

View from the shows: Paris Men's, Women's Pre-Collections, Paris Showrooms and Splash Paris June 2019

The show landscape is changing but buyers are still in town, reports Paul Alger, UK Fashion & Textile Association (UKFT) from Paris

Hot on the heels of Pitti Uomo in June, UKFT's next major fashion event was the Paris men's fashion week, pre-collections, the men's and pre-showrooms and Splash Paris swimwear and beachwear. For the past three years, all three of these "market weeks" take place at the same time at a mixture of three key trade shows (TRANOI HOMME and PRE, MAN and MAN/WOMAN and SPLASH) as well as approximately 45 multi-brand showrooms in central Paris, from Showroom Central" in the Marais to the affluent residential quarters of the 8th and 16th arrondissements.

There were 21 companies supported by grants from the Department for International Trade, coordinated by UKFT. These were spread liberally through all three shows and 13 independent showrooms. Overall, there were 153 UK brands at the shows and 17 showrooms and another group of brands showing independently in Paris. Thankfully, the UKFT representative is a dab hand on Paris's Lime S scooters, enabling rapid (if slightly bumpy) travel around Paris!

Concerns about the *Gilets Jaunes* movement, which disrupted Paris previously have now given way to deep concerns about Brexit, as reported in our previous report on Pitti Uomo. More information on this can be found at www.ukft.org/brexit.

Buyer Traffic:

Whilst buyers were most definitely in town, Paris, and particularly the Marais, felt quieter than usual. Buyers appeared to be concentrating their time on specific venues very carefully and some were spending fewer days in Paris. At the same time, as we saw in Florence, some were visibly looking for something and interesting rather than the "same old" ubiquitous "Luxury" brands which can be found online as easily as anywhere else.

As last year, there is a feeling that increasing presence of women's pre-collections and swim has taken the accent away from menswear. Whilst the number of showrooms in Paris has increased, it is not likely than the number of buyers with open to buy budgets has increased – quite the opposite. So whilst the increase of the showrooms may give the impression that the

market in Paris is growing, behind the scenes the market remains fragile, increasingly niche focused and more competitive.

Overall, Paris felt quieter than last summer. This is very much in line with the feeling of a market under pressure. Notwithstanding this, most British exhibitors said that they had seen their main buyers and the showrooms reported that their appointment numbers were in line with or slightly above their expectations for the season. There were different views on the week from companies depending on whether they showed in trade fairs or showrooms and also between menswear, women's pre and swimwear and beach, with the swimwear show feeling especially upbeat and ready for the summer temperatures.

Tradeshows:

This season, we have seen a continuation of the trend towards smaller and more targeted and intimate tradeshows whilst at the same time showrooms have tended to consolidate on brands they are already working with. This makes life more complicated for new brands looking to get in.

Tranoi at the Palais de la Bourse was completely revamped with a new retail store concept which really wowed visitors. Gone were the two metre high monolithic stands and in has come a bright and airy open plan event laid out like the very best concept stores.

British exhibitors Simeon Farrar, Harris Wharf and Yolke confirmed that they had had a good response at the show. Simeon Farrar said: "When I first arrived I was really surprised by the new layout and I gave the organisers a hard time about the lack of furniture on the stands. However, I have had a good experience here and have seen some my existing customers and some new ones". Harris Wharf also reported having had a busy three days with a lot of international attention in the range.

Meanwhile, MAN/WOMAN continued to develop its strong heritage and workwear inspired collections along with sportswear. British exhibitors Lou Dalton (with her John Smedley and Gloverall collaborations and mainline), Studio Raeburn, (ki:ts), Albam, Oliver Spencer and Sunspel all reported good business at the show.

Will Dixon, representing Studio Raeburn said: "In general, Paris has felt quieter than previous seasons but we saw the majority of retailers we expected to. Paris remains important for us to meet and work with the world's leading stores!"

Splash! Paris:

The summer also saw the return of the highly successful Splash Paris swimwear and resort show in tents alongside the Seine, close the Grand Palais. Splash is giving the established swim and resort shows a run for its money. Well laid out and organised, the show is winning

the hearts and minds of buyers and exhibitors alike by giving them what they want: a well thought out and executed swim and resort trade show at a reasonable price.

Laid out in two tents with a view of the crystalline waters of the Seine (the sun was shining throughout), there was an impressive mix of established brands and newcomers. Once again, the British exhibitors were pleased with the show and it was clear that the key operators of the sector had taken the time to visit.

More established brands such as Heidi Klein, Derek Rose, Frescobol Carioca, Paolita, Sophie Anderson and Juliet Dunn were visibly popular and their deliberate proximity to the newer brands such as Arkitaip, Cloe Cassandro, Atelier Greta meant that they also got to see the buyers. This works well for everybody.

Debbie Lovejoy of Kalmar said: “We were delighted to have opened new accounts as a result of showing for the time in Paris in June. We are looking forward to Miami this weekend and hope to increase our US sales there too.”

Ana Paola of Paolita said: “Splash! Paris was wonderfully curated with a really helpful, hard-working team that were always readily available to help. It is an extremely important show for us, as many of our European / Middle Eastern / Eastern European buyers only travel to Paris to do their buying. It’s essential we see them there, early on in the season, to gauge a response on our collections and print stories. We have had amazing feedback on our designs. I had pre-booked most of my appointments for our existing and potential stores, but we had some nice surprise visits from stores such as Bloomingdales, Editions Maldives and Rumpus. We wrote good orders with existing accounts such as Depeche Mode and Molol with had many selections from a mix of existing / potential accounts.”

CIFF Paris:

Tucked away on the outer edge of the Marais at Garage Amelot (close to the Cirque d’Hiver and Saint-Sébastien-Froissart), was another new show concept, this time launched by the organisers of the CIFF tradeshow from Copenhagen. This first venture by the Danish behemoth into the French market had an edgy research and party feeling about it. Far more casual and design-based than CIFF during Copenhagen Fashion Week, the organisers are investing to build a new vehicle in France where they feel they will see a more international selection of buyers – not all make it to Copenhagen every year as Paris remains the most international of the fashion and market weeks.

British brands Labrum London, Benton and Johnson (the new RTW casualwear collection from Toye Kenning and Spencer), Ocularis and a number of smaller brands showing with Schröroom agency, including great collections from Clío Peppiatt and Tolu Coker, appeared to be happy with the layout and concept of the show. Those located on the top floor were

worried about the extreme heat, which can only have worsened throughout the show and will have alienated buyers, especially those from the US who cease to function above 19 degrees! It will be interesting to see how this show evolves in Paris and how it impacts on CIFF in Copenhagen.

Lara from Schröroom said she was “delighted” with the quality of the new contacts she had made on the first day from the USA and Australia. Foday from Labrum London said he was very excited about the long-term prospects for the show and said he had already seen a number of UK designers considering the show for next season.

Showrooms:

This season, most showroom organisers decided to hold back from taking in new brands or expanding their showrooms, especially with Brexit on the horizon. Because of this, we had a number of brands which struggled to obtain space at their preferred showrooms. However, there have been a number of new showrooms for smaller and innovative brands including Nieuway by Darren Skey, Common Trade (2nd edition), Tora Tora showroom and a handful of others.

Polly King, one of the best run and most in-demand showrooms, split her men’s and women’s showroom, starting with men’s then switching over to women’s pre- on Saturday. This was a calculated gamble which appeared to pay off and worked well for agency and the brands. British brand Wicker Wings was especially busy. They had appointments throughout the week and had received a number of “walk-ins” from Asian buyers.

The Alphabet was busy as usual with its eclectic mixture of brands. The agency has plans to expand carefully next season. Alex of Horn Please was delighted to be at the front of the show with a great space to show off his vibrant prints. Thelma Speirs representing Bernstock Speirs commented on the excellent quality of the buyers she had seen, even if numbers felt to be down across Paris.

YouConcept, next to Tomorrow Ltd, is a small incubator showroom for promising new talents. This season saw three smaller UK brands all with interesting collections: L. Saha, Ester Kubisz and Camilla Bloom. Ester Kubisz, showing in Paris for the first time with some amazing British fabrics at YouConcept said: “It was a great experience and very important for the future development of my brand that I was at the showroom. For my first show, I met a number of important stores including Selfridges, Harvey Nichols Doha, L'Eclaireur, Antonioli, Barneys New York Japan, Cuccini, Julian Fashion... I am not sure if this season will generate any sales however I believe that next season will start to bear fruit as I continue working on these relationships”.

Awaykin returned to rue des Arquebusiers with Primury, Shrimps, Story Mfg and the Vampire's Wife who had a busy show. This year they were joined by Folk. The showroom bus busy and thriving throughout the week with smiles all round when UKFT came to visit.

Welcome Edition at rue de la Fontaine au Roi north of République continued with its successful third season with young UK casual and workwear/heritage brands including Far Afield, Instrmnt, Kestin Hare, Nigel Cabourn (moved from MAN this season), Riz Boardshorts and Thomas Dutton and Throwgood England. In only three seasons, the showroom (launched by Mark Battista (formerly Jacket Required and the Content Store in collaboration with Scottish designer Kestin Hare) has become a real destination for casual and heritage buyers.

Joe Sharpe of Thomas Dutton and Throwgood said: "Welcome Edition Paris is always an enjoyable show for us. It is not solely about the traffic but the quality of buyer we see and the feedback received from them allows us to provide a strong start to our season ahead and get in front of many of the finest stores in the world"

Touba returned to its deconsecrated church in Avenue Ledru Rollin with an updated and refreshed concept, bringing art and fashion together. Fode Sylla brought the works of American artists into the showroom alongside the UK and international brands. The RTW collections included Heresy, Roker and And The Sky Goods, a particularly beautiful collection.

New entry, Nieuway, curated by Darren Skey, brought a number of interesting and exciting collections to Paris, some for the first time: ANZ, Avant l'oeil, Auxiliary Footwear, Malle and Soho Grit. There was a heavy emphasis on footwear but alongside some great new ready to wear.

Tora Tora made a very successful launch in rue Charlot with designers Renata Brenha, Paper Men and Marché Marché showing. This showroom has been created by Yuko Fujita (ex: Touba) and was especially popular with buyers from Japan, Korea and the rest of Asia looking for new women's wear and accessory designers.

Other UK designers were showing in Paris again this season, including UKFT member and now UK-manufacturer Barbara Alan. Alan Maughan representing the brand in its standalone showroom between the Marais and Beaubourg said: "The general feel of all fashion weeks is much more subdued and the number of buyers around has noticeably declined. The overall report back from stores is that the market is very difficult. Paris has been much stronger than Milan for us this season and many customers we would normally see in Milan or both, have only travelled to Paris." He continued: "Overall, we have had a very positive season with all our current customers returning and happy, mostly with an increase in the budget allocated for our collection."

In their own words:

Paul Alger of UKFT said: “This week has been a real whirlwind as we have more shows and showrooms in Paris than ever before. This creates a challenge for buyers and press as it takes time to get around Paris in the heat. Nonetheless, our companies have generally fared well, with both existing and new accounts, and I have seen a number of amazing British collections and products this season, including UK manufactured and sustainable brands, which have been especially popular with buyers”.

Debbie Lovejoy of Kalmar said: “It was wonderful to work with UKFT for the first time during the Resort market week in Paris. They offer great support to new businesses and the grant from the Department for International Trade allows us to show not only in Paris but also at Cabana and Miami for the main resortwear season”.

For details on how to apply for vetting, space and/or grants contact paul.alger@ukft.org