THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

"THE GROWTH OF THE ITALIAN FASHION SYSTEM SINCE WORLD WAR 2"

"A LEARNING EXPERIENCE"

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Plate 1 : An ensemble by Gianni Versace for his 1990 collection. British Vogue March 1990 P.213.

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BACKGROUND

The original plan for my thesis was to discuss the historical contribution of Italian artists, architects, painters and sculptors as a primary factor in the position of Italian fashion today.

In the course of research, it became clear to me that my original premise, though relevant, was, to say the least, inadequate to explain the current success of the Italian fashion industry.

From here, a lot of other questions arose and my thesis became much broader. I began to ask: What are the significant factors pertaining to this success? Are they unique to the Italian fashion industry? Is it a combination of factors that we in Ireland could learn from? What do we lack in Ireland that is holding us back?

English designer, Katherine Hamnett, who has recently switched her production base to Italy after years of manufacturing in Britain, says simply: "It's too difficult. They don't even consider the potential of fashion in England. They simply don't understand the kind of money they could be making. They should be sent to Milan for six months just to look at Italian industry."(1)

Betty Jackson, another formidable British designer, who has also moved base to Italy, says: "We beat our heads against a brick wall for so long with British manufacturers. You think they've understood and when the garment comes back it's overlocked

instead of the seams being neatened. You can't deliver it, and it's got your name on it. Italy is the answer to a maiden's prayer." (2)

Ireland's own John Rocha says: "Manufacturing in Ireland is a hazardous game. I have my collections produced in Italy." (3)

Comments such as these led me to realise that to consider Italian design in isolation is to deny its function within the relationship that exists in Italy between design, production and marketing. This relationship, I would submit, is the foundation for the phenomenal success of Italian design today.

In retrospect, this study has given me the opportunity to re-think my ideas about the basic role of the designer, and the infrastructure needed in Ireland to allow design talent to flourish, and to contribute positively to the gross national product, as it has in Italy.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, when one examines the latest editions of "Vogue", "Elle", "Tatler", or any of the other international style setting magazines, undoubtedly there will be at least one editorial featuring some of the big names in Italian fashion.

Italy is recognised as a major leader in the design world: cars by Pininfarina, furniture by Cassina, plastics by Kartell, office systems by Olivetti, clothes by Armani .....

For the public at large, the general idea of Italy is connected with images of art, of cinema, of design and of fashion. There is, however, nothing innocent or spontaneous about this image. Italy has worked hard to build it up, and is now beginning to reap the rewards of prolific work in recent years.

Taking a look at what leading French and American designers have to say about Italian fashion will give one some idea of how highly regarded the Italian 'fashion system' is amongst those whose business it is to know about style.

Donna Karan, New York:

"Italy puts creativity first. I see that particularly at the fabric mills. They understand the work of a designer and have an incredible relationship with all levels of design. The purity of design is respected." (4)

Emmanuel Ungaro, Paris

"What Italians have, especially when it comes to fabrics, is imagination, creativity, dynamism and availability. For them anything is possible. It's never 'no'. Manufacturers are reliable, serious in their follow-up, and they take risks." (5)

Christian Lacroix, Paris

"The Italian manufacturing industrialists have, more than the French, a passion for fashion. Like the Japanese, they have conserved an artisan's sensibility without neglecting modern techniques." (6)

Sonia Rykiel, Paris

"Italy is the champion of quality. Quality is the word that comes to mind when one thinks of Italian fashion: creative design, the very best of fabrics, superb tailoring, dedicated artisans and brilliant technicians." (7)

These comments might lead one to believe that Italy has a great tradition of fashion. Not so. Italian design has not always enjoyed such a prestigious position in international style circles. It is only since World War 2 that Italy has really begun to realise, and capitalise on, the design potential she possesses.

The Italian 'fashion system' has had to deal with a complexity of problems within recent decades. The obstacle that immediately comes to mind is the subordinate relationship of Italian fashion to that of France.

This is an overbearing legacy, not only of the Fascist period and the fundamental ineffectiveness of the whole operation in the fashion field mounted by them from 1932 onwards, but of a long and established tradition, whose roots go back as far as the seventeenth century, when the whole of the European aristocracy conformed to a courtly model such as the French one.

Over the last forty years, a striking change of direction has taken place in the Italian fashion world. With the necessary backing and encouragement of their government, Italian designers have managed to record a great development in recent years.

Today, the fashion industry (textiles, apparel and accessories) is ranked second on the Italian export trade figures, and brings into the Italian treasury over a billion dollars a year in foreign exchange.

Although aesthetic and artistic tradition, along with new techniques of promotion and distribution, have all played a part in the recent popularity of the 'Italian Look', its success is rooted in the phenomenon of Italian industrial design and the distinctive ability of Italian manufacturers to bring about a fruitful encounter between design and high technology.

I am interested in trying to evaluate how in the space of forty years since 1945 Italian designers have lifted themselves out of a rut where couturiers were still copying the models that Paris dictated, and are now amongst the most influential figures in the design world.

I will look at the parallel development of the couture, ready-to-wear, knitwear and textile industries, to see how they have interacted to form a strong united front to Italian fashion.

I will then consider if any of these processes, which have in retrospect proved so successful in Italy, would have any bearing on the Irish fashion scene. There must, I feel, be invaluable lessons to be learnt from the methods used by the Italians in tackling design, production and co-ordination problems in the fashion field.

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CHAPTER 1

Paris in Eclypse - A Chance for Italy to Shine

According to I.S.V. Patcevitch, for 28 years President and Chairman of Conde Nast:

"Each issue of Vogue, this fragile and transitory product, performs a certain function. It holds a mirror up to its times, a small mirror perhaps, but a singularly clear, brilliant and revealing one." (8)

With this in mind, I looked to the early 1930's and 40's editions of British Vogue as a starting point in piecing together an overall picture of the fashion world in the years leading up to and during the Second World War. They helped me to put Italian fashion into some sort of global context and to gain a better understanding of the social environment that fostered a fashion system which was tyranically dictatorial.

The 1930's and 40's editions of Vogue revealed to me that there were just two major influences on the tide of world fashion, unquestionably Hollywood and Paris. The former set a standard of sumptuous luxury, taking their lead from the latter.

The 1930's saw stars such as Joan Crawford, Gertrude Lawrence and Marlene Dietreich, wearing clothes by the foremost French designers - Schiaparelli, Vionnet, Lelong and Mainbocher.

In the 1940's, Deborah Kerr, Katharine Hepburn, Vivienne Leigh and Ingrid Bergman, were sporting models by Chanel, Paquin and Molyneux.

Women who could afford couture clothes bought from Paris, but the great cinema-going public of America and Europe copied the dresses of the screen stars.

Vogue filled its pages with slinky cinema satins from France, along with a monthly page long feature titled "Paris Says....." which outlined the latest changes and directions dictated by the couturiers. Rigid lines were laid down, encompassing fabrics, cut, hemlines, shoes, accessories, cosmetics and headwear. Vogue of November 1936 noted:

"Paris says its pleats, transparancies, prints and tunics." (a)

Throughout this period I could find virtually no mention of Italian fashion in Vogue. Paris was the unquestioned leader in the fashion field. French models were copied by fashion houses throughout the world.

Legions of Italian couturiers made their way to Paris to acquire models for copying, or to make surreptitious sketches during the fashion shows. The imitations would then be made up in Italy. A French origin was a positive factor from the commercial point of view, and was widely publicised in order to attract customers.

There were, however, individual designers working in Italy in the 1930's and 40's whose work was innovative and original, but due to the lack of a strong united front to Italian fashion, they did not

receive the necessary back up or publicity that would ensure them international recognition.

One such designer is Mariano Fortuny - known as "the magician of Venice." Painter, inventor, theatre designer and photographer, he is best known for his dresses and textiles. Working outside the mainstream of haute couture from his base at the Palazzo Orfei since the early 1900's, Fortuny saw himself as an artist who was interested in dress as a medium - another means of displaying his painting and patterns.

Through designing theatrical costumes, he became increasingly involved with designs and effects with cloth. This led to the creation of his famous 'Delphos' dress, which was eventually to become the hallmark of his work.

This garment was simply cut, and hung loosely from the shoulders to the ground in finely pleated silks. It was named 'Delphos' after the bronze statue of the Delphatic Charioteer, from which he derived his inspiration.

A revolution for the tightly corseted women of 1907, Fortuny saw his dress as an invention. In 1909 he patented it, and throughout his life he created timeless variations from the original.

Among his other creations were jackets, mantles and capes, made from rich velvets and silks which he designed and printed himself. Decorated by hand, using a stencil technique, or hand-painted in gold or silver, each cloth was unique, and his materials were always of the highest quality.

Fortuny's work was much admired by the highly influential French designer, Paul Poiret, who commissioned young artists to work with him on everything - from textiles and fashion, to interior and theatre design. Fortuny was among the list of formidable artists he commissioned, along with others such as Sonia Deluanay and Raymond Duncan.

In 1909, he turned the ground floor of the Palazzo Orfei into a shop, which sold original fabrics and dresses. From here he began to establish a network of international outlets.

By 1919 he established the Societa Amomina Fortuny on the island of Guidecca, where he opened a print factory in a former Napoleonic prison. He began to diversify, creating intricately decorated cottons intended for interiors, which he sold alongside his silks and velvets in a Paris shop in Rue Charron, next door to Poiret's 'Rosine' boutique.

Artists and the literary set really appreciated Fortuny's work. Marcel Proust wrote of his Delphos dress, describing it as :

"Faithfully antique, but powerfully original, an inspiration."(10)

Throughout the 1920's, 30's and 40's, there was considerable demand for Furtuny's creations. They were worn by Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, Isadora Duncan, Countess Greffulhe, Duchesse of Grémont, Queen Mary of Romania, and more recently, Martha Grahame, Greta Garbo, Peggy Guggenheim and Irene Worth. The list goes on - some of the most famous names of his time.

In 1949 Fortuny died. The Palazzo Orfei was renamed The Palazzo Fortuny, and is now a museum to his lifetime's work. His friend, Comtesse Gozzi, still worked there executing the famous Fortuny fabrics. His clothes have now become collectors' items.

Why then could I find no trace of his work in Vogue during the 1920's, 30's or 40's? Why was it that Italy, which was producing talented, prolific artists such as Fortuny, yet its couturiers felt obliged to copy the work of French designers?

It had become more profitable for the Italian couturiers and manufacturers to simply follow the lead from Paris. It was a vicious circle. The demand had been created. Everybody was crying out for French couture, and until the public could be persuaded that Italian fashion was worthwhile having, economics demanded that French couture was what they would have to be given.

Italian designers thus found themselves trapped into a situation where they were merely churning out reproductions on the Parisienne theme, season after season.

The Italian 'fashion system' was in a rut, and it was to take an earthshattering event to shake it out.

In 1940 this event occurred. Germany under Adolf Hitler invaded Poland and the Second World War began, plunging Britain and France, followed by America, Canada, Russia, Japan, Italy and Australia into the worst war the world has even known, in which over thirty million people perished.

The war was to change the face of fashion dramatically. At first the conflict appeared to make little difference. When all the great Paris houses launched their collections in March 1940, they found plenty of buyers, both European and American. And it was reported in Vogue in March of that year:

"Social life goes on, and in the Ritz they are all dining in skirts that touch their toes." (11)

The battle of France soon put an end to that. The couture industry was in the hands of the Germans after the fall of Paris in late 1940. The victorious Germans, however, made every effort to win over artisans of all kinds during the occupation, and dress designers continued to produce some extravagant fashions.

Some of the famous couture houses managed to stay open in Paris. Schiaparelli and Mainbocher went to America, and Molyneux, Creade and Delanghe to London.

One of the first things the Germans did was to break into the Syndicate offices and seize all documents pertaining to the French export trade. Lucien Lelong, President of the Couture Syndicate, successfully resisted all German efforts to remove the couture houses to Berlin and Vienna, and managed to show two abbreviated collections a year.

The export trade, however, was dead. Britain was completely cut off from French haute couture, as was most of Europe, and Schiaparelli's wardrobe that she took to America in 1940 was the last Paris fashion to be shown in Vogue for four years. Michel

de Brunhoff, Editor of French Vogue, was unable to publish under the Germans.

For a magazine that was so closely concerned with Paris as Vogue, the blanket of silence that descended on the city during the occupation was bound to change the character of the magazine.

In the summer of 1940, the regular 'Paris Says' feature ceased, and it was noticeable that the magazine had already become more insular and independent. The shortages caused by the war, and the lack of direction from Paris, forced British designers such as Norman Hartnell, Hardy Amies, Peter Russell, Worth, to get together to pool their ideas and to use their limited materials to present a united front to fashion.

In June 1941, clothes rationing was introduced in Britain. Utility clothes came in, and models were photographed on location in factories or beside bomb craters. Make-up disappeared from the shops. So too did stockings. It looked as though fashion was at its lowest ebb.

Contrary to appearances, however:

"A revolution was taking place behind the smokescreen of wartime conditions". (12)

The war proved to be a watershed for fashion:

"The genius who invented the utility scheme had a lot to say in the development of the fashion industry."

By controlling quantities and prices, the utility scheme forced manufacturers to choose their cloths wisely and cut economically. Standards of manufacture were imposed by minimum standard government regulations, and by a public forced by coupon rationing to discriminate.

Methods of manufacture were streamlined and better merchandised by the pressures of uniform production. Sizing and costing were, for the first time, regularised and accurately worked out, and the labour system was reassessed.

In a speech to the fashion group of New York, Edna Woolman Chase, the American Editor in Chief of Vogue said:

"When people speak to me about this war they ask me, 'Isn't it going to be incredibly difficult to edit a luxury magazine like Vogue in times like this?' My answer to that is - What kind of a magazine do you think this is. Fashion would not be fashion if it did not conform to the spirit and needs and restrictions of the current times." (13)

The British fashion system was actually benefitting immensely from the limitations and the lack of communication caused by the war, as was the case in both America and Italy.

"Cut off from the dictates of Paris couture houses during the war, a distinct American look began to develop in New York, particularly in the inventive hands of Claire McCardell. Her vast talent characterised by lateral thinking and a total absence of snobbery,

re-assessed the humble basics of American clothing, and made of them something startlingly fresh and perfectly adapted to American women's changing roles. (American Vogue, P.211, 1986).

Her designs came out of an early awareness of the needs of the busy housewife and the working, travelling woman; her ambition was to dress them effectively and inexpensively.

Pride in the outdoorsy American woman has always been a strong influence on U.S. fashion. In 1940 American Vogue confidently noted:

"One unquestionably pure American contribution to fashion - sports clothes, play clothes, swimming clothes. These are native; they grow out of our life; they are as unselfconscious as a good game of tennis, as gay and happy as the life on America's thousands of miles of beaches." (14)

However dressed up the American city clothes became, they were still known as sportswear.

American women have always demanded clothes that do not get in the way of the job in hand. Amelia Bloomer, who gave her name to the first sensible garment for female bicycle riding as far back as the 1850's, was American. Her unselfconscious daring, and refusal to see why women should continue to be held back by old fashioned, illogical forms of clothing, was only an early example of a way of thinking that gives American design its energy.

Lacking the tradition of elitist European culture, American design has always been about mass marketing, about producing what most women want.

With breathing space from French dictates, the American 'sports-wear' look went from strength to strength during these years.

Later, in the 1950's and 60's, the American desire for sportswear and quality casual clothing was to provide a ready market for Italian design.

At the beginning of the war predictions had been uncertain what would happen to fashion, with no direction from Paris and such hare conditions in terms of shortages. This, however, taught designers all over the world that they had the ability to carry on designing without Paris, and under sever limitations. Paris would never again have quite such a final say as she had before the war.

American, English and Italian designers were becoming more and more determined to assert their new-found self confidence.

From 1922, following the famous march on Rome after which Benito Mussolini was appointed Prime Minister, Italy was under fascist rule.

A regime which looked upon the backwardness of the working class as a guarantee of its own stability, the fascist government did not like the idea of advanced research. It opposed the study of a system of design which could be applicable on any scale, regarding

it as an outcome of democratic ideology, with possibilities of social progress, and therefore suspect, to say the least.

The fascists boycotted foreign products, and obstructed the transmission of information from the rest of Europe concerning artistic movements of the time.

In terms of fashion, and monarchy and the fascist regime publicly committed themselves to the idea of women dressing in Italian fashions.

Two of the most important weddings of the period bear witness to that commitment. When Maria Jose, Princess of Belfium, married Umberto of Savoia in 1930, she was dressed by the Ventura firm, who also was in charge of her reception gowns and those for all other 'occasions'.

Also, when Edda Ciano, the daughter of Benito Mussolini, married Count Galeazzo Ciano in the same year, the Montorsi firm made her wedding gown and trousseau. Many other women then followed these examples.

In June 1940, Mussolini announced that Italy had entered the war. In the same year, in the winter edition of 'Belleze', the official magazine of the Ente Nazionale Moda, was published the guidelines of Italian fascist fashion for tailors, milliners, showmakers and all artisan categories.

They were required to comply with 'good taste'. (rules were based on rigid discipline, fabric saving, sober lines, refined details and colour palette.

Moreover, the Ente Nazionale Moda guaranteed that models would be kept secret, and prohibited workshops from having relations with non allied foreign countries.

This, combined with the lack of direction from Paris during the wartime period, was, contrary to appearances, one of the most positive factors in the long term development of the Italian fashion system.

The lack of outside influence gave Italian designers no option but to become to some degree self-sufficient. 'Belleza' magazine recorded in 1947 that: "During the days of wartime isolation, Italian collections were all without copies." [vol. 1, p.172] (15)

Italian couturiers began, slowly, to realise the design potential they possessed, potential which was not being utilised due to the over-riding tendency to submit meekly to French design supremacy. In 1942, during the most difficult period of the war, came the first signs that Italian couturiers were trying to overcome their lack of design confidence, and were beginning to challenge the French.

Like the rest of Europe, Italy was devastated after the war, physically and socially. Cities were destroyed, industries

neglected and the population demoralised. Technology had taken a leap forward because of the war, but domestic orientated industry had failed to keep up. The economy had been undermined, politics had gone head over heels, and the people had suffered massive cultural changes.

Finally, when the hostilities were over, there occurred in Italy a sort of democratic re-birth, with the anti-fascist movements of national liberation, setting about the task of re-building the country, easing the scar of oppression inflicted upon her by the fascists, establishing social justice.

A number of society women founded 'maisons de couture' after the war, aristocratic ladies such as Simonetta Visconti, Princess Galitzine and Donna Giovanna Caracciolo. Three little dressmakers from Parma, the Fontana sisters, created a couture house of international reputation, with branches in New York and London. Besides these, other ateliers were opened, such as Maria Antonelli, Frederico Schuberth, Alberto Fabiani, Sorelle Fontana, Germana Marucelli, Jole Venezian, Wanna .... the list goes on. This huge surge of creativity needed an outlet.

However, in spite of good designers working in Italy, Britain and America, it was Paris that emerged from the war as leader in fashion, with one man literally saving the prestige of French fashion.

In 1946, backed by Marcel Boussac, the textile millionaire, Christian Dior opened at 30 Avenue Montagne, Paris, launching his revolutionary 'New Look', on February 12th, 1947. He proposed a corseted woman with a flourishing bust, a slim waist, rounded natural

shoulders, ankle length flaired skirts and high stiletto heel shoes.

This look had been preceded by thirteen uninterrupted years of the square shouldered, straight short skirt - Schiaparelli-initiated look.

Women had barely emerged from the privations of war and they greeted Dior's extravagance with undisguished relish - while male politicians were busy denouncing it for using such huge amounts of fabric at a time when all materials were still in such short supply.

The first ambition of the post war years had been to get back to normal. The first sign of life after the war had been women's appetitite for Dior's 'New Look', but on second sight its appeal was seen as nostalgic, a reaction against the sexless, dreary clothes of wartime.

Women had been forced by circumstances of war to fulfil jobs that men would have previously occupied. They had become accustomed to wearing boiler suits and trousers to work.

Many of them had enjoyed their new-found freedom of working and earning their own wage, and wanted to continue to do so after the was.

Dior's 'New Look' was not a very practical suggestion for this new breed of woman. Tight nipped-in corsetted waists were surely a thing of the past. The novelty of the 'New Look' was soon to

soon wear off, and although Dior remained a highly influential fashion force until his death in 1957, the ever growing tide of young Italian designers were preparing for a new challenge.

In 1948, Italian industrialist Franco Marinotti, President of Snia Viscosa, established the Centro Italiano della Moda (Italian Fashion Centre), considered the largest manufacturer of man-made textile fibres as far back as the end of the 1930's, the chief aim of which was to concentrate the scattered initiatives of individual dress-makers into a single national fashion fair that would facilitate the task of fashion writers and buyers.

The centre was headquartered in Milan in the hope that Italian fashion would discover artificial fibres and gain for synthetic fabrics the same respect that natural fabrics enjoyed.

In Milan, Siki, Marucelli, Veneziani, Curiel, Tizzoni and Fercioni began presenting garments made with artificial fabrics. Their fashion shows were organised in collaboration with the Venice Film Festival, under an agreement with the International Centre of Arts and costume. In addition to the Milanese designers, Galtizine, Capucci and Enzo Baratta also took part in these early shows.

In 'Belleze' magazine in 1948, Irene Brun pointed out how little justification there was in following foreign models, whether French or American, and offered the advice that Italians should "show ourselves as we are." [vol. 1, P. 170]

In 1951 there came the change for Italian designers to do just that. For them, fashion would never be the same after the 'fashion conscious' 1950's.

CHAPTER 2

The International Successs and the Domestic Debut of Italian Fashion:

Fundamental changes occurred think and fast during the 1950's - changes that revolutionised the Italian fashion industry, taking it into new territories, involving bigger business than ever before.

The advent of the teenager was a new phenomenon in society. The idea of teenage lifestyle was a luxury that could only come into being when the young had enough money to pay mother for their keep and have something left over for themselves.

This state of affairs arrived in the 1950's. There was a shortage of labour. Europe had to be rebuilt, and there was an enormous housing shortage because of the war damage, which meant a youngster could get a good job as soon as he left school. If he earned a good wage he could give half to his mother and still have the rest to spend on clothes, records, drink, bikes etc.

The teenage market, which saw a rise of special magazines, shops, records and radio stations, aimed at a specific group which had not not existed before. A new economic force was coming into being.

Fashion became a new language, when boys and girls between 17 and 23 began to use clothes for group identification.

The word 'teenager' itself was an import from America, and it was the 'American Way of Life' that was to have a huge influence on

the evolution of consumption in Europe in the 1950's.

The first impact of modern patterns of consumption on Italian fashion was both violent and traumatic; violent because the cultural penetration of 'The American Way of Life' was rapid and comprehensive, in the sense that it did not spare any sphere of daily life; traumatic because the new lifestyle that emerged out of North American society broke with many ancient customs and rooted habits, with the result that at least in the early stages Italian families put up a fair amount of resistance to the new consumer goods on the market. Yet once doubts and suspicions were overcome, Italians, like the rest of Europe, did not hang back from changing their lifestyle and began not only to acquire the new consumer products with remarkable enthusiasm, but to reject without too many regrets the cultural framework on which their customs had previously been based.

"New Products" whetted the appetite, the commercial novelty - anything that appeared different from the 'old' consumer goods and traditional way of life, processed goods, the motor car, domestic gadgets, plastic articles, all things that were completely new with respects to habits of consumption in traditional Italy (the domestic hearth, natural foods, hand-crafted products, etc.).

In the realm of fashion, in the 1950's there was a huge desire for the "new" garments, for both men and women, which fulfilled a need to testify to the end of wartime and post-war penury. These "new" clothes were a witness to the wearer's membership of urban

industrial society. The possession of certain goods was a guarantee of a new status.

It was at the beginning of the 1950's that the effective take-off of the Italian economy occurred. The 'Italian Look' then gets under way, just as Italy, traditionally a poor country, begins to feel it can cope with its own elementary needs, once the fridge, washing machine, television, car, seaside home, had been bought.

It was on the crest of this wave of consumerism that Italian fashion really began to take off.

After the reconstruction of the years after the war, Italy entered a phase of rapid economic growth, in which the garment industry appeared as one of the more dynamic fields, partly because of its good qualitative level, and competitive prices, guaranteed by the low cost of labour, made it possible to develop new and larger markets.

According to an opinion formed and disseminated by the press, Italy boasted manufacturing traditions sufficient to allow the possibility of, if not competing with, at least of posing a potential alternative to the primacy of France.

The motive behind what came to be referred to as the Italian Look (the American expression immediately found place in Italian trade jargon, in part because the States were the first and chief buyers) is thus eminently economic, and it is justified by the fact that during the years immediately after the war, Italy gravitated in

the orbit of the American market. Thus, there were all the premises for launching fashion, too, in the wake of the 'Italian Made' goods that were invading American stores. Fashion shows had had a more or less stop and go existence, tied to society events and either appearing at festivals, sports, theatre, and other activities, and even if every important dressmaker organied defiles to show off his or her products, there did not exist an event that by joining together the more representative names could bring them to the attention of the market.

While newspapers and magazines continued to focus exclusively on models from north of the Alps (mainly French), a few Italian fashion firms began to make themselves a reputation in specialised fields.

Salvadore Ferragamo, for instance, had made Palazzo Feroni a reference point and meeting place for elegant women of the bel mondo. Immortalised at the cobbler's bench, he was taken as an example of the giftedness and personality of the Italian craftsman, for whom a touch is all that is needed to distinguish himself and create an exclusive - the heritage of the Renaissance Man of certain appeal.

Then the climate began to change. In September 1950 the Centro Italiano della Moda called in the major dressmakers to learn the new trends. The reports it received were essentially identical, due in part to the fact that Italian models still depended substantially on the Paris style.

In July of the same year, Florence tried in the wake of similar initiatives to involve at least the city in a show of local fashion, coupled with a famous entertainment event, 'The Maggio Musicale', which maintained a considerable artistic and high society appeal.

On May 22nd fashion became entertainment on the stage of the Teatro della Pergola. The mannequins entered from behind three canvasses, reproducing paintings of different epochs, complete with frames, in a temporal sequence that suggested an ideal continuity of the history of costume. They showed creations by Bellenghi, Calabri, Chiostri, Chioffi, Aiazzi-Fantechi, Lami, Magnani and Palloni, and shoes by Ferragamo, representing thereby the best of Florentine output.

In the following year came the unifying event that Italian design needed so badly.

"On February 12th 1951, one man in Florence sanctioned the official birthdate of the 'Italian Look'. A man with a noble hawklike face, a worldly smile, the courtesy and bearing of an aristocrat, the vocation of the patron, and an unshakeable faith in products 'Made in Italy; Giovan Battista Giorgini invented Italian high fashion." (16)

He started working in 1923 as a buying agent for some of the best American companies. Despite political upheavals, closure during the war, and the economic recession, he managed to organise Italy's export across the Atlantic. His flair, imagination and enthusiasm as a businessman was responsible for the success

abroad of quite a few Italian craft products, from footwear to knitwear, and from Florentine linen to ceramics, glasswear and antiques.

His daughter, Mathilde, who started working for him in 1947, said of him:

"My father was so convinced that our craftsmen were technically unbeatable, he went pretty far to prove it. All kinds of things were brought back from America to widen their knowledge and to duplicate them better." (17)

In 1950, Georgini realised that his American clients when they came to Italy were: "Struck by the elegance and originality of certain boutiques."

Since the war, despite notable challenge from British, American and Italian designers, Paris had still managed to lead the way in all things elegant. Dior very much dominated fashion since his new look of 1947 had literally saved the prestige of French fashion after the war. Other French names to be reckoned with were: Balenciaga, considered by many to be the greatest designer of his day: Madame Gres: Jacques Fath: Givenchy: Balmain: Cardin: Nina Ricci: and the great Madame Chanel, who re-opened her house in 1954 - a high powered line up.

Georgini decided that there was no reason to feel inferior to the French designers. He made a tour of the better known ateliers in Rome and Milan, suggesting that they invent original designs,

as different as possible from those of Dior, Fath and Balenciaga.

The aleliers were not impressed by his suggestions. They had been thriving on customers who wanted copies of Paris styles. Giorgini did not give up. He scouted among the new names, and succeeded in convincing ten high fashion people (Simonetta, Fabiani, Fontana, Antonelli, Schubert, Carosa, Marucelli, Veneziani, Noberasco, Vanna), and four boutiques (Emilio Pucci, Baroness Gallotto, Avolio, and Berboli of Milan).

He organised a fashion show at his own home in Florence for February 12th 1951, the first fashion show expressly conceived for the international community of critics and buyers. Its aim was to win international acknowledgement for Italian creativity, calling on the participation of designers from Milan, Rome and Florence.

In March of that year, Italian fashion received its first formal consecration, when I. Magnin, the most influential American buyer, showed both French and Italian creations at his seasonal fashion show.

He invited important American customers such as Mrs. Ziminsky of B. Altman, Julia Magnin of California, Hanag Troy and John Nixon of Morgan of Montreal. Also invited were big journalists such as Elisa Massai, Elsa Robiola and Sandra Bartolomei Grosso.

The first presentation caused a great stir, and hit all the newspapers immediately. By the following season, July 1951, Giorgini was so submerged by requests, that he was forced to transfer the next show to a hugh hall in the Grand Hotel.

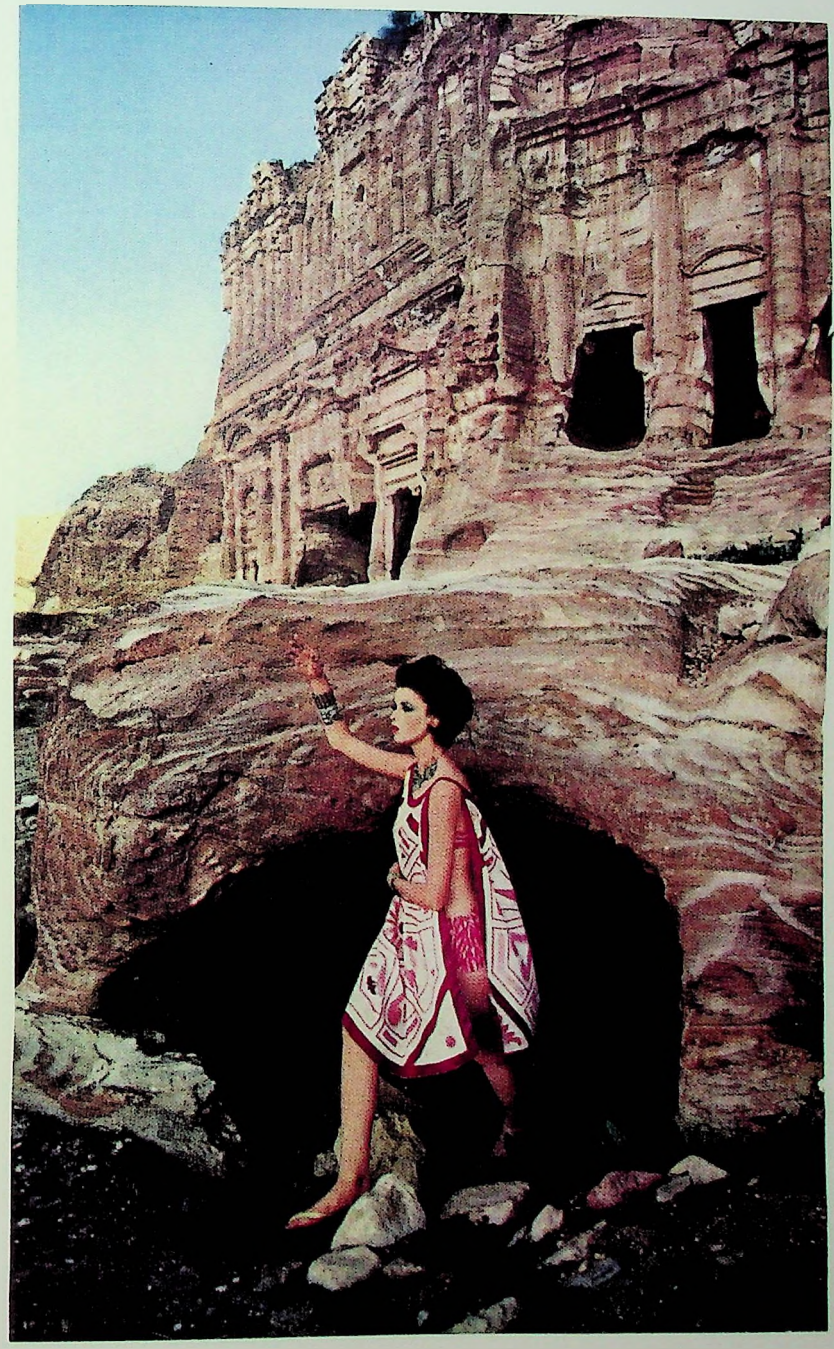
Maria Pezzi of Life and Time Magazine, telephoned Giorgini to apply for entry to the July showings. She wanted to photograph Italian fashion; this was really the beginning of the take off of Italian design.

One of the designers especially favoured by the American buyers, was Emilio Pucci. He deserves a special mention at this point. During the postwar period he was among the first of the Italian designers to have his fashions exported to the States, and was the first Italian to become a myth in the world of international fashion.

He started to design fashion for his friends in the postwar period. He designed a range of ski wear while at St. Moritz. These were noticed by a fashion photographer from Harpers Bazaar, who published pictures of his work in 1947. His career as a fashion designer had begun.

In the early 1950's he broke all schemes, coming up with the colour combinations that made him famous (Capri blue, Emilio pink, and a turquoise called, to this day, Pucci turquoise). He created prints with an Italian flavour, inspired by the Palio di Siena.

In an interview for Woman Magazine in 1964, from his palazzo in Florence Pucci told Veronica Scott: "Colour does so much for a



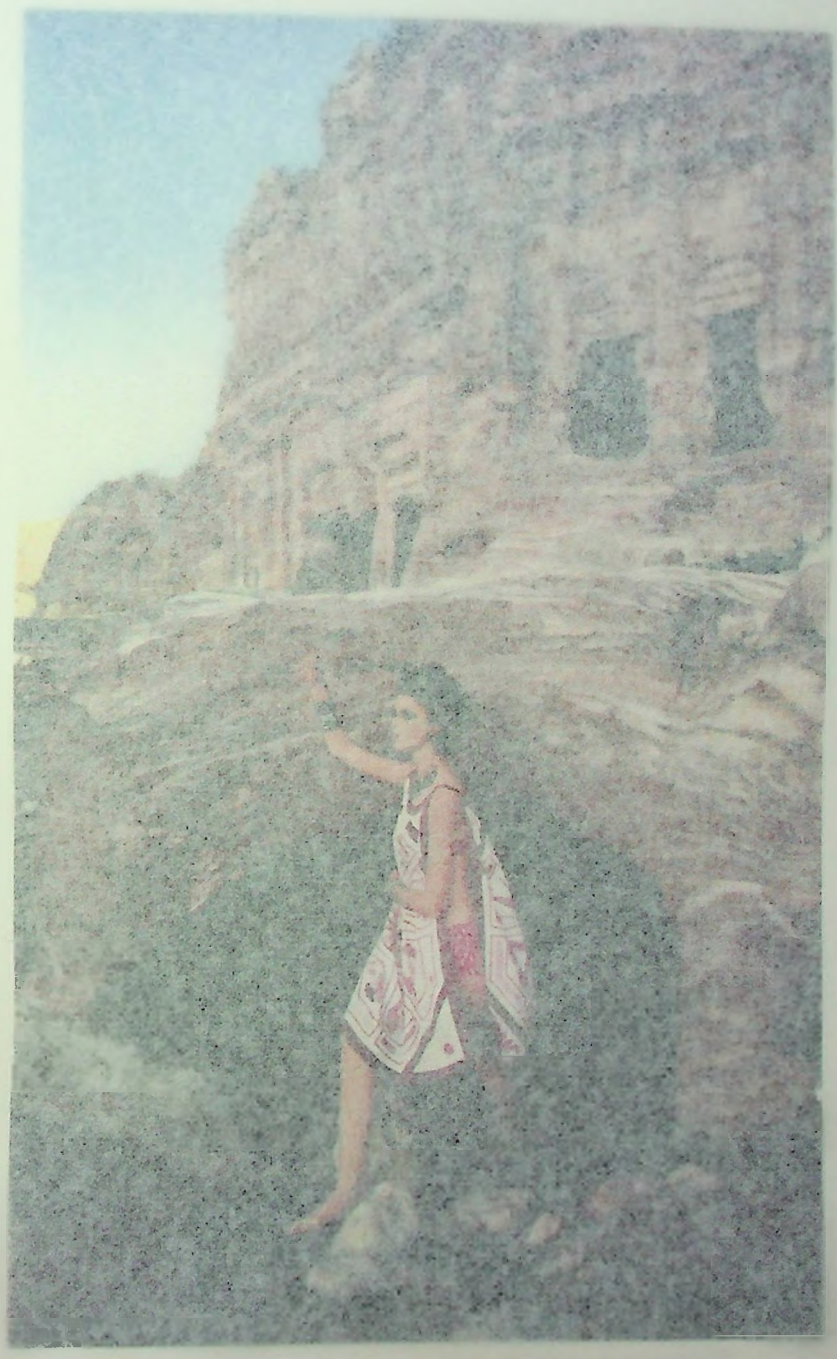


Plate . Pucci pinks on silk, simple tunics shown in British Vogue in 1956.

Plate . Puccis use of vibrant colour is portrayed here, bright yellow silk top and scarf over slim fitting yellow trousers.
Vogue 1959 June. P. 13

Plate 7. Puccis' famous palazzo pants pictured in British Vogue 1956.

woman - enhances her beauty, makes her clothes exciting instead of drab, gives her gaiety and confidence, so that she is attractive."

During the mid-fifties, bright new synthetic fabrics such as Orlon, Dralon and Terylene, and knit jerseys, were developed. These fabrics were crease-resistant, easy to wear, and washed well. Pucci immediately took advantage of these fabrics, creating bright easy to wear comfortable garments.

His clothes delighted the Americans, whose love of sportswear made them partial to the easy fluid lines of the Pucci cut.

Comfortable palazzo pants, tunics, swirling skirts and dresses were his forte. "Life is getting more hectic", Pucci explained. "I've tried to create a new concept of fashion to go with it. That's why I choose slacks, perfect for open air living."

Pucci, quite rightly, predicted that: "Clothes of the future will all contain stretch fibres, foundations will be streamlined, the all in one leisure suit will arrive."

Pucci fashions dominated the late 50's, the 60's and the early 70's. The influence of his sporty designs is still evident today.

Italian designers have since produced variations on the Pucci themes - soft swirling printed skirts for casual wear, palazzo pants with easy to wear co-ordinates, have become de rigeur sportswear of today.

Three seasons after the first presentation in 1953, the Grand

Hotel could no longer capacitate the numbers at the shows. Giorgini applied for, and gained, permission to hold the shows at the Salon Blanca of the Palazzo Pitti, a permission never granted to a private individual.

The show was a tremendous hit - at least seventy models for each house were shown. It was here that the famous T-shaped catwalk originated. Over thirty metres long, it was covered in pale beige carpet. The Palazzo Pitti proved to be the perfect showcase for Italian fashion.

In 1954, Giorgini began to solicit interest in fashion among public figures, and in that year, due to his own personal industry, he convinced the Chairman of the Florence Chamber of Commerce, and Tourist Board, to set up the Florence Centre for Italian Fashion.

When the war was over, the internal demand for clothes had taken a sharp upturn. Clothes made to measure took the lion's share. In 1955 still no more than 22% of garments sold were produced by the ready to wear manufacturers.

In 1954, Samia (International Clothing Market and Show) had a large scale trade fair in Turin to promote mass produced products.

The concern for quality and the industry's interest in the 'fashion content' of mass produced clothing, are demonstrated by an important step by the Italian Association of Clothing Manufacturers (AIIA): the setting up of a Fashion Board of Clothing Manufacturers in Milan in 1958. The Board was intended to conduct

research into the possibilities of forecasting colours and fabrics. The ready to wear industry had to deal more and more seriously with new and more exacting sections of the market, and had to cater to them and/or attempt to shape their tastes.

Giorgini, who had a lot of past experience of the American market, saw huge prospects for Italian expansion into off-the-peg fashions that were becoming popular there. In 1955, he urged some of the wool, silk and cotton producers (Rivetti, Tarragni, Valdisusa) to come to an agreement with dress designers, to launch a new and up to date idea - a ready to wear fashion show. The first show was held in Milan at the Principe de Savoia Hotel in 1958. It lasted three seasons, but expenses were too heavy, the buyers too few, and so it was not until ten years later that ready to wear fashions became a topic of real interest.

As recently as 1959, the Italian ready to wear industry was under-developed in comparison to that of the rest of Europe. As far as women's wear is concerned, Italy was producing a mere million and a half dresses, while much smaller Holland was turning out four million, France twenty million, and Germany twenty seven million.

Meanwhile, in 1958, high fashion was prospering from season to season. Fresh names and stars were emerging: Galitzine, Cappucci, Forquet, Lancetti and Biki.

A report for Corriere d'Informazione by Hedy A. Guisti in March 1958 said:

"Stop telling me that Italy can't do things on a grand scale! For years we have complained about ourselves and listened to the complaints of others in America, because Italy wasn't getting it together, doing things in a haphazard fashion, letting itself be beaten by France. We have been saying that Italy can't export and can't advertise the way it should, especially to America, where, if you want to sell things, you have to do things without skimping. Well, Italy has done things on the grand style. Never in the history of international trade has a government made such an effort to get its industry known abroad. Fourteen representatives of Italian fashion houses, carrying 2,000 lbs. of luggage, are currently travelling around the United States." (18) In 1958, Guido Carlo, Italian Minister of Foreign Trade, promoted and backed the first tour of the United States. Fourteen fashion houses staged shows in New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas and Boston. It was a huge success.

On the international market, important gains were made, not by magazine advertising, even in the most representative magazines, but by following this strategy of fashion shows, foreign tournees, competitions, costume parties, and infinite other tricks expressly conceived to attract the attention of American buyers.

The weekly magazine Grazia, had the highest circulation in Italy, because it succeeded at the end of the postwar period in re-creating an image that influenced other magazines (Belleza, Annabella). After a short pause, from 1943/45 production resumed under Laura Mondaini, echoes of the war disappeared and the magazine took on new dynamism under new management.

The most significant change the magazine underwent lay in the kind of communication employed. From a predominantly literary language, a transition was made to a narrative based predominently on images. The guiding thread of this new narrative was fashion, and Italian at that.

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CHAPTER 3

The 1960's - The Growth of the Ready to Wear Industry

The ready to wear became the new market interest in the late 1960's. Mario Goracci, the then Secretary to the National Chamber of Fashion, explains: "The decline of haute couture is really due to social reasons. No one can afford to go about wearing three million liras worth of clothes." (19)

The Italian look in ready to wear became particularly strong in the field of menswear towards the end of the 1960's.

The 1950's had witnessed a substantial growth in the Italian menswear industry. During this decade it had for the first time become fashionable for men to be fashionable.

In 1956, a challenge to Britain's domination of male fashion came from Italy - inspired by designers such as Gaetano, Savini, Brioni, Litrico, Cucci, Franzoni, Valentini - whose work, as early as 1950, had launched Italy's reputation for men's tailoring.

Known as 'the continental look', the style had broad shoulders, a short three-buttoned single-breasted jacket, with a fitted waist, curved fronts, semi-peaked lapels, slanting pockets, and short side vents, worn with tapered trousers without turn-ups.

Its generally youthful appearance had a strong influence on menswear during the latter half of the decade, and prepared the way for lightweight and brighter suits for men.

The Beatles, in the early 1960's, wore short collarless jackets and slim trousers in lightweight fabrics, following this 'continental' look. The look was in line with 'mod' fashion - the youth culture - which may be said to have begun around 1957 when Stephen Jones opened a boutique in London's Carnaby Street and started what he described as 'a crusade to brighten men's clothes.'

Carnaby Street became a tourist attraction, generating great interest in manswear styling.

In January 1961, a day after the presentation of the women's wear collections, the first organised group of leading menswear designers joined up on the runway in Rome. In an official opening, Cucci, Franzioni, Litrico, Valentini, Dulpiez showed their work.

The idea was conceived in an effort to keep menswear fashion up with the frenetic pace of womenswear.

In 1969 twelve men's ready to wear collections were shown at the Sala Bianci with the womenswear collections: Emilio Pucci, Zegna, Bazzarini, Nativo, Siviglia, Valentino, Datti Rosati, Baratta, Litrico, Ken Scott.

This venture had its effects within a very few years, and in 1972 at the Grand Hotel, Florence, the first edition of Pitti Uomo was launched. It now takes place twice yearly, one month before the women's ready to wear collections. It is regarded everywhere as the most prestigious trade fair in the business, and is

credited for having raised the sale of Italian sportswear, knitwear, shirts, ties, suits, shoes and belts to record heights on the international market.

The success of both women's and men's ready to wear collections was also facilitated by the availability of luxury fabrics. Between 1950 and 1955, silk exports tripled, and wool exports doubled. The dressmakers seemed to employ Italian fabrics amost exclusively. The entire textile field was by this time involved in the Florence fashion shows, in which both industrialists and designers took part. Exports in the field grew from 82,950 billion lire in 1952 to 270,683 billion lire in 1959.

In a fashion show in 1960, a special review of the Italian textile industry was promoted, with a view to pointing out the importance of Italian-made fabrics.

Italy has had a long tradition of competence in the area of textiles. As far back as the 13th century the Norman lords of Sicily brought Greek weavers to Lucca, from where they spread to Florence, Bologna, Milan, Genoa and Venice, which became famous by the end of the 14th century for magnificent brocades of silk, velvets and metallic threads.

The strongest influence of the Italian city states came during the Renaissance, and later still, the emigration of many weavers to France and Flanders made Rouen, Paris and Lyons great silk weaving centres in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Women of Valle di Avigna taught generations to weave 'Pezzotti' using the poorest materials, salvaged from remnants, and in Burano for at least 600 years women have made needle lace.

In Sicily, gold embroidery is done by the women of Piani degli Albanesi. In Liguria, silk velvets are made at Zoagli and demasks at Corsica.

Thus, Italy's textile industry has distinguished traditions. In the 1950's the three main capitals, Como, Biella and Prato, began to play equally decisive roles in Italian industry.

Since the mid 16th century, Como has been famous for its silk weaving. Como is in the enviable position of being able to rely on the most expert designers, high skilled photoengravers, and an ultra-modern school to train its future technicians. Today, the silk weaving industry in Como counts 18,500 looms and employs 15,000 people.

Biella is one of the most important wool centres in Europe. Average and small companies, mostly family run, employ more than 70% of the industrial labour force.

The Tuscan town of Prato is the last great producer of carded wool cloth, and produces a staggering range of fabrics, from flannel to jeans, from fashion fabrics to blankets. Flexibility and imagination, plus a remarkable entrepreneurial flair, have created a local production cycle in Prato which is unique in Italy.

Work is done on commissioned jobs, and is farmed out to small outfits that have become highly specialised in one area only - carded and combed wool, spinning, doubling, dyeing, finishing or craft weaving.

The material is sent through each individual process and then returns to the purchases mill, which packs it, ships it, and shoulders the burden of responsibility for orders, exports and imports, currency risks and market problems.

For years, since 1957, the textile show was MITAM, which was held twice yearly at the Milan Trade Fair. It deserves the credit for linking textile manufacturers, high fashion and clothing manufacturers, operating on a national and an international scale.

In May 1975, the success of the ready to wear induced leading manufacturers to think up another high quality event to show off their fabrics. A new show names "IDEACOMO" now takes place in November and May of each year at the Villa d'Este on Lake Como.

Sergio Bini, owner of a leading Como company, says: "Today it's not enough to have good textile collections, you have to have a brain with compartments in which one section works as a designer, one as industrialist and one as a director."

Today, designers from all over the world order their fabrics from Italy. American based Donna Karan has her fabrics especially woven and printed for her in Como. French based Sonia Rykiel buys 70% of her fabrics from Italy.

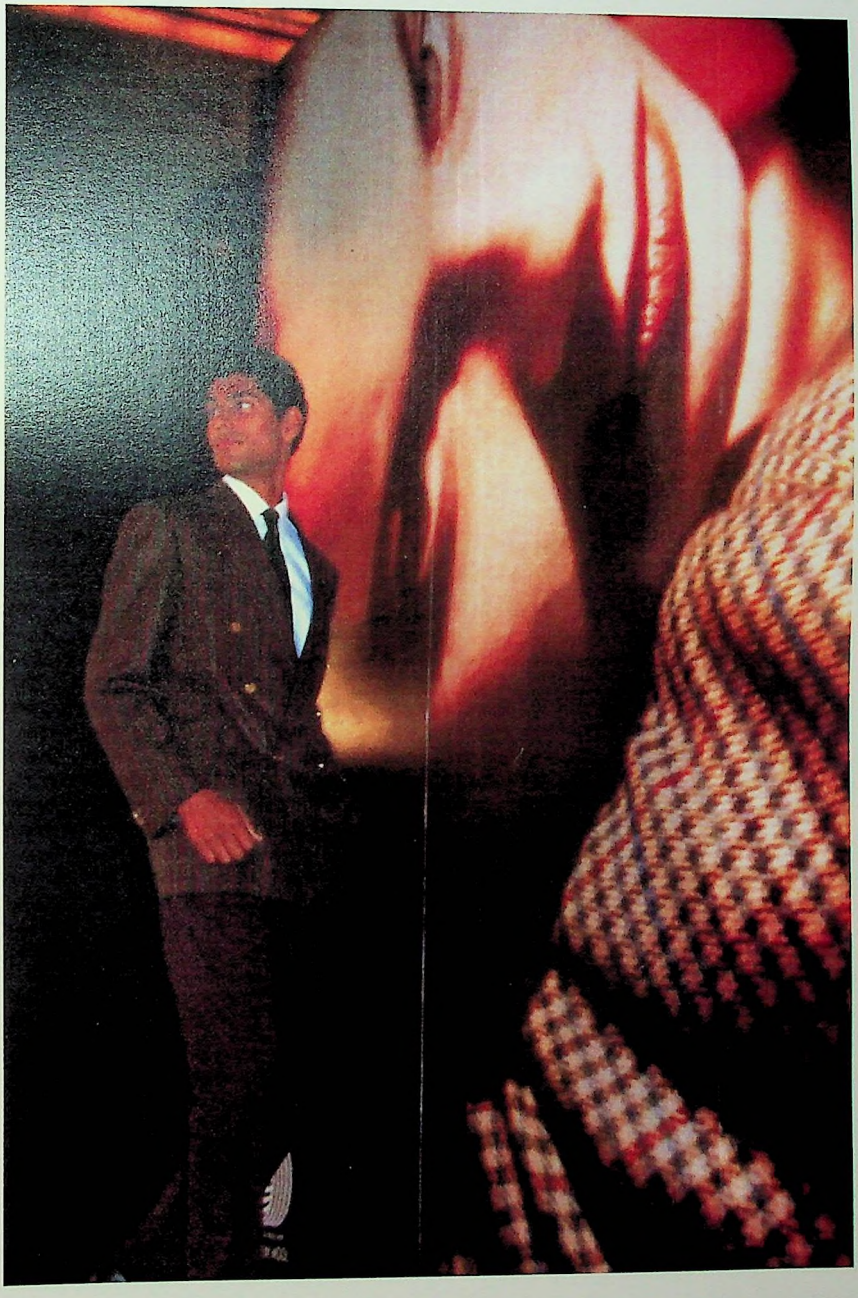
Magees Menswear Company of Donegal had a recent promotional show in London, on the 28th February 1990. There I spoke to Head Design Co-Ordinator, Bob Steiner. He told me that although Magees manufacture a lot of their own fabrics here in Ireland, they also order in bulk from Italy. He spoke of the great quality and design level of the fabrics, saying: "They are very professional in terms of production and design."

When one speaks of ready-to-wear clothes, there is an immediate problem to be tackled. When exactly did this fashion begin? There is an official date considered the starting point of Italian ready to wear fashion. That is 1975. And Walter Albini is officially recognised as the true father of Italian ready to wear clothes, and was undoubtedly the stylist who was able to grasp the problem connected with the world of fashion with the greatest awareness and farsightedness.

Albini began his career by designing for Krizia and gradually linked himself with a secondary group of manufacturers, Basile, Sportfox, Callaghan and Escargot. It was while working with these groups in the 1970's that he realised that the unitary designing of clothes and material was one of the primary elements contributing towards the success of French fashion. He himself then sought, and found, a real link with materials, in order to accomplish the greater unity of style.

Albini was the first stylist who really began to co-ordinate the designing of the material and the clothing.

Plate . A photo I took myself at the Magees promotional show in London Feb. 1990. A suit made from Italian fabrics, one of many they were displaying



In Rome, the home of haute couture, in 1975, he held a fashion show, with prototype clothes, having only the paper pattern and the material for sale.

With this gesture Albini denied the unique and unreproducible item of clothing, and proposed instead precisely the technical reproducibility of the design.

This manner of seeing and designing fashion lies at the heart of ready to wear clothes, and had never existed in Italy during the 50's. today, the ready to wear specialists are treated with as much respect as the couturiers - names such as Armani, Krizia, Ferre, Versace, were to become the main protagonists of ready to wear, along with Missoni, Soprani, and many others.

With his partner Sergio Galeotti, Giorgio Armani, in 1970, went independent after eight years spent with the large industrial group Cerrutti, for which he designed both men's and women's clothes.

Armani was experienced in architecture, and thus was well versed in the problems of design. He had also had a lot of experience in fabric mills. He confesses: "I fell in love with textiles while working for Cerrutti, and began to understand the work behind each yard of fabric." (20)

He could relate thoroughly to Albini's concept of the relationship between fabric and garment. He himself always designed with the fabric at his side.

After ten successful collections at Pitti, he began designing under his own label. He created clothes that have an effortless look that combined elegance with comfort. Flawless tailoring, and attention to detail are hallmarks of his work.

His first success was in the mid-seventies, when he gave classical menswear an updated look, concentrating on the basics - the blazer and the suit.

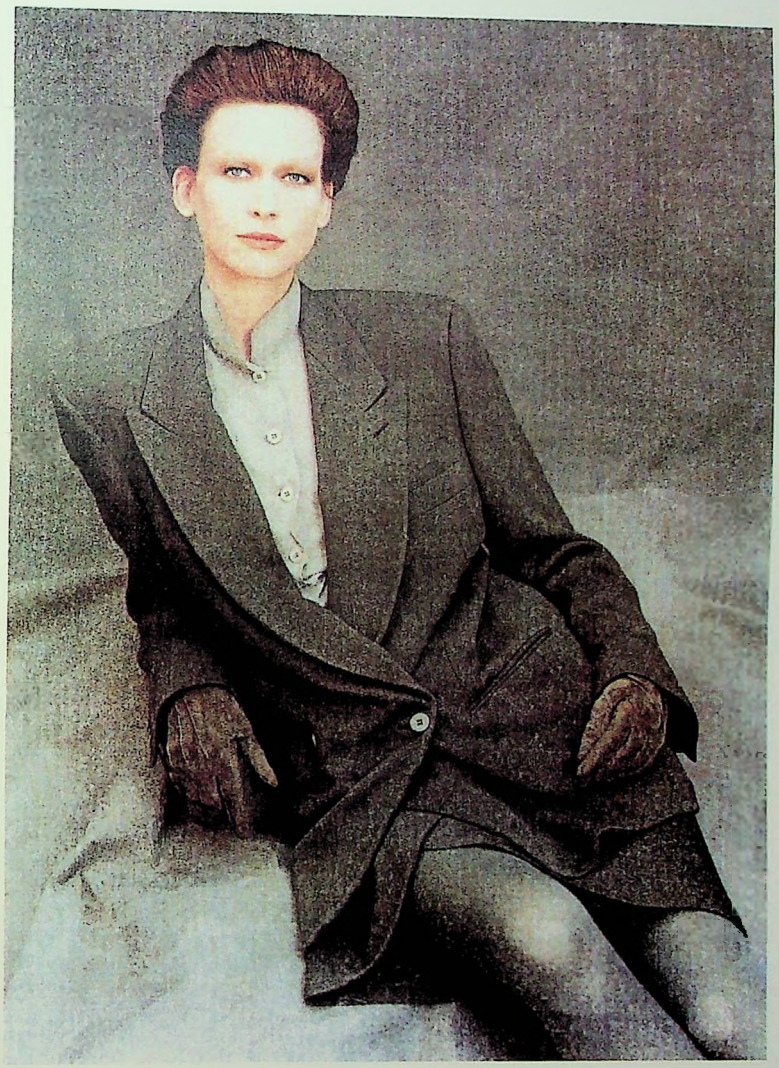
He made loose, lightweight, unstructurer jackets with no lining, no padding and no shoulder definition. If a jacket was lined, he modified its inner structure by not glueing the lining to the fabric's underside, thus creating a draped flowing effect, giving menswear a much softer edge.

He also looked at new combinations of fabrics, combining suede trousers with lightweight wool jackets. He played around with jacket lengths, and created a fashion for the layered look in the 1970's.

Later, Armani diverified, adapting his clothes for men into a women's line, applying the same softly tailored techniques, proposing models which were often inspired by Chanel, who also shared the idea of a unitary man-woman design.

Some fundamental items of clothing, such as the suit or coat, were thought of by Armani in terms of the same lines, both for men and for women. He refined them to keep the look feminine but not outwardly sexy.

Plate . Giorgio Armani advertising campaign for his 'Armani' line, showing his simplicity of cut and his precision tailoring.
Vogue Sept 1989 P.118



GIORGIO ARMANI

815 Madison Avenue, New York • 436 No. Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills

GIORGIO ARMANI

123 New Bond Street London. Tel: 01-499 7545.

GIORGIO ARMANI

123 New Bond Street London. Tel: 01-499 7545.

His designs for women are perhaps more innovative than those of his men's wear. His garments for men offered a new slant on the classic theme, but when adapted for women they presented a whole new approach to fashion - a totally new way of dressing for women.

Women felt comfortable and elegant in Armani's loosely draped jackets and mid-length trousers. They were practical and easy to wear at a time when more and more women in the workplace were searching for a look that was chic in an understated manner.

He also created elegant leisure wear, loosely draped chamoix leather jackets co-ordinating with gaucho pants, baggy slacks, swing skirts and lightweight shorts.

In American Vogue, January 1986, fashion correspondent Arthur Elgort wrote: "Milan - Nowhere a stronger voice than that of Giorgio Armani, in his collections, always the essence of modern daytime style, dressing that answers needs in the most attractive, unselfconscious way possible, straightforward, easygoing clothes, no frills, no distractions, just a unique precision of tailoring."

In 1982, 'Time' Magazine, the most widely distributed American magazine, devoted their cover to Giorgio Armani, along with a six page article about his work written by Jay Cocks, who says: "Armani's classic style is for all seasons, since it is consistent it will last forever."

Armani now runs several different lines of clothing - Armani, Mani and Emporio. The Mani collection is 30% less expensive than the Armani range, and is available only in Europe and New York.

In 1982, he launched his Emporio line, with the younger market in mind, although it is still expensive, on the level of the Mani range.

His menswear ranges from couture to couture sportswear, which is less costly, as it is made in Hong Kong.

Nino Cerrutti remarked of Armani in 'Time' Magazine, April 1982: "Discovering a man like Armani is impossible because he discovered himself..... he has a natural talent and he is self taught. He would have stood out from the crowd in any case. Men like Armani are so rare that when one emerges even the blind are aware of it."

Armani worked on costumes for stars such as Richard Gere in 'American Gigolo' in 1988, and Kevin Costner in the 'Untouchables'.

He has received a string of awards, including The Neiman Marcus prize in 1979 for Best Designer of the Year: three 'Cutty Sark' awards as top international menswear designer in 1980, 1981 and 1984: the Gentleman's Quarterly Style Award for best designer in 1981: and in 1982 Milan's prestigious 'Ambrogino d'Oro' Award, for outstanding achievement in the fashion field.

Gianni Verace came to prominence about the same time as Giorgio Armani. Today, as one of Italy's best known designers, he heads a conglomerate that reaches all over the world.

Both were instrumental participants in putting Milan on the map as a reputable design centre. Their work, however, is quite different. Armani is inspired along classical lines, whereas

Plate . Giorgio Armanis' advertising campaign for his new Emporio line. A younger image than either the Mani or Armani lines. British Vogue March 1990 p. 111

EMPORIO ARMANI

191 Brompton Road, London
February 10, 1989

EMPORIO ARMANI

191 Brompton Road, London
February 10, 1989

Versace's creations are more romantic in nature. Born in Reggio, Calabria, as a young boy he used to spend most of his time in his mother's design workshop. The experience here as he grew up was to be fundamental in his professional training.

In 1969, Versace started working for Genny for the 'Complice' line. Here he learned about design production, and fabrics.

On March 28th 1978, Versace presented his own 'Donna' collection at the 'Permanente' in Milan. This was followed by his men's collection a few months later. These collections were successful with critics and the public alike. Versace's creativity was acknowledged. His collections featured bold use of leather, in easy lines, with a military accent.

This is how it was described in
"Versace succeeded in combining the exceptional quality of the material with completely new manufacturing techniques and re-invented volumes and proportions." (21)

His interest in new clothing materials is always present at his collections. In 1982 he took everybody by surprise when he presented an absolute novelty, a metal jersey used in the classic way, that is, sewn as a dress and draped on the bias. He wanted a beautifully light, sexy and easy to wash dress that would hang well. Fitting required required three months before being able to cut and sew this material properly. The metal jersey, the gilded steel hue of the first collection, was presented in a second collection, with several variations, including stripes and lozenges made of different metal, sprayed

with contrasting colours, with extraordinary optical effect.

Machines succeeded in transforming metal into precious embroidery by adding small and large pearls, strass and other effects. Another material, neoprene, combined with cotton, was used by Versace for sports jackets, as well as to reinforce trouser pockets in men's clothing. This evaluation of the body line led Versace to design plastic clothes in glossy jersey stretch. For this connection, Versace was awarded the 'Occhio d'Oro' as the best designer in the 1982/83 Fall/Winter season.

In Paris on October 2nd 1985, Jacques Chirac honoured Gianni Versace with an exhibition "Dialogues de Mode" at the Palais Galliera. This exhibition showed the relationship between the most important fashion photographers and collections, and offered a broad evidence of the interpretation and documentation of Versace's work.

In the New York Times, Bernadine Morris wrote: "It is every ten years that a star is born in fashion: Poiret, Chanel, Saint Laurent, and now Versace." (22)

Today he has 100 franchies in Italy for Complice, Genny, Callaghan, and 60 for Versace, and 240 throughout the world in America, Japan and France.

In a book named after Chirac's exhibition, Hebe d'Orsey, Fashion Editor of the International Herald Tribune, remarked:

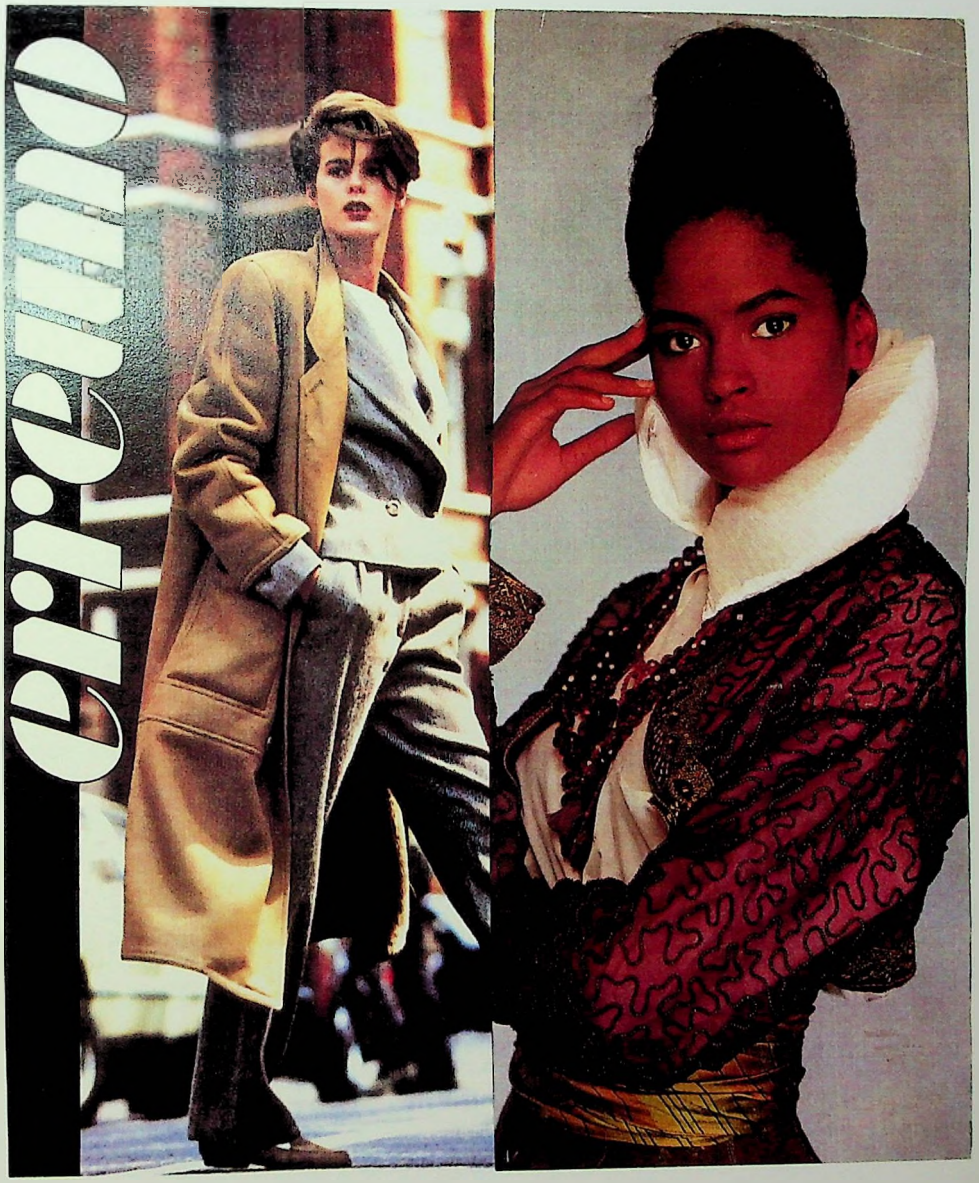
"Although the Italians had the wonderful fabrics, the marvellous leathers, and the inimitable accessories, they were sadly lacking in original designers. Every time a collection stood out on the runway at the Palazzo Strozi in Florence, I would ask who the designer was. Invariably, it was someone from Paris. The only international writer to attend these shows went year after year hoping for a miracle. I don't know why. I kept hoping that something would come out of these seemingly provincial shows. It did. Versace was the first designer to emerge as a truly original Italian talent. For the first time, there was a ray of light - Italy could look into its own ranks without searching abroad. Shortly afterwards, others followed, and Italian ready to wear was born." (23)

There are many other designers who emerged in and around the same time as Versace and Armani, whose work is of an equally high standard, and who had a lot tocontribute in terms of original lines of thought: Valentino, Glanfranco Ferre, Maruccra Mandetti, and later, Franco Moscino.

The growth of the ready to wear industry in Italy, and the billions of dollars it has brought into the Italian treasury in the 70's and 80's, was much due to the enlightened long term view of contracting designers to develop well made, high profile collections which, properly marketed, can dominate world markets.

This practise is highly lucrative for both designers and manufacturers alike. It maintains a design standard and ensures a creative input which has made Italian ready to wear

Plate . . Giorgio Armani designs the Erreuno range and Romeo Gigli creates for Callaghan. Two examples of how Italys ready to wear manufacturers use their top designers.


ebony

some of the best in the world.

Several famous designers are prepared to produce ranges in addition to the ones that carry their own label.

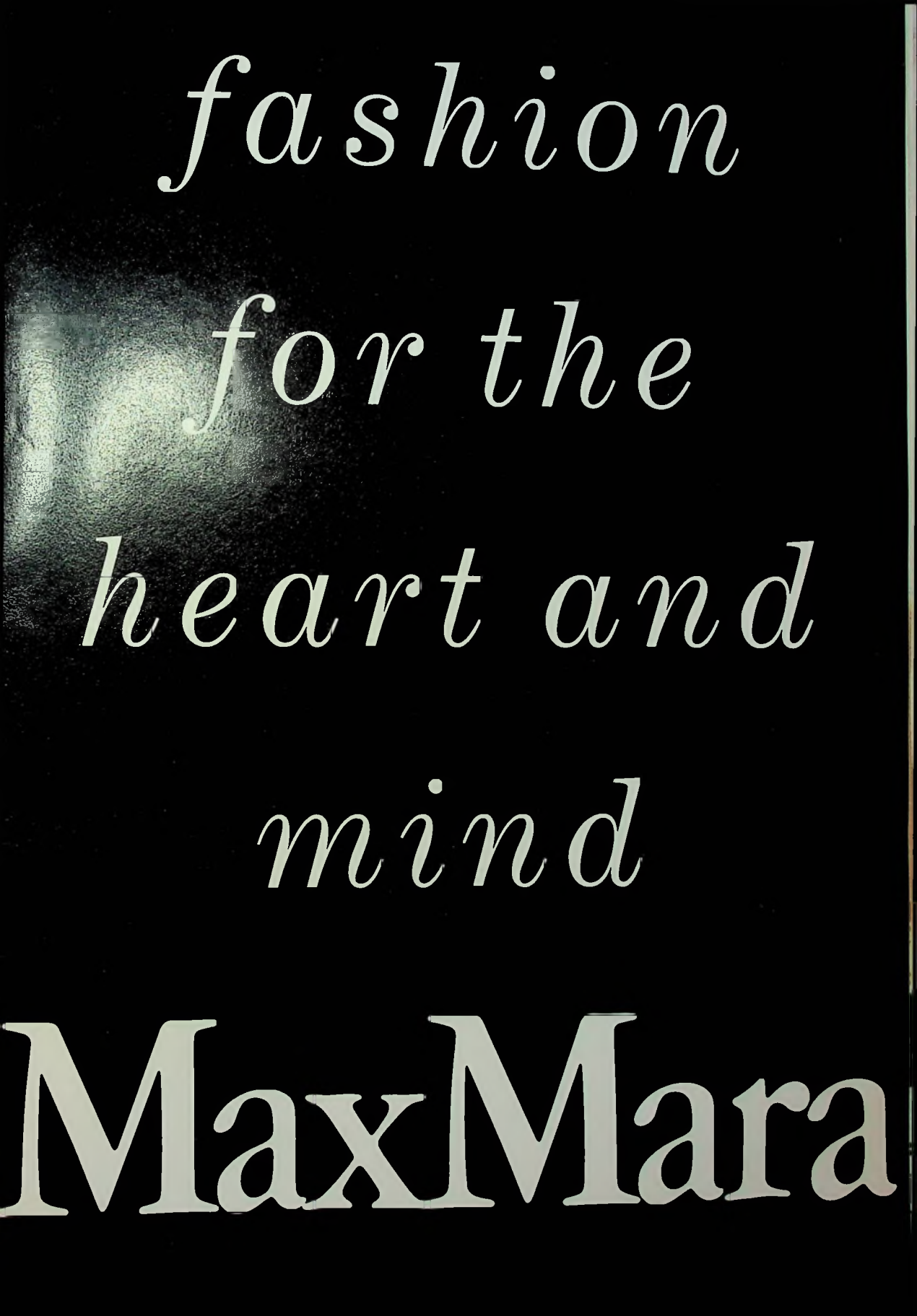
Armani came out to admit he designed the Erreuno collection. Versace designs for Callaghan, Jenny and Complice. Thus, the two top ready to wear designers are involved in this very Italian approach to design. Romeo Gigli, also, designs for Callaghan. Outside help is also solicited with French designer Claude Montata working for 'Complice' and 'Cadette' and Varty creating the Byblos range.

Another lucrative concept in the field of marketing is the ability to create different market levels, as in Georgio Arman's Armani, Marri and Emporio. This gives a broader area of the market the opportunity to avail of a part of the Armani look.

The most exemplorary example of this method of marketing must be Max Mara, who produce at six different design levels: Maxmara, Sportmax, Weekend, Blues, Marella, and Pennyblack. Each level is aimed at a different type of woman, and the price range is set accordingly.

It was design and marketing flair such as these that was to generate a lot of business for the Italian ready to wear industry throughout the 70's, 80's and 90's.

It would be impossible, however, to discuss the ready to wear industry with any educated authority, without also establishing


fashion
for the
heart and
mind
MaxMara

the classical genius

MaxMara

classic form

classic precision

classic beauty

freedom of expression

SPORTMAX

a way of thinking

a way of feeling

a way of showing

the casual approach

WEEKEND

by MaxMara

fashion for living

fashion for pleasure

basic harmony

I BLUES

always individual

always in tune

practical made perfect

MARELLA

perfect comfort

perfect attitude

perfect choice

the extravagance of youth

PENNYBLACK

all the fun

all the energy

all the news

the parallel role of the knitwear industry.

We must remember that it was through small beginnings in kniwwear, leather accessories and shoes, that Italian fashion had begun to be noticed in the 50's.

Knitwear Industry

The economic sanctions of 1936, the autocratic policy of the fascist regine, and the restrictions imposed by the Second World War, represented a severe trial for the Italian knitwear industry, which was compelled to use yarns made from locally produced or regenerated materials.

The Italian Look in knitwear made its debut in 1949-50, when a few knitting mills and creative craftsmen established new, lasting relations with exclusive importers and exclusive department stores in Northern Europe, the United States, and Canada. Dorville House of London discovered Laura Aponte and Marisa Arditi in Rome, and Lea Galleani and Maglificio Mariangelo in Milan. In June 1950 Henrietta Tedesco, buyer for I. Magnin of San Francisco and Los Angeles, discovered Maglificio Mirsa of Galliate, near Novara, and established a connection that would last some twenty-five years.

The European recovery plan of 1948-50 brought the first large quantities of spun wool and cotton for mass production to Italy. Therefore a number of knitting mills and talented craftsmen were able to produce garments which attracted the attention

because

of its classic italian style

of its endless creativity

it is fashion that lasts

it is noticed

it is

MaxMara

For further information: MAXMARA, SPORTMAX, PENNYBLACK, MARELLA, WEEKEND.
Robert Danieli, 30-34 Langham Street, London W1N 6LD. Tel: 01-637 1028.
I BLUES, Jasper Herbert, 27 Berkeley Square, London W1X 5HA. Tel: 01-499 7246.

Plate . One of a four page spread, the first of its kind, in British Vogue 1950 for Italian knitwear. (notice the Fornasetti screens in background)

Knitwear: the new Italian way

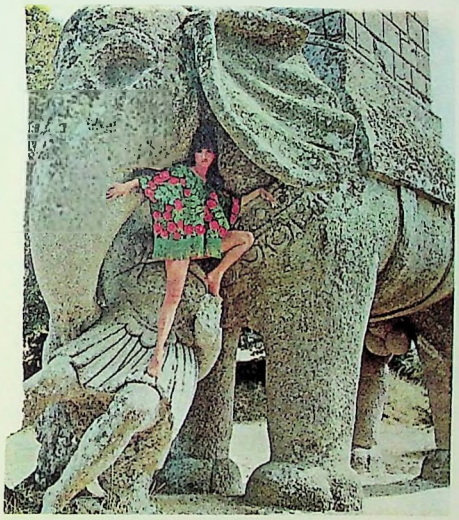
4 pages of new imports, photographed at the Milan studio
the brilliant designer, Fornasetti, against a series of his screens

Plate. . . .
A three page spread in Vogue of June 1959 showing Italian knitwear and Jewellery.

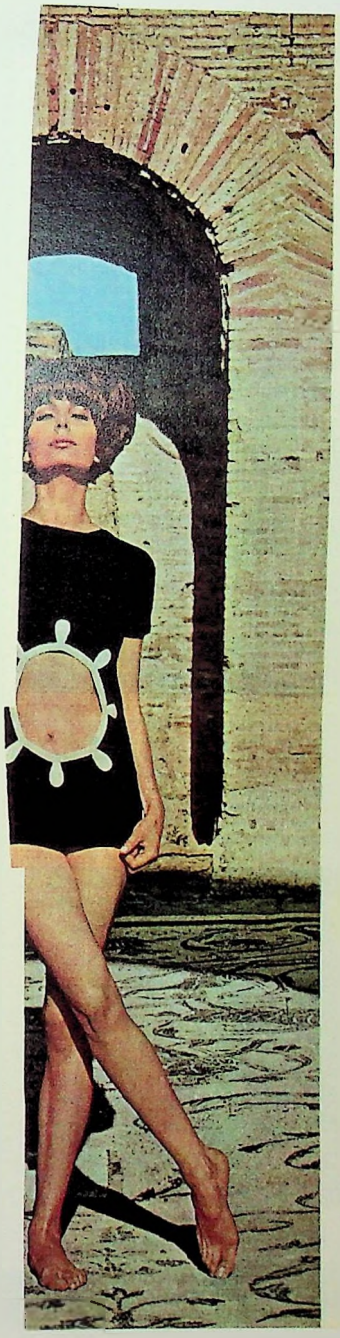
Italy's knit playclothes are witty, brief and bold. They are photographed on these pages at Ostia, the port of ancient Rome. Model Adria Ramacci (above), *with a scarf tied over a straw helmet, wears a scanty scalloped top over scantier bikini pants (Micia) as she reclines on a mosaic floor.*

Actress Daniela Bianchi, the blond Soviet spy of From Russia with Love (below), *wears a knit play dress by Laura Aponte. The hemline is notched above the knee to uncover a lot of tanned leg. The geometrically patterned mosaic fragment is part of a warehouse floor built during the Roman Empir*

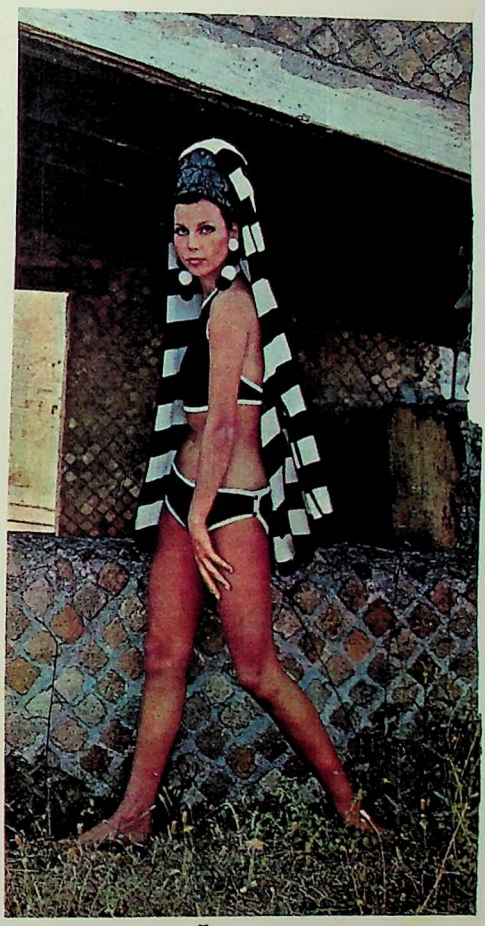
A profusion of prints in a garden of monsters



Bright prints enhance the grotesque sculpture in the 16th Century "Garden of the Monsters" at Bomarzo 60 miles from Rome. There are 52 such sculptures in the garden. They were commissioned by the son of Duke Vicino di Orsini, who according to legend was a hunchback and built the gardens to show his lovely young wife that there could be beauty in ugly things. Above, Alberta Tiburzi wears beach poncho (Ken Scott). She stands on a warrior caught in the trunk of a Hannibal-style war elephant. Below, she wears a Scott cabana dress printed with words of endearment in five languages. Her gold jewelry is by Luciana of Rome. Françoise Rubartelli (above, right), in Pucci's medieval velvet tabard and leotards, leans on a dragon's snout. Benedetta Barzini (opposite), in a high-waisted beach robe of mosaic print (Ken Scott), stands in an ogre mouth. Into it is carved an inscription from Dante which means, "Every thought flies."



Knits that bare the leg and open up the middle



Sweater with a big hole in its middle is a Laura Aponte design for the beach. Lilina Monti of Milan wears it over a knit bikini in the remains of a circular room at the Bath of the Seven Sages.

Ivana D'Orso's knit beach outfit is more headdress than bikini. It is made by Micia who also designed the earrings. The diamond-patterned brick wall of the building behind dates from the Roman republic.

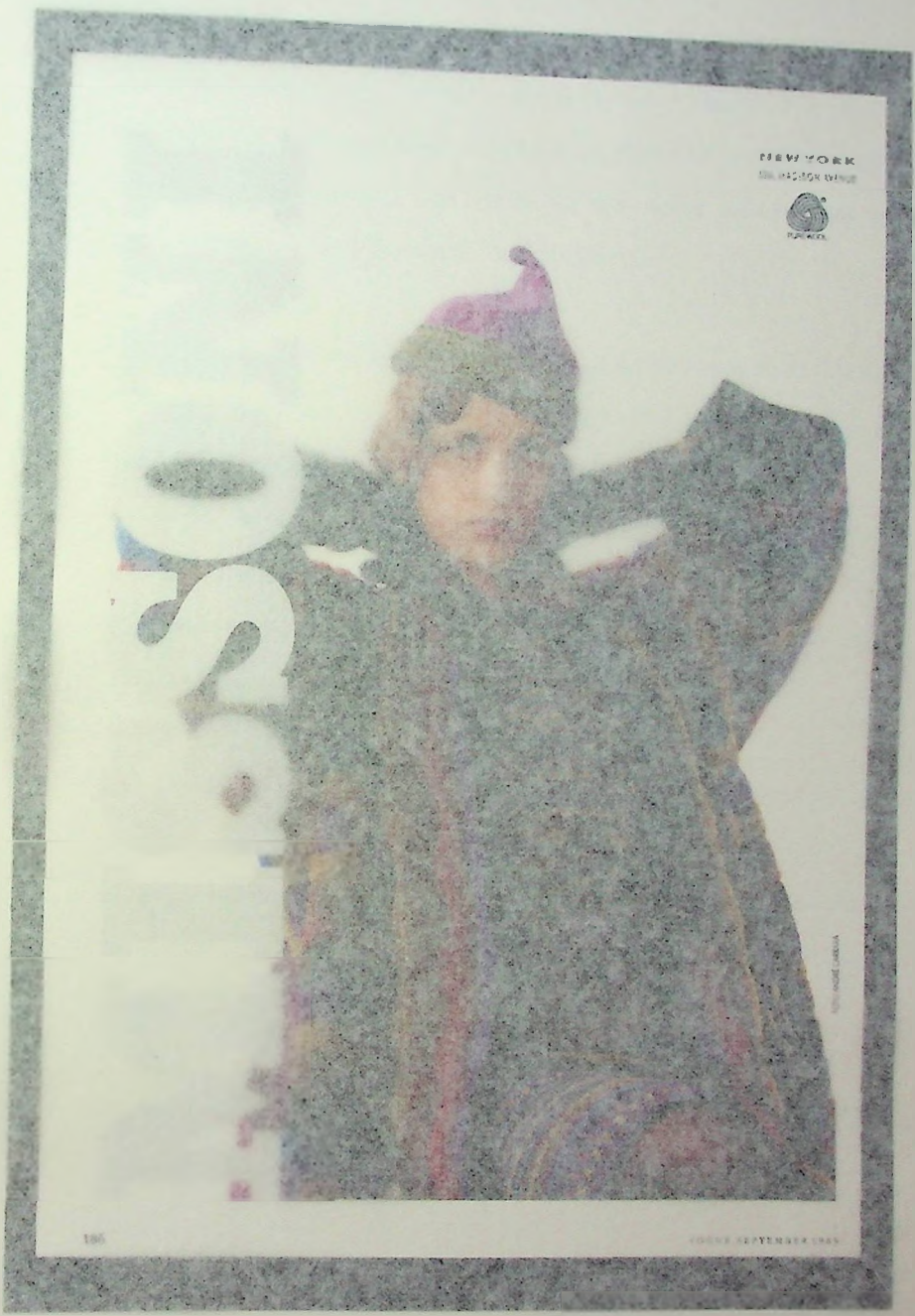
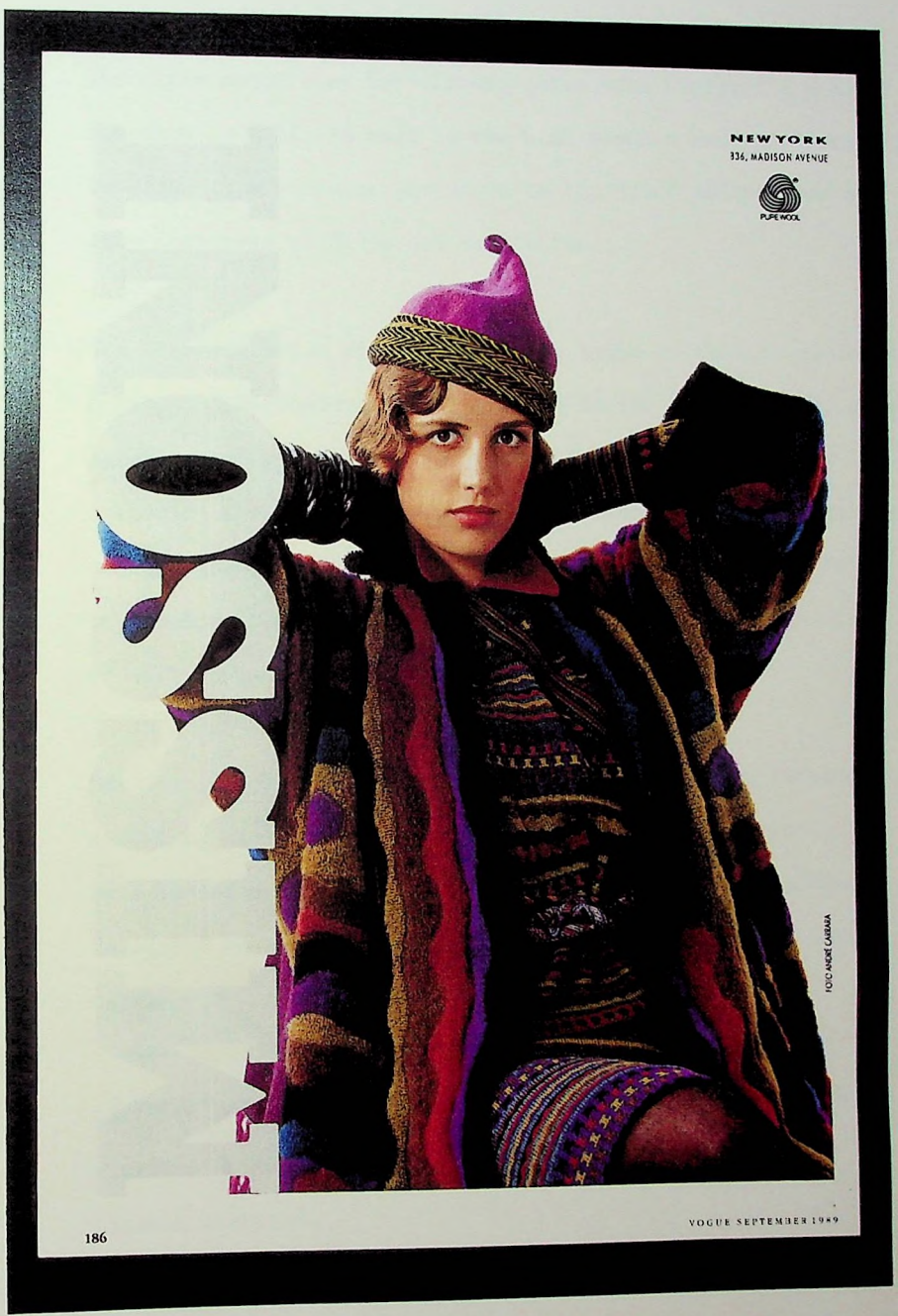


Plate. · Missoni collectables for 1990 (B.V Feb. 1990) with the distintive colours and patterns that made them famous.


NEW YORK
336, MADISON AVENUE
PURE WOOL
FOTO ANDRE CARRARA

of American, English, Swiss and Swedish buyers for their quality of workmanship and design.

The first major step forward was taken with Giorgini's show in Florence in 1951. As well as the high fashion designer garments, boutique type knitwear was shown in the minor collections of such designers as Mirsa and Emilio Pucci.

The liberalisation of foreign trade, begun by Senator Merzagora during the De Gasperi administration in the early 1950's, gave spinners and knitters access to the finest raw materials. As a result, there immediately arose a tendency to make fashionable, quality products for exports. Both these factors were felt on the domestic market, which was stimulated also by the flow of well-to-do foreign tourists on holiday in Italy.

Between 1950-55, Italian knitwear adopted the close fitting, revealing style, launched by the two queens of Hollywood, Lana Turner and Ava Gardner. Ava Gardner gave the hallmark "Avagolf" to an up and coming Milanese manufacturer of luxury knitwear.

The five year period between 1955-6I witnessed the triumphal entrance of synthetic fibres such as Orlon and Draylon to fashion knitwear.

It was reported in British Vogue early in 1953: "Nowhere was this improvement more noticeable than in Italy, where chic and well cut knitwear made an end to the dreary non fashion garments hitherto regarded as proper to sporting life, and

Mirsas neat models with dark Eton jackets and light slacks entered every holiday wardrobe." And, in February 1955, Vogue printed four pages of Italian designed knitwear entitled "Knitwear, the Italian Way", and reported: "Currently conditioned as we are to the bold exciting lines and colours emerging from Italian fashion houses, the next logical step is to find such clothes imported here." (24)

Although machines suited to this kind of work were built expressly, optimal use was made also of the vast reserves of cottage labour in the areas of Tuscany and Emilia.

Missoni came into the limelight in the early 60's and achieved notable success between 1965-70 with sweaters and ensembles in plain and printed viscose yarns, often woven with sparkling thread for evening ensembles.

The overbearing rise of acrylic and polyester fibres pushed the use of artificial fibres into the background. Rayon was well received by knitting mills such as Laura Aponte and Kriziaprayhei, and by the workshops of famous dressmakers such as Venezioni and Biki in Milan, plus Galitzine and others in Rome and Florence. At the same time, fashion boutiques developed rapidly, and every high fashion atelier supplemented collections with knitted and woven articles.

Cooperation between ateliers, designers of luxury garments, spinners and textile machinery manufacturers, became very active in the late 60's.

Designers were excited by technological progress which made the prospects offered by quick production of different jacquard designs a reality.

The variety and versatility of machines and yarns enabled designers to develop what can be defined as the vogue of layered cloth which took off around 1965, and is still strong.

Layered fashions utilise skirts and pants of every width and length accompanied by close-fitting tops, blouses, vests, jackets, overcoats, ponchos, capes, and wrap-arounds or square cut coats. The excesses of layered fashions were cutely mocked in the fully-shaped knits and jersey garments with "trompe l'oeil" effects launched by Roberta di Camerino in the late sixties. The fake two and three pieces became the trademark of the Venetian dress-maker, who was well known for over twenty years in Europe, America, and Japan, as a designer and manufacturer of handbags, accessories, and leather goods.

Today the Italian knitweat industry has become most highly respected for its research into new and better methods of knitwear production.

The secret of the Italian success in this field is that they have continuously striven for better technology.

Protti are Italy's biggest manufacturers of knitting machines, and are in direct competition with the world's leading Japanese manufacturers, Shima-Seiki.

They are at the moment working in conjunction with the Irish Research and Standards Institute, EOLAS (formerly I.I.R.S.) on a machine development project called "The Bright" programme, which is sponsored by the E.E.C.

They are trying to gain increased automation of knitting machines. Italian industrial designers are thus pushing the frontiers of technology in an attempt to broaden the boundaries of design.

The combined sales and export figures sum up the success of the ready to wear, couture, accessories, and knitwear industries, and will perhaps give Ireland an incentive to begin to emulate some of their design/production processes.

The Italian fashion industry holds a special position in the international market in all of its various aspects - women's and Men's wear, accessories, knitwear, and ready to wear. It is the most export-oriented business in the industrialised world. Despite being the third major world manufacturer, the Italian fashion industry holds the leading position in terms of exports.

Out of a total of more than £20 billion apparel and knitwear sales, exports amount to about £9 billion, with a trade balance surplus slightly above £7 billion.

The countries with which the Italian fashion industry has most intense trade relations includes the Federal Republic of Germany (about 30 per cent of total exports), France (17 per cent) and the United States (10 per cent). These are closely followed by Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Exports and the Italian fashion image play a leading role, even if far away and difficult markets such as Japan. Here Italian fashion holds the record of exports among the western countries. With 173 million, it ranks fourth after the following consumer goods manufacturing nations: Korea, China and Taiwan.

The intense growth recorded in recent years is due to a number of factors of which three are particularly important: process and product innovation, internationalisation of philosophy, and operations and rigorous image policy development.

Process and product innovation, which is the fundamental component of the Italian fashion system, was based on certain factors. The designers' success was matched by a particular aesthetic - project organisation affinity on the part of Italian industry. On the one hand, the Italian industrial system proved to be more suitable than others to test new solutions on the basis of a special sensitivity as regards the risk inherent in motivation.

In innovation, on the other hand, Italian industry adusted its structures in order to meet the requirements involved by the multiform, mass individualism of the post-industrial society.

Large, star-type production systems were created where artisan know-how, techniques and imagination are combined with industrial organisation and technology. The synthesis of tradition and expansion was also achieved with major investments in the field of EDP.

In twelve years the utilisation of CAD-CAD systems increased by a 48 per cent average annual rate; in 1987 it accounted for 50 per cent of the entire market potential. The primary consequence of the new strategy was an increasingly marked presence on foreign markets. Starting in the middle of the '70's, it has become a fundamental growth factor at a structural level. In the 1976-1987 period exports increased by 700 per cent. Their incidence on production improved from 30 per to 44 per cent. another equally important effect was the revitalisation of the domestic market. Fashion consumption remained above the average of other industrialised countries. Imports continued to be a minor phenomenon contrary to the trend in the rest of the western world. In 1987 imports amounted to about 2 billion dollars with an approximately 13 per cent incidence of total domestic consumption.

CHAPTER 4

MILAN - CLOSE UP

In the summer of 1989 I visited Milan, to discover for myself the pleasures of shopping in Italy. I was interested to see their methods of merchandising and how they displayed their products. I also wanted to see the designer collections.

At this point, before discussing the overall lasting impressions I formed of Milan's design world, and the observations I made of their methods of marketing and presentation, I feel it necessary to introduce a short summary of some of the places I visited, and a few of the interesting things I learnt about them. Hopefully, this will successfully set the mood of modern-day Milan.

With luxury in window after window, where was I to begin? Shopping is fairly easy in Milan, as it divides inself into neighbourhoods. The most obviously fashionable area is around Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga. Here are the major designers.

Giorgio Armani is at 9 Via S. Andrea, with his surprisingly sexy but impeccably subtle collection: light chiffons, crepe de chines and linens cut to skim the body. Nearby at 24 Via Durini is his famous Emporio Armani. As with many of the Italian designer shops I was to visit, I found it difficult to decide which was more wonderful, the shop or the clothes. Room after room of grey walls hung with endless coats, suits, knitwear, and every type of accessory.

Plate . One of the photos I took in Milan, the interior of the Gianfranco Ferre boutique,

At 32 della Spiga, steel columns and metal bars are the backdrop for Ferres strong shapes, black suits, large white collars and narrow creased trousers.

At Versaces Minimalist Boutique, 4 della Spiga, reflecting marble and glass contrasted with his light swinging skirts, jackets which swirl from the waist, and girlish trapeze dresses.

Krizias Boutique had mid-calf pleated skirts, and Laura Biagotti at 19 Via Borgopesso had an Italian-style sweater girl theme.

Some of the neatest and simplest tailoring I found at Soprani, 14 Via S. Andrea, while Missoni at 1 Via Montenapoleone had a vivid rainbow of brilliant colours and distinctive prints.

Cose is said to be one of Milan's favourite boutiques. It stocks today's most talked about Italian designer, Romeo Gigli's collection for Callaghan, similar in style to his own, with jerseys in warm reds, rich green and black.

Etro, 10 Via Baglia, is another unique find, emphatically masculine, like a huge study with stern portraits, silver sports cups and serious books. Armani, Versace and Valentino have all used Etro fabrics with their characteristic paisley patterns. The clothes are distinguished by their impeccable quality and discretion, tween jackets, spotted ties, and other timeless pieces such as a smoking jacket in velvet with silk cord tassel and silk lining. Etro are beginning to introduce more women's wear, with simple printed cottons in bright and muted shades. Etro fabrics have

also inspired French and American designers.

Not far from the Via Montenapoleone shopping area, at 4 Gerolano Morone, is Guisy Bresciani, the hatmaker, whose grandmother made hats for the Royal family of Savoy, and who is continuing the tradition. The shop reflects a highly romantic style: black and cream picture hats with crimson poppies: sequinned bands and hats with beaded nets: full length suede gloves: pleated silk scarves. The clothes are sophisticated, college-style: long pleated skirts and cashmere cardigans worn with flat shoes.

Donatelle Pellini has a similar sort of history. Both her mother and grandmother designed jewellery, and she is keeping up the tradition. Hidden discreetly in a quiet street, Via Morigi, the shop is startling. There is nothing half-hearted about Pellini's style: black perspex and diamonte bracelets sculpted into modern geometric shapes, worn high on the elbow: glowing faux-amber and tortoiseshell rings, loaded one on top of the other: wooden beads: antique Italian silver beads piled row upon row. This shop is like an Aladdin's Cave - very hard to leave. Fifteen years ago Donatella Pellini took over from her mother, who designed for Dior and Balenciaga. She now works for top rung Italian superlatives - Basile Fendi, Soprani, San Lorenzo and Romeo Gigli.

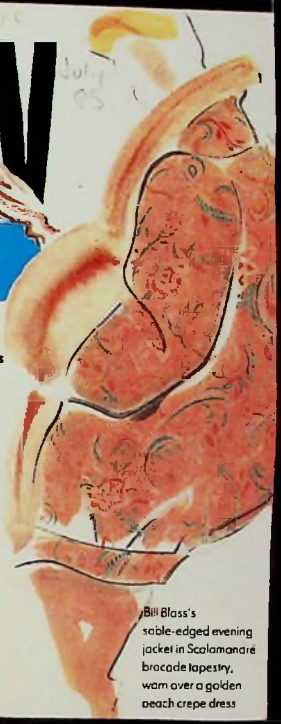
The Brera district is traditionally Milan's artists quarter, and it is full of curious little shops. One of them is Framboisier, at 6 Via Breva. Here the choice of designs is not wide, but each is covetable and simple: wonderful black cocktail dresses: seemingly demure blouses with Peter Pan collars, which turn out to have no

Plate . An article discussing Etro fabrics and the impact they have had on designers worldwide. American Vogue July 1985 P.114.

VIEW

BY ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY

Fall riches...hood-dunits...Carol Channing's personal style...answers from Ungaro...Beene hand notes...



Bill Blass's sable-edged evening jacket in Scalamandré brocade tapestry, worn over a golden peach crepe dress

TAPESTRY WORKS

For last spring, it was bowers-of-flowers power—chintz. This fall/winter, floral patterns will sprout in patterned, textured tapestry wools. Blooming in a big way in Paris, London, and New York ready-to-wear, tapestries are a new way to wear bold pattern and texture in everything from long coats to boots.

Jeffrey Banks works long chesterfield greatcoats and blazers inspired by the bygone opulence of Orient Express travel. "It's a modern sumptuousness," says Banks. "Women want a little more excitement this season, even in a practical, long coat that keeps them warm. What must be avoided is wearing tapestry florals like a costume. Shapes and proportions have to be dynamic."

"With the absence of beading and embroidery around, opulent fabrics look right," says Bill Blass, who pulls his tapestry silk brocades from upholstery and interior-design textile resources. At Blass, a dusty-peach brocade comes from Scalamandré and is used in a new rounded shape, a luxe evening jacket that can go dressed up or down. Clarence House is another resource for the some half-dozen tapestry turnouts.

For tapestry fabric, Etro, a Milan-based house, is a star of the season. In Paris, Kenzo uses beautiful tapestry wool inspired by a nineteenth-century wall hanging in the country house of the Etro family. At Ralph Lauren, Etro tapestry becomes shawl-collared evening robes and "riding" vests. Emanuel Ungaro creates a whole scheme of interplaying pattern with six Etro tapestry fabrics, some originally designed for Etro's home-furnishings shop on Via Bigli in Milan.

Says Jacopo Etro, of the Ungaro magic: "It took special dyes and two-thousand patterns on combined looms to translate the fabric into these lighter weights for ready-to-wear."

Jeffrey Banks chesterfield (top), Kenzo's greatcoat (above)—both in Etro tapestry. Scott Crolla's riding boot, right: "Meant to be worn and aged, for luxury under trousers."

Plate . Donatella Pellini, her shop, and some of her work pictured in British Vogue Dec. 1989.

1, Donatella Pellini; 2, newly expanded interior of the Pellini shop, via Morigi, Milan; 3, Pellini *faux* amber and silver bracelets for Collaghan, worn *à la Cunard*; 4, massed Pellini beads in store

side seams: and beautiful bustiers.

Naj-Oleari, a family firm at 5-8 Via Brera, sold flowery cotton and linen fabrics. They also sold quilted jackets, umbrellas, silk ties and furnishing fabrics, in their distinctive fun and young prints, tiny cars, bears, trains, and kangaroos in canary yellow, candyfloss pink and peppermint green.

At Piero Fornasetti (perhaps my favourite shop) at 16 Via Brera, you can buy a waistcoat that looks like a Roman column, an umbrella stand which at first glance is a vase of flowers, or a plate with a smiling sun.

Eccentric Piero Fornasetti - artist/designer/inventor - who died in 1988, went to the Brera Academy, and was discovered by the famous Italian architect Gio Ponti in 1948. In the 1950's he began depicting architectural elements, both real and imaginery, in his trompe l'oeil creations.

Gio Ponti was taken with the freshness of Fornasetti's eye, and commissioned him to do some china patterns for him. Their collaboration lasted for over thirty years.

"For an object to be use", Fornasetti once said, "is not enough. Each object should have a kind of poetry. The objects true value is in its spirit."(25) The spirit of Fornasetti has had a huge impact on lots of areas of design.

Vogue of April 1989 reported:

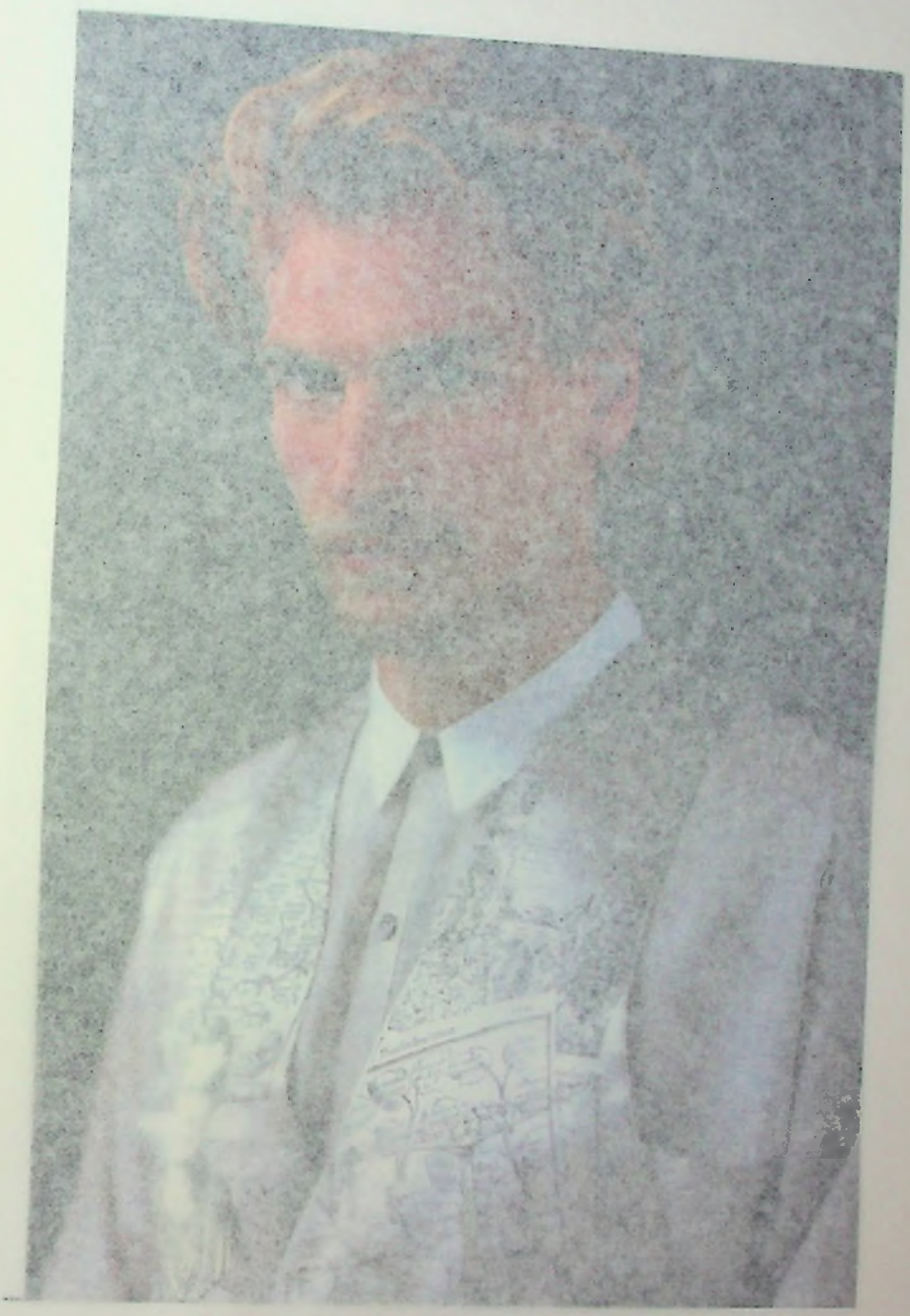


Plate . actor Julian Sands star of "A room with a view" in a Fornasetti silk print waistcoat at Paul Smiths.
British Vogue Dec. 1986 P. 253

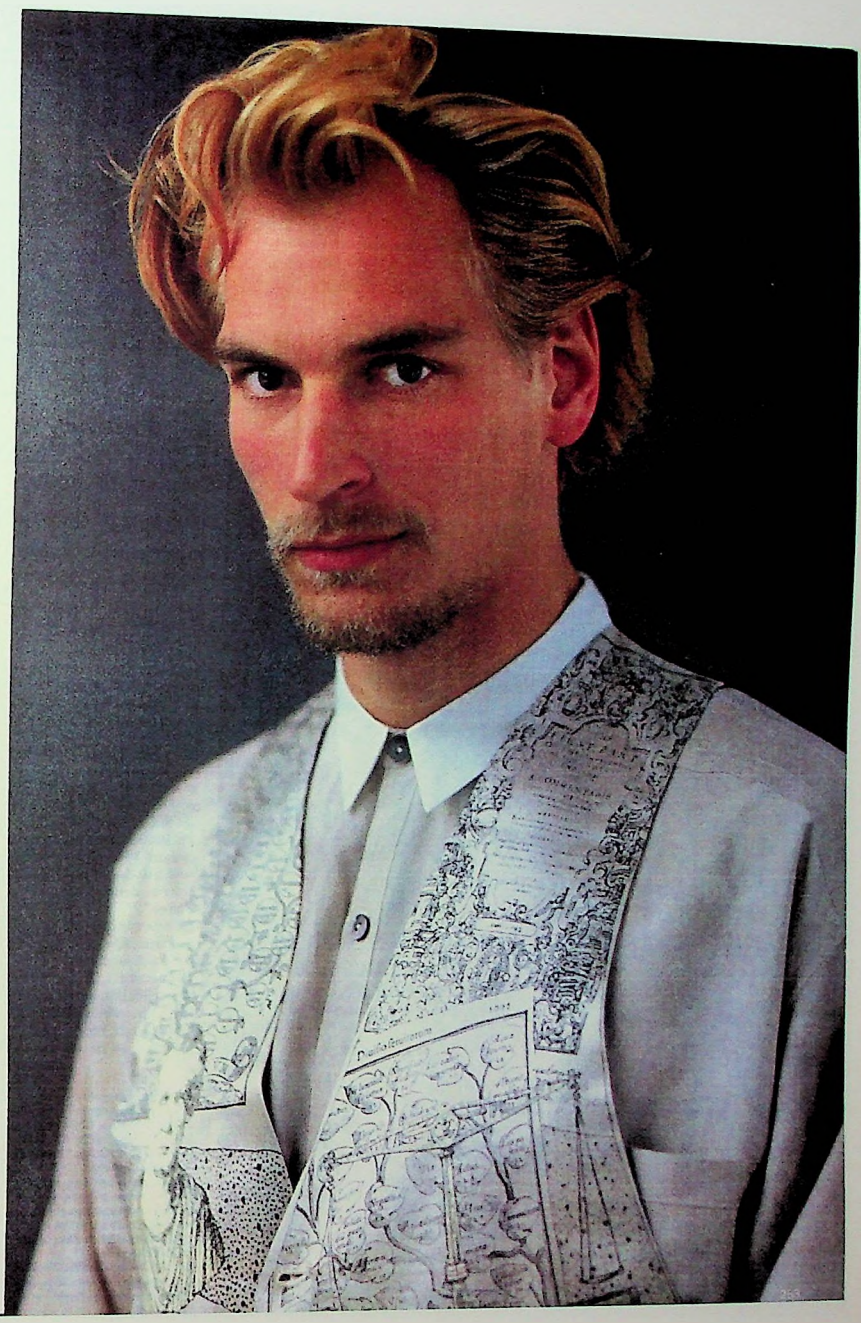


Plate . Runway Fornasetti from Perry Ellis spring/summer collection of 1988. Also Fornasetti prints on paper plates and sofa.

"Designers now seem to envisage the world as bold Fornasetti - black and white - adapting his signature graphic emblems to objects refined and ordinary." (26)

The English design firm, Timney Fowler, owes much to Fornasetti's freewheeling investiveness, and his classical suns and faces were borrowed for a recent Perry Ellis collection for spring/summer.

British manswear designer, Paul Smith, has also found inspiration in Fornasetti's prints, using them in his 1986 collections. And Gear have given Fornasetti's forms a soft touch with a sofe upholstered in a fabric printed with the facade of a neoclassical building. Columns a la Fornasetti even appear on a series of paper plates, providing the perfect background for classic canapes.

Fornasetti once said, "Ideas lead to ideas. It's the simplest thing in the world." (27)

Nobody could visit Milan without being struck by the success of the Benetton Company. There is a store on almost every street corner, and it seems like almost a national costume among the young.

The headquarters of the multinational, billion dollar enterprise, Benetton is at the 17th century Villa Minelli in Treviso, just north of Venice.

Juliana and Luciano Benetton run the Company, which supplies 5,000 stores in 80 countries.

Benetton's produce is youth targeted, very young, very casual, very cosmopolitan. Luciano Benetton had a vision of colour combinations which broke conventional colour rules, and the collections include a hotch-potch of bright pastels and muted tones in mix and match leisure wear.

Benetton are the largest clothing manufacturers in Europe and are also Europe's largest consumers of wool.

Benetton's Product Director, Senor Fabritzio Servente, says the secret of Benetton's success lies in the fact that they have always had a "global vision" for their product, and have produced a very cosmopolitan image.

Recently, the Company has diversified into childrens wear 0-12, perfume 'colors', spectacles, shoes and accessories, to present a complete package to the consumer - the Benetton lifestyle.

Benetton has a policy of employing young designers. The whole design end of the Company is very youth oriented. Throughout the year, Benetton staff travel around the world to do market research, to observe fashion trends, and to anticipate market demands.

Designs for each season are done a year in advance, with 1,000 styles per collection. Usually each style is carried in twenty five different colours. Eighty per cent of Benetton's orders are received before production for the season begins. They have a policy where shopowners can decide upon the colours they want the

Plate . The 'United colors of Benetton advertising campaign by Oliviero Tuscany promoting an image of colour co-ordinated racial harmony. Vogue Feb.89


UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.


UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.


UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

Sunglasses licensed: Polaroid

Watches licensed: Bulova

Perfume "Color" launch in Europe: 1988

UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON.

benetton

garments dyes, in response to market demands or fashion trends.

Strict instructions are laid down by the Company as to how the products should be displayed, and each shop must conform to a pre-stated format.

Fashion photographer, Oliviero Toscari, is the Benetton image-maker, who created the 'look that is marketed - the 'united colours of Benetton' advertising campaign, making it the most successful manufacturing business in Europe.

These were among the many fashionable outlets that were to help form my overall impressions of Milan's design world.

My visit to Milan left several big impressions with me - the craftsmanship, the quality, the presentation, which I had read about in reports of Milan, were everything I thought they would be.

The product is high quality, the marketing is equally as impressive. The surroundings, the shops, are all part of the overall design package, carefully planned and cleverly executed.

The garments in the designer collections that I saw in Milan were all superbly constructed and tailed to precision. It puts them in a league of their own. This was in sharp contrast to a lot of the London collections. Having worked in several retail outfits for designer clothes in London, I had become accutely aware of the importance of quality garment construction.

An example of how not to do it is reflected in the case of British

designer, Rifat Ozbek, whose collections were discontinued in one of the stores in which I worked, due to the fact that customers continually returned garments that had fallen apart.

I had also realised the power of marketing which perpetuated images. Image books, which often includes posters and postcards, work as a designer's tour de force, since everything in it, from cover to cover, is under his or her control. It delivers the designers individual style statements without interruption straight to the audience. Although image books are churned out in greater numbers today, exclusivity remains part of their appeal. In Italy, marketing has been perfected to a fine art. Dolce and Gabbara produced an image book which presented Steve Meisels photos of Isabella Rosselini, wrapped in a scarf. Only 2,000 select customers and members of the prese received this de luze portfolio of loose leaft prints.

For his image books, Gianni Versace has worked with such camera wizards as Helmut Newton, Guy Bourdin, Irving Penn, Richard Avedon, David Bailey and Gianpole Barbier among others.

Romeo Gigli presented loose leaf photographs of his 1989 collections in a gold box held at the top with a ribbon, ensuring that the design product does not stop at the garments, but goes right through to the presentation of his image to the customer.

I was struck by the overall image that comes across from almost all the combined different facets of Italian advertising.

The most widely used marketing image is one that involves

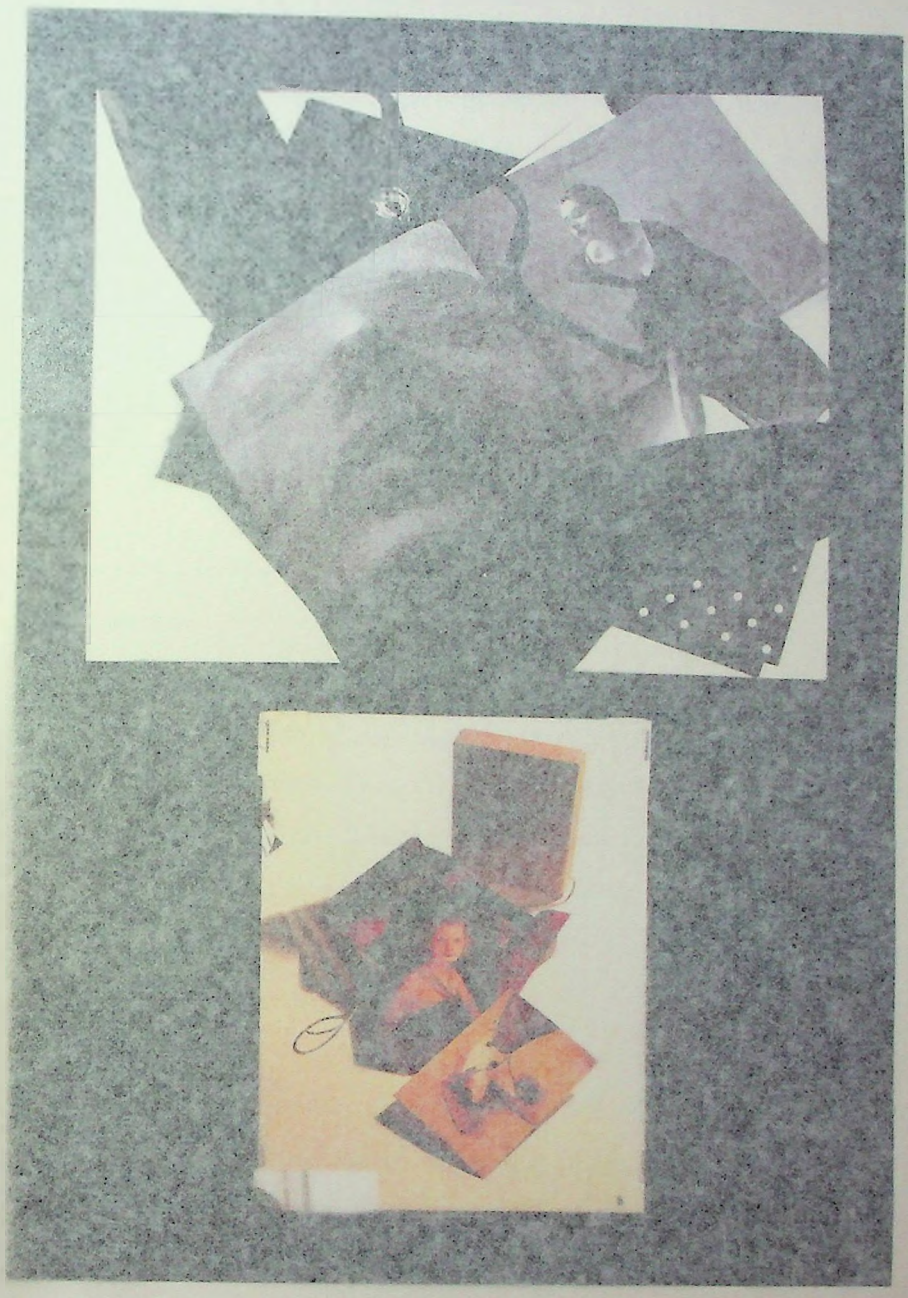


Plate . Image Booklets from both Romeo Gigli and Dolce and Gabbana for their 1990 ranges. Courtesy of Matches boutique Wimbledon .

in one form or another a portrayal of Italy's classical past, to lend a cultural image to the product.

There are many examples of this method, including that of Salvadore Ferragamo, Armani, Soprani, Ferre, Venturi, and many others.

Fendi's advertising for Swiss watches is a good example, with a classical sculpture in the background and the gold watch in the foreground, under which is written "Fendi", The Latest Roman Masterpiece."

Cappuci has also availed of this method for his Capucci perfume promotion.

This overall image of Italian design is perpetuated through many spheres. The Shoes from Italy is a perfect example. Sponsored by the Italian Trade Commission, this advertisement uses all the trappings of Italy's cultural post, evoking images of beautiful architecture, eminent scholar, to lend a timeless, classical image to modern Italian design.

As I mentioned earlier, the design of the shopping environments in Milan is another outlet for design flair, and many of the designer shops are noticeably influenced by Japanese minimalism.

The effect of environment, combined with marketing and design of garments, all left lasting impressions of 'quality', and relayed to me a most definite confidence in Italian design.

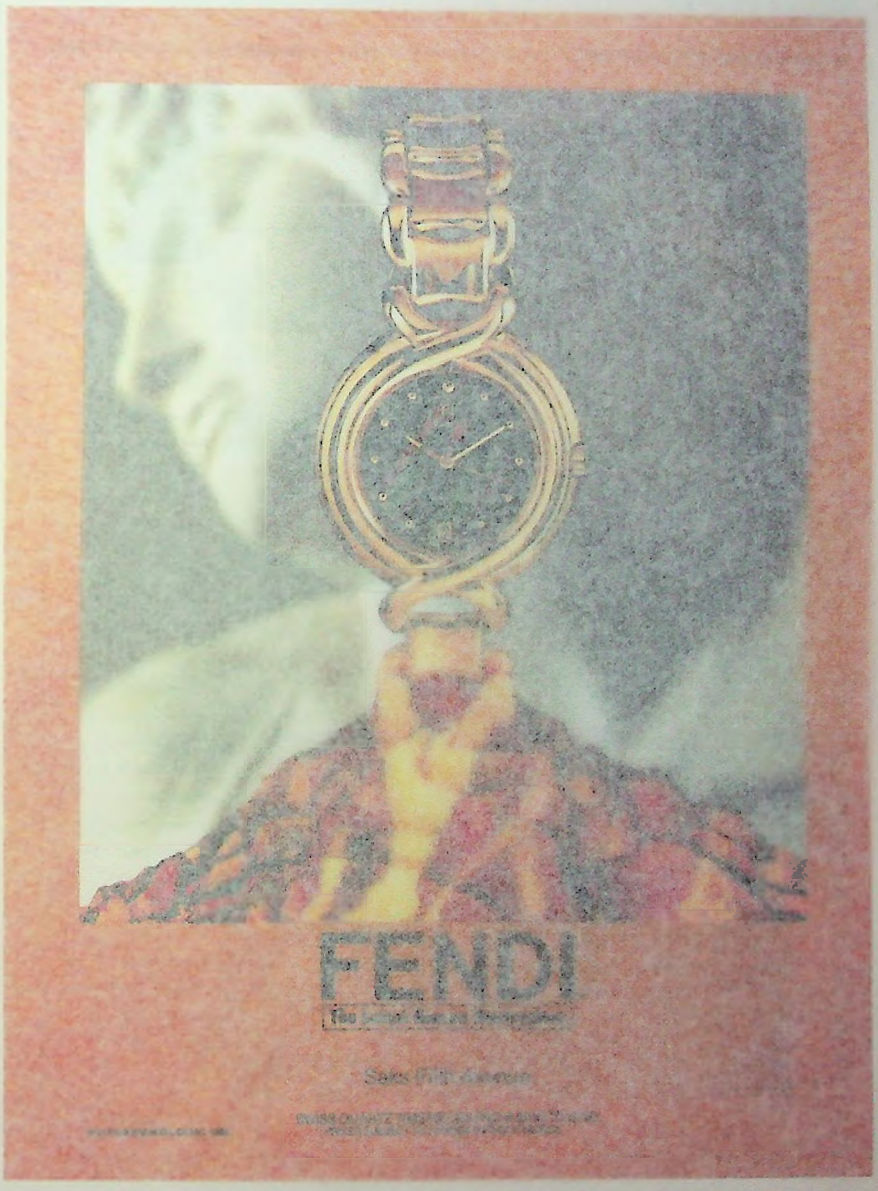
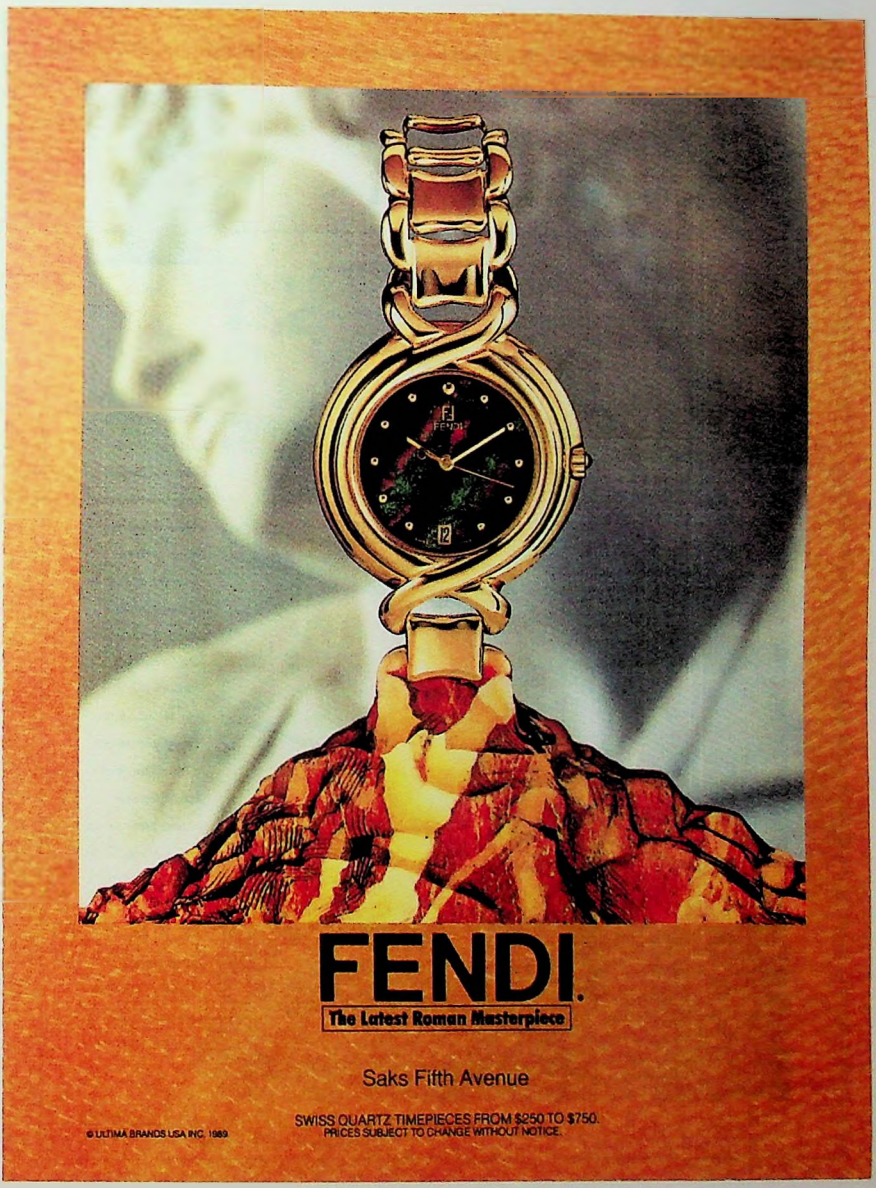


Plate . The Fendi advertising campaign an example of the use of classical Italian images in advertising. Back cover of British Vogue Sept 19


FENDI
The Latest Roman Masterpiece
Saks Fifth Avenue
SWISS QUARTZ TIMEPIECES FROM $250 TO $750.
PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.
© ULTIMA BRANDS USA INC. 1989

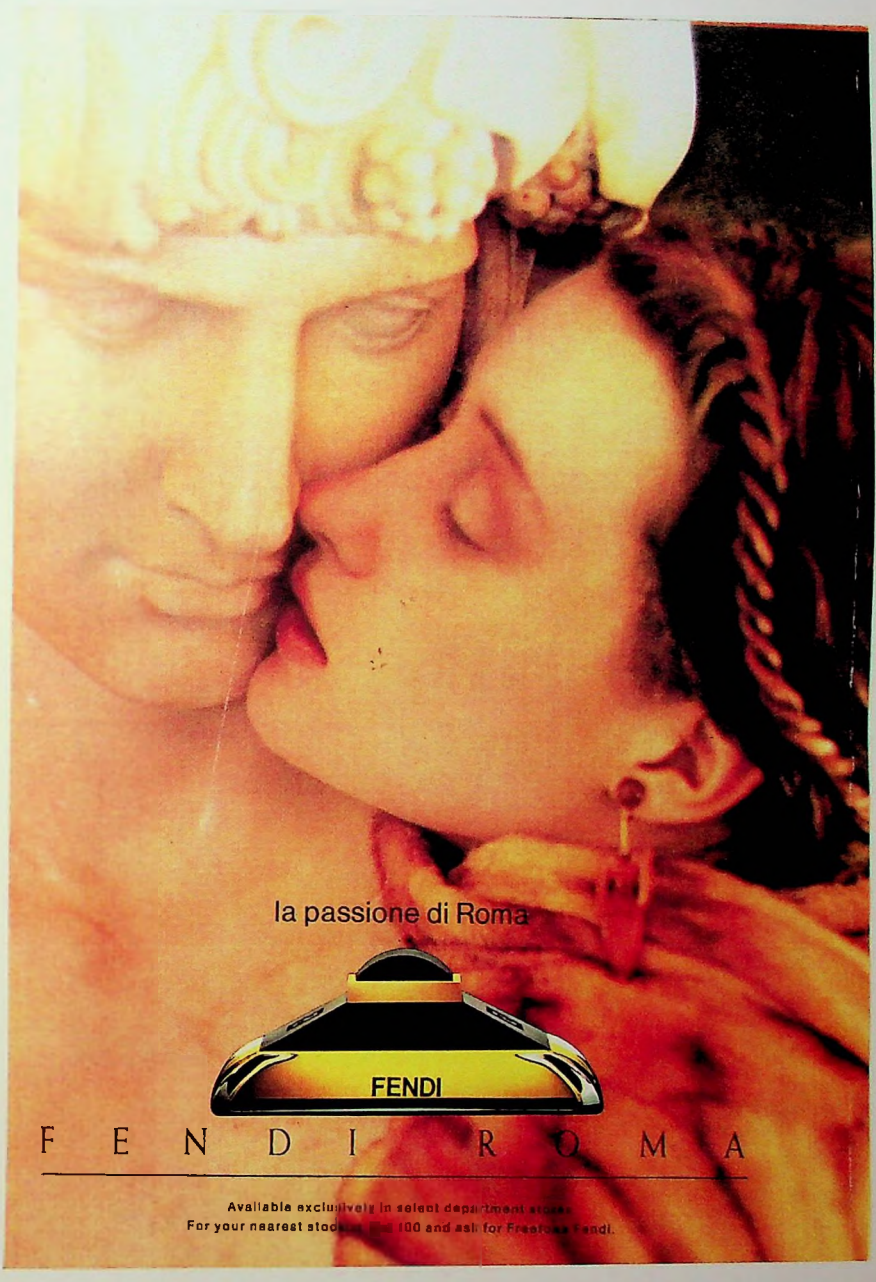
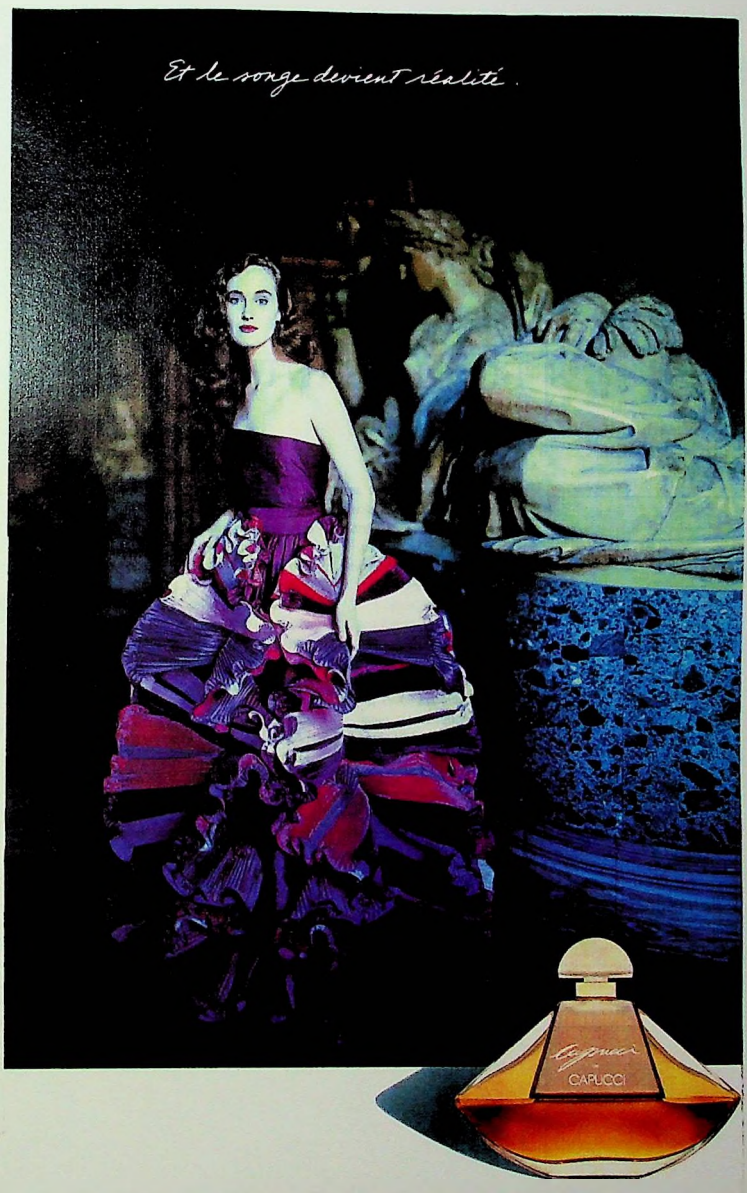

la passione di Roma
FENDI
F E N D I R O M A
Available exclusively in select department stores.
For your nearest stockist call 1800 and ask for Freefone Fendi.

Plate : . Capucci adverts for his perfume, another image of classical Italian splendour; British Vogue back cover June89



CAPUCCI DE CAPUCCI

LE NOUVEAU PARFUM DE ROBERTO CAPUCCI

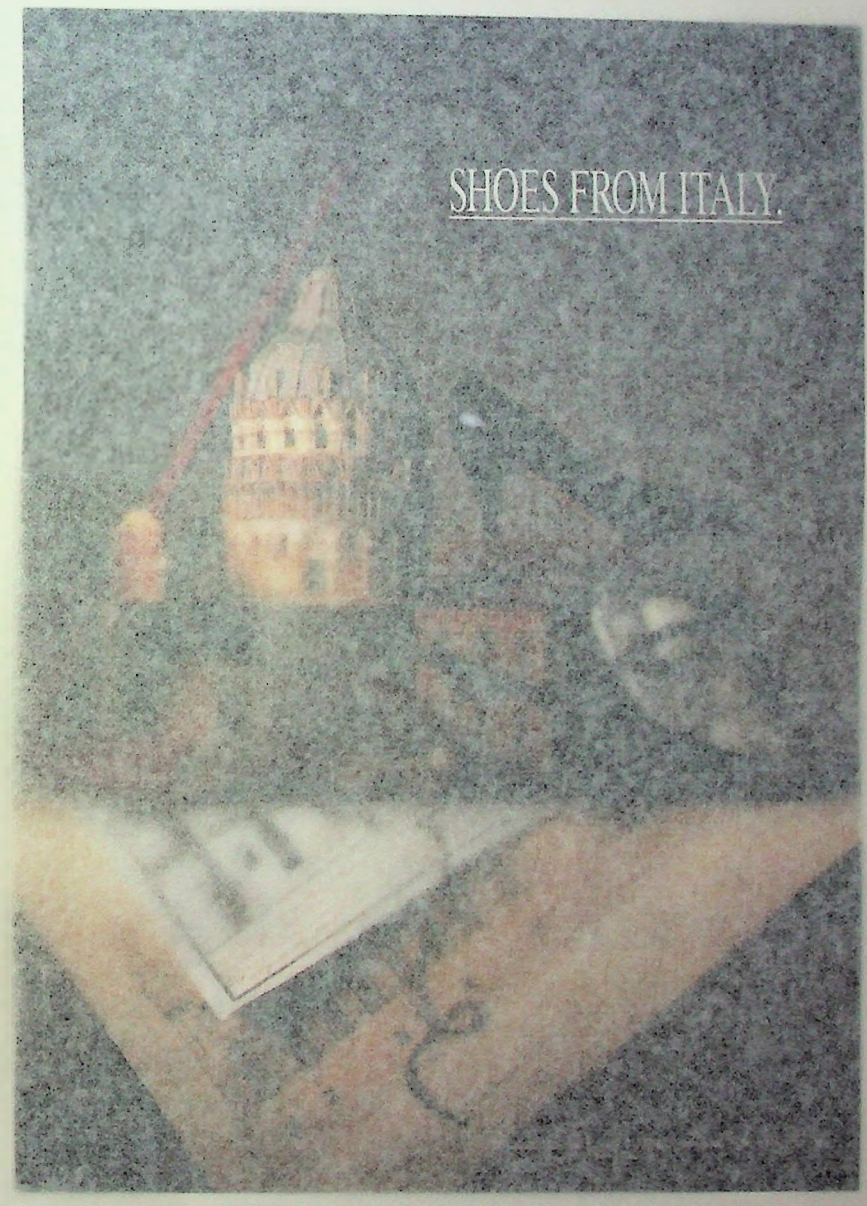
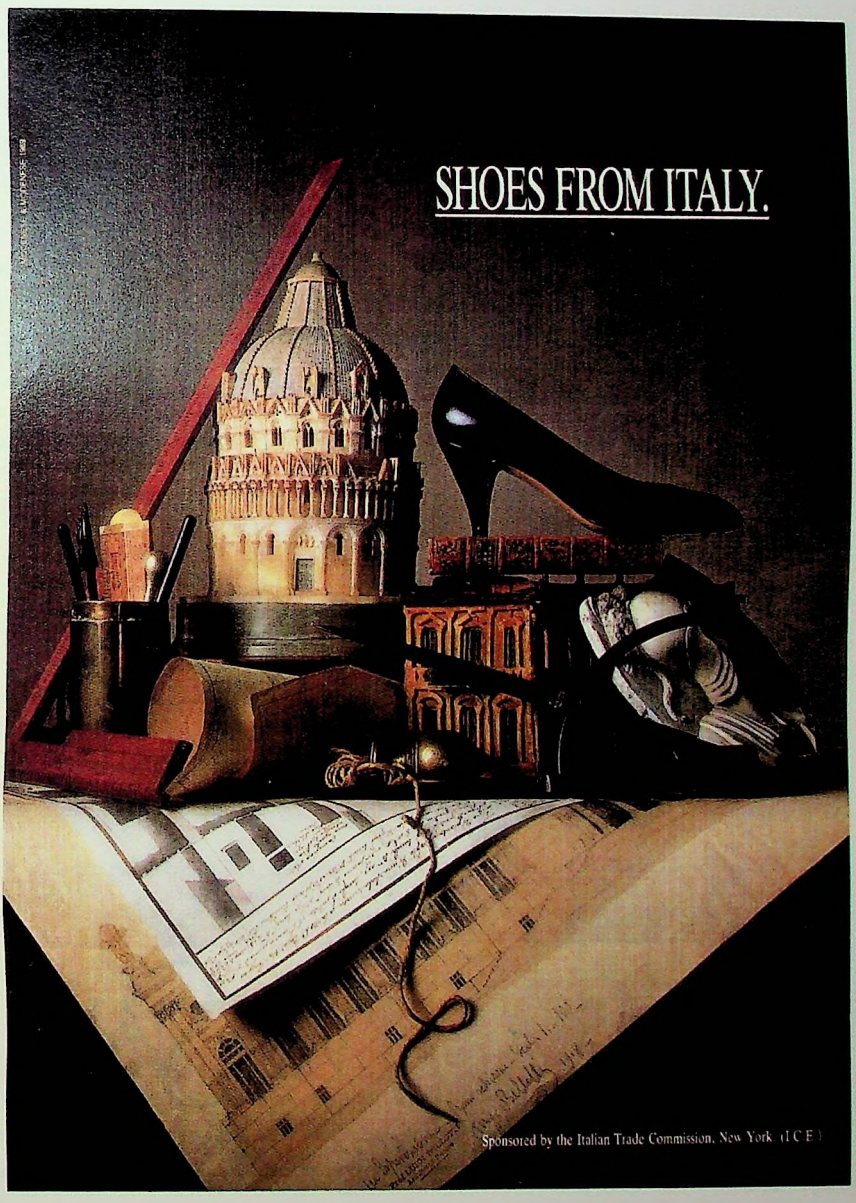


Plate . 'Shoes made in Italy' a government sponsored advertisement, another example of the classical image in advertising


SHOES FROM ITALY.
Sponsored by the Italian Trade Commission, New York (ICE)

Many people have commented to me about the lack of youth orientated fashion in Italy, saying that most of the young dressed almost in the same manner as their grown up counterparts. I did notice an element of this, and also an element of 'playing safe'.

The Italians have discovered that quality orientated, beautifully made classic styles sell, and are ever so slightly reticent in experimenting too far from the proto-form.

There has been in the recent past a noticeable lack of 'way out' designers (for example, nobody that would compare with Britain's eccentric Vivienne Westwood). However, Franco Moscino is beginning to challenge the established classic image of Italian couture and ready to wear. His witty advertising campaign pokes fun at the stuffiness of the couture industry, flaunting slogans like: "This is an advertisement for couture" - as if you didn't already know.

This is a healthy sign and a new development for Italian fashion, leading it on to a new, light-hearted approach to design, that I would submit will be a significant factor for success in future years.

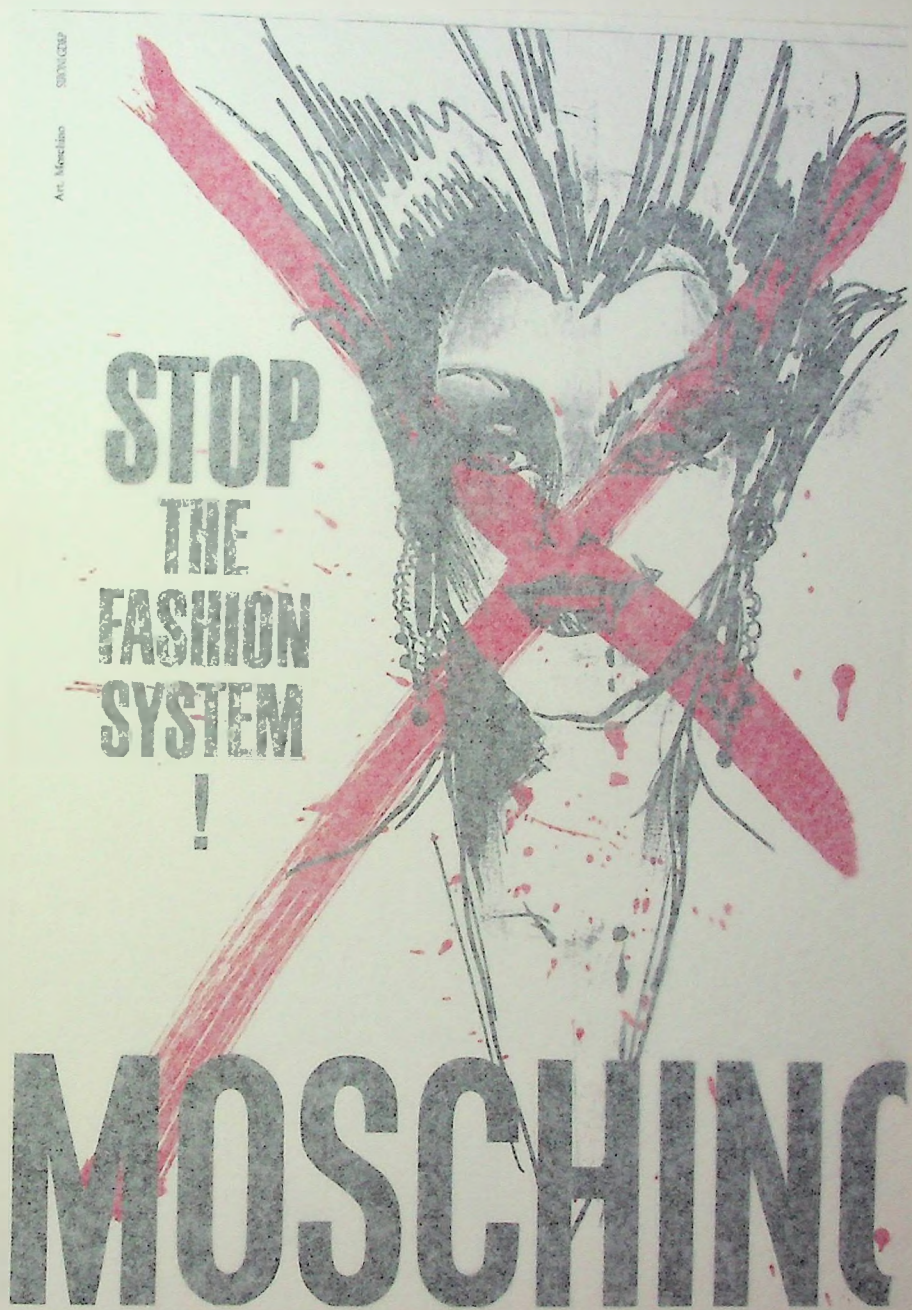
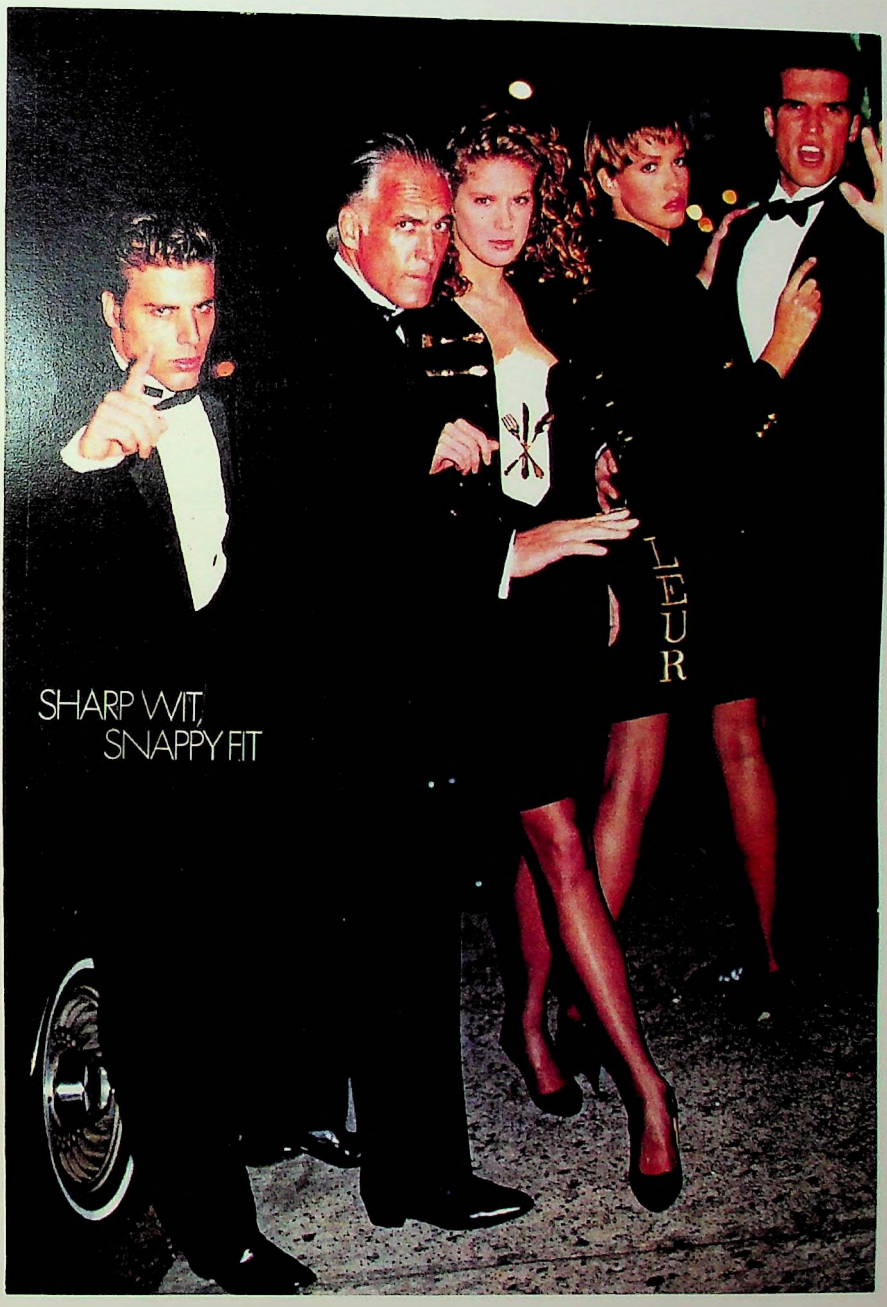


Plate . Franco Moscinos' witty advertising campaign, giving a new image to Italian fashion. British Vogue March 1990 P. 113


Art. Moschino
STOP
THE
FASHION
SYSTEM
!
MOSCHINO


BRAND GRUP
Lay out & Photo: Moschino
COUTURE !
MOSCHINO
Produced and distributed by ALIFE spa - 47048 San Giovanni in Marignano (FO) ITALY Tel 0541955354
Agent ZMD Via Masaccio, 2 20121 Milano ITALY Tel 02/76.01.01

Plate . Witty designs from Franco Moscino, challenging the 'classical' approach to design, he is Italys 'bad boy' of fashion British Vogue Feb 1990 P. 216


SHARP WIT,
SNAPPY FIT
LEUR

CONCLUSION

Italian design has gone through tremendous changes over the past forty years - from a position of subordinance to the French fashion system in the 1930's and 1940's. It has established itself, through tremendous hard work and entrepeneurial exploration in the 1960's and 1970's, and reaped the rewards in the 80's and 90's, gaining a unique level of esteem in the fashion scale.

A significant role-reversal can be seen to have occurred when recently Gian Franco Febre, former Italian architect, was called in to put the classic French couture house "Christian Dior" into order.

The enthusiasm generated by Giorgini in 1951 was the impetus that started the Italian fashion system on the road to success.

The design process in Italy has prospered immensely through increased liaisons between designers and the manufacturing industry, promoting a strong 'Italian Look', encompassing knitwear, ready to wear, haute couture, furs, shows and accessories.

Once the Italian designers stopped taking their initiative from France and began thinking for themselves, they realised that Piero Fornasetti was right when he said: "One idea leads to another, it's the simplest thing in the world."

The realisation of their own potential was the most significant

factor in the development of the Italian fashion system to date. Once they started to create the industrial back-up they organised themselves in order to keep up with market demands, realising that Italian fashion could put the next dollar in their pockets.

Plate . A report in British Vogue Oct 1989 P319. An Italian at the helm in the Dior house caused great speculation, but is a triumphant sucess.

Diorissimo!

Gianfranco Ferré sweeps into the house of Dior with a flourish of Italianate bravura

SPY

Gianfranco Ferré was in the hot seat. The launch of his first collection for Dior was the most keenly anticipated show of the winter couture – a moment of high excitement for Ferré enthusiasts and sceptics alike. The collection was put together in record time – with only nine weeks' preparation between Ferré's appointment and the show upon which he was to stake his reputation as rightful heir to the Dior line. He acquitted himself, with honours, in a full-blown operatic orchestration of classic Dior themes and familiar Ferré signature tunes.

Daywear was a matter of Dior discipline and Ferré flourish: little black redingotes and house-style Prince of Wales grey suits finished with crisp pique cuffs, massive bows at the neck, a trim of fur. A controlled, strictly Parisian, black-and-white opening warmed into the frank luxury of herringbone tweed embroidered with pearl; volumes gradually became larger, played up by stoles for day, and progressively vast multi-petticoated gowns for the most extravagant evenings imaginable. These were dresses for making both entrances and exits: their backs were embellished with huge swags of fabric supporting entire aquets of silk flowers and waterfalls of taffeta and satin train.

was an impressively confident Paris debut for a designer who has already built up an influential emational following for his Milan collections. At Dior, they are delighted. As Beatrice ngibault, directeur général, says, "Monsieur Ferre doesn't act like a star. He is very ofessional, he's a generous, open personality and everyone here feels comfortable with n." And even the hard-to-please Paris pundits have come down on the side of Ferré for performance in the couture: on the final day of the collections, they awarded n The Golden Thimble, the industry's highest accolade. ■ SM >324

MICHEL ARNAUD, 3, LOUISE DAHL WOLFE, FROM DIOR BY FRANCOISE GIROUD (THAMES & HUDSON, £75), & FROM DIOR IN VOGUE

1

2

3

4

5

2, 5, Ferré's voluminous skirts and silk flowers pay homage to the master's work ...ie, 3, a 1950 dress

or hallmarks stamped by Ferré's unmistakable hand: 1, grand evening coat; ...rast bow at neck. The heritage of the grey tweed suit: 6, the 1951 version. d, 7, transformed with pearl beading. Echoes of the past: 9, herring-bone d fur hint at, 8, a shape and treatment of 1950. 10, crisp collar and cuffs

6

7

8

9

10

Golden touch

4, Gianfranco Ferré holding the "Golden Thimble" awarded to him for his first couture collection for Dior

■ HT

Plate . Gianfranco Ferre receiving the Golden Thimble award, with models from his 1989 collection, sharp tailoring along classic lines with a new twist. British Vogue Nov. 1989.

APPENDIX

When I began research for this thesis, I was interested in it being a learning experience. I had hoped to find aspects of the Italian fashion system that, if applied in Ireland, would help promote the work of our designers.

I can draw many corrolations between Ireland's fashion system today and that of Italy in the 1950's. Today in Ireland, there are many talented designers (Lainey Keogh, Mariad Whisker), as there had been in Italy in the 50's. We also have the problem that existed in Italy during that period, i.e. the absence of a united front to fashion and the lack of good promotional outlets for our designers' work.

Perhaps all we need is one person with a clear vision for Irish fashion, i.e. Ireland's answer to Georgini, to launch Irish fashion.

Wouldn't it be a good idea, since buyers are notbothering to come to Ireland's fashion week (opting for Milan, Paris and London), if we took it to them, in a series of fashion shows and tournees, like the ones organised by the Italians in the 1950's.

Magees of Donegal have begun to do something to this effect, when in February 1990 they held a promotional show in London's Institute of Directors in Pall Mall. They chose London because it acts as a good launching pad into Europe.

They invited the international press, the Clothes Show, and

Ireland's 'Head to Toe' in an effort to gain as much publicity as possible.

I won this competition with a design for a man's business suit, and my outfit was shown alongside Magee's own updated classical suit combinations.

The show was a huge success, generating lots of publicity, and gaining many new buyers for Magees.

It is this type of initiative that we need more of in Ireland. By bringing in students, Magees gave their image a younger, fresher look, and for us students it provided precious insights into how the industry works. Thus, the venture was beneficial to both parties involved, while being profitable at the same time.

Irish designer, John Rocha, has also begun to appreciate the Italian system, which allows designers such as Armani to work for other outlets, such as Errerno. He now designs two lines, his own John Rocha line and a cheaper line for Brown Thomas run A-Wear. It has been a lucrative venture for both. Quinn and Donnelly have also resorted to this method.

So, Ireland's designers are already copying the promotional and marketing examples set by Italy. Perhaps now we should pay some attention to the production and management side of the business. The industrial talent is here. Protti chose to work with Eolas on the production of new and better knitting machines, and our industrial designers are well respected.

Although we do have the Futura Fiar, which offers a chance of interaction between designers, manufacturers and industrialists, there are still new frontiers that can be crossed here.

All in all, looking at the development of the Italian fashion system, I realise that there is hope for the development of Irish fashion. The question now is - will we begin to realise and capitalise on our talent?

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

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