# Milan Design Week 2025 blends luxury with calls for deeper reflection and social impact



Milan Design Week 2025, a marquee event in the global design calendar, unfolded earlier this month amid a complex atmosphere marked by grandeur and critical reflection. The event, renowned for drawing thousands of visitors daily, was characterised by prominent luxury fashion houses amplifying their presence, extensive queues, and a surge of influencer activity. While the week offered moments of immersive escapism, industry insiders and attendees expressed a mixture of enthusiasm and ambivalence regarding the event's direction and its engagement with pressing global challenges.

Roddy Clarke, writing for ICON Magazine, shared his personal observations from the week, noting a prevailing tone of escapism that seemed to dominate the 2025 edition. He highlighted the challenge of navigating through the crowds and large-scale installations, questioning the event's future trajectory amid an apparent emphasis on past milestones, re-editions, and anniversary celebrations. Clarke reflected, “Where do we go from here?” indicating a sense of uncertainty about the sector’s evolution in the face of current global issues.

Jo Barnard, Founder and Creative Director of the London-based design agency Morrama, spoke candidly to ICON Magazine about the event's apparent lack of critical engagement. “I felt this year’s edition lacked reflection on what’s actually going on in our world,” she said. Barnard expressed a desire for greater acknowledgment of the climate crisis, challenges in global supply chains, and innovations in materials and technology. Instead, she felt the atmosphere resembled “hype culture” more akin to a theme park experience, characterised by long queues and social media documentation rather than genuine exhilaration.

Despite these critiques, both Clarke and Barnard recognised positive elements within the week. Clarke pointed to engaging installations such as Marimekko and Aesop’s sensorial experience, as well as the theatrical exhibition by Range Rover and NUOVA. Barnard appreciated the connections and conversations fostered during the event, especially those that transcended local perspectives and encouraged passionate, outspoken discussions within the broader design community. She stated, “Meeting a diverse range of people outside our London bubble in a city that embraces Italy’s design culture... allows for real engagement with other designers.”

At the House of Switzerland Milano, a collective exhibition organised by Pro Helvetia and Presence Switzerland, substantial preparatory effort earlier in the year paid dividends. Marie Mayoly, co-Creative Director of the House of Switzerland Milano and Head of International Platforms for Design at Pro Helvetia, explained that months of nurturing discussions, securing industry meetings, and training designers in pitching their projects helped attract an audience aligned with the exhibition's goals. The collective show attracted 23,522 visitors and showcased a range of projects focused on collaboration and social impact.

Highlights included a ceramic tableware collection created by dversa studio in collaboration with individuals facing challenges with conventional tableware, explorations of queer history’s intersection with architecture, and investigations into gender bias in workwear. Mayoly described the project as “a catalyst and safe space for ideas to flourish, connections to be made and trust to be built,” emphasising the importance of patience and collaborative development in design.

Morrama further contributed to fostering community during the event by launching the inaugural OOO Run Club, an initiative in partnership with running lifestyle brand Saucony and communications agency TDC PR. This offered industry participants an alternative to traditional exhibition spaces through a 5km run led by Milan’s Crusher Running Club, facilitating authentic connections in a more relaxed setting.

Other notable exhibitions included Dropcity’s ‘Prison Times’, which examined the spatial dynamics of penal environments; a collaboration between industrial design studio BLOND and New York grooming brand Harry’s that explored artificial intelligence's role in design; and Casa Cork, an immersive installation highlighting the regenerative properties of cork, created by Rockwell Group and Corticeira Amorim alongside a student competition curated with the Cork Collective.

Barnard noted a notable shift in attendance patterns, commenting, “A lot of people expected to attend this year didn’t show up and there is a growing sentiment of ‘I don’t know if it’s worth the expense anymore.’” She cautioned about the risk this trend poses to Milan Design Week’s role as a unifying industry platform, warning that without sufficient participation, the event could devolve into a series of luxury exhibitions lacking meaningful contribution to design’s purpose.

Looking forward to Milan Design Week 2026, questions remain regarding the event’s evolution. Both Clarke and Barnard suggest that it could pivot to become a stronger platform for showcasing diverse, emerging talents with a focus on design’s capacity to address real-world problems rather than purely aesthetic pursuits. Barnard encapsulated this sentiment, stating, “Milan should be about design’s capacity to solve real problems, rather than just chasing aesthetics.”

Milan Design Week 2025 thus presented a complex tapestry of high-profile luxury displays, collaborative social impact projects, and community-building efforts, while also prompting critical conversations about the future direction of one of the design world’s most influential events.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dezeen.com/eventsguide/milan-design-week-2025/> - This URL provides information about Milan Design Week 2025, including its dates and the Salone del Mobile event, which is part of the broader festival. It highlights the blend of exhibitions, installations, and product launches.
2. <https://www.archdaily.com/1028668/navigating-milan-design-week-2025-key-venues-events-and-architectural-installations-to-experience> - This URL offers insights into key venues and events during Milan Design Week 2025, including Dropcity’s exhibition focused on alternative forms of design and architecture. It provides a comprehensive guide to navigating the event.
3. <https://www.wallpaper.com/design-interiors/performance-trend-milan-design-week-2025> - This URL highlights the trend of immersive performances and installations during Milan Design Week 2025, showcasing how brands are using drama and staged performances to engage audiences.
4. <https://www.sightunseen.com/2025/04/the-best-of-milan-design-week-2025-part-i-our-favorite-collection-debuts/> - This URL discusses new collection debuts during Milan Design Week 2025, providing insights into the latest design trends and notable exhibitions.
5. <https://www.dezeen.com/eventsguide/2025/04/milan-design-week-2025/> - This URL further details Milan Design Week 2025, emphasizing its broad range of activities including exhibitions, installations, and talks across various venues in Milan.
6. <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/design/milan-design-week-2025> - Although not mentioned in the previous links, this URL typically would discuss Milan Design Week 2025, covering key designs, events, and architectural installations from a design perspective. However, as it's not directly linked in previous results, a direct explanation or link wasn't available for this specific year's content.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMitgFBVV95cUxPbVNMcjZFd3NCM1NhckVyb2lsdkFtYXlrWVE5c0xrbGUxeFRfQnZWSjNnLWhVSTlFRU1TdHQydEdZLVZhLVRzRjF3VnJTUmdla1FONGxrRk0yTUsxdXhicHVMc0dxQ3ltVUFRdkZjOGJWaUQ1QTREMUYxbGJ3V2U0VGlHX0JmeDAwX0hWd2pvekczald3WE0wTVQ4U1NEV2ZvNFQyN2Z5Xy1XSWdDLTVjekpRYjhlQQ?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data