

RETAIL

Luisa Via Roma embraces Syrian refugees with conceptual installation

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Luisa Via Roma's "Underwater Love"

By STAFF REPORTS

Italian department store Luisa Via Roma is tackling the migrant crisis by building a Bridge of Love.

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Inspired by a 1966 flood in Florence caused by the overflowing Arno River, during which young people came to the aide of the Italian city, Luisa Via Roma is looking to inspire the same action with a conceptual installation crossing the same body of water. In line with its biannual Firenze4Ever digital gathering, the retailer is also launching the initiative "Everything Starts with a Hug," a project that will see participating companies train and include migrants into their workforces.

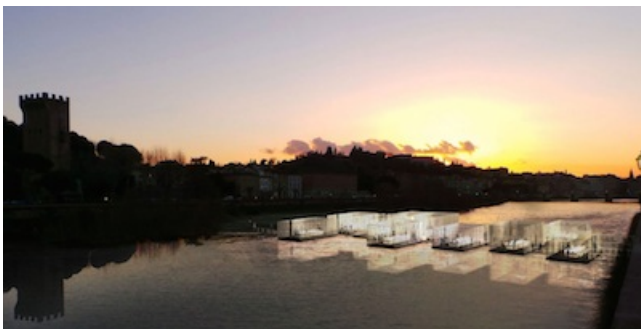
River crossing

Firenze4Ever, with the theme "Underwater Love," will take place from June 13-17.

Discover #Firenze4Ever 13th Edition Underwater Love, 13-17 June 2016

The Bridge of Love, conceived by architect Claudio Nardi, is a series of floating cubes connected by suspension bridges, creating a connection between the two banks of the river.

On June 13, the bridge will premiere with a gala dinner and VIP lounge, including an Underwater Love Party, all as part of World Refugee Day. From there, the space will be used for special projects and presentations, marking the first time the Arno River has been used for an exhibition space.



Luisa Via Roma's Bridge of Love rendering from Claudio Nardi Architects

In 1966, Florence's cultural institutions were in danger as flood waters rose through the city. Taking its cues from the

young people who devoted time and resources to the cause five decades ago, Luisa Via Roma is taking on today's crisis.

Raising funds for the cause, the retailer will sell the outfit worn by model Bianca Balti at the opening dinner on its Web site, giving all of the proceeds to The UN Refugee Agency. The agency's Lifeline Jordan project gives economic assistance to Syrian refugees who have found a new home in Jordan.

Since the start of the war in Syria, 4.8 million of its civilians have left home, many of whom require help to make new lives in foreign lands.

Noting the need for assistance, other brands have focused their charitable efforts on Syria.

Chime for Change, the charitable initiative founded by Gucci is beginning a campaign in Syria to raise money for the children and families impacted by the country's civil conflict.

Chime for the Children of Syria, officially launching in May, has the goal of raising \$25,000 for UNICEF to help the youngest citizens who have experienced trauma get an education as well as psychological help. As the Syrian conflict enters its fifth year, Gucci and UNICEF's efforts will help minimize its costs and restore a feeling of normalcy to children's lives ([see story](#)).

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