

SANDY PARKER Reports

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Dear Subscriber:

DESPITE THE ANTICIPATED DECLINE IN RUSSIAN PARTICIPATION, THE RECENT MILAN FUR FAIR MANAGED TO TURN IN A RELATIVELY STRONG PERFORMANCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY, ATTESTING TO THE POWER OF FASHION. This was the 20th anniversary of Mifur and it proved once again that fashion and innovation are sufficiently powerful to offset other factors in the merchandising of fur. The number of actual visitors was down almost 30% at 10,102, but this also reflected this year's absence of two other events, Micam and Mipel, which had shared halls 16 and 20 in Fiera Milano Rho and accounted for about 20% additional visitors, but shifted to other dates.

THE NUMBER OF ACTUAL BUYERS WAS DOWN ONLY 11%, MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF PARTICIPANTS FROM RUSSIA (DOWN 35%) AND UKRAINE (DOWN 13%). But buyers from other

members of the former Soviet Union showed up in greater force, those from Azerbaijan up 27%, Kazakstan up 14%, Armenia up 20% and Romania up 29%. Economic factors resulted in an average of 9% fewer buyers from Greece, France and Germany, but there were 28% more buyers from the United states and 15% more from China, as well as 32% more from Japan. The Americans, it was pointed out, also had the advantage of about a 20% decline in the value of the euro against the dollar compared with a year ago.

BUT THE MAIN NEWS ABOUT MIFUR, ACCORDING TO BUYERS AND OTHER VISITORS WAS, AS USUAL, IN THE FASHION AREA. Mink was the

predominant fur by far, the recent price drop from record highs having sparked the return to this leader. But price evidently was still a consideration as the designs tended to favor slimmer shapes, tight to the body. And there were more smaller items including short jackets and lots of vests, as well as neck pieces and accessories.

EVEN BIGGER NEWS, SAID VISITORS, WAS THE EXTENSIVE USE OF BRIGHT COLORS IN ALMOST ALL FURS, SABLE THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION. It was estimated that as much as 90% of the furs were dyed in bright reds, yellows, blues, orange, pink and other shades and appeared in both solids and combinations.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Milan Fair Gets Good Rating
 - *Big Drop from Russia, Ukraine
 - *Prices Holding at Saga Sale
 - *U.S. Judge Upholds AETA
 - *Style Lab Offers Diversity
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THE RUSSIANS, NOTED MIFUR PRESIDENT NORBERTO ALBERTALLI, “HAVEN’T COMPLETELY FAILED TO ATTEND; THE BUYERS OF THE LUXURY SEGMENT AND TOP-QUALITY FASHION PRODUCTS HAVE VISITED THE SALON. They certainly had a different budget at their disposal compared to past years due to the ruble situation, but that was predictable.” Despite the 11% decline in buyers, he said, “we can declare ourselves quite satisfied. Mifur focused on its mission and the entrepreneurs gave their best. A good response in terms of attendance, together with a cautiously positive climate registered at the closing, confirmed that Mifur is the not-to-be-missed event for those who operate in this supply chain.”

SPEAKING FOR THE ITALIAN EXHIBITORS, ROBERTO SCARPELLA, PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN FUR ASSOCIATION, SAID “WHAT STANDS OUT IS THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ITALIAN HERITAGE. Our businesses,” he noted, “have a distinct creative ability which is an exclusive characteristic of “Made in Italy” that is expressed by a quality offer with high stylistic contents.” His sentiments were echoed by at least one prominent American buyer who, citing the fresh fashion he found, ventured that “more American retailers should be here.”

THE TOP PRIZE IN THE ANNUAL REMIX COMPETITION CO-SPONSORED BY THE INTERNATIONAL FUR FEDERATION WENT TO YUSUF KALEM OF TURKEY. He won the gold with three looks inspired by green jewel beetle wings that adorn the ceiling of a Belgian palace and in fur garments of fox and mink. The silver award went to Sophie Sälekari of Finland for her use of mink mixed with calfskin, Swarovski crystal and glass beads. The bronze went to Lorenzo Sisi of Italy for his men’s coat of long-haired and sheared beaver with black mink trim. All three winners will be featured on *Italian Vogue’s* official website.

THE COMBINED AUCTION IN HELSINKI WAS STILL IN PROGRESS AT PRESSTIME, BUT THE WILD FURS OFFERED BY FUR HARVESTERS FIRST TO GO UNDER THE HAMMER ENJOYED GOOD DEMAND. According to the preliminary results, in U.S. dollars for first-section pelts, the 35,000 marten were all sold, the semi-heavy averaging \$58.02 and topping at \$220, while the heavies averaged \$76.11; 8,000 coyote: Westerns 100% at \$102.98/\$135, up 20%, Easterns 96% at \$37.26/\$88, up 18%, and Central 100% at \$17.40/\$26; 3,000 otter 51% at \$50.38/\$90; 6,000 fisher 100% at \$71.27/\$145; 4,000 lynx cat: Western 70% at \$395/\$450, North Central 82% at \$218.46/\$525 and Eastern Canadian 51% at \$115.89/\$180.

IN ADDITION, 109,000 raccoon 60% at \$10.33/\$52; 1,500 lynx 51% at \$126.07/\$350; 25,000 beaver, Eastern 90% at \$18.30/\$160, firm; 88,000 muskrat 92% at \$6.10/\$25, up 6%; 7,000 red fox: Eastern 100% at \$30.60/\$110, up 5%, Northern 76% at \$32.25/\$60, Western 50% at \$27.12/\$29 and Central 85% at \$20.42/\$30, up 25%; 2,000 opossum 99% at \$2.16/\$4; 600 skunk 100% at \$9/\$15.50; 300 cross fox 90% at \$34/\$56; 300 white fox 100% at \$39.43/\$68; 17,000 mink 45% at \$8/\$15, and castoreum: Grade 1 at \$60 per pound, grade 2 at \$48 and grade 3 at \$40.

PRICES WERE MOSTLY FIRM TO DECEMBER LEVELS AS SAGA’S LONGHAIRS WENT UNDER THE HAMMER. More than 700 buyers were on hand in the expanded salesroom, where the main buying was by the European fashion industry. Finnraccoons sold well, but uncertainty in the Russian market affected the sale of certain types of foxes. According to the report, the 43,000 finnraccoon were 90% sold at an average of \$150.56 and a top of \$235.40; 3,000 white 92% at \$139.16/\$181.90; 2,500 arctic 62% at \$81.01/\$119.84; 79,000 silver fox 60% at \$97.61/\$556.40; 17,000 gold fox 22% at \$92.75/\$160.50; 4,000 gold cross 32% at \$91.54/\$128.40; 4,000 arctic marble 21% at \$130.25/\$165.85, and 2,500 platinum 19% at \$104.45/\$165.85. The top lot of silver fox was bought by Gorski Group of Montreal.

JUST BEFORE PRESSTIME, THE SAGA SALE CONTINUED WITH ADDITIONAL FOXES: 50,000 blue shadow 100% at \$165.35/\$231.88, up 25% over December; 68,000 blue frost 61% at \$116.19/\$163.37, firm; 8,000 shadow blue frost 83% at \$116.44/\$184.45, slightly higher; 13,000 arctic marble 53% at \$108.48/\$128.59; 13,000 golden island 87% at \$140.01/\$205.53, firm to higher; 2,000 golden island shadow 33% at \$134.46/\$163.37, and 8,000 fawn light 62% at \$125.45/\$189.72. The sale was continuing through this week with the remainder of Saga foxes and mink, followed by American Legend's mink, ending Friday.

KOPENHAGEN FUR DECLARED LAST WEEK IT HAD SET A NEW RECORD FOR CLEARANCES IN A SINGLE WEEK LEADING UP TO THE MARCH 7 PROMPT DATE. Of the 5.9 million mink sold at the February sale, a total of 2.7 million were cleared that week. The clearance percentage for that auction is now 57% and for the January sale 64%, according to Brian Tufvesson, head of the customer department.

AUCTION NOTES: NAFA has significantly increased the quantities of its mutations on sale March 28 to April 3. There now will be 200,000 pastel; 50,000 palomino; 220,000 silverblue; 25,000 sapphire; 225,000 white; 50,000 blue iris; 230,000 pearl, and 75,000 unique mutations including crosses.

A FEDERAL JUDGE HAS REJECTED A MOTION TO DISMISS CHARGES AGAINST TWO ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ON GROUNDS THAT THE ANIMAL ENTERPRISE TERRORISM ACT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL. Judge Amy St. Eve of the U.S. District Court in Chicago, in denying the defendants' motion, issued a powerful opinion rejecting all of the arguments that have previously been used to attack the AETA, both legally and politically. She concluded that the law was not facially over broad and therefore in violation of the First Amendment; it was not void for vagueness in defining the nature of the violations and, most significantly, its use of the term "terrorism" was not improper and therefore a denial of the defendants' rights of due process. The case involved defendants Kevin Johnson and Tyler Lang who were arrested in rural Illinois in August, 2013, on charges of possessing burglary tools and targeting fur farms. Previous challenges to the law were dismissed because those defendants were not indicted under that law and therefore had no standing. Johnson/Lang had standing.

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THE STYLE LAB THAT HAD ITS PREMIERE LAST WEEK IN MONTREAL WAS A SLIGHT DEPARTURE FROM THE TRADITIONAL FUR FAIR. This event, according to Alan Herscovici, executive director of the Fur Council of Canada, was aimed more at enabling traditional furriers to broaden their operations with the addition of high-end accessories, jewelry and apparel that would complement their furs and extend their operations beyond the fur season. It featured about 85 brands from North America and Europe and drew about 320 buyers, mostly from Canada. Interviews with several exhibitors turned up general satisfaction with the event's organization and with the business they wrote. They felt there could have been more traffic, especially from the U.S., but indicated they would return next year.

IN ADDITION TO LEADING CANADIAN FURRIERS, THERE WAS A CAREFULLY SELECTED RANGE OF HIGH-END COATS, ACCESSORIES AND CANADIAN DESIGNER COLLECTIONS. Products, said show manager Teresa Eloy, designed to attract new customers year-round and enable them to sell more furs.

FASHION NOTE: With furs finding their way into many new uses these days, it should be no surprise that Italian design house Dolce & Gabbana would send its models down the runway topped with fur-trimmed headphones. One version, embellished with Swarovski crystals, pearls and green-dyed fox, carries a price tag of \$7,995.

RESEARCH DEPT.: Fur Commission USA has launched a fur animal research library at www.furresearch.org. It is a free resource for farmers, veterinarians, current and future researchers. It contains over 1,500 scientific studies on mink health, disease, nutrition, housing and other critical issues going back to the 1930's. There also are links to other research and veterinary sites and documents are constantly being added as they become available. Plans are to add research done in Canada and Europe in the near future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "S".