

This issue Colin Pattison talks about his time at Kind Und Jugend, Cologne

A look back at K&J 2014

As anyone who reads these articles regularly will know, I am not a great fan of air travel. Don't get me wrong, I love the romance of settling into a nice wide leather seat on a 747. But that is not what most business travel is actually like. Travelling to Cologne for instance, is a 2 to 3 hour trek to an airport in the middle of nowhere (Stanstead for instance), being herded around from check in to security to departure gate. Followed by something not much better than a bus trip for 40 minutes, before being toured around another airport, and finally being ripped off by a Taxi driver for a journey which would cost a tenth of the price if only you had the confidence to use the train.

In previous years I have driven and fully enjoyed the experience, it may take a little longer, but door to door for me that is not a great inconvenience, getting anywhere from deepest Wiltshire takes a long time, so it's unlikely I am going to visit the fair on a travelling day and at least in the car I am in control! Given all the asylum seeking, drug crazed mad men waiting to hijack my car, at least according to the newspapers, I thought I would try something different this year, so I travelled by Eurostar. So a train from Wiltshire mid morning, change stations in London at lunch time and I was in Cologne in time to walk around the old town before bed. I could put what I wanted in my suitcase, take as much stuff as I wanted, and sit and read on the train in comfort without being constantly moved from one place to another or interrupted by the



Many of the UK suppliers exhibited under the banner of the BPA in the again excellent British pavilion. This is by far the best organised and supported of the country pavilions at the show, with this year over 60 UK suppliers taking part. Having so many small and medium sized UK companies in one area meant it was easy to establish a UK identity for the area

hostess with safety procedures, drinks, souvenirs and putting the chair up and down.

The next morning I was up bright and early, stocking up with a good German breakfast before walking the halls. All the usual suspects were in their usual places, and there were some interesting new products to see. Many of the larger companies will be keen to tell you directly about new products, when they are ready, so as usual I want to concentrate on the smaller companies and more unusual products; you might miss if you did not go to Cologne. But first a Quick word about the Britax Smile, the automatic break system is a great safety feature and will create a lot of positive PR for Britax. The consumer will not see this product until well into 2015 and it will be expensive to start with, but I am sure the idea will be used across a range of products in the future and could become yet another industry safety standard developed by Britax.

The British contingent was out in force

Many of the UK suppliers exhibited under the banner of the BPA in the again excellent British pavilion. This is by far the best organised and supported of the country pavilions at the show, with this year over 60 UK suppliers taking part. Having so many small and medium sized UK companies in one area meant it was easy

to establish a UK identity for the area. The inclusion of a Cafe and meeting area meant the BPA was able to support any UK business with meeting facilities, Seminars and the after hour's networking event on Thursday night. Cosatto provided a unique statement of British style at the main entrance, with Babystyle and their Oyster to one side and Trunki, one of our best innovators to the other. If I was working with a small nursery supplier looking to launch internationally this area, together with the support and possible TAP funding available would rank highly in my plans.

Interestingly the French pavilion was very close to the UK base. This had obviously been well funded, with strong national graphics, and a good standard of shell scheme units. A creditable contingent of around 15 exhibitors fitted well between 2 runs of pillars. The German pavilion was next to the Innovation area, which must have worked very well for any local exhibitors who entered the competition. The USA area was well marked out, although I suspect smaller than usual due to the closeness of dates with ABC. Chinese suppliers do not of course have a pavilion, but due to their number and size tend to be grouped around the periphery of most halls!

Kind Und Jugend is always a good indicator of fabric trends, as the new launches here will follow through into the UK next Spring at Harrogate. If the fabrics at this fair are outrageous, too bright for UK tastes, we will end up with a year of ultra safe Grey and Navy