

FASHION / TEXTILES

Textile Makers at Milano Unica Were Upbeat, Banking on Precious Fibers, Deconstructed Tailoring for Fall 2025

The three-day textile trade show broke attendance records, signaling the market's dynamism despite economic headwinds.

By **MARTINO CARRERA, ANDREA ONATE**
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The scene at the 39th edition of the Milano Unica textile trade show in Milan. COURTESY OF MILANO UNICA

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MILAN – Despite economic headwinds and a **global slowdown** in luxury and fashion sales, **exhibitors at the Milano Unica** textile show were optimistic, albeit cautious, about making predictions for 2024, which is expected to be marked by consolidation rather than growth after two years of strong performances.

The three-day fair, which closed Thursday, displayed the fall 2025 collections of about 700 exhibitors, an 18 percent increase compared to July 2023. With 5,541 buyers attending the **trade show**, up 19 percent compared to the same edition last year, the summer edition broke records.

Simone Canclini, the newly appointed president of **Milano Unica**, characterized the event's success as a result of favoring quality and innovation and an attention to **sustainability**, with a careful selection of exhibiting brands that must produce in Europe to be selected.

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“Attendees know that they can find completely different products at **Milano Unica** compared to other trade shows,” Canclini said.

The 2024 Outlook Is Anyone's Guess

Following a downturn in sales that began in the fourth quarter and stretched into the first months of 2024, the industry is trying to navigate uncertainties, looking forward to a rebound.

“The slowdown is apparent and it's hard to predict how long it will last, but I believe it is crucial for companies to work thoroughly to grasp the opportunity of a rebound when that happens,” said Canclini.

Franco Mantero, president of the Mantero silk specialist based in Como, Italy, ed that sentiment. “Now it's important to invest in winning paths from a creative point of view such as craftsmanship, technology, **sustainability**, combining

them with very high research into materials and technology without forgetting about environmental sustainability issues,” he said. The company’s sales in 2023 jumped 22.6 percent to more than 101 million euros.



Mantero fabrics for fall 2025. COURTESY OF MANTERO

According to figures provided by the association Sistema Moda Italia, in the first three months of 2024 exports of Italian **textiles** dropped 16.9 percent to 772 million euros compared with the same period in 2023. The negative performance echoes figures for 2023 when a weaker second half impacted the sector’s year-end revenues, down 3.1 percent versus 2022 to 7.7 billion euros.

Exports to China and Hong Kong went counter-trend in the first quarter, inching up 4.6 and 7.4 percent, respectively. “We have seen European markets slow down while America and the Far East perform very well,” said Vasily Piacenza, co-chief executive officer of the newly founded Piacenza Group, which comprises Lanificio Fratelli Piacenza, Piacenza 1733, Lanificio Piemontese, Lanificio F.lli Cerruti dal 1881, Arte Tessile and Filatura Cardata Lanefil Srl, the latter acquired at the end of 2023.

“The market is clearly characterized by a chiaroscuro performance,” said Alessandro Barberis Canonico, CEO of the Vitale Barberis Canonico woolen mill, adding that he sees a rebound on the horizon as brands and retailers are starting to whittle down overstock.



Vitale Barberis Canonico's Saxon Club collection for fall 2025. COURTESY OF VITALE BARBERIS CANONICO

“We are pretty confident for the second half of the year when we expect a swifter rebound,” echoed Stefano Albini, CEO of cotton specialist Albini Group. He expects to be able to limit any decline in revenue to under 5 percent in year-end figures, adding that the downturn in the second half last year provides an easier comparison.

Maglificio Maggia also expects to post sales between 18 million and 20 million euros this year, flat compared with 2023 turnover, ditto for Manteco, although it bulked up in size through the acquisition of the Casentino Lane spinning facility. “It represents a unique place for biodiversity, and it allows us to have the most precious fibers directly from there,” said Marco Mantellassi, the wool mill’s CEO.

An expected 20 percent decrease in 2024 revenues is not dampening the mood of Ercole Botto Poala, CEO of the Reda woolen mill, who on the first day of the **trade show** said the company had 30 percent more appointments than last season. “The outlook for 2024 is complex and I think the first half of next year will also experience a spotty rebound,” he said.

Overall, executives underscored that the luxury slowdown coincides with a redefinition of fashion consumption habits, which textile makers must embrace and adapt to.

“The menswear market is clearly evolving,” said Botto Poala. “It’s going to look increasingly more like womenswear, driven by trends and constant evolution.”

“The company is ready to face the market challenges ahead thanks to the investments made over the past few years,” said Andrea Crespi, general manager at Eurojersey, predicting a 10 percent contraction in 2024 sales.

Eurojersey is the first Italian fashion company to obtain the Made Green in Italy certification from the Ministry of the Environment and Energetic Safety, a recently introduced validation based on the Product Environmental Footprint system, which Crespi believes could become a standard for the country’s textile industry.

Eurojersey’s Sensitive Fabrics collection for fall 2025. COURTESY OF EUROJERSEY

Reflecting consumers’ reduced confidence, willingness to spend and spending power, Crespi noted how the company has pivoted to “do better with less [resources],” as well as bank on durability, which he sees as the single most important sustainability commitment fashion companies can make.

The Fall 2025 Fabrics to Keep an Eye On

Cashmere Is Paramount

In the post-pandemic reality, buttoned-up tailoring has less of a grip on end consumers as the category skews toward unconstructed, relaxed and more casual

styles, while retaining a luxurious feel conveyed via the use of precious yarns, especially cashmere.

The latter was reinterpreted at Reda in The Goat collection comprising wardrobe builders — including pants, a sweater, a T-shirt and a baseball hat — with a relaxed and oversized fit. The fabrics were available in single-yarn and wool-blended versions, as well as in solids and patterns including Madras checks and herringbone or pinstriped.

Maglificio Maggia also homed in on the fiber with single-yarn herringbone fabrics and blazer-intended lighter and more casual options in blends with cotton and wool, dyed with a pigment print technique. At Lanificio F.lli Cerruti dal 1881, the Oxygen lineup provided a template for knitted blazers with a jersey effect in wool and cashmere.



Reda's The Goat cashmere collection for fall 2025. COURTESY OF REDA

At Manteco — whose experiential booth showcasing steps across the value chain was a hit among visitors — the Noble textile made of extra-fine premium wool and cashmere yarns spun at their Casentino Lane facility mingled with the patented Bi Gala double layer wool proved its versatility, especially for outerwear.

Blends of cashmere and silk, vicuña and silk, royal cashmere and vicuña and royal cashmere and mink stood out at Lanificio Fratelli Piacenza for their 3D structures rendered in mouliné or slub options for men's blazers and frisé and bouclé for overcoats.

At Vitale Barberis Canonico, a similar single-yarn approach resonated in the celebratory Saxon Club range dedicated to the Saxon Merino extra-fine wool worked into the Saxony fabric aimed at suiting, a worsted lightweight flannel with a mélange effect and the double Melton textile aimed at outerwear, which came in solids with a textural and thick effect.

This range, like all others in the mill's collection, came with a traceability QR code that detailed the sourcing and manufacturing steps. "It's a consumer's right to know different value chain steps, and I hope for a European Union legislation at some

point which imposes all brands to provide such information,” Barberis Canonico said.

Manteco’s Bi Gala fabric for fall 2025. COURTESY OF MANTECO

New Traceability Frontiers

To be sure, a focus on quality and sustainability certifications was paramount at the trade show, with several cross-company projects hinting at a goal of raising awareness of how the industry is making strides in traceability.

The Woolmark Company marked its 60th anniversary, unveiling at the fair a new certification, Recycled Wool, which extends its quality standards to products containing at least 20 percent recycled wool in blends with virgin raw materials.

“This move speaks to the European legislation on eco-design and the use of recycled fibers... as well as to brands’ request and the direction fashion is embracing,” said Francesco Magri, regional manager central and eastern Europe at The Woolmark Company, describing the new certification as an innovation trigger.

At Marzotto Wool Manufacturing, CEO Giorgio Todesco was upbeat about joining the Schneider Group’s Authentico verification system hinged on the

traceability of wool to guarantee a third-party audited, transparent, ethical and high-quality supply chain.

Rather than providing a new certification similar to others currently available — and thus causing a potential headache for textile firms willing to join the program — Authentico offers a single traceability “tool that covers sourcing as well as the industrial manufacturing steps,” said Laura Ros, CEO of the Schneider Group, a manufacturer of wool tops. “Its uniqueness lies in our strong bond with breeders and the territory, as well as the control of the industrial processes.”

Marzotto Wool Manufacturing is a partner in the program, which links with breeders in Australia, New Zealand and Argentina that commit to obtaining the Authentico seal of approval. Involved farmers have surpassed 1,000, with the program poised to be extended to South Africa in the near future.

“It became natural for us to push for the Authentico [wool] rather than the RWS fibers,” said Todesco. “A lot of brands are already asking for Authentico,” he added, while hoping that the number of different certifications will one day merge under a single umbrella to allow weavers to keep a single certified stock.

Linen Is a Thing for Fall

Perhaps reflecting the effects of climate change that has resulted in warmer winters, as well as fashion customers' penchant for breathable and lightweight fabrics, linen — traditionally a summer yarn — was ubiquitous at the fair, incorporated in blends with wool and cashmere to add softness to suits and overshirts.

A slub wool silk and linen blend looked particularly refined at Vitale Barberis Canonico, as did the wintry linen used in denim combinations over at Loro Piana, which mingled with cashmere denim and wool denim crafted from the superfine Australis 150s wool.



Loro Piana's fall 2025 Australis denim fabric. COURTESY OF LORO PIANA

The LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton-owned luxury house delved deep in its archives for fall 2025, trying to distill its hero textile products and repurpose them under a new light. Cue the Award cashmere collection rendered in slub and tweed versions, or the double cashmere aimed at women's outerwear presented in single fiber and wool-blended versions.

Weaving New-Gen Textiles

The ideal stage to present innovation, Milano Unica spotlighted high-tech fabric solutions.

IST Corp., the Japanese Industrial Summit Technology, unveiled the new patented, RWS-certified, 14.5-micron natural Merino wool fiber IST Platinumwool, which boasts high resistance to pilling, and wrinkle-free and odor-neutralizing qualities, in addition to avoiding wool itch. CM Tessuti is the exclusive Italian partner in charge of distribution for Europe, the U.K., and the U.S.

“We asked ourselves how to add value to the natural fiber through technology... It almost 10 years to put together all the ideas and make the perfect fiber. We worked on the cause of wool itch by manipulating the fiber's chemical composition,

enhancing dyeing properties by working on thickness. Little by little we fixed all the critical issues up to today,” said Toshiko Sakane, CEO of IST Corp.

IST Platinumwool fiber. COURTESY OF IST CORPORATION

As part of its sustainability strategy for more responsible production, Maglificio Maggia joined the joint program by Roica by Asahi Kasei and Tencel by Lenzing to unveil two new-gen **textiles** embedding the Tencel Modal and Roica V550 fibers – a stretch cashmere jersey and a stretch Milano stitch fabric. Both textiles are finished by Tintoria Finissaggio 2000.

Performancewear weaver Brugnoli and underwear specialist Maglificio Ripa have also joined the Roica and Tencel program.

Milan-based insulation company Thermore debuted its newest stretch product, called Freedom and made from 50 percent post-consumer recycled polyester. The GRS-certified stuffing is machine washable and easy-care with reduced microfiber release.



Thermore Freedom stretch product for fall 2025. COURTESY OF THERMORE

The Performance Trend Continues to Rule

At Bergamo, Italy-based Sitip, a new apparel division has been quietly established in the past two years as the company saw the potential in ready-to-wear for its polyester and nylon-based technical fabrics typically used for industrial applications. The Native-Blizzard runproof and gauzed technical fabrics boasting high thermal insulation properties and the ultrasoft microfiber Paris GZ Cosmopolitan featuring high breathability and UV protection qualities were targeted toward the activewear sector, while Busy Life Cosmopolitan, a bi-stretch, runproof fabric, was aimed at techno-sartorial casualwear.

Along the same lines, Reda debuted a collaboration with Eurojersey, aligning with the latter's offering of "smart, technical and functional gear," as Crespi characterized it. Called Techblend, the co-branded range offers fabrics bonding Reda's Active Merino wool with Eurojersey's Sensitive Fabrics for breathable and thermoregulatory suiting and outerwear.

Elsewhere in the Eurojersey collection, the versatility of the Sensitive Fabrics line is showcased across in the délavé and piqué-like polo shirts for Roberto Ricci Design, high-

performance perforated golfwear for Fila and urban outerwear for the Gap Inc.'s Athleta brand.

At Limonta, which returned to Milano Unica after a six-year absence, its apparel division presented a three-pronged collection aimed at different market segments. In the 1893 range developed and produced in Italy, blends of nylon and polyester with natural fibers such as silk and cotton were worked into inventive jacquards, while the East lineup made in China reflected the company's commitment to activewear with stretch and laminated nylons and cloth-dyed jacquards with a 3D effect. The third range, called BATM and produced in South Korea, aimed at the urban and streetwear fashion segments offering nylon and cotton blends, as well as microfibers with performance features.

A fabric from the Limonta fall 2025 collection. COURTESY OF LIMONTA

Cotton Gets Leisurely

A relaxed and leisurely feel resonated in the Albini Group's shirtmaking collection, which referenced winter resort vibes with its Madras and checkered, earthy-toned cotton and Tencel Lyocell blends, and added a laid-back attitude to business shirts with 4Flex Formula super stretch fabrics. In the Thomas Mason brand's high-end

collection, fine cotton yarns such as Sea Island and Giza 45 and 87 were blended with wool, silk and cashmere, adding extra preciousness.

A fabric from the Albini 1876 fall 2025 collection. COURTESY OF ALBINI GROUP

Over at competitor Alumo — recently acquired by Chargeur PCC — cotton was blended with cashmere in the Cashmerello fabric that came in soft pastels and checkered patterns, mingling with Supranova, a poplin cotton textile rich in stripe variations and bright colors.

A similar palette resonated in the Mantero fall 2025 collection dominated by olive green, khaki and browns, as well as scarlet red, yellow and mauve. The expansive lineup showcased the silk specialist's know-how via technical finishes, printed lace and the use of reflective pigments in fabrics that retained formality but were treated to look soft with raw cuts, bouclé, crackled and crepon effects to enhance fluidity and movement.

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