

Beat: Lifestyle

MILAN-FASHION WEEK OPENS WITH GUCCI DEBUT

AFTER NY AND LONDON ITS MILANS TURN

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USPA NEWS - After New York and London, it is now Milan's turn to get into the swing of fashion week as leading Italian fashion houses prepare to debut their women's fall-winter 2015-2016 collections from Wednesday through Monday.

And if London felt comparatively warm after the sub-zero temperatures of New York, with the 1960s and 1970s consistently rehashed by designers, the fashion pack is now eagerly anticipating how hot Alessandro Michele's debut at Gucci will be Wednesday in Milan. Michele's first foray into women's wear since being appointed creative director at the megabrand last month follows the abrupt departure of his predecessor Frida Giannini just a week before the presentation on January 19 of the men's wear collection. Giannini's departure after 10 years at the helm, which has been linked with falling sales, was supposed to follow the Milan women's wear shows this week.

Michele, a former head accessories designer at Gucci, redesigned the entire men's wear lineup in just five days after Giannini's resignation - showcasing a 1970s-inspired blurred gender divide and a fresh take on the subcultural music scene that was a far cry from Gucci's customary jet-set glitz. The collection received a standing ovation from the front row. Wednesday's debut will reveal just how much of the nonconformist vibe seen in men's wear - an echo of the Hedi Slimane take on Saint Laurent that has transformed the French house - will be part of the next Gucci incarnation.

Other leading fashion houses presenting their fall-winter collections on Wednesday will include Luisa Beccaria, Alberta Ferretti, Alessandro Dell'Acqua's label N. 21, as well as up-and-coming fashion stars Fausto Puglisi, Francesco Scognamiglio and Stella Jean. Meanwhile, data released on the eve of the Milan shows by Mediobanca's research and development department revealed that Italy's fashion sector, spearheaded by luxury clothing groups, is doing better than industry as a whole, with turnover growing by 2 to 3% in 2014 and expected to be stable this year.

The report based on a market consensus survey found that the fashion system is "solid and doing well, even if it slowed down a bit in recent years".

Top luxury groups recorded a 43.8% growth worth 14.4 billion led by Prada, which recorded the highest growth rate in 2013 - up 129.8% from 2009 with sales worth 3.6 billion euros - ahead of Armani with 2.2 billion and Benetton with 1.6 billion.

Italy's Gucci and Bottega Veneta, owned by French luxury goods group Kering, together totalled a turnover worth 4.6 billion euros.

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