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NEWSLETTER FROM THE FUTURE OF TANNING

Skylines leather

New market

horizons

Facing the challenges
of a changing world



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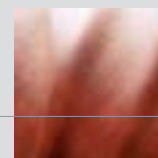
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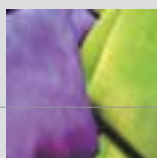
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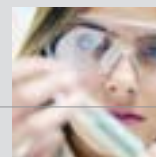


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focus On

The challenges of a market

Exports in trouble, the increasingly ferocious competition of foreign countries, and the reduced buying power of the western world are by now accepted facts. For its part, ChimontGroup faces this particular moment with the determination and awareness of a business that is stimulated rather than frustrated by the constant changes that a constantly changing market 'forces' them to make. Inventing new compact processes that reduce the quantity of materials used, increasing the quality of the products, notably reducing the consumption of and pollution of the aquifers are only some of the examples of the great challenges of the future. For this reason, our goals are the same as always: constant innovation, ecology and processing economy. Thanks to our seasoned experience in Italy we can help emerging countries in problem solving. In their turn, these countries can suggest alternate solutions to these problems.

Because we believe that this is the only way, through the continuous exchange of knowledge, to bring about the turnaround in this sector and, as a consequence, a real improvement in the leather industry. Welcome to LeatherZone.

Remo Petroselli
ChimontGroup
general manager

Chimotan Ac

Quality that improves process and creates savings.

The latest project signed by ChimontGroup was born from the need to eliminate the use of sodium chloride from the processes of acidification of leather, avoiding dangerous and irritating acid swellings of the collagen.

The final aim is to create a process of acidification that falls within the standard work parameters, maintaining the organoleptic characteristics of the hides while eliminating sodium chloride from the waste waters.

Premise

Standard processes of acidification use from 7 to 10% of sodium chloride. The use of this sale creates a blotting effect that makes it possible to eliminate swellings on the surface of the leather. On the other hand, the high concentration of salt in the baths results in an environmental impact that is decidedly elevated, and therefore considerably increases the cost of purifying the waste water.

The alternative

The use of **Chimotan AC** in place of the salts eliminates contamination from sodium chloride while leaving the blotted effect on the leather unaltered, and thus avoiding all risk of swelling due to dehydration of the fibre (with the consequent presence of the saline formations on tanned leathers).

Comparison

Comparing a standard process with that created thanks to **Chimotan AC** shows that leathers treated with this product are round to the touch, fuller, more compact, with fine, very firm grain.

And, when leather previously treated with **Chimotan AC** is chrome tanned, it is possible to note a greater stratigraphic distribution of the chrome. When vegetable tanning is used instead, the velocity of penetration and the distribution of the vegetable extracts within the leather are considerably increased, regardless of thickness.

It can be concluded that whatever system of tanning is used, leathers treated with **Chimotan AC** have a physical resistance to tearing that is far greater than average.

Decalcified and washing leather	Quantity	Timing
> Water	20%	
> Chimotan AC	3%	30 min
> Formic acid	0,5%	
<hr/>		
> Formic acid	0,6%	
<hr/>		
> Night automatic rotation		3 hours
<hr/>		
> Morning Ph 3-3,2 (Uniform yellow section)		
<hr/>		
Starting by normal retanning system (chrome or vegetale).		

Level: Technology for quality leather

Perfect leathers without defects.

Polymers and auxiliaries added via special expandable microcapsules perfectly cover possible defects present on crust leathers, improving surface yield and permitting more uniform embossing. This technology led to the creation of the new series of products named **Level**, ideal for giving leathers a full, buffed grain and superior quality. For roller-coater applications on buffed or crust leathers, **Level** offers two special formulas: **Level ST**, a mix of polymers and filling capsules to be used on buffed or crust leathers, to be followed by an ulterior buffing treatment;

Level RG, a special pre-base or as an additive to the base coat, which expands after ironing at high temperatures to render uniform whatever defect is present.

For application by spatula proposes:

Level Mn and **Level Ar**, two fillers for application by spatula on full and buffed upholstery leathers with optimum qualities of adhesion, elasticity and resistance to embossing.

Level Na, particularly indicated for full-grained nappa leathers for use in footwear, handbags and luggage. The product, for manual application or by roller as a pre-base on the entire surface of the leather, does not harden the leather, and so does not affect the natural appearance of the grain after

drumming. With optimum adhesion for successive refinishing coats.

For spray applications, **Level** proposes: **Level Pt**, a formulation of special products to be used as sprayed pre-bases or with the possible addition of pigments on full-grained leathers destined for the production of leathers for upholstery, footwear and leather goods.

Whatever the choose application, **Level** will improve leather superfice and preparing it to the successive treatment. As other ChimontGroup products, **Level** is innovation that help you to save money and producing great quality leather.



In the picture, a particular of a worked leather using Level.



Guangzhou. Shoes&Leather '08

Truly exceptional success in China.

The eighteenth edition of Shoes&Leather in Guangzhou concluded on 31 May 2008. ChimontGroup's results at this event were positive, in spite of a lack of visitors from Sichuan, the Chinese province that was recently struck by a tragic earthquake. There were many Chinese visitors, but the great surprise came from neighbouring Korea and Taiwan, which are taking advantage of the momentary dip in demand in the Chinese tanneries due to the upcoming 2008 Olympics in Beijing, and are enjoying an unexpected boom. Always attentive and innovative, ChimontGroup presented in Guangzhou its new line of refinishing products baptised "Fashion", which allows the achievement of fashion effects that are truly

surprising. These products named Fashion caught the attention of a large part of the visitors to the fair, who responded with curiosity and interest. The ChimontGroup Party took place during the trade fair, on the evening of 28 May, with more than 100 invited guests participating. The evening began with a talk by General Manager Remo Petroselli, and then continued with a fun lottery with prizes, and ended in the most traditional of ways, with many toasts and "Cheers!". The occasion of the fair allowed the company to reinforce some of its previous commercial relationships established during past editions, and further contributed to the cohesion of the existing network of collaborators. Looking forward to next time at Shoes & Leather.



On this page, some scenes from the ChimontGroup Party and details from the Shoes&Leather 2008 stand. On the previous page, a photo-group.



Price lists blocked and delivery times cut

Prices during and after Lineapelle: for labels and buyers there is less anxiety regarding the lowering of prices and more regarding rapid delivery. The exhibitors took a firm stand, but when you start to deal in dollars...

by Luca Fumagalli © **MdP La Conceria**

It might seem strange, but during the latest edition of Lineapelle, right in the middle of a difficult and complicated market phase, there was talk of everything in the stands, but very little was said of prices, reductions and discounts. Strange, because during past editions – and in the periods between – one of the hottest topics was just that: the impossibility of those who exhibit at Lineapelle to adapt their pricelist proportionally to the increase in raw materials and the consequent attitude of

the buyer who was aiming to drastically reduce his spending.

It seems then that the rigidity of the target price imposed by the large groups and labels has both metabolized and become more 'malleable'. This doesn't mean that the price struggle is over, just the opposite, but that at least it has come back to within a range that we can define as physiological.

In Bologna the product itself was (almost always)



more important than its price, putting the stress of “staying within the budget” in the background. We shouldn’t forget that not long ago that stress had led to straight-out requests for 30% price cuts for supplies by the big names of the fashion world.

Tanneries

The most sensitive to this theme are tanneries that use vegetable tanning, destined for leather goods, who when asked for an interview begin right away by talking about price. ‘By now we’re in a situation where our prices are blocked’ is the stock phrase, making evident first thing the monetary stress they are feeling and which, even with prices blocked, had thrown them into the upper end of the market where they were most vulnerable, the United States. ‘We sell finished goods with quotes that have been the fixed by now for quite a while’, says one tannery in Tuscany, ‘but in spite of our best efforts, the strong Euro has driven them crazy: for American clients we cost at least 50% more than 2 or 3 seasons ago, and this is devouring any possibility of maintaining that market’. But the tannery’s capability to resist is concrete: they play on flexibility, service, compression of internal costs and delivery times, and thus are able keep price

lists more or less unchanged in the end, so that a certain level of client – luxury, fashion multinationals – can accept a price that ‘includes’ a consistent variable of added value. This is confirmed by Lorenzo Chiorino, of the Piedmont tannery of the same name, who closed the fair to his satisfaction, by virtue of the his constantly offering articles that are different (flesh split refinished with polyurethane, ‘using a technology’, says the owner, ‘that up to now no one else has been able to copy or reproduce’). He also says that his stand received visits from ‘good’ buyers from the United States: ‘Yes, they came, in spite of the weak dollar, which just shows how valid our market strategy is, offering clients the most service possible, almost tailing them, contacting them over and over, trying to be visible all the time, presenting them with constant sneak previews of our collection. And not only are our products different, but our markets are too’. This last is a choice that opened Chiorino up to new developments in Sweden. ‘We work on more than one front, aiming at the niche in each, and this helps us when it comes to talking about price. In Bologna we presented pricelists that had remained the same with respect to Anteprema, but

given that we offer a valid product, which the client likes and that meets his needs, today I see less insistence on price. I think this has happened because the clients understand that, since they can no longer guarantee us a certain volume, they can't presume as much'. So they stay quiet and pay? 'It varies from case to case', Chiorino goes on, 'in the sense that, with clients of long standing we always try to arrive at an agreement that is good for both parties. But let's say that price is a variable that weighs, not like it did a while ago, because service is much more important, and above all prompt and rapid delivery: we have gone from 3 or 4 weeks to 2 weeks. We saw this in Bologna, where many who ordered wanted immediate or at least rapid delivery, since by now schedules are tight'.

Accessories and components

Chiorino's last sentence reveals how the outcome of Lineapelle, with everyone evidently satisfied, conceals a double reality. For the tanneries, schedules were as tight as they could be, but on the other hand for accessories and components lead times are too long. Ermanno Donati (Don Diego, TR soles) says, 'We met with our clients of long standing and others at the fair, but in spite of the fact that we were presenting summer, a good 70% of them were still asking for winter. Regarding prices we can say that they are not 'the' problem. Buyers ask for top quality and service, if they find them, they don't argue about the prices and just accept them'. How did you present yourselves at Lineapelle? 'Our prices are updated on a trimester basis, because from Christmas to now the suppliers of raw materials

have revised their prices twice, with a percentage increase of between 3 and 8%'. On the other hand, we work with petroleum derivatives, and this in itself explains the pressure we are under and keeps us from transferring the increases proportionally to the finished goods: we try to keep them internal, limiting our profits, adjusting our price lists, and we're making it'. Another production line, but same story. Roberto Bicocchi of Guimer, which specializes in brass buckles, explains, 'The outcome of Lineapelle was interesting, I would even say good, if you leave aside the United States: the dollar inevitable represents an obstacle that can't be overcome. By now we have solid relationships with our clients in the States, which for the moment lets us maintain our standing, but I am afraid that with the next collection, if conditions remain the same, we will start to see a decrease in orders'. Price lists? 'In Bologna blocked at the September 2007 level, and I believe that we will keep them there until the end of this year. In spite of the fact that in the last 12 months our prime material, brass, has been subject to increases of up to 50%'. That service counts for more today than price does was also confirmed by Giglioli, a shoe-sole manufacturer in Emilia Romagna (soles in leather shaped by means of a special technique, aimed mainly at the top levels). According to Massimo Pazzaglia, 'The present difficulties of the sector are not so much due to the prices that we give to the client, as to the necessity of guaranteeing him a package of services that go beyond the product, respecting delivery times that are increasingly tight and compressed'.

Nella pagina precedente, una foto panoramica che ritrae un momento di Lineapelle 2008 all'interno dello Stand di Monti&Monti.

To each his own

Soft and natural, and then? It's not easy to figure out the dominant theme of the fair, given the differences in styles between labels and generic clients. Colour is back, after a 'black' winter.

by Andrea Guolo © **MdP La Conceria**



The leading line is still softness. Nothing new regarding style in Bologna: the trend for softness, which goes from sheep to goat to calf with the lightest of refinishes, with visible grain and defects barely retouched, without sealing or buffing. In line with this theme however the tanneries displayed dozens of variations, and the clients sometimes added this own, asking for further modifications and personalisations. There was also no consensus on colours, treatments and basic trends. This is shown by the information gathered from exhibitors at the end of the fair. Confusion? Partly yes, partly no: the fashion houses apply their own personal philosophy, and the others either conform or follow more than one example. This is what will be in fashion for next summer.

Footwear

The decline and fall of patent leathers has been predicted for a long time. But stepping into what many considered the best stand at Lineapelle, patent was found to be the

reference point for the whole collection. We are in the house of Dolmen, and Pietro Giananti, co-owner along with his brother David, doesn't seem especially surprised. 'The juxtaposition of shiny and opaque is good now. So we have patent and nubuck, especially calf, along with a return of colour, in all its variations. 'This is the real news', Giananti explains, 'above all with respect to the winter season, where we saw practically only black, a little brown but that was it'. Enrico Giay Arcota, administrator of Ilcea in Turin, talks about 'clamorous colour combinations'. 'We interpreted them on calf up to ten feet and on larger ones up to 18-20 feet intended for men's sports shoes', he says. Finishes? Natural, naturally. 'Ours was maybe the only real natural on the market, mainly intended for men's shoes, used by all the shoemakers in the world and so by the big designers as well. No cover'. So this is the moment for calf. "The main article for medium to high quality", sums up Piero Rosati of the tannery Incas. 'The decrease in

unprocessed calf in the European markets has made it more interesting, while in the south it has stayed steady. But we are dealing with different origins that lead to products that are equally different'. What kind of calf leather will be in? 'For summer', insists Rosati, 'we see a marked interest in vegetable tanned calf. And this is what we are mainly oriented towards'. For Sabatino Vignola, owner of the Vignola Nobile, in Solfrana, Campania, there is no one product of reference.

Patent leathers are still good, as is retro, if styled with elegance and class; not even paper for the most fanciful applications have disappeared from the scene. Does that mean that anything goes? 'We make changes to our articles based on the specific needs of the manufacturing district', Vignola explains. 'For example, in the Marche they ask for certain things that their Russian clients like, but that shoe manufacturers and makers of leather goods in other areas wouldn't accept. The stylistic diversification follows commercial diversification, especially now that we are working so little in the dollar zone'. A specialist like Federico Albarello works in the field of exotics, and has noted the success of the woven and washed version of eel. 'Last year', he relates, 'we saw patents above all, now that demand has slipped from first place to second or third. On the other hand, the washed version is a new offering of an article that went very well until five years ago and then disappeared'.

As for the basic trend, Albarello sees footwear constructed with less coated and more natural leather. 'This is the input from the opinion leaders and the fashion studios, which is then accepted by the rest of the market as well.

There is sure to be a continued demand for exotics, and of course for naturals. Clients are increasingly demanding certification that polluting chemical products are not used: this is we turn the technological gap between us and China and India to our advantage. I can certify my own product, but not an imported product'.

Leather goods

Ideas are clearer about handbags. Demand is oriented towards softness, like in footwear, but with less fragmentation in the orders. And stylists are constantly searching for valuable materials. This explains, for example, why in the last few years there are tanneries that have markedly increased the amount they invoice for leather goods. 'At Gaiera we invoice 70% against 30% for footwear', explains Enrica Miramonti, sales manager for the company in Robecchetto (Milan). She explains the current trend this way, 'Nappa leathers, since people want softness, are working very well. And we carried this desire for softness over to calf as well, which has the right dimensions and is easy to cut'. Less embossing, more wrinkling in the vats for the big labels. But natural abrasives as well, such as those offered by a specialist in high-quality calf, Masoni. Owner Fabrizio Masoni says, 'Classic items, quality thick leathers. Those are what went well'. Colours? 'Those were natural too, with all the gradations of hide leather'. Two trends were noted by Aldo Donati, president and administrator of Ausonia: 'Retro works, and so does classic. I believe that after so much patent leather we'll go to nubuck and abraded leathers, but antique finishes will go on. For example, we brought as a new product an item that we call 'Old Grinta'. Refinishes? Restrained, sometimes almost not there. 'On vegetable tanned leather', Donati said, 'the grain of the leather has to be evident, without those coatings that are part of the world of industrial tanning but not part of ours'. There are some who love thick leathers, and others who go to an ultra-thin leather for the summer, similar to those used for clothing. This is explained by Luigi De Vita, of the Deviconcia of Solofra, who brought an ample colour chart (sixty colours) and a series of offerings oriented to the classic. 'Patent leather is finished, and so are papers', says this tanner. 'Today everything is going towards the soft and natural, and so towards those leathers that are part of our DNA as suppliers

for clothing. In this area we don't have anyone to fear'.

Clothing

The thing that partially saves clothing from the distress of these years is nappa. Shearling, which by its nature is not a material for the hot season, is going through a long-term crisis, and so specialists have looked for shelter. Thus the Spanish group La Doma has developed a nappa production in summer colours, transforming a leather of English origin with the application of patents and other shiny coatings. 'Opaque is still far away', says Peter Colomer, sales manager, 'because at this time it is shiny finishes that give the idea of luxury'. There are some who are tied to suede, such as the Motta Alfredo tannery of Cinisello Balsamo (Milan, supplier for the big labels and specialized in materials for clothing. This year he has shown leathers that are especially light, both shiny and opaque, presenting also a rather interesting range of nappa. The colours? Green, purple, fuchsia, yellow and shades of pink. 'Suede is our point of reference and is going pretty well', explains Vincenzo Boldetti, managing director. The trends? 'Halt to patents, more naturals'. Motta Pelli of Monza confirms the more sobre direction taken by clothing. 'No to laminates and colours that are too bright. Suede is good, and nappa confirmed', says Maurizio Motta. The clientele? More and more names, who are looking for lightness and softness.

Interior furnishings

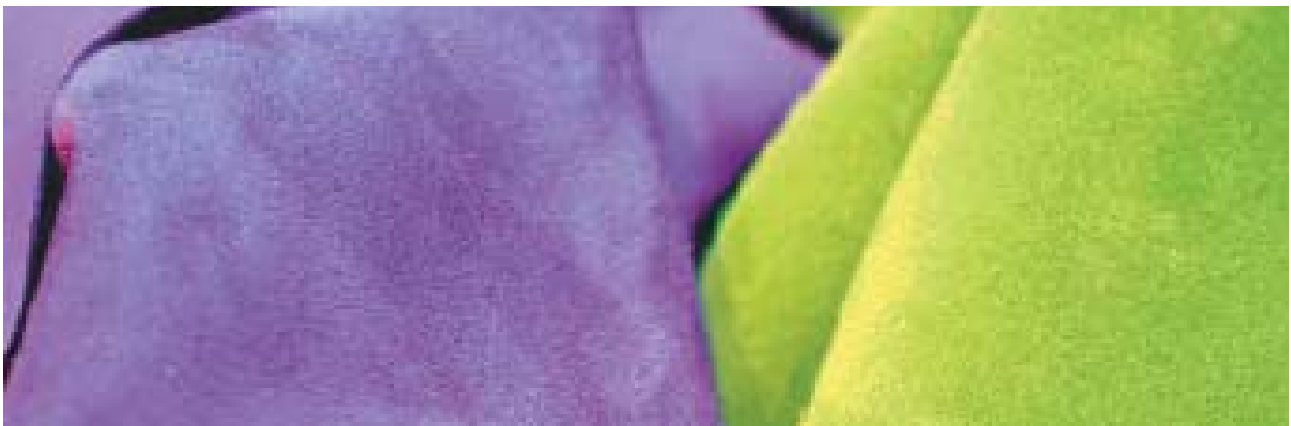
Producers of interior furnishings brought items that are

beautiful and weighty to Bologna.

And it was the right choice. 'At the Salone del Mobile, the furniture fair, our clients were generally oriented towards quality, mellow anilines and up to 5 millimetres thick', says Valeriano Marelli of the Gruppo Mastrotto, 'and as suppliers we have adapted. Certainly we won't be at the levels that the other lines measure themselves against, such as footwear and leather goods, but for interior furnishings this is without a doubt a positive aspect'.

Lineapelle has thus anticipated the trends that will emerge at next year's fair, and in particular in the pavilions of the furniture makers of Lombardy: beautiful leathers, or better, gorgeous, at reasonable prices. This is the only way that the Italians can distinguish themselves from their competitors, having lost by now the (significant) sector of economy furnishings. And accessories too, especially conceived for the furniture manufactures of Southern Italy, have reached a certain importance, and moves from the low to the medium price range. 'At Lineapelle the classics that were able to adapt to the problems of the market went well', insists Marelli. 'Unfortunately volume is blocked, in spite of the added value of our products. And so repositioning has become a necessary process'.

The colours? Soft shades, cream and hazelnut, went and are still doing well, and so did various shades of dove. The oranges, reds and yellows of some time ago have almost disappeared.





The spectre of MCV

MVC stands for “monomer vinyl chloride” and is the basis for PVC, today (even more than before) under attack for being dangerous if poorly handled. Rigid standards.

by Luca Fumagalli © **MdP La Conceria**

Once upon a time, a few months ago, the huge fuss (starting in the USA) about toys produced in China, made of PVC. But the problem at the base of those accusations was not related to PVC as much as to the lead-based paints used to colour them. It was a very heavy attack, which led manufacturers of the calibre of Mattel to recall millions of items the world over. Now that attack has been renewed and this time it is aimed at the ‘heart of the product’, contested already for some time, accused for decades, constantly at the centre of heated debates. We mean PVC and the danger posed by a long and silent exposure to the toxic agents it is made of. How much of this is really true? And how much impact can this have, for example, on shoes, seeing as how certain parts of the soles (from the middle segment down) are made

precisely in polyvinyl chloride, otherwise known as vinyl, a polymer that many consider as synonymous for plastic and by now as widespread as the air we breathe. At the base of its production is a monomer, MCV, recognized as a carcinogenic by the World Health Organisation and the European Union.

The monomer

Let’s start at the beginning. PVC is created from a process of polymerization of the vinyl chloride monomer, MCV. Polymerization is a chemical process that transforms MCV into PVC, with the addition of some additives used to give the finished product the desired characteristics. MCV is carcinogenic: the first to say so were the Russians in the 1940s. In Italy, tragically, it was discovered through questions raised by the petrochemical companies of Porto Marghera, where

for decades PVC had been produced in Europe, in conditions that caused the onset of various illnesses and health problems, due to the ongoing and prolonged exposure to MCV (a gas with no colour and only the slightest, sweet, odour) and to PVC dust. At the bottom of all this is chloride: a third of all the chloride produced in Europe is used to obtain vinyl. Up to this point we are dealing with the level of danger verified during the chain of production. Another part of the problem is related to the finished product, such as the toys that have been contested (as said in a recent long article in the Wall Street Journal Europe), to the point that producers and specialty stores are looking for alternatives and substitutes to placate the concerns of consumers and associations. In industrialized societies PVC is literally everywhere, from shoe soles to the water pipes, from bottles to electrical appliances, etc. Don't forget until the age of the compact disk,

'vinyl' was synonymous with 'record' and 'music'. It is so widespread because it is easy to produce, strong, and easy to mould. So widespread that in spite of alarms, it is widely used in medicine: sacks of blood for transfusions are made of vinyl, as are surgeon's gloves (because they are anallergic, unlike those of rubber) and often it is even found on the walls of operating rooms. It is hard to believe that this PVC is as carcinogenic as the MCV it is derived from. And so?

The consequences

So the problem is a different one. Or rather, more than one: there are others as well. First of all 'nozzle quality': PVC is dangerous if it releases MCV, and if it does – perhaps subject to decisive physical and chemical stresses – this is in great part due to the poor way in which it was obtained. In short, this is when the polymerization mentioned above is done badly. A 'bad' PVC, low quality and instable, might release MCV under



certain conditions. Since 1987, according to a study by the IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer), MCV is associated with the formation of tumours in the liver (hepatic angiosarcomas), brain, lungs, and in the hemopoietic and lymphatic systems. It is also associated with particular pathologies of the hands (acrosteolisis, a deterioration of the finger bones; peripheral microangiopathy), blood (decrease in platelets), and liver. PVC is very dangerous when exposed to combustion, because it releases the notorious dioxin, which causes cancer, it destroys the immunity system, and compromises the reproductive system. It is particularly insidious if, to soften it, phthalates are used, toxic additives banned by the European Union and in spite of this often used to increase the flexibility and malleability of a toy (or other item). An example? If you buy one of those teething rings for newborns, meant to be chewed on to reinforce the gums, and if by chance it carries the signature of an American manufacturer, then it probably contains phthalates, because in the United States the ban was gotten around by an agreement between producers and the Department of Commerce. The toxicity of continual exposure to and contact with phthalates can give rise in the medium/long term to tumours and cause damage to the reproductive system. The bizarre thing is that the ban also indicates a means of avoiding it, and so there is no reliable, official and univocal way to verify its presence.

Our case

Having said all this, it is easy to understand why the world is divided between those who consider PVC the devil's tool and those who can find hundreds of reasons to bless it. It remains to say what this means for footwear, and how those who today use vinyl soles in their footwear and want to sell them in Europe have to respect the rigid standards imposed by their clients. At the first transgression, orders come to a halt. This is the case

with Lenci Calzature. They produce middle-range women's shoes: the whole cycle is made in Eastern Europe and all of the materials are bought in Italy, from the leathers to the PVC soles. Patrizio Marzocchini explains that 'clients in northern Europe are increasingly insisting that we respect product safety standards, and this obviously becomes a factor in remaining competitive. Requests like this began about 6 or 7 years ago and have progressively increased'. To the point that today every buyer or commercial chain uses them as one of the criteria for selecting their suppliers. What standards are we talking about? 'The context varies according to the market of reference. The English ask above all for physical tests, while the Germans have a special, developed sensitivity as to whether or not toxic or banned substances are present, which obviously includes PVC'.

Right, including PVC.

But there is one more thing, and that still regards the continental giants that buy shoes and the related sales via a diversified universe of commercial brands.

There are groups that differentiate their acquisitions on the basis of the clientele target base that they wish to reach. These come to Italy to buy the collections with the most prestige, the highest quality and the greatest content, then entrust to Asian producers in India, China, Vietnam and others the production of private labels at the lowest cost. It even appears, as often happens when many know but no one wants to say anything about and rumours fly, that some have opened unlikely facilities in North Africa. Facilities where what can be euphemistically called 'quality controls' are performed on goods arriving from the Far East and attempts are made to rectify possible non-conformances related to toxic substances among other things. However, how this is done – and if such attempts are successful – no one can say.



a.skinshoes those who respect the environment also respect your feet

After years of advanced research and design, Karuna, a company that has always been dedicated to the development of sustainable practices, has patented a.skinshoes, the only footwear in ecological and non-allergic leather studied to resolve Allergic Contact Dermatitis from shoes. ACD from shoes is an irritating problem that notably compromises the quality of life of those who are affected by it, and which can easily be complicated by bacterial and mycological infections, above all in patients who suffer from diabetes. Today the substances that cause ACD are well known and fall into three principle categories: tanning agents, glues, and products for refinishing, especially colorants. After about three years of experimentation, an innovative technology has been identified for the treatment of leather and the construction of the shoes. The principle characteristic is that of not using any chemical component is known to cause ACD. This method of tanning is unique in terms of the selection and application of the components; the process adopted for the preparation of a.skin leather takes place in a specialised production unit, with specially dedicated machinery. During the phases of tanning, dyeing and greasing the only products used are of natural origins, non-allergenic, and come from the food and cosmetic industries. Excluded are all metals and any other substance that is dangerous for man and for the

environment. The surfaces of the uppers are treated with natural waxes that give an simple and natural look to the leather, while leaving the small imperfections that characterise real leather visible. The glues used in assembling the shoes are all water-based and the laces and seams are all in untreated cotton. These special characteristics give a.skinshoes a breathability and softness that are unequalled.

The Department of Dermatological Sciences of the University of Florence has actively contributed to the research and development of a.skin during the experimenting phase as well as later in monitoring the anti-allergic effectiveness of the leather.

This valuable collaboration is ongoing today and includes constant use tests of a.skin footwear on sensitised subjects (both those who do and do not suffer from Allergic Contact Dermatitis from shoes). During the production phase, samples of footwear from different lots are taken in order to perform tests in laboratories that are specifically certified UNI EN ISO 9001 e UNI EN 14001. These checks mean that the user can be absolute certain that the product can be unequivocally trusted. a.skinshoes is the footwear in ecological and anti-allergic leather that guarantees constantly controlled quality and effectiveness, in respect for your feet and for nature.

More information can be found on www.askin.it

Looking At Karuna/a.skinshoes

THE ONLY SHOE IN LEATHER THAT DOESN'T STEP ON THE ENVIRONMENT

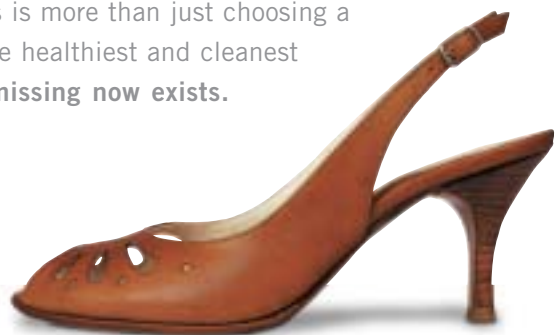
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in the World

Vietnam / **Textile and footwear exports increase**

Vietnamese textile and footwear exports in January-November 2007 reached USD 10.58 billion, accounting for 25% of total exports. The value of footwear exports is USD 3.53 billion, increased by 9.5% year-on-year.

The two sectors contributed not only to the national economy but also to employ hundreds of thousands of people.

Turkey / **Turkish imports of hide and leather increase**

Turkey exported raw hides and skins and leathers worth US\$80 million in the first eight months of this year, as compared with US\$68 million in the same period in 2006. The State Statistics Institute reports that Turkey imported the same types of commodities worth US\$419 million in the January to August period, as against US\$379 million in the same period last year.

Russia / **European exports to Russia are growing**

The Countries of Europe "in 15" registered 34% increase in garment sales to Russia in the first semester of 2007, for a turnover of 1.1 billion euros. The first positions among the supplying countries are occupied by Italy with 535 million euros and +27%, Germany with 323 million euros and +50%, France with 121 million euros and +18%.

Nevertheless forecasts point out a lower rate of growth for the future, as Eftec (European Fashion and Textile Export Council) experts are convinced that the luxury segment is going to be saturated, and that this fact will penalise in particular the companies of made in Italy, unlike the German ones that work above all in the medium band.

Croatia / **Croatia invests in textiles, garment and tanning**

Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship of Croatia launched its first strategy of development of textile, clothes and leather industries. It is indicated that governments will offer financial support of about 274

million euros and 40% of which is for research and development departments. Because the textiles, clothes and leather industries has the lowest level of wages in Croatia, the workers in these sectors become fewer day by day. Moreover, the competition from far-east areas makes the industries difficult to develop.

France / **International visitors at Le Cuir à Paris**

Exhibitors grow, more than 50% of them represent Italian companies – Collections for summer 2009 presented. Once more this year, the past edition of Le Cuir à Paris - held with the exhibitions Expofil, Indigo, Mod'Amont, Première Vision – was a winning one in terms of both exhibitors and buyers, in particular stylists and designers, irrespective of the difficult economic situation that is affecting the market.

The fourteenth edition of the Parisian event registered the participation of 236 exhibitors, with 21% increase of participants compared with February 2007 edition: obviously tanneries took the lion's share, above all the Italian ones who occupied 56% of surface and represented the largest slice of the exhibitors' total; they presented their new collections dedicated to 2009 summer season.

The represented Countries were 15, with France and Spain immediately after Italy, and Brazil has become a consolidated participant.

More that 10500 visitors took turns during the four days, meaning 5.3% growth and rising internationality: figures issued by the organisers say that Italian participation registered a growth (+22.57%), as well as English (+17.5%), US (+16%), Spanish (+11%) and Japanese (+4.8%), as well as domestic visitors who increased 6.9%. Remaining in the fashion field, visitors represented all the different sectors, from footwear to garment and leathersgoods, centring the research on novelties in terms of creativity but also of qualitative and technical contents.

Almost all participants – either first-

time exhibitors or not - drew a positive balance: all of them agree on Le Cuir à Paris being a fair dedicated to fashion and trend collections, an interesting occasion for the contacts you may have even outside the traditional and consolidated field, an opportunity to discuss proposals and evaluate further inputs. They all think that Première Vision Pluriel is a winning formula which supported the growth of the event, edition after edition.

Piero Maccanti, director of Santa Croce Tanners' Association, stated at the press conference: "Le Cuir à Paris is an opportunity to meet the most important designers and griffes worldwide, enabling to test product validity and to exchange information among the various worlds of fashion".

We have been told that other Tuscan tanneries asked to take part in the next edition of the Parisian event: is it a sign of uneasiness due to periods of crisis leading us to run after all possible appointments, or the acknowledgement that the event has become a moment of real and concrete interest for fashion-making companies? Maybe it is both the things: what we can say for sure is that the exhibition is now part of the international circuit of events dedicated to fashion and creativity. Next appointment will be from September 23 to 26, 2008, where 2009-2010 autumn-winter collections will be presented. Always with the complicity of a town like Paris, with its allure, shop-windows, small markets...

Argentina / **Argentina exports more leather to China**

According to government's statistics of Argentina, in the first 8 months of 2007, the exports of products to China reached \$3billion, increased by 37% compared with the same period of last year. The exports of leather and leather products increased respectively as well. Instead of US, China has become the second largest exports' destination of Argentina after Brazil.

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