

WORLD FOOTWEAR

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE GLOBAL SHOE INDUSTRY



**Roger Vivier treasures
go on show**

**Sourcing: Canadian
start-up reveals all**

**Leather innovation gives
shoe firms reassurance**



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Front cover

A high-vamp shoe in silk made by Roger Vivier in 1987, part of the Shoe Treasures exhibition at the Dutch Leather and Shoe Museum in Waalwijk.

Image: Deutsches Ledermuseum, Offenbach

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IBC Advertiser/reader enquiry service



News

BELGIUM The European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) has announced a new International Footwear Forum. CEC president Jean-Pierre Renaudin said it was necessary to bring footwear associations together to “anticipate problems, remove uncertainties and find ways to accommodate the diverse points of view in the globalised footwear economy”. A date and venue will be announced during the first quarter of 2015.

COLOMBIA Brazilian footwear industry association Abicalçados has said Colombia is one of seven export countries, along with the US, Mexico, Germany, Russia, the UAE and China, that it wants manufacturers to pay special attention to in 2015, alongside the domestic market. In the first nine months of 2014, Brazilian producers shipped 7.4 million of the 37.9 million pairs of shoes and boots that Colombia imported, a share of 19.5%.

SPAIN Sales of footwear made in Spain reached a record €2.5 billion in value in the first 11 months of 2014, with most heading to France (22%), Italy (10%), Germany, Portugal and the UK. The country sold 144 million pairs between January and the end of November, according to FICE, the Spanish Footwear Industry Federation. These figures represent an increase of 16% in revenue and 13% in volume.

ITALY Italian footwear manufacturers' association Assocalzaturifici has given its backing to a new government-led project to boost the Made in Italy label. One of the measures is funding mechanisms to provide support for Micam and other events. Assocal's Cleto Sagripanti said: “We are fully in line with the deputy minister in stressing the need to create a system for reinforcing overseas investments in Italian fashion, an effort we have been pursuing for many years.”

PORTUGAL A three-year initiative has begun in the European footwear industry, aimed at encouraging technicians and designers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to produce high-end footwear. The Portuguese Footwear Technology Centre (CTCP), Spain's INESCOP, Italy's Politecnico Calzaturiero, France's Lycée du Dauphine, the Czech Footwear Association and the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) have agreed to make a preliminary assessment of the skills and to draw up an “occupational profile” of a bespoke shoemaker.

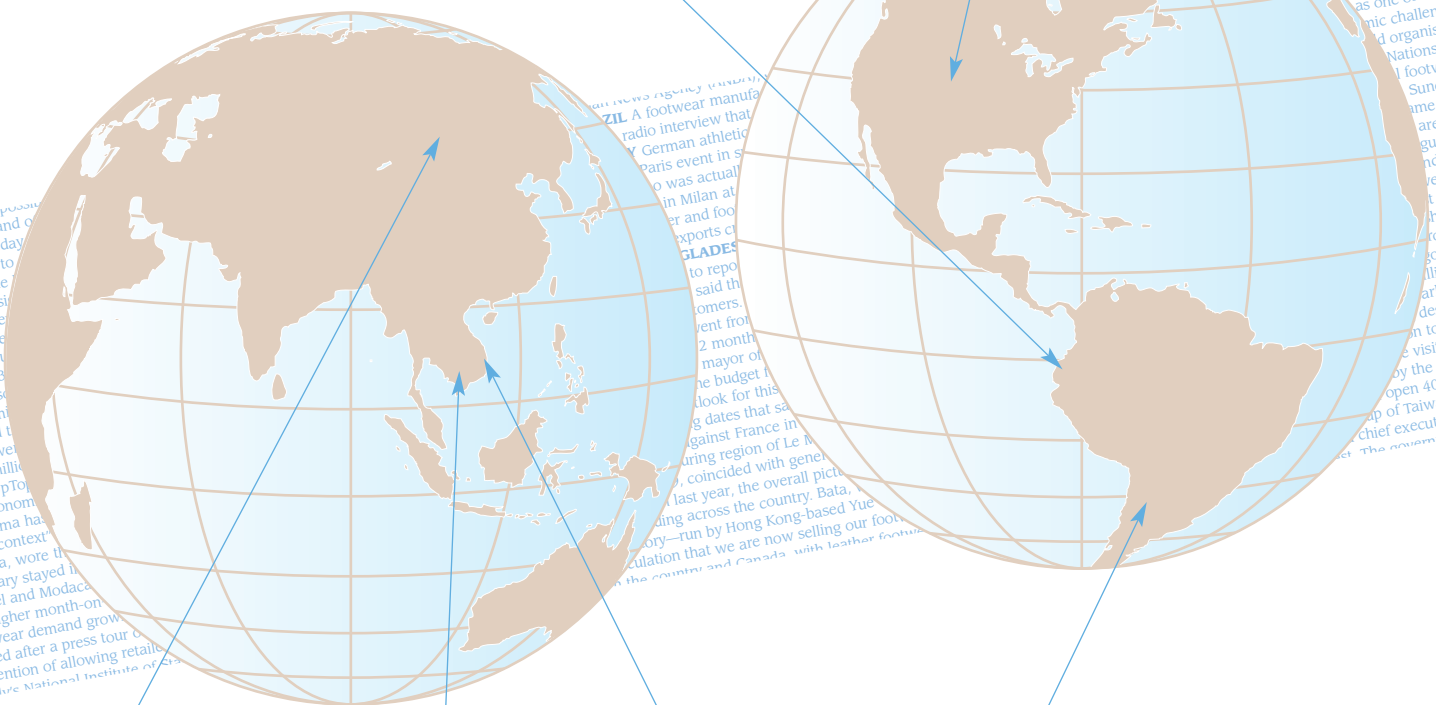
TANZANIA UNIDO (the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation) has expanded a course on footwear pattern engineering launched last year in Tanzania to include new lessons and tests. The material is now “tried and tested”, according to UNIDO's Ivan Kral, who said: “This will open doors to millions who, by virtue of their remote location, limited time or resources, security issues or other constraints, would be unable to follow conventional learning programmes.”

INDIA Industrial group Tata International is expanding its footwear production capacity by establishing a new factory near Chennai. The unit will involve an initial investment of \$4 million and will have an annual production capacity of two million pairs, which would give the group a footwear capacity of 8.5 million pairs a year.

US US-based consumers bought the most shoes per capita in 2013, according to a recent report by the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA). Each individual (children are included) bought 7.5 pairs of shoes. "This is more than any other country in the world," said AAFA CEO Juanita Duggan. Domestic manufacturing of shoes increased 8.5%, however, 98% of shoes sold in the US are imported.

● The US has called for "dispute settlement consultations" with China at the World Trade Organization. The dispute concerns an export subsidy programme under which US trade representative Michael Froman claimed China "seems to provide prohibited export subsidies" to manufacturers. His department insists it has evidence of Chinese manufacturers receiving "an unfair advantage" through direct subsidies from the Chinese government and through a programme of subsidies to suppliers.

EQUADOR The president of Colombian footwear and leathers goods association Acicam, Luis Gustavo Flórez, has expressed concern about the introduction of high tariffs on imports into neighbouring Ecuador of products including shoes. Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, introduced new tariffs of up to 21% from January 15.



MONGOLIA Dutch fashion designer Hans Ubbink is launching a collection of footwear made from sustainable Mongolian leather, after joining a project jointly set up by the Dutch leather industry and partners to help improve the country's tanning sector. The shoes will be marketed under the Aduu Mal label – aduu meaning 'horse' and mal meaning 'livestock' in Mongolian – and will be available to buy this spring.

CAMBODIA United Nations experts have called on global brands to help manufacturers in Cambodia absorb the rising costs after the minimum wage was raised 28% to \$128 a month on January 1. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates this will increase factories' wage bills by 19%. Brands which source from Cambodia include Asics, Nike, Merrell, adidas and Puma.

VIETNAM Leather and footwear industry association Lefaso has said 2015 could be an important year because Vietnam is likely to gain duty-free access to all ASEAN Nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) markets. Vietnam sold \$1.8 billion of shoes in ASEAN partner states last year.

ARGENTINA Per capita consumption of footwear fell by almost 7% in Argentina in 2014, according to consultancy IES. Figures for the first 11 months put footwear sales at 121.1 million pairs, an average per person of 3.2 pairs, down 6.9%. However, the share of the local market that domestic shoemakers commanded remained steady at 85%.

● The government has stated that a temporary programme it set up last year to encourage consumers to increase their spending on domestically manufactured goods continues deliver important benefits to the industries taking part, including footwear. For shoes and leathers goods, the volume of purchases is now well in excess of 500,000 per week and Argentinean producers have raked in revenues of just under \$80 million since the programme began in September 2014.



Footprints

NEW POLICY STRATEGIST SAYS FDRA HAS "MORAL OBLIGATION" TO END SHOE TARIFFS

The Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America (FDRA) has announced that former US Representative Sue Myrick is to become its key policy strategist. In a separate appointment, FDRA has announced Thomas Crockett as its new director of government and regulatory affairs.

FDRA president, Matt Priest, said he believed having Sue Myrick on board would help his organisation "elevate our brand name across Washington".

Ms Myrick said she was happy to be part of an organisation "fighting to lower consumer costs and create jobs".

FAYTEX FOUNDER DIES

The founder of footwear moisture management solutions provider Faytex, William Fay Senior, died on the last day of 2014.

Bill Fay founded Faytex in 1978 and quickly made a big impression on the footwear market with Cambrelle.

In 1988, he launched Dri-Lex fabrics for synthetic moisture management systems in footwear. To this day, more than 40 Dri-Lex fabrics are being used by top footwear brands around the world.

Faytex is still owned and run by Bill Fay's family.

THREE SUPPLY CHAIN EXPERTS JOIN KEEN

Footwear brand Keen has hired three in a bid to "more efficiently connect factories, transportation, distribution, sales force and retailers".

Kirk Hale joins as VP of supply chain operations, where he will direct all facets of global distribution. He brings more than 27 years of experience, most recently working as the senior VP of distribution operations at kitchenware company Williams-Sonoma.

Joining Kirk at Keen's headquarters in the US and also a veteran of Williams-Sonoma, Brad Voelpel will serve as senior manager of international logistics and compliance and guide the



Left to right): Andy Long, Carl Davies, Matt Rock and Sean Hastings.

PENTLAND PROMOTES FOR KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES

UK-based outdoor group Pentland Brands has announced a series of senior leadership appointments, all in-house.

Its CEO, Andy Long, said he was pleased they came from the group's "leadership talent bank": "It means we can ensure continuity not only for our teams, but also for our partners, customers and suppliers."

Sean Hastings, vice-president of product and marketing at Speedo, has been named marketing director for the group.

Taking his place on an interim basis is Jamie Cornforth, head of category strategy and planning, product and marketing at Speedo.

Carl Davies, managing director of Mitre and Prostar, has been promoted to global customer director at Pentland Brands. Jon Godden, chief operating officer, moves up to take his place.

Matt Rock, managing director of the lifestyle division, which includes Kickers, Ted Baker Footwear and Boxfresh, will take on the role of supply chain director for the group.

His role has been taken over by Marco Ellerker, managing director of ellesse, Red or Dead and KangaROOS. Mr Ellerker's former position will be advertised shortly.

In December, the group promoted Andy Long to CEO.

company's global transportation operations. He previously oversaw high-volume ocean shipping operations at Maersk Line & Damco and international operations at Williams-Sonoma.

Eric Goldner has been hired as VP of global operations and costing, having worked with Nike, Wolverine and Coach. Based in Hong Kong, Eric will look after organisational agility, vendor relations and supply chain capabilities

KAMIK MAKES TWO VICE-PRESIDENT APPOINTMENTS

Canadian outdoor footwear brand Kamik has named Sorel's European sales manager, Patrick Chevalier, as its new vice-president for international sales.

At the same time, the Montreal-based brand has announced that it is expanding the role of marketing vice-

president, Catherine Cook; she will now become vice-president for marketing and strategic planning.

Ms Cook has been working at Kamik for 13 years and is a member of the family that owns and runs the brand.

'THE GOOD OLD DAYS ARE BEHIND US,' WARNS EUROPEAN OUTDOOR GROUP PRESIDENT

Last year proved to be a challenging one for the outdoor industry as the growth of previous years attracted new businesses and competition became tougher than ever, according to Rolf Schmid, president of the European Outdoor Group.

"Weather dependency, competition from sports and fashion brands and retailers, 'discount' mentality - these factors are all real, but our influence on

them is pretty limited, so let's focus on what we can do," he said.

Firstly, he said: "Accept that our industry has changed and that this process will continue. The old days, while great, have gone and we face a new reality and harsh challenges at all levels of business. We are a €10 billion industry, and big data, market research, stakeholder engagement and supply chain control are all inevitable and necessary consequences.

"Secondly," he said, "work with and towards the consumer. Technology and consumer choice are the ultimate determinators of routes to market and the purchasing power of the consumer will define us. We should use our energy to satisfy our consumer and where appropriate, we should cooperate and work on this together.

Finally, he suggested "increasing enthusiasm". "Our industry has a unique passion for sports and activity; let's use it and find ways of driving even more interest and participation."

VINCE CAMUTO DIES

The death has been announced of footwear and leathergoods designer Vince Camuto, co-founder of Nine West.

He co-founded Nine West in 1978 with Jerome Fisher and served as its creative director. In 1993, when Nine West went public, Vince Camuto became the company's chief executive, a post he held until Jones Apparel Group acquired the company in 1999.

He launched the Camuto Group in 2001 and began to launch footwear brands including Antonio Melani, Gianni Bini, Nurture, and Michelle D. Four years later, he launched a brand in his own name.

Mr Camuto was 78 years old when he died in Greenwich, Connecticut, on January 21.

CROCS NAMES NEW CEO

Experienced footwear industry executive Gregg Ribatt has returned to the footwear industry after a gap of just two years. Mr Ribatt took up the position of chief executive of Crocs on January 28.

He was chief executive of the Collective Brands Performance & Lifestyle Group at the time of its acquisition by Wolverine Worldwide in 2012. Initially, he transferred with brands such as Merrell, Saucony and

Chaco to Wolverine, but announced at the start of 2013 that he was leaving his new employer and said he would be leaving the shoe industry.

Before Collective, Gregg Ribatt worked at Stuart Weitzmann and Bennett Footwear Group. After leaving, he took on the role of interim chief executive of shapewear brand Spanx.

UNDER ARMOUR HIRES 'ACCOMPLISHED FOOTWEAR LEADER'

US-based Under Armour has hired former Nike VP Peter Ruppe as senior vice-president of footwear, effective immediately.

"Peter is one of the most respected and accomplished strategic leaders in the footwear space, with more than 25 years of unrivalled experience and success," said Kip Fulks, Under Armour COO.

"He has a commanding, entrepreneurial spirit and an eye for innovation that will be invaluable to Under Armour, as we continue to assert and expand our global leadership in footwear."

Mr Ruppe most recently served as president of Alchemy Global, an investment platform dedicated to the sports and entertainment industry.

He spent 25 years at Nike, where he was vice-president and general manager of global footwear, VP and of global equipment and VP of athletic training and field sports.

DEICHMANN CREATES NEW DIRECTOR ROLE

Footwear retail group Deichmann has named Manfred Kroneder as its director of purchasing, logistics and IT, a new post created specifically for him.

Mr Kroneder was previously director of purchasing and logistics at perfume retail group Douglas.

Deichmann said its aim was to reinforce its international expansion plans. The group sells more than 150 million pairs of shoes a year in 3,500 stores in more than 20 countries.

US: 'ENCOURAGING' MESSAGES FOR FOOTWEAR IN OBAMA'S NATIONAL ADDRESS

US footwear associations have reacted to President Obama's State Of The

Union address, delivered on January 20, with the Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America (FDRA) describing his stance on trade as 'encouraging'.

FDRA president Matt Priest said: "For years now our leaders have been negotiating a Pacific free trade agreement that would greatly benefit American consumers and the footwear industry by providing nearly half a billion dollars in duty savings. I am encouraged that the President strongly outlined the need to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2015.

"I was impressed he spoke so passionately about trade and is working to convince the public of its benefits and the Congress of the need to pass Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) - the same authority given to every President since Nixon. He will not be alone. The footwear industry is committed to telling its story and how TPA and TPP will help create and strengthen footwear design, marketing, logistics and retail jobs across America.

"The industry and our consumers paid over \$2.7 billion in footwear duties in 2014, more than \$400 million of which was taxed on TPP footwear imports alone. Imagine the impact on consumers and footwear companies if outdated footwear tariffs from the 1930s - reaching upwards of 67.5% - were eliminated on footwear out of TPP countries."

The American Apparel and Footwear Association spoke along the same lines, with its CEO, Juanita Duggan, publishing a letter beforehand which stated: "We ask that you:

- Urge immediate enactment of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), which is urgently needed for the United States to conclude robust trade agreements currently being negotiated with our top trading partners in Europe and the Pacific Rim;
- Call for swift renewal of expired or expiring trade provisions, such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which create shared economic partnerships between workers in the United States and the developing world; and
- Champion the benefits of trade - which will open foreign markets for our exporters and give US manufacturers and consumers access to goods and inputs produced abroad."

Products & Services



3D PRINTED SHOES SHOULD MARRY OLD AND NEW DESIGNS, SAYS DELCAM

Software supplier Delcam Crispin says 3D printing's influence on the industry lies between "hype" and "the only future".

"The new materials and increased design freedom offered by 3D printing are expanding the creative opportunities for footwear designers," said the UK-based company. "Unhindered by the restrictions of conventional manufacturing, designers can let loose their creativity, paving the way for more projects in mass customisation and in meeting the most unusual and individual bespoke requests."

"The situation with 3D printing is similar to that with many other technologies when they are first introduced," explained Delcam's Chris Lawrie. "There are advocates claiming that it is the only future for the industry and more conservative commentators that regard it as the latest bit of hype."

"The real position is, as always, between the two extremes, with many projects where 3D printing will be the only possible approach able to meet the complexity of the design and just as many where only traditional methods will produce cost-effective results. The hybrid shoe project is intended to show that the two approaches can be complementary, rather than having to be competitive."

● Delcam has launched the 2015 release of its ShoeMaker Pro CAD software, which includes improvements to the last import wizard, the introduction of style-line templates, more flexibility in the modelling of heels, and the ability to create tuned flattening-parameter files based on existing lasts and production flattenings.

AUSTRIAN SAFETY FOOTWEAR FIRM DEVELOPS 'NEXT-GENERATION' SOLING

Polyurethane experts from Huntsman have announced details of an innovation project with Schütze-Schuhe, an Austrian manufacturer of high-quality, professional footwear.

Using a specialist footwear material from Huntsman, Schütze-Schuhe has developed what the chemicals group has called "a next-generation, PU-based soling solution for a new range

of light, fashionable, safety shoes". The new range from the Austrian shoe company also has electric static discharge (ESD) properties.

Schütze-Schuhe is a family-run business, best known for making hardwearing boots that enable construction employees to work on hot asphalt for more than an hour. The organisation also has an established range of roofing shoes that offer high levels of grip.

When the company decided to diversify and create a range of ESD

safety shoes, it began looking for a new polyurethane supplier to work with. The ideal partner had to be located in central Europe, be willing to develop a double-density soling solution tailored to specific requirements, and be capable of providing hands-on technical support.

Together the two companies embarked on the creation of a bespoke soling solution based on Huntsman's Daltoped Dual Density technology. Following a period of rapid product development and successful trials at Huntsman's footwear technology centre in Belgium, Schütze-Schuhe began using the new material to create a compact polyurethane outsole with a foamed, soft polyurethane midsole.

SATRA PLEASED WITH PROGRESS OF FOOTWEAR EFFICIENCY SYSTEM

UK-based testing and research firm SATRA has announced record sales of its 'TimeLine' production efficiency system in 2014, with Asian manufacturers the predominant customers.

Timeline is a database and configuration tool that enables manufacturers to calculate the optimum time required to carry out shoe making, which SATRA says enables factory production planners to produce reliable direct labour times and, therefore, to reduce cost.

At its core is a system that identifies the time required to complete simple actions, combined with the times required to carry out typical shoe-making operations based on a decade of SATRA's research.

BAYER TO JOIN FOOTWEAR EXPERTS AT 'GREEN POLYURETHANE' EVENT

Bayer's Insqin, a new polyurethane-coated fabric production process, will be on the agenda at the China-based Green Polyurethane Industry Technical Seminar on March 20.

Speakers will focus on the application of waterborne, solvent-free TPU technology and biomass raw

materials in terms of synthetic leather, coatings and adhesives.

The PU industry has expanded rapidly in recent years, but organisers says that the rapid development created problems in terms of pollution. "Meanwhile, many companies are plagued by technical barriers, higher raw material costs and other problems when producing and using green PU products," they added.

Speakers at the event in Xiamen include Nick Smith, head of textiles at Bayer MaterialScience, and Eugene Deng, from the shoemaking innovation team at Great Eastern Resins.

GERMAN FIRMS ACHIEVE LEATHER INSOLE BREAKTHROUGH

Specialist German footwear insole manufacturer Tacco Footcare International has achieved a first in the industry.

Working on a project with Osnabruck-based footwear group Hamm Reno, Tacco brought to market the first ever leather insoles to receive Blue Angel accreditation.

Blue Angel claims to be the oldest eco label in the world, having first been awarded in 1978. Around 10,000 products in 80 categories have now qualified for Blue Angel status, but never a leather insole, until now.

The Blue Angel organisation said that what it looks for in shoes and insoles are products with high standards of environmental care in production, avoiding chemicals that can be harmful to health and adhering to the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization in production.

INESCOP PRESENTS 3D DESIGN UPDATES

INESCOP, the Spanish Footwear Technology Institute, showcased its most recent technology developments in 3D footwear design at SIMAC, the International Exhibition of Machines and Technology for Footwear and Leathergoods Industries in Italy.

INESCOP's Icad3D+ integrates pattern engineering with 3D design, enabling an "intuitive environment" for the designer.

The program allows the designer to add margins, symmetries and rotations and automatically recalculates material consumption.

The system also features a virtual photographic studio to obtain photo-realistic rendered images that can be used in catalogues or online.

HUNTSMAN SHOWS OFF FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY IN CHENNAI

Polyurethane experts from global chemical company Huntsman explained to attendees at the India International Leather Fair about the polyurethane soling materials available to Indian footwear manufacturers and how using "differentiated footwear technologies" can deliver a competitive edge.

Fully water-blown polyester and polyether footwear systems that are

suitable for a wide variety of mid-sole, unit sole and sockliner applications are available from the company.

Marketed under the Daltoped technology brand, the range includes Daltoped Lite technology for lightweight shoes. It is based on innovative polyether material for polyurethane soles that functions, according to Huntsman, as "an ultra-lightweight, cost-effective and highly versatile alternative to ethyl vinyl acetate (EVA)".

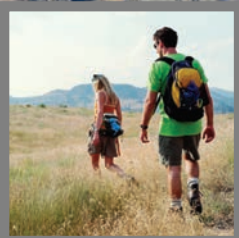
Another product in the range is Daltoped Grip, a system for enhancing the safety and comfort of shoes, constructed using polyether or polyester-based technology to "mimic the look and feel of rubber".


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Backtrack

World Footwear's publishing cycle and limitations on space make it impossible for us to run more than a carefully selected sample of news from across the industry. However, we publish hundreds more stories on **www.footwearbiz.com**. The site is updated every day with news from every continent and every part of the industry, making footwearbiz.com one of the most

comprehensive archives of news anywhere on the web for the global footwear industry.

We list below just a few of the headlines that have appeared on the site in recent weeks — **www.footwearbiz.com** allows you to read those you have missed.

13/02/2015

Anta claims U-turn with 2014 sales up 22%

12/02/2015

US: New plea to reduce tariffs on shoes
Kelme aims for international growth again

11/02/2015

Momad Metr polis fails to satisfy shoe firms

New Turkish brand to continue its market launch at Micam

Montrail to relaunch in Europe as part of Columbia's Ultra-Trail deal

10/02/2015

New footwear testing facility for Bangladesh

Garmont sets up US division

09/02/2015

Footwear firms attractive as takeover targets

06/02/2015

Acquisitive Under Armour posts record results - footwear up 55%

Another new footwear factory for Portugal

04/02/2015

Cole Haan aims for 'creative disruption'

Swedish outdoor footwear brand chooses Heinen leather

AAFA declares Brown Shoe company of the year

Record third-quarter sales for Deckers

03/02/2015

OutDoor founder Knut Jaeger dies aged 72

02/02/2015

2014: Brazil's leather exports hit a record \$2.9bn

29/01/2015

Self-lacing shoe and flashing ski boot among ispo winners

28/01/2015

Turkey keen on Ethiopia's leather and footwear prospects

New life for Denizli's sole leather tanners

Bioplastics take stage at Nike-backed green technology project

27/01/2015

Adidas sells Rockport for \$280 million

Jimmy Choo pleased with first results since IPO

26/01/2015

Where Li Ning went wrong

21/01/2015

Adidas Outdoor launches Boost hiking boots at Outdoor Retailer

Keen opens a new store in Prague

20/01/2015

Micam Shanghai extends to cover apparel brands

19/01/2015

New 'Made in Italy' project will provide support for Micam

16/01/2015

Yue Yuen earns \$8 billion in 2014

15/01/2015

Argentina eyes Russia for high-level footwear exports

14/01/2015

Bruno Magli is 'jewel in the crown', says new owner

Positive signs from Russian shoe buyers at Riva Schuh

Indian shoe retailer announces breakthrough deal with Church's

FICE to repeat and expand Co-Shoes as demand increases

13/01/2015

Special Roger Vivier "treasures" to go on show in Waalwijk

12/01/2015

Another Italian footwear producer is to close down

US Footwear association welcomes government action on dock talks

08/01/2015

Delcam Crispin promises faster footwear design

07/01/2015

The shoe start-up that links Canada, Bali and Mexico

Coach buys Stuart Weitzman for \$574 million

06/01/2015

Nike names Flyknit expansion among 2014 highlights

Last year, UNIDO chose Tanzania as the place to try out and test a new e-learning training programme to help footwear producers develop their technical skills. Now the programme has been expanded and updated and is available to help build up new generations of footwear artisans in all parts of the world. The footwear industry in Tanzania, meanwhile, has been given a new lease of life.



Participants at the inaugural UNIDO footwear pattern engineering e-learning course in Mwanza, Tanzania.

CREDIT: UNIDO

e-learning lends new life to Tanzanian shoe sector

Hope emerged of a much brighter future for the footwear industry in Tanzania last year after UNIDO (the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) and the Leather Association of Tanzania joined forces with a local education provider to run a new course on footwear pattern engineering, with e-learning the key to its success.

In all, an initial intake of 17 young people completed the initial course at the Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT) in the city of Mwanza in northern Tanzania. In conjunction with hands-on, practical training, much of the information available to participants on the day came from a web portal that UNIDO set up in April 2014 to provide widespread access to reports, research and other work carried out by its leather panel over the last 40 years. UNIDO has made it clear it believes the information from its portal will work best in conjunction with practical training.

Remote learning

Ivan Kral from UNIDO's Agro-Industries Technology Unit says this method will help provide opportunities to students from more remote regions who do not always have access to training in conventional institutions. He adds: "With the help of new technology such as digital imaging, we are able to improve and increase learning efficiency and help achieve technology transfer, which is one of our priorities."

The reference to remote regions resonates with Dr Albert Mmari, head of the DIT Mwanza campus. "Tanzania is a big country," he says, "and the people who work in leather and footwear here are spread out. At the same time, we only have one institution like this one. The new technology means we can reach everyone now and our footwear people, no matter where they are, can learn more about making shoes and develop their production."

Injection of confidence

With the injection of confidence generated by the UNIDO course, the Tanzanian footwear industry went on to set up a pavilion at the Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair to allow its footwear producers to display their designs, boosting orders, Dr Mmari says, by between 20% and 30%. "The e-learning made a difference," he insists. "Many of our people were already making shoes, but without the technical knowledge they have now. The course made an instant, positive impact on the quality of their production."

Further good news for the Tanzanian footwear sector is that the ministry of industry and trade has set up a loan programme for small- and medium- enterprises to encourage entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. Dr Mmari insists that this will allow some of the participants in the Mwanza training programme to go on to supply shoes not just to the domestic market, but to customers overseas as well.

Examples include Sterco, from the Arusha region in the north of the country, and Shah Industry from Moshi in the Kilimanjaro region in the north-east, which the head of campus says are already exporting their products to the US under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which aims specifically to help eligible countries in sub-Saharan Africa to develop trade with the US and improve their economies by granting quota- and duty-free entry to the US market of exports for qualifying products and materials.

Course expansion

UNIDO is equally pleased with the way its footwear e-learning initiative in Tanzania has worked out, saying this February that it has followed up on the success of the

Mwanza programme by making new lessons and tests available as part of a now expanded online footwear pattern engineering course and updated all the lessons that were already included.

It points to the cost-effectiveness of training a new generation of footwear manufacturers in this way, making high-quality information and technical assistance accessible to "all users, without limitations". The successful launch of the programme with DIT Mwanza last year means the material is "tried and tested", according to Ivan Kral, and can now be rolled out as part of self-learning or classroom-based training programmes everywhere.

This, he says, will "open doors to millions who, by virtue of their remote location, limited time or resources, security issues or other constraints, would be unable to follow conventional learning programmes".

Mr Kral also points to the programme's ability to inspire innovation. He says: "UNIDO is closely associated with innovation; its interventions are about the practical application of innovation." In the context of being able to use modern communications technology to offer best-in-class training in shoe design and production to talented footwear professionals anywhere in the world, there are strong grounds for hope that this initiative can revitalise the footwear industry in other developing economies, just as it appears to have done in Tanzania. 

UNIDO insists the e-learning course works best in conjunction with practical training.

CREDIT: UNIDO





The Poppy Barley range includes flat boots, heeled boots, ankle boots and flat shoes for women, as well as a selection of brogues and chukka boots for men.

ALL CREDITS: POPPY BARLEY

Coming into the footwear industry from the outside may have helped the two sisters behind Canadian start-up Poppy Barley to rethink custom footwear sales in North America.

The shoe start-up that links Canada, Bali and Mexico

It's exactly three years since Canadian footwear entrepreneur Justine Barber had the idea for Poppy Barley, a custom-made boot and shoe brand that she has set up with her sister Kendall. Poppy Barley, whose name celebrates the barleycorns and poppy seeds that cordwainers traditionally used to determine sizing in custom-made footwear, is based in Edmonton, Alberta. However, Ms Barber hatched the original idea while on holiday in Bali.

A clever craftsman on the Indonesian island told Justine Barber not to worry when some black riding boots with a brown top she liked were unavailable in her size: he measured her feet and calves, worked on the boots in her absence and mailed them to Canada a few weeks later. She and her sister decided to offer a similar service to other Canadian consumers and set their footwear company up.

It offers an internet-based made-to-measure service as well as a personal by appointment measuring and ordering service in downtown Edmonton. There is a full range of styles on offer, including ballet flats, flat boots, heeled boots, ankle boots and five styles of men's custom brogues. Rather than have its orders made in Bali, though, Poppy Barley is sending its customers' measurements to, and bringing its footwear into Canada from, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partner country Mexico, working with artisan manufacturing partners in León, Guanajuato. "Our footwear is handcrafted by talented artisans in León," the company states. "We proudly manufacture with full transparency, and share this on our website: from production practices to working conditions and employee wages."

Outsiders' view

Justine Barber explains that although she and her sister both have business degrees, they have come into the footwear business "as outsiders". She explains: "I later did a Master's in Europe focusing on war studies and then worked in Edmonton on social policy issues. Kendall has a background in marketing and runs some independent eyewear stores with her husband, but we are new to the footwear industry. Sometimes, though, when you view something from the outside rather than from a conventional point of view it's easier to rethink things."

What needed rethinking, from the point of view of Poppy



The company's website gives customers clear instructions on how to measure their feet and calves and how to submit those measurements.

Barley, was how to source footwear. It wanted from the outset to be able to offer bespoke boots and shoes to its customers, detailing carefully on its website what measurements it needs (shoe size, obviously, but also the width of the foot and the circumference of the calf). Anyone can do this, the company argues, but it's clear that not anyone can transform the measurements into a perfect-fitting pair of boots or shoes. After "looking everywhere", Ms Barber says she and her sister found suitably personalised production possibilities in a handful of niches only: polo boots in Argentina, cowboy boots in Mexico, riding boots in England. Because Mexico is a NAFTA partner, the sisters arranged to travel to León to talk to two cowboy boot manufacturers about the possibility of producing for Poppy Barley.

Chance encounter

"One of them didn't show up to meet us, and with the other one, we were worried about the quality," she says. "We were just about to pack our bags and return to Canada when the person we had taken on as our broker in León [now



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The founders of Poppy Barley, sisters Justine (left) and Kendall Barber.

Mexico operations manager], Laura, got a call from her daughter saying that we really needed to meet someone, the mother of a friend. Through this, completely by chance, we met Lupita, the person who runs the artisan footwear manufacturing company that we now partner with."

The partnership is strong: Lupita allows Poppy Barley to publicise how many hours her artisan employees work (8.30 to 6.30, Monday to Friday, with nice long lunch-breaks), and how much they earn (on average, just over \$17,000 per year, 13 times the local minimum wage). But, because everyone knows it's poor supply chain practice to be completely reliant on one customer or one supplier, Lupita continues to produce footwear for other clients and Poppy Barley is preparing to place a proportion of orders with other producers in León. "We will be equally open about the working conditions at these new partner companies," Justine Barber says, "and we will offer all our manufacturing partners the same high levels of trust and transparency. We will try to be as consistent with all of them as we can be."

Openness at a premium

Transparency is attractive. Ms Barber says Poppy Barley sets out to be attractive to customers principally by offering footwear in designs that appeal to people, at prices they will be prepared to pay. However, she says questions about ethical production did come up quickly in early discussions that Poppy Barley carried out with the buying public. "This is something we care about," Ms Barber says, "and something our customers care about, too, and we know this because, typically, it would be the second or third question they would ask us about our footwear. Our experience is that people in the markets we sell in are willing to pay something as a premium for the reassurance that this is ethically made custom footwear, but you cannot be off the scale. You have to find the intersect." This, at least, moves the argument on a few steps. Big brands often say that consumers care about



Production is in the safe hands of artisans in León in Mexico.

none of this and only place importance on branding, look and price. Clearly the Canadian and US shoppers who have engaged with Poppy Barley so far can see beyond this and are willing and able to pay for the privilege. These consumers recognise there is a difference between artisan production and mass-manufactured shoes. When the price is in the range of \$300, \$350, \$400 or \$500 per pair, which is what Poppy Barley boots cost (its range of flat shoes is substantially cheaper), there should be some money there to provide the people who make the products with fair compensation, Ms Barber contends.

Personal contact

Poppy Barley footwear is available for delivery to addresses in the US as well as in Canada, but in-person shopping opportunities, which have taken the form of in-store pop-up events, have so far only taken place in Canada. "We want to do more of this," Justine Barber confirms. "E-commerce is great, and I think we have done a beautiful job with our website, but consumers certainly seem to like the in-person shopping opportunities we have been able to arrange. For example, last fall, we held a pop-up event in Vancouver. People came who told us they had been following us for a year but had waited for us to come to them before buying."

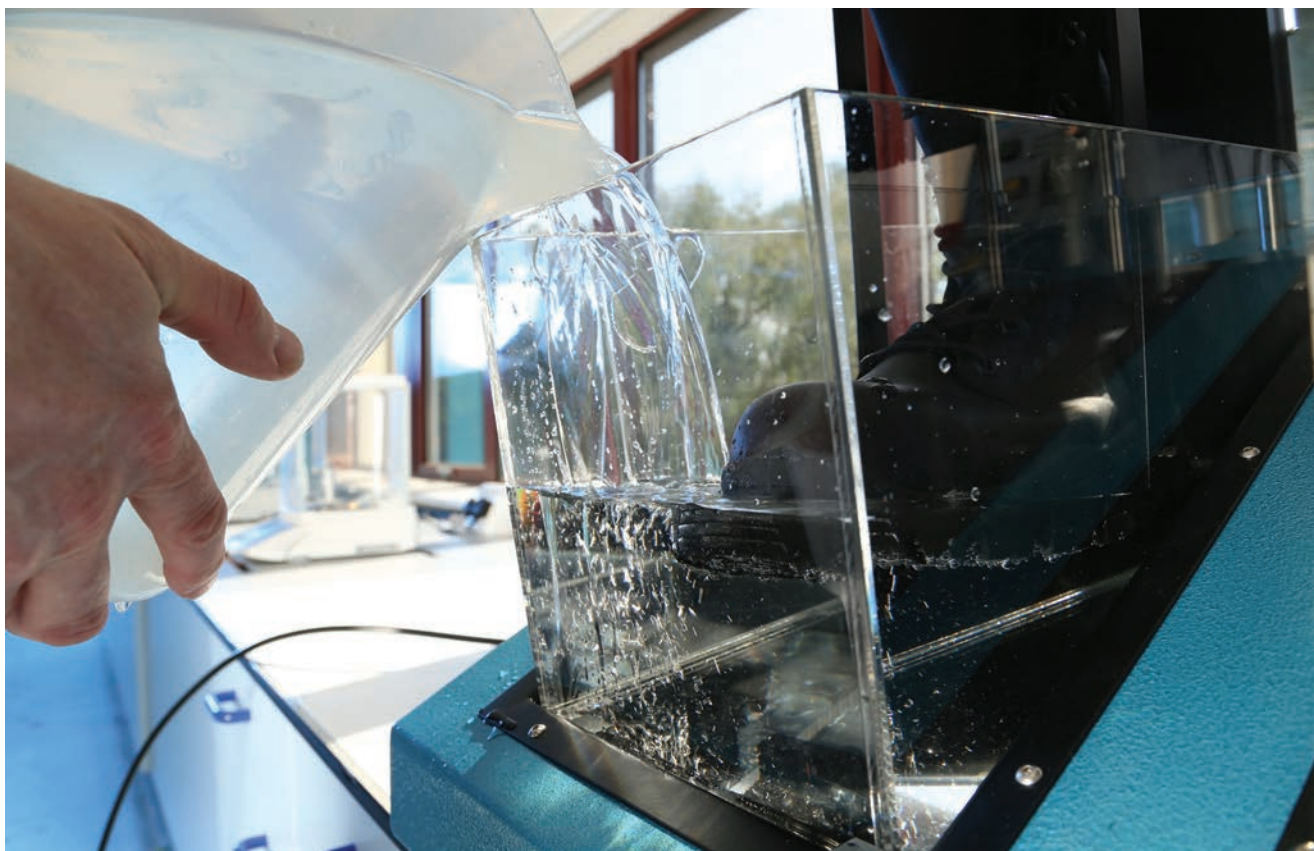
She accepts that some shoppers are a little nervous about measuring their own feet, although the website explanations are clear, and Poppy Barley checks the measurements for coherence when orders come in and a robust returns policy is in place. More than that, Ms Barber accepts that being able to smell the leather and to see and touch the footwear before buying is something that appeals to many consumers. For this reason, Poppy Barley will continue to sell online, but will work to make available more in-person appointments for showing samples to customers and carrying out the measuring for them as well as more pop-up events like the one in Vancouver and, in time, its own stores. 📍

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In-factory test facilities can be a major benefit to manufacturers.

ALL CREDITS: SATRA

The importance of testing

AUSTIN SIMMONS, CEO, SATRA

The world of footwear manufacturing never stands still, with shoe makers and sourcing companies always looking to improve competitiveness and gain market share. As result, testing continues to play an important role in footwear supply chains throughout the world.

Regardless of the type of footwear involved, it is essential to have procedures in place to provide confidence that products have been made in accordance with the correct specifications, quality levels and satisfy legal safety and fit for purpose legislation. Being able to assess the performance of footwear and components—preferably at the earliest practical stage—is highly desirable for a number of reasons.

The most important thing to remember is that 'quality' is all about

meeting customer expectations. Keeping customers satisfied is essential and their requirements will play a large part in the procedures the manufacturer puts in place. This is still largely in the form of a quality control or assurance process, which often involves some type of testing.

In the footwear industry, traditionally, testing forms part of a manufacturer's quality assurance programme or is a key element of quality control processes from initial product verification through to confirmation of production quality. It is used to verify the quality of materials, control critical processes during manufacture and validate the performance of the finished product. Sourcing companies and retailers frequently have a testing regime in place, not only to be sure the product supplied is as expected, but also often forming part of a legal 'due diligence' defence process.

Although there are many independent laboratories offering testing services, there is often greater convenience in having in-factory test facilities. The establishment of properly controlled and accredited laboratories can be a major benefit to manufacturers. By developing a greater knowledge and understanding of a product's characteristics, manufacturers are often not only able to bring improved quality products to market earlier but also work more closely with their customers to develop even better products or move into other footwear market sectors.

SETTING STANDARDS FOR 96 YEARS

SATRA has been at the forefront of test method development since its inception in 1919 and many of its methods are enshrined in national and

international standards. These methods provide a useful way to evaluate footwear and components, including materials or sub-assemblies taken from footwear. Having developed to over 250 footwear and textile related test methods they cover all aspects of shoemaking.

While SATRA itself still conducts a considerable amount of routine, often safety critical, testing in both its UK and China-based laboratories, it is more usual for manufacturers to carry out basic testing with organisations that are close to them in-country. With a catalogue of over 300 types of footwear test equipment, it is more likely to supply these laboratories, with many of the manufacturer's customers wanting tests carried out to SATRA standards or relevant international, European or US standards. In some cases brands and retailers may have their own test specifications that must be followed.

Despite trends towards relocating some manufacturing closer to major markets, the vast majority of shoemaking remains in Asia. Good supply chain management is therefore still critical and can be a fraught and complex process. Ensuring product quality is just one important issue among a number of potential pitfalls and difficulties. Although we have latterly seen a number of companies revert to procuring or making shoes closer to market, the vast majority are still sourced from regions many thousands of miles away making it more difficult to implement designs, conduct research and development, directly supervise production and report back or correct faulty products.

Many companies have their own personnel in the factories or have agents to keep an eye on things (often working in conjunction with the manufacturer's own in-house laboratory) or employ specialist independent quality control organisations to carry out third party checks of products. Smaller organisations, however, may not have this infrastructure and in many cases are likely to put a greater emphasis on finished product testing. At this stage, any problems found are more difficult to put right and may involve whole batches of product being rejected or recalled. There will always be a need for independent third party testing and many retailers and brands insist on this.

WHOLE SHOE EVALUATION

Traditional footwear tests can tell a great deal about the properties of the specimen such as resistance to abrasion, strength, hardness, flexibility, density and, of course, the presence of restricted chemicals. They do not, however, enable the evaluation of the footwear as a whole. This is an area that SATRA has been working on over recent years, developing standard laboratory whole shoe tests and equipment that can simulate what happens in wear by removing the subjective aspect of using humans as part of the test method. These whole shoe tests have applications in both research and product development as well as to ensure the integrity of production units.

WATER RESISTANCE

A good example is the SATRA TM 230 test method for evaluating water resistance of footwear which provides an alternative to the traditional 'trough test' in which a wearer repeatedly walks along a water filled trough to determine the resistance to water ingress. By utilising a mechanical flexing operation the equipment used subjects footwear to a flexing motion similar to that which

occurs during normal walking. The machine provides a more consistent, less labour intensive test and has become the organisation's preferred method of assessing whole footwear dynamic water resistance.

OVERALL DURABILITY

Another area of human subjectivity where it has implemented an automated solution is whole shoe durability testing, traditionally undertaken via a 'wear trial'. Over the years, the organisation has conducted hundreds of wear trials for shoes in an attempt to evaluate the durability of the footwear in realistic circumstances, where the footwear is undergoing the same stresses as if worn by the consumer. Wear trials, however, are usually a long drawn out processes (particularly if the footwear does not fail prematurely) and require significant planning and logistical implementation to be successful.

With demands for ever shorter time periods from initial design to retail availability, the length of a human wear trial is, more often than not, impractical and expensive. The trial itself can often take up to several months of the subject's time not to mention the



The STM 528 Pedatron accurately simulates real life wear patterns in a shoe.

probability of human error that has to be taken into consideration when undergoing this type of exercise.

Until recently, the human wear trial was the only obvious route for manufacturers who wished to assess whole life performance of their products. SATRA recognised the need for an alternative that removed the human subjectivity and time from wear trials while retaining the accuracy. Its 'Artificial Ageing Protocol' simulates a wear trial under controlled laboratory conditions by subjecting an item of footwear to a cycle of testing that can produce initial results in days rather than months.

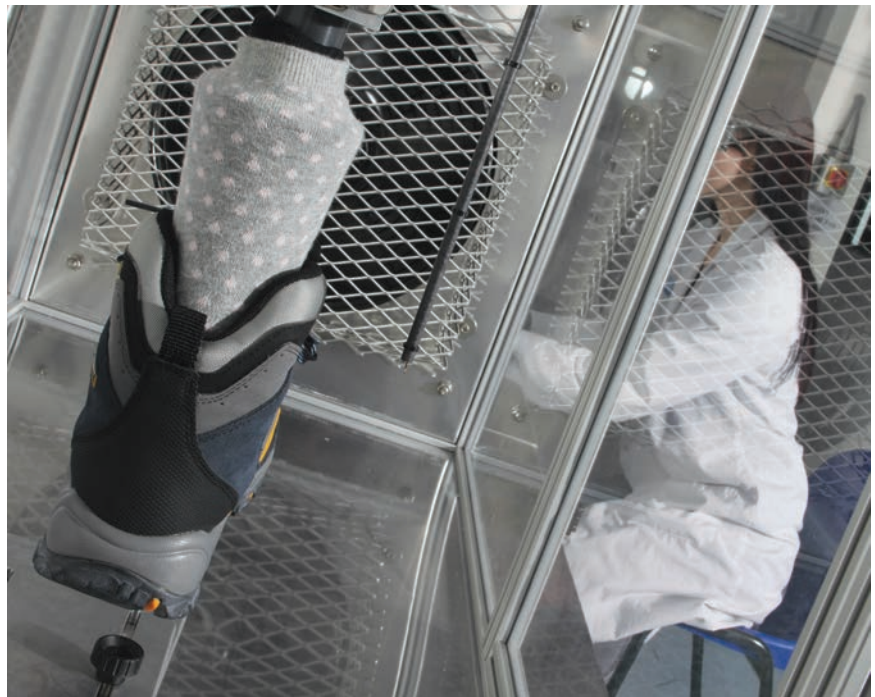
This Simulated Wear Assessment Test (SWAT) subjects finished footwear to comparable levels of moisture, heat, pressure, flexing and abrasion as would be experienced in actual wear. The advantage SWAT has over a traditional wear trial is the accuracy and consistency of results and speed of completion.

By shortening the trial time and removing the need to involve a lot of people, it not only increases the scientific validity and accuracy of the test but substantially decreases the time it takes to provide results. The tests mimic the wear that shoes would encounter in real-life situations. The routine followed can be applied to a variety of shoes and also modified to suit more specific applications.

Typically, controlled doses of moisture and heat are introduced into the footwear to simulate foot perspiration. The footwear is then subjected to the stresses and strains typically associated with walking, realistically simulating the forces, flexing and sole abrasion equivalent of a number of months or years walking. Depending on the application, a variety of treatments and environmental conditions may also be applied (before or during the test) to further simulate real life scenarios. This gives us an insight into any design problems or manufacturing deficiencies which correlate well with those that would occur in actual use of footwear.

MIMICKING THE HUMAN GAIT

At the core of the ageing protocol is the Pedatron, the result of a research project to develop a walking machine which flexes the shoes by mimicking



The STM 567 Endofoot measures moisture management and thermal efficiency in a shoe.

the walking action of the human gait very closely. Underfoot pressure mapping instrumentation was used to characterise human subjects' walking styles which were analysed using computer software to produce a 'SATRA walk' gait. This information was converted into digital signals to control the Pedatron electronics and create a consistent walking pattern, which has been verified by comparing typical wear patterns from both the Pedatron and human subjects.

The biomechanical action that the Pedatron is able to produce is an accurate simulation of actual wear patterns. Not only are the same forces going through the heel and toe when comparisons are made to human gait but the wear pattern seen inside and outside of the shoe correlate very well with those produced in human trials. These include visible toe imprints and indenting and wear at the heel position being seen on the insole of the shoe.

Each walking cycle can be interspersed with periods of hot moisture introduction. The compound effect of all this simulated sweat combined with the heavy walking and any other conditioning treatment considered applicable is what accelerates the ageing of the footwear. After each unit, the footwear is carefully examined and any wear or damage noted.

IMPROVING COMFORT

Shoe comfort is heavily influenced by thermal insulation and moisture disposal properties and these two important characteristics have been the subject of considerable research resulting in the Endofoot machine which allows both moisture management and thermal efficiency to be determined. As a whole shoe test, the combined effect of sole, upper and lining is taken into account as well as seams and different types of hosiery.

At the heart of the machine is a moulded foot form incorporating a distribution system of small bore capillaries and electrical heating elements allowing heated water to be introduced through surface pores of the foot form to simulate sweat. Feedback control enables a uniform temperature to be maintained. Reference hose is fitted to the foot form, then the subject footwear itself. A controlled volume of airflow is introduced over the footwear at a constant temperature and humidity and the test yields a measure of the energy needed to maintain the foot form temperature. From this the thermal performance and sweat management capability can be derived.

Many materials characteristics have been proven through tests conducted under standard laboratory conditions, usually either 23°C / 50%RH or 20°C /

65%RH. While this aids consistency between laboratories and can provide considerable information about product performance, they are conditions that are far more likely to be encountered in temperate regions of the world than elsewhere. As a result, there is a wealth of information about how footwear materials perform in standard laboratory conditions, but little comparable data on property levels in 'real life', non-standard conditions.

VARYING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Breathability of footwear materials and moisture management of footwear are particular aspects of comfort that are heavily influenced by the conditions in which they are to be used. It has long been recognised that many of the properties of the materials and components used in footwear are to a greater or lesser extent affected by their temperature and moisture content. Sensitivity to the ambient conditions means that an item tested in a laboratory

atmosphere where the temperature and relative humidity are low is likely to give a different result from an identical one tested in another laboratory atmosphere, where the temperature and relative humidity are high.

So, more recently, SATRA has also been concentrating on whole shoe evaluation under a variety of environmental conditions in which footwear is intended to be worn. Tests have been developed that allow both materials and whole footwear to be assessed for breathability and moisture management performance levels in the types of environment in which they are intended to be used, especially harsh environments — hot, cold, dry and humid.

This is a complex area. Performance and comfort depend not only on the external environmental conditions, but also the activity level of the wearer. Results predicted from tests conducted under standard laboratory conditions often prove to be of limited use in more extreme environments as characteristics and rankings of upper

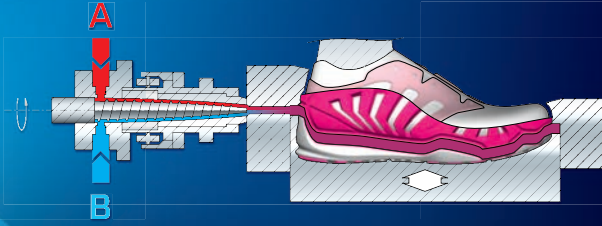
and lining materials in different climates can change dramatically. When selecting materials for footwear that will be marketed and worn in environments that are far removed from standard laboratory conditions, it should be an essential part of the selection process to have these materials tested in applicable climate conditions.

In difficult financial times, it is always tempting to reduce the level of product checking carried out as a cost saving exercise. However, this can be a false economy unless other measures of ensuring quality are in place. Testing is still one of the easiest ways to demonstrate compliance and forms a vital role throughout the footwear industry supply chain, whether for evaluating materials and prototypes, confirming production or ensuring that sourced products meet specifications. Testing as part of research and development opens up another world of knowledge enabling manufacturers to keep at the forefront of innovation. 



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The changing face of leather

For just about as long as recorded history, leather has been the staple material for footwear production, whether it was the shoes Ötzi was wearing while running away from his murderers in the Swiss Alps some 5,000 years ago or King David wearing his simple sandals in Biblical times.

Advances in the production of leather for shoes progressed in slow, measured steps; for centuries, the leather available for footwear manufacturers had relied solely on vegetable tanning until the end of 1800s. Then, with the development of chrome tanning, footwear manufacturers suddenly found that leather was being produced faster, with greater choice, as tanning times

fell from almost a year to a matter of a few weeks.

It took virtually another century before the next fundamental change in tanning occurred. Chrome-free tanning systems have only started to develop within the last decade and could prove of interest to footwear producers. The 2000s saw the opening up of new possibilities in the relationship between tanner and shoemaker. The pace of change had been speeded up and the beneficiaries are the manufacturer and their customers.

DRIVING CHANGE

The leather supply chain in 2015 would be barely recognisable to the footwear manufacturer of 1915. The motivating forces for fresh thinking

have had little to do with the demands of the footwear producer. The real drivers for change, however, can be traced to a better understanding of the structure of hides and skins, the physics and chemistry applied in leather production, as well as the advances in machinery manufacture and, crucially, the use of the computer and microprocessor.

The attitudes of governments, legislators and the agendas of environmental lobbyists cannot be ignored either. The lobbyists are akin to the parents on the touchline, watching their offspring play soccer, and demanding greater effort from their children: they can make a lot of noise without the responsibility of making the play.

In the latter decades of the 20th century, the noise could no longer be ignored and demands grew for industry, in general, to clean up their act. Without doubt there were and are extremely responsible industries that did not need the urging of the legislators but there were sufficient that needed more of 'the stick and less of the carrot'.

From an historical point of view, these streams of change and external forces on leather production can be seen to have merged into a consistent flow of benefit for the footwear manufacturer.

ISO, EU AND OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

Uniformity of product is key to shoemaking. In the first instance, meaningful standards had to be developed. What were known as BS standards were translated into EN and ISO standards. One of the first that entered consumer consciousness was BS 5750, introduced in 1978 and which became ISO 9000 in 1987. It is in effect a quality management standard and implied that the product produced would be of a consistent quality; it did not define that the product was either good or bad.

It soon became clear that more stringent standards on production would be needed and so a deluge of ISOs flooded in. Probably the ISO 14000 group has had most influence on the tanning sector as it deals with the environmental impact of any industrial activity. As the standards organisation describes it, the ISO 14000 family provides practical tools for companies looking to identify and control their environmental impact and constantly improve their environmental performance. Other standards within the family focus on specific environmental aspects such as life cycle analysis, communication and auditing.

Introducing concepts such as life cycle analysis is a relatively new approach but one which increasingly is having an impact on footwear production. Anything the tanning industry can do to help must be seen as a welcome contribution. Who would have thought that carbon footprint would enter everyday language so speedily, yet it is an



Modern effluent treatment plants have transformed the global industry to the extent that a tannery today can be sited in an urban area and the local population is largely unaware of the tannery on their doorstep. This photograph shows part of a primary effluent treatment system installed at a tannery within the city of Santiago, Dominican Republic.

CREDIT: WTP



Recycling, reduce and reuse are very much part of modern tanning. These settling vessels being installed in a tannery in Austria are designed for the recovery of proteins, following the acid precipitation of unhairing/liming wastewaters and washings after sulphide removal.

CREDIT: WTP

aspect of leather production that this journal's sister publication, *World Leather*, had raised as an issue well before the turn of the 20th century.

While the tanning sector was digesting the impact of fresh standards, along came the EU's REACH initiative, the regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. It entered into force on 1st June 2007. The implementation of this

legislation has had an impact worldwide. Companies wishing to send product into the vast European market realised that they too would need to be compliant with its demands. As most of the major developers and suppliers of chemicals to the tanning industry are firmly based in Europe, even if much of their production is outside of the EU, the leather producers beyond the confines of the EU found that they would have

to adapt and amend their production methods too.

The effect, again, was to the benefit of the footwear manufacturers, who could begin to rely on the leather supplied being compliant with enhanced health and safety regulations. These changes also affected the dyestuffs and finishes used by leather producers and potentially hazardous products were removed from the supply chain.

ADDING CONFIDENCE, EXPLODING MYTHS

Two further initiatives have added weight to the changing face of leather for the benefit of the shoemaker: LWG and ToTY. In their different ways, both are designed to allow footwear manufacturers to confidently continue using leather as a material of choice. LWG, the leather working group, came into existence in 2005 with the aim of promoting sustainable and appropriate environmental stewardship practices within the leather industry. As part of this, the LWG created a protocol to accurately assess the compliance and environmental stewardship practices of leather manufacturers. It is the group's objective to work transparently, involving tanners, brands, retailers and other relevant supply chain representation. It has created an auditing system and is supported by some of the major global brands in footwear.

ToTY or, more correctly, the Tannery of the Year Awards programme, was the brainchild of the magazine *World Leather*. The international leather industry had come together at a conference in Paris in 2007; the overriding consensus was that, as much as the global industry had advanced, there remained concern that the perceptions of leather production were still based on those of the 1960s and even earlier. It was still regarded in some quarters as a dirty, polluting industry. The industry needed to be promoted as the modern, clean and responsible sector it had become and the myths promoted against leather in the 21st century had to be exploded.

While industry leaders agreed on the need, none of the international organisations could afford to develop the proper response or the means of communicating the new reality. *World*



The machines in the tannery today can match those to be found in advanced technology companies. This vacuum drying machine at a tannery in Australia is used to extend and flatten skins before completion of the drying process. CREDIT: WTP



Sophisticated machines, such as this roller coater, provide tanners with multiple options to suit their production, similar to deciding what features you would like when buying a car. The options that can be added to the basic machine appear to be almost as numerous. CREDIT: GEMATA SPA

Leather created the Tannery of the Year concept and it won the support of ICT, the international council of tanners, IULTCS, the international union of leather technicians and chemists, and ICHSLTA, the international council of hides, skins and leather traders' association, as well as other global companies supplying the tanning sector.

Besides promoting the modern leather industry, the Awards programme, with its in-depth

analyses, is designed to bring best practice in the sector to a wider audience and to disseminate innovative thinking around the world, as well as to prove the corporate social responsibility of the best on all continents. It has already illustrated how even the smallest tanneries, even in remote parts of the world, can match large corporations which often escape such detailed scrutiny by 'the parents on the touchline'. The magazine's current *Nothing to Hide*



Regrettably the colourful tourist scene from Morocco still gets reproduced as representative of the leather industry today – check Wikipedia/leather, nothing could be further away from modern reality. CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK / MIKADUN



Modern retanning/dyeing drums in stainless steel, also used in experimental dyeing departments, give an accurate picture of the 21st century leather industry. CREDIT: WTP

series of articles is also designed to explode the myths about leather, some of which are promoted through spite, others published by respected world organisations such as the FAO, that should know better.

PRODUCTION LINE CONSISTENCY

For the manufacturer, consistency of the leather substrate is the greatest advance of the last decade. While it is proper that the natural, sustainable

quality of genuine leather needs to be kept to the fore, modern production requires that the leather supplied must be of uniform thickness and finish. In times gone by, such consistency relied in large measure on the skill of the operative and the experience of the technicians and chemists.

A change in formula would be logged in a book. Written by hand, it could be difficult to interpret, or easily forgotten or ignored. The computer and the microprocessor changed all

that when they were introduced into the tannery, both by management and machinery manufacturers. It has meant that the arcane methods and guesswork have been removed. The leather produced in one tannery of a group is now identical to the leather produced in another associated tannery in a different country. For the giant footwear brands, it meant that their leather shoes made in China were the same as those made in Vietnam or elsewhere. Such is the ability of modern systems that, in a blind test, a group salesman would not be able to say where a particular leather sample was produced.

A single tannery clearly can reproduce the same consistency and product quality. It has meant that reliable partnerships can be forged between the leather supplier and the user. Chasing consistency has inevitably wrought changes within the structure and layout of the tannery. Machines and processes are now linked in a way that was not previously possible. The application of chemicals and additives is now strictly measured, timed and controlled. Program improvements can be generated as required; the guesswork of yesteryear has been relegated to historical analysis.

While black and brown might still rule the colour palette, the ability of finishers to create a broader spectrum has been infinitely advanced and the innovative controls ensure consistency. The chemical companies have ensured the development of aqueous-based finishes. Emissions are controlled, and waste eliminated. Leather producers and finishers should be seen as partners in progress by the footwear industry.

In the final analysis, the footwear manufacturer wants to be assured of a safe consistent substrate with which to work, that is delivered on time and one that will perform to the demands of the consumer. If the leather that is supplied meets all the requirements of consumer legislation and cannot be damaged by the lobbyists, the parents on the touchline, it allows the manufacturer to concentrate on his responsibilities with greater assurance.

In 2015, the advances made by the leather industry have made this easier to achieve. 🍎

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Nanotechnological footwear

Nanotechnology involves the study and application of extremely small things and can be applied across all the other science fields, such as chemistry, biology, physics, materials science and engineering. It is hard to imagine just how small these particles are as one nanometre is one billionth of a metre. For instance, there are 25,400,000 nanometres in an inch and a sheet of newspaper is about 100,000 nanometres thick.

It involves the ability to see and to control individual atoms and molecules. Literally everything on earth is made up of atoms but they are impossible to see with the naked eye or even with a conventional microscope. It is only during the past 30 years with the invention of the scanning

tunnelling microscope (STM) and the atomic force microscope (AFM), that the age of nanotechnology has been made possible.

Nanoscale materials (nanoparticles or NPs) have however been unwittingly used for centuries. For example, alternate-sized gold and silver particles created colours in medieval stained glass windows although nobody was aware that the process being used to create them actually led to changes in the composition of the materials themselves. Scientists and engineers are finding ways to deliberately make materials at the nanoscale to take advantage of their enhanced properties such as higher strength, lighter weight and greater chemical reactivity than their larger-scale counterparts. And this, now includes footwear.

NANOFOOT PROJECT

Nanofoot is a European R&D project to develop advanced and innovative nanotechnology-based solutions for leather and polymer components for footwear and is supported by the European Executive Research Agency (REA). It is hoped that this, in turn, will lead to a new form of sustainable and customer-driven production of consumer goods, where health and the environment, high quality components, fair marketing information and competitive pricing are combined to make companies more competitive in world markets.

The project involves five SMEs (small- and medium- sized enterprises) and four RTD (research and technical development) centres. The SMEs involved are Curtumes Aveneda and

Indinor (Portugal), Cammina Leggero (Italy), TPSP and Evathink (Spain). The RTDs are CTCP and Porto University Sciences Faculty (Portugal), Inescop (Spain) and Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Italy). Together they create a balanced and interdisciplinary team combining the practical know-how of the SMEs with expertise from the universities and research centres. Working this way helps the project develop knowledge that is more easily transferable to manufacturers and so promote innovation and commercial application. It also enables the SMEs to validate the results obtained.

The project aims to change the concept of the shoe and make it functional in all respects, from its production using easily accessible, low-cost and high-performance materials, to its final disposal. This in turn requires the materials used to have a very low ecological impact such that the only 'footprint' that the footwear will hopefully leave will be the shape of the sole on the ground. A technological or, more precisely, a nanotechnological shoe that is able to

combine comfort with environmental care.

PARTICULARS

Antimicrobial properties, thermal and electrical conductivity, water resistance and breathability are some of the functional characteristics of a shoe which it is believed could benefit from the use of nanotechnology and lead to the development of more comfortable footwear. The Nanofoot SMEs particularly want to explore the potential and possible benefits of using NPs that are already on the market in the development of new functional materials and products. Their final objective is to create new and different high added value and marketable materials and finished products that satisfy the needs and expectations of modern consumers.

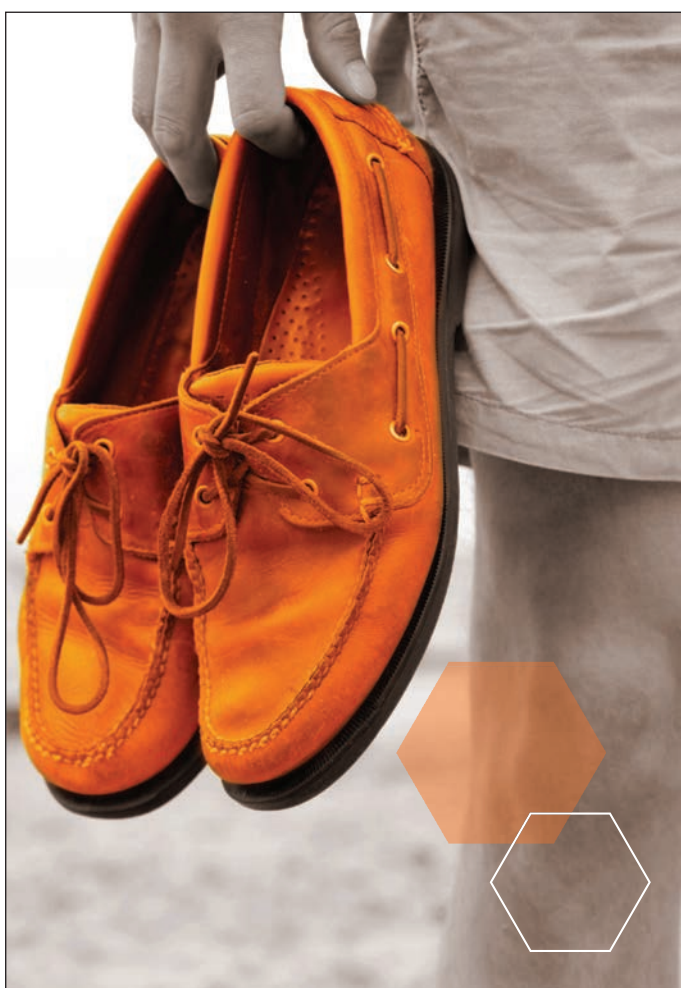
The RTDs are undertaking a more diverse set of activities. They are screening commercially available NPs to see if they might be cost-effective and, if so, investigate the feasibility of using them in processing products, coatings, leathers and microfibres.

They are also looking at developing polymeric nano-composites for use in footwear components and developing advanced antimicrobial and thermally auto-regulated footwear.

With regard to footwear manufacturing itself, they are exploring ways to create an integrated approach that safeguards operatives, consumers and the environment. They will then analyse the results and, where appropriate, produce prototypes for further evaluation. The project also aims to decrease the environmental impact of industrial processes by replacing bulk materials by NPs and improving nanoparticle-based formulations and their manufacturing procedures.

Nanofoot is a 24-month project that began September 2013 and will finish in September of this year. It is therefore still very much a work in progress. However, some positive benefits are foreseen for both the consortium's SMEs and the wider industry.

Avenida, as a leather manufacturer, specialises in the manufacture of differentiated leathers with higher added value and improved properties. It



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will explore the nanoleathers developed with a view to bringing to market innovative new leather products with enhanced anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, breathability and water resistant properties.

Indinor is a producer and supplier of chemical products for leather tanning, and leather and footwear coating and finishing. It will explore the processing products and coatings developed with the use of nanotechnology to see what new opportunities there are for the leather and footwear industries.

Evathink is a polymer compounder with extensive experience in EVA processing for orthopaedic footwear applications. Its aim is to be able to offer a range of nanocomposites with advanced thermal and electrical conductive properties for orthopaedic and similar applications such as safety footwear and technical floorings.

TPSP is a speciality footwear manufacturer that will explore the potential of nanotechnology for customised and orthopaedic footwear. This will take the form of shoe and custom-made orthopaedic insoles, with



The two year Nanofoot project has involved extensive laboratory research and testing.

different materials and assembling processes, covering the range of processes and applications more usual in this sector in Europe.

Cammina is a small company that designs and produces shoes and accessories made out of eco-compatible materials. The target here is the production of footwear with different nanofunctional and animal-free vegan materials and constructions for its particular market segment.

Furthermore, the nano-based solutions that will be marketed will have real added functions and a higher level of performance than existing ones. This 'increase in product functionality and quality' will attract areas of the footwear market where price, while still relevant, is not the most important factor, resulting in an economic benefit in an added value estimated at 10 to 20% higher than similar products without the new improved functions. Given the multi-level objectives of the project, performance indicators and impacts will be influential throughout the life cycle of both the materials and finished products. 



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Interesting... but giving the wrong impression

The conversion of raw skins into leather, among the earliest of crafts, has now evolved into a sophisticated and technically developed industry. There are some historic remaining examples that provide an illustration of early practices and the following images show the most basic procedures that were probably typical in medieval times. Needless to say, this method is no longer practical in an industrial sense as even the most basic of modern tanning systems are so advanced in comparison. It does however still have a curiosity value and as such is now used to serve the

tourist industry, complete with guided tours and an opportunity to purchase leather goods produced from the leathers being made.

Unfortunately, these tours place a strong reliance on shocking the visitor with a smell of putrefaction, emphasis on the use of pigeon dung for softening the leather and people working in filthy and unhygienic conditions. They may provide significant revenue for some sections of a local economy but it is regrettable that any visitors may well be left with a totally wrong impression of an industry having a total disregard for the health and safety of its workforce

and the environment. These examples of 'shock tourism' continue regardless of any legislation that could be applied or without any attention being given to good and responsible practices that can be found within small-scale or ethnic leather making anywhere else let alone the high standards of the larger ones.

A perception is unfortunately generated that is clearly detrimental to progressive and responsible leather manufacture and all those involved. The footwear and leather industries, like farming itself, suffer relentless pressure and criticism from many environmentalist movements and



Goat skins are soaked for 10 days in lime solution. They are hauled out daily and re-immersed in the solution.



After liming, the hair is sufficiently loosened to be pushed from the grain using a blunt hand held scraping blade.



The alkali swollen flesh is then removed from the skins using a shaped flat bladed tool.



To neutralise the alkalinity, deswell and soften the skins they are immersed in a solution of pigeon dung. They are turned regularly as shown over a 15-day period.

organisations. They are also wilfully misrepresented by many sections of the media far too frequently such that the general public is only too willing to believe the worst and, unfortunately, it is all too ready to believe any scare stories the media elects to carry.

At least it would be helpful if the

tourist guides could explain this type of leather production is far removed from modern reality. They don't of course as they make money from shocking gullible tourists just as the media and other vested interests do in pursuit of their own agendas. At least we in the leather and footwear

industry know the truth of the matter and must constantly seek to refute unfair allegations and demonstrate the fact that we are a sophisticated modern industry using a sustainable raw material with safe and hygienic working conditions, and an environmentally friendly outlook. 



The next stage is a 20 day tanning period. Various natural tanning materials are used to provide colour, and the pits are covered to avoid bleaching by sunlight.



During the tanning period the skins are regularly removed from the solution, then re-immersed to minimise creasing.



Mostly the leathers are tanned as "natural" due to its versatility. After tanning they are washed then slowly hang-dried tension free.



Leather is placed over a beam and held in place by the operative's thigh pressure. The skin is extended by hand, and then scraped to soften using a wooded block or blade.



Skins are traded in the local markets, although some tanners also own small factories for the manufacture of leather goods.



The crust leathers are hand-finished in many vivid colours for a wide range of leather goods.

The famous Clarks desert boot. Galahad Clark says he is still "proud and passionate" about what Clarks does.

CREDIT: CLARKS



Seventh-generation shoemaker is a barefoot believer

If you have roots near the town of Street, Somerset, in the south-west of England and bear the (admittedly common) name Clark, the chances are you will soon be asked if you have an association with the famous footwear brand. Clarks was founded there by two brothers, Cyrus and James Clark, in 1825; their specialism was making slippers from the sheepskins that were easy to source in that part of the world.

James Clark's great-grandson, Nathan, went on to develop one of the brand's most iconic ever products, the desert boot, which he brought to the industry's attention in 1949. Nathan Clark was serving in the Second World War when he noticed soldiers wearing rough suede boots with crepe soles. They had come from local tradesmen in Cairo's Old Bazaar, specially commissioned by men from South Africa, whose veldtschoen (boots sewn from soft, flexible hides, with a

Galahad Clark's family has been involved in footwear production since 1825, which lends a certain weight to his belief that all shoe designs should mimic the bare human foot.

reliable grip for walking on sand or rocks) had worn out. "I thought a version of these boots would make a good all-round shoe," he said in an interview later in his life, so he created one for Clarks. At first the company was less than keen, thinking that suede shoes for men would not sell, but Mr Clark took samples of the boot to the 1949 Chicago Shoe Fair, where they proved popular.

Family ties

Seven generations on from Cyrus and James, Galahad Clark is making his own impression on the footwear world, having previously co-founded heels fashion brand United Nude and now concentrating on minimalist brand Vivo Barefoot. If, in doing so, he is holding onto family traditions, he is only just clinging onto the family firm by his toe-nails. "When they were still manufacturing in England, the whole town was pretty much a Clarks town," the Vivo Barefoot founder says of Street, which he still visits frequently. "The family desperately tried to keep the factories in the UK going, right up until the late 1980s and early 1990s. It tried every manufacturing trick in the book to do so. In the end, the company did get into a bit of trouble and was nearly sold."

The business now has its shoes made by outsource manufacturing partners, mostly in Asia and the Americas, but still runs its own design and distribution business from Street. It has around 200 shareholders, not all of whom are called Clark, but who do all have a link to the original family.

Private affair

When a hostile bid to buy Clarks was tabled in the early 1990s, Galahad Clark was still at school. "I was watching from afar really," he recalls, "but I'll never forget that moment. The company was still completely owned by the family and it went to a vote. My father (Lance Clark) was fighting to keep the company private. He was part of the last generation of family management. Other parts of the family were opposed. We are all friends now. But I remember the day of the vote and it was very, very anxious. People were being helicoptered in to sell shares from one camp to the other and it was 50.5% to 49.5% in favour of the decision not to sell."

It was as part of this process that the family agreed to bring in outside management, and, with Vivo Barefoot to concentrate on, Galahad Clark does not seem to feel he missed out too much. "Luckily Clarks has remained in family hands," he says. "I've never really done anything of any consequence in Clarks, but it's been great to sit on the sidelines at least and see that happen."

Educated owner

He pays tribute to having been brought up in the shoe business and has clear memories of his father "baking shoes in the oven in the family kitchen". Lance Clark told him straight that he was under no obligation to go into the footwear business, but said he hoped his son would end up as the owner of a footwear business and that it would be for the best for him to be "an educated owner". This meant spending "a lot of child labour years" on shoe production lines in various places.

But he got away, for a time. Galahad Clark ended up going to university in the US, specifically at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It was the late 1990s and he became interested in rap music. It transpired that the members of his favourite rap group, the Wu-Tang Clan, were devotees of a famous Clarks product, the Wallabee moccasin. Presented with a chance to hang out with his favourite musicians, he says now that he "allowed myself to be sucked back into the footwear business". While still at university, he developed a product he called Wu-Shoes. He enjoyed the project, even though it was what he describes as a dismal failure, and "just got the bug", he explains.



Galahad Clark says that while there are lots of designs for shoes, there is really only one for the human foot.

CREDIT: UNITED NUDE

Pure experience

He co-founded United Nude with Dutch architect Rem D Koolhaas soon after returning to Europe and later, in 2009, formally set up Vivo Barefoot. He says he cannot really take any credit for this brand, which claims to offer the "original and most pure barefoot experience available", with its shoes that have zero-drop, anatomic width, total flexibility and ultra-thin, puncture-resistant soles. A lifelong friend, Tim Brennan, had long been interested in what we now call barefoot shoes, having grown tired of sports injuries, especially from playing tennis, and attributing his physical problems to the sports shoes he had been wearing. "He told me that we needed to make shoes that would allow us to be as close to barefoot as possible," Mr Clark recalls. "I instinctively loved the idea and we started developing shoes together. There are many different philosophies on shoe design, but there is only one on foot design. These shoes allow the foot to do its natural thing."

He points out that it took until 2011 for him to learn fully about biodynamics and some of the technical aspects of making barefoot shoes, but says that now that he can consider himself "educated" on the subject, he has become more convinced than ever that all shoes should be designed this way. Even Clarks shoes.

"I hope that we might work together one day," he says of the global footwear corporation that bears his family's name. "I've made the offer once or twice but we haven't got there yet." He sees the irony and the difficulty in the proposal. Vivo Barefoot goes round the world telling people they should wear as little 'shoe' as possible, while Clarks sold around £1.5 billion worth of the products in 2014. He describes the corporation as a "big ship" and says he understands that it's not fair to ask it to "turn on a halfpenny". But he insists the world is moving in the direction of barefoot and that science to back up the claims its devotees make is starting to come through. He still feels "proud and passionate about Clarks", but believes strongly in what he is doing now. 🌀

The expertise, determination and sheer hard work of footwear museum curators in Germany and the Netherlands have made it possible for a shoe exhibition to cast new light on some aspects of the work of legendary twentieth-century shoe designer Roger Vivier.

Vivier treasures unearthed

An extensive exhibition celebrating the work of footwear designer Roger Vivier, which ran at the German Leather and Shoe Museum in Offenbach in 2014, opened at the Dutch Leather and Shoe Museum in Waalwijk at the end of February and will run until the end of June this year.

Born in Paris in 1903, Roger Vivier's life spanned almost the whole of the twentieth century; he died in Toulouse in 1998. Orphaned at a young age, he studied sculpture at the School of Fine Arts in the French capital, which commentators agree helped define the shoes he went on to design. He worked for a time in the costume departments of Parisian theatres and, shortly afterwards, when he took a job in a footwear factory run by a relative and began to devote his artistic talent to making shoes, chose to devote the first designs he completed on his own to theatre stars such as Josephine Baker and Mistinguett. From these beginnings, he went on to become one of the giants of twentieth-century shoe design, as the exhibition in Waalwijk makes clear.

Treasure trove

Divided into various sections, the event celebrates different periods of his life and work, including early work from the 1930s and shoes he made for film stars of the time. Another part of the exhibition, entitled 'Shoe Treasures - Roger Vivier', are designs he created for Christian Dior. Roger Vivier made shoes for Dior for a decade, between 1953 and 1963. Commentators say that the fact that, unusually, both names appeared on the shoes is proof of the esteem in which Christian Dior held the footwear designer. Other major names he worked with include Elsa Schiaparelli, Charles Jourdan (with whom he developed the modern-day stiletto heel), Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Balmain.

The material from the 1930s, when Roger Vivier caused a sensation in the North American footwear market as a designer of shoes sold in the US by New York-based label I. Miller by Delman, is perhaps the most revealing part of the overall content. These Vivier shoes went to I. Miller from a famous German footwear manufacturer, Worms-Liebenau-



One of the designs Vivier produced for Saks Fifth Avenue, in kid leather with metal buckle and rhinestones.

CREDIT: DEUTSCHES LEDERMUSEUM, OFFENBACH



Among the treasures that have come to light are a series of never-worn Vivier designs from the 1930s.

CREDIT: DEUTSCHES LEDERMUSEUM, OFFENBACH

based Heyl'sche Lederwerke, which had been tapping into France's design talent for a number of years, leading to its commissioning Roger Vivier.

It's a complicated story, which, fortunately, Dutch Leather and Shoe Museum curator, Inge Specht-den-Boer, is an expert at unravelling. "Heyl'sche Lederwerke had a very long history," she explains. "It was founded in 1834 and produced shoes until 1974, when the family that owned it decided to close the business. They didn't source shoes from France but set up a company there, Laboremus, to have French designers work for it, producing designs and prototypes, which it then incorporated into its collections, producing the shoes in Germany." The ties Roger Vivier built with important clients in the US during this period later became important in his life because he used his connections to spend much of World War II on the other side of the Atlantic. Further down the line, Saks Fifth Avenue became another prominent client.

Man of mystery

Interestingly, Ms Specht-den-Boer explains that in the early days of Laboremus, which had its headquarters right in the centre of Paris, in the Place Vendôme, close to the famous Paris Ritz, its most influential designer wasn't Vivier, but Gaston d'Almeida, a figure about whom painfully little information seems to have been preserved for the footwear industry of today. Inge Specht-den-Boer says she learned of his work from her counterpart in Offenbach, Rosita Nenno, who wants to find out more about Gaston d'Almeida and his place in the history of European shoe design. It's here that Heyl'sche Lederwerke comes back into the story because when the dynasty that owned the company, the Heyl family, decided to close it down, it handed over its archives to the city of Worms and shoes it had in its

own storage facilities to the museum in Offenbach. The archive material includes correspondence between Worms and Paris and in her examination of the first of these letters, Ms Nenno found that Gaston d'Almeida's name was prominent; it was clear that his role was of great importance in cementing relationships between Laboremus, Heyl'sche Lederwerke and its customers. But d'Almeida died in 1932 and, from this point on, the focus of the correspondence was his successor, Roger Vivier. Designs that he produced while working at Laboremus were part of the legacy Offenbach received from the Heyl family and Ms Nenno uncovered some of them, prototype kid-leather shoes, lasted but never worn, that form part of the exhibition that has now moved from Germany to the Netherlands. "They are really very interesting," Ms Specht-den-Boer says, "they are genuine treasures. They have very complicated stitching and the designs are so different from the work that Vivier went on to do in later decades."



Missing milestones

Not every item that was on display in Offenbach in 2014 is part of this year's exhibition in Waalwijk. The German Leather and Shoe Museum secured several exhibits on loan from the Roger Vivier brand, acquired in 2003 by Diego Della Valle because, the owner of the Tod's group has said, "the Roger Vivier style was so distinctive and inimitable". However, when the exhibition in Offenbach ended, the company said it preferred to take the shoes back into its care rather than allow them to be part of the event in the

A 1957 evening shoe with stiletto heel, one of the designs Vivier produced for Christian Dior.

CREDIT: DEUTSCHES LEDERMUSEUM, OFFENBACH



Royal mix-up. Vivier claimed to have made the shoes Queen Elizabeth II wore for her coronation in London in 1953, but many footwear historians believe this to be unlikely. The exhibition in Waalwijk includes this pair made in the Netherlands that same year from Vivier's sketch of his design.

CREDIT: DUTCH LEATHER AND SHOE MUSEUM, WAALWIJK

Netherlands. Also missing are the famous thigh-length boots that Brigitte Bardot wore while extolling in song the virtues of her Harley-Davidson motorcycle in 1967 or the shoes that Catherine Deneuve wore in the film *Belle de Jour* that same year part of the event. There is a picture of Ms Bardot and the boots at the exhibition and several shoes that are very like the ones Ms Deneuve wore.

Before Catherine Deneuve was born and while Brigitte Bardot was still a very young child, Roger Vivier made shoes for an earlier generation of film stars, most notably for Marlene Dietrich. Four pairs of shoes he made for the Berlin-born actress and singer are part of the Waalwijk event, as is an unusual exhibit that relates to another curious chapter in the Roger Vivier story.

Royal disappointment

It's often said in France that Roger Vivier made the shoes that the current queen of the United Kingdom, Elizabeth II, wore for her coronation in 1953. Specht-den-Boer says she has received assurances from footwear experts in the United Kingdom that this is unlikely to be true because the queen would have been inclined and encouraged to favour local design talent instead. She also thinks that, while Vivier clearly liked to talk about this connection to the coronation (obituaries of the man in several prominent French newspapers include the detail of his having made the queen's shoes as a statement of fact), it's possible he never actually produced the shoes in question. "What he did produce," she explains, "is a sketch of the design he hoped to turn into shoes for the coronation and we have that sketch. It's part of the exhibition, but so is a real pair of shoes made in 1953 in the Netherlands, reminiscent (if not an exact replica) of the ones Vivier wanted to make for the queen."

The designer who made those shoes was a well known figure in the Dutch footwear industry, Koos Bergmans. Based in Waalwijk, Mr Bergmans wanted to

make a special contribution to an exhibition that the city arranged that summer to mark the 650th anniversary of its foundation. The coronation was one of Europe's first widely televised events and the fashion world followed it avidly. Because the queen's gown was floor-length, however, the watching world barely got a glimpse of her shoes on the day. Somehow, however, Koos Bergmans got his hands on Vivier's design sketch and made a pair of the shoes himself, in gold kid leather with five fleur-de-lys loops on the vamp, studded with ornamental glass (Vivier's suggestion was a lavish quantity of real rubies). The Bergmans' shoes are also part of an exhibition that gives a fascinating insight into Roger Vivier's life and work. 📌

A shoe that shows the connections between Roger Vivier, German footwear firm Heyl'sche Lederwerke and its Paris-based design offshoot, Laboremus.

CREDIT: DEUTSCHES LEDERMUSEUM, OFFENBACH





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German shoe fair reinvents itself again

Once upon a time, the GDS shoe fair in Düsseldorf led the world. However, it gradually lost ground to the more fashion led Italian fairs and, more particularly, to the fashion and shoe combination fairs such as Bread and Butter, Berlin. The fashion areas of the GDS fair, with many Italian and French exhibitors had gradually got smaller, although the GDS has always been extremely strong in casual, comfort and kids shoes. The organisers added sourcing halls for country groups from China, India, Pakistan and the like, where buyers can check products and prices. Frankly, the floor area of the fair has gradually reduced, and the organisers have worked hard to make the fair more appealing to shoe buyers. After much discussion the fair is now a month earlier, in February instead of March. The accessories area has increased, with bags, gloves and small jewellery. The high-grade designer area has become less exclusive, with no need to have a special entry card restricted to approved buyers, so now the fair is more open and accessible. The halls again had been reorganised and moved round, making it a little confusing for even regular visitors.

New areas were launched at the latest fair, with fresh exciting designers from around the world showing shoes that were more works of art than day-to-day footwear. Finsk is a London-based company with both owner and designer from Finland, with shoes handmade in Brazil, each one a work of art. Curved, hand carved wooden heels, and wrap around uppers where the shoe looks very different medial from lateral, in mixed leather colours appeared to be inspired by cubism. The same designer has created a range of rubber boots for the Finnish company Nokian, too.

From Japan there was Sonomitsu, a small workshop with five artisans making shoes by hand in Tokyo with each pair taking a week to make. Every pair is designed by hand. The designer makes shoes for both men and women, using the best leathers and materials.

Chau Har Lee, based in east London, makes shoes that are inspirational pieces of art in sample size 4. They are not 3D printed as many others but are hand carved and sculpted from materials including wood and Perspex. Her artistic shoes have given her many freelance design



commissions for more mainstream companies too.

Men's shoes are also considered as works of art. The Italian hand welted men's shoes by Giorgio come in hand-painted and brushed versions, single colour or mixed. The shoes are made in natural unwaxed vegetable tanned leathers and then carefully painted, section by section sometimes in different colours. The artist who paints them was at the fair with his bottles of ink and paintbrush, carefully concentrating on his shoes.

There was also a small market-like area for funky street brands, selling direct to shops. Bali-Bali's Michael Dornseifer travels often to Indonesia sourcing shoes, and would holiday in Bali nearby. Now he sources all types of hand-beaded flip-flops, hand printed scarves and handmade jewellery using local natural pearls, all packed and wrapped in presentation boxes or displays ready for the shoe shops to put in their windows or by their cash tills.

The GDS fair has also worked hard to bring some new blood to the fair, and find fresh young exhibitors. A first timer was Lutta, from Romania, making handmade soft leather fashion shoes, long gloves and bags, all with embroidery detail from traditional Romanian white cotton shirts and wedding shirts. The embroidery is all symbolic, with patterns representing the North Star, or the Tree of Life, for example. Instead of the embroidery being all over, it is in panels or placement on toe or heel. The natural beige, off white leathers represent the birch trees of the forests and the red details the berries of late summer.

From Lithuania, My Felt Boots have won a German Red Dot design award. They are made in natural wool felt with

local leather using traditional cemented construction methods. There is a Lithuanian touch with the traditional snowflake or moose embroidery on the shafts.

Mercedes Arocena showed her Cushiz shoes for the first time in Europe at GDS. The collection is handmade in Uruguay from the best leathers and materials. Soles are leather or rubber and the heels often hand-built like cowboy heels. Inside there is a soft padding under the foot. Her shoes come in brighter shades like wine red with cream or white. But she found that many of the visitors to the fair were rather conservative German shoe shops who were mainly looking for black shoes at lower prices. GDS is actually mainly a shoe shop and chain fair; the funkier wilder shoe designers often find that fairs such as Premium in Berlin can be better because they attract fashion and shoe retailers, since clothes and accessories are all on show.

The busiest stand at the fair was Laura Vita, with multicolour patchwork shoes with embroidery and printing designs from silk screen scarves. These boots and shoes are handmade on leather soles with stack leather heels, and part of the appeal is the hand polished look of the leathers. Practical points are that the lace up boots have inside zips, so that they are easy to get on and off.

Natural fur is an ongoing theme for winter footwear, for both shoes and boots, inside and out. Sheepskin linings and UGG boots are a staple today. Longer fur that is more natural is making an appearance not just outside and inside boots, but also as decorative panels as on leather lace up loafers from French fashion brand Parabooot. Flip*Flop showed winter versions of espadrilles, in a traditional



stitched to the sole construction but with EVA sole and fake fur lining, to make them more winter suitable, or for use indoors as trendy slippers. Natural soling materials, too, such as crepe rubber, are more widely used in both fashion and street shoes, for men and women. Ca'Shott of Denmark reinvented an UGG-inspired boot by putting it on a natural crepe rubber outsole with a stitched welt.

Generally the shoes at GDS were functional and practical, with, of course, the usual large hall for comfort footwear for men and women with the big brands such as Ara, Tamaris and Högl doing good business. The comfort movement, and the fact that so many young women wear sneakers has not just encouraged hybrid sneaker footwear, but has led to lower heels. Flat man inspired footwear (laces and loafers) was a major theme for women's fashion at the fair, on both moderate toes and thicker soles, as well as thin almost summery soles and the newer pointed toes.

The GDS fair managed to overlap the ispo sports fair, so some had to fly from Düsseldorf to Munich to cover them both. Leguano barefoot shoes decided to show at GDS with their slipper-like soft unstructured shoes. The toes are natureform shaped and the soles are direct injected with a special compound called Lifolit so that they protect the bottom of the feet from stones and gravel, while also having gripping studs. Lifolit is so harmless that it meets the criteria for toy standard safety, DIN EN 71/N. The shoes are so soft they can be wrapped up into a ball. They are machine washable and meet all German environmental standards. The company maintains these standards by actually producing the footwear in Germany.

Porsche Design makes footwear that is a gradual progression on previous designs like the car shoe. The brand exhibited sporty inspired shoes and sneakers at the fair, in signature black or white all over. Discreet high grade details include all folded edges and a combination of laces and touch-and-close fastenings.

In addition to the usual shoes, new retail technology was also on show. LK-AG presented a tool for showing shoes in a box with a glass front where both text and background could be overlaid onto the shoes. Unique selling points can be highlighted with text, or raindrops could appear to be falling on the shoe from overhead. Other companies showed giant screens with Wii-type technology where the consumer can pull shoes out of a catalogue and rotate them, enlarge them or see the USPs, all without actually touching the screen.

The Forum Touch area was new for last season and organised by Lineapelle. Here you can see the new and experimental leathers and materials. There are large pieces, as indicated by the name, where visitors could touch and feel the leathers. There is a description of the designer too. For example, Sabina Brägger from Lucerne University showed Swiss made fish (sturgeon) leather reclaimed from the Swiss caviar production at Tropenhaus Frutigen. Sturgeons are bony fishes without scales. Instead, they are partially covered with bony plates/scutes which cause a specific central line on the skin. She created a totally natural look for the tanning by using mimosa.

July 29-31 2015 are the dates for the next GDS, more than a month earlier than usual. www.gds-online.com



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