

Chicago's Iconic Merz Apothecary Acquires New York-based KOBO Candles

With the Acquisition, Merz Will Move into Light Manufacturing and Create Jobs

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, May 17, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Merz Apothecary, the iconic 147-year-old family retail business in Chicago, has made its first acquisition, KOBO Candles, based in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Merz Apothecary began operations as a pharmacy in 1875 on Chicago's north side. The brick-and-mortar retail and ecommerce business is now a Chicago landmark often featured in blogs, books and magazines, and it is a mecca for people who want unique, natural and luxury products.

KOBO Candles was created in 2006, inspired by travel and the transformative power of scent. Their candles, room diffusers, room sprays and hand and body washes are sold by retailers around the country and the world.

"KOBO makes impeccable products. It starts with the fragrance and the unbeatable burn of their hand-poured soy candles. I have been in this business over 50 years and KOBO Candles are quite simply some of the best we have sold at the store. And founders Louis Hotchkiss and Junko Kobori are smart, kind people. It is truly an honor to be carrying on their legacy," said Abdul Qaiyum, chairman of Merz Apothecary.

KOBO Candles' manufacturing operations are slated to move to Chicago in the summer of 2022 and the founders will remain active in the transition.



The Merz storefront at 4716 N. Lincoln Ave in Chicago. Merz was purchased by Abdul Qaiyum, an immigrant from Pakistan and registered pharmacist, from the Swiss-German Merz family in 1972. Merz was founded in 1865. (Photograph by Christina Noël)

The acquisition of KOBO Candles, which also creates private label products for major retail brands, moves Merz Apothecary into the world of light manufacturing. Operations will take place in their newly acquired warehouse in the North Branch Industrial Corridor, two miles south of their flagship retail location.

At launch in August, five new jobs will be created to support KOBO Operations. With more than two decades of experience in e-commerce retail, Merz plans to grow KOBO quickly and create more employment and opportunity in the company.

Both Merz Apothecary and KOBO Candles are family owned and run businesses with international roots. Abdul Qaiyum, an immigrant from Pakistan and registered pharmacist, purchased Merz Apothecary from the Swiss-German Merz family in 1972. The apothecary has been in the Qaiyum family ever since. Abdul's son Anthony Qaiyum, the president for the past 20 years, has been responsible for taking the business online and expanding its presence beyond its brick-and-mortar roots.

KOBO Candles was created by Junko Kobori, originally from Japan. She and her husband have owned and operated the company from upstate New York since 2006.

"I started KOBO Candles because Louis and I, as young people, traveled the world together. I was always struck by the scent of each place and how absent it felt when we attempted to recount our adventures with photographs and stories. From this concept, the transformative power of fragrance, KOBO was born. It feels appropriate KOBO will now travel to Chicago and find a new



Pharmacist and now Chairman Abdul Qaiyum, after purchasing Merz Apothecary from the original Merz family in 1972. (Photograph courtesy of Merz Apothecary)



Merz Apothecary sells over 10,000 personal care products from around the world. Merz's "Soap Wall" displays their impressive collection of internationally sourced bar soaps, and is a destination for local, national and international shoppers. (Photograph

home at an international apothecary. And Louis and I will get back to exploring the globe,” Kobori said.

“When Junko and I began making plans for our retirement, we spent many hours reflecting on how KOBO Candles would continue to have a fruitful life as a company. We have created something very special, which we are immensely proud of. It is our life’s work, and we wanted to leave it to a team of people who knew its value, respected it, and would give it new and exciting life in the years to come. The Merz team will do that,” Hotchkiss said.

Anthony Qaiyum said the acquisition of KOBO candles will pave the way for future growth opportunities in private label and manufacturing.

“Being the fifth-generation owner of a beloved small business, it is my personal mission to provide high quality jobs in the city and a unique shopping experience to my fellow Chicagoans and our customers worldwide. We are committed to remaining in Chicago, hiring locally, and as we continue to grow our business, we endeavor always to be in gracious service of our customers and team members. The acquisition of KOBO Candles is a major step forward for us, our community, and for the goal of keeping manufacturing in our city,” he said.

ABOUT MERZ APOTHECARY

In 2021 Merz Apothecary was named one of the top beauty destinations in the world by “T” the “New York Times” style magazine. [Smallflower.com](https://www.smallflower.com), Merz Apothecary’s e-commerce presence, was founded in 1998 and has become a vital part of the business and has contributed to Merz’s overall growth.

Merz Apothecary is located at 4716 N. Lincoln Ave in Chicago. [Merzapothechary.com](https://www.merzapothechary.com), Merz Apothecary’s e-commerce presence is [smallflower.com](https://www.smallflower.com).

KOBO Candles can be purchased directly at [kobocandles.com](https://www.kobocandles.com).



KOBO’s newly released Watercolor Collection is bright and optimistic. The Collection seeks to utilize a bright color palette and watery brush strokes. The patterns are paired with matching scents to bring you into the world of each unique fragrance. (Pho

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KOBO's Plant the Box Collection consists of pure soy candles that come in plantable, seed-infused packaging. A true cradle-to-cradle endeavor, these candles represent a new and unique approach, resulting in environmentally friendly products and packaging.

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