

Spotlight on Innovation

LEATHER WITH LYCRA® FROM MARTINE: IMPROVING UPON NATURE

Innovation and fashion are inseparable partners. And increasingly, new fiber and fabric developments are the tie that binds them together. In a series of articles, DuPont LYCRA® spotlights trailblazing textile and apparel companies and retailers that are using DuPont's multiple resources as a springboard to stretch their imagination.

You may not be able to fool Mother Nature but updated fabric technologies can allow you to improve upon it. Just such a marriage, between one of nature's finest materials and one of science's most successful fibers, has resulted in Leather with LYCRA®, which is redefining the comfort and fit of luxurious leather fashions.

About a year ago, apparel designer and marketer Martine discovered that a handful of European tanners had employed LYCRA®, to solve an age-old problem, that leather apparel permanently bags and sags after multiple wearings. Martine seized the opportunity to create a unique collection made entirely of this new leather phenomenon, calling it Martine Stretch Leather.

"Think about traditional leather," explains Martine. "Skin tight leather pants are not easy to sit in because they don't stretch with your body. Although some skins are softer than others, after a while they all lose their shape."

Leather with LYCRA®, is a process that fuses a lightweight woven fabric with 3-5% LYCRA®, content to the back skins. The tanning process is modified to create skins with considerably more of their natural stretch intact—and rely on the LYCRA® in the backing fabric to provide the "memory" to ensure the garment keeps its shape.

Months of experimentation with construction and fit resulted in the first Martine Stretch

Leather collection, introduced in DuPont's Design Gallery at the last MAGIC show. It will make its retail debut for fall 2000 in such forward-thinking specialty shops as: Fred Segal/Ron Herman, Los Angeles; Dungarees, Santa Monica; Gil's, Austin, Texas; and Spirit, Edina, Minnesota. The early top seller is a European-styled, slim-fit jean jacket which—along with several other jackets, pants and tops—fill out the range that wholesales between \$170 and \$350.

The stretch and recovery of Leather with LYCRA®, allows garments to shape up without the styling limitations of traditional leather.

"The biggest advantage is in tops," says Martine. "We make long-sleeve, suede T-shirts that must be made of stretch suede or you couldn't even get them on. In tight-fitting jackets, the stretch allows the shoulders to expand when you sit and move."

Another advantage is that the smooth fabric backing can be worn directly next to the skin, eliminating the need for linings for pants and tops. Most of Martine's jackets, however, are constructed with compatible stretch linings.

Because stretch leather garments cannot be mass produced, Martine advises, "they will never be able to retail for \$100, but they will always give you comfort and durability." Each Martine garment is cut and sewn individually in local Los Angeles factories. The backing fabric's weft stretch means garment pieces must be cut and sewn as though they have a grain.

"This is a specialty product for people who don't care about cost but care about comfort and want to look good in leather," says Martine. "Like Rolls Royces and Lamborghinis, if you want the very best, Leather with LYCRA®, is there for you."



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