

Best of Show Sidelines

This year's BookExpo America extravaganza at the Javits Center in New York City was packed with people, prose and products worthy of consideration. The following three sidelines earned the rating "best of show" for their overall quality, originality and suitability to a bookselling environment.

All the better to see you with, my dear. LightWedge, an innovative, sleek new design for a more efficient and streamlined book light, brings elegance to the job as well. A lighted 6¼" x 9¼", distortion-free, optical-grade acrylic lens that extends across the entire book page, LightWedge capably delivers all of its brightness onto the reading surface, reducing shadows, glare and strain. In addition, since the light emitted goes directly onto the page, there's no excess shine to reflect off into a sleeping partner's (or airplane, car or train companion's) eyes. Thin and lightweight (only 8.5 oz. with batteries), sturdy LightWedge is easy to handle and to slip into a briefcase, tote bag or suitcase; when not in use, it also serves as a convenient bookmark stored between a book's pages. The amazingly bright but eye-friendly LED lamps that illuminate LightWedge (with two brightness levels) are guaranteed to last forever; the four AAA batteries that power it will keep a page lit for up to 40 hours (or seven coast-to-coast airplane flights), more than twice as long as any other reading device currently on the market. Just rest LightWedge on the left page and read, then flip it over to read the right; the removable page rest holds it in place on either side. Click it off, close the book and snooze. Currently available in a size ideal for hardcover or larger trade paperback formats, LightWedge will soon come in a magnifier edition as well as a version sealed for smaller paperbacks. Call LightWedge's creator, Jamey Bennett, at (917) 209-5547, e-mail jamey@lightwedge.com, www.lightwedge.com.

From van Gogh's, Matisse's and Hemingway's pockets to yours: a venerable se-

ries of note and sketchbooks returns to inspire the 21st century. The classic black pocket-sized journal, Moleskine, touted about Europe by artists and intellectuals for two centuries—but out of production for several decades—has been reproduced and reissued by an Italian manufacturer and is now available in the U.S. as part of the fabulous offerings from Kikkerland Design Inc. in New York City. These tasteful little books come in pocket (3½" x 5½") and large (5" x 8") formats, all of them bound with the trademark black covers and containing a variety of acid-free papers (lined, blank, graph). Each notebook comes with a woven bookmark, elastic closure and an expandable inner envelope made of cardboard and cloth. Address books, Japanese accordion albums, memo-pockets and diaries round out the selection. The new Touch Diaries present the classic papers in textured bindings—subtly trendy. The mere sight of these notebooks gets the creative juices—verbal or visual—flowing.

Some of the coolest desk and office accessories also come from Kikkerland. Attractive and amusing desk lamps, clocks, small vases, photo frames, noteholders, pens, calculators, CD holders and cleverly compact games are but a few potential distractions from the tasks at hand. The unofficial prize for most endearing time waster goes to Kikkerland's series of small metal windup toys designed by Chico Bicalho. Vaguely insect-like, these critters wobble and climb over desk and tabletop clutter with endlessly entertaining ease. An absolute must for anyone under deadline. Call (212) 678-2250, fax (212) 678-6296, www.kikkerland.com.

Educational toys never looked so good. The folks at Folkmanis Puppets in Emeryville, Calif., have combined cute with clever in their new Baby Folkmanis line. Targeting the very youngest consumers, Baby Folkmanis products are designed for children from birth and up (the traditional Folkmanis line is recommended for ages three and up). Joining the delightful *My First Puppets* soft book, which

A trio of sideline winners deemed the best of this year's BEA trade show

opens up to reveal four colorful hand puppets and four finger puppets, with rattle and crinkle sounds, are *My First ABC Puppets* soft book, Peek-a-boo Bunny and Monkey Play Cubes, bath puppets, soft cars and trucks with finger puppets and several new soft rattle puppets in the shapes of zebras, leopards and cows. The Hey Diddle Diddle Storytelling Glove Puppet takes the age-old nursery rhyme and puts it all on your fingers. The soft fabric glove emulates the glittery night sky, with a moon flap on the palm; when lifted, a scroll with the words of the rhyme is revealed. The fingers of the glove include a cat playing a fiddle, a jumping cow, a laughing dog and, of course, a dish running away with a spoon.

Folkmanis's new "eating puppet" collection features animals and their favorite foods, which each puppet can "eat" through a small hole in its mouth. The chocolate brown Eating Bear comes with a pink-and-gray salmon finger puppet; a bright orange fabric squid squirms down the throat of the off-white baby Beluga Eating Whale; and the black-and-white pig scarf down his favorite ear of corn. Included with the puppets are stories designed to encourage interaction and conversation, although the sheer visual and tactile enchantment of these playthings is surely more than enough to spark the imagination. Call (510) 658-7677, fax (510) 654-7756, www.folkmanis.com.



My First ABC Puppets features alphabet flaps and four hand puppets.