

APLF Leather & Materials+
Fashion Access
Cashmere World
14 – 16 March 2018

APLF
Serving the Global Industry

Press Release

For immediate release

14 March 2018

Encouraging Economic Backdrop for 34th Edition of APLF

Widely recognised as the **Annual Meeting Place for the Global Leather Industry**, the 34th edition of APLF takes place from 14 – 16 March at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre (HKCEC).

The earlier dates will allow professional buyers to locate the materials they need in good time to manufacture collections for Fall/Winter 2018 – 2019 and in future years avoid a clash between the former late March dates of APLF and Easter Week.

With APLF Leather & Materials+, Fashion Access and Cashmere World all taking place concurrently, under the same roof, APLF is presenting a Triple Show Event.

Leading up to the fair, there has been a raft of positive economic news that bodes well for the atmosphere and confidence on buyers coming to Hong Kong. Such news includes:

- Global stock markets reached record levels earlier this year and despite recent price volatility still reflect a positive growth outlook. The last IMF growth forecast for global GDP issued in January 2018 notes that the stronger momentum of 3.7% experienced in 2017 is expected to carry into 2018 and 2019, with global growth revised up to 3.9% for both years.
- Bain & Co reported that luxury sector sales in China had increased by 20% in 2017 – a startling rebound from the doldrums the market was in during 2016 and this trend looks set to continue into 2018.
- Consumer confidence is buoyant in the US, Europe and China. European GDP has shown its best performance in the last decade and India's economy is also expected to grow by 7.5% in 2018 according to ministry forecasts.
- Real wages have risen for the first time in almost twenty years in the US
- Interest rates and inflation rates remain low in industrialised countries where most of the demand for consumer goods comes from. After a record year in 2017 for global automobile sales, a consolidation at these heady levels in this big ticket sector is expected by many auto analysts.

In contrast the leather industry has been suffering from an oversupply of raw materials that has kept prices under pressure at the lowest levels seen since the financial crisis. This could, however, stimulate demand in the footwear sector as lower leather prices can better compete with synthetics that have taken market share in the shoe manufacturing sector.

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What is needed to boost demand is for designers to turn their attention to leather and its characteristics of longevity, beauty and most importantly biodegradability.

The sectors that continue to be most active in terms of leather demand are upholstery and automotive and this latter sector had a record breaking year in terms of vehicle sales worldwide in 2017 and could consolidate at these high levels in 2018.

The Main Hall for APLF Leather was sold out some three months before the fair and has attracted exhibitors from Africa, the return of Egypt as a pavilion, exhibitors from Uganda and a brand new first time presence from five Sudanese companies). In addition some of the world's major chemical suppliers have also reappeared at the fair – these include Fenice and Zschimmer & Schwarz.

Materials+

Held on the third floor of the HKCEC on the same level as Fashion Access and Cashmere World, Materials+ enters its second year after its successful launch during APLF 2017.

APLF Materials+ is the platform to source advanced functional materials and components for use in fashion-forward footwear, bags, garments and fashion accessories, which cater either to the "fast-fashion" trend in the sports ready-to-wear markets or to the more high-end demands of the "bespoke" market.

With machinery and specialist components required for the products characteristic of a sports-lifestyle shift in developed economies, Materials+ had a highly successful launch edition with 8,500 visitors passing through the fair from 82 countries and regions.

In fact, many sourcing professionals from well-known brands were present in Materials+ including the following brands:

Asos, Adidas, Armani, Burberry, Charles & Keith, Chloé, Clarks, Coach, Dr. Martens, FILA, Gucci, GAP, H&M, KENZO, Levis, Li & Fung, New Balance, TBS Group, TUMI, Under Armour, VF Corporation, Wolverine.

With a fair like Materials+ targeting the sourcing and manufacturing requirements of the latest fashion trends, contacts and even contracts are just a step away at this new, dynamic event.

This year there are 839 exhibitors from 42 countries and regions exhibiting at APLF Leather & Materials+.

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Fashion Access and Cashmere World complete this Triple Event

This year Fashion Access has been divided into three clearly defined segments to help buyers better navigate the fair and make the most of their time at the fairgrounds. These are:

- Sourcing Zone
- Brand Avenue
- Design Street
- Cashmere World

There will be OEM manufacturers waiting to produce collections to designers' specifications but also ready-to-wear sourcing opportunities for retail and boutique buyers.

The combination of Sourcing Zone from manufacturers plus the original designs that can be found in Design Street and Brand Avenue make Fashion Access a uniquely rounded event catering for every type of buyer.

Cashmere World returns after a brief hiatus in 2017 with encouraging news from the rising sales of luxury goods in China during 2017. There is a strong presence from Chinese companies from Inner Mongolia indicating that the China cashmere sector is still well directed towards exporting its products as the world's biggest manufacturer.

Key buying offices are regular visitors to Cashmere World as it is the only trade fair dedicated to cashmere and natural fine fibres. These buying offices include such prestigious brands such as Burberry, Hugo Boss, Loro Piana, Armani, Eastmax Fashion amongst others.

#iNSPIREDBYAPLF

There are three trend areas developed from the iN themes curated by Olivier Guillemain in collaboration with Comite Francais de la Couleur–“iN Colours & Materials” at **Materials Trend Space**, “iN Fashion” at **Fashion Trend Space** and “iN Cashmere” at **Cashmere Trend Space** located throughout the fairground. These trend spaces allow designers and manufacturers to have a glimpse of upcoming materials and colours to start planning their future collections and the suppliers of these materials and trends can be located as exhibitors at the fair.

Fringe Events During APLF

For more than fifteen years it has always been APLF's philosophy that trade fairs are not just about sourcing or “buying and selling” but constitute a meeting place for the industry.

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Here exhibitors and buyers can discuss the latest news and topics pertaining to the industry; make new contacts and consolidate existing customers; gather market intelligence and, last but not least, benefit from conferences and seminars crafted to serve the interests of the industry and to be of practical use when taking strategic business decisions or planning for the future.

To this end there will be two major conferences taking place this year during APLF:

Global Footwear Retail Conference (GFRC)

Since the launch in 2015, the Global Footwear Retail Conference (GFRC) has been bringing together over 100 key footwear retailers to this annual meeting in Hong Kong to discuss on ground-breaking ideas, latest innovations, technologies and critical issues that are shaping the retail scene.

In each edition, the programme is designed to stimulate interactive and constructive discussions between industry experts and audience with business networking opportunities to maximise their visit.

Organised by APLF and the Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America (FDRA), this year's GFRC, this year's conference will feature interventions by: Le Saunda, Deckers, WGSN, Wolverine Worldwide, Li & Fung, FDRA, The Footwearists, Hong Kong Footwear Association, Atom Cutting & Robotic Equipment and more.

Listen To Experts and See Footwear 3D Printing at Work

The emergence of new micro-manufacturing technologies, including in-store manufacturing is revolutionising footwear production. Two fully functioning micro-factories will be operating at the conference giving audience a live demonstration of how 3D printing works.

Sustainability in the Leather Supply Chain

APLF and BLC are delighted to have once again organised the half-day Sustainability in the Leather Supply Chain Hong Kong Conference, due to be held on 15th March 2018 from 12 noon in Room N101B here in the fairgrounds.

Leading authorities on chemicals and sustainability in the leather industry who will be participating are:

- Michael Costello - Director of Sustainability, Stahl
- Sarah Walton - Senior Director of Sustainable Materials, Nike
- John Graebin - Sr. Director of Materials, Deckers Outdoor Corporation
- Victoria Addy - Technical Director, BLC Leather Technology Centre Ltd
- Dietrich Tegtmeier - Vice President, LANXESS Deutschland GmbH
- Eric Wang - Senior Environmental Sustainability Manager China, Primark

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