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Edition N°6 of Gallery SHOES

International Trade Show for Shoes & Accessories

8–10 March 2020

“Shoe tradeshow defies coronavirus fears”...

This headline from a German daily newspaper perfectly sums up the event. Ulrike Kähler, Managing Director of IGEDO Company and the show’s Project Director, fought hard not only to go ahead with the event itself, but also for continuity and consistency.

Following intensive consultation with the Federal Association of German Shoe Retailers (BDSE) and the Federal Association of the German Footwear and Leather Goods Industry (HDS/L), as well as permission from the Regional Office for the Rhine District of Neuss (due to the geographical location of the Areal Böhler) as well as the Public Health Department of the City of Düsseldorf and public approval from certain noteworthy exhibitors and professional buyers in the run-up, the sixth edition of Gallery SHOES took place as scheduled from 8-10 March 2020.

Press coverage published during the event such as “Better than expected” or “Gallery SHOES gets off to an optimistic start” quickly showed that, despite facing some harsh criticism, the team’s persistence paid off in the end. The event attracted 360 of an otherwise expected 400 exhibitors, who showcased 500 (rather than 600+) brands. Despite the anticipated decline in the number of professional visitors, one trade journal reported “a bustle of activity” on the first day, which was also apparent and noticeable on the second day.

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“There were always well below 1,000 people in each of the eight halls,” continues Ulrike Kähler. “This established benchmark, which all visitors have known and shared with us for more than three years, even at regular editions, was the reasoning behind our final decision, during which we were always in regular contact with the authorities. We are by no means a large-scale event comparable with the fairs organised by Messe Düsseldorf or football matches!” The organisation team were also personally in contact with all 70 exhibitors from Italy, working together on possible solutions and, in some cases, making the joint decision that it was unfortunately not possible for them to attend the show. It goes without saying that this required the utmost transparency with the authorities and absolute honesty regarding the concerns of exhibitors and visitors.

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The professional visitors who were able to attend were driven and determined. Even prior to the show, leading names from the German shoe trade were positive about the event going ahead – such as shoe store Zumnorde, for example, which runs over 20 branches in Germany and a successful online store and was represented by their regular team. Brigitte Wischnewski, President of the Federal Association of the German Shoe Retail Trade (BDSE), confirmed that the retail sector not only showed a strong presence, but also that there were no signs of panic in the air. Everyone made the most of Gallery SHOES and honoured their planned meetings and appointments, making things a lot easier for brands and retailers.

With highly visible precautionary measures including hand sanitizer stations installed around the venue, the presence of doctors and medics, cleaning teams, notices and informative badges, Gallery SHOES provided visitors and exhibitors with peace of mind and stability. And necessary last-minute changes to the layout in the halls also contributed to a feeling of reassurance and therefore motivation for everyone present.

“Despite the coronavirus”, Manfred Junkert, General Manager of the German Federal Association of the Footwear and Leather Goods Industry (HDS/L), paid a “huge compliment to the show”, which he said: “dealt with the situation extremely well”. He also mentioned that the



event conveyed “a good image” and “a great impression” because visitors weren’t made to feel as though there were empty stands. Ulrike Kähler and her team made sure of this shortly before the doors to Gallery SHOES opened. “For example, we moved smaller brands from the ‘Halle am Wasserturm’ to prime locations in the ‘Alte Schmiedehallen’. This not only gave the visitors a good feeling, but also resulted in them attracting new customers and orders, which came as a positive surprise.”

The fact that Gallery SHOES holds so much potential for new exciting brands and innovative products for the retail sector was also emphasised by Brigitte Wischnewski from the BDSE. “For the future, I can only encourage retailers to plan more than just one day here.” In her opinion, the show has so many innovative, creative and new brands to offer alongside the more established ones. Individuality certainly plays an important role in specialist stores, she says, but it’s also essential to have well trained, informed sales teams on board. She went on to say that Gallery SHOES offers a lot of valuable input with its line-up of side events – against the wonderful backdrop of the ‘Altes Kesselhaus’ as a new communication hub with fascinating forums, forecasts and the catwalk.

“This was probably the most demanding tradeshow of my career to date, but as far as our partnerships are concerned, it was also a very valuable one. After all, Igedo Company has been synonymous with consistency and collaboration for more than 70 years now,” sums up Ulrike Kähler. The team is already working on next season’s event to continue offering the industry and retailers a successful, stable platform in the future.

Date of next Gallery SHOES: 30 August – 1 September 2020

Düsseldorf, 11 March 2020

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