

Ambiente 2010

Meeting Place for Trendsetters

Frankfurt, February 2010 -More than 4,500 exhibitors from 93 countries, over 133,000 buyers from all over the world, 183,000 square metre fair ground, no doubt the international trade fair Ambiente proved its name as the biggest international consumer-goods fair and meeting place for trendsetters.

Snow, ice and harsh temperatures made it a bit of a challenge for visitors as well as exhibitors to make it to Frankfurt, where the event took place from the 12 to 16 February.

The organizers, however, were pretty upbeat. First and foremost about the reinvention of the trade fair and the new hall arrangements. "I am very happy with the new concept of the Ambiente, which has led to shorter walking distances, and an improved flow of visitors", said Nicolette Naumann, vice president Ambiente/Tendance, during the fair.

For Gill Williams, director of Foreign Accents International, Tauranga, the Ambiente is a "fantastic platform". She knows the fair from way back as she used to come here as a buyer. Now she and her husband Ian are amongst the exhibitors. Their stand in the Giving section in hall 10.0 was small but inviting and enjoyed a constant flow of fair visitors. Gill revealed that she was approached by a number of high profile trade guests during the fair. "As a buyer the Ambiente is the fair I would like to buy", she says. "The choice is unbeatable."

For the majority of the big chains in New Zealand such as Briscoes, Farmers or Stevens a visit of the Ambiente is an absolute must. Some of them were very fond of the new hall concept. "It is much better, it worked very good for us and we were able to source a lot of new products", remarked Helen Northey, merchandise manager homeware at Farmers. She and her colleague Janis Skelly have been at the Frankfurt trade fair for many times.

The portfolio of the Giving section included gift ideas, trends and design-oriented giftware, jewellery, personal accessories, toys, manufactured goods, paper products, candles and smoker's accessories. 1,210 exhibitors presented trends and new, creative ideas for gifts.

The traditional backbone of the Ambiente is the Dining area, the kitchen and houseware segment, which was also the biggest one with 2,172 exhibitors. Labels such as WMF, Alessi, Bodum, WMF, Villeroy and Boch and Le Creuset celebrated themselves with fascinating and pompous stand designs. Many exhibitors took this opportunity to rethink their presentation completely and introduce new and modern concepts.

Sustainability and nature were still the prevailing trends in the Dining sector. This was reflected by enduring design and in the use of long-lived materials or recycled raw materials, e.g. for cooking utensils. Combinations of glass and stone or glass and wood or stainless steel and wood were state of art. In the case of porcelain and china, manufacturers continue to introduce new shapes without withdrawing classic designs. White remained as a trend colour while soft shades of blue and green, as well as an intensive, dark blue, provided coloured accents.

“Products need above all to be credible, and to embody quality and durability” said design consultant Claudia Herke from Design Studio Bora.Herke. “This year’s revival is all about handicraft skills, uniqueness with a homemade feel and an individual improvised look”, she continued.

“People are staying at home more and transferring their activities into their own four walls. Inviting friends round, communal cooking and eating is more popular than ever before which is why the home needs to be cosy”, describes Angela Regler from Messe Frankfurt a major trend.

“There continues to be a strong desire for simplification, reduction, for things that are close to nature”, continuous Herke. “Sustainability, too, continues to be important and will remain so in the future. This feature is not a trend, it is much more a new awareness, a measure of value and a duty towards the planet that falls to all manufacturers, buyers and consumers”, she added.

1,122 exhibitors were presenting in the Living section. Home accessoires, textiles and furniture, design products, outdoor furniture, seasonal decorations, pictures, frames and lighting belonged to the product portfolio. Wood, cork, rattan and cotton seem to remain the most popular materials. The cold look of stainless steel, chrome and glass was often transformed into warmth through the use of wood and fabric adornments.

Among the exhibitors in the Living section were 18 young designers. In the so-called Talent area they showcased their product ideas. The fair organizers provided free exhibition space to these young talents to give them the opportunity to get into contact with companies.

Hansjerg Maier-Aichen, professor of product design at the State University of Design, Karlsruhe, supports this promotional programme. “We have noticed that with their vision more and more young designers from all over the world are breathing new life into the range of available products by working in cooperation with other disciplines such as the sciences, research and the arts,” Maier-Aichen said.

“Recession and financial crisis have always been an excellent breeding ground for breaking creations”, he added. “As consumers we can look forward to an exiting re-evaluation of design.”

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