

SECTION II

INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOWS

# Positive Signs

A rebounding economy and strong beauty and accessories markets fuel Australasian trade fairs.

By Patty Huntington

**SYDNEY** — Beauty, accessories and seasonality are emerging as key agenda issues for Australasian trade show organizers.

Beauty is now the second-fastest growing market — mining is first — at Australia's biggest trade show organizer, Reed Exhibitions.

The company's September 2006 acquisition of the 31-year-old Hair Expo Australia show is helping fuel that growth. Following its 2002 acquisition of the biannual International Beauty Expo shows, Reed now owns the nation's two biggest beauty events.

Touted as the largest event of its kind in the southern hemisphere, Hair Expo will run for the first time under the new management from June 9 to 11 in two halls of the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre at Darling Harbour, totaling approximately 108,000 square feet. Last year, the event attracted roughly \$1 million in ticket sales and 16,000 visitors — 10 percent of whom were consumers; foreign visitors comprised another 10 to 15 percent.

Reed is anticipating 17,000 visitors in June, with more than 135 exhibitors, a marginal increase over last year.

The Sydney International Beauty Expo will run from Aug. 11 to 12, also at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, and will take up 54,000 square feet across three halls. This represents an extra 5,400 square feet of space compared with the Sydney show in September, which attracted 11,500 visitors and 280 exhibitors. Reed is expecting visitor numbers to increase again in August, and exhibitors to exceed 300.

"Beauty is definitely growing — especially in spa and health and wellness," said Lauren Ebbeck, Reed's International Beauty Expo exhibition manager.

Fashion and accessories are additional growth areas for Reed, accounting for 25 to 30 percent of exhibition space of the company's six Gift Trade Fairs. Reed introduced a series of runway presentations at the Sydney show in February, increasing visitation to Hall 7 of the Sydney Exhibition & Convention Centre by 22 percent. Reed will introduce more runway shows at the Melbourne Reed Gift Fair from Aug. 4 to 8, held in approximately 164,000 square feet across two venues: the Melbourne Exhibition

A look by Zambesi at AZNFW.



A look by Trelise Cooper at ANZFW.



ANZFW PHOTOS BY MICHAEL NGAR, NEW ZEALAND FASHION WEEK

and Convention Centre and The Melbourne Showgrounds. This represents a jump from the 136,000 square feet last year. Reed expects the show will attract more than 800 exhibitors, up from 702 last year, and 37,571 visitors.

The Brisbane Reed Gift Fair, from July 14 to 17, will occupy more than 102,000 square feet of the Brisbane Exhibition and Convention Centre, similar to last year, with more than 600 exhibitors and more than 11,000 visitors expected. The Sydney Reed Gift Fair runs from Sept. 15 to 18 at the Sydney Exhibition & Convention Centre, in 136,000 square feet of exhibition space, with more than 700 exhibitors and more than 16,000 visitors expected — marginal increases over last year.

Tapping into the accessories market in a far bigger way is Australian Exhibitions and Conferences. From Aug. 12 to 14, the company will launch its first Leather, Bags and Accessories Fair in the Melbourne market at the Melbourne Exhibition & Convention Centre, alongside its fourth Australian Shoe Fair. The LBA show was launched at the company's February Shoe Fair in Sydney.

The combined Melbourne shows will occupy 81,000 square feet of exhibition space, up from nearly 65,000 last year, with 200 exhibitors — a 30 percent increase over August. More than 3,000 visitors are expected.

The accessories shows are spin-offs of AEC's well-established biannual fashion show, Fashion Exposed, which, together with its high-end Preview component, will run in the same Melbourne venue three weeks later.

"The accessories market just continues to grow phenomenally," said Sue Dight, Fashion Exposed/Preview project manager.

Now venue-bound, Fashion Exposed/Preview again will occupy 253,000 square feet of exhibition space. Around 65,000 square feet of that will be dedicated to Preview, which will boast 100 exhibitors, up from 85 last year, including a delegation of Italian designers.

Although space continues to be an issue for show organizers, at least the economy is looking up. "I'm getting some very positive calls from exhibitors who feel it is starting to turn around," said Dight. "In Sydney [in March], we had some major corporations up by 50 percent their previous sales at the show. Western Australia is taking off considerably with the mining boom — our visitor numbers from WA were higher than they've ever been before."

One unexpected challenge with which AEC has been presented over the past 12 months, however, has been seasonality, with shorter lead times to market eroding the traditional advance sales pattern, according to Dight.

"People are doing store drops every six [or] eight weeks," she said. "The challenge is to make sure that we have the right format for them at the right time. We're looking at whether we continue with our seasonality factors — meaning do we call the show an autumn-winter show or is it just a show?"

IMG Fashion Asia Pacific responded to industry feedback on seasonality, but now finds itself between a rock and a hard place with its troubled autumn-winter edition of Rosemount Australian Fashion Week.

Having just staged the 12th spring-summer runway showcase at Sydney's Overseas Passenger Terminal from April 30 to May 4 — with 80 runway designers and 70 exhibitors — IMG had no confirmed plans for its upcoming runway showcase at press time.

Brought forward by more than a month, to Sept. 4 to 6, last year, and rebranded as "transseasonal" collections in response to feedback that a late-October autumn-winter showcase was irrelevant, that event went to market too late and featured just 12 runway shows/installations, showcasing 35 designers (14 of them students) and 17 trade show and showroom participants.

Tentatively slated for Aug. 29 to 31, even the venue for the transseasonal 2008 showcase was yet to be confirmed at press time. A five-year contract with the Victoria government expired at the end of last year, and if renewal negotiations prove unsuccessful, RAFW's transseasonal showcase could move to Sydney.

According to an IMG spokeswoman, it is "highly unlikely" that the transseasonal 2008 collections will be canned altogether.

Were the event forced to move from Melbourne, one short-term exhibitor carrot might be to dovetail RAFW with Fashion Group International's upcoming international conference in Sydney.

The Sydney chapter of FGI is anticipating up to 250 delegates, including 150 internationals, at its Nov. 15 to 18 conference. Titled "The Cutting Edge," the conference will embrace seminars, fashion parades and cultural and social activities in various venues, from Government House to the Sydney Opera House, the NSW Art Gallery and The Powerhouse Museum.

Prior to locking in dates, FGI spokesman Dominic Beirne said FGI had made several unsuccessful attempts to coordinate dates with IMG.

Beirne, a fashion industry consultant, believes that Melbourne and the autumn-winter season were always going to be hard sells for RAFW.

"I think that the domestic industry is so attuned to Fashion Exposed as [the place to] go to buy your autumn-winter merchandise," said Beirne. "Australia also does not have a reputation internationally as a winter market. We own spring-summer — that's our season."

But neither the autumn-winter season nor an earlier time slot have been issues for Air New Zealand Fashion Week, which also moved its showcase forward by more than a month last year. Designers have since voted to keep this year's event in the same time slot. The ANZFW 2008 showcase will run from Sept. 16 to 22 at Auckland's Viaduct Harbour, with organizers expecting similar turnout and exhibitor numbers as last year. In September, the exhibition space was cut to 8,900 square feet, almost half the size of 2005.

"We deliberately made [the exhibition area] smaller and it will stay that size," said ANZFW managing director Pieter Stewart. "You can take anyone or you can decide you can have the ones who are right for the audience that's going to be there. It was smaller, tighter, but I thought better."

As for making her event biannual, Stewart believes that New Zealand's premier fashion showcase should stick to its knitting.

"I honestly don't think that the New Zealand economy could cope with it," said Stewart. "There's a huge amount of sponsorship needed. I think there would be two mediocre fashion weeks rather than one good one. I think Australia does spring-summer really well. That was the philosophy that I started fashion week in New Zealand with — so we went for the other season."



Reed Exhibitions acquired Hair Expo in September 2006.



**Si**  
SPOSAITALIA  
COLLEZIONI

**NEW LOCATION**

PAV. 3  
ENTRANCE  
PORTA TEODORICO  
fieramilanocity

International Presentation  
of Bridal and Formal Wear  
2008 Collections

22-25 June 2007  
fieramilanocity

In collaboration with



under the patronage of

