

Leading tableware company delivers first range of 'men' mugs

Creative Tops targets men



Experts in mug design, british tableware, kitchen and home décor company, Creative Tops presents its first collection of mugs designed especially for men. Traditional styles are combined with hobby-related iconography and quirky slogans for mugs that are on-trend and giftable for all tastes.

Perfect for a warming cup of tea or coffee after outdoor sessions on two wheels, the ceramic 'You can't buy happiness but you can buy a bike' mug is crafted with a traditional enamel effect. A touch of luxury is added with gold decal to make this an understated and premium design.

Ideal for sports fans after a game on the pitch, the sports-themed mugs feature golf, rugby and football designs with cheeky slogans such as 'It takes a lot of balls to golf'.

The mugs are crafted in a rustic tankard shape to finish the real quality feel of these designs. After a week in the office, a nautical themed mug states on one side 'Work like a captain' and on the other 'Play like a pirate' making it ideal for caffeine fixes from Monday mornings to Friday afternoons. ■

Source : Home & Textiles Today

Delicate, feminine designs top trends

rustic and blackened finishes offer aesthetic balance

Trends were tweaked at the New York Tabletop Show held recently, offering retail buyers the newest options in colours and finishes across the subcategories of dinnerware, glassware and flatware.

Delicate, feminine designs achieved through pearlescent sheens and pastel shades were offset by rougher and sharper-edged finishes in darker colorways. On the light side, there was Vietri's Perla opalescent glass dinnerware edged in gold; an assortment of lustre-hued scalloped-edge ceramic dinnerware from Gibson; and glass and ceramic serveware from Mikasa with an iridescent glow. Some manufacturers experimented with blush and petal pink colourways in dinnerware and glassware. On the darker side were black-studded barware from both Mikasa and Riedel, and Dansk's new Moby serveware collection that makes use of a powder-coated black finish in combination with wood. Gunmetal PVD flatware finishes are also accelerating. Metallic finishes are now the norm, with gold being the most in demand, according to several manufacturers. Copper remains popular, gunmetal is on the rise and brass is an emerging material. Galvanized metal, a key aesthetic in the farmhouse movement, has many more applications and is most commonly seen in serveware and entertainment-based pieces, from manufacturers such as Artland and others.

Reactive glazes, a staple for some dinnerware manufacturers, have become the go-to look for many more, and techniques have evolved to produce drip-like effects or feather-edged, crystallized designs that enhance the homemade look. Marble looks are proliferating on dinnerware and serving pieces and are morphing into marbleized designs, such as Aiden from Mikasa, with its earthy palette layered with metallics, and Blue Marble by Caskata, the result of a newly minted license partnership with Williamsburg, based on end paper from a book found in Williamsburg's collections. Maxwell Williams uses condensed marble ash, which is not porous, in combination with ash wood in its new collection of Elemental serving boards.

Blues and greens have been the dominant colorways in the market for the past few seasons; at this market the newest blues are marine and the greens more mossy with yellow undertones. In terms of icons, pineapples persist and flamingoes made several appearances. But animals in general—whether stylized or true to life—have a greater presence. Barware is as popular as ever

and the trending spirit is now gin, according to some manufacturers. This has inspired the creation of gin glasses, stemware with a large bowl and a wide mouth. Coupe-shaped champagne glasses, instead of the tapered flute, are also back in style. ■

Source : Home & Textiles Today



Home-Products Industry to continue on growth trajectory in 2017

A new home-products industry forecast from global information company The NPD Group, reveals that the small home appliances and housewares markets will continue on the growth path they returned to in 2015. Covering more than 100 small kitchen electrics, personal care appliance, home environment appliance, and housewares categories, NPD is forecasting a nearly three percent combined dollar sales increase for these industry segments in 2017 versus 2016. This is based on forecasted sales of small home appliance and housewares products captured in The NPD Group Retail Tracking Service point-of-sale data.

Home environment appliances, which include floor care, will have the strongest growth this year, increasing dollar



sales nearly four percent, followed by personal care appliances with three percent growth compared to 2016 results. Small kitchen electrics and housewares (non-electrics) are each forecast to grow two percent in 2017.

"The home-products industry has entered a five to ten-year window in which it has the potential to see consistent annual growth in the U.S., based on the changes occurring in the demographics of the population," said Joe Derochowski, executive director and home industry analyst at NPD. "While the environment is supportive of growth for the home industry, manufacturers and retailers will need to deliver innovative new approaches addressing consumer needs and wants, not just bells and whistles, in order to compete and capture consumer dollars." ■ *Source: NPD*

Consumers shift to 'responsible' spending incline towards artisanal and handcrafted items

Two-thirds of US consumers now patronize off-price stores, part of a shift away from aspirational shopping. According to a new white paper from NPD Group, consumers have adopted 'responsible' spending habits. Even Baby Boomers, who continue to have more discretionary income than any other group, aren't shelling out for the same categories of merchandise they did a few years ago. Millennials are more tightfisted than their elders. "Millennials aren't aspirational. They're frugal, except in a handful of categories," the report concluded. Presented during the recent ShopTalk conference, the report's key findings include that consumers now:



- Prioritize their purchases
- Are fascinated by artisanal/handcrafted items
- Chase individuality rather than fashion
- Are skittish about debt
- Prefer experiences to things
- Search carefully for items or foods that enhance an experience and make good photogenic prospects for social media

The hunt for value extends up the income ladder. A recent study from NPD's Checkout Tracking service showed about 19% of spend at Dollar Tree, Dollar General, and Family Dollar came from households with an income in excess of \$100,000 a year. "The dollar-store phenomenon is even more significant among Millennials. Checkout Tracking found Millennials with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more made purchases at these stores nearly 13 times a year and spent more than \$135," the report noted. ■

Source: Home & Textiles Today

Target: New textiles chem regulations soon producers to have six to 12 months to get compliant

Once Target releases its restricted substances list, textiles producers will have six to 12 months to get compliant. Speaking at a seminar recently, Target's Kirk Smithwick said the retailer's new chemical management goals will be one of the most comprehensive in the industry. "The word 'transparency,' that's the key," he said. Smithwick, one of Target's principle product engineers, said the company is in the process of crafting its textiles restricted substances list and aims to have it completed in the next six to 12 months. Once it's published, manufacturers will have six to 12 months to get compliant. "It's going to be a lot work on both sides," he added. Ben Mead, managing director for Hohenstein Institute Americas, discussed the role of the Oeko-Tex Standard 100 as a measurement tool in the process and Target's leader as an industry influencer in moving the transparency forward. "In most cases we see a pull effect from the retailers or from the brands saying 'here are our requirements, we need to be able to provide this to the consumer, and we need you as a producer to be able to enable this," he said. ■ *Source: Home & Textiles Today*

The numbers say furniture business should be smokin'

says Economic roundup for Spring

The traditional drivers of furniture sales, employment, home ownership and consumer confidence, just to name three, are all performing at a level that suggest the furniture industry should be delivering substantial growth right now in the US market. The economy added 235,000 new jobs in February, and unemployment was down slightly for the month to 4.7%. Consumer confidence rose to 114.8 in February, up slightly from January and then jumped to 125.6 in March, its highest level since December 2000.



Sales of new single-family homes were up 6.1% in February, and year-over-year sales of existing homes rose 12.8% for the month, compared to the same time period in 2016. Median existing home prices were also up for February, the 60th consecutive month of YOY gains. On the other side of the coin, however, the percentage of Americans moving over a one-year period - a significant potential contributor to furniture sales - fell to an alltime low of 11.2%. A major contributor to this decline is the stationary status of the nation's Millennials, only 20% of which moved last year. That's about 5-7% less than the activity of previous generations at the same age. ■ Source: Furniture Today

Shift in footwear and accessories spending sends warning signals

Apparel, footwear, and fashion accessories to get impacted

The three key components of the \$334 billion retail fashion segment, apparel, footwear and fashion accessories, are each in different positions when it comes to the business, according to global information company, The NPD Group. The apparel industry, which represents 65 percent of total US retail fashion dollar sales and spans everything from basics to jeans, continues to enjoy the consistent growth experienced over the past few years. Conversely, the more trend-driven footwear and fashion accessories industries are now experiencing sales declines, keeping overall retail fashion sales in the 12 months ending February 2017 even with results from the prior year.

While the footwear and fashion accessories industries experienced dollar sales growth in the 12 months ending February 2016, both have taken a turn in the past year. The US footwear industry declined 1 percent to \$65 billion in the 12 months ending February 2017, driven by in-store losses. Fashion accessories sales dropped 7 percent, to \$51 billion during this period, with declines occurring both online and in-store. Not only are consumers spending less, they're purchasing fewer items as well. These declines occurred while segments of the millennial generation increased their spending on footwear, fashion accessories, and apparel.



"The losses happening within footwear and fashion accessories are leading indicators of the fundamental changes occurring within the whole of fashion at retail," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst, The NPD Group, Inc. "Consumers tend to build their wardrobes through accessories and footwear, giving their outfit a fresh look, so when sales of either of these industries slow or decline it signals a decline in fashion as a priority." As activewear has been in apparel, the sport leisure category has been the recent bright spot in footwear. But, the fashion segment, representing more than 40 percent of annual footwear dollar sales, has been challenged in the past year - down 6 percent in the 12 months ending February 2017. The fashion accessories industry has seen growth in categories like luggage and backpacks. However, one of the biggest struggles for this industry has been the now \$7.3 billion handbag category, which lost more than \$1 billion in sales between March 2016 and February 2017. The active influences that drove apparel did not impact the total accessories and footwear businesses in the same way, while fashion athletic and retro sneakers worked well, consumers continued to be presented with the same non-athletic inspired fashion footwear and bags. The overall scope of today's fashion innovation needs to reach beyond one audience or one set of consumer demands, but also be prepared to move with new influences as they take shape. ■ Source: NPD

Wellness: The New Status Symbol

Products that enhance health and wellness remain hot commodities in housewares. Consumers are willing to spend money to enhance their health, and it's not just about living longer. Healthy living is becoming a status symbol, as more consumers opt to flaunt their passion for wellness through paying for boutique fitness sessions, 'athleisure' clothing, food with health-giving properties and upscale health and wellness holidays, says a research by research firm Euromonitor. The company identified "wellness as a status symbol" as one of its Top 10 Global Consumer Trends for 2017 in a recent study.



The health and wellness trend has elevated certain cooking categories over others. One of the biggest products in this trend are pressure cookers for both healthy eating and canning, which helps keep items fresh. While all demographic groups are keen on products that can help them live a healthier life, the fact that Millennials are such a group will also continue to increase this trend's stamina. ■ Source: HFN

Hooking the Early Birds

Retailers that launch back-to-college programs early will reap rewards with shoppers spending less as summer rolls on

While the influence of e-Commerce is pervasive among students, most back-to-college purchases will be made in physical stores, according to research from Deloitte LLP. Most students, however, will purchase at least one-third of their back-to-college items online, but those purchases are most likely to be apparel and electronics, not home furnishings, according to a study by Branding Brand. Before drilling deeper into category purchase behavior and this year's trends, it's important to note that 86 percent will do all of their shopping from no more than six retailers, with 51 percent saying they will only buy from one to three retailers, according to Branding Brand, which noted that the top three retailers for online purchases are Amazon (74 percent), Target (51 percent) and Walmart (42 percent).



The biggest trend retailers seeing right now is that students have imaginative ideas for their dorms. Savvy students realize they can make pretty dramatic room décor statements with the right type of lighting, a category growing in importance for back-to-college merchandising and marketing. A desk lamp just won't cut it anymore. Students are loving light-up marquee letters to personalize their room, string lights, and cool LED floor lamps. A retailer is also introducing a neon-phrase lighting collection for the back-to-college season, delving more deeply into the personalisation, bright colour and fashion lighting trends. Five years ago, parents were the ones who did most of the back-to-college shopping, but that has evolved, which recent sales data and research bears out. Dorm shopping allows young adults to express their personality without consequences. Functionality is also crucial; this should be a space where students can kick back with friends, study, or just unwind in their free time.

In a 2016 Deloitte survey, parents said they planned to spend \$1,345 on back-to-college merchandise, \$263 more than the students expected to spend. And while 57 percent of students plan to contribute more than half of the back-to-college budget, only 16 percent of parents expect their kids to contribute that much. By category, parents expect to spend \$584 (43 percent of the total budget) on household appliances and supplies, and dorm furniture and supplies, while students expect to spend about \$100 less on those categories.

Parents and students also begin shopping earlier in the summer and at different points throughout the summer to take advantage of the most deals, according to Deloitte's research. Early shoppers also spend the most. While July and August are the biggest shopping months, those that shop before July spend the most (\$349), although they only represent 6 percent of total back-to-school shoppers. As the summer proceeds, spending declines, which could be a combination of more merchandise being sold on promotion and shoppers being more judicious about the amount they spend. For example, shoppers in late July spend \$309, while those in late August spend \$270. Last minute shoppers in September spend even less, \$259, according to Deloitte. Not surprisingly, freshmen spend more money and seniors the least as they head back to school (\$1,352 versus \$845). Male students on average spend more, especially on tech products such as computers, hardware and electronic gadgets, but when it comes to dorm furniture and household appliances male and female students are neck in neck, spending \$481 and \$472, respectively. And, of course, social platforms strongly influence students in what they buy. ■ Source: HFN