



## **The summer season of international fashion kicked off in Florence, with Pitti Uomo and Pitti W. Confidence in investors and trendsetters. New dates starting in 2009.**

The 74<sup>th</sup> edition of Pitti Uomo and the second edition of Pitti W (Florence, 18-21 June 2008) "ended in a climate of positive energy," noted Raffaello Napoleone, the Managing Director of Pitti Immagine. "It launched signals of dynamism and innovation to the international fashion market, which is currently undergoing a difficult phase in terms of the larger macro-economic variables but also a fertile evolution in terms of service, design, and production, buying methods, as well as the psychological and cultural approach." Just browsing through the articles of the Italian and international publications issued during the opening days of the shows revealed the satisfaction of the exhibitors, in terms of the opportunities to exchange and compare their collections (more than 900 in all), the high quality and origin of buyers with whom they had business contacts, and the general mood surrounding the 200 fashion events that played out in Fortezza da Basso, Dogana, Palaffari and the entire city of Florence, with a special penchant for its most beautiful gardens.

Closing figures report a total of 20,565 buyers at Pitti Uomo this year – 7,827 of them from abroad (accounting for 38% of the total) – nearly in line with the levels recorded at the most recent summer edition (there were just over 21,000 buyers in June 2007). There were also more than 35,000 visitors and in its four opening days, 80,000 movements recorded between the three exhibition halls. The Italian market is holding well, with 12,738 buyers paying a visit (unchanged on last year's edition), while the number of foreign buyers was down slightly. "In nearly the entire developed world," noted Napoleone, "the number of retail stores has fallen and we are noticing a strong concentration in distribution. It is physiological. We only get partial information from exhibitors, clearly, but according to our statistics, the volumes of trade realized in the exhibition is growing steadily."

Taking a closer look at the countries, we see growth in Germany, France and China, compensating for the expected declines in Great Britain, the United States and Japan, where the strong Euro and the contraction in domestic spending are two major problems. The figures in Russia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal and Greece were generally stable, but the summer proved to be a less interesting season for Spanish buyers. The Turkish market is also doing less than brilliantly, suffering from an unfavourable spring economic trend. The shows attracted the attention of buyers from the new markets, among which the Asian former Soviet Union republics, currently profiting from their soaring oil revenues. In the top sixteen country rankings are Germany (429 retail stores vs 424 in June 2007), Japan (336 vs 370), Spain (278 vs 321), Great Britain (222 vs 265), the Netherlands (221 vs 210), France (194 vs 189), Turkey (152 vs 170), Greece (157 vs 163), Switzerland (145 vs 141), South Korea (91 vs 126), Belgium (113 vs 130), China (89 vs 78), Austria (99 vs 98), the United States (96 vs 123), Russia (107 vs 99) and Portugal (79 vs 81).

It was not as easy to make comparisons for the second edition of Pitti W (the first edition was last January) but more than four thousand buyers were recorded, more than 25% of whom from abroad, representing the finest boutiques and some of the leading department and specialty stores in the world. "These are very positive figures which shore up our project and lead us to seriously reflect on new investments in the women's segment," noted Napoleone.

In 2009, Pitti Immagine Uomo and Pitti W will be held a day early, from 13 to 16 January (winter edition) and 16 to 19 June (summer edition): in both cases, it is the first time that the event is being held only on weekdays, from Tuesday to Friday.

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"Every time the calendar has brought Pitti Uomo too close to the tail end of the Christmas holidays, we moved it up a week," noted Raffaello Napoleone, "so this is really nothing new. It is true that the times of the fashion market have shifted forward compared with the past and this is why we have worked to create a calendar that would account for different needs and circumstances. We've done this by scheduling our exhibitions at the opening of the international season, coordinating closely with the Milanese events to ensure easy visiting for sector professionals and the media. This was the reason for moving the opening day to Tuesday, a change that many exhibitors and buyers had been requesting for some time," continued Napoleone. "Furthermore, the summer dates meet the need to introduce the collections in time, which is also the reason for the general revision made to the international calendar."

**Below are the opinions of three buyers, gathered over the past few days at Pitti Uomo and Pitti W.**

The first interviewee is Konstantin Andricopoulos, development director of Bosco dei Ciliegi, an icon of high quality buying in Moscow: "The mood at Pitti Uomo has changed. A breath of fresh air has found its way to Fortezza da Basso and we are noticing this in particular in the classic men's sector. While Pitti Uomo was once essentially a place to make contacts and establish new relationships, there is a new focus now on product research. In terms of the structure, colours, materials and quality. Fashion made by the industry is reacting to the crisis with these new contents, which at Pitti Uomo emerge forcefully. Fashion has begun to create desire again, removed from the extremism of the designers."

The second interviewee is Nelson Chan, head of merchandising for The Swank Shop, the foremost fashion boutique in Hong Kong. "This is a vital, energetic edition. Throughout the show, I noticed freshness and the perfect atmosphere for finding new and interesting proposals even in the midst of such a large number of collections. I found an extremely interesting selection of brands in the Rooms section, which is very representative of fashion research today. I also gathered very positive opinions on the collections of Pitti W. If you want to have a 360° overview of men's fashion, you have to come here. This is the starting point to continue research at the fashion shows of Milan, Paris and London. This is where we can see what direction fashion is taking and I feel that Florence is an ideal setting to get a handle on the trends."

The third interviewee is an Italian, Massimiliano Alessandrelli, who owns a boutique in Perugia. "Pitti Uomo reconstructs a global panorama on the contents of the season and does so through a very segmented but easy to read offer. I found a number of interesting ideas in the exhibition sections dedicated to emerging designers. I would like to see these more extensive and extreme, perhaps through initiatives such as the UPS Design & Fashion Contest, which brings to the fore the next generation of designers. I would also like to see more events entirely dedicated to young designers, besides the great names such as Diane von Furstenberg or Walter Van Beirendonck. Scouting by an institution such as Pitti Uomo helps contribute to the growth of new labels and new talents, which can give new youth to contemporary fashion, without falling prey to the facile equation of young people and street style."

Finally, at the UPS Fashion & Design Contest 2008, after the first prize to Kristian Guerra of the IUAV University in Venice, the popular vote of visitors to Pitti Uomo voted *Charlie Brown* by Nicoletta Baudino and Filippo Bretoni (Faculty of Architecture – University of Florence) as the best design – a leisure sail boat with a hybrid sailing-motor design.

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