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# White Launches Direct-to-Consumer Streetwear Market, Among Other New Initiatives

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## WHITE

The Milanese trade show is seeking to tap new opportunities by deepening its relationship with showrooms and actively attracting end-consumers for the first time, with the support of the Confartigianato Imprese and the Italian Trade Agency.



**MILAN, Italy** — Today, trade show White will open the gates of its sprawling campus in Milan's Tortona fashion district, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors over the next four days. Founded in 2002, the trade show has grown from just a handful of Italian brands to an international event that drew 26,000 attendees to its last edition in September 2017. However, this season it is who is in the crowd, not its size, which is most notable.

For the first time, trade show organisers are welcoming consumers to the event by launching White Street Market, a merged B-2-B and B-2-C space for emerging and established streetwear and sportswear labels. "Brands will produce capsule collections and limited edition items, which will then be amplified by a mix of digital communication and impactful sales to influential buyers," says White co-founder and chief executive Brenda Bellei. "A big e-commerce partner will be also involved in order to reach a wider audience and to extend the White Street Market experience online. We will also welcome pre-registered consumers here in Milan," she continues.

Streetwear is not a new vertical to the trade show, having collaborated with Highsnobiety on its WOW (White On Web) online destination last season, (which featured 10 emerging streetwear designers who created capsule collections sold exclusively through Italian e-commerce player Luisa via Roma) and acted as an early supporter of emerging labels Cottweiler and CDGS. However, this season's increased focus reflects growing demand in the market, especially in luxury. High-end streetwear helped boost global sales of luxury personal goods by 5 percent in 2017 to an estimated €263 billion (\$309 billion), according to a study released by consultancy Bain & Company.

"We believe the time is right for a public area which presents streetwear and sportswear to the final consumer as well as buyers. Those two fashion segments represent the taste of both the new digital generations and the best international buyers attending our event," says Bellei.

White is collaborating on the Street Market with Paolo Ruffato, the founder of the Probeat Agency whose client roster includes Eastpak, New Era, Vans, Oakley and Timberland, and Walter D'Aprile, the co-founder of NSS — an online magazine and specialist creative agency for streetwear and sportswear brands.

"It's fundamental to communicate in a different way that is more open to the public and to the new reality of a global market," believes d'Aprile. "This is why Milan, a fashion city, can offer a unique point of view if compared to Sole DXB in Dubai and ComplexCon in LA," he says, referring to two of the biggest events in the global streetwear calendar, the latter of which drew 50,000 visitors and reportedly drove \$20-25 million in sales last year.

With regards to athleisure, White is continuing its partnership with the London showroom, Tomorrow London, which is bringing womenswear brands No Ka'Oi, [Monreal London](#), C-Clique, Sapopa and menswear lines such as White Mountaineering, Geym and KAPPA x AFL x SHAUNA.T/P.A.M.

The White Street Market will take place in Ex Ansaldo in Tortona, just a stones throw away from the original location of White, which over the years helped prompt big name Italian

brands like Ermenegildo Zegna and Armani to open premises in the borough, the creation of which now attracts considerable foot traffic in the area. However, despite the appeal of connecting brands to the wallets of fashion fans and students that large-scale industry events now draw all over the world, the trade show believes dialogue between consumers and brands has innate value beyond the transactional.

“We want to provide an opportunity for established companies to check the appreciation of their product with both buyers and consumers, and to get actionable feedback. At the same time the buyers we invite can view special editions potentially for their stores or perhaps start working on new cobranded items,” continues Bellei.

This season’s event, which will include a music performance by Club to Club, has been designed as a teaser, enabling White to act on its learnings in preparation for a full launch in June. Organisers plan to grow the Street Market into an event that attracts the most authoritative street culture influencers and professionals, while organising exhibits, concerts, workshops, music events and cultural engagement activities for pre-registered consumers.

In addition to experimenting with a direct-to-consumer element through White Street Market, the event-organisers are supporting Italian-made design by partnering again with the Confartigianato Imprese, as well as the Italian Trade Agency and the Comune di Milano, to expand last season’s Showroom Connection initiative. As a result, more international buyers and press have been invited to White, the dates of which coincide with Milan Fashion Weeks, while abroad the partners have worked together to build the profile of Italian design in key global markets such as China, where, for example, the Confartigianato Imprese recently funded a delegation of 56 SME design businesses to visit and exhibit.

The impetus behind the Showroom Connection is Milan’s strength as a European distribution channel. “Milan is one of the key distribution capitals due to the number of showrooms located in the city. Buyers are searching for new products to create cool brand mixes for their stores and medium/small showrooms need to expand their audience. Working with White, the two can support each other. Showrooms can benefit from the flow of buyers attending White and White is able to showcase interesting labels and enrich its brand offer,” explains Bellei.

Indeed, brand mix remains fundamental to White’s plans. This season the event welcomes the Vald Agency, Paris’ 3rdEye showroom and Six London, a wholesale and shoe showroom collective founded by Jose Neves in 1996. Six London also manages the licenses for Swear and B-Store, along with other contemporary designs from brands such as Opening Ceremony and Ksubi. “White Milan is the perfect addition to our agency’s two main showrooms in Paris and New York. It’s a great platform to expose our designers to a wider audience,” says Jacob Valdemar, founder of the Vald agency. “With growth in the Italian economy, and the recovery of Italian fashion retail, we just can’t miss out on being present in this market.” Additionally, the trade show has curated a specialist knitwear area, championing heritage producers and innovators in the field.

“We believe we have scouted a number of strong athleisure, streetwear and ready-to-wear labels with unique commercial appeal, and continue to host high profile brands that will continue to attract more and more international buyers each season,” says Bellei.