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**PREVIEW OF THE 2017 FURNITURE FAIR**

*For the European furniture sector, early November means the Brussels Furniture Fair. This has been a must-attend event on the trade fair calendar for 80 years, and it never fails to surprise. Once again, the exhibitors’ list for 2017 is full of promise…*

*7 halls at Brussels Expo will again be filled with some 270 exhibitors, of which over 60% are coming from abroad. The layout will be more or less unchanged, as visitors like to know where to find someone. But this does not mean that there aren’t fresh discoveries to be made at the fair! New for this 80th edition of the Brussels Furniture Fair are our new house style and – more importantly – the many premières waiting to be discovered at the exhibitors’ stands.*

**80TH edition**

The 2017 Furniture Fair will be the 80th edition of this Brussels-based fair. This makes it one of the oldest professional trade fairs in Europe that is still running, if not the oldest. But luckily this grand old lady is not showing her age: the fair is full of life and constantly changing with the times. Of course, the fact that the fair is still going is not self-evident: it is the result of hard work, a willingness to question things, and continuous innovation.

The 80th anniversary of the Brussels Furniture Fair was the perfect opportunity for a thorough rejuvenation. In June we launched a new logo and a new house style, which is somewhat sleeker than before. Although we are proud of our history, we have no desire to wallow in nostalgia on this anniversary. In our BE Magazine, we do take a quick look at the trade fair’s past, but we prefer to turn our attention to today and to the future. To mark our 80th anniversary as a Belgian trade fair we particularly want to turn the spotlight on our home manufacturers. With the design|industry platform in Hall 3, we’ll be focusing on Belgian designers’ collaboration with the industry, as a way of bringing innovation to a company or broadening their range. On Tuesday evening, a meet&greet is being organised with these manufacturers and designers. Following on from this, the Balthazars will be awarded in the Square bar, in an especially celebratory anniversary atmosphere.

**Hospitality is key**

It is well known that visitors receive a warm welcome in Brussels. For a smoother experience, our new website now features extra tools to facilitate a more efficient visit to the fair. In the exhibitors list, you can mark and export your favourites in order to create a tailor-made pathway through the fair. And there will be an interactive trade fair map for your smartphone that will also be able to point you in the right direction. As always, you can visit one of our bars for refreshments: a cup of coffee, a drink or a snack. As always, visitors can expect a fair that is not only stunningly presented, but also relevant. Of course, our new house style will have an influence on the look and feel of the fair. But the true innovation lies at our exhibitors’ stands, and that’s the real reason for your visit!

**Naming names**

To begin with, there are several interesting new names, as well as some familiar faces that will again be making their way to Brussels. We are delighted to see Natuzzi return with a large stand in hall 3. Excitingly, they will be presenting the world premiere of the new shop concept for Natuzzi Editions. Maxdivani will be coming with an entirely new label – also a first for Brussels. With Brera58 they will be presenting sofa beds for the first time, in leather, fabric and microfibre. Brera58 will be marketed completely separately, and thus will also have its own stand. Moreover, there has been considerable interest this year from Scandinavia. Hovden will be bringing its sleek sofas and armchairs to hall 3; and hall 4 will see the return of Furninova, as well as IMG Norway from the Ekornes group with its ergonomic recliners and armchairs.

We were pleased to welcome Tetrad as a new British exhibitor last year, and their time in Brussels was clearly a success, because this year the company has doubled its stand size! It will be presenting an exclusive collection featuring fabrics by Ralph Lauren. Word has clearly spread across the channel about the positive experience that was had in Brussels, as Tetrad will now be joined by Baker Furniture, also in hall 8, and by The English Chesterfield Company in hall 4.

Spain and Portugal are also well represented in Brussels. In Square there will be a small but beautiful stand from Beluga, a Portuguese collection in a timeless luxury Art Deco style that is all available in made-to-measure. In hall 4 we will find living room furniture from the Portuguese firms Cortimoveis and OPR, and tables and chairs from the Spanish firm Discalsa. Mobliberica will once again be exhibiting in hall 5. At the Furniture Fair, Italian firms predominately focus on sofas. But the fact that the Italians also make tables and chairs is apparent from Calligaris, for example, and now from Infiniti too – one of Italy’s leading contract specialists that also has a fine collection for the residential market. The German firms FMD and Topstar are moving to hall 4; and the latter is also bringing along its sister firm Wagner, offering a range of chairs in the higher-end segment. Two names to watch are Era and White Oak, both in Square. The former is a manufacturer from Croatia, which works with designers such as Karim Rashid; whilst the latter offers warm design from Switzerland.

But let’s also take a look at the Belgians, the backbone of our trade fair. It goes without saying that all the key players will be here: Meubar, Evan, Joli and Neococoon in hall 3; and Dekimpe, Vipack and Mobitec in hall 4. New names here are Sympa and Vandenberghe. In hall 5, as always, we will find the big stands of D&D, De Eiken Zetel, Gerlin, Mecam Groep, Medal/up2date/Wolmat, Mintjens, Moome, Neyt, Passepartout, Perfecta, Rom, MTE Theuns, Unic Design and Varam. Lee&Lewis used to be in hall 8, but this year has decided to exhibit in hall 5. Sitino was recently taken over by Mintjens and will therefore also be exhibiting in Brussels at this stand. The most important innovation in hall 5 is probably to be found at Recor. They already presented their new home brand Recor Home to Belgian customers at their ‘At Home Show’ in June, but will also be focusing on it strongly in Brussels.

Fusion in hall 8 is also a segment in which the Belgians have a strong presence, with Demuynk-Demtre, KDB Furn, Leda, Micheldenolf, Pro Arte and Vandecasteele all exhibiting. Paul Rogiers is a pleasing new addition with two stands, one featuring their Lifestyle collection under the label PR-Living; and the other featuring the accompanying sofas under the name PR-Rogiers. The Dutch group around PMP/Nix Design and Eleonora will also be returning to hall 8, and it once again promises to be a celebratory occasion! It has struck us that we are receiving an increasing number of enquires from the decoration sector. Rogiers is one example, but Chehoma, Pole to Pole, Maretti, Byclassy and Drimmer are also new. Due to lack of space, we have had to turn down a number of others. As in previous years, we have been able to count on names such as Vandecasteele, Ruby Fires, Daatti Home Collections, Mondiart, Inditime, DV D’Sign, G&S, PTMD, DTP, By Boo, Richmond and Nijwie.

Accessories can also be found in Holland à la Carte, for example at Claudi, Expo Trading Holland, Spinder, Ztahl by Dijkos and new names Label51 and Urban Cotton. It goes without saying that there will be furniture exhibited there too, with stands from names such as Cartel Living, Kluskens, Jess Design, BKS, Gealux, Chita, HE Design, Sumisura and Nouvion. This year, Bert Plantagie has opted for Holland à la Carte, thus adding a further strong player to the section. Another new name for Brussels is Kessels, which focuses strongly on the trend for customisation.

Hall 9 houses the entry segment of the market under the Mozaïek title. Names such as Bauwens, Alcos/Divaco, Idea, Hima, Girardeau, Motard, Zijlstra, Confortluxe, Karintrad and HM Helvetia are well-known exhibitors here. And here too there are a number of new faces: Wajnert and Restyl from Poland, for example, or Vince Design from the Netherlands: PI Distribution, Thermobrass, Linea Verdace, Lama d’Or and Livorno from Belgium; Bonino from Italy; Hela Tische from Germany; and Bellus from Estonia. There are also some sleeping comfort firms active in this segment of the market, such as Kretschmar, Forbed and Padvaiskas.

The majority of sleeping comfort can of course be found in Brussels by Night in hall 6. The well-known Belgian names are all present: Revor Group, Veldeman Bedding, LS Bedding with Magnitude and Nox, Kreamat, Van Landschoot, Recor Bedding, Polypreen, Elsach and Nill Spring. Green Sleep is back after a few years’ absence, and as its name suggests is a supplier of ecological sleeping comfort, entirely made in Belgium. Boone, Van Houdt, Jooken and Mathy by Bols do not offer beds, but bedroom furniture. Boone specialises in space-saving solutions, Mathy by Bols in children’s and teenager’s bedrooms. Custom8 is a KU Leuven spin-off and specialises in technological sleeping solutions.

The Netherlands is also well represented in this sleep hall, with Norma, Avek, Perzona, Mahoton, M-Line, Boxspring Design, Heavens, Mérens, Cartel Bedding and bedroom furniture from Van Os. Other key international names are Serta and Yatsan. Bed textile firms are also worth a visit, for example Carlina/Goodnight, Soraya, Brinkhaus and Brun de Vian Tiran. The Furniture Fair’s 80th anniversary is being marked at Brussels by Night with a series of beds from bygone eras, courtesy of Veldeman Bedding.

**BE Magazine, a preview of the Belgian offering**

As a Belgian trade fair, we like to throw an extra spotlight on our home furniture industry. This year we are producing the thirteenth edition of BE magazine to preview their new collections. It offers a complete, coherent and contemporary overview of the Belgian furniture sector. This beautifully designed magazine gives potential visitors a clear and sometimes surprising idea of what they might expect at the Furniture Fair. It also shows that Belgians continue to relish a challenge. That they react assertively with creativity and flexibility, but that they also keep on doing what they do best.

**Countdown to November**

3-2-1! The countdown has officially begun. The Furniture Fair keeps on innovating, whilst continuing to respect the basic concept. We always seek to achieve a balance between recognisability, authenticity and the demand for innovation from exhibitors and visitors. Within this, our focus lies first and foremost on Belgium, the Netherlands and France. We are in fact the most important trade fair in the Benelux. In France there are other players, and yet every year we can count on a large group of French fans. In addition, the Germans and the British are increasingly finding their way to Brussels. The Furniture Fair showcases beautiful, innovative things. From large international exhibitors who come back year after year, but also from smaller, innovative exhibitors. It is working together that fuels our success, and once again, together we hope to equal last year’s positive result.

Lieven Van den Heede

Brussels Furniture Fair

Brussels Expo

5 - 8 November 2017

9 am - 7 pm (Wed till 6 pm)

[www.furniturefairbrussels.be](http://www.furniturefairbrussels.be)

(Images of last year’s show can be downloaded from the website under the section “Press”)