



Bigger and bolder bags and belts

The autumn edition of Lineapelle in Bologna included interesting developments in patent and patterned leathers. Penny Leese reports.

The latest Lineapelle was a paradise for bag and belt designers. Buckles and trims are becoming ever more fabulous; at the event, they were often highly decorated and oversized.

Trim designers have clearly been working hard to create big and bold components. Leathers and decorations on show were highly intricate, ideal for bags where they are not subjected to such hard treatment as on footwear.

For example, leather, velvet and fur were interwoven. Lanyard straps and handles were plaited in the round, mixing leather with velvet, metallics and textiles. Novel mixes of materials, such as metallic leather embroidered with creamy 'bouclé' wool and decorated with small sequins, came in giant scale so that only part of the pattern could be seen (unless it was used for a giant 'softee' bag or over-knee boot).

Soft leathers were feminine; they came with floral laser punching, from Thule, where the dark cut edge was part of the decoration.

Shaded patent leather ('degradé') appeared last Lineapelle and has been used by Prada for big, squishy bags; this time we saw more versions designed for shoes or boots, ideal for use with a darker toe and brighter counter when in muddy shades of grey and plum.

It was used too for men's simple jazz-inspired lace-ups in leather by Genesis. Patents for winter came in many more shades than before, and in more subtle nuances; they were also often crinkly even before use. The best quality patent leather had an almost matt sheen; it had a clear coating that brought out the natural tones of the full-grain leather underneath.

Metallics were still there, but they had more interesting finishes: they were glossy, embossed, textured, two-toned. Darkened



Women's shoes made with patent leather from Dolmen.



Leather with a quilted effect was popular for bigger bags.



Patent leathers for winter came in many more shades than before.

The latest Lineapelle was a paradise for bag designers.



Many men's shoes had a turned-up toe effect.



The best quality patent leather had an almost matt sheen bringing out the natural tones of the full-grain leather underneath.



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shades like pewter have overtaken summer's bright gold and silver.

After the greys, darker berry shades predominated in subtle metallics and patents. At the higher end, there were faded and muted milky berry colours (from Del Chienti, for example); gone were all the lurid and vivid shades of summer. In fact, there was very little neon to be seen at the fair, except in small details like zigzag embroidery stitching.

Reptile effects included python, in a matt look, whether real or embossed, and authentic looking surface-cut (Thule). Croco and snake returned in strength, for winter, in all scales and finishes. Some leathers were so highly worked that they hardly looked like leather any more. Conceria Italiana had a chain-mail effect, with leather coated in coloured circles, or cut in patterns to create a medieval-knight-in-armour look.

Textiles

Textiles received all sorts of treatments and effects. One very popular treatment for winter next year will be puffy quilting, like a duvet Puffa coat, stitched with lightweight polyester wadding fibre inside to create volume.

Stitch patterns came in squares, circles and even hearts. The quilt effects on display were lighter for boot shafts, but more extreme puffy versions were available for big hold-all bags and clothing. The same puffy stitching is used to great effect on soft nappa leather too.

Prints and weaves for shoes reflected the trends in clothing now; there were woven tweeds and tartans for uppers and linings. For dressy shoes, satin was ruched and pleated. Soft glossy velours were not just for indoor slippers but were used prettily on dressy pumps with toning satin bows.

Natural treatments also made their mark. Bigagli, a company that specialises in slipper textiles, presented a series of felted looks. It had a new felt material called 'Wooly', made from 100% natural wool, an ecological line, creating a lovely two-tone effect. It looked especially good when embossed and moulded in flower shapes on bags.

Surprisingly for a leather fair, there was suddenly a lot of transparent plastic on show. Mo.So.Ca used it as a see through top layer for a sandwich effect with pink feathers underneath, the whole stitched through in quilting patterns.

New technology

We saw leather with encapsulated ➤



LINEAPELLE

Feminine soft leathers with floral punching from Thule.



nanotechnology perfume from Portuguese company Dias Ruivo. Its offering matched colours and scents, with red leather smelling of raspberry, and so on. The leather samples had been handled non-stop for three months, but they still retained their fragrance.

Smells were also on the agenda for Maiao, who presented an encapsulated perfume pocket in the insole arch area of shoes. It will work for several months, keeping bad smells at bay.

Technical features like antibacterial treatments remained popular, despite rumours that too much of an antibacterial agent can possibly weaken the body's immune system. Go Guard (www.goguard.de) contains only very small amounts of silver so only reacts to the micro environment of the feet. It is a lining inside the textile and is also washable.

Soles

Sporty soles from Vibram were vividly coloured with very clear definition. New rubber technology has made it possible to get such clarity with no channel lines (dams). There was a whole range of new ecological and organic products on offer. But Vibram proved that not everything needed to be new to attract interest. It introduced its Ecotstep regrind rubber in 1994, but has suddenly found that it is in big demand.

For men, soles were roughened and natural looking, often with an ancient patina, emphasised by the second-hand looking turn-up toes. Despite the fact that ballerina shoes are gaining in popularity, it was clear at Lineapelle that high-heel shoes

with forepart platforms and covered platforms are for the fashionistas still. Heels were still sky-high, toe shapes were rounded and upper patterns were simple pumps or, more wearable designs with straps across the foot. Heels were very fancy, with glitzy details like crystals and gilt rings (Artimoda). Mid-high stiletto heels suited elongated pointed toes well, especially when made up in patent with a faint metallic sheen from Dolmen.

Davos had croco emboss with metallic overlays. The skived and rounded edges helped them emulate real leather soles.

For children, rubber unit soles were still the most popular; they are easy for production and come in a huge range of colours and finishes. Hard for the imitators to copy were the semi-transparent finishes from Base Up which are spray-finished in a darker shade and brushed off afterwards to give a greater depth of colour. For girls, oval-toe ballerina units came with and without small toecap protectors. For boys and for boots, lasts were wider with full toecap coverage, often emulating vulcanised styles.

Trims

Highly raised three-dimensional designs can be hard to achieve in leather without sacrificing softness. At the fair there was embossed leather by Centro Incisioni, made with double steel moulds with a heavy defined pattern above and below. The treatment can be much higher than most normal leather embossing, perfect for bags; it looked even better when polished to give a two-tone effect and greater depth.

Time for Steel is a new sub-brand, which

promotes its anti allergenic properties—a sensible alternative to nickel and aluminium, and not just for belt-buckles, but also for high grade curved trims and labels for companies like Ferrari.

Special lacing systems developed originally for desert military boots by Sammi seemed to work well for technical trekking and hunting boots too. The lace locker in the centre part (flex area in front of the ankle) can just be pulled tight with one grip of the laces, no need to position it in the teeth of the lace locker. This means, for ski and trekking boots, the lower part of the vamp can be tightened first so as not to constrict the foot too much and the upper part of the shaft can be tightened independently, for ultimate comfort.

Hawaii's new eyelets and speed laces came in colourful plastic colours, but the most important feature was the technology. They have no "memory" which means that if they get deformed they go instantly back to their original shape. Up to now, the best-selling style is the classic hexagon eyelet.

Studs, rivets, buckles and eyelets abounded on winter boots, where they looked glitzy—Italian style—rather than punky. Newer shaped rivets were not just domed, they were pyramid-shaped. Colours ranged from classic silver to muted rich gold. For shoes, there were oversized front buckles, covered, contrast, plain steel or enamelled with floral designs. These buckles co-ordinated well on belts and bags too.

The next edition of Lineapelle will take place in Bologna from April 22-24 next year. 🌐