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Saudi 100 Brands showroom opens at Milan Fashion Week

► It aims to bring the kingdom's emerging clothing and jewellery names to international audiences



With its elevated take on streetwear, 1886 is one of 100 Saudi Arabian brands being showcased during Milan Fashion Week. Photo: 1886

Sarah Maisey
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Milan Fashion Week is hosting Saudi 100 Brands, a showroom dedicated to highlighting some of the fashion, jewellery and accessory labels coming out of Saudi Arabia.

Taking place at Museo delle Culture in the Tortona Fashion District until Sunday, it is a collaboration between White and the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and Fashion Commission. Together, they are looking to bring new talents to an international audience.

Previously held as part of New York Fashion Week, this marks the Milan debut for the event and indeed many of the names on show.

The 100 designers taking part have been selected across the categories of handbags, women's ready to wear, resort wear, menswear, eveningwear, casual, concept wear and jewellery.

Saudi Arabian label Qormuz, which incorporates subtle elements of regional culture into its pieces, is now on show in Milan. Photo: Qormuz

One name taking part is Qormuz, a brand that creates bags decorated with elements that echo Saudi culture, such as geometric patterning and even hand-painted scenes.

Speaking with *The National*, founder Abdulrahman Alabid explains why showcasing in Europe during fashion week is so crucial for a new brand hoping to expand.

"These international opportunities are incredible because so many people don't yet know about the Saudi fashion industry," Alabid says "This is a chance to put us on the global stage and demonstrate our talent and uniqueness."

Saudi 100 Brands is showing everything from evening wear, from brands including April by Noura, Atelier Hekayat, and Yousef Akbar; to bags by the likes of Dania Shinkar, Bovenue and Qormuz, as well as menswear by designers Lomar, Thobe and Jino Collections, and jewellery by brands such as Dalal Jewellery, Sedra Jewellery and Yataghan.

Earrings by jewellery house Yataghan, which is taking part in the Saudi 100 Brands showroom. Photo: Yataghan

Despite starting her company more than a decade ago, Sarah Abudawood, the founder of Yataghan, explains to *The National* that it is never too late to gain new recognition.

"My brand has been around for 15 years and a lot of hard work goes into it," she says. "I know we will leave Milan Fashion Week in an elevated position in the eyes of major international retailers, which is important to the longevity of the brand."

Brought to life under the auspices of the Saudi Fashion Commission, the dedicated showroom is part of Vision 2030, an ambitious, government-led plan to open Saudi Arabia to the world through transformative social and economic reforms.

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Speaking with *The National*, Burak Cakmak, chief executive of the Saudi Fashion Commission, outlines why it is important to keep a global perspective. "Giving emerging talent opportunities to develop their own unique skills is key to creating a thriving Saudi fashion industry," he says.

"We have plans to build a product development studio in Riyadh, equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and run by on-site industry experts to nurture young designers, and the commission runs programmes to springboard talent.

"Saudi 100 Brands is our year-long mentoring programme that provides specialist training, advice and opportunities to exhibit on the world stage, including at the main fashion weeks. Fashion Futures, our annual conference, brings the local and international fashion community together to share knowledge, ideas and expertise. And Elevate, our female leadership programme, aims to increase the number of women in leadership positions.

"Saudi Arabia has a young and rapidly growing population. Providing quality education and supporting our future stars is at the heart of our strategy as part of Vision 2030."

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