

Playtime New York & Kid's Hub A/W 23/24: Kidswear

Versatility and cosiness are central to collections, as brands stay true to their core values and brand ethos without too much experimentation. Here we highlight the most exciting brands and design development spotted on the show floor and the digital platform

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Oucollie

Overview

The in-person show has expanded to five floors this season, with over 300 brands from across the globe including the UK, Hong Kong, Spain, Brazil and Ukraine. Standouts include Mimi Poupous from Japan, The QT from the UK, Poupée from Greece and My Little Cozmo from Spain.

WGSN's Head of Kidswear, Erin Rechner, took part in a seminar named Building Your Brand's Community, where the panel discussed ways to increase loyalty and sales through digital techniques and strong in-store community building. Read the accompanying piece about building a brand community [here](#).

With versatility and transseasonality high on the agenda across the show floor, true knitwear was prevalent throughout, with comfortable matching knit sets also key. Comfort and heritage themes were the focus for buyers, who were cautious with orders this season, sticking to tried and true trends that stick. There was an emphasis on more responsible products with an increase in undyed styles, a focus on natural materials and development in plastic-free packaging and tags. Scroll down for the must-have brands and emerging trends from the in-person event and its online B2B platform, [Orderwizz](#).



Editor's pick: Milkology

Made and designed in Mexico, Milkology has supported ethical and sustainable practices from its conception. Having recently teamed up with the first sustainable printing factory in Mexico certified for a 100% recycling water programme, it's now a member of the [US Cotton Trust Protocol](#). In addition, the brand has organised workshops for women in jail and on probation, paying them a fair wage to make dolls from offcuts while offering occupational and psychological therapy.



Thrift shop

Thrifted looks continue to inspire kidswear with a more playful edge for A/W 23/24, as brands experiment with colour and pattern-clashing, sometimes all in one look. This narrative sits in line with our Care Culture forecast, where throwback directions are explored for kidswear, taking inspiration from older generations and offering a more stylised and upbeat take on this trend.



Sweet vintage

Another strong theme that looks to the past for inspiration is this soft take on vintage. Items are designed to last through seasons and trends, with features that make them more responsible and long-lasting, such as reversibility. Take Appulu from India – the brand uses slow design processes and pays close attention to details that make items unique, such as appliqués created from deadstock prints and monomaterial designs that lend biodegradability at the end of life.



Homeproud

This theme ties in with our Home-proud concept within the Care Culture forecast direction, where interiors inspire fashion. Kitchenware, chairs, tables and decor offer inspiration for prints and graphics. Blankets and throws inform blanket-like layers such as ponchos, spotted in knitted and quilted versions. Abril Flores Mil from Colombia looks to the home as inspiration for its new range, featuring domestic pets such as the corgi as a character across a range of accessories.



Cabincore

Cabincore design directions blend practical and comfort-driven pieces for a warm, nostalgic take on #TheGreatOutdoors. This was a popular theme at Pitti Bimbo and CIFF Kids, with the gilet, shacket and heavy-gauge sweater emerging as key items at the New York shows. #TeddyBear graphics get a woodland update, with the grizzly a popular graphic choice, enhancing the rugged spirit of this theme.



Statement knitwear

Knitwear was abundant at Playtime New York, in line with Pitti Bimbo and CIFF Kids, proving to be a key category as brands focused on long-lasting items that can be handed down or resold. #StatementKnits played with #Geometrics refreshed in colourful, upbeat checks with gender-inclusive appeal. For commercial updates, animals were a key component, with 3D elements adding a sense of play.



#AddOnKnits

In addition to key knitwear items such as the sweater and cardigan, [#AddOnKnits](#) introduce a soft, modular accessory for kidswear, echoing the popularity of the [balaclava](#). As the weather becomes increasingly unpredictable, these packable add-on layers are key for creating extra warmth in place of bulky scarves, with a clean and minimalist look that's appropriate for indoors and outdoors.



Plush gilet

The gilet is another layering item that's versatile and protective, in line with our [A/W 23/24 Buyers' Briefing](#). High-pile textures were the material of choice in New York, adding a sensorial layer over simple knits and basics. This A/W staple appeals to the consumer mindful of the high cost of living and deepening climate crisis, with versatility key.



#SupremeComfort set

#HomeHub and #Slounge looks are given a super-soft update, aligning with the rise of #Plush, #SupremeComfort and #HyperTexture narratives. Coral fleece, peached cotton and teddy fleece are popular choices for the casual set, ranging from baby to tween designs. Abril Flores Mil from Colombia uses recovered cotton and fabrics made from plastic bottles, bringing a sustainable quality to its playful printed collections.



Collared dress

#StatementCollars are here to stay, in removable and fixed iterations, with the woven top and #Cottagecore dress seen featuring this must-have add-on for A/W 23/24. The majority of collared dresses lean into retro territory, with zesty oranges and warm shades of rust invigorating core autumn palettes, and corduroy and #RetroFlorals key.



Wide-cut trouser

Brands continue to move away from skinny-fit bottoms, with the wide-leg working well within a comfort-first narrative. #WideLegTrouser silhouettes and flared fits were called out in our [A/W 23/24 Buyers' Briefing](#) and are key for the increase in gender-inclusive styles within kidswear.



Undyed and natural

#Undyed naturals and #Neutrals are key across product categories as brands continue to explore more sustainable solutions from fibre to dye, packaging to components. Pamboo, designed in Switzerland and made in Ukraine, uses RWS wool and GOPCA-certified organic materials without chemical dyes or bleach. It also uses compostable tags made from 100% recycled seed paper that can be planted after purchase. Tane Organics from New York has used purple corn as a dye in its organic range, in addition to undyed styles, giving items a unique, soft grey tint.



Intense Rust

Our A/W 23/24 Kids' Colour Forecast called out a shift in browns, as we anticipated them moving towards warm and rich shades such as Sepia, Ginger Biscuit and Intense Rust. Team with neutrals and cobalt for a retro back-to-school assortment, or pair with pinks and oranges for a luminous take on autumn palettes. This colour is key for A/W 24/25, so don't underestimate its longevity and transseasonal appeal.



Vibrant citrus

Orange, which tends to be a bit more difficult to sell, is having better luck for A/W 23/24 as buyers gravitate towards this vibrant and energetic shade for kids. The most popular hues range from [#BeaconOrange](#) to [Candied Orange](#), fitting into a wide range of themes such as [Digi-hike](#), thrift shop and [Home-proud](#).



Vintage pink

Although Digital Lavender is having a moment, with many brands including it in assortments, brands are also expressing that it does not get nearly as much interest as pink. In terms of trending colours, Digital Lavender is the clear winner, however with buyers increasingly risk averse, this is where vintage pink triumphs. Familiar, comforting and soothing, this hue works well in a cautious market.



Fluff and stuff

Tactile and [#Plush](#) materials continue to drive kidswear, with some fresh interpretations coming to the fore. Textured fabrics are used to update jackets, sweaters and cardigans, with rompers and overalls getting a fluffy overhaul for the baby market. The [#BucketHat](#) gets a cosy update, in line with our [A/W 23/24 Key Items](#), and sweatshirts are refreshed with pieced and pocketed details that fit into outdoor adventure narratives.



Action points

1

Invest in responsible design practices that can set you apart from the competition

Continue to improve your brand's circularity developments and invest where it can make the biggest impact. This can mean everything from sustainable packaging to low-impact dyes, upcycling and deadstock strategies to carefully considered material choices. Be mindful of micro-shedding with the rise in plush textures, and choose materials appropriately

2

Design into items that are familiar and cost-conscious, as they are proving to win over buyers in a rocky marketplace

Brands and buyers at the New York shows said there was a lot of window shopping this season and a focus on buying deeper into brands that offer a retro and vintage feel and designs that are familiar. Practical pieces will work well in a period of continued uncertainty

3

Use #ColourBlocking and #PatternClash designs to refresh nostalgic directions

With vintage and retro looks key directions for kidswear, use vibrant pairings to set yourself apart. Offer a sense of joy and enthusiasm through mix-and-match collections that are transseasonal and gender-inclusive

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