

After a year like no other, packaging fairs are starting to take place on-site and people are reacquainting themselves with face-to-face meetings. Despite a few absent big names, the recent Luxe Pack show in the Principality of Monaco served to reinvigorate the luxury packaging sector with a raft of innovation and several awards.

One thing that has not changed since the pre-pandemic 2019 edition of the show is that environmental issues and sustainability remain key concerns. For many packaging producers, this involves single-material solutions to facilitate product end-of-life and recycling. Refillability is also pivotal, and manufacturers are banking on strong added value on a reusable or refillable element that the consumer will keep beyond the simple use of the product.

Created 12 years ago, the Luxe Pack in Green competition rewards responsible solutions and initiatives, and among this year's winners is Groupe Pochet with its refillable and on-the-go Odyssée pack, a two-in-one jar that combines a case and a refill. The case is in light-weighted glass while the refill is rPET. The refill can be closed by its own cap (also rPET) and so becomes a portable, light and airtight product, which allows the consumer to transport it with them.

Pinard Emballages was also given an award for its Pin Pack refill bottle, which is made from 100 per cent rPET and boasts ultra-thin walls. The lifecycle of the Pin Pack is designed to minimise environmental impact (lightweight bottle and cap, green energy for blowing) and the shape is designed for functionality. It is at odds with traditional cosmetic bottles, yet recognisable enough to promote its refill functionality to the consumer.

Albéa's mono-material HDPE tube and cap was also acknowledged as a breakthrough recycle-ready extruded product. The mono-material flip-top is made of HDPE and is compatible with the Greenleaf 2 plastics-barrier laminate tube. After its recognition by RecyClass (Plastics Recyclers Europe) a few months ago, the US version of the HDPE tube has successfully passed the Critical Guidance and Bottle to Bottle Application tests set by the Association of Plastic Recyclers. This milestone means that the tube/cap combination made from US-sourced resins is now recycle-ready and officially compatible with an established, at-scale HDPE bottle recycling stream.

"L'Oréal is our number one customer and Albéa is their number one provider. Together, we had to face three scourges: the price increases of the resins; the volatility in securing supplies with poor forecasts; and with high inventories, preserving cash was key [high inventory levels means more cash tied up in stock]," said Cecile Tuiil, Albéa Group's vice president of communications in the pre-Luxe Pack press conference.



A luxurious location served up a luxury show

The bold and the beautiful

Considered the ultimate in luxury locations, Monaco played host to a recent packaging event that focuses on the prestigious. **Dominique Huret** reports from the show

On the company's upcycled stand, marketing manager for tubes Caroline Hughes showcased the group's mono-material solutions, which consisted of a trio of 100 per cent PP, PE and PET designs.

"We also propose three new applications: a 100 per cent PP mascara package where all the components have been reworked with this material and partly in post-consumer recycle [PCR], a selection of jars in full PP, as well as an additional range with up to 50 per cent PCR, and face and body sticks in 100 per cent PP or PET, with both available with PCR material," she explained.

An evolution of the bi-injection blow moulding technology acquired by Quadpack in 2019,

the Canvas Airless bag-in-bottle is a proprietary airless container system with collapsible pouch. Developed in conjunction with R&D partner Inotech, the two-phase process lowers investment and vastly reduces development time compared with bespoke piston airless packs. Preforms are bi-injection moulded at Quadpack's airless manufacturing centre in Germany, to be blown in a single pass in the desired shape.

"With one mould for infinite shapes, it enables greater freedom of expression," explained Quadpack head of market development Pierre-Antoine Henry. "Brands can choose oval, square, convex, concave and other forms – and all without additional outlay or time delay."



Above: Texen is now including rPET on its Smart flexible production lines. **Below:** Pretty in plastics: The likes of Albéa (tube innovation), Groupe Pochet (two-in-one jar Odyssée pack), Gerresheimer (rPET), and Quadpack (Canvas Airless bag-in-bottle) showcased their latest innovations at Luxe Pack



Left: The award-winning Pin Pack is designed to minimise environmental impact but boost functionality



LUXURY PACKAGING



Mathieu Boulanger, chief executive of Roctool



Yvan Vahlas, vice president of product line development at Texen



Caroline Hughes, marketing manager for tubes at Albéa Group



Elie Papiernik, co-founder and design director at Centdegrés



Above: Veuve Clicquot's new champagne bucket is made of ABS and PMMA. **Right:** The cap of Chanel's Le Lift is detectable in optical sorting streams for recycling

As a bi-injected, two-layer pouch-based pack, Canvas Airless uses 15 per cent less plastics than piston airless equivalents and it can be made with a choice of materials. The QLine range comes with an LLDPE pouch and PET outer bottle as standard, and current outer options include rPET and PETG, while inner options include surlyn. Further sustainable materials will be available in future, while a metal-free pump and refill formats are both on the product development roadmap. Canvas Airless will be commercially available from January 2022.

Renowned as a glass manufacturer, German firm Gerresheimer has offered applications using PCR plastics for many years now, especially PET ranges for the cosmetics industry with various blends of recycled content, up to 100 per cent rPET.

To respond to the environmental demands of the House of Chanel, French packaging provider Texen has also adapted its industrial processes to include rPET on its Smart flexible production lines.

"Thanks to the polycondensation process, Texen has been able to create a new eco-designed cap that has the same mechanical and sensorial properties as its predecessor for Chanel's Le Lift and Hydra beauty skincare lines," said Yvan Vahlas, vice president of product line development at Texen. "This cap contains a black dye specifically developed with SK Group to make the part detectable in optical sorting streams for recycling."

"The modularity and flexibility of the

Smart production lines allows Chanel to control its production. As such, by managing the integrality of the design process, Texen can produce the raw material and manufacture a finished, varnished component in less than 20 minutes."

Roctool, a producer of heating and cooling moulding technology, is a partner of Texen and chief executive Mathieu Boulanger explained that his company's induction process is now fully adapted for plastics injection and compression moulding.

In mid-September, Clinique (from Estée Lauder) became the first prestige beauty brand (for its 200ml Clarifying Lotion) to leverage Roctool's technology on one of its iconic bottles.

The technology eliminates the need for a secondary decoration process, which the company claims helps reduce scrap or waste by 10-15 per cent. Pinard Emballages was the first to use the technology in Europe, and Texen signed a collaborative agreement with Roctool a year ago.

And, because in Monaco style is everything, Dogwood went retro with Veuve Clicquot's new champagne bucket, made of injected acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) and featuring an inner bucket made from crystal poly (methyl methacrylate) (PMMA). The champagne bucket is designed to be kept as a decorative object after use.

Spain's Faca Packaging claims to have been the first company in the world to provide PMMA for a cosmetic jar, back in 1991. The company has now created a transparent,

recycled PMMA for cosmetics applications, and demonstrated it at its stand at Luxe Pack.

The Chinese beauty sector accounts for €79 billion (\$90bn) – or a quarter of the global market – and is expected to grow at double the global rate with a compound annual growth rate of 14.3 per cent versus 7.8 per cent until 2025. The environment is highly competitive and dominated by foreign brands, while local brands focus on the mass market.

In the most recent decade, high-end beauty rose quickly to hold a 51 per cent share of the market in 2019, dominated by international giants. But since 2016, domestic brands have been boosted by a wave of rising patriotism.

"However, the Chinese clientele is changing and the pandemic has accelerated the speed of change," says Elie Papiernik from market intelligence agency Centdegrés. "A new younger mainly Z-generation clientele is rising. It has new characteristics (gender fluidity, new lifestyles, and new consumption patterns) and expectancies built on an unconditional love for Western brands. But, there is also growing love for their own culture, called the C-Beauty trend, where Chinese heritage is central."

Changes do not end there, however, and the luxury brand retail industry is undergoing a massive revamp. Duty-free retail is bouncing back, social commerce has become a new norm, and standalone boutiques are mushrooming.

"In China, Covid-19 has shaken up the luxury goods supply chain with breakthrough retail concepts unknown in Western countries," concludes Papiernik. **P**