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Key trends

Prints

From paisley to florals, prints on trousers, ties, shorts, shirts and jackets were blossoming. The 1970s-style prints at Engineered Garments and the bold shirts at Piombo were highlights. Over at Drumohr, director Michele Ciocca said, "We have put a lot of emphasis on digital printing on knitwear this season." Who said print was dead?

Casual

This season's Pitti fashion crowd opted for casual chic over stiff tailoring. Antonio de Matteis, CEO of Kiton said: "The trend is for people to feel more free and comfortable, so we've used lighter constructions, fabrics and no lining which is a new thing for us." Italian brand Brunello Cucinelli was at the forefront of this trend, insisting that shirts should no longer be teamed with jackets but with sleeveless Barbour's or a skinny blunt-tipped tie. Aiming at a younger market, the usually conservative hatters Barbisio used jersey and linen for the first time.

Shackets

For next summer, lightweight, unlined jackets and blazers made from wrinkle-proof fabrics will be ideal for frequent travellers. Shirt-jacket hybrids at Kiton, Hackett and Piombo were made from the softest mixes of silk, cashmere and cotton/linen that Japanese buyers referred to as the "shacket".

Colonial style

Bombay bloomers, khaki and desert hues were big trends. At Japanese brand TS(S), slim-fit shorts fitted the workwear bill but it was British designer Nigel Cabourn who went all out. Cabourn's sandy-hued collection was inspired by his father who fought in Burma in the Second World War. Highlights were bags, shorts and jackets made from Second World War dead-stock fabric and a leather lace up work boot he created with US brand Yuketen.

There were 889 brands at June's 76th Pitti Uomo vying for the attention of more than 18,000 buyers largely hailing from Germany, Japan, Spain, Holland, France and the UK. The focus was on quality and craft but, happily for the buyers, price-points had never been more accessible.

"Buyers are expecting an economic recovery for 2010 so were ready to sign orders for next year's spring/summer collections. Brands were showing new designs, fabrics and colours and investing a lot more in research," says Raffaello Napoleone, CEO of the fair that is a key event on the menswear calendar.

Moods at the main exhibition ground at Florence's Fortezza da Basso were oddly buoyant: at stands such as Engineered Garments, director Daiki Suzuki confirmed that business was booming. Yet some buyers admitted that budgets weren't as lavish as in the past. Walking around there seemed to be more of an emphasis on casual comfort and sportswear over stiff tailoring.

The fourth edition of the womenswear show, Pitti W_Women, was hailed as a great success with a 10 per cent increase in buyers attending. New York's Proenza Schouler was a special guest and among the 60 labels on show were British designers Christopher Kane, Jonathan Saunders and Preen.

The highlight of the week was Japanese brand Undercover, Jun Takahashi's first menswear collection to be shown at Pitti. Takahashi said he had been inspired by German industrial designer Dieter Rams' ethos of less is more. At this innovative but understated fair, Rams' principles couldn't have been more apt. — (M)

PITTI PATTERN — Florence

Preface

Although buyers' budgets were cinched in and high-end fashion was kept in mothballs, the mood at this summer's menswear show Pitti Uomo remained optimistic. This was reflected in the light, bright collections.

WRITER

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Brands to watch

Castañer

This Spanish espadrille firm established in 1776 found fame in the 1970s when Yves Saint Laurent asked Castañer to make a high-heeled espadrille for a catwalk show. The latest hand-stitched collection included an espadrille-style shoe called the Alfonso with a leather sole.

Arianna

Based near Genoa, family-run scarf brand Arianna used to manufacture scarves for Cartier and Loro Piana. Their exquisite scarves made from linen-cashmere-silk mix and linen and cotton are woven on a 19th-century box loom.

Ralph Vaessen

"Everything is made in Germany from natural horn [buffalo] by hand and it takes about three weeks just to make one piece," said Dutch eyewear designer Ralph Vaessen.

Sartoria Debernardis

Hand-made cashmere blazers, and unlined wrinkle-proof jackets from Sartoria Debernardis are made to

measure. Established in 1956, the firm attracted lots of attention from buyers on their Pitti debut.

Want Les Essentiels de la Vie

"I call our 24-hour, 48-hour, and 72-hour bags my Russian dolls," said Dexter Peart, co-founder (with his twin brother) of Canadian travel goods brand Want Les Essentiels de la Vie. "The concept was to make essential travel products – from small leather goods to travel bags – that hark back to the romance of travel."

Salvatore Piccolo

Until two years ago, 31-year-old Salvatore Piccolo and his mother only made shirts for private clients. They have now launched a new ready-to-wear line. "I get to play more with fashion with my new business that has the same concept as my bespoke venture," said Piccolo. Fitted herringbone, linen and Aertex shirts stood out.

Perfetto

Japanese shoemaker Perfetto's factory near Tokyo used to manufacture for other footwear brands but now has its own label. "For us, the material, the last, the construction and design of the shoe is key and the core concept of our brand is to use a Goodyear welt but in a dressy Italian style rather than the traditional US or UK traditional welted shoes," said sales manager Makoto Shimamura.

Haversack

Japanese designer Koji Norihide's Haversack caused a buzz with its military-inspired workwear and meticulous washes. Norihide said, "I am into recreating vintage clothing and workwear that isn't actually factory wear with added detailing."



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02 Drumohr's stand with
its garden theme

MONOCLE musts

Hackett

Reflecting its status as official clothing supplier for the Oxford/Cambridge boat race and its sponsorship of the London Rowing Club, boating was a big theme at Hackett. CEO Jeremy Hackett said, "The London Rowing collection's sporty and stripy blazers were inspired by Henley Regatta whereas a new range called 'Brown in Town' is quite refined." The label set trends for shorter jacket lengths and slimmer fits for trench coats. It also showcased a fabric called THE WAVE by Loro Piana as part of the fourth collection of Hackett's luxury Mayfair diffusion. "It's the lightest travel cloth in the world and it never wrinkles," said creative director Michael Sondag.

Kiton

Italian label Kiton's latest collection was an optimistically colourful affair. Mixed materials, tartan and lightweight stonewashed travel jackets stood out. A highlight was a stunning sky-blue unlined cashmere, linen and silk mix jacket with a white cashmere under-collar. Although financial times have been better, CEO Antonio De Matteis said, "Customers are looking for more quality products; that is why they are still buying with us."

Drumohr

Since 239-year-old Scottish knitwear label Drumohr was taken over by the Italian Ciocca family it has been updated for the 21st century. At a stand decked with foliage inspired by an English garden, CEO Michele Ciocca said, "We have introduced bright colours this season. It's to make people a bit happier in this recession." All eyes were on an electric neon sleeveless jumper in a classic paisley pattern.



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Orobianco

This season, luggage brand Orobianco showcased cork bags with leather handles and hi-tech trolley suitcases made from aluminium textiles. The team were most excited about their new slim-fit raincoat that came in artichoke or red. President Giacomo M Valentini said, "The fabric for this raincoat has been developed with the technology of a company called Cihon Tech in Japan."

Bill Amberg

UK leather goods designer Bill Amberg displayed his strongest bag collection yet, including a handsome graphic printed tote. "We've printed on rubber but used a very simple graphic," says Amberg. Fisherman-inspired shoulder satchels and beach bags made from neon mesh fabrics used on building sites will be on the smartest of shoulder's next spring.



Name: Alberto Monti
Occupation: Owner of A. Gi. Emme
Wearing: Jacket and belt by Engineered Garments, shirt by Piombo, trousers by Acne



Name: Antonio Liverano
Occupation: Tailor and owner of Liverano & Liverano
Wearing: Jacket, shirt, trousers and tie all by Liverano



Name: Rasmus Storm
Occupation: Founder, Storm
Wearing: Jacket by Brooks Brothers, shirt by Black Fleece by Brooks Brothers, bag by Mismo x Storm



Name: Hun Lee
Occupation: LERICI brand manager from Korea
Wearing: Jacket by Time Homme, shirt by Goshe, trousers by Universal Language, bag by Sander's



Name: Shuhei Araki
Occupation: Menswear sales division, Aman
Wearing: Jacket by Boglioli, shirt by Finamore, tie by Altea, belt by Amboise, bag by SantaCroce



Name: Nicola Ricci
Occupation: Creative director, Sciamat
Wearing: Jacket, shirt and trousers all by Sciamat, glasses by Persol, watch by Omega