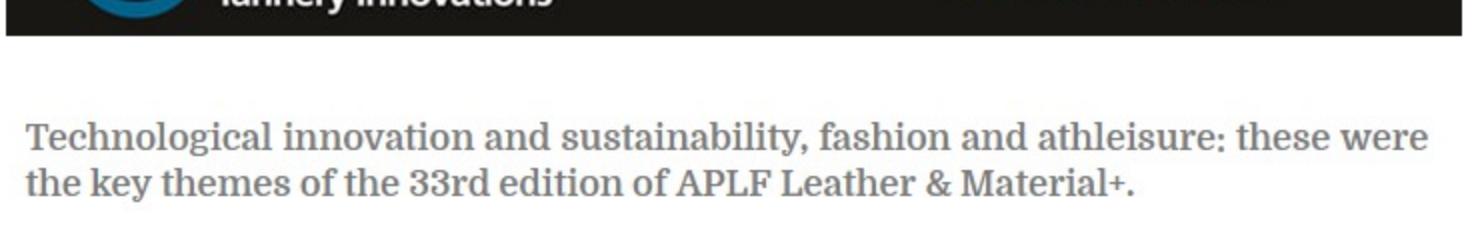




APLF, in the spirit of dynamism

In Hong Kong, from the 29th to the 31st of March 2017

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Technological innovation and sustainability, fashion and athleisure; these were the key themes of the 33rd edition of APLF Leather & Material+.

The platform of reference for the leather supply chain in Asia returned to enliven the halls of the Hong Kong Exhibition Center from 29 to 31 March 2017, bringing together 800 exhibitors (of which 222 were new entries) with more than 16,000 buyers: numbers that are on the rise, when compared to the previous edition, and which were also the protagonists of a lively work session.

"The feeling of liveliness permeating the halls of APLF was tangible" – declares Michael Duck, Director of APLF and Vice President of UBM, the fair's organizer.



"With years of difficulty left behind them, I believe that today people in Asia have greater confidence and are aware of the direction being taken by the industry: China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India are going through a phase of change and development that generates opportunity. While the European and USA markets are showing signs of uncertainty, in Asia there is a higher level of confidence. And Asians have started asking themselves: why should we be worried about what happens in North America or Europe? We must develop our business, our communities, and education for our children... Ok, we can follow trends in fashion and technology, but we can also dictate them according to our own trends... What is happening is exciting: it is the start of a new cycle in Asia".

The protagonists of APLF were tanning machines, chemical products, leathers, accessories and components: it is the latter part of this selection that was part of a re-branding in the "Materials+" area, where "materials" stood for a focus on Athleisure trends, which is a big hit among Millennials throughout all of Asia (and beyond). Instead, the "+" of the new name introduced shoe-machinery sector technology.



"We have decided to implement a re-branding of the fair for a more logical organization of the offer", – explains Perrine Ardouin, Director of APLF, "–in Hall 1, we have placed all the suppliers belonging to the leather supply chain, including chemicals, tanning machinery, and leather. In Hall 3, instead, we proposed Material +: it was an experiment, the staging of a new idea. Highlighting not only materials, but also technology for shoes, represented by market leaders in automation and robotics, Atom and Comelz. The proposal received excellent feedback from visitors at the show and fully embraced the concept of the fair, Merging craft workmanship with innovation".

Next to the exhibition, APLF also proposed a rich calendar of events, seminars, and conferences, which were closely followed by a numerous public. Among the "hottest" topics addressed, with the contribution of sector experts, were those dedicated to Sustainability along the entire leather supply chain, and Trends in Footwear Retail and Fashion, with a special focus on Athleisure. Taking place in conjunction with the event was Fashion Access held in Hall 3 of the HK Exhibition Centre, with a selection of fashion accessories as its protagonist.

The next edition of APLF will be held from 14 to 16 March 2018, once again at the Hong Kong Exhibition Center.

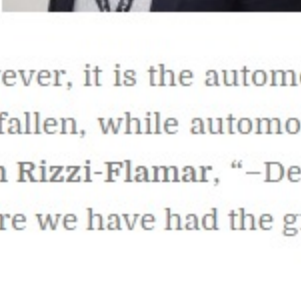


"Despite our closing of many small tanneries", – explains Marco Fogli from Thema, "–so many have remained open and there is sufficient room for everyone to do business, more room than other markets that are becoming increasingly limited. Buyers requested machines for the treatment of leathers, the finishing and ennobling, which is necessary for leather production in the fashion industry".

The on-going reorganization also creates opportunities: "Environmental issues are making the difference in China", – explains Paolo Matelli from Alpe, "–and so, those who produces machines with a greater focus on eco-friendly solutions succeed in having significant margins. Chinese tanneries are moving from the South to the North of the country, and those that move are planning on using sustainable plants and machinery: an aspect that previously no one was interested in and which today opens up a number of opportunities for the Italian tanning-machinery sector and for businesses like ours".



Businesses that continue to be preferred for the quality of their products: "There is always a technological advantage for Made in Italy", – says Alberto Baggio, from Baggio Tecnologie, "–and this is the aspect that allows us to qualify our offer, giving it that extra edge over the growing local competition".



Roberto Calattini, from SC Costruzioni Meccaniche, presented the company's depuration plants at the fair: "Big groups already have their own depuration plants, while small tanneries unable to adapt are forced to close".

However, it is the automotive industry that is the driving force at the fair: "The trend in shoes has fallen, while automotive continues to reinforce its growth", – explains William Pellicciari from Rizzi-Flamar, "–Despite our readiness to reply to the needs of all tanning sectors, this is where we have had the greatest feedback at this edition of the fair".

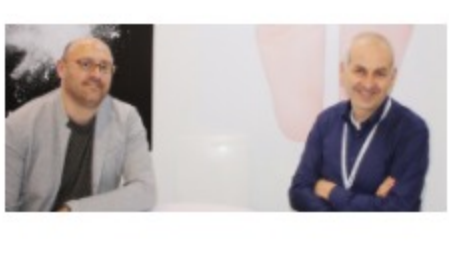


Along with the massive turnout in Chinese visitors, the event also attracted buyers from all of Asia and beyond: "APLF is a meeting point with the entire world", – confirms Lorenzo Freschi from Mostardini-Barnini, "–If China is a market characterized by some difficulty, at the fair we also met up with customers from Uruguay, Brazil, and Vietnam".

The chemical companies were also satisfied with the outcome of the fair: "Apif is always an excellent vehicle for reaching Asian markets", – comments Claudio Piamplani from Chimica Italiana, "–here at the fair we met up not only with Chinese buyers, but also those coming from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India".



To these nationalities, Andrea Fastelli from Tecnochimica adds "Vietnam, Indonesia... in general, there was a larger turnout compared to past years: among our products, buyers visiting our stand appreciated those for ennobling leather and finishing it".

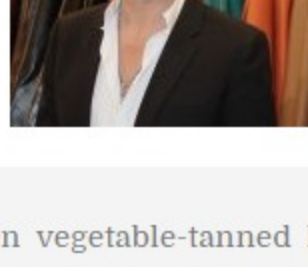


Transfer papers for leather, elasticized and bi-elasticized, were instead the most in-demand of LMF Biokimica's products, confirms Bruno Muccignat, who was satisfied with the company's renewed participation in the event: "At APLF we met up with more Chinese buyers at the fair than in Canton".



Dermacolor also commented positively on the latest edition of the fair: "Notwithstanding we were in a slightly removed location, there was still an abundance of customers", – declares Andrea Meucci, "–Many showed interest in the certifications that satisfy MRSL criteria: those manufacturing products for the European market, in fact, must comply with its terms".

The collections presented by Italian tanneries aroused the interest of buyers: "We are happy with the appreciation expressed for our fashion proposal", – comment the sisters Silvia and Anita Scafuto from Humane Hide, "–Buyers were especially enthusiastic about the laser techniques, metals, and fur, which is an extremely cutting-edge trend".



The offer of Concieria Bonaudo was instead more classic: "It is the product that our customers prefer", – explains Alessandro Iliprandi, "–While for the European market we have a trendier proposal, for our Asian customers we propose more traditional products".

Even vegetable-tanned leather had its own niche: "At the fair, we met up with our usual customers from China, Hong Kong, but also from South Korea, Japan, and Thailand", – explains Andrea Ghizzani, from Concieria Montana "–These markets are familiar with the characteristics and quality of our product and return to buy it".



Protagonists of the debut at Material+, Atom and Comelz are worldwide leaders in the shoe-machinery sector. The former brought the technological innovations of Atom Lab to the fair, which were presented by Eng. Sergio Dulio, who commented: "We enthusiastically accepted the proposal to participate in APLF and we are satisfied with the interest created by our innovations, like the robot that was a source of great curiosity, creating a sensation in the halls of the fair".

Comelz instead focused on the technologies devoted to small and mid-sized companies, like the Caligola system and cutting machines, "A strategy that has proven itself to be a rewarding choice", – comments Fabrizio Bellagamba, "–to the extent that we never had a free moment at the fair".



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For the 21st edition of the event to be held in Shanghai from 29 to 31 August, the organisers of the All China Leather Exhibition expect buyers not only from the tanneries and manufacturing industries of China, but also an increasing number of participants from the countries of South-East Asia, which represent an increasingly important leather goods and footwear manufacturing industry, thanks to their rising numbers.

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