

View from the show: UK Childrenswear at Pitti Bimbo edition 90

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Exhibition Report by

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Pitti Bimbo, the international junior fashion and accessories exhibition, is held in January and June at the ancient and splendid Fortezza da Basso fortress in Central Florence. Commissioned by Alessandro de' Medici, the first Duke of Florence, the Fortezza was built between 1534 and 1536. Strategically located in the historic city centre, near the Santa Maria Novella main railway station, the original buildings have been sympathetically restored, new pavilions have been added in recent years, and it is now the principal congress and exhibition venue for Florence and Central Italy – see <http://www.firenzefiera.it/en/our-venues/fortezza-da-basso>

For the fifth season in recent years, 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 Pitti Bimbo. 10 UK designers and brands showing accessories (including top end party wear, sustainable fashion, skiwear and changing bags) were approved for TAP grants.

This exhibition took place just as China was being locked down for the COVID-19 virus. Chinese buyers and other Chinese visitors did not leave home to visit Pitti Bimbo this season, but buyers from the other major markets were still travelling, and most of the UK group had an excellent show.

It's a really international show in terms of buyers: 5900 buyers from stores, shops, boutiques and online stores all over the world attended the January 2020 edition. Buyer numbers held steady: the majority of buyers are always from Italy, but this season 2350 buyers were from outside Italy – from 80 foreign countries. The largest number of non-Italian buyers was from Russia (+10%) UK (+31%), Netherlands (+15%), Austria (+30%), Greece (+13%), South Korea (+56%). Buyer numbers from Ukraine were up 70%, albeit from a small base. Good numbers were seen from France, Turkey and the USA.

In total there were 550 exhibitors. Again a very international crowd...the largest group from Italy, other large groups were from Spain and France. The UK was well represented as usual with 34 designers and brands. 28 came from the Netherlands and USA exhibitor number was stable at 24.

Pitti Bimbo is spread across various different halls and buildings on the exhibition site, including many exclusive individual private show rooms and chalets, in which large brands stage their own mini-exhibitions. This season Dinoski, a new exhibitor from the UK, parked up their big yellow school bus in Piazza Ghiaia (in the middle of the exhibition park) ...and showed their kids skiwear there to great acclaim.

The merchandise sectors this season were:

Pitti Bimbo: – Central Pavilion, Lower Floor:

The “Super Designer Labels” such as Aigner, Colmar Originals, Airwool, Byblos, Emporio Armani, DKNY, Michael Kors, Petit Bateau, Yves Salomon Enfant, Sophia Webster and Angel's Face from the UK designer.

Pitti Bimbo: – Central Pavilion, Ground Floor:

Internationally known childrenswear brands and marques e.g.: David Charles (UK), Ferrari, Fiat 500, Special Day, Ikks Junior, Tartine et Chocolat.

Fancy Room: – Central Pavilion Lower Floor

100% Lifestyle design and accessories, from gadgets to technology. Brands e.g. Blade and Rose, Cute Cute, Mimi & Lula, Pigeon (all UK). Many brands here show through their agent/s or distributors.

Apartment - Lyceum 24 exhibitors (7 from the UK)

Luxury contemporary childrenswear and accessories for exclusive boutiques. UK Brands e.g.: Caramel, Hucklebones, Jem + Bea, Jessie and James London, Raspberry Plum Ltd, Belle Enfant (all UK), The Middle Daughter.

In The Kid's Lab, in the Central Pavilion, Top Floor were:

KidzFIZZ:

The Pitti Bimbo concept lab for the most creative collections e.g. From the UK The Bonnie Mob, Frugi, Holly Hastie), Mimi & Lula, Holly Hastie, Dotty Dungarees, Loud, The Bonnie Mob.

The Nest:

Small independent brands and up and coming collections. No UK brands selected this season.

Ecoethic:

A small selection of ethical and responsible kidswear brands such as Kildbury, Mori, Toastie, Toby Tiger, Mini la Mode feat. Peter Rabbit (all UK)

Kid's Evolution – Mini-me brands

Sport Generation - Cavaniglia Pavilion – Sporty and street brands e.g. Crocs, Fabric Flavours (UK), Sunuva (UK), Minoti (UK), It's in my Jeans (UK), Emu Australia, Sunuva (UK), Tom Joule (UK)

Superstreet – denim, street and urbanwear Brands: Blue Effect, Guess Kids, Ocra, Someone Kids, Dirkje, Wheat

The Pitti Bimbo show is child-friendly (children under 12 are not allowed on-site, but instead there is a nursery and children's play area), and globe-trotter friendly (a capacious baggage store and cloakroom make it easy for buyers to get to work as soon as they arrive at the show, and there is considerable free parking for buyers).

Pitti Bimbo 90 was a very successful event for most of the British exhibitors, many of whom were there for the first time. It is extremely important for an exhibitor not to rely solely on Pitti's efforts and international reputation to attract buyers to the show, but to make efforts themselves to let buyers know that they will be at the exhibition. Formal invitations are not expected these days, but interesting and thoughtful emails building up to the show, starting off with news of a general location and building up to a stand number (including embedded thumbnail images) really encourage buyers to visit a specific stand.

What did a selection of the Brits think of the show?

"This show is essential for top end childrenswear, there is no better showcase."

"We currently have a just small presence in the Italian market; investing in a stand at Pitti Bimbo was a big decision for us, so the funding was very helpful. Buyers saw our collection through our Italian representatives at the show – they would not have seen it elsewhere."

"We would not have tried out Pitti Bimbo if we had not had a grant – we made some fantastic contacts, and took orders as well."

The Brits in Florence group of 34 companies was promoted by UKFT through targeted mailings of the exhibitor list, see <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/ukft/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/10154448/Pitti-Bimbo-Jan-2020-Brits-in-Florence.pdf>

and the production of the Brits in Florence Pitti Bimbo video of images from the participating companies which can be seen here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhpETRMWQ-g&feature=youtu.be>

Dates for the next event 25 – 27 Florence at the Fortezza da Basso

Pitti Bimbo is a "juried" show (this means that each brand is selected, and the organisers have to really want you there. To get space you will need to make a strong application which showcases your brand or collection, and your company. To apply for a stand, apply direct to the Pitti Bimbo organisers. www.pittimmagine.com

Competition for certain areas is stiff, and not every company which applies is accepted to show. If you are new to the show, we have notes on how the Pitti Bimbo show and the application process works. If you are planning to show for the first time, please email Laurian Davies Laurian.davies@ukft.org or call 020 7843 9460.

To apply for a TAP reimbursement grant to help with your costs for Pitti Bimbo, please email Laurian Davies for the grant application forms Laurian.davies@ukft.org. This must be done at least 3 months in advance of the next exhibition.

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 may have up to 6 TAP grants in the lifetime of the company.

² **TAP grants** are available to UK-based SMEs from the Department of International Trade (DIT) through UKFT
Brief summary 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

c) Has not had 6 TAP grants, and is ready to export

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 which is itself larger than an SME.

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

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