

International window treatment expo a worthy trip

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EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE, CUSTOM FABRICATION

The 2004 International Window Treatment Expo is the largest industry show in North America. Held this past April in Baltimore, MD, the show filled the entire floor of the convention center. Not surprisingly, it took me four hours and seven rolls of film to get from one end of the center to the other.

The expo floor was filled with every imaginable window treatment product: shades, blinds, equipment, luscious fabrics, stunning drapery hardware and row upon row of fabulous trims, tie backs and tassels.


The biggest trend this year seems to be beads and ribbons of all types and sizes, sewn onto fabric and mixed with brush and loop fringe. Some tassels combined ribbon, threads and beads, while others were made of crystals, feathers or hand-blown glass.

Conso® International and Brimar® showcased a full line of outdoor trims and tassels. Brimar's trims are actually made with yarns from Sunbrella®, who is well known for their outdoor fabrics. Conso's trims included 6-inch bullion, brush fringe, tassel fringe and tie backs in mixed colors known as Rainbow Row and Tropicana. All trims from both companies are mildew resistant, waterproof, UV proof and stain resistant.

The show featured over 15 fabric companies including Robert Allen, Plumridge Silks and Kasmir. The talk in most booths was the fabric companies' trend of moving away from large scale floral prints and into solids, plaids, textures and mini-prints. Several companies, including Norbar and Michael's Textiles were featuring fabrics designed exclusively for them which can only be found through a decorator or window treatment designer. Robert Allen Fabrics showed a special line of silk fabrics with hand-sewn beads setting off plaids and hand embroidery.


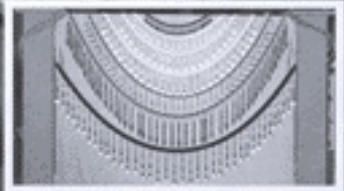
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There is no doubt you can find textiles in any color you desire. Like the fashion industry, trends pop up in fabrics and trims. Many companies were showcasing new lines in neutrals swirled with yummy raspberry, dark chocolate and cool, modern blue. Sage green and rose, gold green and raspberry, coral blue, champagne and green are all mixed and matched in tassels, ropes and woven jacquards.

The truly stunning booths seemed to be reserved for the decorative drapery hardware. Innovative manufacturing allows companies to create finials to look like finely carved lions, roses and acorns with oak leaves. Sconces looked like monkeys or ram heads while poles could be smooth or ridged, made of twisted wood or cast iron. Forest



Group had the most modern looking hardware with polished chrome poles topped with smooth, blown glass in sapphire and violet. LED technology allowed the same company to create a full line of finials that light up orange and green.

Next year's show moves to Atlanta, GA and I have my plane ticket ready. *