

Playtime Paris

26 – 28 January 2019

The International childrenswear, maternity and lifestyle show

www.iloveplaytime.com

by Laurian Davies MBE, UKFT

Overview

Edition 25 (A/W 2019) of Playtime Paris, 26 – 28 January 2019 was held as usual at the Espace Événements in the Parc Floral, near the Château de Vincennes, on the Eastern outskirts of Paris. One of the world's leading international childrenswear and maternitywear and lifestyle exhibitions, it takes place in January and July each year. The show fills several interlinked single-story halls. Maternity wear and lifestyle items cover 2 halls; other merchandise is spread throughout the remaining 5.

Almost since its first edition, UKFT has had Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) grants (See Note 1. below) from the DIT (Department for International Trade) for eligible (see Note 2 below) UK designers and brands exhibiting at Playtime Paris. This season, 27 UK designers and brands showing accessories (including child-friendly nail polish), fashion collections, dress-up, and changing bags were approved for TAP grants.

UKFT has worked with the Playtime Paris organisers since it first began 11 years ago, and we know them well. UK designers and brands wanting to show should first visit the show, to see for themselves how their competitors merchandise their stands, and what the merchandise mix is at the event. Potential exhibitors should then apply direct to the organisers for space through the website and they will then be placed in the location which the organisers consider to be the most appropriate for their collection.

Whilst Pitti Bimbo in Florence remains the key international trend show for exclusive and luxury childrenswear brands, Playtime Paris has expanded rapidly, and attracts large numbers of UK brands who are keen to meet quality buyers from around the world (including a good number from the UK!).

Playtime Paris covers a large part of the childrenswear offer, from designer to contemporary (but largely excluding very classic collections, with the exception of a very few classic babywear brands). Children's apparel, footwear and accessories are the major focus, but Playtime Paris is a very important show for maternity wear. Layette, children's giftware, teething and children's jewellery, nursery products and print design services, are also well represented.

The “look” of the show is casual and design-focused. There is a “New Now” section showcasing 12 new childrenswear brands per season (on smaller stands at a reduced cost); situated near one of the main entrances. This is curated by Romaine Coonghe of Junior Style London and Tangereene Magazine.

The organisers can sell bare space on which a stand can be built (following strict guidelines, this works for a few of the larger brands), but the majority of exhibitors take an equipped stand package (with walls, chairs, lighting, carpet etc.). Walls and floor can be left bare at a lesser cost, but this does not work for all brands...this is one of many very good reasons for visiting the show before booking space! However highly the show has been recommended to them, a potential exhibitor needs to see what would best suit the look of their collection.

558 brands exhibited this season at Playtime Paris. A record 128 of these were newcomers to the exhibition, 400 came from outside France. More space was needed to accommodate additional brands, so a large tent was added at the North entrance of the exhibition. 68 brands were from the UK, of which 27 were in receipt of UK Trade & Investment TAP grants.

As part of the #BRITSAROUNDTHEWORLD social media campaign, UKFT promoted all the British exhibitors under the #BRITSINPARIS banner. The list of UK exhibitors can be found here:

<https://www.ukft.org/export/export-essentials/brits-around-the-world/event/brits-in-paris-3/>

This exhibitor list was promoted to buyers, agents and press, available on the UKFT website, and a postcard version was distributed at the show.

As with each show to which UKFT takes companies under the TAP scheme, all UK exhibitors (whether grant supported or not) were invited to send their logos and images of their collections for the UKFT Brits in Paris Playtime Paris film, which is posted on YouTube, please take a look:

<https://www.ukft.org/export/export-essentials/brits-around-the-world/event/brits-in-paris-3/>

Buyer Attendance:

According to published figures, 7,235 professional visitors attended the show; of these 42.8% were from France, and 57.2 % were international. The largest group of buyers was from Europe, followed by France, Asia and USA.

The Top 5 European countries were:

Belgium
The Netherlands
United Kingdom
Germany
Spain

The visitor breakdown per day was as follows:

Saturday	Day 1: 37%
Monday	Day 2: 32.2%
Tuesday	Day 3: 30.8%

The show is always well attended by both the key domestic and international Childrenswear specialist Press (print and digital).

What did the British exhibitors say about Playtime Paris January 2019?

Two longstanding exhibitors at the show commented that it had been excellent for them, better than for many seasons, “just like the early days!”

Lisa Joyce from first time exhibitors Kidunk (protective clothes for messy play) said: “The Playtime Paris show has already had a positive effect on our business and an influence on the perception of our brand. It was an incredible environment in which to share experiences and ideas with like-minded exhibitors, but also to get in front of buyers and distributors not previously available to us. Visitors to the show were keen to work with us and learn more about our plans for the future. Playtime Paris and its outcomes have shaped our business strategy for 2019 into 2020.”

“We are cautiously optimistic – orders are beginning to come through, and if the orders placed at the show all materialise, we should be in good shape! Many thanks for your support,” said **a new exhibitor showcasing children’s outerwear.**

Deborah Medhurst from girlsweat brand The Middle Daughter said: “Participating in Playtime Paris is fundamental to our business. The volume and diversity of international buyers allows us to get our product in front of all markets at the right level, and to establish good relationships. It’s absolutely the right decision for us to show here.”

“Playtime is our favourite show, it’s always so inspiring. The quality of buyer is good, and we really appreciate the opportunity of showcasing our new range to such an engaging international audience,” added **A regular exhibitor, children’s footwear.**

Exhibiting brands are also showcased in Playtime Online, the virtual platform launched in June 2018; it gives exhibitors a second chance to be seen by buyers or agents who were not able to see them at the exhibition, and is a valuable resource to exhibitors and buyers alike.

As usual, UKFT had a meeting with the Organisers during the show, to discuss business in general, and Playtime Paris in particular. Buyer behaviour was a particular topic this season, and the absolute necessity for brands (especially newcomers, but it also applies to larger brands showing for the first time) to have a strong up to date website with decent images

and copy that truly reflect the personality of the brand. Strong social media is also important to attract buyers to the idea of taking on a new brand, and Press coverage also helps a lot.

“Big” buyers certainly visit Playtime Paris, but they are increasingly there for pre-arranged meetings with suppliers they know. This makes it essential for new brands to do their homework in advance of the show and make sure to target the buyers they want to sell to – buyers expect this.

UKFT can help with this aspect of promoting your brand or collection – contact Laurian Davies for a discussion before visiting the show.

The dates for the next edition of Playtime Paris are 29 June – 1 July 2019. If you have visited the show, to apply to exhibit, go to www.playtimeparis.com and email the Organisers.

DIT TAP grants will be available for eligible UK companies, exclusively through UKFT. Exhibitors must apply for a grant at the same time as applying for space at the show.

Demand for grants will far exceed supply, so any company wanting a grant should complete and return the grant application forms as soon as they receive them. Grant application forms will be available in March 2019.

If you would like grant application forms when they are available, or if you would like to know more about the show, please contact Laurian Davies at UKFT
Tel 020 7843 9460 or email laurian.davies@ukft.org

Notes:

1. The DIT TAP grant. The Tradeshow Access Programme is funded by the Department for International Trade, and grants for the fashion and textile sector are administered by UKFT. The grant for this exhibition was £1200 per company, payable as a reimbursement on proof of payment after the event. TAP grants are available through UKFT, and applications should be made as soon as a company begins the process of applying for a stand. A company is entitled to 6 TAP grants in the lifetime of the company.

2. TAP grants are available to UK-based SMEs.

The DIT Definition of an SME (Small or Medium Sized Enterprise):-

- a) Has fewer than 250 employees
- b) Has an annual turnover not exceeding 50m Euros, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43m Euros

NB. DIT reserves the right to review the eligibility of businesses that are distinct and independently operated, but are part of or owned by an organisation itself larger than an SME.

3. UKFT (UK Fashion & Textile Association), the trade association for the UK fashion and textile industries. Financed by the industry for the industry, UKFT is the largest industry sector user of TAP grants from DIT.