

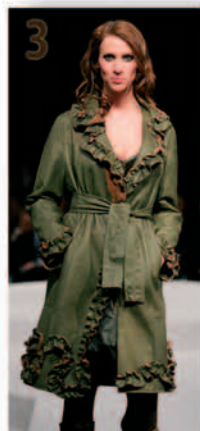
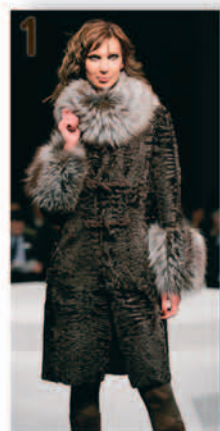


Winter is set to be a warm one

In spite of certain groups criticising the use of fur in fashion it seems that consumer interest in fur clothing and accessories continues to grow and this sentiment is shared by all, from fashion-makers in Europe and North America to the growing number of manufacturers in the Asia-Pacific region.

The positive business trend that the fur trade has seen world-wide in recent years continued in 2005. According to the

casualness remains en vogue with a playful mix of casual and classic chic. Voluminous materials with abraded, fulled or velvety textures are the preferred choices, particularly lamb velour and fur ranging from short, wavy karakul/astrakhan (Persian lamb) to fleecy Rex rabbit, mink and fox. Silhouettes are largely slender and lean and colours are generally darker. While lush embellishments were in vogue last season, this year's look is more reserved, with



International Fur Trade Federation (IFTF) global retail revenues for fur clothing, including trim and accessories reached \$12.77 billion in 2004/05, a 9.1% increase over the previous year's performance. This trend was highlighted in the autumn/winter 2006/2007 collections at the recent Fur and Fashion Frankfurt show, held in Germany.

Although fashion is becoming more subdued and streamlined for the coming winter season, fur is still set to play an increasingly important role in fashion, particularly in the women's, and increasingly in the men's, outerwear sectors.

Understated elegance

In contrast to last season, opulence is out and understatement is in, alongside quality, elegance, and a cool classic look. Sporty

embroidery, quilting, fur trimming, piping, tucks and patches supplanting glitter and sequins. Though ethnic influences are not altogether passé, they are now more subtle and designers are deliberately playing with contradictions, mixing the masculine and the feminine, the shiny and the dull, textiles with fur, and shorthair with longhair pelts to produce a sense of modernity and restrained realism. There is a new look that is all about "cross-dressing" and mixed materials combining leather and fur with other fabrics.

Lithuanian luxury

And these trends towards mixing fabrics and expanding the range of products aimed at men are likely to last beyond the coming winter season. One of the most innovative natural fur tanneries, dyers, and

manufacturers of fur and leather garments, Vilniaus Kailiai, based in Lithuania, has adapted its production to meet these demands and envisages a clear way forward for the fur industry.

Adopting centuries old professional dressing and dyeing methods Vilniaus Kailiai is applying new technologies to give fur a feeling of lightness and softness.

The company originated in 1865 and went on to become one of the largest rabbit dressing companies in the USSR, with production mainly focused on hats and caps for the Russian market. However, the Russian market collapsed due to the economic crisis in 1997 and the company had to rapidly reorganise.

In order to adapt to the new market, the



company implemented modern American fur dressing and dyeing technologies into the production process, widening the company's versatility and ensuring good dressing fur quality. The fur has become lighter, softer and more flexible and offers much wider possibilities to reflect fashion colour trends in the collection to meet the demands of both domestic and foreign customers.

The garment ranges have also changed. The limited men's products line has been expanded and is now aimed at both the youth market as well as the businessman. Women's styles are also now targeted at the younger market, using classic designs with fashionable elements, and each new season's range now contains about fifty styles.



Products include 100% furs plus combinations with natural leather, textiles such as velvet, cashmere and wool and shearling. The company also offers a bespoke service for made-to-measure garments.

Recognising a revival in the popularity of fur, the company opened its first shop in Vilnius in 1998 and has since opened further retail outlets around Lithuania. Talks are now even underway to develop partnerships with UK, USA and Norwegian customers. Far from losing its appeal, it seems that fur is one of the hottest (as well as the warmest) materials on the catwalk. 🌐

1 and 7: Coffee brown Swakara Persian lamb coats with grey dyed silverfox from Jahn

2: Curly lamb men's coat with Tanuki, beige from Hans-Jürgen Wendt

3: Rabbit coat, napa from Sam & Buchmann

4: Silk lamb coat with quilting optic from Adrian

5 and main image: An example of garments produced at Vilniaus Kailiai.

6: Kid jacket with mink from Schenkenbach.