



FASHION AFFAIRS

The biggest international fashion and leather fair in the kingdom, BIFF&BIL 2014 is the highlight of the March trade shows. **Ellen Boonstra** reports.

With the many fashion fairs on the international roster, it can be a juggling act for buyers deciding which countries to visit. But a 'must-see' for industry experts and budding fashionistas alike is the Bangkok International Fashion Fair & Bangkok International Leather Fair (BIFF&BIL).

Set to be held from March 12 to 16 this year, the event is Thailand's top trade show for fashion wholesalers, importers, designers, retailers, manufacturers and exporters, together with anyone affiliated with the fashion and textile industries. BIFF&BIL is conveniently held in conjunction with

another major show – the Thailand International Furniture Fair (TIFF) – that highlights furniture, home décor items and lifestyle products.

More than 700 companies and 1,100 booths run by selected domestic and overseas exhibitors are set to display products and services at BIFF&BIL 2014 attracting an anticipated 24,000 visitors and buyers from around the globe.

The organisers project 200 million baht's (US\$6 million) worth of spending at the fair itself, with the total business trade stemming from the show for the whole year estimated to reach 900 million baht (US\$27 million). As customary, the show is divided into

professional and trade days, with sessions reserved for the general public. During the latter slots, visitors can discover the latest fashion trends, essential accessories and top designers.

Organised by the DITP, the show is also a collaborative effort by a number of key industry players, such as the Thai Silk Association, the Thai Textile Merchants Association and the Thai Garment Manufacturers Association (TGMA).

Founded in 1973, TGMA currently counts 387 members, whom the organisation supports through exhibitions, development training programmes, seminars, trade missions and other initiatives.

According to its president Sukij Kongpiyacharn, the top priority this year is to get Thailand ready for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

"Our vision is to promote Thailand as a value-added hub for the ASEAN fashion and apparel industry, with the intention of driving ASEAN fashion and apparel business to the world," he says.

Polpat Asavaprapha, founder of renowned fashion label Asava, echoes the sentiment. He recognises that while many designers in Thailand are well equipped to compete on a global scale and are achieving brisk sales both domestically and overseas, emerging talents may require a helpful guiding hand.

The Bangkok Fashion Society, a group of 15 top Thai fashion labels presided over by Polpat, is playing its part by coaching smaller brands and raising awareness of the Thai fashion industry, both domestically as well as internationally. Thailand's thriving retail landscape with many foreign fashion brands entering the market, is forcing local designers to step up

their game. Besides lending advice on practical matters like export procedures and international-standard packaging, the society also conducts workshops and seminars with industry experts.

“The cost structure will change, the demand will change, the whole game [of the fashion industry in Thailand] will change,” he says. “We’re actually competing against global brands, like Mango, Zara and Uniqlo, on a limited budget. It’s forcing Thai brands to run their businesses more efficiently.”

Polpat believes that Thai fashion design has a bright future ahead. As the world increasingly moves towards mass production, the demand for original and innovative design is set to grow, and this is where Thailand shines.

“It’s very different here from the rest of the world,” he says. “The craftsmanship, the originality of the design, the quality of the products... Thailand has the best total package.”

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Besides shining the spotlight on designers, there’s a lot more in store for anyone attending BIFF&BIL 2014. This year, Thailand is hosting the Asia Fashion Federation (AFF) conference – comprising member countries China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam and Thailand – at the event.

The conference features panel discussions on global retail expansion as well as fashion shows with designers from Thailand and Asia. To liven up the proceedings and make them more interactive and useful, a full roster of workshops, exhibitions and business match-making sessions is also slated. A section not to be missed is the Designer Room, which showcases collections from young designers.

“It’s very interesting for both Thai and international visitors, and I am very excited to see their fresh ideas and presentations,” says Yuttana Silpsarnvith, TGM’s executive director.



SHOW FACTS

Bangkok International Fashion Fair & Bangkok International Leather Fair 2014 (BIFF & BIL 2014)

Next Show Dates:

Trade March 12-14 (10am-6pm);

Public March 15-16 (10am-9pm)

Frequency:

Once a year in March

Venue:

IMPACT, Muang Thong Thani, Bangkok, Thailand

Exhibition area:

20,000 sqm

Organiser:

Department of International Trade Promotion,

Ministry of Commerce, Royal Thai Government

Exhibits (BIFF):

Women’s wear, menswear and children’s wear;

fashion accessories; textile materials; silk and

ethnic products; machinery

Exhibits (BIL):

Footwear; leather garment bags; leisure and sport

bags; raw materials and tanneries; machinery

Number of exhibitors (expected):

700 companies; 1,100 booths

Number of visitors (expected):

24,000

Websites:

www.biffandbil.com

www.ditp.go.th

www.thaitradefair.com

www.bfs-bkk.com

www.asiafashionfederation.org

Thailand International Furniture Fair (TIFF 2014)

next show dates:

Trade March 12-14 (10am-6pm);

public March 15-16 (10am-9pm)

frequency:

Once a year in March

venue:

IMPACT, Muang Thong Thani, Bangkok, Thailand

Exhibition area:

20,000 sqm

Organiser:

Department of International Trade Promotion,

Ministry of Commerce, Royal Thai Government

Exhibits:

Artificial flowers, plants and potpourri; Christmas

decorative items and handicrafts; home textile

and fabric decorative items; household products;

toys and games; stationery; and green and

eco-friendly products

Websites:

www.thailandfurniturefair.com

www.ditp.go.th

