both clear and opaque – and in portables



Resin mosaic lighting from **Kayak Wohnaccessoires** of Kalker-Wissel, Germany, provided a lively accent. Craftsmen take from three to five days to apply the mosaics to a fiberglass mold. The company, which supplies the residential and contract markets, also distributes a line of vibrant fiberglass planters.

coupled with black and white shades. Breaking up the stark contrast were occasional soft accent colors.

Among long-time exhibitors at Messe Frankfurt, **Florian Schulz** (florian-schulz.de) of Ludwigsburg, Germany, expanded its sleek steel line of portables with Stoa featuring pencil-thin pole bodies topped with ball-like opaque Teflon® shades. Following this same sophisticated, low-key theme, its new hanging light, OE, was comprised of a narrow steel bar with three

pendants lamped with halogens. Both families were offered on lacquered and unlacquered brass, Matte Brass, plus Bright or Brushed Nickel finishes. OE also comes in a single-light, counterweighted version.

In the same theme, **Hazenkamp Furnitures** (hazenkamp.com) of Venlo, the Netherlands, debuted two slim brass and nickel table lamps with black hardback shades. Michael Kohler, company representative, emphasized the current importance



This accent lamp from **Kokopelli** combined neutral colored lenses and textured surrounds.

in combining metals like brass and nickel. "The lamps may have a delicate size and shape, but a sophisticated overall appearance and function," he explained.

Like most exhibitors queried, Aki Hollander of Dusseldorf-based **J. Holländer** (hollaender.de) noted that current economic conditions in Europe and North America have strongly affected lighting's style, size, shape, and materials. His company introduced several fixtures and portables, but one family was a standout with Swarovski® teardrop accents.

Bringing a bit more variety to



Italian manufacturer **Lucienne Monique** dressed silver-toned fixtures with crystals. The Model #670 six-light chandelier measures 23½" diameter x 19½" high and is accented with faceted drops. The ceiling mounts are 4¼" diameter x 5" high and are lamped with GU10 halogens.



its introductions, **Kokopelli** (info@kokopelli-gmbh.de) of Zossen, Germany, combined metal, glass, stone, and recycled paper in several exciting styles. Jute shades topped genuine stone table lamps, while some shades and even mirror frames were made of recycled and pleated paper.

For **Lucienne Monique** (lucienmonique.it) of Firenze, Italy, round shapes in metal were key in pendants. One was highlighted by crystal balls and angels hanging from a circular gold-plated metal frame, while a large angel sitting on a round gold-plated rim with hidden twinkle lights dominated another.

Although known for its traditional Murano and cut-crystal collections,

Johann Zang-Keramos (zangkeramos.de) of Dreieich, Germany, presented updated selections characterized by strands of crystal beads and lamped with halogens. In contrast to its classic glass and porcelain lighting, the company displayed more contemporary items in its mirror and console program as well.

For **Capventure** (capventure.com/puhlmann.eu), based in Amsterdam, its Puhlmann brand of giftware table lamps were composed of round steel bases or spindle-slim bodies all topped with crisp flat-topped round shades in white, red, or black glass.

Small, colorful Tiffany-styled table lamps with soft patterns atop dark metal bases were the latest additions



Industrial designer **Sebastian Amelung** of Kessel, Germany, invites visitors to reshape his bare-bulb chandelier. He was part of the Talents section of Ambiente, which featured young designers from 11 countries. Now in its ninth year, the program has a successful track record. Manufacturers who viewed products introduced as prototypes have added some of the items to their line-ups in the following show.

to the lighting and accent furniture at **Fusco Import & Export** (fusco.nl), also of the Netherlands. The company, which began manufacturing brass, copper, and pewter accessories and lighting in the 1970s, is now importing a vast selection of traditionally themed home décor. The Antique White finish in its recently added accent furniture is the most popular.

The fall edition of this show, Tendence, has been moved to the beginning of this month and runs concurrently with Collectione and The Design Annual under the umbrella title of Decorate Life. For more information, visit decorate-life.com ❖