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THE WEDDING DRESS WORLDWIDE, A MIX OF GLOBALISATION AND TRADITION

SÌ SPOSAITALIA COLLEZIONI RECOUNTS THE EVOLUTION OF THE WEDDING DRESS, CAUGHT BETWEEN LOCAL CULTURES AND WESTERN CUSTOMS

The tradition and modernity of the bridal segment will come together once again at Sì Sposaitalia Collezioni. As it prepares for its next edition, to take place from 24 to 27 September, the exhibition confirms its strategic role at international level, further amplified by the fact that it will run alongside Milan Fashion Week. An important synergy that is designed to give greater prominence and visibility to its protagonists and that will not only celebrate the relaunching of the entire Italian fashion supply chain but will also allow for the showcasing of features unique to the exhibition itself, such as its scouting activities and attention to sustainability, as well as its important role as a privileged observatory for the latest trends.

Milan, 23 June 2020. The term "wedding dress" automatically evokes the traditional long white dress with veil, a characteristic of Western culture which has conquered the world with its symbolism. But world cultures have always had their own wedding garments which represent local customs and religious creeds, and which now, in their many different ways, find themselves living alongside the familiar white dress.

For instance, in many countries an initial ceremony in traditional apparel is often followed by a second celebration or reception in which the bride wears a Western wedding dress.

The white dress is gaining ground everywhere: **Sì Sposaitalia Collezioni showcases it with a study which has focused, among other issues, on wedding garments from around the world, highlighting the growing popularity of the Western dress** as a trend which is not only an excellent social indicator, but which enables bridal brands to position themselves strategically in various markets. #

The analysis takes us on a world tour which, while respecting different traditions, shows how the march of globalisation has also changed the traditional wedding: while just ten years ago international brands were designing different collections for different markets, each inspired by local customs, nowadays a single style has imposed itself around the world. There are exceptions, of course, with ample space for local customs and, in some cases, a reinterpretation of indigenous traditions by leading brands resulting in the creation of special collections. This is often so in the Middle and Far East,

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where spending power and a culture of luxurious display have led the most famous international brands to create special capsule collections which maintain their recognisability while emphasising local tastes.

But, more generally speaking, the Outlook demonstrates that it is still possible to protect the local identity of a wedding dress that reflects its roots in a national culture while hybridising it with a more globalised style.

This is true in China, for instance: while more and more brides are choosing the white wedding dress, many still prefer a veil over a red dress, the Chinese colour of love and good luck. During the day the bride will change her dress as many as three times and is likely to choose a Western style dress for the ceremony itself: wide, flowing dresses with an embroidery bodice are the most popular choice. This trend has still not caught on in India, however, where traditional saris are still preferred, decorated with rich embroidery and symbolic colours, with great attention to jewellery and henna body art.

If we consider the most westernised of Eastern countries, Japan, brides are increasingly likely to choose a classic Western white dress: Italian brands are a firm favourite, thanks to the quality of their fabrics and their unique, highly recognisable design qualities. More traditional brides will wear a white kimono followed, after the ceremony, by a red dress (the colour of good luck) combined with large traditional head coverings.

Korean women also sport elaborate traditional hairstyles held in place by showy diadems in colours matched with the hwarot, the customary national wedding dress. Although there is a growing desire to imitate more typically Western styles. *“The Korean trend is all about seeking the new, even when it comes to the wedding ceremony. So while tradition is maintained early on in the ceremony, an increasing number of brides will then change for the reception, wearing colourful dresses. The Made-in-Italy, already much loved and well-known in Korea, would have even greater potential if it were to offer more modern, original designs”* comments the buyer from **My Daughter’s Wedding in Seoul**.

The mixture of tradition and modernity is easy to see in the kaftan, the symbol of Moroccan female culture, always used for weddings: made of precious fabrics, finely embroidered and decorated with jewels, a bride may wear up to seven different kaftans, one for each day of the wedding ceremony, all extremely extroverted - an outstanding opportunity for fashion designers and one that Western brands have not hesitated to grasp. This hybridisation of tradition and global culture is also highly fashionable in Africa where, alongside a more Western trend, there is still a strong attention to individual details which recall local cultures and religious values, such as the custom of covering the head adopted from Islam by Somali brides, or the colour coordination between bride and groom in Eritrea.

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But the richness and value of individual cultures and how they express themselves, especially on the wedding day, is also clearly evident in the United States. America is renowned for its cinematic weddings, with their carefully curated dresses and perfectly organised staging. *“Here in Florida women love romantic dresses for a fairy tale wedding, so those with a full skirt and sparkling appliqués on the bodice”* reveals **Jessica Vargas of Solutions Bridal**.

But there are also other traditions, from those of the Amish people with their strict simplicity and brides who sew their own dresses (rigorously blue and without a veil) to those in which weddings are an occasion to throw the party of a lifetime, as in New Orleans.

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