Elsewhere in Milan: Tod’s, Marcelo Burlon, Doucal’s, Woolrich, Villa Eugenie and Moorer

By Godfrey Deeny - 22 June 2022

Milan has become the most powerful magnet for young talent and millennium dreamers in Europe, and the clothes in the Italian menswear season reflected that new found belief and boldness.

In a word, the Milan menswear season was the most bustling and brilliant in the past decade. We caught up with six diverse brands that all heralded something new and unexpected.

Tod’s: An earthy new sensibility

Walter Chiapponi’s latest collection for Tod’s felt almost as if it had sprung from the earth of Italy with its hues of terracotta, sand and soil.

A sense heightened by a video projection at Tod’s presentation this weekend, which featured a gang of handsome youth shot as they wandered around a rural corner of the Apennines, finally gathering within a giant rust-colored cylinder.
“It’s not a narrative, but more a sentiment of hope. A collection with a younger silhouette, freed more from the body. Where the video represents the idea of a personal moment lived together,” explained Walter before a board of his multiple looks.

Presented, as is the tradition for Tod’s, in the garden of Villa Necchi, a masterly modernist mansion in central Milan, where there were plenty of new takes on the brand’s signature codes.

Parkas and wind-cheaters composed with leather inlays; a great petrol blue workerist cotton jacket; trench-coats constructed in rubberized cotton; and biker jacket and parkas jazzed up with rubber studs.

In among them, a new take on the house’s iconic Gommino entitled the ‘Bubble’, a softer shaped evolution of the moccasin finished with a metal T Timeless buckle and a contrasting studs on the sole in bright summery colors.

Softer tote bags and backpacks in sporty ethnic fabrics looked just right for a fun weekend getaway. Everything looking very Italian, and managed to inject a neat dosage of easy modernism into practical clothes.

Marcelo Burlon: Tenth anniversary, newfound respect

Fashion likes few things more than a good anniversary and the great and the good gathered Saturday evening to fete Marcelo Burlon, whose brand County of Milan celebrated its tenth anniversary.
Originally a DJ, Marcelo has always loved a large space to stage his shows, and few could be bigger than his latest location, the Velodromo Vigorelli, a giant cycling track. A space so large it contained an American football field within it. No wonder the Beatles, Led Zeppelin and The Clash were able to play there.

County of Milan will always be about clubbing with a twist. And Burlon’s Spring 2023 ideas had plenty of the latter – from the broken-pattern check judo suits in faded pink and white hoodies covered with graphic sketches of rib cages, to patchwork light wool sweaters in sorbet hues cut off to expose acres of tummy and three-piece fantasy paisley suits made with Nehru jackets.

There was a time when crueler critics were mean to Marcelo for being a DJ far more than a designer. But this weekend, many of them should eat their words. This was a fine collection with a fresh vision that fully merited the huge cheer it earned Burlon at its finale.

Doucal’s: Luxurious flexibility
One brand very much on the move is Doucal’s, which opened a spanking new showroom in one of Milan’s finest buildings on Saturday, and revealed some great new men’s shoes.

Located at 5 via Gesù, in Palazzo Bagatti Valsecchi, with windows looking down on Milan’s most famous hotel, the Four Seasons, and on the Versace family home.

At the top-end of the product range, perfectly made loafers composed of Louisiana alligator in hues of steely blue and flint blue. Presented under a painted wooden ceiling of Renaissance nobility, the sort one only ever sees in Italy.

Another great thing about Doucal’s is how it also manages to link uber high-end gents shoes, with elements of skateboarding. Close by, one finds a cool series of sneakers, in soft muted hues of mustard and putty. With soft interiors making them ideal for skating or just leisurely strolls.

“And you can do this with them,” smiled Gianni Giannini, creative director and CEO, as well as son of founder Mario Giannini, as he twisted the skater sneakers almost into a knot.

Similar flexibility was evident in burnished intréccio leather loafers and shoes; or smart, light-weight suede monks.

Looking ahead, Doucal’s, a family-owned brand based in Le Marche, Italy’s key footwear region, is predicting strong double-digit growth this year, from its annual turnover of 20 million euros.

“Our future is looking very rosy,” beams Giannini, dressed in a perfectly cut ecru whip-chord Lardini suit anchored by a pair of Doucal’s alligator loafers.

Woolrich: Embracing the great outdoors

Woolrich is a venerable American brand, that’s been revived by Italians based in Bologna; and now guided creatively in menswear by a Dutchman, but it’s heart will always be in the great outdoors, though in the finest of new materials.
“It’s about elevating the product, making it lighter and a little more fun but always real,” explained creative director Mark van Beek in a tour spring 2023.

A meeting of noble fabrics – Tuscan-made plaids or super 100 fine wool – with technical-like linens and cottons supported by fine membranes. All mirroring the mood-board, which featured photos of the Woolrich Lodge, located at Zavikon Island, on a river border of America and Canada, just east of Lake Ontario. One T-Shirt featured the old world lakeside speedboats that ferry you to the lodge.

That frontier spirit given a fresh twist by subtly faded sweatshirts, pants and tops in jersey. Or in a great series of matelassé iconic check shirt/jackets that were cool and hyper practical. Multiple looks that can be worn in an urban context of out on a trail like the Pennsylvania Walk, the state where Woolrich was born.

Finished with a new minimalist sheep model, this was a clever expression of an iconic brand retooling for the global consumer, while keeping its American roots.

Villa Eugenie: Coolest cocktail in town

Milan’s coolest cocktail party was to celebrate the opening of the Milan office of Villa Eugenie, the highly respected production company helmed by Etienne Russo, which produces shows of the caliber or Dior Homme and Dries Van Noten.
A gaggle of designers and men and ladies about town - Alessandro Dell’Acqua, Giorgio Guidotti and Anna dello Russo – showed up to imbibe bio-wine and strong cocktails like a gin bash.

“It’s an important year for Villa Eugenie, our 30th anniversary. So, it feels right to open a new office in Milan. I feel there is a great new wave of creativity here now which is so inspiring. Milan is bubbling at the moment,” enthused Russo, a Belgian of Italian origin.

Located inside a storied south Milan palazzo, artfully restored to leave its faintly decayed frescoes and moldings contrasted with mid-century Italian furniture and works of conceptual art.

While there are occasional debates about Etienne’s choice of footwear, one can only admire his ability to blend haute-gamme sophisticated with cool and quirkiness. Meaning, if any of the events he produces in Italy look as good as his Milan office, his clients should be very happy.

Luca Larenza

Italy will always be a unique source when it comes to knitwear, and one brand developing some great new ideas in this sector is Luca Larenza.
In a charming piece of staging, Luca had eight handsome young guys pose at a café on via Lecco, located in the most happening multi-cultural corner of bustling Milan, the four blocks north of the Giardini Pubblici.

Showing blends of silk, linen and cotton to create super airy, semi-transparent striped soft collar polo shirts; striped tops and tanks. He paired these with wide, full pants in hemp and linen with big deep side patch pockets; contrast by shorts with tiny patch pockets.

“The key for me is lightness and optimism. We have to be positive about the future,” smiled Larenza, a Neapolitan who founded his brand in Milan. He now sells on the giant e-tailer Zalando, and next week will be in Paris showing in a Marais showroom.

Moorer: Lake-side cool
Italy is all about its regions, and their considerable diversity – well expressed by Moorer, a brand born on the shores of crystal clear Lake Garda, just north of Verona.

A lakeside marque with a very particular take on outerwear, seen in its latest collection presented in Milan this weekend.

Their big idea was fusing practical and stylish weekend clothes with fine and novel materials. Case in point, a great series of goose down jackets made of Japanese denim wade with contrasting bright nylon panels. Many finished with interior lining featuring images of elegant speedboats and villages on the giant Alpine lake.

Italians referencing their own little environment, even as they think globally – the leitmotif of this season.

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