ILM
EDITION #164

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AN INDUSTRY FINDS ITS NEW RHYTHM

THE CHALLENGES ARE WELL KNOWN, BUT OUR EYES ARE SET ON THE FUTURE: FOR THE 164TH TIME, THE ILM BROUGHT TOGETHER BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY IN OFFENBACH FROM 29 TO 31 AUGUST.

For three days, orders were placed, discussions took place and networking went on. Exhibitors reported securing specific order dates, making relevant contacts with new customers and having fruitful discussions with existing partners.

Above all, however, a shift in attitude was noticeable in the exhibition halls. The challenges facing the market are well known, but are no longer being treated as the overriding narrative. Instead, the discussions were characterised by pragmatism, confidence and a willingness to seize opportunities. This mindset created a refreshing overall atmosphere and also shaped the outlook for the coming season.

“I am very pleased,” says Arnd Hinrich Kappe, CEO of Messe Offenbach. “We have seen a significant increase in international visitors: after two days, visitors from 59 countries had attended the ILM, including Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Australia and Japan. The feedback from exhibitors has been consistently positive.”

MORE EMOTION, MORE OPPORTUNITIES

This approach was already highlighted in the Welcome Talk at the start of the trade fair. The focus was on the opportunities that arise even in a challenging market environment, as well as on how the retail sector and industry can respond to shorter cycles and changing consumer habits.
The fact that emotion is once again playing a greater role is also evident in the products themselves. Following the long dominance of ‘quiet luxury’, designs are once again allowed to stand out and spark a new sense of desire. Colour, in particular, is making a comeback,

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whilst the appetite for decorative elements is spilling over into bags and accessories in the form of glitter, charms and pendants.
The jelly trend is also set to make its way into the ranges for spring/summer 2027. This new expressiveness thus creates commercially appealing incentives to buy and provides retailers with fresh impetus for their shop floor displays.

There are also developments taking place in the world of luggage. The desire for high-quality, reliable and comfortable travel companions is driving further innovation in this category. Front-opening designs, functional add-on modules and convertible models – right through to suitcases with rucksack functionality – are creating visible product innovations and compelling reasons to upgrade.

CHANGE OF BEAT

However, it wasn't just the products that provided fresh inspiration at ILM. With trend presentations, talks and keynote speeches, the program offered a space for topics that went beyond the immediate business of placing orders. In her keynote speech, for instance, trend forecaster Karolina Landowski explored the growing desire for 'human-made' products in the age of artificial intelligence. This concept is particularly relevant for bags and leather goods: knowledge of materials, workmanship and the quality of craftsmanship are inseparable from the human factor.

Personal interaction between the retail sector and the industry is also becoming increasingly important in the face of shorter cycles. The ILM is thus not merely a trade fair for placing orders, but a venue where developments can be discussed, short-term ideas taken on board and business relationships nurtured beyond the individual season.

STARPOWER WITH ADDED VALUE AND A SUCCESSFUL COMEBACK

One of the highlights of the first day of the fair was the joint appearance by TV presenter Frauke Ludowig and her daughter, podcaster Nele Ludowig. For Frauke Ludowig, it was also a return to Offenbach: she had previously been a guest at the ILM back in February this year.

On stage, the duo combined personal insights with professional experience and two dif-

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ferent generational perspectives on presence, public image and communication. Particularly in the age of social media, the discussion centred on questions that are also relevant to retailers and brands: How does one create an authentic presence? What makes people appear credible on camera? And how can one achieve communication that is not only visible but actually reaches its audience?

That evening, Frauke Ludowig returned to the ILM stage once again – this time for yet another comeback: she hosted the ILM Award, which was presented for the first time since 2019. In the 'Best in Product' and 'Best in Retail' categories, the trade fair recognised outstanding product concepts and exceptional achievements in the retail sector.

In the 'Best in Product' category, first place went to Deuter for a convertible 90-litre duffel bag that combines minimalist design with high functionality. Cabaia took second place with a customisable rucksack packed with well-thought-out details. Third place went to Jost for its contemporary reinterpretation of the men's wrist bag.

In the 'Best in Retail' category, as determined by the exhibitors, Leder Maurer won thanks to its outstanding expertise in customer advice and product range. The Henschel Modehaus Group took second place with its combination of customer insight, data-driven engagement and regional networking. Third place went to Leder Spahn, which has stood for professional expertise and personalised service for 80 years.

The awards ceremony flowed into the joint trade fair evening. Amidst conversations, reunions and new connections, another of the ILM's strengths became apparent: the industry doesn't just do business with one another here; they know and support one another. This sense of community takes on even greater significance in a challenging market.
"For me, the ILM is always a bit like coming home," says Christiane Brunk, Managing Director of Braun Büffel.

Max Antwerpes, Lead of Sales DACH at Got Bag, describes it in similar terms: "For me, the ILM is a bit like a school reunion. The whole industry comes together in one place and you can chat easily. It makes many work processes quicker than constantly sending emails back and forth. You don't experience this kind of productive interaction at other trade fairs."

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For Arnd Hinrich Kappe, the response confirms that the organisation is on the right track and that its aim of developing the ILM into a key event in the industry is on the right track.

LOOKING AHEAD

“We spoke about a new beginning at the opening – and that is exactly what you can feel and sense. Those who are here want to shape the future and say: ‘Things are moving forward.’ The atmosphere was great throughout the two days. That was precisely our aim,” sums up Arnd Hinrich Kappe.

With its 164th edition, the ILM thus highlighted, above all, the value of direct industry dialogue at a time when opportunities for face-to-face meetings are becoming increasingly rare.

The next ILM will take place in Offenbach am Main from 13 to 15 February 2027.

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