

3.
Kiosks
Milan

Lilliputian huts of iron and glass cloistered on city pavements, Milan's newsstands are freestanding shrines to media. Headlines in Italian, dialect and a smattering of foreign languages broadcast the day's biggest news to pedestrians. Magazines deck the vitrine windows with a crowded riot of the latest styles, the latest scandals, the latest politicians' earnest or sinister faces.

Milan's first newsstand opened in 1859; in the postwar boom, they opened on every well-peopled corner. The five years preceding 2018 saw 30 per cent of their kin shuttered but the city's culled ranks endure, filling a niche that's become an immutable part of the physical and cultural fabric of Milan.

"People don't come to us for news anymore but the more curious, the more sophisticated readers, they come for what they can't find online," says Fabrizio Prestinari, who's been operating a legendary Brera-area newsstand (pictured, top right) since 1990. He's known to offer detailed suggestions to anyone he considers a worthy, open-minded reader, whether they be first-timers or his long-time faithful clients. Unlike most *giornalaini*, as the stands' operators are known, Prestinari hasn't added extra *tchotchkes* (subway tickets, phone refills, plastic gizmos for kids) to supplement the plummeting sales of dailies that used to prop up the newsstand business. Instead he's doubled down on his personally curated and much sought-after selection of ambitious magazines, with newly inaugurated international

publications stockpiled next to iconic glossies. All of these are becoming evermore like books, he says, with literary-level writing, engaging design, long-term relevance and collectability aimed at the print-loving newsstand faithful of today.

Like other *giornalaini*, Prestinari gets a slim 18 per cent take of his sales and is pitted against rising costs but bolstered by a newsstand's superlative visibility and the cheaper rent of public land. The local government is smartly seeking to turn Milan's newsstands into "service points for every neighbourhood," as deputy mayor Cristina Tajani has termed the plan, with digital resources designed to draw in both locals and tourists. And unlike in other countries where large, browsing-friendly magazine shops have become the standard, in Italy, kiosk operators such as Prestinari are finding that it's the old-fashioned human exchange and advice on the best reading in the stacks that still matters most.

