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## Direct from Market: Chicago

*By Meredith Schwartz -- Gifts & Decorative Accessories, 1/27/2010 12:48:00 PM*

Chicago – Monday's keynote speech by Gordon Segal, chairman and co-founder of Crate & Barrel, at The

Chicago Market: Living & Giving was a resounding success. Show management received well over 700 RSVPs to attend: The response was so large that they had to move the event from the Mart's Conference Center to a ballroom in the adjacent Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, where the full room gave Segal a standing ovation. He stayed 20 minutes extra for a spontaneous question and answer session. Another measure of Segal's popularity: Monday's market attendance rose 36 percent over last year.



Gordon Segal

Segal used the history of Crate & Barrel, complete with many humorous anecdotes, to illustrate his main themes: that stores should have a single point of view; that they need to offer either a unique product, or a common product at a unique price; and that product should appeal to a broad range of customers. He also suggested that retailers should hire for personality (passion and high energy) because you can train people on your business but not in those qualities; and that they should "hire slow but fire fast."

The mood in the Chicago aisles was positive: traffic was up (22 percent over last January, according to MMPI), the parking garages were full, and people were buying as well as looking, with exhibitors reporting sales anywhere from "decent" to "great!" not a single person we spoke to was unhappy with their results.

MMPI senior director of marketing Paula Guilano emphasized the Mart's new tagline, "especially the lines," which is designed to convey that the all the lines and brand names buyers are looking for are all present at the Mart, though consolidated onto fewer floors than in years past. This may be temporary: According to Guilano, the Mart hopes to expand to a second floor of temps in the future.

Another MMPI initiative, sponsored by Midwest-CBK, was a Twitter raffle, in which anyone who tweeted about market could include #chitowngift to be entered to win a digital camcorder or flat screen TV.

### Twice the Temporaries

The Mart's decision to drop the price for the temporaries paid off. According to MMPI, the market expanded its temps by 50 percent, and 40 percent of the temps were new-to-market resources. Many we spoke to were brand new to the industry, not just the Chicago show.



One Eighty

Notable newcomers included [ShapeShiftas](#) Armaments pillows shaped like arms, best booth display winner [Saucy Girl](#) vintage-inspired aprons; One Eighty eco-inspired design decorative metal pieces made from salvaged materials, one-month-old company The [Smart Hook](#) decorative bag anchor, and [WineCarriage.com](#), which sells wine bottle and glasses carriers made in Colorado with artwork by local artists.

Among the new resources were many Fair Trade companies, all members of the Fair Trade Federation, including new South African jewelry resource [World Shoppe](#). Even though the company is brand new, its founder Megy Karydes is no stranger to the Chicago market: she used to work for the Mart before going out on her own. Fair Trade is among the categories the Mart hopes to expand even further in years to come.

National trends that were well-represented in Chicago included turquoise, Pantone's color of the year, and of

course coastal, which showed up on everything from pillows at [Chandler Four Corners](#) to shell-topped vintage bottles at [Kenneth Ludwig Home Furnishings](#). The robot motif also appeared, especially at new exhibitor [Intl. Robot](#), which featured nothing but robot designs on both T-shirts and wall-decor.

[Roman Inc.](#) gave robots (and rockets) a back-to-the-future twist as part



Roman

of its retro collection, which also includes new smaller sizes of their hit product, an old-fashioned television with a scene inside. Also notable at Roman is the iTree, a hybrid of a snowglobe and lava lamp, in which green liquid jumps in time to the music that plays through the speaker.



Kenneth Ludwig

*Gifts & Decorative Accessories* contributing editor Carol Schroeder said she saw butterflies as a hot theme at the show. We also noticed birds, popular for years now, showing up

in mid-range saturated colors and simplified, graphic shapes at [Global Views](#), [Imax](#) and [Design Design](#).

Chicago's Lake Living highlighted depictions of the Great Lakes on everything from clocks from [Lake](#)

[Art LLC](#) to coasters by [CoasterStone](#) to coffee

tables from [Harbinger Laser](#), but they weren't the only maps at the show. Cartography showed up as a motif on everything from new National Geographic desk accessories from [Enesco](#) to map jewelry by

**Sue Rosengard Jewelry Design Ltd. and Kathy Lo Rocks.**



Enesco

These days green seems to be transcending trend status and becoming a staple. One twist on the common bags-made-of-old packaging motif was **ReFashioned**, which turns recycled aluminum cans into woven cuff bracelets. But green is not just showing up in product offerings: One common refrain heard at the show was that companies were

“going green” by eliminating catalogs and line sheets, offering CDs and websites in their place.

Of course, there are always those standout discoveries that don't fit into any trend. Other fun finds from the

Chicago aisles included **Thin Scents**, which offers candles, reed diffusers, room spray and “travel tart” which claim to help curb appetite; peace, love and happiness serveware from **Inspired Generations**; gourmet salt line **Beyond the Shaker**, which seems poised to turn salt into the next coffee or tea; The new-to-the-USA minimalist Brink line from **Present Time**, with products like a bicycle repair kit, perfect for men's gifting; Design Plus award-winning bendable Formila Harry and Harry Jr. from **Benny Seide**, whose tangle of tentacles can be used to hold just about anything; and **Sugar Notes**' line of handcrafted cards for cancer survivors.

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