

Filippo De Laurentiis Gets Investment, Opens Milan Store

- The luxury knitwear brand has sold a majority stake to the Made in Italy Fund II, the private equity entity managed by Quadrivio and Pambianco.



Filippo De Laurentiis, fall 2024

BY MARTINO CARRERA

MILAN — Italian knitwear specialist Filippo De Laurentiis has secured a private equity investment and is gearing up to open its first flagship in Milan.

The Made in Italy Fund II, the private equity entity managed by Quadrivio and Pambianco, has acquired a 51 percent stake in the family-owned and -run fashion company.

Financial terms of the deal — pivotal to scale up the brand’s business at a time of slowdown in luxury consumption and increasingly polarized fashion market — were not disclosed.

“Made in Italy Fund II invests in Italian excellences to turn them into national champions to be exported and promoted abroad,” said Alessandro Binello, chief executive officer of Quadrivio Group and managing partner of Made in Italy Fund II. “Filippo De Laurentiis is certainly one of them and has all the right means to become a go-to brand in Italy and abroad for high-end knitwear,” he said.

“The opening of a Milan flagship in the heart of the fashion capital, as well as the activation of important distribution partnerships, mark a pivotal step in our growth and development strategy, aimed at doubling the brand’s revenues in a few years,” he offered.

Quadrivio and Pambianco have over the years acquired stakes in 12 companies across the lifestyle, apparel and accessories, design, beauty, food and beverage sectors, through the Made in Italy Fund I and II vehicles.

They include fashion brands 120% Lino; Dondup; PT Torino; GCDS; Rosantica; Autry and, most recently, French boho-chic brand Sessùn. It also has stakes in design retailer Mohd, beauty company Rougj and wine specialists Prosit and Xtrawine.

Filippo De Laurentiis was launched in 2013 as the white label project by the Ferrante Brands company, a knitwear specialist established by the Ferrante family in Italy’s Abruzzo region in the ‘70s.

The brand offers men's and women's knitwear crafted from luxurious yarns including cashmere, silk, alpaca, yak, wool, cotton and linen. In addition to the namesake line, the brand also operates the Filippo De Laurentiis collection of experimental knitwear. In 2021 the brand opened a showroom on Milan's Via Manzoni.

In 2023 Filippo De Laurentiis generated a turnover of about 17 million euros with earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization standing at 3.2 million euros.

"I've been wanting for a long time to open up the company's capital to an external investor, for them to bring about elements that our family-run company — albeit healthy and growing — lacked," Filippo Ferrante, the brand's founder and chief executive officer, told WWD.

"We didn't have a managerial structure nor the culture to implement one on our own... with them we share the same vision so it's natural to just work towards the same goals," the entrepreneur said.

Touting the Made in Italy Fund II for being a financial entity with business managers that know fashion's inner workings, he likened the deal to having "consultants that happen to be shareholders."

"I thought we had reached a plateau in terms of growth with fewer options [on our own] to scale up e-commerce operations, open a retail network and negotiate wholesale deals globally," Ferrante said.

"The key strategy is to strengthen the brand [positioning] and build up its intangible value, of course this encompasses the product but not only that," he said.

To this end, Filippo De Laurentiis is testing retail waters and opening its first outpost, a six-month temporary location, on Milan's Corso Garibaldi, in the arty Brera district.

Called "Spazio Effimero," or "Ephemeral Space," the name was selected as a nod to its temporary duration and in contrast with the tangible timelessness of the brand's knitwear. The flagship opening on Oct. 10 covers 1,076 square feet.

"It will help us define the perfect size for future permanent retail units, given we are a single product brand... but the ambition is to be able to open two to three

stores in Italy in the next year and a half,” Ferrante said. “Of course, we want the stores to be effective and generate profits... laying the foundations for an even bigger fund to come knocking at our door,” he said.

The executive also shared that ongoing talks with department stores for the opening of shops-in-shop and corners are inching toward completion.

“The main goal is to synchronize direct retail, soft retail [shops-in-shop] and e-commerce, in addition to wholesale, which we don’t expect to be overcome by other channels before two to three to five years,” Ferrante said.

Filippo De Laurentiis currently generates the bulk of its revenues via wholesale with about 731 stockists globally. E-commerce is planned to grow to represent 10 percent of the business in two years.

About 55 percent of the brand’s revenues come from exports, with key markets including Austria, Japan, Switzerland and the Benelux area, but Ferrante sees potential in adjacent and new regions, including the U.S., South Korea and Scandinavia, as well as an opportunity to beef up its footprints in Germany and France, which are currently underrepresented.