

WSM'S THIRD EDITION

## A CREATIVE HUB

The new business&consumer format launched by White is attracting major streetwear brands and niche labels that believe in responsible fashion. Organisers work towards establishing a highlight of Milan fashion week. Buyers and the UN agree

DI ELISABETTA FABBRI

«We are at the start of a journey that will lead to the rejuvenation of men's fashion week," commented Massimiliano Bizzi, founder of White, referring to the third edition of White Street Market-WSM, the business&consumer event devoted to fashion and street cultures, which was held from June 15 to 17 at Superstudio Più in Milan. Conditioned by the African heat, the event received slightly fewer visitors compared to the January event. However, many are willing to bet that this experimental project, which places a strong emphasis on responsible fashion, is the right path, starting with supporters such as MISE, ICE and Confartigianato and partners such as the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) and Fashion Revolution, a non-profit movement aiming to make the fashion industry ethical and sustainable. The WSM opening conference, moderated by *Fashion's* director Marc Sondermann, was an opportunity for Maria Teresa Pisani of the UNECE to announce the Commission willingness to start a multi-stakeholder discussion group (fashion industry chain, consumers, cultural representatives, academies and foundations) focused on concrete sustainability initiatives, seen as "as an ethical choice and a business opportunity." Looking ahead, Pisani said within two years, she sees the creation of a United Nations standard for the traceability of the supply chain and the use of block-chains, giving consumers access to correct information. Designer Marina Spadafora, who coordinates Fashion Revolution in Italy, revealed that the movement is preparing to create a map for consumers who want to dress sustainably. The movement also has plans to recycle clothing companies' stocks, "so that they are not sold off cheaply or incinerated, but enhanced." The fair/event,

organized by White in collaboration with Milanese communication agencies Probeat Agency and Nss factory, also involves buyers. "It is a project open to everyone, where you can see and think, and I hope that it will increasingly grow with the involvement of other fairs," remarked Francesco Tombolini, President of Camera Buyer Italia-CBI. "WSM is able to create a wonderful creative synergy," commented Rosy Biffi, owner of Biffi Boutiques in Milan and Bergamo, as well as the Milanese stores Banner and Biffi B-Contemporary. "I always find the concept and the set-up appealing." The buyer views the focus on sustainability as an excellent choice: "They have managed to come up with a creative hub that is able to attract attention to the subject, exploring various possibilities, with brands that combine a sustainable appearance with aesthetic and stylistic elements, which are essential for making a product attractive to consumers". Biffi also expressed her approval of sustainable fashion brand Wråd, one of the WSM exhibitors. "We love its taste and youthful, very sophisticated creativity," she said. "I think Massimiliano Bizzi is a courageous precursor of a trend that has just begun, but that will definitely guide many future brand policies." Claudio Betti, owner of the Spinaker boutiques in Liguria and Tuscany, said, referring to the WSM fair/event mix and the business&consumer option. "Unfortunately, consumers do not currently recognise the true added value of a sustainable product, but it is a task for the whole supply chain, particularly retailers who have



ARTIST RED, PERFORMER FOR CONVERSE BRAND



### Give A Fok-Us Makes A Splash At WSM

WSM unveiled the second edition of its sustainable hub Give a Fok-us (first debuted at White Milano in February 2019) envisaged by artistic director Matteo Ward, founder of Wråd brand. This time the spotlight was on the conservation of water and involved a collaboration with the collective of artists DrawLight. Visitors were invited to immerse themselves into the depths of the marine world, in order to understand the damage mankind has inflicted on the oceans. One of the company's chosen by Ward to participate in give a Fok-us Water was yarn makers Aquafil collects fish nets and transforms them into up cycled nylon called Econyl.



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SIMON CRACKER



BGBL

Ph. Marco Pistolesi



RBRSL

contact with end customers, to support its principles through proper communication. Made in EU could acquire more strength and identity, resulting in a renewed level of competitiveness,” Betti said. Among the brands, Betti singled out MYAR, which recycles military clothing (see page 26). In terms of exhibitors, the third edition of WSM attracted brands such as Vivienne Westwood, which presented stands and t-shirts with slogans such as “stop climate change” and “buy less, choose well”, as well as a collaboration with eco-friendly fashion brand 24Bottles. Converse involved young Ethiopian street artist Red (pseudonym of Riet Longo) in a project involving the reuse of canvas scraps from old Chuck Taylor shoes. Venetian bag brand BGBL, launched by Elisabetta Viola in 2018, recycles basketballs and buys new ones for local teams with some of the proceeds from the sales. “We expected a higher turnout because the event is great. We saw more buyers on Saturday, including from Japan and Korea, while on Sunday there were more ordinary visitors,” a BGBL spokeswoman said. “We observed fewer developments than in January and retailers are interested in responsible fashion, while young people are poorly informed,” said others in the space curated by Fondazione Pistoletto-Citadellarte, which gives visibility to brands on the Fashion B.E.S.T. platform, dedicated to the development of bioethical sustainability in the textile world. “There were more people in January and we met more buyers, while at this edition there was a higher turnout of ordinary people looking around, but



VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

they struggle to buy,” commented a RBRSL spokesman, a Made in Italy sneaker label whose footwear is priced at over 300 euros (not really suitable for an impulse purchase at a trade show). Their unique feature is their use of rubber: more than just a sole, it is a fluid material fused with leather, creating an indistinguishable product. There was similar feedback from the international 3Rd Eye concept showroom, which presented several products by the Venividivi, Enclave Monarchy and Simon Cracker labels. “Ordinary people and buyers passed by, including from Asia: they stop, but it is not easy to approach them,” said a representative of Vanta Design Studio, which creates almost unique garments reusing pieces of traceable denim or cotton. Vanta Design Studio, like other niche green brands that attended WSM, was looking for a distributor for Italy in order to raise its profile and expand its business. What makes the difference compared to an ordinary fashion brand is hearing these words: “It’s not just an economic issue. There is really a lot of materials that can be recycled and not wasted.” ■



### Italian Fashion Talent Awards: Winners On Show

In anticipation of the IV edition of the Italian Fashion Talents Awards, slated for November 22 to 23 in Salerno, WSM showcased pieces designed by the winners of the 2018 edition and their respective books. The event was made possible thanks to the collaboration of Confartigianato Imprese and Fabio Pietrella, president of the fashion section. The upcoming theme of the 2019 competition will be ‘Timeless.’ The list of candidates can be found on [iftawards.com](http://iftawards.com).