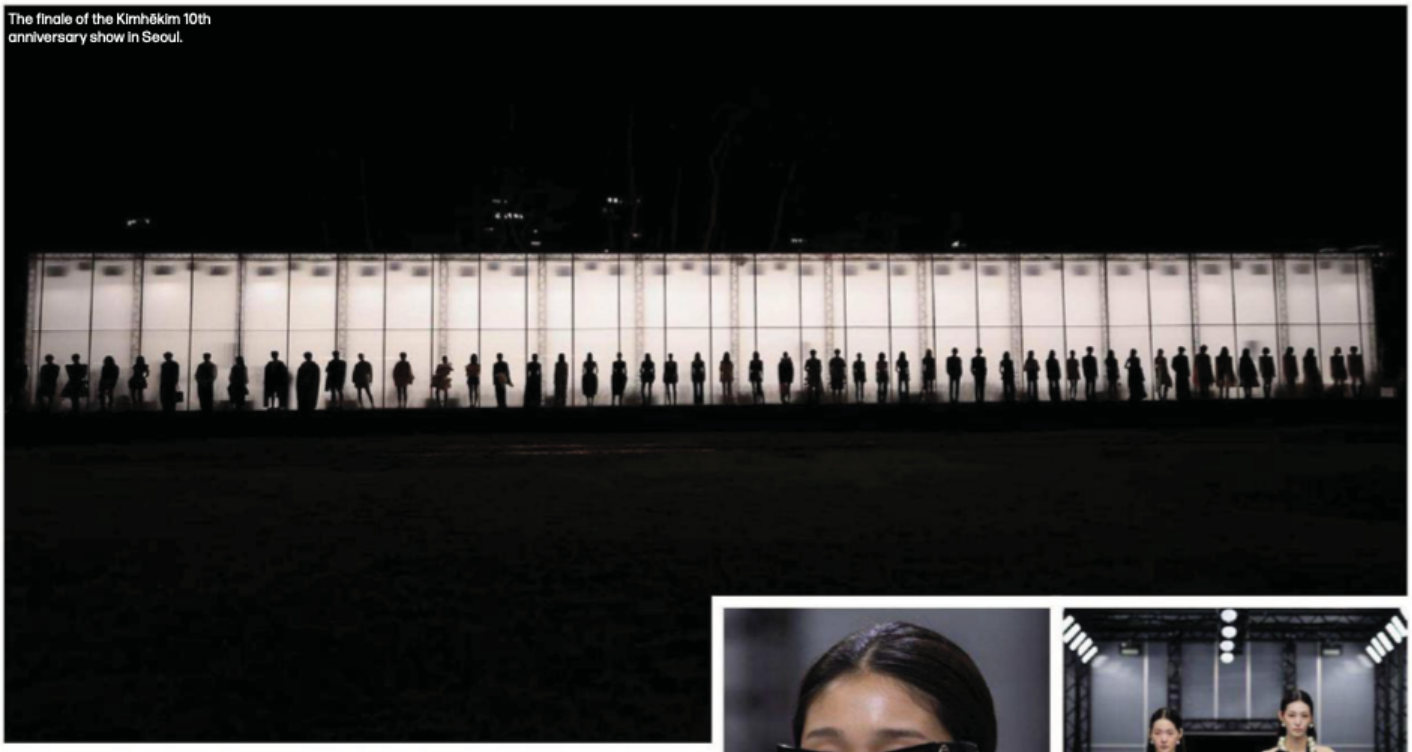
WWD

FASHION

Kimhēkim Celebrates 10th Anniversary At Expanded White Milano Fair



The finale of the Kimhēkim 10th anniversary show in Seoul.

- The South Korean designer is a guest of the trade show, which will unveil expanded footprints and has inked a beauty collaboration with Cosmoprof.

BY **MARTINO CARRERA**

MILAN — South Korean designer Kiminte Kimhēkim's celebrations for his eponymous brand are being unfurled in three acts — the latest scheduled for Sept. 24 to 27 at White Milano.

The Milan-based fashion trade show is hosting Kimhēkim as its guest designer this season, allowing the brand to mark the third celebration of the milestone after Paris Fashion Week and Seoul Fashion Week earlier this year.

Kimhēkim adds to an already packed edition of White Milano, which will host 450 brands spread across four venues in the Tortona Fashion District, including two new sections. Named "On the Beach" and "More," the two new venues are dedicated to resortwear and non-fashion categories, such as beauty, lifestyle and design, respectively.

White Milano also revealed Monday that it has sealed a long-term partnership with leading fair Cosmoprof for a cross-pollination between its fashion offering and the beauty sector. The collaboration will kick off in 2027.

In an interview a few days after his Seoul display, Kimhēkim's first major runway moment in its hometown since the designer established the brand in 2016, he characterized his upcoming detour to Milan as an opportunity to engage more directly with Italian and European buyers.

"Seoul was about celebrating our roots, and Milan is about opening the conversation with Europe and in a more commercial and strategic way. I want people to see that we are not only a runway brand, but also a real maison with a product and vision and long-term potential," the designer said.

After graduating from the Esmod and Studio Berçot fashion schools in Paris and joining the Balenciaga studio under then-creative director Nicolas Ghesquière, Kimhēkim went solo and built a sizable business out of candy-hued minidresses, asymmetric tailoring with giant pearl buttons and bow-embellished frocks.

These signature designs feature prominently in the 10th anniversary collection, a body of work that has morphed and evolved across the three showcases. Paris Fashion Week attendees were treated to the brand's greatest hits, while the Seoul Fashion Week audience saw the brand dive deeper into the more experimental pieces within its archives. At White Milano, the presentation format will allow Kimhēkim's craftsmanship to shine the brightest, the designer said.

"We will celebrate our 10th year also in Milan, bringing my favorite archival pieces [that show] our artisanship from our atelier in Seoul... I want it to be an opportunity to make the brand's identity clear," he explained.

A regular on the Paris Fashion Week schedule, Kimhēkim is looking at broadening brand perception globally, tackling newer markets where he sees potential.

His ambitions should find fertile ground in light of the global appeal of K-culture.

"We are focused on building stronger international distribution and, at this stage, we need a platform where buyers and press and retailers can understand the brand closely," the designer said.

"I want to understand how European buyers see the brand today, and which pieces feel strong to them, and which categories have the most potential, and how they imagine the brand living in their stores," Kimhēkim said.





Here and right: Looks from the Kimhēkim 10th anniversary show in Seoul.

"The feedback is very important... international growth requires listening carefully to the buyers and press. So, I want to learn how to edit, price, present and expand the collection without losing the emotion of the brand," he said.

Outside of South Korea, where the brand has operated a flagship in Seoul since 2023, Japan is the strongest market, while the U.S. is rapidly picking up, especially in online sales since the brand does not have physical distribution Stateside. Kimhēkim currently boasts 46 stockists globally.

Reflecting on the brand's 10-year run, Kimhēkim feels like he has plenty of boxes to tick — and dreams to accomplish.

For one, expanding retail is high on his agenda, starting from Paris, which the designer bills as his "second home." Although the search for the right space and partner is still ongoing, he said that after operating the Seoul flagship for three years, his vision of the shop floor experience has grown more focused and he's now looking to build "meaningful spaces" to connect with the different customers in each city.

"Each country understands the brand in a different way. So we want to grow carefully and find the right partners to open our physical stores and make people experience our universe," Kimhēkim explained.

The designer is also committed to introducing new categories, such as leather goods and fragrances and cosmetics in due time, as well as lifestyle extensions in the decorative art space.

"I would love to do everything... there is a very strong emotional language in our brand, so I think we could expand this language beyond clothing," he said.

So far, Kimhēkim has tested footwear via a collaboration with Asics, debuted on the spring 2026 runway, and sold at retail institutions such as Dover Street Market and The Broken Arm in Paris, which did not carry the brand before. Such linkups are instrumental in recruiting a new clientele for the brand, the designer said.

Asked about the next 10 years, Kimhēkim hopes to see the brand thriving internationally and allowing him to set up a foundation aimed at promoting artists and young designers.

For now, the designer will be headed to Paris Fashion Week after his Milan trip. In the French capital he will host the spring 2027 sales campaign and throw a party to cap off the milestone year.