

Yarn makers Embrace DIY Trend With Tactile, Sparkling, Fuzzy Threads for Spring 2024

After a booming 2022, spinners at textile trade show Pitti Filati were left wondering how to sustain momentum. BY MARTINO CARRERA



The scene at textile trade show Pitti Filati 92 where spinners unveiled their spring 2024 collections.

FLORENCE – How can yarn spinners top 2022 performances this year as the market plateaus and uncertainties loom?

That was the hurdle industry operators pondered during the three-day textile trade fair Pitti Filati that unveiled spring 2024 collections. The fair, which closed here on Jan. 27, listed 105 exhibitors and drew 2,850 visitors, 40 percent of which hailed from abroad.

Answers were unanimous as textile executives do not expect to report a similar level of growth, spurred last year by the combination of a post-COVID-19 rebound of the fashion sector as a whole and increased prices for raw materials and energy that benefited yarn makers' revenues.

In 2022, the Italian sector registered a turnover of 3.32 billion euros, up 27.8 percent compared to the previous year and significantly above sales in 2019, which stood at 2.7 billion euros. In the first nine months of last year, exports grew 23.2 percent to 770 million euros.

Spinners are facing 2023 with optimism, albeit they are mindful that recession may dent second-half performances and it's now a matter of selling more goods rather than relying on higher price tags to sustain the momentum.

The spring 2024 yarn collections on show reflected the cautiously optimistic business mindset. They hinged on Popsicle and pastel hues; shimmering effects courtesy of micro and macro sequins and lurex threads; tactile and 3D textures, oftentimes fuzzy and fur-like, and tapped into the DIY fashion trend and booming demand for knitwear.

"Let us play the game and see where it takes us to," said Monticolor's chief executive officer Alberto Corti, who noted how hardly predictable the future is. In 2022, the knit yarns specialist's sales jumped 32 percent to 35 million euros. "We don't think to even equal those results this year, but there are several nuances [of growth] to aspire to," he said.

"There are several headwinds on the horizon," echoed Alberto Enoch, CEO of silk spinner Servizi e Seta, mentioning the

ongoing war in Ukraine and the uncertain full recovery in the Far East. About the latter he sounded wishful, noting that a rebound would offset the likely impact of inflation on the performance in Western countries.

The U.S. was generally viewed as a strong driver in 2022, and hopefully this year, too, compensating for missed sales in the Far East.

"The U.S. shone bright; they significantly contributed to growth," said Cristiana Cariaggi, the sustainability director at Marche-based Cariaggi. The company had sales of 143 million euros last year, up 26 percent year-on-year, lifted by its knitwear-leaning offering.

According to Zegna Baruffa's CEO Lorenzo Piacentini, the U.S., as well as the increased reshoring from abroad, helped offset the negative performance in Eastern countries, where the mill generated 20 percent of its revenues pre-pandemic.

Italy is known as a main source for premium yarns and fabrics, with spinners at the fair making the bulk of their revenues out of deals with luxury brands.

Over the past year, as raw materials and energy prices skyrocketed, the high-end positioning of most Italian yarn and fabric producers has safeguarded the supply chain from a stranglehold as luxury brands were more inclined to accept price increases.

"Upticks were spread across product categories, even basics were more expensive," said Silvio Botto Poala, CEO of Biella, Italy-based Botto Giuseppe. "Luxury players shouldered them easily, while brands in the middle and premium markets with higher production volumes were impacted the most. I think overall the price increases in the 20 percent range were accepted only because of the exceptional circumstances," he said.

"When a thread is priced at 120 euros per meter, there are higher margins [that] help us offset the impact of inflation," observed Enoch, stressing the company's reliance on luxury clients.

"I'm still uncertain about prices' normalization, as the U.S. dollar fluctuations have been hard to digest and

the governmental aids in controlling energy supply are only confirmed through the first quarter," said Zegna Baruffa's CEO Lorenzo Piacentini.

"It's hard to make 12-month forecasts. You need to plan and act by quarter bearing in mind the five year-term vision you have for the company," the executive added.

He touted Zegna Baruffa's tailor-made services. "When uncertainty rules, you need to reassure clients with a speedy service," Piacentini said, echoing several textile executives who are increasingly banking on efficient stock services and developing trans-seasonal collection.

This was the case at Tollegno 1900, where president Lincoln Germanetti is stressing the versatility and timeliness of the company's woolen yarns. At Lanificio dell'Olivio, developing a streamlined range available in multiple colorways has allowed the company, owned since 2020 by Ethica Global Investments SpA, to ensure same-day delivery on several of its products. The latter company has sales of 22 million euros in 2022, up 40 percent compared to 2021.

As recession forecasts get postponed by the day and the luxury sector looks well-equipped to dodge a downturn, yarn-makers didn't pull back on fashion-leaning offerings for spring.

Monticolor – which has tapped Marie Nardi, the winner of the Feel the Yarn contest, to revamp its collection – is leveraging its expertise in cotton threads. The company had a clean laundry undercurrent permeating the entire collection with blends of cotton and linen and cotton and hemp worked into ribbed knit options, fuzzy superfine bouclé yarns paired with tulle, as well as mouliné and spongy cotton and poly blends with a crisp and tactile effect.

The same furry effect was seen in Cariaggi's Bizarre thread, a mohair-looking blend of cashmere and silk, in Botto Giuseppe's gauzed 100 percent silk bouclé yarn with a cashmere-like hand, as well as in the luxurious organic linen, cotton and polyester Gale yarn of Lanificio dell'Olivio.

The Tuscany-based mill added sparkle with recycled polyester and metallic fiber blends that had a metal mesh effect without compromising softness.

Desire for party-ready attire, and textiles, seems to be on the rise, as Cariaggi introduced a cashmere and silk blend scattered with micro sequins. Sequins also spiced up Botto Giuseppe's traditionally more conservative collections, with the Iside silk and polyamide blend bearing tiny ones.

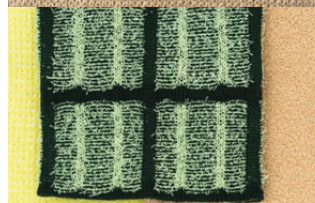
Silk was also all the rage, as part of blends or as a stand-alone fiber. Servizi e Seta had several options, including a matte silk yarn obtained with a mechanical treatment that stood out for its precious look and feel. It was available for the first time in a GRS-approved iteration.

At Zegna Baruffa and Tollegno 1900, the primary goal was to showcase the versatility of woolen yarns.

Lightweight cashmere and GOTS-certified cotton and wool and silk blends came with a dry and crisp texture at Zegna Baruffa, while extrafine merino wool was worked into summery crepe iterations, including the Millennium yarn dyed with the patented Coldblack chemical treatment aimed at reducing UV reflection.

Similarly, crepe defined the spring offering of Tollegno 1900, where merino wool came in the Icewool chlorine-free thread and in the breezy Woolcot Bio combined with 47 percent organic cotton.

Linen and cotton yarns from Servizi e Seta's spring 2024 collection.



Monticolor's Nuage yarn for spring 2024.



Lanificio Dell'Olivio fur-like Gale yarn for spring 2024.

A selection of yarns scattered with sequins from the Cariaggi spring 2024 collection.

