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A Study of the Italian Textile Design Industry

By

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Introduction

Italy has been a driving force in western culture since the Roman Empire. In his commentary on Italy and the Italians, Brunt (1990) says that the Romans introduced some of the most unifying principles of our cultural heritage such as language, towns, roads, and the legal system. The spread of common ideas and culture from Italy was also assisted by the absence of any physical barriers which might have prevented the large scale movement of people. Italy has given the world the poetry of Dante and the art of the Renaissance, the political theory of Machiavelli and the science of Galileo. It has produced the first internal banking system, great explorers and famous composers. Even today, Italy plays a vital role in both world economies and the diffusion of cultural ideas. Good design, taste and style have become synonymous with Italian culture and has gained Italy respect globally, whether it is design in architecture, fashion or textile design.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the significant role Italy continues to play, especially in the textile industry in an increasingly competitive global market. The context will range from the post-war determination to re-build into a modern industrial state, to the realisation of that ambition, as exemplified in textile design.

Italy derived considerable benefit from export-led growth; both production and productivity eventually increased leading to the period of sustained growth known popularly as the 'economic miracle' of 1958-62. Essential characteristics of this period have included the growth of the manufacturing sector; the integration of the country in the international economy; and the development of rapid urbanisation. By the 1950s, Italy doubled its gross national product, recording average growth of 5.3%, a pace it kept up until the 1970s. Post-recession growth has been slower but still above the EU average. By the 1990s, Italy had fulfilled its long time slogan "il sarpasso" in overtaking Britain as the fifth largest market economy in the world. (Delamaide, 1994)

In Chapter 1, I will introduce the topic with an overview of the cultural and historical traditions of Italy, which will contextualise the historical , political and sociological issues relevant to the textile industry.

The second chapter investigates the textile industry itself. It will examine the characteristics of the industry and its technological advances. Consumers, and the role they play in product quality, reliability and creativity will also be examined.

As a representative model of a typical printed textile design studio, I will acquaint the reader in Chapter 3 with *Faro Textile Design Studio* in Rome. This case study was researched during the summer of 1995 when I spent three months working in the studio. I interviewed the principals of the studio and recorded my personal observations during my work there. The reader will thus gain an understanding of the current issues, challenges and concerns which face the textile industry in Italy today.

In the Conclusion, I endeavour to summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the Italian textile industry, and of *Faro Textile Design Studio* in particular, and I shall suggest how the problems can be addressed at a local and a national level. Looking to the future, I will make some comments on the continued viability of the textile industry in Italy.

Chapter 1

Western Europe is a comparatively small but highly populated and well developed part of the world. It has achieved an importance out of all proportion to its size and is clearly identified as a major world region. General characteristics of Europeans are that they are mainly Caucasian in race, speak one of the Indo-European languages and belong to a Christian religion.

Italy, the well defined mainland "boot" off southern Europe, is no exception. Alpine mountains, intensively farmed lowlands of the rich Po valley, and borders with France, Switzerland, Austria and Hungary characterise the geography of the northern half of the country. In contrast, poor extensively farmed land, hot dry weather and the Adriatic and Mediterranean seas reveal a poor and peripheral side to the Italian economy. The north of Italy is a highly developed region, dominated by Milan, the southern point of the Manchester-Milan industrial axis. In stark contrast, however, the south of Italy is allocated millions of ECUs each year from the EU development fund (ERDF) due to its under-developed peripheral nature. Italy has, thus, to some extent overcome its southern problems and focused on its economic strategies in trade and industry, so that by the late 1980s it claimed to have overtaken Britain to become the fifth largest industrial nation of the world, after the USA, Japan, Germany and France (Ginsborg, 1990).

By the 1930s, as in other countries, the war brought together masses of people, strengthened industrial concentrations, increased the number of wage workers, expanded urban centres (particularly Turin, Milan and Genoa), and gave the state wider economic functions and a more authoritarian role. The National Fascist Party, having been given political power under the leadership of Mussolini, proceeded to perform many of its functions. It kept wages down by destroying the trade unions and so

enabled Italian entrepreneurs to compete in foreign markets; it facilitated the rationalisation of Italian capitalism through industrial concentration; it developed powerful instruments of economic intervention, such as the IRI (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale) and saved the banking system from bankruptcy.

Only the large industrial centres of the north profited from these changes; in reality during the immediate post-war period, few structural changes occurred in society or the economy. Italy was still predominantly a peasant country of unspoilt, natural beauty, sleepy provincial cities, enduring poverty (especially in the south), rural culture, and local dialects (Ginsborg, 1990). In 1940, well over 40% of the working population were involved in agriculture. During the war effort, Italy's industrial heartland (i.e the cities of Milan, Turin and Genoa) were manufacturing goods for the war. Fortunately for the Italians, due to their double game of collaboration with the Fascists in the north, and getting information leaks to the Allies in the south, Italy was spared the indiscriminate bombing of its energy and industrial plants. This is, perhaps, what gave Italy a head-start in re-building after the war.

Italy moved allegiance to the Allies after World War 2 by becoming party to a supranational defence organisation (NATO), which has closely tied its foreign policy to that of the United States of America. During the 1950s, the USA launched its European Recovery Programme (ERP) better known as the Marshall Plan. It is estimated that between 1948 and 1958, more than \$1,400 million of Marshall aid funds reached Italy, or about 11% of the total granted to Europe. The programme presented Italian decision-makers with a new set of variables. The options were essentially, to use American money to increase state intervention in the economy by setting up infrastructures or to increase Bank of Italy reserves in order to maintain the stability of the currency and the equilibrium in the balance of payments (Sassoon, 1986). No overall plan evolved; certain industries like steel and textiles were indiscriminately favoured and the Italian motorway system was developed towards the end of the 1950s



which reduced the physical separation between north and south. In fact, the "autostrade" became one of the most comprehensive road networks in Europe, leading to a more active market for goods within Italy and abroad.

The decision to open up the Italian economy to the international market is of importance for the following reasons; to open an economy means that one has to find appropriate trading partners, that is, eventual customers. Thus, one has to gear one's production to their demands; production must be geared towards exports. And so certain industries must be established, industries such as textiles were favoured, and their economic interests prevailed at the expense of others. The majority of Italy's customers are West Europeans and North Americans, and so it is not surprising that the decision to enter the world market entailed membership of the Atlantic Alliance and later the European economic organisations including the EEC.

Exporting firms were essentially located in the north of the country and became a magnet of opportunity for southern semi-skilled and unskilled workers. A huge level of migration from south to north was to occur in the twenty years of industrial boom from 1950 to 1970. The textile industry boomed because of its low wages and labour intensity in comparison to any other Western country. Devaluation of the Lire made exporting more and more attractive to foreign investors.

A tradition of craft-based textile industry existed in the Como region (north of Milan), famous for its silk producing, and in Biella, famous for its woollens. Abundance of raw materials (silk worms, sheep, etc), along with skills and knowledge, allied to injections of capital from the Government, led to the expansion of the textile industry. When oil prices were soaring, the textile industry was able to draw its energy requirements from hydro-electric power stations in the Alps. Energy prices were kept relatively low and allowed the industry to remain competitive in the global market.

Italian industry is recognised for this type of clustering, in certain geographical areas. The Sarruolo region of Italy is synonymous with the design and manufacturing of tiles, as Como is synonymous with Italian textile design. The most important cluster to Italian trade is related to the production of textiles and apparel i.e. footwear, fabrics, clothing, leather goods and travel goods (Porter, 1990). Entire clusters of Italian industries are often tightly concentrated in a geographic region or regions, this area then becomes a self-contained and self-reinforcing economic system. Fluid interchange within Italian clusters is facilitated by proximity, by strong family or family-like ties that connect many Italian firms with their suppliers and related firms, and by community spirit. Italians do not like to work for an anonymous company but want to feel that they are part of a family-like organisation where they will be recognised. If they do belong to such an organisation, they work extremely hard and work very long hours, like the Japanese (Porter, 1990). Indeed the intense concentration of industry in a certain area generates the gathering and storing of cumulative knowledge. The industry is the constant subject of discussion locally which leads to broad diffusion of information. This may stimulate investments in joint activities such as trade fairs in which 'ComoCrea' is a leading textile design show and a major showcase in which all of Italy's leading textile designers and manufacturers exhibit. Through five industry associations, in different but related fields, there is joint research on new technologies, construction of a central purifier, co-operation in the purchases of services, raw materials and equipment, operation of a general warehouse, and an ongoing effort to influence local infrastructure. The concentration of these clusters of industry can cause intense rivalry and rapid imitation of good ideas, but this in turn leads to the constant search for new innovations. Clustering is convenient because it allows families to remain intact in the workplace, and it also facilitates the diffusion of specific skills and training for a specific industry to be penetrated throughout the region.

With the birth of the Italian republic, the pressures for mass education multiplied. It



was necessary to expand the educational resources, not only to enable and empower a democratic society, but also because it was one of the means of bridging the technological gap which existed between Italy and its international competitors. Every Italian citizen must attend school until the age of fourteen. Senior high school prepares students for a specific career: classical, scientific, artistic, commercial or industrial. In the case of Como, due to the clustering of the textile industry, there is a specific high school course to prepare students for a career in textile design . Apart from this example, education generally for the textile design industry is rather informal and unplanned.

Designers enter a design studio at an early age so that they can learn from experienced colleagues rather than attend a third level institution. Expertise has remained in families and it is through this system of apprenticeship that people have become educated and trained in the textile industry. If the industry is to advance further, education and training will need to be upgraded. Overall, Italian university education does not rank near the top in European or world terms. The university system is heavily state run; the only three privately run colleges are Bocconi and Cattolica in Milan and Luiss in Rome. Departments are concentrated in traditional fields and there are chronic shortages of places in newer fields such as computing and electronics. Facilities are in need of updating. Italian companies provide little formal training for their staff, nor do they actively support the universities. Hence, advanced training is like other training; informal and on-the-job (Porter, 1990). In the age of computerisation, this type of training approach will not work. In order to upgrade any system, the workforce must have up-to-date knowledge and education. Italians lack good skills in the mathematical, scientific, and computing fields due to the lack of initiative and investment within the universities. Engineers and scientists have generally emigrated to pursue post-graduate courses due to the under-developed post-graduate facilities in Italy.



The Italian economy is still divided between the developed north and the underdeveloped Mezzogiorno region of the south. If Italy is to progress as a developed nation, this problem has to be tackled immediately. Although countless millions of Lire have been allocated to the south, little has been achieved. Unrelated industries such as petro-chemicals, refining and manufacturing took advantage of tax and government incentives and now have left derelict factories like "temples in the sun". What the government ought to focus on is working with existing clusters of industries, which have been traditionally successful, to gain advantage in the marketplace through upgrading and investment. Italian prosperity is otherwise going to be absorbed by government funds allocated to the south.

Chapter 2

There are over 40,000 textile companies in the European Union employing 1.28 million workers. Italy, with a 32.5% share of the Union's production in 1991, has a thriving textile industry, annually providing some 45,000 tonnes of silk, 250,000 tonnes of cotton fabric and 175,000 tonnes of woollen fabric. In the textile sector, the silk industry employs nearly 15,000, the wool industry 110,000 and the cotton industry 61,000. About 153,000 people work in Italy's knitwear industry producing socks, underwear and other knitted garments.

The textile, clothing and footwear industries are widely spread. Como is the silk capital; top quality woollens are made around Biella, near Turin; Prato, near Florence, is the centre for regenerated woollens; and several major clothing manufacturers are located in the north-east.

The striking geographic concentration of the silk industry in Como, as already suggested, speeds up the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge and skill within that industry. In Como, the local technical high school (Istituti Tecnici) is the only school in Italy to offer a vocationally-oriented printed textile design course. This means the workforce is well educated for the industry within that town. According to Professor Michael Porter (1990), the Italian case clearly illustrates his self-reinforcing industrial-clustering model called "the diamond"; sophisticated demand, world-class suppliers, deep personal commitment to an industry and intense domestic rivalry (fed by active new business formation) create an irresistible force for innovation, all inside a concentrated geographic region.

Expensive energy, due to its importation because of lack of domestic raw materials, and an expensive labour environment due to burdensome government regulations are some of the problems Italian firms face; the easy option of relocating in a developing country

has, interestingly, not been taken. In the region of Prato where woollen textiles are the main industry, the lack of raw materials pioneered the experimentation in recycled wool with man-made fibres. Italy now holds a dominant international position in this industry. Thus, disadvantages can open opportunities through innovation.

Despite the post war-funding for the textile industry from America through the Marshall Aid plan, government policy today lacks co-ordination in backing business ventures and has poorly developed mechanisms for allocating capital. Porter (1990) maintains that government investment in factory creation is low and poorly managed, and public support for research is low. A public equity market has been all but non-existent until recently due to regulation limitations and the absence of pension fund investors or another concentrated group of institutional investors. The market is small and inefficient. Few firms are listed and the proportion of shares traded is relatively small. Thus, the traditional Italian systems of small family-run medium-sized companies is perpetuated. The majority of Italian entrepreneurs do not covet the status of 'large companies' and resent government intervention. Most firms in Italy have financed set-up and growth out of private savings, profits and rolling short-term loans. Another reason that Italy has greater success in small-to-medium sized businesses is the management style and organisational approach. Italians do not usually function well in hierarchies and aspire to working in their own closely-knit company. Managers desire independence and their own areas of responsibility instead of working in groups.

Italian firms tend to be highly specialised and compete through constant model changes and innovation. They work in collaboration with their customers to produce highly customised products that offer excellent price/performance, although they may lack some of the technological sophistication of German or Swiss competing products. Superior product design is part of the equation and Italian firms are imaginative innovators in process technology.

It is the marketing of Italian design, textiles and clothing which has become a major factor in the success of the textile industry in Italy and abroad. This is reinforced by Italian magazines such as Amica, Grazia, Domus, and Casa Bella which play a significant role in the areas of fashion and furnishing world-wide. Thus, the international eye recognises Italy as an historical and cultural centre and acknowledges the quality design that comes from a country blessed with the fruits of art for centuries.

Branzi, a noted design critic, has asserted that in the 1980s designer decade, Italy held on firmly to her design reputation. Each September saw the Italian furniture fair, which attracted buyers, designers and journalists from around the world. The Milan Fiera developed into a celebration of designer culture that was stylish and breathtaking. Indeed for the last ten years, only what happened in Milan really mattered (Branzi, 1991). The impact of such publicity means that the inventiveness of design in Italy not only caused a dramatic rise in exports, but made the Italian home market a very sophisticated consumer segment with high expectations of Italian designers and manufacturers.

Italians spend more per capita on clothes, shoes and accessories than citizens of any other any other nation (Porter, 1990). Italian consumers are at the cutting edge of taste and style. Some observers attribute this to an innate interest in design and the arts, a function perhaps of living amongst artistic tradition and culture. Italians have outstanding knowledge of forecasts and trends and will be among the first in the world to adapt to new trends and styles. If in capitalist societies the primary purpose of the manufacture of artefacts, a process of which design is a part, is to make profit for the manufacturer, then Italy is indeed a capitalist society where the latest style and trend is a necessity.

Italian exports have also benefited through the internationalisation of Italian style and taste; this has occurred through Italian (and non-Italian) design and fashion magazines,

design firms and the pull-through effects of related industries. Italian furniture benefits Italian lighting, for example, while Italian textiles benefit Italian clothing.

"If inherited and socially created factor conditions are among Italy's greatest weaknesses, demand conditions are among its greatest strengths. In virtually every consumer goods industry in which Italy has national competitive advantage, Italian buyers are among the, if not the, world's most sophisticated advanced buyers (this is true in apparel, shoes, jewellery, furniture, lighting, textiles, and many others). Some of these are well-known Italian passions."
(Porter, 1990)

Not only are home market consumption trends and requirements analysed, but global markets as well. By using trend analysis and sophisticated computer modelling, global production data can be used to predict sales in various countries. This information is fed into manufacturing resource planning systems to allow design, production and marketing decisions to be made.

One of the forerunners to use this global market planning approach was the Benetton Company. Enthusiasm for colour, design, quality of raw materials and knitting has launched a family-run business into a diversified international clothing and marketing success story. Founded in 1965 in Ponzano Vento, near Treviso, the group has become an exporter not only of its own products, from clothing to accessories, but also of its sophisticated technological and manufacturing know-how which can be adapted to local social and commercial conditions.

Benetton exports 60% of its production and in 1992 total sales worldwide exceeded 2,500 billion Lire. Innovation and flexibility, characteristics of Benetton's manufacturing organisation, are also at the base of its commercial network. This consists of eighty representative offices (each one responsible for a precise

geographical area). More than 800 people constitute the interface with more than 7,000 independent shops all over the world where Benetton products are sold exclusively. A computerised network operating in real-time connects this global community to the central system at Ponzano and to production facilities. The Benetton shops, from the beginning, have been innovative and different from their competitors. They are bright, open and inviting, favouring the correct relationship between client and product.

These types of technological and organisational systems have been introduced to all leading Italian textile manufacture and design firms. Much of the technological capability has ironically come from Italy's trading competitors. However, it is the way in which Italy has harnessed and adapted these technologies which has been decisive.

"In recent years, the Italian entrepreneurial strategy of adaptation/resistance to the in-roads of developing nations into the textile-clothing field has been focused on technological and organisational innovation and on expanding the production cycle to include phases closer to the end-product, namely those with a higher value added." (Entrepreneurship & Regional Development)

When analysing technological change, there are two elements of particular relevance to this thesis; the first is the changes which took place with regard to chemical fibres which, from the late 1960s, were concentrated in the field of electronics and in the second instance, the electronic based technologies, such as computer-aided-design (CAD) and computer automation in factories.

The recent introduction of significant process innovations in the form of information technologies and of associated organisational innovations represents a revolution that is dramatically affecting the textile/clothing sector; a traditional sector that, through innovation, is attempting to ensure its future revival.

"There are also important benefits deriving from increased elasticity, or the ability to effect changes in production volume. A greater flexibility both on a design and operational level, will thus ensure a better and faster adjustment to an extremely differentiated and changeable market." (US Congress, 1987)

Among the most established technologies are CAD systems, which have in fact been adopted by all the enterprises considered here. There are various CAD applications in the textile industry; it can be used in fabric design, in developing the patterns to be printed and in colour mixing; and secondly, in garment making it can be used for model design, size development, and optimisation of the tailoring phase.

The advantages of the adoption of CAD systems are many, including a positive effect on the creative part of the production cycle, a saving in raw materials and finally, a saving in the time taken to prepare sample catalogues, thus reducing the time between conception of a new fashion idea and the presentation of a collection. (Campagni and Rabellotti, 1992)

Technical information and research is a necessity for the future strategy of the Italian textile industry. Funding in this area and government support therefore is vital. Some steps have already been taken, such as the establishment of the marketing 'Assoziatzione Italiana Industriali Abbiamento' and the development and technical association EWEA. Both of these state agencies liaise with all sectors of the textile industry, advising and organising marketing fairs, international relations, etc. They also finance a small amount of research and development and infrastructural work on behalf of a cluster of industries.

"Co-operation agreements between companies and research institutes for the development of technological innovations, such as the case of EWEA's programme in the Como area, which with a pre-existing association, 'Tessile di

Como' interfaces with companies in the industry." (Campagni and Rabellotti, p.280)

A similar approach is developing in the Biella region where 'Citta Degli Studi', a research and technology transfer agency has co-financed an analytical study on the wool processing cycle with the Biella Industrialists Association.

Apart from more automation and technical innovations, the 1990s have given greater priority to 'green' environmental issues. Consumers are recognising products which are produced in an environmentally friendly way.

"Increasing awareness that the first priority in reducing the negative impact on the environment is to substitute finishing processes and substances for new ones that are less polluting and safer, rather than attempting to reduce their effect through purification treatment. This goal requires very close co-operation between the finishing, chemical and machine industries." (Ereco, 1993, p.131)

This in itself is a problem because it heightens costs. Firms from developing countries which do not have environmental legislation are more competitive. Public funding (both national and community sourced) of research on more environmentally-safe processes and products, as well as the promotion to the consumer of the environmental difference of products made in accordance with EU legislation are crucial in order to prevent a loss in competitiveness.

At the beginning of 1995, the World Trade Organisation agreed that, over the following ten years, quotas are to be phased out in relation to textile imports world-wide. This has been protecting home manufacturers and markets in the EU, USA and Canada. Now competition will be open to cheaper imports and free trade will begin in 2005.

"For those who elect to maintain all or almost all of their manufacturing operations closer to their home markets, an edge can be developed in a number of ways which should help them to combat the effects of increasing competition from lower cost rivals . These include a specialisation in higher margin product and market sectors, a focus upon a limited range of business areas in which a very strong international position and reputation can be achieved; heavy promotional support and strong branding of product lines, the adaptation of extensive automation and computerisation throughout company operations and the provision of a high and exemplary level of customer service." (Payne, 1995, p.4).

It is through these measures that Italy's textile industry will enjoy continued prosperity. Italy has developed enormous 'goodwill' from customers world-wide who value the quality and standards in the design and production of Italian products. This retained 'goodwill' should ensure continued market success and a sustained competitive edge over new competitors from developing countries.

Chapter 3

During the summer of 1995 I worked in a printed textile design studio in Rome. In this case study of *Faro Textile Design Studio* I will describe how the studio was run, amplifying my commentary with personal insights, observations and interviews.

Faro design studio is situated in the centre of Rome. With a staff of up to sixteen designers working full-time, Faro produces between six and seven thousand designs per year, of which about 60% sell. These designs are executed either on paper or material and may entail a very concentrated, detailed design with complicated colours or may as simple as a black and white print. Some of these designs are almost direct copies of previous or traditional designs, while others are innovative new ideas.

The founders of this company are Hungarian brothers Paolo and Charles Farkas, along with Charles's wife, Ibe. All three had an artistic background. Charles studied sculpture; Ibe, fashion; and Paolo, fine art; all at the Academy of Art in Budapest. Given the political unrest in Hungary at the time, Paolo decided to emigrate for Italy and worked initially in a printed textile design studio in Rome. He soon observed the opportunity which the industry presented and in 1951 decided to open a studio under his own name in Como. As mentioned earlier, Como is supported by a range of industries related to textiles, so he found an eager market for his new designs. His studio expanded rapidly and soon he opened other studios in Rome and Florence managed by his brothers-in-law. He formed a partnership with his brother, Charles, in 1969 and it was decided that Charles and Ibe would manage the studio in Rome. The production boom in printed textile designs was at the beginning of the 1970s and with three studios in full operation, the Farkas brothers employed over seventy designers.

In 1980, Paolo divorced his wife and arguments ensued over the ownership of the

studios. Charles and Ibe became independent after buying out 70% of the shares of the studio in Rome.

Charles and Ibe were already widely respected for their design talents within the industry at this time. Ibe had worked under prestigious labels such as Lanetti and Capucci in the fashion industry and now applied her knowledge of trends from fabric print to fashion (see Figure 1). Noting the possibility for a journal to liaise between textile printers, manufacturers, and fashion, she published a magazine in 1979 called "Fashion Bulletin" to fill the vacuum. She was very adept at predicting trends, styles and colours. She attended fashion shows, examined new, innovative fabrics, liaised with printed textile designers, and led many top fashion designers to ask Faro to design the print for their collections.

Although Faro became an independent art studio in 1980, the relationship between Como and Rome remains very strong. Como still has an output of commercially viable designs while Rome has a more creative and innovative angle. Every week all the designs from Rome are sent to Como to be sorted into different 'stories'. Each season brings a new trend theme or colour and these combine to give the title 'story'.

While I worked in Faro most designers were busy with trends for the spring/summer 1997. We were working on projects in association with Indigo, the large French textile trade fair, and also colour stories from the European Colour Forecasting network. Colours and designs are chosen, therefore, at least eighteen months in advance of production.

The Farkas brothers have always been very astute at marketing their designs and were quick to realise how important the international market would be. Paolo first went to the USA in 1966, having ventured to Australia with his designs two years earlier. He was the first Italian designer to sell printed textile designs in the USA. He established



contacts worldwide and since then Faro designs have sold approximately 80% of their designs overseas. Other important markets for Faro are: Turkey, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore. They also sell in Hong Kong, but the Chinese in general are still slow to buy foreign designs. Clearly, different markets require different styles; the Japanese are interested in gimmicks and new, futuristic ideas while the Americans prefer simple designs, using less than six colours, as they are looking for designs which are easiest to print.

Within the domestic market, customers are mainly located in the north of the country: Varese, Milan, Como and Prato. Periodically, during the year, Faro call to clients with new collections or the regular clients come to the studio. Faro also do specific orders for clients and particularly during the 1980s, the studio in Rome became synonymous with Versace, Missoni and Mantero. Special orders from haute couture firms, such as Laura Biagiotti and Versace, would require joint design development of certain ideas and collections.

Outside the domestic market, the sales operation is organised through a network of agents in Japan (Kyoto and Osaka) and America (New York and Los Angeles). These agents receive a briefing on the total design production at least six times per year. Faro also market themselves through the use of trade magazines, catalogues, and international trend forecasters.

Within Europe, sales and marketing is focused on a number of large textile fairs in France, Germany, Belgium and London. These fairs deal with both interior design and fashion. Faro visit "Heimtex" and "Interstoff" in Germany three times per year, "Indigo" and "Premier Vision" in France twice a year, "Deposit" in Belgium, and "Certex" in New York for the home furnishing market. At these fairs, they sell designs to upper and lower segments of the market. Fashion forecasters, interior journalists, and cloth manufacturers all buy at these fairs.

In order to meet the demands of these fairs and marketing efforts, the designs are produced in many different categories. There are certain designers who specialise in accurate drawings of flowers or paisleys and these are known as the 'bread and butter' designs because they will always sell well. These designs range from small floral s for fashion prints to large complex ottoman designs for furnishing fabrics. The large furnishing designs can often take up to a week or two to complete, and sometimes are executed on fabric with inks and the manufacturer will try to print the material 'look' also. Very often the 'bread and butter' designs are taken from a page of an old book and changed only slightly or painted with updated colours.

A very important element of design at Faro is the comprehensive library it has. Charles and Ibe now have a valuable collection of old books of art and design, many from their university days in Hungary. The library contains many original books and it has been expanded annually. An acquisition fund is set aside annually for this purpose.

Other design categories such as children's wear, beach wear, interiors and fashion wear have to be kept very much up-to-date and include various alternatives within any given collection. One designer, Francesca, was particularly good at children's motifs either for fashion or interiors. She used children's paints and brushes to achieve the 'hand' of a child when painting. With a child's book as a guide for imagery, she produced many collections including co-ordinates and colourways during my time there.

Another designer's work I admired was that of a German woman, Joh Dagmar. She had a very interesting history having been one of the first textile designers to work for the Volkswagen car company. From there, she moved to Italy where she work for a design studio in Rome called Cobertaldo for ten years. From there she did freelance work in America for five years. She has been with Faro for twelve years and is considered one of the best designers and sells remarkably well worldwide. She uses her



own 'free' style and has an excellent sense of colour and composition.

Teri Bandl, a niece of Ibe and Charles, also a native of Hungary, specialised in upholstery fabric designs. She particularly used 18th and 19th century motifs. She modernised classic designs with new colours and techniques, and thus sold well in the America (see Figure 2).

Finally, there was a young designer there called Tony Tricky. He is English and graduated from Winchester College of Art with a degree in textile design. He is one of the most creative people I have ever met and he contributed significantly to the design output of the studio (not to mention character and humour!). He did a great deal of experimental work on paper and material, often bring in his sewing machine for sewing effects, or dye baths to achieve the exact colours and strengths he envisaged. It could be argued that he was a fine artist rather than a designer; it was from him that I learnt the most about composition, images, colour and materials. He designed mainly for fashion fabrics and appealed to the Japanese market due to the innovation and gadgetry. During the 1980s, when Missoni were a major client of Faro, Tony was responsible for creating the new logo and many patterns for collections through his use of coloured paper cut-outs, etc (see Figures 3 to 7).

Delegating and forecasting what work must be achieved by a certain date is the single most important factor for the management of these studios. Charles and Ibe have now let Ida, their daughter, take control of the everyday running of the studio. Ida is a member of the European Colour Forecasting Network and this gives her accurate knowledge of where direction trends are going in the future. She also goes on many of the trips worldwide selling designs, and so she has direct customer contact and knows what they expect each season. She commutes regularly between Como and Rome. In Como the designers are paid a monthly wage and enjoy security of employment. This is perhaps why the Como studio is producing very commercially salable designs. Ida

MISSONI



MASSA
 MONTANELLI
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MILA
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 VIA MATTEO
 SALOMAGGIO
 SALVO
 VIA ROMAGNOLI
 SARNICO
 L. A. D.
 VIA GARIBOLDI
 VARESE
 SESSANTO
 CORSO MATTEOTTI
 MODE
 ROSA

This image is a vibrant collage of various paper strips and shapes. At the top, there's a horizontal strip with a repeating pattern of yellow, black, and purple squares. Below this, several long, straight strips of paper in red, blue, and purple are scattered. A prominent feature is a large, wavy, multi-colored strip that forms a spiral-like shape, with colors including red, yellow, blue, and purple. To the left of this spiral is a checkered pattern made of yellow and black squares. Below the spiral, there's a horizontal strip with a yellow and black checkered pattern. At the bottom, a large, complex shape is formed by overlapping strips of yellow, black, and purple, creating a dense, woven appearance. The entire collage is set against a plain white background.

VITALITÀ. Il piacere del movimento, il gusto per gli sport, il coraggio del tuffo colore o del tuffo bianco. Questa collezione è una stile di vita. È moda "attiva". Vislata nelle giacche di varie lunghezze, morbide, fluide, "assisse". Vislata nei bermuda di città, negli shorts "ginnici", nelle gonne al ginocchio o alla caviglia, nei pantaloni allargati o occorati, negli abiti essenziali. Immagini virili: le donne fotografate da Munkacs negli anni '30, da Louise Dahl-Wolfe negli anni '40: la spazza della California o a Capri, vestite da Claire McCardell, con rivoluzionario americano semplicità. Vislata nei colon da asserno, con

Again vitality, in the outdoor colors following patterns of nature, from a fresh spring palette to an explosive tropical summer one. Black and white and pure white in the form of background and/or contrast to vivacious colors. Sharp shades of blue, a strong a ever. Green, turquoise, cyclamen, anemone purple, orange, coral pink in exotic fancies. A new round line of some of the dresses and blouses, not just sock or bowle but tassel or vase as well. Vitality too in the transparent embroidered effects, in the interchangeable basic pieces, in the soft geometry escaping figurative images.

Vitality in the crease suggestions, in the dancing skirts, petticoats and gathered Southern Belle necklines.

MISSONI UOMO COLLEZIONE PRIMAVERA / ESTATE

"MASTER STORY. Rivisitati da "Master" in una collezione che è pienamente Misonna, al tempo stesso, reprensibile. La moglie come oggetto di studio. Test: "Enate come coniglio, immagine, espressione, storia, evasione. M, questo volta, Resort vuol dire, per Misonna, una riedizione dei suoi classici, con nuova rilegatura, nuove illustrazioni".

progetto include una serie di patterns, spesso figurativi, con una particolare ricerca su colori, paesaggi, spirito e colori.

Il Ponte dei Sospir visto dalle finestre di una cella, ma anche il più garbato dei motivi veneziani, quello del costume di Arleschino, espresso con loangine coloratissime.

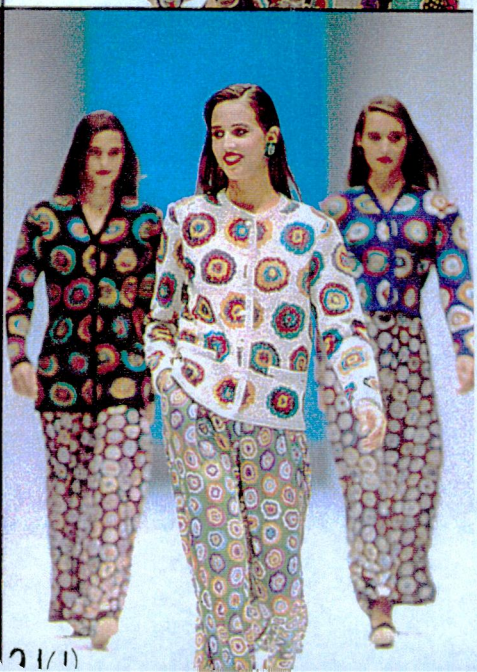
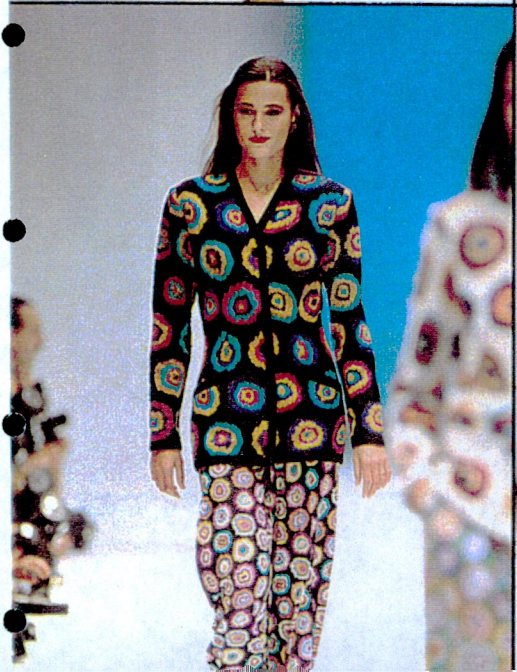
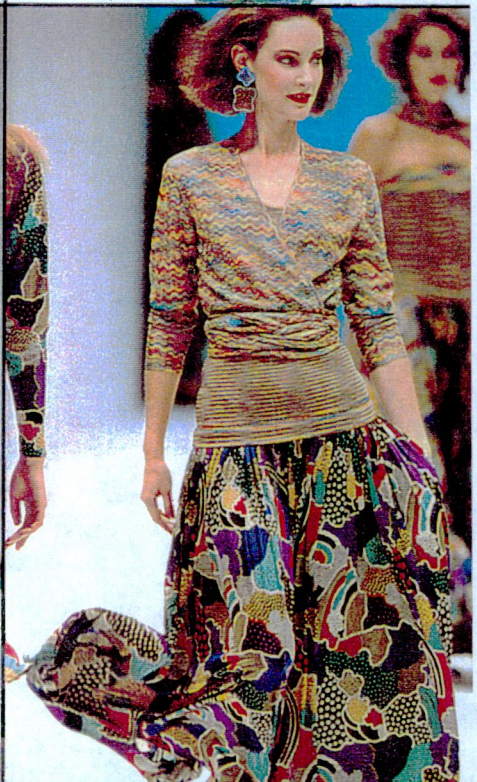
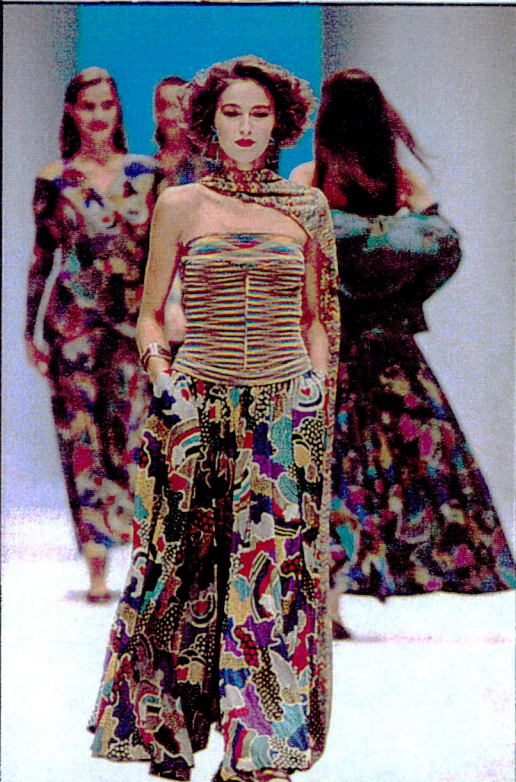
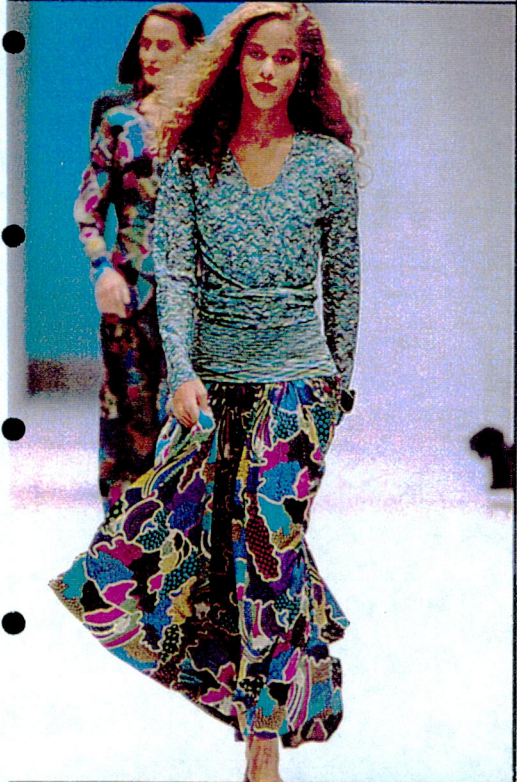
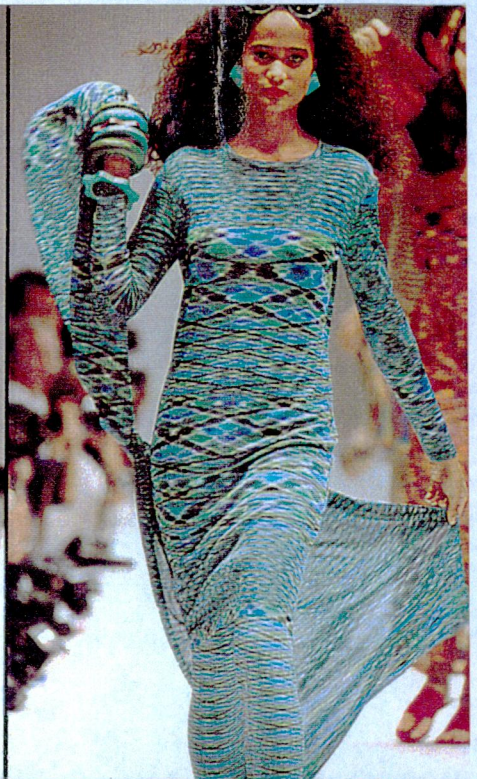
Le "matrici" (il repertorio Missoni, dal far lise al polsini, dal fiammato al klism, dal foltello alle righe all'italiana) è trattato con l'estrema libertà di una tecnica avanzata.

Alcuni effetti di lavorazione diventano veri e propri disegni a bordo una densellatura lungo un rigo per trasformarlo in un motivo paesistico.

La tecnica pura Sistema di lavoro: Patchwork e collage sono passi costanti per la costruzione dell'immagine.

Il soleggiato della test estivo, ecco gli allegri effetti di giochi di carte, di cartoline unistiche postali e di francobolli, di etichette sui bauli.







makes a lot of design decisions in Como and the designers carry out her design ideas. In Rome the designers work on a freelance basis and are only as good as their next or last design. There is no security of tenure. It is the designers' own ideas that become finished designs. Perhaps the Rome operation is more satisfying from a creative designer's view, it is financially insecure.

The management have therefore little or no responsibility towards its employees in Rome. This temporary, casual, part-time and 'black' work is a nationwide phenomenon. Ginsborg remarks on the contrast between north and south in his ultimate chapter:

"A final overall trend is the increasing differentiation between that part of the workforce which is 'garantito' (protected, in regular work, covered by social insurance and pension schemes), and that which is not. The majority of the garantiti are to be found in the centre and the north, and the non-garantiti in the south." (Ginsborg, 1990, p.410)

It is the manipulation of this social system that keeps the Rome studio in operation. Industrial relations suffer to a certain extent; however the designers are happy to be satisfying their own creative agenda in designs that they have devised rather than those determined a manager. The flexible hours are a bonus, particularly for working mothers; they can come early and leave early or vice-versa. The environment is non-stressful. The designers themselves set their timescale for each design and work towards trade fair dates. Yet there is resentment on the part of designers at the lack of even a basic minimum wage or health cover. Some designers have worked over ten years with the firm but they have no more status than the young designer who got a job yesterday. Some designers supplement other work with a fixed wage for half of each week whilst working on Faro designs on the other days. Others work completely at home and Faro sell on behalf of these designers.

Many of the designers are very creative individuals experimenting with many techniques and ideas. Ink, wax, stitching and fabrics were all common mediums to work with in the studio. Paper of all different textures, colours and weights were imported from around the world, particularly Japan. Many designers are fine artists, working on private pieces in the evenings or at weekends and simply designing for the studio to finance themselves. One of the designers, Pasquale, had two exhibitions of his sculpture work before I arrived.

I had expected that at Faro I would be treated as a student and taught techniques by observing designers at work. This was not the case. Ibe and Ida reviewed my portfolio on arrival and selected three designs they liked. They assigned me to a desk and provided me with requisite art materials. From one of the selected designs I was given a week to develop a collection of (twelve designs) which would go to America for the next trade fair. I progressed through the summer beginning, as I would in college, with a set brief and working through to completion. As I became more confident, I began noticing and learning from other designers techniques which I then incorporated into my own work. In August, when all the designers took summer holidays, I was left on my own. I completed several designs for fashion and beach-wear fabrics with bright colours and free-style patterns. By the time I left in September, six of my designs had sold in Japan and four in America.

Perhaps my only criticism of Faro was that for all the goodwill the employees showed the management, respect was not being paid financially to these hard-working men and women. It is through this type of manipulation of the system in Italy that many businesses, particularly in the textile industry, remain profit-making. On the one hand Italy is the fifth largest industrial nation in the world, while on the other hand, third world conditions for its labour force result in the high profit margins, no wages being paid unnecessarily, no loss of working hours. Designers consider themselves lucky to have this type of job these days and thus the system remains corrupt. The system is

also unlikely to change, the high costs of laying-off staff deters employers from hiring employees full-time. It is overall government policy which will have to protect employees rather than small firms like *Faro Textile Design Studio*.

Conclusion

"Far from being 'immobile', Italy has changed enormously and rapidly and many of these changes have been for the better. Compared to 1945 the average Italian is better fed, better housed, better educated, more literate and politically aware. (Sassoon, 1986)

It is increasingly obvious that Italy has now moved from an economy dependent on low wages, pervasive subsidies and widespread protection to an innovation-driven economy with a uniquely dynamic textile industry in the period of a few decades. The textile industry is still successful today largely due to the Italian business people and designers being flexible and innovative. From very early stages, their ability to incorporate state-of-the-art manufacturing and other technologies into small- and medium-sized firms has been crucial. These astute investments have won Italians international respect and credit in not only textiles, but also in related market segments like textil machinery, parts and many other spin-off products.

As with fashion predictions, the Italians have a highly developed sense of trends and forecasts many years in advance of competitors. Italian magazines, periodicals and journals swamp every country, telling consumers in every spectrum from office furniture to shirts what one must have in order to be fashionable, sophisticated and modern. This is a very important advantage that Italy possesses and earns goodwill from customers globally.

Italy as a nation is fully aware of its own superiority in regard to good taste and design. Design businesses in Italy can only be successful internationally if they are first successful at home against domestic competitors. The intense scrutiny, that is part of Italian culture, makes one aware of what one is wearing and how you wear it. This leads to intense competition and rivalry between people and businesses. The rivalry is

both personal and commercial. The rivalry in the textile industry causes innovation and rapid production of new products, resulting in a vigorous and exciting market both in Italy and worldwide.

It is difficult to say what lies ahead for the textile industry in Italy. To date it has overcome many obstacles and yet remained in a strong profit-making position. The opening up of the European markets to global imports will have a significant effect on all European textile producers. Many of these imports will come from third world countries where cheap labour is plentiful and will pose a serious price competition to the established producers in Europe. I believe, however, that the imported products will lack the design features and quality of their Italian counterparts, and the Italian industry will 'weather the storm'.

Italian companies, to date, have complied with EU environmental laws and will continue to find favour with environmentally-conscious European and North American customers. In order to remain competitive, it is likely that Italy will have to spend heavily in areas such as research and development, logistics and overseas market development. Italian companies will also need to evolve their management strategies if their global competitiveness is to be retained and extended, while in addition making greater strides in human resource management at home.

I believe that the Italian textile-clothing industry will be able to repulse the strong competition of newly industrialising countries. Through government support and appropriate capital investment, Italy will continue to reap the benefits and continue to be fore-runner in global taste and style in fashion and textiles well into the next century.

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