

Charles Vögele



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Vögele
S w i t z e r l a n d

AGNES VÖGELE

Together with her husband, Agnes Vögele, now 74 years old, opened a store selling clothes for motor scooter drivers in Zurich in 1955. 55 years later, Charles Vögele Group is listed on the stock market, employs around 7,800 people, has more than 850 branches, and is one of Europe's leading clothes retailers.



“I’VE NOTICED THERE’S A FRESH WIND BLOWING.”

Agnes Vögele, cofounder and widow of the entrepreneur Charles Vögele, looks back on the past 55 years and comments on the company’s recent overhaul.

On 5 March 1955, you started the Charles Vögele story by opening a shop in Zurich. Why did you specialise in clothes for motor scooter riders?

This was in the 50s when not many people could afford cars. There were a lot of scooters around, so in the early days we focused on specialist clothes for scooter drivers.

How did the opening day go?

I well remember the day. My husband had a lot of experience in advertising, but we still weren’t at all sure whether we’d get any customers in our little 40m² shop. I’m pleased to say, though, that we turned over 500 francs on that opening day. We were delighted and went out for a meal that evening.

Did you ever think that your company would one day become so big and successful?

No, not at all. But we did think we’d be able to open some more shops.

What were the best moments?

There’ve been a lot of great moments. The openings of the big branches are definitely always special. I particularly remember the one on Spitalgasse in Berne in 1969. The fashion show with a cheetah was very daring for those days. The VIPs who came to the opening party were also very impressed.

What was your job at the company?

I worked with my husband even before we set up our business in Zurich, which is how I knew we could work well together. When we founded the company, we were engaged. I was responsible for the accounts, purchasing and sales – basically for everything. I had just one sales assistant to help me. I always said: “A good car needs a good engine and good brakes.”

I tended to be the brake. This meant my husband often had to rethink his ideas, which then inspired him to come up with some unconventional solutions.

Talking of cars, how did your husband manage to combine his time consuming hobby with his job?

My husband was a very successful racing driver, though he was never a professional. He drove just about every race possible – apart from the Grand Prix. We benefited from his fame abroad, especially when we expanded into Austria. However, work definitely came before racing, and on the day after the prizes were awarded he would always appear punctually in the office.

Why did you sell the company in the end?

Selling the company was purely a matter of logic. From an early stage my husband tried to ensure a fair solution for our five children – two sons and a daughter also worked at the company. The decision to sell the company and leave it was extremely difficult for us. Even years later my husband suffered from it, so I often had to cheer him up.

“I expect
great things from
André Maeder.”



Agnes Vögele in her favourite chair (Altendorf, 2010);
congratulations on a successful opening party and fashion show (Berne 1969)

André Maeder has been the new CEO since the middle of February 2009. Since then the company has been overhauled at all levels. What do you think of all these changes?

You can't, of course, change a company overnight; but I've noticed there's a fresh wind blowing. I know André Maeder from before, when he was in charge of menswear. I expect great things from him, because he knows how the company was in earlier times – what was successful and what wasn't. He also knows that in those days our goals were pursued unconditionally. Persistence was one of my husband's great strengths. André Maeder was at the forefront and always worked with great dedication to achieve our objectives.

Has André Maeder already fulfilled any of your expectations? What do you hope from him?

Above all, I expect him to sharpen the brand's profile. It has been diluted somewhat in recent years, and that's a problem. There are still a lot of customers who would like to buy good quality clothes at a good price – clothes that are fashionable but not too crazy. There is a lot of competition, especially in clothes for fashionable young women. So we should also focus very clearly on women who are a little older and who want to dress slightly more conventionally. I always used to make sure that we bought in clothes specifically for this type of customer. The collections and the fit of the clothes have to be right, or customers will go elsewhere. I hope and believe that André Maeder can put the company back on track.



“The posters are really eye-catching and set Charles Vögele apart from the competition.”

The company has massively reduced its stocks of old items since April 2009. By the end of March 2010 there won't be any more clothes older than 18 months. What do you think of that?

A few years ago there were sometimes more old items in the stores than new. The new clothes

were completely buried. I think all those old items could have broken the firm's back. That's what happens when too many people work independently of one another. Some things have to be managed from the centre.

Charles Vögele's advertising became much more emotional in 2009. How do you like it?

The posters are really eye-catching and set Charles Vögele apart from the competition. Charles Vögele has used the colour violet and a concise logo to create a unique image. You see it in the ads, magazines and posters. The actual photos are better too. But you have to be careful here that you're not just appealing to very young people who are bombarded with advertising from all sides anyway.



Celebrity guests at the opening ceremony for the store in Berne (from left to right): Jo Siffert, Dorothea Furrer, Toni Sailer, Heidi Brühl, Mäni Weber, Agnes and Charles Vögele, the prima ballerina from Stadttheater Berne, Peter Hinnen, Ines Torelli, Jörg Schneider (Berne, 1969)

Last year, Charles Vögele opened three pilot branches using the new store design. The roll-out is on 24 March 2010 with the flagship store in Zurich. Do you like the new branches?

I think it's great that the brands of Charles Vögele have been put more firmly in the spotlight.

I also like it that more items are laid out on the round plinths. It makes it much easier to get an overview of what's on offer. The mannequins on the walls also make it easier to find your way around. The stylized tree takes



a bit of getting used to though. I'm not sure that people realise straight away that it marks the children's department. I really like the violet wall by the tills though.

Charles Vögele now wants to focus more on its main markets again. What do you think of that?

I think it's a good idea. Charles Vögele has always enjoyed a strong position in these markets and that will now continue.

“I don't think big companies can afford not to have an online shop these days.”

The company has split purchasing into three areas: brand management, procurement and merchandising. How was it organised before, and what do you think of this specialisation?

It depends how cooperation is arranged in future. You have to make sure that it's not split up too much. The company used

to be smaller, of course, and a very small number of people could make all the decisions, so we could work very purposefully and efficiently.

Charles Vögele opened its own sourcing offices in India and Bangladesh in November 2009, meaning that purchasing is now mostly in its own hands.

What do you think of this development?

We opened an office in Hong Kong way back in the seventies to take care of the whole of the Far East.

I think it's good to have someone out there who can act on behalf of head office but who also knows how locals think. The important thing is that the offices communicate with each other all the time.

Charles Vögele is going to introduce e-commerce.

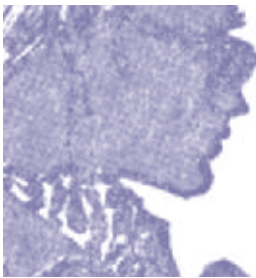
Does it need this sales channel too?

It's simply part of the constantly changing way we all live our lives. I don't think big companies can afford not to have an online shop these days. More and more people want to sit comfortably at home whenever they like – whether the physical shops are open or not – and buy things over the Internet.

What advice would you give Charles Vögele now?

The company must have a definite direction and follow clearly defined goals, even if this is sometimes anything but easy. Things don't always go smoothly. My husband and I had to cope with setbacks too. But we always stuck to our goals. Think like an entrepreneur, have the courage to take new paths and stick to them – these are the keys to success, especially in difficult times.

Charles Fögelle
55 years in fashion



**Rassigste
Jeans**

"The hottest jeans", ad 1979



Fashion Booklet 1971



CASA | BLANCA

The Casablanca brand reflects the spirit of the times, with trendy mix-and-match collections and modern basics. The focus is on simple casual outfits, most of which could also be worn to work.



Charles Fögele
55 years in fashion



Fashion Booklet 1978



Den schulterbetonten
Mänteln von CV zeigt man
nicht die kalte Schulter

"You won't turn your back on CV's square-shouldered coats", Ad 1979



Flyer 1963





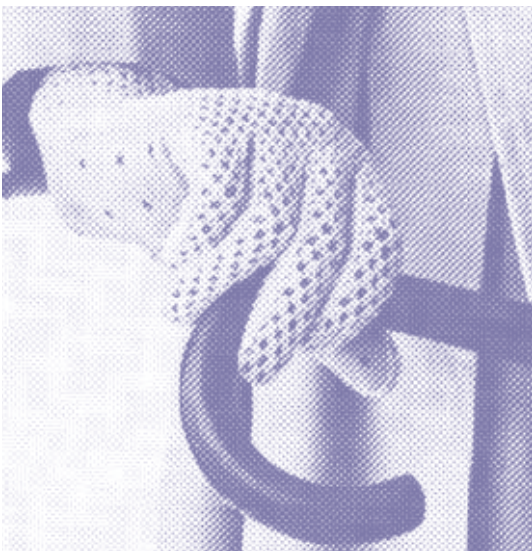
BIAGGINI

The Biaggini brand delivers the latest trends to make you feel great. Elegantly simple, easy to combine into different outfits - casual and formal.

Charles Dögele
55 years in fashion



Flyer 1969



**Bund-
Falten
bringen
neue
Front-
Optik**

"Pleats give a whole new look", ad 1979





Kingfield

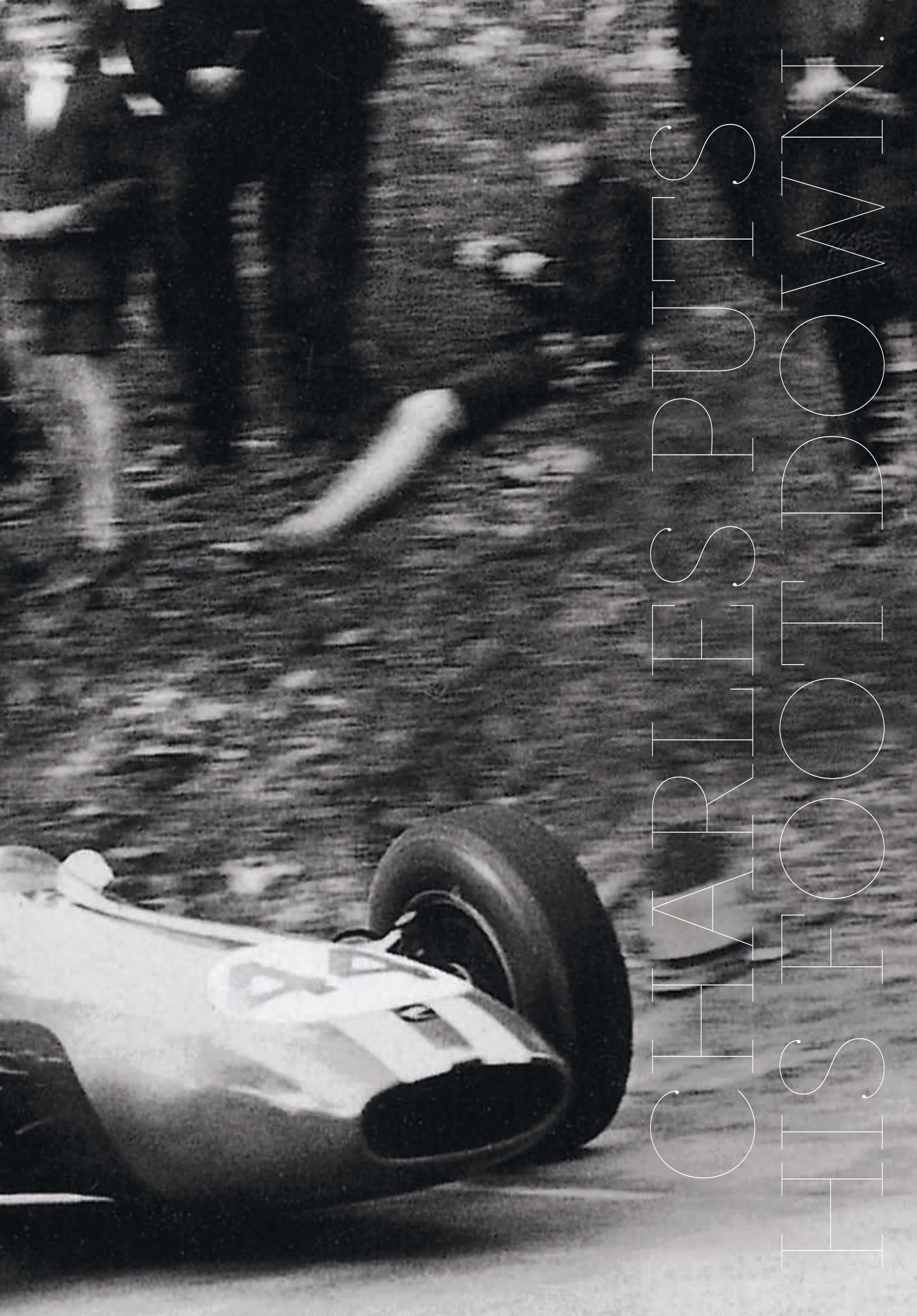
The Kingfield brand is known for high-grade fabrics, classic clothes which are consistently well-fitted and comfortable. Can be combined in all sorts of ways for business, leisure or special occasions.



CHARLES VÖGELE – THE RACING DRIVER

During the 1960s, Charles Vögele was one of Switzerland's most high-profile racing drivers, although he only competed as an amateur. The highpoint of his 15-year career were winning the Swiss Sport Car Championship in 1962 and the Swiss Racing Car Championship in 1963.





HIS FOOT PUTS DOWN.

1950s

The 1950s were a time of change, progress, growth and mobility. Society was trying to establish standards and rules. Men wore suits and ties, women had different wardrobes for the daytime and the evening. Haute couture set the tone and Paris was always the reference point. Hardly anyone could afford the clothes made by the big designers, but



everyone knew about them. By the mid-50s, haute couture and off-the-shelf clothes were being combined into “prêt-à-porter.” Synthetic fibres opened the door to new types of clothing, especially in leisurewear. The mini-skirt, which was to have its heyday in the 1960s, first appeared in the late 1950s.

THE COMPANY'S EVOLUTION >>

Charles and Agnes Vögele open a store selling clothes for scooter drivers in Zurich on 5 March 1955. Two stores opened in Zurich and Berne. The range is augmented by sportswear.

1960s

The fashion scene has rarely moved as fast as it did in the 1960s, when it was heavily influenced by political and social developments. It became less removed from reality and more affordable. The decade was



marked by the economic boom, the Cold War and the moon landing. Women's new self-esteem was reflected in the clothes they wore. The mini-skirt took over and was worn at every opportunity. Fashion designers were inspired by young people on the street. And young people were rebelling against the classic conservative style of the 1950s. The Beatles created a new musical style and became known as “mop-tops” owing to their much-imitated hairstyle. The extremely colourful “flower power” generation emerged in the mid-60s and persisted well into the 70s.

Charles Vögele, who had so far been running his parent's business in Uznach, moves over to his own company. Continuous expansion of the Swiss branch network. The company buys “London House” on Zurich's Bahnhofstrasse. Head office moves to Rapperswil.

1970s

Everything to excess. It could be as short, colourful or as heavily patterned as you like. Belief in the future and in new technologies was riding high in the 70s. The freedoms won in the 60s were lived out and exploited to the full. The hippies made sure that flower power became a real trend. Meanwhile, the disco style was also coming through: platform shoes and shiny flares for men and women alike. Bodies became stages for self-expression. Men's faces sprouted beards and



sideburns. By the end of the decade the trend towards boyish slimness had evolved into an ideal of beauty for many women.

The company's own Seedamm shopping centre is opened in Pfaffikon SZ. Own procurement office established in Hong Kong. Opening of the Seedamm Cultural Centre. Expansion into Southern Germany. Acquisition of a 22-store network.

1980s

The 80s were a time of diversity and contrast in fashion. Women wanted to look strong – with toned and tanned bodies. Naturalness and health were the big ideas. Fashion magazines featured more and more pictures of scantily clad women. Shoulder pads were very “in vogue,” especially in the trouser suits women were wearing. Aerobics was the trendy new



sport that brought a dash of colour to fashion. Leggings, t-shirts, colourful headbands and wristbands became essentials. Bikinis in the brightest possible colours appeared everywhere.

The Vögele children – Marco, Carlo and Monica – join the company. HQ moved into the new building at the Seedamm Centre in Pfaffikon SZ. Rapid expansion in Switzerland. Vögele Reisen founded.

»

1990s

The cult of the brand began in the 1990s. It gripped the younger generation who thus became a lucrative target group.



Brands gave their wearers a feeling of exclusivity. Techno music influenced fashion with its use of neon colours. New materials and tailored fits became fashionable. The distinction between young people's and adults' fashion largely disappeared. The "girlie" look saw women dyeing their hair and wearing false eyelashes. Platform shoes enjoyed a revival.

»

2000s

From the glitter look to hip-hop and flower power – the fashions of the "noughties" were inspired by previous decades. With slight modifications, all the old styles became popular again.



Fashion was definitely still changing, but everything seemed somehow familiar. Most of the revivals were short-lived. There was no particular dress code, styles fluctuated this way and that; people mixed trends together into colourful hybrids. Dresses and skirts became popular towards the end of this period – more feminine styles were in again.

55 years of Charles Vögele – how fashion and the company have evolved over the decades.

55 YEARS IN FASHION

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Entry into Austrian market.
The group has 150 outlets in Switzerland, 120 in Germany and 59 in Austria.
Majority shareholding in Charles Vögele Holding sold to Schroder Ventures.
Stock market flotation.

»

Expansion into Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.
Own procurement offices established in India and Bangladesh.

ADVERTISING THROUGH THE YEARS

From hand-drawn ads to high-end colour photography. Advertising, like fashion, has always changed with the times.



Le style jeune plaît



Borg macht Mode



Die Mode diktiert: Pelzkragen



3-teilige Anzüge



Coffre une mode balnéaire variée pour enfants



hautfreundlich, modisch, sportlich



Die schönsten Jeans für so wenig Geld



CV Prinzesside



Hit




Vögele



**CHARLES VÖGELE –
THE ENTREPRENEUR**

Innovative businessman, patron of the arts, successful racing driver – Charles Vögele was talented, determined and interested in everything. He was always open to new ideas and approaches, and he set and pursued ambitious goals.





“LOOK
FORWARD AND
DARE TO TRY
NEW THINGS.”

His credo

Charles Tögele
55 years in fashion

CV
Charles Tögele

Charles Tögele
COLLECTION
AUTOGIRL



CV
Charles Tögele

CV
STAR

Tögele
mini Markt

Tögele
MODERAMA

Mode
Vögele



Charles Tögele
Sportfahrer-Moden

Vögele



STATE-OF-THE-ART STORE DESIGN

At the end of 2009, Charles Vögele opened the first three branches to use its new store design: in Metzingen (Germany), Weinfelden (Switzerland, pictured) and Lancy (Switzerland). From 2010 onwards, all new openings and renovations will adopt the new design.



Schultern machen Mode an lässig-jungen Pullis von CV... betont durch Polster und breite Achseln

"Padded shoulders give CV's youthful/casual jerseys a fashionable edge", ad 1971



Noppen geben den Ton an: legerer Pulli mit Zöpfen an Raglan-Ärmeln und weitem Rundhalsausschnitt. Gemischte Baumwolle in frühlingsmodischen Pastellfarben, die sich ideal kombinieren lassen.

Betont nämlich automatische Erscheinung. Besondere Kennzeichen: Die dezent Eleganz, der markante 4-Knopfverschluss, die taillierte Polsterung, die Verarbeitung und Qualität.

Trotz leichtem Hang zum sportlichen Akzent ein eleganter Club-Sakko: Der Blazer! Bester Wollstoff in gesellschaftsfähigem Marineblau. Für den Liebhaber auch mit Rennsport-Aufnähwappen



Unsere Kollektion «Junge Dames» bietet jugendlich Gekleideten sportliche Eleganz zu vorteilhaftem Preis.

Ein Beispiel:

Deux-Pièces mit modischem Seidenglanz- und Shantung-Effekt, ganz auf Taft gefüttert; attraktives Arête-Dessin; elegante Jacke mit prägnant sportlichen Dekors; Dior-Jupe. Der Preis? Zauberhaft!

Diese Kapuzenjacke schafft's. Jung. Rassig. In Hängeform: lässig. Oder mit Bindogurt gehalten: taillenbetont. In hervorragender Qualität. Nerz-Fischgrat-Simili. Farbe: grau-schwarz. Eine Jacke, die schicke Beine schick zur Geltung bringt.



Rustikale Strickbilder, grosszügige Weite und V-Ausschnitt prägen Herren-Maschenmode

"Rustic designs, generous cuts and v-necks are features of the new men's knitwear range", ad 1979



Neue 500g...
Schön für...
Touche;...
Die Fas...
die eine...
Hose...
Aspe...
gesch...
sch...
Se...
Z...

Charles Vögele bringt Markenmode! Modisch attraktiver Trenchcoat, betont schlank und lang im Schnitt mit markanten Details: einseitiges Gölter, breiter Gürtel und sportiver Charakter durch Achselpaten und Stehkragen.





EXPERT ADVICE IN AN ENJOYABLE AMBIENCE

The new store design centres on the three Charles Vögele brands: Casablanca, Biaggini and Kingfield. They attract maximum attention thanks to a highly visible, shop-in-shop-style presentation. Knowledgeable advice is a priority in sales.

Sommerdeit
in gross
Anzahl



Schap'blend
Kleid

Neue Pullis
für kokette Mädchen und
pfiffige Buben

"New jumpers for pretty girls and smart boys", ad 1971



Zauber
Frühling



...auch für
die Kleinen



grosse wie kleine Männer

"little chaps" sizes", flyer 1966



Bärenstarke
Hosen
für die Bube
und doch schneidig

Mod

Aus unserer Serie "Praktische Kinderkleider"

voll waschbar





erhafter
ng

PRESENTATION ELEMENTS AIMED AT SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS

Design features suited to the different target groups, like a stylised tree in the children's department, encourage customers to identify with Charles Vögele and increase their sense of wellbeing. The new store design invites customers to linger.

TIKE
SILK
TIKE



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CONTACT

Charles Vögele Trading AG

Group Communications

Gwattstrasse 15

8808 Pfäeffikon SZ

Switzerland

T + 41 55 416 71 11

www.charles-voegele.com



55 YEARS
IN FASHION

