Brioni continues with restructuring drive

By Dominique Muret - 26 October 2021

Kering continues with its effort to restructure Brioni. As was announced in April, as many as 320 jobs will be cut at the Italian luxury menswear label bought by the group owned by François-Henri Pinault in 2011. The dismissals will all occur at the label’s three facilities in the central Italian region of Abruzzi, in the towns of Penne, Montebello di Bertona and Civitella Casanova, where Brioni’s shirt-making and knitwear workshops will eventually close down.

In a meeting at Italy’s Economic Development Ministry, attended by representatives of the Labour Ministry, of the Lombardy and Abruzzo regional authorities and the unions, Brioni’s management reaffirmed the intention of implementing an industrial plan for 2021-25 that aims to rationalise organisational costs and redeploy production.

For a number of years, Brioni has been blighted by manufacturing overcapacity, owing to the profound transformation of the high-end formal menswear market. A predicament that was made worse by the pandemic. Yet, as revealed by Kering with the recent publication of the group’s latest quarterly results, “in Q3, Brioni’s sales were back to the levels of Q3 2019,” in other words to pre-pandemic levels.

According to the union representatives attending the meeting, 200 employees from the Penne site, to this day home to Brioni’s famed tailoring workshops, have agreed to leave the company, though they are set to stay on until October 2022, as they will until then benefit from the Italian government’s special Covid-19 aid package.

“Ever since the Kering group bought Brioni, it has only concerned itself with repaying debts, without ever truly putting forward a relaunch plan for this long-established Italian label,” lamented the union representatives. Well aware of today’s troubled economic situation, the unions urged the French group to “invest in craftsmanship and manufacturing, the real assets of this made-in-Italy label.” They especially highlighted “the need for technology investment that could ensure the company will be suitably incorporated within the group,” and warned against the loss of craftsmanship skills that would only risk “impoverishing Brioni.”
Brioni has been led by Mehdi Benabadji since 2020. In September 2018, it put Austrian designer Norbert Stumpfl in charge of style, creating a capsule collection with Hollywood star and Brioni brand ambassador Brad Pitt. The label recently opened a Beverly Hills store on Rodeo Drive, and in summer it inaugurated a new store concept in Frankfurt, Germany. It is called ‘Brioni Atelier’, a reference to the same, long-established tailoring workshops that Brioni is about to radically downsize.

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