

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Milan Fashion Week shows supports for China amid COVID-19

February 27, 2020



*Unfortunately, COVID-19 is starting to breed anti-Chinese sentiments around the world. But Milan Fashion Week is standing out by combating them while celebrating Chinese culture. Image credit: Tamsin Smith*

By **Tamsin Smith**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

In an attempt to stop **COVID-19** from spreading further, governments around the world have imposed travel restrictions, which means that dozens of Chinese brands, editors, buyers and influencers will not be able to attend 2020's **Fall Fashion Weeks**.

As panic surrounding the virus continues to spread, cross-cultural relations have started to become strained, and many news reports have warned about rising levels of anti-Chinese discrimination.

With the hope of providing an antidote for travel bans and prejudice, **Milan** is standing apart from its fellow Fashion Weeks by launching an initiative called "China We Are With You" to help support the people of China and their fashion world.

"The Fashion World needs to build bridges, not walls," said Carlo Capasa, chairman of the nonprofit, Camera Nazionale Della Moda Italiana (a.k.a. The National Chamber of Italian Fashion), to *Jing Daily* at the initiative's campaign launch on Feb. 18.

"The initiative is a message to all of our Chinese friends the buyers, designers, consumers," he said. "We want to say that we are with them because it is a very difficult moment in history. We want to support the human side of the crisis, with a supportive and loving message."

The Italian Camera Della Moda kicked off Milan Fashion Week on Tuesday, Feb. 25 with scheduled performances dedicated to their Chinese peers. This included an emotional dance produced by the hot, young choreographer Laccio with a routine inspired by Chinese martial arts that featured male performers wearing red gloves.

As expected, the event also included a runway show one from top emerging Chinese designer Han Wen which was live-streamed to China via **Tencent's** media channels.

Originally from Hainan province, Han Wen is now based in New York and, therefore, was able to attend Milan Fashion Week.

The event has long been a popular stomping ground for Chinese designers and, in the past, Chinese buyers represented up to 35 percent of its attendees.

Eight other Chinese brands were chosen to be part of the "China We Are With You" initiative a list that includes Emma Sweet, Xun Ruo, Leaf Xia, Zijue, Dot Minute, Shengyi Liu and Pinhui Zhao.

Although they are physically unable to be in Milan, these **Chinese brands** will still be "present" because Milan Fashion Week's Fashion Hub will "virtually host" them by displaying highlights from the designers' collections throughout the week.

The hub will even feature large flat screens alongside their creations to show the designers telling their stories and explaining their brand philosophies.

Milan Fashion Week has also launched an official Weibo account where it will share moments from Fashion Week via daily uploaded short videos.

**Leaf Xia**, one of the designers virtually showing at the Fashion Hub, told *Jing Daily* that she believes she has a responsibility as a Chinese designer to support her nation during this difficult time.

"I think it is a great event to participate in," she said, "and as a young designer, I do have my own voice and the ability to support my country and to support fashion in China now."

Ms. Leaf, who hopes to encourage the Chinese people with her vibrant and playful designs, added that her "design philosophy is to spread love and positive energy to the world with the use of vivid colors and prints."

According to Mr. Capasa, Ms. Leaf's message of global unity and positivity is what he also hopes to spread via the "China We Are With You" initiative.

"Designer **Han Wen** is from China, has studied in London, lives in New York, and is here tonight in Milan," he said. "The [global] fashion world needs to remain united in this way and supportive of all of our friends, wherever they might be."

To further prove this point, Milan's Fashion Hub is also featuring noteworthy emerging designers from three other locations around the world: Italy, Hungary and Africa.

Mr. Capasa explains that alongside positivity and support, Camera Della Moda also wants to provide Chinese people with the opportunity to take part in the excitement of Fashion Week, despite the current quarantines in China.

"This is why we are live-streaming our Fashion Shows with **Tencent** and uploading interviews, backstage content, and presentations on **Weibo**," he said. "We really want to bring the experience of Milan Fashion Week to everyone who couldn't come join us this time."

CHINESE CONSUMERS have already suggested that they are pleased with Milan's response to the crisis and are hoping it will promote further acceptance elsewhere.

At nearby Fidenza Village, which is home to more than 120 designer boutiques, stores are used to Chinese buyers being their top clients. But thus far in 2020, only a few small groups of Chinese tourists have visited.

"We were already in Europe visiting my daughter who is a fashion student here before the virus hit," said Jenny Wang, a Chinese shopper. "It has been quite difficult to travel around, but here and in Milan, we haven't felt people staring at us in the same way everyone has been very welcoming."

"We don't feel judged for being Chinese and not wearing a mask," she said. "In fact, people seem pleased to see us."

*Published with permission from **Jing Daily**. Edited for clarity and style.*