

LUXURY MEMO SPECIAL REPORTS

Cities of luxury: Milan – Luxury Memo special report

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Givenchy's Milan store has morphed into an apartment. Image courtesy of Givenchy

By NANCY BUCKLEY

Described as a global capital for fashion and design, Milan is one city often synonymous with luxury.

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Milan is the second-most populous city in Italy and is home to the national stock exchange and numerous fashion houses and designers, such as Valentino, Versace, Bottega Veneta, Prada and Dolce & Gabbana. The industries, brands and artists associated with the Italian city create a culture that draws millions each year.

"Milan continues to be among the key destination cities for luxury shopping," said Luana Carcano, professor of luxury business and management at **Bocconi University**, Milan. "It keeps attracting a significant number of tourists, professionals and business people."

Top 5 trends in Milan

- **Via Montenapoleone**

The fourth-most expensive street in the world, and the second-most expensive one in Europe, with an average rent of \$1,433 per square foot, the famed street is the place to be seen as a luxury brand.

- **Milan Fashion Week**

Many cities have fashion weeks, but they are often second to the one in Milan. The top luxury brands not only showcase their styles in Milan, but also host events and pop-ups throughout the week.

- **Milan pride**

Milan is the hometown to several luxury brands, including Miu Miu, Versace and Dolce & Gabbana. These brands often pay homage to their roots, but other brands also honor the city through campaigns and events.

- **Store openings**

Milan is a center for luxury. Brands from all over the world want to be seen in the city. For example, Este Lauder chose Milan for its first European store. In addition, other European brands have been opening up shop

in the city.

- **Art**

Milan hosts renowned art works of previous centuries, so it is logical that houses align their brands with the art of the city and country.

Weeks of Milan

Design week in Milan, or Salone del Mobile, is an extraordinary event that hosts more than 1,800 exhibitors at the International Furnishings Accessories Exhibition. The 2018 event had more than 430,000 attendees in the six days, representing 188 countries.

The exhibitors represented 34 countries and offered a wide array of options in the design world.



Milan Design Week sees eclectic designs from brands both within the traditional furniture sector and without. Image credit: Loewe

Throughout the week, luxury brands and design firms showed off some of their most innovative new designs. Brands such as Bentley, Loewe, Marni, Fornasetti and Max Mara had some major new design works at the weeklong fair.

Since Salone del Mobile's launch in 1961 as a small fair focused on Italian furniture, the event has grown to be a global phenomenon with major brands from around the world gathering in Milan to showcase their designs. The show is a centerpiece of Milan Design Week, which sees a plethora of launches, parties and events.



Comma by Pistacchi Design was on view during SaloneSatellite x Rinascente's design supermarket. Image credit: Pistacchi Design

For example, Spanish luxury brand Loewe brought a new collection of blankets, tapestries and tote bags to Salone del Mobile, exploring a wealth of textile production materials and techniques from around the world ([see story](#)).

Another famed event in Milan is Fashion Week. As one of the four major fashion capitals, Milan has a reputation for being one of the hubs of new design and talents.



Brunello Cucinelli sits with models at Milan Fashion Week for his brand's fall/winter 2018 presentation. Image credit: Brunello Cucinelli

However, Milan also has the reputation of being the least diverse fashion week. New York, London and Paris all have a nonwhite representation of models of at least 30 percent, whereas Milan in 2018 fell at 27.1 percent non-white models.

Over the last decade, there has been a concerted effort in the luxury business to be more inclusive in terms of sex and gender, race, nationality or body type. Nonetheless the luxury business, as with the world itself, still has a long way to go to fully remove many of the institutional and ingrained barriers that have prevented women and minorities from excelling for so long ([see story](#)).

Grand opening

Remodels, pop-ups and new stores are common in all luxury hubs. Milan saw Givenchy welcome consumers "home" as creative director Clare Waight Keller's first collections for the house hit stores.

To fete the retail arrival of its spring/summer 2018 designs, the brand remodeled parts of its Milan store on Via Sant'Andrea into a Parisian townhouse, debuting the collection three weeks ahead of the global launch. As the brand shifted to a new creative direction, the bricks-and-mortar environment played a major role in facilitating this change.



Givenchy Beauty's Live Irresistible Blossom Crush campaign. Image credit: Givenchy Beauty

In honor of the new talent at the head of the label, Givenchy looked back to its beginnings.

The main entrance of Givenchy's Milan store was given a wrought-iron gate, reminiscent of the brand's original home at 3 Avenue George V, where Hubert de Givenchy founded his house. Inside, Givenchy has decorated a space to resemble a Parisian townhouse, which the brand says evokes Ms. Keller's "private home."

Completing this concept, merchandise was displayed as if casually placed by an owner. For instance, a handbag rested on an armchair and a dress was draped over a sofa ([see story](#)).

Another opening was seen with French fashion house Balmain's first Italian flagship in Milan, bringing touches of the label's Parisian hometown to Via Montenapoleone.

The 3,000-square-foot boutique features a new store concept for Balmain, which will be used as the basis for future openings. Surrounding the opening, Balmain encouraged shoppers to further immerse themselves in its universe through a virtual reality experience.



Balmain's store on Milan's Via Montenapoleone. Image courtesy of Balmain

As with other Balmain boutiques, this flagship channels the house's history. For instance, the brand's Mayfair location in London is designed to resemble an imagined pied-terre for founder Pierre Balmain.

In Milan, the design is centered on the brand's Parisian heritage. The resulting store concept divides the sales floor into a series of connected rooms that recreate the feeling of a Parisian apartment, modeled after a library or bedroom ([see story](#)).

"Brands are also enhancing their customer experience in their stores mastering the different touchpoints throughout the customer's journey with the goal to create inspirational and personalized experiences," Bocconi's Ms. Carcano said. "The omnichannel approach, combining digital and physical, is now quite well-established."

Moncler opened in its home city on Via Montenapoleone. The largest store for the brand, the boutique is four floors.



Moncler x Poldo Dog Couture's Mondog collection. Image credit: Moncler

Este Lauder opened on Via Dante. The store is 40-square-meters and is the brand's first European store. The store is equipped with the brand's augmented reality application YouCam via iPads that allow for consumers to see new makeup trends.

"Flagship stores are becoming your own place when you are shopping with dedicated exclusive events, exhibitions with artists that tailor selected items, changing rooms with your name and your favorite drink, music and your signature maison fragrances; products that deliver not only a use and aesthetic, but an experience and a vision/dream," said Monica Cannalire, national director and head of retail agency Italy, [JLL](#).

Milan pride

As the home to companies such as Etro, Rinascente, Mia Miu, Versace and Dolce & Gabbana, Milan certainly has a lot to be proud of, and these companies often honor their home in campaigns and events.

For example, Italian retailer Rinascente demonstrated how its store fits within Milan's fashionable fabric in an effort promoting local landmarks.



Comma by Pistacchi Design will be on view during SaloneSatellite x La Rinascente's design supermarket. Image credit: Pistacchi Design

Rinascente's The District was a Milan-themed effort that underscored how the Italian city is world renowned for fashion and style, a notoriety ideal for a department store selling high-end apparel and accessories. Department stores are de facto landmarks in many cities around the globe and rely heavily on foreign visitors' foot traffic as much as they do local consumers ([see story](#)).

Another Italian apparel and accessories brand, Giorgio Armani, weaved together art, sport and fashion in a short film that showed its basketball-themed museum exhibit come to life.



Giorgio Armani campaign. Image credit: Giorgio Armani

The Italian brand celebrates its Milan heritage in a multitude of ways, including raising support for the Special Olympics. Armani's short featured Milan basketball team Olimpia Milano art pieces coming to life to play a late night game at the designer's museum in the city, as a part of its sponsorship ([see story](#)).

Continuing the Milan-themed campaign, Italian fashion label Etro explored its hometown in an advertising effort that spoke to its past and present.

The brand's spring/summer 2018 campaign captured models at some of the city's key places. As the house turns 50, Etro honored its heritage with a look at Milan's characters and culture.

Etro's campaign takes place in various spots around Milan, including indoor garden Vivaio Riva and Fercioni Tattoo Studio ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Italian fashion label Dolce & Gabbana created a dedicated microsite to house information and multimedia about its 10-year partnership with soccer team A.C. Milan to stoke traffic from the team's fans.



Dolce & Gabbana SS 2018 menswear fashion show in Milan; Image credit: Dolce & Gabbana

The microsite features a photo series of members of the team wearing the clothing the fashion brand designed for the club, as well as interviews with players. By creating exclusive online content featuring sports stars, Dolce & Gabbana will be able to increase brand awareness among sports aficionados ([see story](#)).

Italian menswear label Caruso also made the case for Italian luxury's supremacy in a short film set in Milan.

The second episode of its "The Good Italian" series sees the return of the exacting prince introduced in the first edition, documenting his trip to Milan from his country estate in Soragna, Italy. Throughout, Caruso makes parallels between the art of food and fashion as the prince prepares for an important dinner ([see story](#)).

"[Consumers] are attracted by the vibrant fashion and luxury retail landscape and by the unique opportunity to live memorable experiences in the home flagship stores of major Italian brands," Ms. Carcano said. "Therefore brands are investing in renovating their existing store network, expanding their existing stores in dimensions, when feasible."

Best practices for brand marketing in Milan

- Luan Carcano, professor at Bocconi University
 - "Casual style is on the rise in the offerings of major luxury brands. Walking down Montenapoleone street, almost all of them showcase sneakers in their store windows. Collaborations between luxury brands and streetwear brands and artists are stimulating the trends, satisfying the request of newness while contaminating the seriousness of the word of luxury with fun. The casual style creates coolness around brands with long heritage and traditions."
 - "Brand building activities based on experiential, in addition to in-store shopping experiences [are effective]. Experimenting with a combination of luxury experiences such as caf, restaurants or spa, sometimes inside a branded hotel with luxury goods gives brands the boost to create a one-of-a-kind experience for customers while differentiating themselves in a crowded retail environment."
 - "Engaging customers, mainly but not only millenials and Generation Z, in their customer's journey through technology, in new and exciting ways [is key]. Not only digital engagement but also in-store cutting-edge technologies to elevate the shopping experience while keeping the one-to-one personalized approach of human interactions."
- Monica Cannalire, national director and head of retail agency Italy, JLL
 - "I recently had a conversation with several Italian luxury brands about online retailing and they all explained that their online customer care, as well as their phone customer service, is becoming even more of a priority. They have company employees, who are very well trained in the different areas of the business in the company and the in's-and-outs of physical stores, before being assigned to luxury online purchase customer services. Delivering an extremely high standard is a top priority, and passing on the same exclusive feeling that a customer would get in person. Additionally, the use of their social media in their company branding continues to be a top priority."
- Doug Gollan, editor in chief of [DG Amazing Experiences](#) and [PrivateJetCardComparisons.com](#)
 - "The trend in Milan for luxury travel is the same as most places: experience, experience, experience. So it could be a day excursion driving an exotic car to a Michelin restaurant in the countryside where they are

waiting for you with a private lunch in the garden, or getting behind the scenes with designers at a major fashion house. It's also popular to combine a few days in a lake resort with a stay in Milan."

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