

# SPOTLIGHT



## The New *Neutrals*

Consumers and fabric manufacturers are clearly not neutral about muted tones in 2023.

BY GREG THOMPSON

### FABRIC MANUFACTURERS CONTINUE TO RELY ON MOSTLY MUTED TONES WHEN

rolling out new colors in 2023. To illustrate this trend, nine out of 13 featured spotlight companies mention the word “neutral” in referencing fabric hues. “We continue to see strong sales trends in neutral colors,” says Natalie Scott, director at Citel, makers of the BLISS brand. “Neutrals and decorative plains will always remain strong sellers because they are timeless mainstays that never disappoint.”

Monica Thornton, director of design at Phifer Inc., describes current design styles as a mix of old and new, ranging from softly modern to classic and streamlined. “Consumers prefer cozy and familiar styles that have longevity and connection, while also supporting their own personal design aesthetic,” she says.

Texture and feel remain key to closing the sale, with Sarah Dooley, director of upholstery at Sunbrella, seeing greater interest in dynamic tex-



TOP: Solarium Woven Rendering from Richloom

BOTTOM: 100% acrylic fabric from Sunbelievable by Z-Wovens with patterns (left to right): Minorce-Spa, Lagos-Ocean, and Sea Dog – Botanical





*TOP: Canvas Seasalt provides a backdrop for layering, while Tranquil Sage provides a linen-like texture. Dream Mist brings dimension with an organic ikat motif and embroidered stitch effect.*

*MIDDLE: Tropicana + Bernhardt from Revolution Fabrics*

*MIDDLE LEFT: Fabric from BLISS in Meadow, a new color*



Bestselling textures Rustica, Firth, Catskill, and Lansinger are some of Bella Dura's most popular patterns. Soft to the touch and Tough to the Core, they provide comfort while standing up to everyday use. "Bella Dura and Bella Dura Home are our Performance Line of fabrics, and are naturally stain- and water-resistant as well as bleach cleanable," Thomases explains. "This is due to the proprietary solution of dyed yarns and proprietary fibers. These high-performance fabrics deliver great looks, ease of cleaning/bleach cleanability, and stand up to the toughest demands of today's environments."

Tracking trends can be tricky, but Thomases sees popular textures "especially in warm neutrals and creams." Paired with bold pops of color and multicolor patterns, the trend is expected to continue. "What is great about multicolor is just how flexible these beautiful fabrics can be when it comes to decorating, allowing patterns to be layered and coordinated and providing a fun way to update a space," Thomases says. "You'll notice deep navy [ink], refreshing greens, as well as pops of black that are flattering to any style. Our designers do a remarkable job introducing gorgeous patterns and textures."

Bella Dura fabrics are made in the United States and PFAS-free, all part of a commitment to be environmentally responsible. "The Bella Dura Home collection consists of solution-dyed polyolefin and/or a high UV polyester fabric," Thomases adds, "all of which outperform and over-deliver, qualities synonymous with the brand. Our outdoor textiles are highly durable, fade, stain, and weather resistant."

**INSIDEOUT PERFORMANCE FABRICS**  
InsideOut Performance Fabrics (Valdese, North Carolina) has cultivated a stellar reputation as a decora-

tures. "It's been wonderful to see consumers begin to embrace more textural options like a luxurious chenille or rich bouclé for their outdoor spaces," she says. "Consumers also expect their products to be inherently sustainable. For many, it's not about the price tag, but rather about investing in quality, heirloom pieces that are meaningful, storied, and built to last."

According to Zac Bryant, director of Tempotest Home Fabrics, residential demand has been "a little sporadic as further supply chain kinks get worked out." He adds, "We're seeing a lull as inventories of manufacturers and retailers are returned to manageable levels ... Contract has started to pick up with requests starting to come in at a little better rate than during the pandemic."

Finally, the long-term trend of designs morphing from the living room to the outdoor room is still in full swing. "What really takes off in indoor seems to be jumping to outdoor," says Victoria K. Echols, director of outdoor at Revolution Fabrics. "A lot of indoor manufacturers are growing an outdoor collection."

This issue features a baker's dozen of medium to massive manufacturers, all with the ability to satisfy a diverse



array of fabric demands. Take a look and get ideas for a profitable second half of the year.

#### **BELLA DURA HOME**

Bella Dura Home, part of the Swavelle Group (New York, New York) recently launched its Bella Dura Cut Program, with 292 new colors in the company's

bestselling patterns, designs, and textures—all available by the yard. "We are so excited about this line of superior performance fabrics for worry-free living," says David Thomases, executive vice president. "They not only deliver great looks, but also ease of cleaning, and stand up to wear and tear of daily life."



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**TOP:** Indigo Cushion – part of the Phifertex Cushion Collection from Phifer Inc.

**RIGHT:** Solarium Woven Group Collection from Richloom

**BOTTOM:** Outer Realm outdoor fabric collection from Milliken features 14 decorative patterns and stripes in curated colors.

tive residential domestic manufacturer, thanks partly to a nimble corporate culture.

“Our vertical model allows us to quickly respond to yarn and color trends in real time in our own facilities instead of losing valuable time sourcing from outside vendors,” says Christy Almond, vice president of product development & marketing. “A great example is our newest texture, Liller, which features a proprietary yarn we designed and created in our own yarn-making department.”

The new yarn is called Kaleidoscope, and it’s designed to be highly textured and multi-toned, making it perfect for

weaving into textures or patterns for a unique look. These types of soft, tactile textures and colorful patterns amount to what Almond sees as a genuine trend in the industry.

Layered together, the textures are well suited to a relaxed, casual setting that allows consumers to express their personality with color and pattern. “Designers and consumers are growing tired of neutral beige,” Almond says. “Color is poised to take over, especially shades of warm golds, greens, blues, and desert tones.”

InsideOut Performance Fabrics have always been PFAS-free (including C6) and that commitment only deepened in 2021 when the company’s IOPF product began incorporating Upcycled Marine Plastics from the Seaqual Initiative.

The initiatives resonate with customers. “More customers are seeking products with a sustainable story in addition to performance and style,” Almond says. “With the addition of the Seaqual Initiative to our InsideOut Performance Fabrics product offering, retailers have the ability to offer a quality performance prod-

uct that not only uses upcycled marine plastic, but also cleans our oceans. Retailers can share this story with customers, thus adding tremendous value to the products.”

## SUNBRELLA

Officials at Sunbrella (Burlington, North Carolina) are seeing a continued interest in nature-influenced colors, textures, and materials. They’ve responded by freshening the green color palette with a new sage green. According to Sarah Dooley, director of upholstery, the color brings a sense of renewal and well-being to outdoor spaces.

Another color, Canvas Seasalt, provides a perfect backdrop for layering. “Our new classic stripe, Tranquil Sage, provides an airy, linen-like texture that can help to soften more modern, sleek silhouettes or integrate naturally into more traditional aesthetics,” Dooley says. “Pattern Dream Mist brings texture and dimension with its organic ikat motif and embroidered stitch effect, adding depth and visual interest.”

Sunbrella’s latest collaboration with Richard Frinier has brought six new striking patterns, all made in part with recycled content that provides an artisanal feel. “Inspired by Frinier’s

interest in grounding and rebalancing energy through a stronger connection to the earth,” Dooley adds, “these designs present a fresh interpretation of this idea.”

While some outdoor fabrics rely on a sprayed-on topcoat that can create a stiffer feel and wear away protection over time, Sunbrella performance starts at what Dooley calls the fiber level. “All Sunbrella upholstery fabrics are protected by our proprietary Color to the Core technology, meaning each fiber of every yarn is saturated to the core with UV-stable pigments,” she says. “This ensures the vibrant color of our fabrics does not fade over time and all fabrics we produce retain the same protection, look and feel, even after continual cleaning and usage.”

## TEMPOTEST HOME FABRICS

The 54 Vol III collection is the most recent launch from Tempotest Home Fabrics. Tempotest is produced by Pará S.p.A (Sovico, Italy) and marketed and distributed exclusively by the Miami Corporation (Cincinnati, Ohio) in the U.S.

According to Zac Bryant, director of Tempotest Home Fabrics, the collection features approximately 50



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PFAS-free SKUs of new solid colors with “interesting stripes and plenty of visual interest and texture.”

Tempotest’s Solids collection remains a bestseller, thanks mostly to a wide color range and patterns that offer textural interest. “While designers and retailers are pushing us to move to other colors, blue and gray remain dominant,” Bryant says. “For us, we see a new twist on the blue story using Spa blues paired with subtle earth tones of beach sand, shell, and driftwood. The nautical colors of indigo and chambray, paired with the clear azur blues of coastal islands, give a fresh spin to the strongest palette on the market.”

Neutral tones (with gray leading the way) remain popular, as well as serene gray tones juxtaposed with charcoal and onyx. “We’re also starting to see earth tones combined with sun-baked hues emerge, and they are a great complement to natural materials such as stone, wood, and rattan,” Bryant adds. “Ginger, cinnamon, and baked clay are colors that we are seeing gain traction.”

As a vertically integrated company, Tempotest controls the process from spinning to finishing and packing. “Our fabrics are woven in 100% solution-dyed acrylic fibers, which are inherently superior against sun exposure,” Bryant says. “Our spinning and weaving processes ensure that our fabrics resist pilling, which is an issue with fabrics woven in solution-dyed acrylics.”

### PHIFER INC.

The 2023-24 outdoor collection from Phifer Inc. (Tuscaloosa, Alabama) will feature nine new color introductions for 2023. Layered green hues of viridian, meadow, green tea, and vintage green are designed to reflect significant trends in nature and biophilia. Middle hues in apricot crush, soft brass, battle plan, and admiral gray will round out the palette.

Monica Thornton, director of design, believes that sustainability will continue to be a key trend for 2023, and consumers will become more concerned about the impact of their purchases on the environment. “Buying less by buying better will drive demand for higher-quality items that blend traditional and modern styles,” she says. “Sustainability will also reinforce a trend toward naturalness, with color schemes and textures from nature greatly influencing our homes and overall well-being.”

Thornton contends that another trend pushing all areas of design is Modern Nostalgia. Specifically, consumers seek comfort in the familiar as decorative styles from simpler times are updated in a more contemporary way. “This opposing, mix-and-match style allows for a warm and curated environment



TOP: PFAS-free fabric in the 54 Vol III Collection from Tempotest



BOTTOM: Batyline Elios from Serge Ferrari Group

that is not overdone,” Thornton explains. “Earthy neutrals with muted mid-tones or dark jewel tones give this design trend a true sense of era.”

Complementing those earthy neutrals with the right feel is a principle seen in a range of innovative Phifer fabrics. Andy Meggs, market manager of designed fabrics, points to the Phifertex Cushion Collection and Phifertex Matte Collection as two prime examples.

“The Phifertex Cushion Collection is constructed with a micro denier vinyl coated polyester yarn that offers increased pliability and a softer hand, ideal for cushion applications,” Meggs says. “Additionally, the Phifertex Cushion Collection has proven its versatility as some Phifer customers have used it in fabricating outdoor patio umbrellas. Their pliability makes fabricating an umbrella a breeze compared to standard sling fabrics.”

### SUNBELIEVABLE

Officials at Sunbelievable by Z-Wovens (High Point, North Carolina) ultimately chose to design and construct their products using solution-dyed acrylic to resist sunlight and weather exposure with maximum color retention. “This represents the highest level of performance available today,” says Bea Spires, vice president of design.

While performance is important, color and texture get equal attention. “We believe in color, beau-

tiful designs, and luxurious textures,” Spires says. “Beauty comes first—then we apply the necessary processes to make it a performance fabric. We chose 100% solution-dyed acrylic because it is such a gorgeous yarn. We have developed a wonderful collection of novelty yarns with boucle and chenille—and these are the distinguishing attributes that make our collections so special, and so beautiful.”

Sunbelievable has continued to explore attractive hues in jungle botanical greens, beyond the sea blues, calming aqua, warm earthy brown tones, and its forever range of neutrals. Vibrant lobster, lollipop reds, and warm golden sunshine hues are also in the works.

A PFAS-free finish called Z-Free has been part of the company’s materials since early 2022 and Spires reports that Sunbelievable has transitioned “almost all previous C6-based finishes to our Z-Free. Additionally, all new fabric development will be specified with Z-Free.”

Sunbelievable largely did not experience supply chain disruptions during the pandemic and Spires credits close relationships with raw material suppliers that increased inventory. “We have also expanded our production facilities, and invested in new equipment,” she says, “which has essentially increased capacity by 75% to 3 million yards per month.”

### TWITCHELL TECHNICAL PRODUCTS

Twitchell Technical Products (Dothan, Alabama) is known for its PVC-coated polyester brand Textilene, and the company is now entering a new category with performance area rugs, runners, and mats. Merging capabilities with subsidiary company Infinity Woven Vinyl, the collaboration is expected to deliver a versatile layer of visual interest to indoor and outdoor environments.

“As we enter our 101st year of business, we are



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delighted to introduce a range of new products that showcase our product diversity and outstanding reputation,” says Gena Webb, vice president of product development. “Our collection of rugs draws inspiration from top-selling patterns, textures, and neutral colors combining visual impact, beauty, and function.”

Contemporary-styled earthy textures in neutral palettes reflect the reputations of both companies. Infinity Woven products feature a heavy-traffic-rated vinyl backing that’s kid-, pet-, and party-proof.

“Twitchell’s famed Textilene is easy to clean, mold and mildew resistant, and engineered for UV stability,” Webb says. “Rugs are woven for real life.”

Webb believes consumers are looking for more depth and texture in fabrics and patterns. “Beige is the new gray,” she says. “Warm neutrals embrace comfort and blend with any style. The growing importance of serenity and balance will bring refined, bold blues and teals. The demand for bright, poolside colors and textured neutrals will never disappear.”

Twitchell designer Nancy Egge adds there is always a place for texture and geometrics. “Fabric can be one of the most impactful and versatile design elements,” she says. “We currently have more than 360 stocked fabrics available on demand. The Twitchell color library boasts over 1,200 custom pigments, and we are flexible in both manufacturing and design.”

## RICHLOOM

Headquartered in the Big Apple with additional operations in North Carolina and South Carolina, Richloom (New York, New York) supplies the upholstery, decorative jobber, hospitality, over-the-counter retail, casual outdoor furniture, and cruise and RV industries. An expansive product range includes prints, wovens, intricate decorative textiles, and finished products. With the ability to adapt swiftly to global needs, Richloom has offices in Shanghai, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Indiana.

In addition to its core offering of new prints, Richloom recently showcased a group of solution-



dyed solids at Interwoven, the High Point, North Carolina-based trade show organized by the International Textile Alliance. Attendees were able to feel the performance wovens—featuring slub yarns, twisted heather yarn, and textured weaves.

“We are known for our diverse performance print collections,” says Chuck Zaberto, divisional senior vice president. “These beautifully designed collections offer the splashes of color needed to perk up an outdoor area and also comfortably make their way indoors in an active lifestyle home. Ultimately, style and durability are at the top of our list when

reviewing our offerings.”

All of Richloom’s introductions will feature PFAS-free finishes. Solution-dyed yarns are used for woven fabrics and high UV-resistant water-based pigments are provided for prints. Getting products to customers has not been a problem, with Zaberto reporting, “Post pandemic, we have seen a normalization in the supply chain. Consumer demand seems to be on the rise.”

## CITEL

The latest product line from Citel, makers of the BLISS brand (Barcelona, Spain) offers seven collections built around individual color palettes, decorative jacquards, multicolored stripes, and small coordinating ditsies. The most popular jacquard introductions are an ikat pattern called Sumba; a smart, contrasting geometric pattern called Icon; and a distressed, horizontal landscape pattern dubbed Panorama.

Natalie Scott, director of Citel US, touts “Pattern Bijou” for its modern approach to the traditional café stripe, achieved by alternating a decorative ottoman weave using a proprietary marled yarn bank of colors. “New fiber color introductions

TOP: *BD Cut Neutral* from *Bella Dura Home*, part of the *Swavelle Group*

BOTTOM: *Pumice and Coast* by *Ultrafabrics*

include *Cerise*, a deep reddish pink; *Meadow*, which is a pure, nature-inspired green; and *Sea*, a tranquil, calm, and serene shade of blue,” Scott says.

BLISS bestsellers are its decorative dobbies—a continued success that Scott attributes to the company’s fully vertical mill that allows designers to develop proprietary yarns. “Citel has dedicated resources with a sole focus on yarn development in our spinning factory,” Scott says. “As a result, our design toolbox is rich with novelty yarns, allowing our design team to create a wide and distinct array of doobby fabrics which cover the gamut.”

BLISS specialty yarns include chenilles, bouclés, multicolored yarns, and blended yarns in a variety of sizes and textures. *Asgard*, a herringbone pattern, features a marled yarn while *Cozy* is a full-faced chenille pattern. *Core* rounds out the trio as a silk shantung-inspired bouclé pattern—with all three representing BLISS’ “best placed patterns” this season.

## REVOLUTION FABRICS

Revolution Fabrics (Kings Mountain, North Carolina) recently launched two new tight yardage collections called *Nashville* (classified as neutral) and *Broadway* (more colorful).

“We do the bouclé, really thick, beautiful-to-the-touch textures on the indoor side and when we bring them to the outdoors, they are absolutely beautiful,” says Victoria K. Echols, director of outdoor. “They are plush and rich to the touch and very high-end looking. The bestseller is white-on-white weave with the bouclé textures.”

With Revolution’s sourcing about 300 miles from the manufacturing facility in Kings Mountain, supply chain issues have not materialized. “We’ve had no issues on inventory and no issues on lead times at all,” Echols says. “That’s a huge benefit to doing business with Revolution, because everything is domestically sourced. We’re not waiting for a cargo ship to come in from the ports. We’re not importing anything.”

When those source materials come in, PFAS is not used, and never has been. “We don’t have to



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make any changes to the way we make performance fabrics,” Echols says. “They’re still bleach-cleanable; they’re still UV-rated. It’s still a great product and we never use the chemical. We’re not having to slow down to reengineer the fabric, or reengineer our mill to do anything different.”

For specialty retailers, domestic sourcing and PFAS policy are two of many items that customers may value. Echols also encourages retailers to reach out to Revolution for marketing materials such as banners, stickers, hang tags, and flyers. “Just ask,” Echols says, “and we’ll come to your store and help.”

### MILLIKEN & COMPANY

The newest collection at Milliken & Company (Spartanburg, South Carolina) is called Outer Realm, and it features 14 distinctive decorative patterns and stripes. The 68 fabric SKUs feature classical and modern motifs in carefully curated colors. “Our patterns can be mixed and matched to create a unique, inviting space,” says Maida Cameron, director of Design—Décor. “Our collection is functional and stylish, designed to complement the foundational textures of our New Vistas Collection.”

Consumers still want to fashion their own outdoor spaces, and Milliken’s diverse offerings cater to a wide demographic. “Traditional consumers are wanting a soft and muted setting, while the younger generation wants a richer color palette along with graphic motifs,” Cameron says. “Classic patterns are made modern and layered alongside contemporary patterns. Our Outer Realm collection has both to offer for a wide appeal.”

Milliken Outdoor Fabrics are made with a non-PFAS performance finish and 100% solution-dyed fibers to withstand the outdoor elements. According to Cameron, these performance fabrics feature fade-resistant color, mold/mildew resistance, and the comfortable feel or hand of an interior textile. Backed by a five-year warranty, the fabrics are water resistant, as well as being easy to clean and bleach cleanable.

“There are many attributes we consider when designing a new collection but the two that are most important are performance and color,” Cameron says. “Consumers expect durability, plus stain-and-fade resistance while being an all-around beautiful textile that will stay beautiful. Additionally, they are looking for a range of colors to choose from to make their spaces feel like their own.”

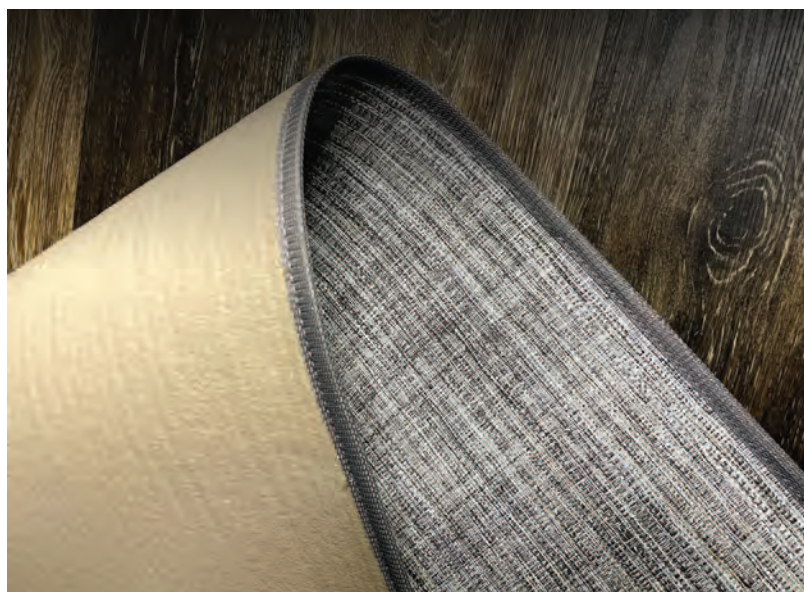
### ULTRAFABRICS

More than 15 years ago, Ultrafabrics (Tarrytown, New York) was the first fabric manufacturer to offer outdoor PVC-free polyurethane materials as an alternative to wovens. These days, the company’s proprietary Takumi Technology manufacturing process effectively uses resources to maximize final performance of its 100% polycarbonate polyurethane materials.

“They safeguard against the likes of active use and exposure, resisting water and moisture,” says Jeff Smith, director of sales, residential. “Engineered to also deflect against mildew, bacteria, and other sur-



TOP: Liller from InsideOut Performance Fabrics



BOTTOM: These rugs from Twitchell feature a unique, heavy-traffic-rated vinyl backing that’s kid-, pet-, and party-proof. It’s easy to clean, mold and mildew resistant, and engineered for UV stability.

Batyline Eden Loop.

“Different textures offer a beautiful range of either upholstery or sling choices,”

face pathogens, Ultrafabrics outdoor collections feature enhanced UV resistance to sunlight and colorfastness, remaining cool to the touch while providing unparalleled comfort and lasting protection.”

Coast performance outdoor fabric remains a bestseller, with Smith attributing strong sales to the fabric’s “soft and luxurious” feel that does not sacrifice performance, cleanability, or sustainability. “The new color addition of Naval Blue is spot on with any outdoor setting,” he says. “Ultrafabrics’ product tailors well for a multitude of seating applications. We coordinate beautifully with various finishes and frame styles and complement cross-coordination with woven textiles.”

On the aesthetic front, Smith continues to see a shift to warmer neutrals with gray as a popular alternative to beige and cream. Four new neutrals—pumice, hightide, anchor gray, and hail and oar—expand the palette.

“Blue and green options are also strong,” he says. “Blues and greens tie into outdoor environments naturally, are calming and soothing when an added pop of color is needed, and pair well with neutrals. Ultrafabrics has several distinctive grain options, giving our customers subtle to bold textures to choose from.”

### SERGE FERRARI GROUP

Collections in the Serge Ferrari Group (Deerfield Beach, Florida and La Tour-du-Pin, France) offer a mix of earthy, organic, and subtle colors. Familiar names are Batyline Elios Sling, Batyline Elios Waterproof, Batyline Eden Waterproof, and

says Laurent Pellequer, hospitality and furniture development market manager, Serge Ferrari North America. “Blending fabrics and mixing different materials yields sensual textures and colorful patterns.”

Several Batyline collections are performing well, and specific selections depend on the market—residential, commercial, or cruise line. “The collection getting the most interest and momentum now is the Batyline Elios range,” Pellequer says. “We also offer custom fabrics that we develop with our customers using our new program called the ‘Configurator’, allowing customers to visualize different custom designs online.”

Along with performance and aesthetics, the willingness to preserve the planet is also a primary concern among consumers. Serge Ferrari has maintained sustainability as a focus within its corporate social responsibilities. “We are developing not only recyclable fabrics but also new collections made of recycled products,” Pellequer says. “Our new Batyline Eden Loop is made of 100% recyclable polyester and 50% synthetic fibers. ... All our products are PFAS-free except for one collection which is being ‘reengineered’ to be without PFAS by the end of year.”

Manufacturing and production times have been significantly improved due to heavy investment in new looms, and pre-pandemic timelines are back with a 30% higher production capacity. “With custom designs and the performance of the Batyline range, we are able to give specialty retailers strong offerings in this competitive market.” ■