

BUSINESS

# Is Barcelona the new fashion capital of Europe?

## BBB and PB took over the Catalan capital this week

MARTA WENDLINGER

If you were in Barcelona last week, you couldn't have missed the fashion hype. From January 18 to 20, the Fira de Barcelona was invaded by the German fashion fair, Bread & Butter (BBB), one of the most prestigious urban fashion fairs in Europe. Although BBB's first appearance in the city put Barcelona on the map last July, this year, the organisers outdid themselves with more than 750 international brands and 50,000 visitors, among them renowned international buyers and store representatives, "coolhunters," PR people, and marketing representatives.

Barcelona was a clear marketing decision by BBB to create a "North-South Axis" in the European fashion market. What invited professionals saw in the fair is what people will wear on the streets next winter. Marta Comella, Purchasing Director of Gonzalo Comella said that "it was like a walk through New York's SoHo". Other reps claim that BBB has duplicated their sales and client base.

But the tradeshow was not all about fashion. It was much more than that: live music, break-dancing, in-line skating and BMX demonstrations, architectural exhibitions, select cuisine tasting, and even a charity and community component.

There was already a buzz outside the halls, but once inside, the energy only increased with techno music, flashing lights, powerful graphic art, and huge video screens. Professionals were doing business in German, French, English, or Italian and the dose of supermodel star power was provided by the appearance of Esther Cañadas, who strutted the catwalk for the Italian firm "Guru."

However, BBB wasn't the only event in town. It coincided with the first edition of Passarel·la Barcelona (PB), which replaced the defunct Passarel·la Gaudí. The Generalitat pulled out over 7 million euros it had pre-



Bread & Butter has become a major date for the Barcelona fashion industry / A.PUIG

vious used to fund Gaudí a few months ago and this time it contributed 1 million into making PB a reality. It also stated that it will cut that by half for the next scheduled edition in July. Organizers, therefore, had to rely on private resources but were fortunate to count on financial support from big-name sponsors such as Lancome, Freixenet, and Vodafone.

Not much has changed, with many of the same names appearing: Antonio Miró, Konrad Muhr, Joaquim Verdu and Armand Basi in addition

to the newest generation of young fashion stars, including Josep Abril, Mireya Ruiz, and La Casita de Wendy. One highlight was the stellar appearance of Custo Barcelona as the final catwalk in the Italian Pavilion.

For Barcelona's fashion sector, crucial questions remain: Where does Barcelona stand in relation to the international scene? Where does that leave Circuit and ModaFAD? Will PB be able to survive?

# Work-related accidents down in Catalonia

CATALONIA TODAY

Accidents at work were at their lowest level in Catalonia for six years in 2005. The biggest decline was in fatal accidents in the workplace with 41 per cent less than in 2000. At 102 deaths, there were 47 less than in 2004. In total the 152,000 work-related accidents last year represented a drop of 3 per cent on 2004. Josep Maria Rañé, the work and industry minister, who presented the figures this week welcomed the fall, though he also said that the numbers re-

mained high and were no cause for satisfaction. On the whole, Catalonia rates well when compared with the rest of Spain. Barcelona registered an average of three accidents per 100,000 workers compared with the average of four in the rest of Spain. In terms of sector, industry, services and construction all fell and agriculture was the only area which showed a rise in the number of accidents. Over the last few years, construction is the sector which has managed to cut accidents the most.

# Large demand for digital local TV channel licences

C.T.

The Generalitat has received a total of 53 bids for licenses to run the 20 private digital channels on offer for the Barcelona area. Demand also outstripped supply in Catalonia as a whole, with a total of 128 applications for the 59 TDT digital channels available countrywide. However, the company that bid for the largest number of licences to run digital channels is from outside

of Catalonia. Teléfonía Local from Madrid, which has channels in 43 Spanish towns, has put in bids for eight licences around Catalonia. The companies Osona Comarca under the name Artesa Venturas and Kiss Media — whose radio station Kiss FM was closed down by the Generalitat over an issue of permits — are the other firms that have made bids for the most licences.



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