

BUSINESS

New Research Collections at a Fair Price Were Key at White Milano

- The four-day trade show closed with a strong number of buyers in attendance.

BY CRISTINA MANFREDI

MILAN – Newly discovered collections with a fair price-quality ratio were the selection criteria at White Milano, held in the Tortona Fashion District from Sept. 19 to 22.

The fair closed with a slight drop in attendance, but the organizers are nonetheless satisfied with the level of buyers present, including Le Bon Marché

and Galeries Lafayette from France; Antonia, Tessabit, Rinascente, Antonioli and Sugar from Italy; The Webster from the U.S.; Autograph from the U.K., and La Bottega from Belgium.

"Nowadays, stores increasingly need to complement their big brand offerings with research collections, brands new to their client, price-sensitive and style-conscious," said White Milano's head of fashion research, promotion and development Simona Severini.

White Milano primarily targets the European market, which, according to Severini, is still quite concerned about the current political and economic situation.

"There is a lot of fear. We are facing hard times, and I'm thinking also of the crisis among U.K. boutiques due to Brexit. However, some stores still do well because they focus on research, and White Milano speaks to them. We presented brands they wouldn't find elsewhere with stories to tell. The average wholesale price ranges between 90 euros and 150 euros, with some peaks around 200 euros to 210 euros for outerwear, always justified by the item's quality," she added. "All brands must have an established distribution," Severini emphasized, "they must be able to produce and deliver on time and as promised."

A much-buzzed brand was Maria Teresa Palazzo, named after its founder. Originally from Calabria, a region in southern Italy, the 25-year-old creative and entrepreneur returned to her hometown after studying at the IED – Istituto Europeo di Milano, determined to create her knitwear brand with formfitting silhouettes and sensual transparencies. "I couldn't afford a

business in Milan, but in my region, I work with small workshops and can control every phase of production," she explained.

There was also interest in Ergon Mykonos, led by creative director Marietta Karpathiou, who has a background in Fine Art from Rome. She draws from Greece's rich cultural heritage to design clothes made exclusively from 100 percent Greek cotton, presenting a modern twist away from the typical resort-chic image of Greece.

Among emerging designers featured in the Secret Rooms, Yid'phrogma stood out, created by Chinese designer Li Yuxuan. This Central Saint Martins graduate returned to China to develop her brand inspired by the values of Tibetan culture, which she studies and admires.

The presence of brands from South Africa attracted visitors because of the craftsmanship and creativity inspired by local culture. As explained by Tumi Buys, the founder of The Fashion Firm, the organization promoting various brands in collaboration with the government's Import-Export department: "Ninety percent of the collections are produced in our country, with some exceptions in Madagascar, Zimbabwe or Portugal because the designer is based there. Seventy percent of the brands already have a well-established distribution, like Judy Sanderson. However, we also support emerging brands such as Good Friday or Abantu. We encourage entrepreneurial know-how sharing among the different brands. Another strength is sourcing primarily local materials, such as the high-quality South African wool used by the knitwear brand Mors."

Looks from Yid'phrogma at White Milano.



Noteworthy is the debut presence of I'm Talent Showroom, an initiative by Istituto Marangoni that brought to White Milano a selection of alumni with established collections, providing additional commercial support. Among the brands, Pronounce, founded by Chinese designers Yushan Li and Jun Zhou, known for its street-tailoring approach, and Unhidden, a brand created by Victoria Jenkins with a social impact. She designs to meet the legitimate desire for elegance of those living in wheelchairs or undergoing chemotherapy, requiring garments with unique features such as openings for treatment without fully undressing.

A look from Maria Teresa Palazzo.

