

OUT OF HOME

## Fashion houses plan walkabout in Milan to celebrate city's ingenuity

February 26, 2015



*Manhole designed by Santi Garofolo of Istituto Marangoni*

---

By JEN KING

Italian fashion designers Prada and Versace are among the creatives participating in a cultural initiative literally on the streets of Milan to benefit nonprofit organization Oxfam Italia.

[Sign up now](#)

**Luxury Daily**

Twenty-four artistically designed manhole covers will be sporadically placed throughout Milan's fashion district from Feb. 24 until January 2016. Now in its third edition, "Over the Under – Manhole Art Tells the Story of a Cabled City," organized by European fibre optic network Metroweb, sponsored by the Municipality of Milan and in partnership with the National Chamber for Italian Fashion, is seen as a tribute to Milan's internationality and excellence in craftsmanship and products.

"Site-specific art exhibits provide a platform for artistic creativity in new and different ways," said Karen Kremer, president of [K2 Brand Consulting](#), Overland Park, KS.

"At face value, artistic manhole covers could be perceived as incompatible with the aesthetics of luxury design," she said. "Innovative concepts and new materials should be strategically leveraged to enhance brand perceptions, never purely for the sake of

innovation or artistic expression.

"A longstanding exhibit provides more time and opportunity for the designers to clearly connect their work to their brand vision – defining their goals, aspirations and messages behind their work."

Ms. Kreamer is not affiliated with the participating brands, Metroweb, the city of Milan or the National Chamber for Italian Fashion, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**The National Chamber for Italian Fashion** did not respond by press deadline.

The over under

The 24 artfully designed manhole covers were unveiled on Feb. 24 along the streets of via Montenapoleone and in via S. Andrea. Each of the covers are original pieces that have been hand-carved and hand-painted as well as site-specifically conceived and designed by the participating designers.

Participants include Giorgio Armani, Just Cavalli, Etro, Missoni, Larusmiani, Laura Biagiotti, Costume National, Moschino, 10 Corso Como, Prada, Trussardi, DSquared2, Versace, Iceberg, Brunello Cucinelli, Hogan, Alberta Ferretti, Valentino, Salvatore Ferragamo, Emilio Pucci, Giuseppe Zanotti Design and Ermenegildo Zegna.

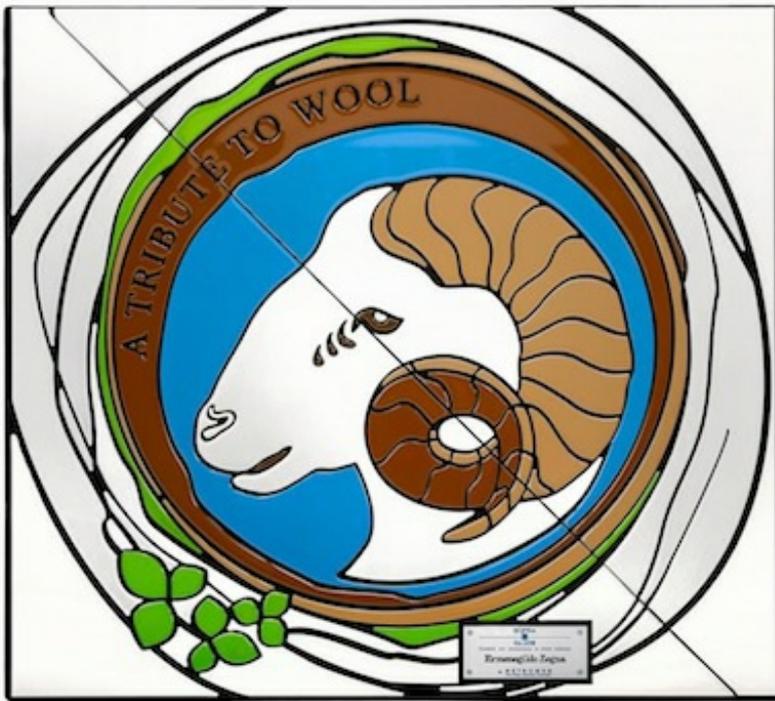


*Missoni manhole cover on a street in Milan*

Houses such as Just Cavalli, Missoni, Moschino, Versace and Emilio Pucci relied on their recognizable aesthetics for their manhole covers, with Missoni and Emilio Pucci featuring their bright printed patterns while Just Cavalli included a cheetah and Versace its lion.

Also, Zegna's manhole cover is a tribute to wool and features a white sheep in circles of

white, blue, green and brown.



*Zegna's manhole cover*

To foster a future generation of fashion designers, the works of Santi and Alessandro Garofolo, one a current student and the latter a graduate of the Istituto Marangoni Milano, will be placed amid the manhole covers created by the legendary Italian houses. Ms. Garofolo is attending Istituto Marangoni Milano's master's program in fashion design womenswear while Mr. Garofolo graduated from the school in 2014 with a degree in fashion design.

Ms. Garofolo's manhole cover was inspired by Milan's commercial and historical heart, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, while Mr. Garofolo drew inspiration from the city's wires.



*Mr. Garofolo and Ms. Garofolo with their manhole covers at the Istituto Marangoni Milano*

Luxury brands and their parent companies often establish programs to help secure creative talent and foster skillsets to avoid talents being lost as career paths have evolved.

Kering, for example, is looking to attract fashion-minded talent through a partnership with Vogue Italia. For the second year, Vogue Italia's Web site will act as the platform for Kering's internship listings in both luxury brands and corporate headquarters ([see story](#)).

At the start of 2016, the 24 manhole covers will be auctioned by Christie's. Metroweb will then donate the proceeds raised for charitable projects promoted by Oxfam Italia.

### Strange mediums

Luxury houses are notorious for their charitable works and often give back in interesting ways that raises awareness through a cause, often through a one-off piece that consumers may not be expecting.

For example, Buccellati and Lanvin are among the designers lending their creativity to the Tarbouche Project to raise funds and awareness for child abuse.

The initiative is the brainchild of artist Mouna Rebeiz, whose painting series "Le Tarbouche" is currently on display at the Saatchi Gallery in London. Ms. Rebeiz handpicked a number of designers to craft a fez in their own style to be auctioned live by Sotheby's as well as online for Innocence in Danger, a charity that works to end violence against children ([see story](#)).

In addition, luxury fashion houses and designers raised money for Operation Bobbi Bear through the auction of one-off teddy bears.

The group of high-profile participants were asked by Vienna-based Life Ball to worked with customizable toy maker Build-A-Bear to create custom teddy bears to benefit Operation Bobbi Bear. Due to the exclusivity of the pieces on auction, enthusiasts may be more inclined to monitor the auction and place a high-priced bid due the items charitable ties during the holiday season ([see story](#)).

An auction element allows these one-off items to be more visible.

"This exhibit brings together the worlds of art, design and urban living, resulting in truly unique pieces from the hands and hearts of top global designers," Ms. Kreamer said.

### Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/BLRazoAJTQQ>

---

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.