

DESIGN SHOWS » IIDEX/NEOCON CANADA 2009

LET THERE BE LIGHT PAINTINGS

And coconut shell on the walls and plastic that looks like marble. At the recent IIDEX/NeoCon Canada expo, the future of design was all about creative media

BY DANNY SINOPOLI

Looking to put a little spring in your step this fall? Try surfacing your rec room with spongy liquid-filled floor tiles.

Want to add a rustic South Seas touch to the den? Why not line the walls with coconut-shell panels?

As Willy Wonkaish as they sound, the above are actual commercial finishes manufactured, respectively, by B.lab Italia (www.blabitalia.com) and U.S.-based Kirei (www.kireiusa.com). And they were just a couple of the new-generation materials on display at the 25th annual IIDEX/NeoCon Canada show, held recently in Toronto.

The roundup, which also included marble-mimicking plastics, concrete embedded with motion-sensitive lights and puncture-resistant textiles made of something called SuperFabric, was a fitting way to mark the design and construction trade fair's silver anniversary. Combining old and new, organic and synthetic, it effectively got across how the building materials of the past and present — rubber, wood, even cattle horn — might creatively (and colourfully) be used in the future.

"For designers, [the scenarios] are only limited by what they can imagine," said Amy Au, who co-curated the exhibit, called THINK:Material, with Jim Salazar.

Imagination was very much in evidence at the show, which had unusual creative media as an unofficial theme. Across the exhibition hall



ABOVE Visitors to the 2009 IIDEX/NeoCon Canada show take in Stephen Knapp's *Castled Void*, a 'light painting' created by the bouncing of light off of precisely mounted glass shards.

PHOTOS BY FRED LUM/
THE GLOBE AND MAIL



LEFT AND ABOVE Some of the innovative finishes on display in the THINK:Material exhibit included U.S.-based Architectural Systems' 'tropical mosaic' of cattle horn, palmwood and teak and Dutch-based LAMA Concept's faux fur/wool fabric.

BELOW Manufactured from reclaimed sorghum straw and formaldehyde-free adhesive, American-based Kirei's strong, eco-friendly Kirei Board can be used to build cabinetry, casework and furniture.



ABOVE The same company's Kirei Coco tiles are made of reclaimed coconut shells, low-VOC resins and sustainably harvested wood backers. This panel features an elegant swirl pattern, but the product comes in a variety of textures.

from THINK:Material, for instance, another show-stopping installation, U.S. artist Stephen Knapp's *Castled Void*, reimagined a classic art form (the abstract painting) through an uncommon medium (refracted light).

"For centuries, painters have been trying to capture light through paint," said Knapp, whose work is typically commissioned by large institutional and commercial clients. "I paint with light."

On a smaller scale, the Brothers Dressler of Toronto (www.brothersdressler.com) put their own creative sleight of hand on show, transforming recycled plastic bottles into funky planters and repurposing salvaged iron window-sash weights as elegant table legs.

Of course, no trade show would be complete without a celebrity appearance. No, hunky James Bond portrayed Daniel Craig didn't show up at this one, but his chair did. German-based Interstuhl's Silver chair, which is distributed in Canada by Toronto's Kimball Office (www.kimballoffice.com), has had cameos in such superstylish movies as *Quantum of Solace* and this year's *Star Trek*.

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ON THE WEB

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