

# The Relationship between Italy's Textile and Fashion Production, 1945-1985

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates Italy's transition from a country of dressmakers, tailors and small-scale couturiers in the early post-World War II period to a major producer of designer ready-to-wear fashion in the 1980s, and emphasises the role played by the Italian textile industry in this transformation. It analyses social, economic and cultural changes from Italy's first internationally-attended fashion show in 1951, organised by the impresario Giovanni Battista Giorgini, to *Time* magazine's Giorgio Armani April 1982 cover story, which signalled not just the fashion designer's international arrival, but that of Italian ready-to-wear more broadly.

My PhD is the first project to analyse how Italy's textile industry was a pivotal factor in determining a shift from the production of handmade garments to designer mass-produced clothing. The project explores the phenomenon of the post-war Italian fashion system through a new lens, examining in particular why and how Italian fashion and textile production worked together and influenced each other in developing an integrated fashion system between 1945 and 1985.

My contribution is the use of a distinctive point of view considering the foundational materials of fashion, that is, textiles and their fibres. My approach, which I defined as 'inside-out', aims to assess the intrinsic material of fashion in terms of its quality, innovation in design, type (natural, artificial, man-made fibres) and production techniques, as well as to investigate the behind-the-scenes mechanisms of fashion and textile production and their impact on the country's overall fashion, textile and design output. The richness of this approach is due to the extensive archival and museum research which is bringing to light new material never been analysed before.

As such, my research addresses a key gap in the histories of Italian textiles, design and fashion. While extensive scholarship has focused on defining Italian fashion style and its history, or has sought to reconstruct its relationship with the USA, existing literature has not made a direct link between Italy's textile production and the country's rapid evolution as a producer of "iconic" and high-quality ready-to-wear garments. The importance of the material employed in making Italian fashion has often been quoted as a very significant characteristic of the national aesthetic, but its impact has not yet been critically assessed. My research aims to address this gap and to contribute a new approach to object-based study by switching attention from the outside (style and composition) to the inside (materials and production), and by uniting the usually distinct studies of fashion and textile history.

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- |                           |   |
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| 2. <b>Brenda Azario</b>   | English Transcript  |
| 3. <b>Cleonice Capece</b> | English and Italian Transcript                              |
| 4. <b>Roberto Sarti</b>   | Selected Italian Transcript<br>Selected English Translation |
| 5. <b>Rita Airaghi</b>    | Italian Transcript<br>English Translation                   |

### APPENDIX 2: Gianni Versace table of producers

## Abbreviations

Explanatory Note:

The full title, in Italian and English of the following organisations are given on their first appearance in the thesis. On all subsequent references only the acronym is employed.

*Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, Italian National Chamber of Fashion (CNMI)

*Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume*, The International Centre of Arts and Costume (CIAC)

*Centro Italiano della Moda di Milano*, Italian Fashion Centre of Milan (CIM)

*Centro di Firenze per la Moda Italiana* (Florence Centre for Fashion)

*Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione*, Communication Study Centre Archive (CSAC)

*Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume*, The International Centre of the Arts and Costume (CIAC)

*Centro Italiano Tessili Abbigliamento Alta Moda*, Italian Centre of Textile, Ready -to-Wear and Haute Couture (CITAM)

*Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*, National Artisan Company (CNA)

European Recovery Program (ERP)

*Fiera Campionaria di Milano*, Milan Trade Fair (FCM)

*Gruppo Finanziario Tessile*, Financial Textile Group (GFT)

International Wool Secretariat (IWS)

*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*, National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)

*Mercato Internazionale del Tessile per l'abbigliamento e l'arredamento*, International Market for Furnishing and Fashion Fabrics (MITAM)

*Società Nazionale Industria Applicazioni Viscosa*, National Viscose Manufacturing and Application Company (SNIA)

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. I have translated quotes into English in the body of the text and placed them alongside their Italian original version.

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## Introduction

When historians return to the past with new questions inspired by current developments, they often (re)discover important phenomena which were well known to contemporaries, but forgotten or obscured by succeeding generations.<sup>1</sup>

My interest in the subject of Italian textiles and fashion emerged when working as a research assistant on *The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945-2014*, an exhibition at London's Victoria & Albert Museum (5 April-27 July 2014). During this period, a considerable amount of time, especially in the first year of the project, was spent travelling around Italy visiting little-known state archives, company collections, and textile manufacturing plants. While all the activities involved in the preparation of the exhibition exposed me to the country's creativity, production skills and history, these visits were a particularly eye-opening experience. I knew *what* Italy was producing in terms of textiles, but I did not know *how*. Visiting a wool manufacturing company in Prato and then a silk one in Como became the starting point of my current PhD project. Since then, I have become fascinated with the machine production of highly desirable objects, such as textile and fashion items.

Textile and clothing production constitute a principal sector of Italian industry, as evidenced in the size of its exports.<sup>2</sup> In 2016 Italy ranked first worldwide in exports of raw hides and skins, second in export of articles of leather/travel goods, silk and wool, and third in the export of footwear.<sup>3</sup>

However, such a strong performance on the international market during the last few years is not the result of a long history of fashion production. Italian fashion developed later than in the USA and other European countries and was and is structurally different. As design historian Nicola White

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<sup>1</sup>Jonathan Zeitlin, 'Industrial Districts and Regional Clusters', in *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.219-243 (p.235).

<sup>2</sup> From as early as 1927, the Fascist regime believed that the clothing sector was important for the Italian economy, Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion Under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt* (Oxford: Berg, 2004). For more economic data on the year 2004, see Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese, 'Turning Fashion into Business: The Emergence of Milan as an International Fashion Hub', *The Business History Review*, 80 (2006) 415-447 (416); Ivan Paris, *Oggetti Cuciti: L'Abbigliamento Pronto in Italia Dal Primo Dopoguerra Agli Anni Settanta* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Exports of raw hides and skins (other than fur skins) and leather (2016, in USD thousands) Worldwide Ranking Italy: 1 (4,309,452); Exports of articles of leather, animal gut, harness, travel goods (2016, in USD thousands) Worldwide Ranking Italy: 2 (7,981,795); Exports of silk (2012, in USD thousands) Worldwide Ranking Italy: 2 (285,294); Exports of wool, animal hair, horsehair yarn and fabric thereof (2016, in USD thousands) Worldwide Ranking Italy: 2 (2,143,806); Exports of footwear, gaiters and the like, parts thereof (2012, in USD thousands) Worldwide Ranking Italy: 3 (10,650,157). *Trade Competitiveness Map*, [https://tradecompetitivenessmap.intracen.org/TP\\_TP\\_IC.aspx?IN=42&YR=2016&IL=42++Articles+of+leather%2c+animal+gut%2c+harness%2c+travel+goods+edn](https://tradecompetitivenessmap.intracen.org/TP_TP_IC.aspx?IN=42&YR=2016&IL=42++Articles+of+leather%2c+animal+gut%2c+harness%2c+travel+goods+edn), [Accessed 10 April 2016]

explains, large-scale ready-to-wear women's wear emerged in the USA and UK in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, while in Italy, even after World War II, there was no fashionable industrial scale production of women ready-to-wear.<sup>4</sup> By the 1980s however Italy's fashion industry was 'heralded by the international fashion press as one of the top three players on the international fashion stage'.<sup>5</sup>

The Italian ready-to-wear phenomenon has often been analysed in its more commercial outputs, with the majority of studies placing fashion designers and couturiers at the forefront of the investigation.<sup>6</sup> Inevitably, this has produced a sort of mythologisation of such figures.

My research seeks to understand how the country transformed from the 1940s to the 1980s, starting when there was practically no international Italian fashion industry of any real economic importance, to achieving international prominence. It specifically explores the role that textile manufacturing played in the rapid transformation of Italy in terms of fashion from a country of dressmakers and couturiers to a producer of ready-to-wear at the forefront of international scene.

With my research I intend to return to the past, as historian Jonathan Zeitlin suggests in the opening quote of this thesis, in order to bring to light phenomena and mechanisms that were well-known to the contemporaries, and fundamental in devising the Italian textile-fashion system, but that have since been obliterated by the passing of time.

## Aims and Objectives of Research

The aim of my PhD is to assess the relationship between Italian textile and fashion production and the development of the Italian fashion system between 1945 and 1985. This research connects production and commerce with aesthetics, and situates national change within global contexts. It fuses textile history, fashion history and design history in a multidisciplinary approach in order to examine Italian textile specialisms within the wider context of fashion production.

In addition, this PhD thesis seeks to determine the role played by the materials and production of both textile and fashion in the development of a mature fashion system in Italy. In doing so, this project aims to answer to the question of why and how Italian fashion and textile production worked

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<sup>4</sup> Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion: America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.; Simona Segre Reinach, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter in the World of Fast Fashion', in *Fashion's World Cities*, ed. by Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006) pp. 123-134 (p.123).

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 52 in Introduction.

together and influenced each other in developing an integrated fashion system between 1945 and 1985. As such, my research addresses a key absence in the history of Italian textiles, design and fashion. Extensive scholarship has focused on defining Italian style, on the study of the Italian fashion industry's relationship with the United States of America, on the history of the country's most prolific couturiers, dressmakers, tailors and designers, and in the last two decades also on the business of fashion.<sup>7</sup> However, existing literature has so far not made a direct link between Italy's textile and fashion manufacturing and the country's rapid evolution into a producer of "iconic" and high-quality ready-to-wear fashion garments.<sup>8</sup> The importance of the quality of materials employed in Italian fashion has often been quoted as a very important characteristic of the country's style, but its impact has not yet been critically assessed.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, as Italian economic historian Ivan Paris highlights in the introduction to his study *Oggetti Cuciti*, Italian scholarship so far has not focused on the fashion industry and its rapid development.<sup>10</sup> The lack of studies on textiles and their role in fashion is however not a peculiarity only of the Italian landscape: English design historian Christine Boydell has also pointed out the dearth of information about fashion fabrics in British fashion literature.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Paulicelli, *Fashion Under Fascism*; Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*; many monographs have been written on singular designers. For an historical recollection see Sofia Gnoli, *The Origins of Italian Fashion 1900-1945* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014); Sofia Gnoli, *Moda:Dalla Nascita Della Haute Couture a Oggi* (Roma: Carocci, 2012); Elisabetta Merlo, *Moda Italiana: Storia Di Un'Industria all'Ottocento a Oggi* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2003); Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese, 'Turning Fashion into Business'; Elisabetta Merlo, 'Italian Fashion Business: Achievements and Challenges (1970s-2000s).', *Business History*, 53 (2011), 344; Ivan Paris, 'Fashion as a System: Changes in Demand as the Basis for the Establishment of the Italian Fashion System (1960-1970)', *Enterprise & Society*, 11 (2010), 524-559.

<sup>8</sup> An exception to this trends are the works and publications of the Fondazione Antonio Ratti such as Margherita Bellezza Rosina and Francina Chiara, *L'Età Dell'Eleganza: Le Filande e Tessiture Costa Nella Como degli Anni Cinquanta* (Como: Nodolibri, 2010); Margherita Rosina and Francina Chiara, *Emilio Pucci e Como: 1950 - 1980* (Como: Nodo Libri, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Rosina Margherita, 'Textiles: The Foundation of Italian Couture', in *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945*, ed. by Sonnet Stanfill (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), pp. 76-93 (76-78); Reinach Simona Segre, 'The Italian Fashion Revolution in Milan', in *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945*, ed. by Sonnet Stanfill (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), pp. 58-71 (69); note that in this article, although Segre surveys the 20th-century history of the Italian textile industry, she omits to mention the artificial and synthetic textile industry.

<sup>10</sup> Ivan Paris, *Oggetti Cuciti: L'Abbigliamento Pronto in Italia Dal Primo Dopoguerra Agli Anni Settanta* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006), p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> With the exception of Lesley Ellis Miller, 'Perfect Harmony: Textile Manufacturers and Haute Couture, 1947-57', in *The Golden Age of Couture: Paris and London, 1947-57* (London: V&A Publishing, 2007), pp. 113-136 and of Lou Taylor, 'De-Coding the Hierarchy of Fashion Textiles', in *Disentangling Textiles: Techniques for the Study of Designed Objects*, ed. by Mary Schoeser and Christine Boydell (London: Middlesex University Press, 2002), p.68.

My PhD is the first project to critically assess the role that materials within Italy's textile and fashion industries played in the shift from the production of hand-made garments, such as couture and high fashion (*alta moda*), to designer mass-produced garments (*prêt-à-porter*). This thesis observes the post-war Italian fashion system through a new lens, focusing on textiles, their fibres and the way in which they are manufactured, commercialised, and employed by couturiers and designers. My research examines the intrinsic materials of fashion in terms of their quality, innovation in design, their composition (natural, artificial, man-made fibres), production techniques, commerce and their impact on the country's overall fashion system.

## Literature Review

This thesis's contribution to knowledge can be located firstly in the macro category of fashion history and secondly in the specific context of studies of Italian fashion. My study contributes to both realms as it uses the Italian example as a case study to investigate wider issues concerning the relationship between fashion and textile production, in particular the overlooked role of the raw materials of fashion such as fibres and textiles.

### *Fashion History Literature Review*

Fashion history is a relatively young discipline. In the last thirty years the field has been preoccupied with studying fashion from different angles as well as defining its boundaries, methodologies and objectives.<sup>12</sup> As recently as 2012, fashion theorist Francesca Granata was still debating the state of fashion studies, an allied field, considering whether it might be it 'developing from a field of interdisciplinary studies [...] into a self-standing discipline and what the potential benefits and drawbacks of such a transformation might be'.<sup>13</sup> The relative newness of the field, and its struggle to define its borders, have led to certain aspects of fashion being overlooked or only marginally considered in the literature. The relationship between fashion and textile production, and the analysis of fashion production in itself, are both examples of such understudied subjects. In 1992 Ellen Leopold states how there is an absence in the literature of any 'consideration of the determining role that might be played by clothing production and its history'.<sup>14</sup> As Elizabeth Wilson

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), Peter McNeil, 'Conference Report: The Future of Fashion Studies', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress*, 14 (2010), 105-110. Breward, *The Culture of Fashion*, p.1

<sup>13</sup> Francesca Granata, 'Fashion Studies in-between: A Methodological Case Study and Inquiry into the State of Fashion Studies', *Fashion Theory*, 16 (March 2012), 67-82 (68).

<sup>14</sup> Ellen Leopold, 'The Manufacture of the Fashion System', in *Chic Thrills: Fashion Reader*, ed. by Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson (Pandora, 1992), pp. 101-117.

points out, 'the serious study of fashion has traditionally been a branch of art history' and has used art-historical methods of stylistic analysis.<sup>15</sup> In the late 1970s the field expanded to include consideration of wider contexts and drew on approaches such as 'Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis and structuralism'.<sup>16</sup> In 1985 Wilson's seminal book *Adorned in Dreams* expanded the field of research to include a method that attempted to 'view fashion through several different pairs of spectacles simultaneously'.<sup>17</sup> One of these was fashion production. In this chapter of the book she chronicled the development of 'economics of the fashion industry' mainly looking at how it exploits developing countries and women in particular.

Breward's 1995 book *The Culture of Fashion* 'aimed to incorporate elements of art historical, design historical and cultural studies approach in an attempt to offer a coherent introduction to the history and interpretation of fashionable dress'.<sup>18</sup> However he explicitly excluded from his study the description of the construction and production of dress and textiles.<sup>19</sup>

Writing in 1997, curator and fashion historian Alexandra Palmer pointed out how some of the fashion studies of the late-1990s, focusing on French couture and its production, contained aspects that destabilise the idea of the couturier as a lonely great artist, instead situating her/him as part of a wider mechanism.<sup>1</sup> Amongst these publications was Dominique Veillon's study of Parisian fashion during the years of the German occupation from 1940 to 1944 connects fashion with politics, economy and the social and cultural realms of Paris. It explained the role French fashion played in the domestic and foreign economy and how the political situation influenced design, production, type of raw materials used, and style of what people could and wanted to wear.<sup>20</sup>

In 1997 historian Nancy L. Green published *Ready-to-Wear Ready-to-work*, a study of the fashion industry and its relationship with labour force and immigration. In the book's first half she problematises and analyses the fashion industry in the cities of New York and Paris in the nineteenth

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Breward, 'Cultures, Identities, Histories: Fashioning a Cultural Approach to Dress', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 2 (1998), 301-313., p.303.

<sup>19</sup> Breward, *The Culture of Fashion*, p.5.

<sup>20</sup> Dominique Veillon, *Fashion Under the Occupation* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

century. Her point of view on production and labour and immigration offers an innovative take on the fashion industry but does not take into consideration the final garments.<sup>21</sup>

In 2005 Yuniya Kawamura with her book *Fashion-ology* defines how the field of the 'sociological investigation of fashion' is concerned with the 'social nature of fashion in its production, distribution, diffusion, reception, adoption and consumption'.<sup>22</sup> However Kawamura differentiates between fashion and clothing and her approach looks exclusively at processes rather than analysing any visual material. A point of contact with my study is how *Fashion-ology* 'debunks the myth that the creative designer is a genius' and instead presents fashion as a collective activity. However Kawamura's study is mainly interested in the social process of fashion: the production of clothing does not fit its remit.<sup>23</sup>

More recently in 2008 Jonathan Faiers with his monograph on *Tartan* intends to reaffirm 'textiles studies as an independent field of enquiry rather than, as has often been the case, an occasional adjunct to fashion theory, art history, or cultural studies'.<sup>24</sup> His book on the Scottish textile was the first of the series 'Textiles that Changed the World', edited by fashion historian Linda Welters, that intends to investigate 'the cultural life of individual textiles'.<sup>25</sup> These kinds of studies with their focus on one textile or technique start to correct the unbalanced weight of fashion over textiles studies.

This thesis aims to bring together the studies of textiles and their fibres as a way of analysing fashion's materiality as well as its production. This research is further characterised by the use of objects as a primary source. It subscribes to fashion historian and curator Valerie Steele's statement that '[...] of all the methodologies used to study fashion history, one of the most valuable is the interpretation of objects', and to dress historian Lou Taylor's opinion that 'object-based research focuses necessarily and unapologetically on examination of the details of clothing and fabric'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Nancy L. Green, *Ready-to-Wear and Ready-to-Work: A Century of Industry and Immigrants in Paris and New York* (Durham; London: N.C.; Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Kawamura, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Faiers, *Tartan* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), p.3.

<sup>25</sup> Textiles that Changed the World, <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/series/textiles-that-changed-the-world/> [Accessed 10 August 2019].

<sup>26</sup> Valerie Steele, 'A Museum of Fashion is More than a Clothes-Bag', *Fashion Theory*, 2 (1998), 327-335 (327), Lou Taylor, 'Doing the Laundry? A Reassessment of Object-Based Dress History', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 2 (1998), 337-358 (347).

My approach prioritises this close reading in a distinctive way. According to art historian Michael Yonan, objects have a structural coherence on two levels: the first material and the second semantic. In order to unveil an object's material logic, Yonan calls for a consideration of how raw materials are structured together and how physical elements are manipulated to make final things.<sup>27</sup> I would argue that applying this theory to garments shows how a dress, for example, acquires part of its structural logic from the fabrics used: the final overall external coherence will change according to whether silk, wool, cotton or synthetic materials were employed in the making. Although they might look similar externally, a couture garment is constructed in a different manner to a ready-to-wear one and therefore its agency, towards the wearer and towards the materials used in its making, changes. Thus, an in-depth analysis is essential when considering garments, since a description limited only to external features does not provide us with a full understanding of their qualities. When studying a garment, the action of 'opening' it to look inside, to understand how seams, darts and stitching have been put together, is a close approximation of Yonan's exploration of the 'logic of materiality'. This action looks beyond the pure visual quality of the worn piece, by deconstructing it. Following the suggestion of the art historian Jules Prown, I systematically analyse in this thesis 'the formal data embodied' in Italian fashion objects and I use them as cultural evidence including in this consideration the wider context of conception, commission and production.<sup>28</sup>

Following Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory, one of the concepts employed here, is to understand the role of a broader range of people and objects in the network of Italian fashion and textiles system. Furthermore, I follow what design historian Kjetil Fallan highlights as one of Latour's rule that can be apply to design history, and in this case to fashion history too, to give priority to the process over the product.<sup>29</sup> In 2015 Joanne Entwistle highlights how there is a 'small amount of academic work on fashion that has already draw upon STS/ANT'.<sup>30</sup> The works that she cites as part of

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<sup>27</sup> Michael Yonan, 'Toward a Fusion of Art History and Material Culture Studies', *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 18 (2011) 232-248 (232).

<sup>28</sup> Jules David Prown, 'Style as Evidence', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 15 (1980), 197-210.

<sup>29</sup> Fallan Kjetil, 'An ANT in our Pants? A Design Historian's Reflections on Actor Network Theory ', in *Networks of Design: Proceedings of the 2008 Annual International Conference of the Design History Society (UK)*, ed. by Hackney Fiona, Glynne Jonathan and Minton Viv , University College Falmouth edn (Boca Raton : Universal Publishers, 2009), pp. 46-52.

<sup>30</sup> Entwistle Joanne, 'Bruno Latour: Actor-Network-Theory and Fashion', in *Thinking through Fashion : A Guide to Key Theorists*, ed. by Agnès Rocamora and Anneke Smelik (London : I.B. Tauris, 2016), pp. 269-284.

this trend are mainly preoccupied with fashion markets while she hopes that ANT could be applied to 'fashion as a nature-culture hybrid'.<sup>31</sup>

My research, however, seeks to understand the role that textile manufacturing played in the rapid development of Italian fashion from a country of dressmakers and couturiers to a producer of ready-to-wear at the forefront of international scene. The isolated study of textiles, fibres and labels, though key, is not sufficient to answer to this. Object-based research needs to be embedded in cultural and historical settings. As explained by Kaori O'Connor in relation to production: 'The new material culture is not concerned primarily with the mechanics of technology or the aesthetics of style, but with production in a larger, cultural sense, in which production is seen as a cultural process and mass-produced goods constitute social values in material form'.<sup>32</sup> In line with this, I analyse in my research the full spectrum of fashion production, from fibre manufacturing to textile design, production and commercialisation, and from the designers and couturiers' inventiveness to its translation into mass production, or unique couture pieces.

#### *Italian Fashion History Literature Review*

Having located this study within the literature on fashion history, what follows is an overview of the literature in the field of twentieth- and twenty-first-century fashion history focusing on Italy, as well as the 'Made in Italy' debate. This will help to historically and methodologically locate my contribution in the field of fashion history focusing on Italy.

The literature in this field commonly places the starting point of Italian fashion's history in the twentieth century with the patriotic attempts of activist and designer Rosa Genoni in 1906. As fashion historians such as Sofia Gnoli have recounted, at the *Esposizione Internazionale di Milano* (Milan international Expo) of that year, Genoni promoted an Italian fashion that was decisively not influenced by France, then the dominant force in European fashion, but presented a collection of dresses made only with Italian textiles and inspired by the Italian Renaissance.<sup>33</sup>

The state of Italian fashion during the inter-war period has more been covered by contributions about this period by fashion historians and curators such as Grazietta Butazzi and Caterina

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>32</sup> O'Connor Kaori, 'The Other Half: The Material Culture of New Fibres', in *Clothing as Material Culture*, ed. by Kuchler Susanne and Miller Daniel (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp.41-60 (pp. 44).

<sup>33</sup> Sofia Gnoli, *La Moda*, pp. 18-22.

Chiarelli.<sup>34</sup> Similarly to my approach, these scholars notably use surviving objects, amongst other sources, to investigate the interwar period and to scrutinise the effectiveness of the style imposed by the Fascist regime.

More recently, this period has been also investigated by a body of work, written in both Italian and English by Gnoli and linguist Eugenia Paulicelli.<sup>35</sup> Gnoli's *La Donna, L'Eleganza, Il Fascismo: La Moda Italiana Dalle Origini all'Ente Nazionale della Moda* reconstructs historically, through in-depth archival research, the Fascist fashion system and its rules, regulations and promotion. In this research however, as in others published later, the presented chronology of fashion's key moments is not critically analysed and objects are mainly used as an illustration of historical facts rather than engaged from a critical point of view.<sup>36</sup> Paulicelli's *Beyond the Black Shirt* focuses on the construction of national identity and *Italianità* during the Fascist period by analysing a variety of sources such as novels, magazines and films. It however makes no direct reference to surviving fashion objects.

The 1970s generation of Italian fashion historians, including Grazietta Butazzi, Gloria Bianchino, Alessandra Mottola Molino and Bonizza Giordani Aragno, use art history as their main methodology and laid the groundwork, with their seminal contributions, for the wider scholarly interest in the study of Italian fashion in the last thirty years.<sup>37</sup> Their work culminated with the publication in 1985 of two volumes of *La Moda Italiana* (later translated into English), an extensive compendium of essays encapsulating 'the attempt to reflect the complexity of problems that the Italian Fashion System had to deal with', as Butazzi explains in her introduction to the first volume.<sup>38</sup> The publication of these two volumes fulfilled a double aim, on the one hand the presentation of an historic text and on the other the promotion of a museological idea. There was no museum of

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<sup>34</sup> Grazietta Butazzi, *1922-1943 Vent'Anni Di Moda Italiana: Proposta Per Un Museo Della Moda a Milano* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1980), Natalia Aspesi, *Il Lusso e l'Autarchia: Storia dell'Eleganza Italiana, 1930-1944* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1982); Caterina Chiarelli, *Moda Femminile tra le due Guerre*, Galleria Del Costume (Livorno: Sillabe, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Sofia Gnoli, *La Donna, L'Eleganza, Il Fascismo: La Moda Italiana Dalle Origini all'Ente Nazionale Della Moda* (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma, 2000); Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism*.

<sup>36</sup> Sofia Gnoli, *Un Secolo Di Moda Italiana, 1900-2000* (Roma: Meltemi, 2005). and Gnoli, *La Moda*.

<sup>37</sup> *Italian Fashion. the Origins of High Fashion and Knitwear*, ed. by Gloria Bianchino and others (Milan: Electa, 1987); *Italian Fashion. from Anti-Fashion to Stylism.*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi (Milan: Electa, 1987), *Disegno della Moda Italiana 1945-1980. Italian Fashion Designing 1945-1980*, ed. by Gloria Bianchino (Parma: CSAC dell'Università di Parma, 1987), Bonizza Giordani-Aragno, *Il Disegno dell'Alta Moda Italiana: 1940 - 1970*. (Roma: De Luca, 1982).

<sup>38</sup> Grazietta, Butazzi, 'Introduction', *Italian Fashion. the Origins of High Fashion and Knitwear*, ed. by Gloria Bianchino and others, 1 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), p7, (pp.7-10).

contemporary fashion in Italy at the time, and the tomes prompted a drive to collect, catalogue and investigate fashion objects to facilitate the opening of such an institution. Unfortunately, these hopes remain unrealised, and no such museum has ever opened. Thirty years on, this diverse collection of researches on Italian fashion remains a key point of reference for the study of this subject. Amongst its many contributions, it pioneered the study of contemporary 1980s fashion with the rigour and scholarly interest previously reserved for past historical periods, and made use of objects as a valuable primary source.

These efforts motivated in part the 1989 pioneering exhibition and catalogue *Gianni Versace L'abito per pensare*. This project, especially in the catalogue edited by fashion historian Nicoletta Bocca and textile historian Chiara Buss, provides an in-depth analysis of the contemporary production of Gianni Versace through a rigorous study of its influences, mode of work and materials. The press at the time reported on this innovative approach with admiration:

The exhibition dedicated to Gianni Versace is ambitious. It has as its objective not only to reconstruct the creative itinerary of an international fashion designer, but to precisely analyse it as if it was a retrospective on a figurative artist. In order to analyse the development of a fashion creator, the curators of the exhibition have done something very innovative: they have studied in depth the way in which Gianni Versace works to invent a fashion grammar and were able to describe the dresses in an objective manner.

[La mostra dedicata a Gianni Versace è ambiziosa. Si propone non solo di ricostruire l'itinerario creativo di uno stilista internazionale, ma di analizzarlo: esattamente come si fa nelle retrospettive serie di qualsiasi artista figurativo. Per analizzare lo sviluppo di un creatore di moda, i curatori della mostra hanno compiuto una vera e propria impresa innovativa: hanno studiato a fondo il modo di lavorare di Gianni Versace per inventare una grammatica della moda e poter descrivere gli abiti in modo obiettivo].<sup>39</sup>

The Gianni Versace experiment remains an isolated event. Although increasingly more studies have been conducted since the late 1990s and the early 2000s, this field in Italy is still in its infancy in comparison to the development in Anglo-Saxon countries, as anthropologist Simona Segre Reinach laments.<sup>40</sup> This under-development can be ascribed to the position of the field in Italian universities. Universities have only recently begun to adopt a historical and rigorous approach to the subject. In 2018, theoretical courses on fashion history, marketing and publishing have become more

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<sup>39</sup> Guido Vergani, *Anche 'L'Abito Fa Pensare' Se Lo Firma Il Grande Stilista*, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1989/04/14/anche-abito-fa-pensare-se-lo> [Accessed 12 January 2019].

<sup>40</sup> Simona Segre Reinach, 'Fatto in Italia: La Cultura made in Italy (1960–2000) by Paola Colaiacomo (Ed.)/ Oggetti Cuciti: L'Abbigliamento Pronto in Italia Dal Primo Dopoguerra Agli Anni Settanta by Ivan Paris', *Fashion Theory*, 13 (2009), 121-126 (124).

prominent in public universities such as the undergraduate course at the Università Statale of Milano, La Sapienza in Roma and at the University of Bologna, but only two public institutions, the IUAV of Venice and the Politecnico of Milan offer a course to form fashion designers.<sup>41</sup> In addition there is no national museum or equivalent institution devoted to the study, collection and display of historical and contemporary Italian fashion. Private foundations and collections, as well as smaller museums of fashion such as the Museo del Tessuto in Prato, Palazzo Morando in Milan, and the costume collection at Palazzo Pitti are scattered around the country, but there is no centralised approach and no active national contemporary collection and mission, despite the necessity for those having long been established, as will be seen in Chapter Five.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the lack of such an institution, fashion curation has in some way bridged the gap. For example, critic and fashion curator Maria Luisa Frisa has mainly devoted her work to fashion curation and has contributed several monographs and exhibition catalogues to various aspects of Italian fashion. Her contribution has benefitted Italian fashion curation practice and, with her latest exhibitions *Bellissima* and *Italiana*, she has brought Italian fashion to the contemporary art museum MAXXI and to the Palazzo Reale in Milan. In so doing she has opened up the subject by showcasing fashion production as part of the country's cultural and artistic scene and presenting to a larger number of visitors than ever previously connected to fashion exhibitions.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Editoria, Culture Della Comunicazione Di Moda*, [http://www.cosp.unimi.it/offerta\\_didattica/C84.htm](http://www.cosp.unimi.it/offerta_didattica/C84.htm) edn, [Accessed 9 January 2019]; [http://www.cosp.unimi.it/offerta\\_didattica/C84.htm](http://www.cosp.unimi.it/offerta_didattica/C84.htm), *Design Della Moda*, <http://www.poliorientami.polimi.it/cosa-si-studia/corsi-di-laurea/design/design-della-moda> [Accessed 9 January 2019], pp. 121-126 (p. 124), *Laurea in Culture E Tecniche Della Moda*, <https://corsi.unibo.it/laurea/CultureTecnicheModa> [Accessed 9 January 2019].

<sup>42</sup> Clara Tosi Pamphili, *Moda E Militanza. Intervista a Maria Luisa Frisa*, <https://www.artribune.com/progettazione/moda/2018/02/intervista-maria-luisa-frisa-mostra-palazzo-reale-milano/> edn, [Accessed 9 January 2019]. Simona Segre identifies and lists regional Italian museums with a fashion connection in Simona Segre Reinach, 'Fashion Museums and Fashion Exhibitions in Italy. New Perspectives in Italian Fashion Studies', in *Fashion Curating: Critical Practice in the Museum and Beyond* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 170-182.

<sup>43</sup> Such as Maria Luisa Frisa, *Italian Eyes: Italian Fashion Photographs from 1951 to Today* (Firenze: Fondazione Pitti Discovery, 2005); *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968*, ed. by Maria Luisa Frisa, Anna Mattiolo and Stefano Tonchi (Milano: Electa, 2014). The exhibition *Bellissima* at the museum Maxxi, Rome (02 December 2014 - 03 May 2015 and *Italiana. L'Italia vista dalla Moda 1971-2001*, at Palazzo Reale, Milan (22 February-6 May 2018).

Fashion historian Enrica Morini has contributed to significant projects, such as the study on Max Mara's coats archive, and has written Italian fashion history that provides a solid reference point to any study on the field, though her work sometimes lack a strong critical perspective.<sup>44</sup>

Anthropologist Simona Segre's research focuses mainly on the city of Milan and its ready-to-wear industry, and on the relationship between Italian and Chinese manufacturing and fashion.<sup>45</sup> In the field of textile history, Chiara Buss stands out with her breadth of publications on historical textiles, such as silks and velvets, but also through her contribution to the literature on Italian fashion with her volumes on Gianni Versace, which examine the designer's use of materials. Textile historian Margherita Rosina, Buss' successor at the helm of the Ratti Foundation, paves the way to challenging the dichotomy between fashion and textiles in her important publications that use in-depth archival and object-based research to demonstrate the fundamental connection between these two worlds.

The neighbouring field of economic history has also recently taken an interest in the subject of fashion. Economic historians such as Elisabetta Merlo have contributed important studies of the economic history of Italian fashion over the last decade.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, economist Ivan Paris' work on ready-to-wear has offered Italian fashion history a solid grounding in economic theory and data. His work is particularly significant for its definition of the characteristics of the different 'levels', as he calls them, of Italian fashion (*alta moda* or *couture*, *prêt-à-porter* or ready-to-wear, mass-production or *confezione*). His study, however, uses an economic perspective and therefore lacks an analysis of the stylistic contribution of Italian fashion to the international arena in relation to these 'levels'. As Segre states in her review of his book, Paris' analysis tends to lean towards the financial side, favouring a focus on quantitative factors over an assessment of cultural implications.<sup>47</sup> Clothing manufacturing has been mainly explored by business history, and studies in this field are very significant for their investigation of company archives, which are often left unexplored by fashion historians (mainly because of the nature of the documents preserved, mainly legal papers, data, etc).

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<sup>44</sup> Enrica Morini, *Storia Della Moda : XVIII - XXI Secolo* (Milano: Skira, 2006)., *Coats! : Max Mara, 60 Years of Italian Fashion*, ed. by Adelheid Rasche (Milan: Skira, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Reinach Simona Segre, 'China and Italy: Fast Fashion Versus prêt-À-Porter. Towards a New Culture of Fashion', *Fashion Theory*, 9 (2005), 43-56.

<sup>46</sup> Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese, 'Turning Fashion into Business'; Elisabetta Merlo, 'Italian Fashion Business'.

<sup>47</sup> Segre, 'Fatto in Italia', p. 125.

However, these studies focus mainly on the business operations of clothing and textile companies and do not draw from the analysis of primary sources such as garments and textiles.<sup>48</sup>

Italian historian of culture and consumerism Emanuela Scarpellini has recently published a historical and cultural study of Italian fashion from 1945 to today. Rather than analysing fashion mediation in the form of fashion display, its styles changing every season or its promotion on social media, as many Italian studies have done before, her research focuses on the cultural dimension of fashion and the influence of economic and technological factors on its development. Her work is also noteworthy for its consideration of the consumption of clothing by different sectors of the population, including factory workers, the middle classes and young students taking part in the revolution of 1968.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, monographs on individual fashion designers and fashion houses are increasingly commissioned by designers' archives, brand museums or in relation to specific exhibitions.<sup>50</sup> These often self-referential publications are however limited by their aim to commemorate and celebrate, and rarely offer any critical assessment of the role of the brand or designer in terms of the wider history or fashion system.<sup>51</sup>

The literature on Italian fashion history has been traditionally written by Italians in Italian, consequently limiting the debate outside of the country. An important exception is the seminal work by Nicola White, whose 1997 MPhil thesis and subsequent publication *Reconstructing Italian Fashion* started a trend of non-Italians writing on Italian fashion, highlighting the topic's appeal in the last few decades for British and American academics and museum curators.<sup>52</sup> White's research was based on the premise that the years between 1945 and 1965 were the 'unrecognised foundation of the post-1980 success' of Italian fashion.<sup>53</sup> She went on to examine the fundamental role that the

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<sup>48</sup> Elisabetta Merlo, *Moda Italiana : Storia Di Un'Industria Dall'Ottocento a Oggi* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2003), Elisabetta Merlo, 'Size Revolution': The Industrial Foundations of the Italian Clothing Business', *Business History*, 57 (2015), 919-941.

<sup>49</sup> Emanuela Scarpellini, *La Stoffa Dell'Italia : Storia E Cultura Della Moda Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Roma: Laterza, 2017).

<sup>50</sup> An example is: Sarah Mower, *Gucci by Gucci: 85 Years of Gucci* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> An exception to this is *Coats! Max Mara, 60 Years of Italian Fashion*.

<sup>52</sup> Nicola White, 'The Role of America in the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry 1945-1965' (unpublished MPhil, Kingston University, London, 1997); Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion: America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 1.

USA had on the evolution of Italian fashion and she attempted to define what the characteristics of Italian style were. Reading her book in the summer of 2012 encourage me to look at this field and inspired me to continue building on the grounds that she started. My PhD is therefore strongly indebted to White's work but starts with a different perspective as it aims to look at both Italian fashion and textile production and at the intersection between the two systems. It examines a larger chronology and it is not focused on defining Italian style, but investigates the role of materials in the development of Italian fashion production. This new perspective, together with research gathered from archives previously not available to White, adds to the originality of my research.

Lastly, one phenomenon that has helped expand writing on Italy's fashion affairs beyond Italians came with the development of fashion exhibitions in foreign museums over the last three decades. The initial tendency with these fashion exhibitions was to present monographic shows devoted to an important fashion personality. Examples of these include the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibitions on Salvatore Ferragamo in 1987, Gianni Versace in 2002 and journalist Anna Piaggi in 2006 in London.<sup>54</sup> American museums have also contributed to this trend with Gianni Versace in 1997 and *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations* in 2012 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>55</sup> Also in America, the work of Giorgio Armani was chronicled in a retrospective at the Guggenheim of New York in 2000 and Roberto Capucci at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2011.<sup>56</sup>

A more recent trend has seen the subject of Italian fashion addressed through wider survey exhibitions. Major examples include the Fashion Institute of Technology's *Italian Style* curated by Valerie Steele in 2003 in New York; the Hasselt Fashion Museum's *La Moda-Made in Italy* in 2013; and the Victoria & Albert Museum's *The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945-2015* in 2014 in London.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace*, ed. by Claire Wilcox (London: V&A Publications, 2002). The exhibition 'Versace at the V&A', V&A 17 October – 12 January 2003. Salvatore Ferragamo. The Art of the Shoe 1927-1960 (exhibition at the V&A from 31 October 1987 to 7 February 1988). 'Anna Piaggi Fashion-ology', V&A from 2 February to 23 April 2006.

<sup>55</sup> *Gianni Versace*, (Met Museum, New York 11 December 1997 –22 March, 1998 and *Schiaparelli and Prada: Impossible Conversations* (Met Museum New York, 10 May – 19 August 2012)

<sup>56</sup> Dilys Blum, *Roberto Capucci: Art into Fashion* (New Haven: Philadelphia Museum of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2011), the exhibition run from 16 March 2011 – 5 June 2011

<sup>57</sup> *Fashion, Italian Style*, ed. by Valerie Steele (New York: The Museum at FIT, 2003). One exception was played by the retrospective on the Sala Bianca at the Musée des Arts de la Mode et du Textile in Paris with 'La Renaissance de la Mode Italienne: Florence, La Sala Bianca 1952-1973' (The Renaissance of Italian Fashion: Florence, La Sala Bianca 1952-1973) which run from 19 March –1 August 1993.

These survey exhibitions have presented historical overviews of Italy's fashion output and contextualised Italian fashion culturally, socially and economically.

### *Researching 'Made in Italy'*

When speaking of Italian fashion, it is almost impossible to separate the subject from a debate about 'Made in Italy'. The expression has recently been unpacked, analysed, critiqued and historicised.<sup>58</sup> Design historian Grace Lees-Maffei highlights an emphasis on production in research of the subject due to the use of the term 'made'.<sup>59</sup> While this might be the case in design history, the opposite may be argued about critical studies of Italian fashion, which focus most prominently on the style and quality associated with the tag at the expense of any in-depth study of the production of these goods. This is one of the main reasons for which I go back to the literal meaning of 'Made in Italy' in this research project. As Paris argues, it is necessary to recognise that the success of the Italian fashion system was based on three main players: textile manufactures, designers and the clothing industry. Literature on the topic, both in Italy and abroad, has historically devoted most attention to the role played by individual creators, such as designers and couturiers, while more recent business history studies, especially in the last twenty years, have shed light on the role of the clothing industry in developing the Italian fashion system.<sup>60</sup>

My research acknowledges the scholars who have considered the Renaissance as a key factor, justification or even, as economic historian Carlo Marco Belfanti describes it, a 'guarantee of provenance' for Italian fashion in the post-war style.<sup>61</sup> However, my aim with this project is to look beyond this historical link and to study the development of new fabrics, machinery and techniques that shaped the Italian fashion system, and to look at the ways in which the country's fashion production has been branded not only traditional and artisanal, but also modern, simple and sporty – aspects that cannot be ascribed to the Renaissance paradigm.

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<sup>58</sup> *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*, ed. by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), Eugenia Paulicelli, 'Fashion: The Cultural Economy of Made in Italy', *Fashion Practice-the Journal of Design Creative Process & the Fashion Industry*, 6 (2014), 155-174.

<sup>59</sup> Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan, *Made in Italy*.

<sup>60</sup> As seen in the widespread of monographs on individual designers and exhibitions in the previous section and for business history see the work of Paris, Merlo and Polese.

<sup>61</sup> Carlo Marco Belfanti, 'History as an Intangible Asset for the Italian Fashion Business (1950-1954)', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 7 (2015), 74-90.

In response to the research landscape described above, this thesis is positioned at the intersection between the object-based approach typical of curatorial museum practice and the sensibility of business history that privileges the investigation into production processes. This research focuses on the mechanisms and actors within textile and fashion manufacturing and investigates the relationships that linked textile and clothing productions. This approach, by reversing the usual accent placed on the role of the designers, unravels often complicated structures and systems operating behind the scenes of fashion and textile making. By looking at how things are made, by whom, and where, in a spectrum that encompasses the full range of players involved – from the fibre manufacturers in Part One, through the textile intermediaries in Part Two, to the places of design, ideation and delocalised production in Part Three – this thesis seeks to unpack the ‘Made in Italy’ label by looking into the process of making. This process is informed by extensive archival materials retrieved from a wide-range of sources, and brings together the often-separated disciplines of fashion, textile and design history.

## Primary Research Sources

The primary research undertaken for this project can be categorised into three types: archives; interviews; mass media (magazines and newspapers).

Archival research is the backbone of this thesis. Between 2015 and 2018 I visited over twenty archives across Florence, Milan, Como, Prato, Parma, Venice, London, Bath, New York, Philadelphia and Wilmington. These include textile manufacturing archives (Faliero Sarti, Clerici Tessuto, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Nattier), archives of fibre producers (DuPont, Snia Viscosa), museum garment collections (Victoria and Albert Museum, FIT, Fox Collection, Philadelphia Museum); personal archives (Giovanni Battista Giorgini, Elisa Massai), exhibition archives (*Italy at Work* at the Brooklyn Museum); fashion drawings (Centro Studi a Archivio della Comunicazione), archives of designers and brands (Simonetta, Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Max Mara), department store archives (Harrods, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bergdorf Goodman), and archives documenting events and institutions (*Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, *Fiera Campionaria di Milan*).

Because of their nature, archives contain documentation that spans a wide chronology and often held materials that was not of direct interest to this project. Several of these archives were overwhelming in richness and scale, and on more than one occasion my attention was side-tracked by what I thought were probably irrelevant materials. I therefore strategically selected what was relevant for this project, but I also embraced the unexpected. This was the case when I focused on a

group of uncatalogued materials in the Giorgini archive that offered a new perspective on what I thought was an already exhaustive investigation.

In order to process such large quantities of materials, I approached each archive through the framework of my research questions, deciding accordingly what to consider and what to leave behind. The case studies for each section emerged from the material encountered in these spaces. Since archives are by their very nature incomplete, irregular and heterogeneous sources, these findings were then complemented with oral history and the study of secondary literature.

Interviewing key protagonists from the Italian fashion and textile world has been invaluable to understanding how certain mechanisms of making and production would have worked at the time. I conducted and recorded a total of five interviews. These were with: Brenda Azario, the founder and co-owner of Nattier, a textile wholesaler or *carnettista*; Franco De Felice, a commercial agent for the Como-based silk mill Clerici Tessuto; Cleonice Capece, an Italian fashion designer mainly active in the 1960s and 1970s; Roberto Sarti, the owner of the Faliero Sarti wool mill in Prato; and Rita Airaghi, the former personal assistant of Gianfranco Ferré and current director of the *Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré* in Milan.<sup>62</sup> The transcripts and translations of these interviews are available in Appendix 1. These encounters have allowed me to retrieve narratives that could not be found in the literature on the subject. The richness of this type of source is however balanced by the limitation of personal memories: some of these recollections were clearly viewed through the lens of the present, highlighting what is considered to be also momentary valuable and important nowadays at the expense of an objective overview of events. I therefore complemented these oral history resources by complemented them with research in newspapers and magazines from the period. In addition to press clipping books and articles included in personal archives, I surveyed fashion and textile magazines, economic newspapers and trade journals. Articles, advertisements and magazine covers provided information and images on some aspects, such as *moda boutique*, that were not addressed in-depth in the secondary literature. The extent of the research into each title was determined by time constraints as well as by the availability, accessibility and type of medium. *Vogue Italia* (previously known as *Novità*) and US *Vogue* were consulted physically for some ad hoc articles and were also accessed through their online databases. *Vogue UK* and *Harper's Bazaar UK*, were accessed physically at the National Art Library (every issue from 1945 to 1955). *Novità* was accessed physically in the Ratti Foundation's library (I analysed surviving issues between 1950 and 1957), at the Max Mara archive (holdings dating from 1958 to 1963) and through an online database (covering the years 1964 and 1965). Physical surviving issues of *Bellezza* (from the 1950s and 1960s) and of

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<sup>62</sup> Transcripts and translation of the all the interviews are included in the Appendix 1.

*Linea Italiana* (from 1966 to 1968) were consulted in the Max Mara archive. *Women's Wear Daily* was accessed through an online database at the New York Public Library (covering the period 1945-1958). The Italian economic newspaper *Il Sole* was available in microfiche at the Sormani library in Milan (issues from 1945 and 1946 were accessed). The textile trade journal *American Fabrics* was surveyed at the New School Archives in New York (all issues between 1946 and 1958). Finally, the few surviving issues of the following magazines were also researched: *Fashion and Fabric Overseas* at the British Library; *Il Mondo Tessile* and *International Textiles* at the Ratti Foundation; and *Harrods News* (from 1946 to 1965) in the Harrods archive.

## Methodology

In 2009 Grace Lees-Maffei presented the Production–Consumption–Mediation paradigm (PCM) as a representation of the last thirty years of the discipline of design history, and its future.<sup>63</sup> The PCM paradigm ‘identifies mediation as a third stream of design history’ in addition to John A. Walker ‘production-consumption’ model.<sup>64</sup> This paradigm has proved very useful for my research: while Lees-Maffei uses the PCM paradigm to define design history in the UK, I have used her model and applied it to this particular study of Italian fashion, highlighting in particular the production and mediation aspects. Consumption is considered only in the analysis of broad markets and not at the level of individual consumption. The decision to focus on two aspects at the expense of the third is based on the gap in the literature highlighted above. Finally, I have added to Lees-Maffei’s paradigm a focus on object analysis that illuminates the model from a different angle by using objects as key evidence rather than mere illustration.

A focus on production drives the first two parts of this thesis. Part One focuses on the making of fibres and textiles in the context of *alta moda* and its cheaper and more export-focused equivalent *alta moda pronta*. Part Two looks at the *carnettisti*, a type of production intermediary, and investigates their role in close proximity to *alta moda* and how they were influential in defining what textile mills were making.

If production is the main lens through which the first two sections are examined, Part Three focuses on both production and mediation. I achieved this by looking at the city of Milan in its role of mediator and also, through a close-up study of working fashion drawings, in its role of virtual capital

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<sup>63</sup> Grace Lees-Maffei, 'The Production–Consumption–Mediation Paradigm', *Journal of Design History*, 22 (2009), 351-376.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

of manufacturing, by examining in detail some of the mechanisms of production behind *prêt-à-porter*, the new language of Italian fashion.

The mediation aspect is mainly addressed through the analysis of fashion and textile magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* (Italia, UK and USA), *American Fibres*, *Linea Italiana*, *Bellezza* and *Novità*.<sup>65</sup> This survey focuses on the features, advertisements and reports on Italian fashion that shaped the country's image and aesthetic in the eyes of both local and overseas consumers. It also offers an insight into the types of collaborations that took place between textile manufacturers, clothing producers, couturiers and designers. Mediation also manifests in the organisation of events, such as catwalks, textile fairs and international partnerships. These are examined through archival research in the papers of relevant individuals, such as Giovanni Battista Giorgini, the organiser of the collective International High Fashion show in the *Sala Bianca* in the post-war years, or institutions, such as the *Camera Nazionale della Moda* (Italian Fashion Chamber) and the *Fiera Campionaria di Milano* (Milan Trade Fair). These documents illuminate the intentions and aspirations of the Italian fashion system on a local and international level.

The diagram below shows the PCM paradigm as adapted for this thesis (Figure 1). It is worth noting that although each of the constitutive aspects schematically appears to be standing alone, they are in fact all part of the same cycle and continuously influence and redefine each other. I explain in the introduction of each section how this paradigm applies to the research presented.

My method of investigation takes into consideration three distinctive phases, but focuses mainly, as I have explained, on the aspect of production in researching the country's fashion output. To put it in the words of anthropologist Tim Ingold, this approach aims to bring forward the 'creativity of the productive processes that bring the artefacts into being'.<sup>66</sup> In that sense, consumption and mediation are here considered as end phases of production that influence each other, as Maffei highlighted, rather than distinct focal areas of investigation.

The spectrum of production ranges from the hand-made tradition, embedded in historical know-how and craft, to machine-made mass production. This thesis spans the entire spectrum, considering the first extreme with *alta moda* in Part One and ending at the other with *prêt-à-porter* in Part Three.

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<sup>65</sup> For more information on Italian fashion magazines see Monti Gabriele, 'Through a Paper Looking Glass', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014); Ivan Paris, *Oggetti Cuciti*, p.40. In this instance I am using the magazines as sources and not themselves as objects.

<sup>66</sup> Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 7.

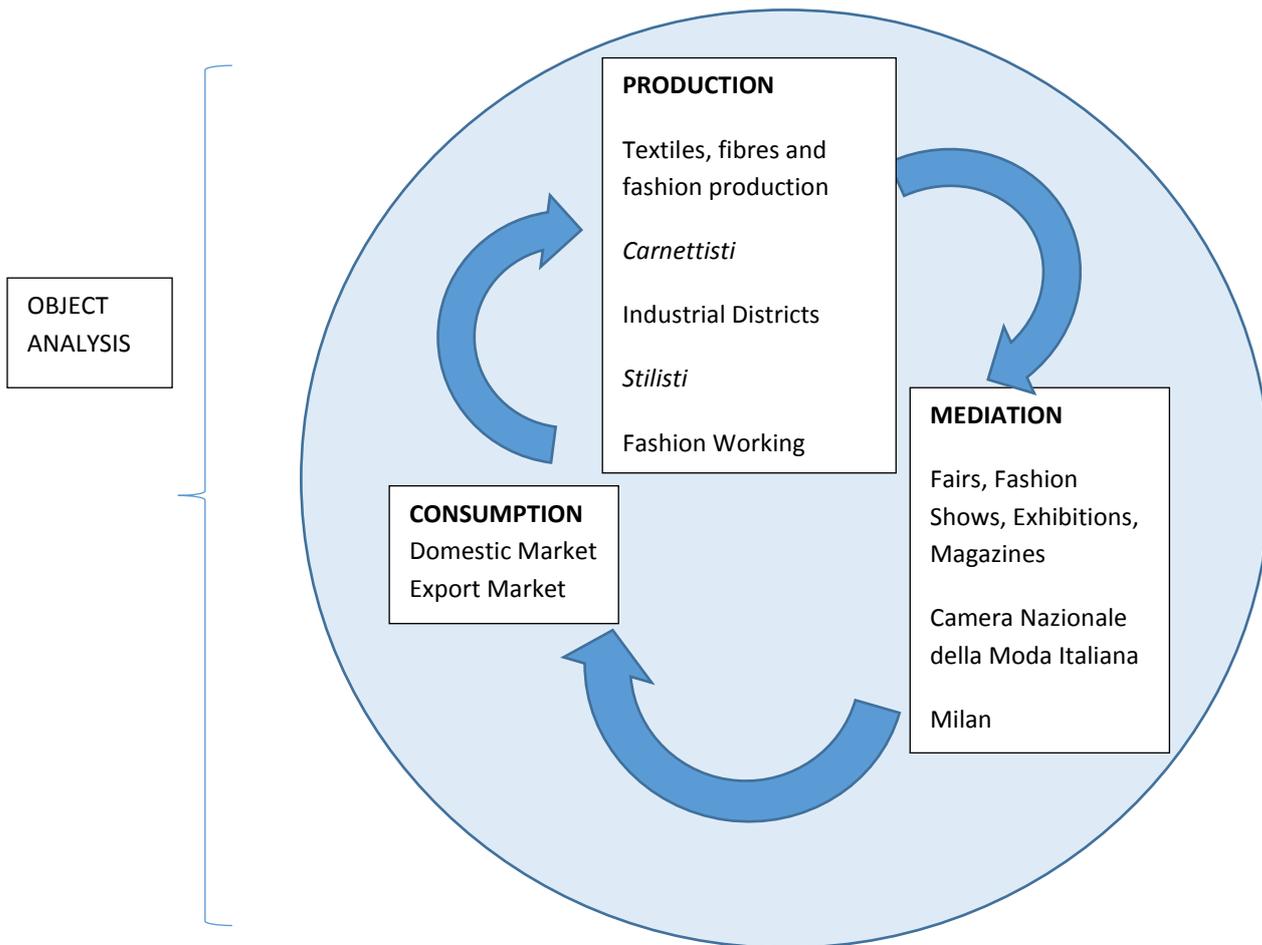


Figure 1. Grace Lees-Maffei's Production-Consumption- Mediation Paradigm (PCM) diagram as applied to this thesis.  
 Source: personal diagram by the author (8 October 2018).

### *The Inside-Out Method*

This thesis considers Italian textile and fashion production, and therefore the 'Made in Italy' label, not as a brand but as a process and a network. It goes behind the scenes to explore what the 'Made in' involves. The following three sections endeavour to get under the glossy surface and expose the many threads, knots and connections 'inside' the finished products. Similarly to what happens when one looks inside an object, this thesis looks also into fashion production processes, opening them up and exposing aspects previously unseen or overlooked in the literature.

This PhD project employs what I call an 'inside-out' method. This type of approach highlights how materials influence style, and processes determine over final products. The forensic approach of the 'inside-out' method of analysing garments has traditionally been used in museums and conservation. Museum curators have used it to investigate the life of objects, their biographies and stories.<sup>67</sup> I am using this approach as one of my methods to interrogate and challenge histories and investigate aspects of production and mediation that otherwise would have remained hidden by methodologies that analyse from a stylistic angle only. Thanks to this method, in the chapters that follow, I also uncovered actors and agents that have not been looked at before. Understanding who is pushing innovations and how, and what actors are dominating at given times, inevitably creates a patchwork rather than a linear, seamless story. The inside-out approach has a threefold aim. It first seeks to temporarily obscure from view the style, shape and the external appearance of the garments studied in order to focus instead on the types of textile, the specific fibres used (artificial or natural, domestic or imported) and the means of production, distribution and commercialisation of the garments. Anthropologist Kaori O'Connor explains that 'focusing on fabric is a useful way to avoid the confusion induced by concentrating on constantly changing fashion styles'.<sup>68</sup> She also advocates an approach for the analyses of contemporary society where mass production is the rule and she suggests that cloth and textiles, although an essential part of the finished garment, have received little attention relative to fashion designers.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For an overview of object-based research in fashion studies see Ingrid Mida and Kim Alexandra, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp.14-23. Lesley Ellis Miller, *Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895-1972): The Couturiers' Couturier* (London: V&A publishing, 2007).

<sup>68</sup> O'Connor, 'The Other Half: The Material Culture of New Fibres', (pp. 44-45). O'Connor also explains that the conventional material culture studies have taken into account as the main object of interest the physical and social processes of transformation and not the materiality of fibres.

<sup>69</sup> O'Connor Kaori, 'Lycra, Babyboomers and the Immaterial Culture of the New Midlife: A Study of Commerce and Culture' (unpublished PhD, University College London, 2004).

Secondly, this method endeavours to shed light on the garments' labels and maker's marks, such as 'Made in Italy' and 'Exclusively for' (as seen in Figure 2).<sup>70</sup> Aspects of this approach are shared with fashion historian Alexandra Palmer's method. In her study on Canadian couture, Palmer uses couture objects in public and private collections as primary evidence, and extensively analyses labels within these garments.<sup>71</sup> Labels, textile codes, technical drawings' marks and captions in fashion advertisements are often overlooked in fashion history. In this thesis, they instead provide the starting point to explore themes connected with the mechanisms of textile and fashion manufacturing, promotion and commerce.

Finally, by privileging the analysis of materials and production, this approach aspires to reveal aspects that would have previously passed unnoticed, such as the use of artificial and synthetic material in couture and its implications, as explored in Chapter One. Similar preoccupations are at the core of historian Regina Lee Blaszczyk's study 'Styling Synthetics', which suggests that the mass-market success of DuPont owed as much to creative marketing, styling, and performance as it did to the industrial research and organizational innovation. According to Blaszczyk, the casual and comfortable American look that developed in the USA in the post-war era depended in large part on the fabrics made from novel synthetic fibres.<sup>72</sup>

This 'Inside-Out' method has been used differently in the three sections of the thesis and will be further explained in the introduction to each part.

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<sup>70</sup> For example, the label inside the Emilio Pucci Bikini (V&A: T.237a, b -1998) 'Exclusively for Saks Fifth Avenue'.

<sup>71</sup> Helen Alexandra Palmer, 'The Myth and Reality of Haute Couture. Consumption. Social Function and Taste in Toronto. 1945 – 1963' (unpublished PhD, Brighton University, 1994). p. 297; Alexandra Palmer, *Couture & Commerce: The Transatlantic Fashion Trade in the 1950s* (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 2001).

<sup>72</sup> Regina Lee Blaszczyk, 'Styling Synthetics: DuPont's Marketing of Fabrics and Fashions in Postwar America', *The Business History Review*, 80 (2006), 485-528.



*Figure 2. Emilio Pucci, labels inside a bikini, showing Pucci's 'Made in Italy' label together with 'Exclusively for...' label (1968), printed cotton, elastic and wire, Victoria and Albert Museum: T.237:1, 2-1998, given by the Bruce family, worn by Mrs David Bruce.*

*Source: personal photograph by the author (7 November 2012).*

## Research Parameters

Writing in 1955, Irene Brin, Rome editor of *Harper's Bazaar* between 1950 and 1969 and perhaps the most influential Italian fashion journalist of the post-war years, asserts that, without doubt, Italian high fashion was born in 1945 when the Allies 'discovered in bombed-out cities filled with starving workers the clever, fragile and heroic invention of Carosa and Simonetta, of Fontana and Schubert [..]'.<sup>73</sup> Using 1945 as the starting date of this project acknowledges the phenomenon described by Brin.

Traditional literature on the subject usually presents Giovanni Battista Giorgini's First High Fashion Show in Florence in 1951 as the event signalling the birth of Italian fashion. This show's impact on the image of Italian fashion and its export, and Giorgini's role and contribution have been extensively studied.<sup>74</sup> In my project, I do refer to Giorgini and the significance of his marketing of Italian fashion, but I also prefer to focus on lesser-known initiatives promoting the country's fashion and textile productions after the war, such as *Italy at Work* and entrepreneur Franco Marinotti's CIAC examined in Chapter One, and the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, considered in Chapter Four.

Giorgio Armani's portrait on the cover of *Time* magazine in April 1982 heralded the emergence of the man behind the very successful label on the international scene, but also highlighted a further shift in the production of Italian fashion.<sup>75</sup> As the Italian fashion system was being celebrated, it had also started to change. The date of 1985 is used as the end point of this project because it marks the culmination of the system described throughout the thesis. It also signals the advent of a different environment characterised by increased competition from China from the late 1980s and the rise of international luxury conglomerates.

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<sup>73</sup> Irene Brin, 'La moda si prepara all'inverno' in *La Settimana Incom Illustrata* 30 (July 23, 1955), quoted in Cinzia Capalbo, 'In the Capital: Institutions in Support of Fashion', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014), pp. 350-353. Also on Irene Brin see Vittoria Caterina Caratozzolo, *Irene Brin: Italian Style in Fashion* (Milan: Marsilio, 2006).

<sup>74</sup> Giuliana Chesne Dauphine Griffo, 'Gb Giorgini the Rise of Italian Fashion', in *Italian Fashion. the Origins of High Fashion and Knitwear*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi, 1 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 66-71., Sofia Gnoli, *Un Secolo Di Moda Italiana, 1900-2000* (Roma: Meltemi, 2005), pp. 139-176., Orsi Landini Roberta, 'The Sala Bianca', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014), pp. 324-327., Guido Vergani, *La Sala Bianca : Nascita Della Moda Italiana* (Milano: Electa, 1992). Giorgini Archive in Florence State archive. Neri Fadigati, 'Giovanni Battista Giorgini, La Famiglia, Il Contributo Alla Nascita Del made in Italy, Le Fonti Archivistiche', *ZoneModa Journal*, 8 (2018), 1-15.

<sup>75</sup> Jay Cocks, 'Giorgio Armani: Suiting Up for Easy Street', *Time*, 5 April 1982.

## Italy's Manufacturing Story: Design, Fashion and Textile

This section positions Italian fashion production within the broader Italian manufacturing landscape and not an isolated occurrence. Italian design, fashion and textiles share a history and many characteristics. As journalist Rinaldo Gianola aptly summarises,

Few economic phenomena are as typically Italian as the furniture and fashion industries. These two sectors have many points in common: they are frequently similar in their origins, in their control and management by families, in their dimensions, in their capacity for innovation and in their aggressive attitude towards markets.

It is not within the scope of this project to answer the questions of which system borrowed from the other or where the model originates. However, it is important to highlight that these two realms have points of contact. Segre's work on the city of Milan suggests that Milan's coronation as the capital of fashion was partly due to the fact that it was already an Italian design hub.<sup>76</sup> Segre's study attempts to link the sectors of fashion and design, which have traditionally been studied separately by either fashion or design historians. Although the design trajectory and the fashion-textile one do not always overlap precisely, Italy's twentieth century manufacturing history originates in the Americanisation of production in the post-war years and the consequent shift towards a more localised industrial structure. Sometimes these two sectors developed along similar paths, as with the common economic structure of the *distretti industriali* discussed in Chapter Five. At other times their stories diverged, as with the figure of the designer/*stilista* typical of the fashion industry but not of the design realm as seen in Chapter Five.

### Chapter Structure

Writing about fashion and textiles over such an extended time frame inevitably requires chronological jumps and exclusions. This project does not aim to present a complete history of Italian fashion and textiles between 1945 and 1985, but instead focuses on key stories and issues informed by the primary material available. The thesis is organised into three loosely chronological parts. Each part consists of two chapters, a first one that introduces the years analysed and a second that focuses on an extensive case study that illuminates the interconnections between textiles and fashion and their production, commerce and mediation.

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<sup>76</sup> Simona Segre Reinach, 'Milan as a Fashion City', in Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, ed. by Joanne Eicher, 8 vols (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 259-263.

Part One focuses on the post-war years 1945 - 1958, when *alta moda* was at the helm of the country's post-war recovery. Chapter One explores the significance of Italian fibres, textiles and fashion for the country's export markets, especially North America: during this period the domestic market was of less concern as the country was still battling with the effects of the war. The production and promotion of export goods is explored in Chapter Two, which analyses the role that textiles played in two events organised in the USA and Italy. The first one, *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*, was an American-organised exhibition which opened at the Brooklyn museum in 1950, showcasing Italian designs for an American public. The second, the *Sala Bianca*, was a promotional fashion show organised in Italy for an American public of buyers and press in 1951. The chapter concludes with a case study that explores the relationship between Italian fashion made in Italy and its transatlantic commerce to the USA and how this helped Italy to develop its own distinctive productive specialisation.

Part Two covers a shift from the export market to the domestic one. From 1958, with the country's 'economic boom', domestic consumption grew and became a much more important player. Chapter Three explores how institutions such as the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* attempted to organise the domestic production of fashion and textiles in order to create a coherent system able to better compete on the international scene. Within this context, Chapter Four analyses the role played in the Italian fashion and textiles system of the 1960s by a little-known intermediary: the *carnettisti*.

Part Three concludes the thesis by exploring the years between the early 1970s and 1985 in Italy. Chapter Five considers the city of Milan and its role of mediation in raising the profile of the Italian fashion and textiles system to the level of other international players such as Paris and New York. The well-known phenomenon of the explosion of Italian *prêt-à-porter* is investigated through the lesser-known aspects of its production (*distretti industriali*) and the role of the designers (*stilisti*). Chapter Six delves deeper and analyses, through a close look at fashion working drawings, the way in which design and production communicated with one another.

## Part 1: 1945-1958, Fibres to Textile: the USA, Italy and the Transatlantic Export of Fashion

### Introduction

The first part of this thesis considers the years after World War II until about 1958. This period saw numerous shifts and changes that influenced the development of a mature textiles and fashion manufacturing system in Italy. It is also characterised by a scarcity of archival material about both textile manufacturers and couturiers, and by the paucity of studies which have tried to unpick it.<sup>77</sup> I have addressed this by focusing on the materiality of surviving objects and by using the 'inside-out' method outlined in the introduction to understand the production, mediation and forms of consumption of Italian fashion and textiles. This approach brings to the fore aspects of production that have been unnoticed so far. For example, the extent to which artificial and synthetic yarns featured in the textiles used in Italian high fashion, an aspect which has not been fully investigated in relation to the period in question.<sup>78</sup>

The existing literature has so far privileged a narrative that focuses on natural fibres such as silk, wool and cotton, leaving out the significance of the use of artificial and synthetic fibres.<sup>79</sup> Reversing this focus is key to unravelling 'threads' and narratives which were significant at the time but that have fallen out of the spotlight.

When analysing production, my primary concern is the study of objects such as day dresses, evening gowns, sportswear, accessories and textiles designed and made by Italian dressmakers, tailors and manufacturers, and conserved in private and public collections in Italy, UK and USA. The specific typology of the fashion and textile objects analysed depends on the holdings of the numerous collections scattered around these three countries. The greater or lesser availability of certain designs in the private and public collections also offers some evidence of how many were

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<sup>77</sup> One notable exception is the work of Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*.

<sup>78</sup> The only publication devoted to the subject merely gives an historical overview of synthetics and artificial fibres without assessing their significance: Maura Garofoli and Bonizza Giordani-Aragno, *Le Fibre Intelligenti: Un Secolo di Storia e Cinquant'Anni di Moda* (Milano: Electa, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> Despite the size of the Italian artificial and synthetic textile manufacturing industry, its impact on fashion has only been investigated in the interwar period and in the context of the Fascist regime's autarchy. See Elisabetta Merlo, *Moda Italiana: Storia Di Un'Industria Dall'Ottocento a Oggi*, pp.65-66 and Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism*, p. 102. Studies such as Rosina e Chiara, *Età dell'Eleganza; Emilio Pucci e Como: 1950 – 1980*; have highlighted the role played by silk in the development of Italian fashion, but no studies have been devoted to the role of artificial and synthetic fabrics in the post-war period.

purchased.<sup>80</sup> These objects are analysed from within in order to bring to the surface previously unexplored aspects, specifically in relation to the realm of making. These include an identification of the means of production (hand-made, machine-made, mass-produced), issues related to the provision of raw materials, the quality of final products and their relations to export markets. Textiles and fibres are at one end of the cycle, and they are aligned with the production of fashion. At the opposite end stands the consumption of goods in the domestic and foreign markets. The various markets targeted by Italian fashion production are taken into account, especially in their macro categories of domestic market versus export market. Together with the role played by materials, also the demands of distinctive types of consumers helped shaped the means of production and must be considered to explain variations in and typologies of manufacturing systems.

The perspective I am using to scrutinise these years is the significance of Italian fashion and textiles in foreign markets. In this part I argue that, alongside the materiality of fibres, textiles and fashion, the attempt to obtain a slice of the export market was a major factor driving Italian fashion's development of an independent style and identity. In particular the export of luxury goods in the years immediately after the end of World War II was crucial for Italy's fashion industry, in particular in terms of the importation of raw materials. This was true for countries such as Italy and the United Kingdom which emerged destroyed and starved by the war and which were competing to get North America's attention as a market for their luxury goods.

The central role played by materials and processes is linked to the promotion of Italian-made and designed goods. Events that took place in Italy, such as the export-focused *Sala Bianca* in Florence and *Il Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume* (International Centre of Arts and Costume (CIAC) in Venice, and in the USA, such as the exhibition *Italy at Work*, are highlighted to show how the focus on textiles was key in promoting and defining the image and the essence of a nascent Italian fashion, especially abroad.

The significance of textile promotion is evident in the display, commerce and advertisement of Italian fashion during that period. Foreign press and buyers regularly commented upon Italian fibres, textiles and their means of production. Praise for their qualities often eclipsed any appreciation of the Italian fashion style. Indeed, articles in many newspapers and fashion and textiles journals single out the importance of Italian textiles when speaking of the Italian fashion output. The *New York*

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<sup>80</sup> Alexandra Palmer, 'New Directions: Fashion History Studies and Research in North America and England', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, 1 (1997), 297-312.

*Times*, for example, reports on July 1951 after the fashion collective show in the Grand Hotel in Florence:

Honours in the show were shared, however, with un-programmed fabric manufacturers whose product of rich and unusual designs and quality had the Americans stopping the mannequins continually for a closer look at the materials.<sup>81</sup>

The upscale American magazine *Town & Country* likewise comments upon the fabrics being displayed at the Florence show, reporting in September 1951:

They [the designers] are grateful for what the Marshall Plan has done for them in equipping their factories with modern machinery. With this asset, they have created some of the most beautiful fabrics in the world.<sup>82</sup>

The trade monthly review *Italian-American Business* declared in a similar vein in 1952:

American buyers who attended the fashion shows held in Rome and Florence were struck by the unusually beautiful fabrics, the designs of the silks, the embroidered materials and the fine laces, together with their competitive prices.<sup>83</sup>

The interest in the intrinsic quality of Italian textiles production and its products provided a way for Italy in the post-war period to find its own voice. The relatively untarnished textiles industries enabled the country to build its own post-war fashion industry.

This first part consists of two chapters: Chapter One considers fashion through its fibres. The interwoven coexistence of artificial, synthetic and natural fibres in these years is explored through their use in the production of textiles in Italian mills and through their domestic promotion in fashion magazines such as *Novità*. The role of artificial and synthetic fibres is further unpicked through the analysis of the fashion festivals organised by CIAC of SNIA Viscosa in Venice.

Chapter Two zooms out from fibres to textiles and considers the decisive role that textiles played in export events such as the touring American exhibition *Italy at Work*. This is an original angle, as previous discussions of *Italy at Work* in the fashion history literature have only focused on impresario Giovanni Battista Giorgini's failed attempt to organise an Italian fashion show for the

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<sup>81</sup> 'High Praise Given to Italian Fabrics', *New York Times*, July 1951, p. 18.

<sup>82</sup> Bragiotti Etting Gloria, 'Florence in Fashion', *Town and Country*, September 1951, p. 138.

<sup>83</sup> *Italian-American Business* 2, no.2 (1952):pp. 5-7 quoted in Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese, 'Turning Fashion into Business: The Emergence of Milan as an International Fashion Hub', *The Business History Review*, 80 (2006), pp. 415-117 (p.441).

exhibition, an episode that encouraged him to put together the near-mythical first international fashion show in his house in 1951. This chapter also charts special promotional events from the early 1950s in the *Sala Bianca* in Florence, and shows how the USA played a crucial role in determining what Italian fashion designers and textile manufacturers were designing, producing, and distributing.

The impact of the Marshall Plan and the Americanisation of the Italian market and production are key factors in understanding this period.<sup>84</sup> Part One ends with a case-study of the Italian couturier Simonetta, and examines how Italian fashion was exported to the USA and then copied. It explores the little-known and rarely studied commercial context in the post-war years of original Italian couture garments to the USA, where they were copied as both custom-made and mass-produced artefacts for the overseas market. The unpicking of this mechanism is significant to understand certain modes of ideation and production of couture in Italy and sheds new light on the origins of mass-production in the country.

The complicated system of imports into North America of European original couture has been thoroughly described by fashion historian and curator Alexandra Palmer in relation to French couture and its Canadian market.<sup>85</sup> It has not, however, been analysed with regard to the original Italian couture ‘translated’ into American ready-to-wear.<sup>86</sup> Design historian Nicola White acknowledges such a practice and describes how, in the 1950s, North American department stores spent thousands of dollars on ‘buying for reproduction (copying or translating) as well as the designs they bought for resale’.<sup>87</sup> Anthropologist Simona Segre also refers to this process and explains how

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<sup>84</sup> Ivan Paris, 'Fashion as a System: Changes in Demand as the Basis for the Establishment of the Italian Fashion System (1960–1970)', *Enterprise & Society*, 11 (2010), 524-559. (p. 526), Nicola White, Paris acknowledges the role the USA played in the 1950s as it ‘supplied technology and organisational models for the emergent ready-to-wear industry and provided a market outlet for high-end products. It facilitated emancipation from the French model of fashion in favour of the “made in Italy” brand’ (Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 527). However, he believes that the American connection to Italian fashion had no consequences on the organisation of the Italian fashion industry. As this chapter will demonstrate, the USA interest, both through encouraging the use of synthetics and artificial fibres and through the business of copies, had a significant influence on how some of the Italian sectors were reorganised after the war.

<sup>85</sup> Alexandra Palmer, *Couture & Commerce: The Transatlantic Fashion Trade in the 1950s* (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 2001).

<sup>86</sup> Other terminologies used in the press at the time were ‘Letter perfect copy’, ‘Identical twin copies both costume-made and ready-to-wear’.

<sup>87</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, pp.47- 48.

Italian fashion, because of its simple line, was easier to reproduce in the American mass-production system. However, no critical or in-depth analysis of this transaction has yet been carried out.<sup>88</sup>

Part One of this thesis provides such an analysis, moving from inside to out, from fibres to fashion, in order to illuminate the role that textiles and the materiality of fibres played in the export markets that shaped the fate of Italian fashion.

## Italy between Tradition and Modernity

In a span of fifteen years, Italy went from being an agricultural economy to an industrialised one. The years following the 1945 armistice brought in rapid succession the referendum of the second of June 1946, when the country decided to abandon monarchy in favour of the Republic, and a new constitution that came into force on the first of January 1948. Such rapid transformations in the political realm, however, did not always correspond directly to social and cultural changes. As historian Paul Ginsborg explains, 'in 1951 the elementary combination of electricity, drinking water and an inside lavatory could be found in only the 7.4 percent of Italian households'.<sup>89</sup>

The period between 1945 and 1958 was characterised by many dichotomies. Italy was, on the one hand, an agricultural country that had just been destroyed by World War II and which was also recovering from the *Ventennio Fascista* (the fascist period); on the other hand, Italy was also a country modernised by the influence of Americanisation and the funds offered by the Marshall aid plan.<sup>90</sup> The Italian Communist party was the largest in Europe at that time, while, simultaneously, the Italian population was fascinated by American film stars and Rome was re-baptised 'Hollywood on the Tiber'.<sup>91</sup> This was the country of craft and hand-made goods, while at the same time it was the cradle for manufactured goods such as FIAT.

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<sup>88</sup> Simona Segre Reinach, 'Italian Fashion: The Metamorphosis of a Cultural Industry', in Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan, *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design* (London : Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp.239-250 (p.241).

<sup>89</sup> Maria Cacioppo, 'Condizione Di Vita Familiare Negli Anni Cinquanta', *Memoria*, 6 (1982), p. 88 quoted in Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 210.

<sup>90</sup> Before the Marshall Plan entered in full operation, the US government offered \$176 million of 'Interim Aid' to Italy at the beginning of 1948, P. Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 115.

<sup>91</sup> For further information on the importance of the communist party during that period, see Duggan, 'Italy in the Cold War and the Legacy of Fascism' in *Italy in the Cold War*, ed. by Duggan and Wagstaff, pp. 1-24 (p. 13).

*Between Couturiers and Manufacturers*

Italian fashion and textile manufacturing were also Janus-faced.<sup>92</sup> At one end of the spectrum there were large-scale clothing manufacturers such as Max Mara. This company, according to White and to fashion historian Enrica Morini, followed American models of production with the introduction of multi-layer cutting techniques, the principle of a production line and a generally more 'efficient industrial organisation'.<sup>93</sup> Max Mara was one of the earliest fashionable ready-to-wear manufacturers in Italy and was established in 1951 in Reggio Emilia by Achille Maramotti.<sup>94</sup> The company still exists today, and it is owned by the Maramotti family. Max Mara pursued a similar path to other Italian 'Fordist'-influenced companies, such as Fiat, Olivetti and Pirelli.<sup>95</sup> Also belonging to this category of American-inspired companies, was the Milanese department store La Rinascente. As economists Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese note, La Rinascente's president Umberto Burstio turned to America for architectural and functional inspiration when he was preparing to reconstruct his store in Milan.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, in 1950, La Rinascente signed an agreement with USA ready-to-wear manufacturers Donnybrook and Rosenfeld for the production in Italy of American-designed women's dresses and coats. The machines for cutting, sewing and finishing needed for the manufacturing were provided by the American Ginsberg Machine and Co. As seen in the copy of the advertisement in Figure 3, La Rinascente was promoting to its clients, how, thanks to this exclusive agreement, it could finally offer to millions of women the opportunity to buy ready-made garments that were elegant, practical and made of modern textiles and colours.

Both these companies, Max Mara and La Rinascente, pursued in their different ways American standards for mechanisation, production in series and distribution.

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<sup>92</sup> Sparke, *The Straw Donkey*, p. 62.

<sup>93</sup> *Coats! : Max Mara, 60 Years of Italian Fashion*, ed. by Adelheid Rasche (Milan: Skira, 2011)., Nicola White, 'Max Mara and the Origins of Ready-to-Wear', *Modern Italy*, 1 (1996), 63-88 (67).

<sup>94</sup> White, *Max Mara*, p. 64.

<sup>95</sup> Sparke, *Italian Design*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>96</sup> Merlo and Polese, *Turning Fashion into Business*, pp. 441-442.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 3. Advertisement for La Rinascente Donnybrook and Henry Rosenfeld showing how La Rinascente clients, could buy elegant, practical and ready-made garments thanks to the agreement with American manufacturers Donnybrook and Rosenfeld.*

*Source: Novità, December 1950, p. 2.*

At the opposite side of the spectrum of clothing production stood the small-scale ateliers, dressmakers, and couturiers. As the Simonetta case study in Chapter Two will demonstrate, these widespread enterprises maintained an artisanal production and at the same time catered to a growing export market. The USA was one of Italy's biggest export markets in this period and, as revealed by White, it was therefore influencing the style of the country's fashion output.<sup>97</sup>

Italy in the post-war was torn between capitalism and communism and between tradition and modernity, as a result of which it developed a fashion system that combined these various influences. As White thoroughly demonstrates, Italy borrowed and was inspired by the American system of production. However, it also integrated it with its own craft base, traditions and small couturiers' style. Merlo highlights how the United States aimed to penetrate Italy with a 'productivity' culture, which meant an improvement and modernisation of existing machinery, equipment and labour organisation. In fact, as Merlo reports, the Export and Import (Bank EximBank) decided to subdivide the American loans to Italy in favour of the purchase of textile machineries.<sup>98</sup> In 1949, the American Marshall Plan favoured the Italian wool industry because it was considered the most promising sector to supply fabrics to the American clothing manufacturers.<sup>99</sup>

According to Merlo, Italian clothing manufacturers did not benefit directly from much American aid and were only influenced indirectly through the textile industry.<sup>100</sup> This is confirmed by Achille Maramotti of Max Mara who declares he did not receive any American funds despite many of his contemporary textile producers, such as Rivetti and Marzotto, receiving Marshall aid, mainly to buy weaving machines.<sup>101</sup> Maramotti explains that because of that textile and synthetic fibre manufacturers such as Snia Viscosa 'always helped with the finance, promotion and organization of ready-to-wear trade shows'.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, pp. 169 and 171.

<sup>98</sup> For more on the kinds of machines that Italian cotton mills bought from the USA through this scheme, see Merlo, *Moda Italiana*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>99</sup> Merlo, *Moda Italiana*, p. 82.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83, on the American impact on the Italian textile industry see also Paris, *Oggetti Cuciti*, pp. 89-91.

<sup>101</sup> White, *Max Mara*, p. 68.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

## From Paris to the USA's Influence

Following the end of World War II, Italian fashion was slowly moving away from Parisian influence towards a new, more market-driven relationship with North America. Paris had been the European capital of fashion since the late seventeenth century and Italy had been in a position of subordination to French influence since then. This dependent relationship was not without debate especially during the early twentieth century. At the *Esposizione Internazionale di Milano* (Milan International Expo) in 1906, dressmaker Rosa Genoni fervently promoted an Italian fashion free from French influences and presented a collection of dresses inspired by the Italian Renaissance and made exclusively with Italian textiles.<sup>103</sup> This was not the only attempt to build an independent Italian fashion and more examples followed, particularly in the wake of the Fascist regime, such as the establishment of the *Ente Autonomo per la Mostra Permanente Nazionale della Moda* (The Independent Body for the Permanent National Fashion Exhibition) that aimed to nationalise the full cycle of fashion production.<sup>104</sup> In 1931, a report on commerce published in the Fascist newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* showed that Italy absorbed one third of French fashion exports. This finding inflamed the Fascist propaganda and led Mussolini to invoke the necessity of creating an Italian fashion system.<sup>105</sup> Many studies have been devoted to evaluating the regime's attempt to reach Italian independence in this field.<sup>106</sup> Despite fascist legislations introduced with that aim, in the immediate post-war, as Grazietta Butazzi notes, legions of Italian couturiers were still travelling to Paris to acquire toiles to copy.<sup>107</sup> However at the same time, Italian artisans had begun to carve out a niche in the market of accessories, namely shoes, bags and hats.

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<sup>103</sup> Sofia Gnoli, *Moda: Dalla Nascita Della Haute Couture a Oggi* (Roma: Carocci, 2012), pp.18-22. Also a book on this subject is forthcoming: Eugenia Paulicelli, *Rosa Genoni, La Moda È Una Cosa Seria : Milano, Expo 1906 E La Grande Guerra* (Monza: Deleyva editore, 2015)., Elisa Tosi Brandi, *Artisti Del Quotidiano : Sarti E Sartorie Storiche in Emilia-Romagna* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009), p. 82.

<sup>104</sup> Gnoli, *Moda*, p. 81.

<sup>105</sup> Cinzia Capalbo, *Storia Della Moda a Roma : Sarti, Culture E Stili Di Una Capitale Dal 1871 a Oggi* (Roma: Donzelli, 2012), p.102. Quoted in Lucia Floriana Savi, *Italy's Autarky - Fashion and Textiles during the Fascist Regime*, Nafplion and Athens edn, Dress and Politics. Proceedings of the 2014 Annual Meeting of the ICOM Costume Committee, Endymatologika (Costume Studies), V vols (KIKPE, 2015), p. 179.

<sup>106</sup> On this Savi, *Italy's Autarky* ; Sofia Gnoli, *La Donna, L'Eleganza, Il Fascismo: La Moda Italiana Dalle Origini all'Ente Nazionale Della Moda* (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma, 2000); Eugenia Paulicelli, Grazietta Butazzi, *1922-1943 Vent'Anni Di Moda Italiana: Proposta Per Un Museo Della Moda a Milano* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1980); Natalia Aspesi, *Il Lusso e l'Autarchia: Storia dell'Eleganza Italiana, 1930-1944* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1982); Caterina Chiarelli, *Moda Femminile tra le due Guerre*, Galleria Del Costume (Livorno: Sillabe, 2000).

<sup>107</sup> Butazzi, *Italian Fashion*, p. 7 and Tosi Brandi, *Artisti del Quotidiano*, p.88, (for Rina Modelli reference). For more on translation of French models into Italian ones through toile see White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 75.

*The Fascist Period and the 1930s*

Italian textiles have been a strong export sector in the Italian economy since the Renaissance. The manufacturing industry grew in the nineteenth century, producing domestic products that looked to France and England as a source of inspiration. During the fascist regime, an organised effort endeavoured to free Italian textile and fashion production from foreign influence and to proudly promote national products in the field. Legislation was introduced to regulate Italian fashion output through royal decrees such as the *La Marca di Garanzia* (Mark of Guarantee), aimed to incentivise the production of purely Italian creations. Following the Ethiopian war (1935) and the subsequent sanctions imposed on Italy by the Leagues of Nations, Mussolini proclaimed the nation's economic autarky. This translated into a search for natural and man-made fibres that could replace now expensive and therefore inadequate raw materials such as silk, wool and cotton. The regime subsidised this innovative research into textile manufacturing. The result was the so-called "autarkic fabrics", made out of either natural materials recovered from century-old traditions, such as hemp, jute and esparto, or artificial products like rayon and Lanital.<sup>108</sup> This production of fabrics that were proudly Italian went hand in hand with the regime's promotion of Italian national fashion. According to this ideology, Italian fashion also had to be purged of foreign terminology, especially French. With the production and promotion of textile and fashion, the Fascist regime attempted to construct a new Italian identity based upon an ideology of economic self-sufficiency and supremacy. Although it failed to create an Italian fashion system at the time, the Fascist regime had a significant impact on the development of Italian fashion in the post-war years.

In the twentieth century, Florence was a hub of Italian craftsmanship as well as the centre of Italian exports, with the headquarters of many buying offices, especially to the USA, being located there.<sup>109</sup> In 1950, exports to the USA of 'sewn goods' amounted to \$595,283 plus \$364,741 of knitwear, a relatively small number destined to grow in the following years.<sup>110</sup> During this period, Italian fashion struggled between its search for an original style, its emancipation from the French model, and its adherence to the new modernity offered by the USA. As perceptively highlighted in an article in the Italian fashion magazine *Bellezza* from that time, although Italian fashion was gaining momentum

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<sup>108</sup> Savi, *Italy's Autarky*.

<sup>109</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 38.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41 quoting fashion journalist Elisa Massai and the Italian Central Statistical Institute.

with North American clients, the rhetoric around its attempt to substitute French fashion was risky while its success was still in its infancy.<sup>111</sup>

To understand the development of a mature fashion system in Italy, it is necessary, alongside the analysis of the role played by textiles, to take into consideration the part played by North America and the interconnections between the small ateliers' practices and the streamlined processes of larger companies such as Max Mara and La Rinascente.

While Italian fashion was trying to find an independent voice, Italian textiles already benefited from a reputation of quality acquired before World War II, in particular the Italian silk manufacturing industries, which supplied the French couture industry and did not cease production during the war.<sup>112</sup> In addition, Italian textile mills suffered little damage during World War II, while competing industries in Germany and Japan were wiped out.<sup>113</sup>

Analysing the condition of Italian textile manufacturers after the war, economist Ivan Paris argues that they came out almost unscathed and found themselves in the situation of being Europe's only tooled up industrial centre able to provide the products needed after the end of the conflict.<sup>114</sup> This resulted in the textile sector being the best performing in Italy with cotton being the department least damaged by the war and therefore the one that more rapidly adapted to the new post-war situation. This was further supported by the financing of the Allies, the removal of Japan from the list of exporting countries and the industrial reconversion difficulties faced by the UK.<sup>115</sup> This was followed by the recovery of the wool and silk industries, leading to a surge in Italian textile production in 1947.<sup>116</sup>

As a consequence of the economic block that afflicted Europe during World War II, most countries in the world suffered a scarcity of fabrics. In industrialised countries, this led to an increase in the production of artificial fibres and later on of synthetic fibres such as nylon. However, although it

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<sup>111</sup> 'L'Albero E i Frutti', *Bellezza*, February 1952, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> Nicola White, 'Max Mara and the Origins of Ready-to-Wear', *Modern Italy*, 1 Max Mara, p. 68.; Rosina Margherita, 'Textiles: The Foundation of Italian Couture', in *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945*, ed. by Sonnet Stanfill (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), pp. 76-93 (p. 76)., Enrica Morini and Margherita Rosina, *Taroni: The Fabric that Dreams are made Of* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2017), p. 74.

<sup>113</sup> Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 471, note 6.

<sup>114</sup> Paris, *Oggetti cuciti*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>116</sup> Wool production grew from 115,000 tons of produce in 1938 to 166,000 in 1950 and cotton from 320,000 tons in 1938 to 363,000 in 1950 (Paris, *Oggetti cuciti*, p. 89).

suffered considerably in other sectors, Italy only experienced moderate problems in its textile production. Andrea Costa, from Filande Costa, a leading producer of 'raw silk and finished rayon and silks', explains in American fashion trade journal *Women's Wear Daily (WWD)* in 1947 how the 'Italian silks mills have not been bombed, as most are located in small communities, and most of Northern Italy was untouched by the war'.<sup>117</sup>

Italy's textile industry was therefore in a privileged situation in comparison to other countries at the end of the war. It was further supplied with fine raw materials such as cotton and wool on the condition that the majority of it would be exported back to its country of origin, for example the USA, in the form of finished manufactured products. Additionally, countries such as England and Switzerland bought Italian textile products in order to then re-export them to the wider market. Such countries preferred to import raw materials for clothing manufacturers rather than buying already finished products such as textiles or fashion items.

In Italy, the shift from being an agricultural country to an industrial one, along with the advent of the baby boom and the so-called 'economic miracle', coincided with the aspiration to the wealth and success so closely associated with American. As fashion historian Aurora Fiorentini Capitani explains, after the liberation of the country from Nazi-fascism, American soldiers came to be seen not only as liberators, but also as 'dispensers' of new wealth and symbols of a new consumer society that was opening up for the Italian population. Indeed, as Penny Sparke argues, 'levels of consumption in Italy rose dramatically in the course of 1950s, [...] (so) that by the end of the decade it was possible to regard the country as a modern American-style consumer society'.<sup>118</sup>

The last part of this chapter takes a more detailed look of the correlation between the Italian and the American paradigms of textile and fashion production, demonstrating that what became the core value of Italian fashion was the quality of its materials and its almost artisanal processes of production. This was the ideal 'other' for American manufactory: on the one hand the rich Italian traditions were glorified, and on the other, Italian production was considered 'safe' because it did not compete with American industrialised production.

At the closure of World War II, Italy was not a modern country and did not have a modern fashion system. Italian fashion's incubation period, or, as Ivan Paris defines it, 'the decade of

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<sup>117</sup> 'Fabrics: Italian Silk Producer Aims at Developing U. S. Market', *Women's Wear Daily*, 22 January 1947, p. 18.

<sup>118</sup> Penny Sparke, 'Industrial Design or Industrial aesthetics', p. 162.

experimentation' ended around 1958.<sup>119</sup> On the first of January of that year, the Treaty of Rome, which had the main objective to reduce custom duties, came into force. The duties amongst European countries, before the Treaty of Rome, would have been very complicated and had to be negotiated individually amongst each state.<sup>120</sup> The formation of the common market liberalised trade and more measures to protect the textile products from competition multiplied.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Paris, 'Fashion as a System'.

<sup>120</sup> 'Gli Accordi Commerciali Con La Danimarca', *Il Sole*, 22 March 1946, p. 1., 'Gli Scambi Con L'Estero', *Il Sole*, 23 March 1946, p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> Giovanna Lazzi, 'Light and Shadows in the Sala Bianca: Florence, Fashion and the Press', in *Italian Fashion. the Origins of High Fashion and Knitwear*, ed. by Gloria Bianchino and others, 1 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 72-77 (p.77).

# Chapter 1 – Fibres and the Making of Italian Textiles

## Fibres and Politics

Fashion, fabrics and textiles, like other scarce goods with a high 'export capacity', were used in the post-war years as a means of exchange and often also as political tools, thereby acquiring meanings beyond their physical characteristics.<sup>1</sup> An article in the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1945 issue of the newspaper *Il Sole*, for example, publicises the amount of cotton supplied to the Italian population by both Italian industrialists and the Allies and highlights the Allies' support of the exchange of raw materials. In a similar vein an article from the *New York Herald Tribune* titled 'Italian Fashion designers helped by Marshall Plan' celebrates the European Recovery Program (ERP)'s aid to Italy's textile industry and claims it has helped Italy reach a higher place in the world of fashion. The entrepreneur Giovanni Battista Giorgini, reporting in the article, explains that the ERP supplied the Italian textile industry with \$328,700, 000 worth of raw cotton in addition to providing \$22,600,000 worth of machinery for the modernisation of textile plants. American cotton therefore represented at the time 60 percent of the circa 200,000 tons of raw cotton Italy used annually.<sup>2</sup> These types of imports, according to another 1945 article from *Il Sole*, were mostly used for internal consumption but also partly used for exports on account of simplified procedures that encouraged international sales.

However, as late as May 1947, *WWD* reports how Italy was the only foreign market where it was cheaper for an American tourist to buy retail than wholesaler. This absurd situation was due to the fact that:

when an Italian firm ships goods to the United States, it must turn half of its dollar payments to the Italian treasury and receives liras for them at the rate of 225 to the dollar. The other half might be retained by the exporter and used to buy raw materials abroad or the dollar might be sold in the free market at whatever rate they can command.<sup>3</sup>

Economic considerations of this nature are relevant to the interpretation of the use, commerce and circulation of certain fibres, their manufacturing into textiles and finally their use in Italian fashion, because they show how the materials available to Italy's fashion designers was predicated on larger economic issues.

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<sup>1</sup> White describes some of the ways in which the USA, through the Marshall Plan and other initiatives, used the supply of raw materials as a political tool. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, pp. 10-17.

<sup>2</sup> 'Italian Fashion Designers Helped by Marshall Plan', *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 August 1951. Florence, Archivio di Stato (ASF), GB Giorgini, Album 1, code 42.

<sup>3</sup> 'Exchange Makes Retail Prices Lower than Wholesale in Italy', *Women's Wear Daily*, 12 May 1947, p. 11.

## Italian Fashion's Materiality

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 4. Advertisement of Todani textile producer of a Vanna model made from Wollena fabric.  
Source: Novità, April 1953, p. 17.*

Fibres, fabrics and textiles were significant protagonists in the making and the allure of garments in post-war Italy. Consumers and producers were aware of the crucial role that they played in fashion as highlighted in the pages of magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Linea* and *Novità*, in Italy and in the UK from that period. These pages included diverse and often evocative designations combining the name of particular fabrics or companies with their characteristics, such as Woollena, Costsurah, Valchiria Satinato, and Drapsusa. Fabric producers proudly promoted fashion couturiers who used their fabrics with full-page colour advertisements such as Todani's for a Vanna piece using their Wollena fabric shown in Figure 4.<sup>4</sup>

The International Wool Secretariat (IWS) consistently proclaimed the quality of wool fibre through a range of magazine advertisements. These included standalone ads such as the one in *Harper's Bazaar* (see Figure 5) featuring a drawing of a sheep happily declaring: 'Take it from me. Wool is the natural thing to wear. Because it is comfortable, warm, wears well, prevents chills, has elasticity'. Alternative approaches included adding the slogan *la lana é insostituibile* (wool is irreplaceable) at the bottom of each page of fashion magazine such as *Novità*.<sup>5</sup> Alongside its regular presence in the printed press, the IWS organised a fashion show around Europe every autumn. *Novità's* report on the 1953 IWS Italian show explains that the *confezione* manufacturers (clothing mass manufacturers) and dressmakers presented their products alongside each other. This coexistence of different types of production was also happening in fashion shows sponsoring artificial and synthetic fibres, as described below in the section on Snia Viscosa.

The emphasis placed on fabrics rather than on the finished garments in fashion magazines is symptomatic of the fact that many readers would have known how to sew or knit at the time, and also that the majority of Italian consumers were purchasing made-to-measure clothes from dressmakers. The act of commissioning a garment arguably requires some knowledge of the different types of materials available, their cost, and the way in which they drape and feel on the body. The prevalent presence of fashion patterns offered in magazines for readers' private use and the regular long articles describing new fabrics, colours, textures and properties were aimed at knowledgeable readers and catered to their needs. This is evident in the front cover announcement of '15 pages of fabric news' in the January 1957 issue of *Harper's Bazaar UK*. The editorial of that same issue, titled 'The Fabric Comes First', declares that 'The big news in fashion is now in the

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<sup>4</sup> *Novità*, April 1953, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Several articles in *Novità* such as the ones in the December 1951 issue and in January 1952 bear this slogan.

fabrics which form the basis of fashion and the galvanic inspiration of designers'.<sup>6</sup> This quote demonstrates how, at this time, fabrics came first and were instrumental in advertise and sell fashion.

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<sup>6</sup> *'La Moda Nasce Dai Tessuti'*, *Novità*, February 1953, pp. 16-30., *'The Fabric Comes First'*, *Harper's Bazaar UK*, January 1957, p. 25.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 5. International Wool Secretariat advertisement showing a sheep happily declaring: 'Take it from me. Wool is the natural thing to wear. Because it is comfortable, warm, wears well, prevents chills, has elasticity'. Source: Harper's Bazaar UK, March 1946, p. 89.*

## Natural, Artificial and Synthetic Fibres

At the beginning of the 1950s, Italy was eager to be seen as being at the forefront of innovation on the one hand and as the bearer of taste, style and tradition on the other. Accordingly at that time, new synthetic and artificial fibres textiles were promoted alongside more traditional natural fibres. A 1953 episode of the weekly newsreel projected in cinema during intermissions titled 'Settimana Incom', for example, promotes the blend of cashmere merino and angora rabbit used by Luisa Spagnoli to produce the 'pure white' cardigan with the same enthusiasm as it describes the capacity of nylon to allow users to 'say forever goodbye to ironing'.<sup>7</sup> This coexistence triggers questions about the interwoven values related to the use of natural, artificial and even synthetic fibres and about the relationships between fibre producers, markets and couturiers.<sup>8</sup>

In several reports on the Italian fashion catwalk shows included in 'Settimana Incom', the innovations and advances made in new fibres, as well as their very low prices, were highlighted as a sign of modernity. For example in the 1953 'Moda Italiana a Firenze' episode reporting on the prestigious *Sala Bianca* catwalk show at the Pitti Palace in Florence, textiles such as rayon are described and illustrated in their applications: images from the event show a variety of garments made with such fabrics, including suits, morning sleeveless dresses, and more elegant summer cocktail frocks (Figure 6).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*Appuntamento Con La Moda, Settimana Incom, 00972, 29/07/1953*, <http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=29557&db=cine matograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false&section=/> edn, [Accessed 6 January 2019] vols (b).

<sup>8</sup> Important to mention here is the autarkic legitimation of the casein's fibre, Lanital through a campaign that also included a poem written by Marinetti: 'The Poem of the Milk Dress' (1938-39) for more on this see Lucia Floriana Savi, *Italy's Autarky - Fashion and Textiles during the Fascist Regime*, Nafplion and Athens edn, Dress and Politics. Proceedings of the 2014 Annual Meeting of the ICOM Costume Committee, Endymatologika (Costume Studies), V vols (KIKPE, 2015); Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'The Fabric of Modern Times', *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (1997), 191-245, in *JSTOR* <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344164>, [accessed 6 January 2019].

<sup>9</sup> The 'Settimana Incom' was one of the Italian newsreels most important of the post-war. It started in 1946 and mainly reported on football, fashion and film, but also politics and in general current affairs. *Moda Italiana a Firenze, Settimana Incom 00902, 06/02/1953*, <http://www.archivioluca.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=29099&db=cine matograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false&section=/> [accessed 6 January 2019].

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 6. Still of Moda Italiana a Firenze, showing a model parading a dress made of rayon.*

Source: Settimana Incom 00902, 06 February 1953 from

<http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/jsp/schede/videoPlayer.jsp?tipologia=&id=&physDoc=29099&db=cinematograficoCINEGIORNALI&findIt=false&section=/>.

The aforementioned 'Settimana Incom' episode, 'Appuntamento con La Moda', shows one of the many dresses made entirely of nylon by the Roman atelier Carosa presented at the *Sala Bianca* on July 1953. The presence of such a fibre on the *Sala Bianca's* export platform is an indication of how the use of this new material was not limited to raincoats, umbrellas and underwear, as was its predominant usage at the time, but was also extended to the more traditional cocktail and evening dresses. The Carosa rose dress can be seen in the film, but also in a picture by photographer Garolla capturing couturier Donna Caracciolo Ginetti fastening the dress on a model in a backstage shot (Figure 7). A *WWD* advertisement records Carosa as paired up with nylon producers Rhodiatocce and Chaintillon, making it safe to assume that they supplied the nylon for the rose dress of 1953.<sup>10</sup>

The widespread use of man-made fibres on the *Sala Bianca's* 1953 catwalks aimed to cater for American demand for more practical and cheaper materials. It showcased how Italy was not only to be associated with natural and artisanal fibres, but also with modern and futuristic materials.

Foreign journalists were impressed with the results of the Italian experimentations with new fibres, as shown in a *Sunday World Herald* issue celebrating wools, cottons and, as 'principal among the fabrics of combined fibres', 'coating of wool and silk; "fancy cloth" of nylon, viscose and silk; and boucle voile of nylon, curled rayon, viscose and silk'.<sup>11</sup> This listing aptly summarises the way in which natural, more traditional, fibres existed side by side with new modern ones. Such a coexistence was not limited to the promotional level, but was also present at the production level, as the next section highlights.

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<sup>10</sup> Advertisement probably in *Women's Wear Daily*, FAS, G.B. Giorgini, Album 8.

<sup>11</sup> 'Italy's Textile Industry, Designers Aim for Leading Role in World Fashion', *Sunday World Herald*, 24 May 1953, p. n/a.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 7. Giovanna Caracciolo Ginetti fastening the rose dress made in nylon, photo by Federico Garolla, 1953*  
Source: *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968*, ed. by Maria Luisa Frisa, Anna Mattiolo and Stefano Tonchi (Milano: Electa, 2014), p. 11.

## *Silk*

The 30 October 1945 issue of Italian economic newspaper *Il Sole* reports on a sale to England of five hundred bales of natural silk for a value of circa two hundred million lire. This was the first export after the war from Northern Italy and the journalist emphatically states that surely more will follow.<sup>12</sup> In December of the same year an article from *Il Sole* explains how the Italian silk industry was one of the few that could draw from within its own borders all the raw materials needed to produce finished products for export, as most European countries needed to import yarns to feed their mills. That article continues to describe how the export of silk textiles was of much more of interest to Italy than the export of silk yarns and that, amongst others, the USA, Switzerland and England were important markets for this type of business.

Italian silk was bought by the English department store Harrods from at least 1951 onwards. As demonstrated by the surviving company sample books, these purchases of silk coexisted with purchases of artificial and synthetic fibres.<sup>13</sup> This is important to highlight because often the same manufacturers were simultaneously producing natural, synthetic and artificial fibres although we are not used to think of these productions coexisting. In the pages of the sample books, the fibre composition of the fabrics purchased is precisely stated along with other information such as the name of the supplier, the date of delivery, the cost, the width and length, and the fabric swatch's colour number.<sup>14</sup> In the examples shown in Figure 8, it is recorded that Harrods ordered 100 percent silk shantung from Battista Clerici in December 1951, while in August 1953 the same department bought some silk and wool and silk and selon blends from Toninelli. The purchase of blends alongside pure silk and artificial fabric, such as rayon, is apparent throughout the 1950s.

Natural and artificial fibres were mixed together to obtain the desired effect and consistency in the production of Clerici Tessuto, a silk manufacturing plant in the Como area. The company's sample books show that, along with 100 percent silk fabrics, blends of natural and artificial fibres such as silk

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<sup>12</sup> *'Esportazione Di Seta Naturale', Il Sole, 30 October 1945, p. 1.*

<sup>13</sup> No sample books predating 1951 have survived in the archive. The sample books analysed date from 1951 to 1953.

<sup>14</sup> Each sample is also identified with the city of provenance, probably meaning that each city and country had its own added cost. A drawback for the precise analysis of the blends of fibres often used in fashion is the fact that garments before 1972 in Italy do not bear a composition label. Before this date only an expert eye would be able to identify the exact composition of a fabric, and only laboratory analyses would allow to determine the precise composition of a fabric. In order to understand whether and how artificial and synthetic blends were present in Italian fashion in this period, it is necessary to go back to the source of production, namely the textile producers, and to the clients that bought them, such as Harrods in this case.

and Bemberg (an artificial fibre derived from cotton), silk and viscose, and silk and cotton were also part of their range.

The coexistence of silk fabrics with artificial and synthetic ones in the production, sale and promotion of Italian fashion, as shown respectively by the Clerici Tessuto's archive, the record of English client Harrods, and the Italian media's newsreels, which counters our understanding of the materials used so far, calls for an expansion of the investigation of Italian fashion and materiality to include a more detailed analysis of the fibre producers. The next section provides this through further examination of 1953, a seminal year for the introduction of artificial and synthetic fibres on the market.

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*Figure 8. Harrods sample books showing that Harrods ordered 100 percent silk shantung from Battista Clerici in December 1951 and silk and wool and silk and selon blends from Toninelli in August 1953.*

Source: Cloth Sample Book 1951- 1953, n.p, Harrods Archive, London.

## 1953: from Man-Made Year to SNIA Viscosa

In the January 1953 issue of *Novità*, all the publicised frocks designed by Jole Veneziani were made from the Bemberg textile as shown in the black and white picture presenting the dresses (Figure 9). One model, on the left, directly and confidently gazes at the camera, the other, seen from behind, looks at herself in the mirror, offering the reader the possibility to also peek at the dress from the front through the mirror's reflection. The ornate mirror-frame and draped fabric suggest a luxurious interior. The photograph is part of an article titled 'La stagione alla Scala' ('The Scala season') in which the journalist suggests that the elegant Milanese woman, who subscribed to the theatre's programme, would need at least five different evening gowns per season, one for each of the most important operas in the season. In this feature, Veneziani and Vanna's Bemberg dresses are shown in the elite setting of Milan's most important theatre and are worn with confidence by young fashionable models.<sup>15</sup> Bemberg is used in its many uses, as brocade, velvet, taffeta, organza and satin, showcasing the versatility of the artificial fibre.<sup>16</sup> Bemberg is also shown to be fully accepted by the Milanese elite at its most important social event, the Scala's season.

The July 1953 summer edition of the *Sala Bianca* featured several special shows in which textile producers were coupled with couturiers or fashion houses who used their textiles to produce special garments. As well as natural fibres such as silk produced by Costa, wool by Line e Lane, cotton by Legler, an Italviscosa show was also included in the programme.<sup>17</sup> Garments were presented by fashion houses such as Antonelli, Carosa and Marucelli with fabrics created using Italviscosa yarn made by manufacturers such as S.A.F.I.T., Mantero, S.A.P.I.T.I. and F.I.S.A.C.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to highlight that most of the synthetic and artificial fibre producers, as in the case of DuPont in the USA, did not produce lengths of textiles, but only made fibres.<sup>19</sup> This lack of a finished

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<sup>15</sup> *Novità*, January 1953, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> In March of the same year *Novità* was also featuring a full-page Rhodiatocce advertisement sponsoring the use of the brand for underwear.

<sup>17</sup> Italviscosa was a 1939 initiative by SNIA Viscosa, Cisa Viscosa and Chantillon. This consortium aimed at using the industrial plants of three companies in a more rationalised and efficient way by coordinating the programs of production and sales in accordance with the necessity of the demand markets. Italviscosa also aimed at unifying and therefore saving capital in terms of propaganda and administration in order to stabilise prices for the internal market. In terms of foreign business, Italviscosa presented a unique trade name under which to unite Italian man-made fibres. *Mezzo Secolo Di Snia Viscosa* (Milano: Pan, 1970), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Legler, Line e Lane, Italviscosa, FAS, G.B. Giorgini, Album 8, codes AB A8, 113 and code 119 A.8.

<sup>19</sup> In the post-war period (no specific date is indicated), SNIA tried to verticalise its structure and took financial control of cotton mills such as Cotonificio Vittorio Olcese and Cotonificio Veneziano in order to secure a

product meant that it was vital for them to establish close relationships with weavers and textile producers who, by adopting the use of such fibres, guaranteed their inclusion in the market. Shows like the ones organised for *Sala Bianca* fostered these links and showcased on an international stage the competence of the new industry through the work of dressmakers and couturiers.

In the next section, the relationship between fibre producers and weavers and textile producers is further analysed through the example of SNIA Viscosa, the country's biggest producer of synthetic and artificial fibres. This includes a study of how it employed fashion to promote the use of its new fibres.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 9. Two Jole Veneziani's dresses made with Bemberg taffeta and organza Bemberg.*  
Source: Novità, January 1953, p. 7.

## SNIA Viscosa and Fibres Promotion

Synthetic and artificial fibres were primarily produced by companies such as DuPont in the USA and SNIA Viscosa in Italy. These are mainly chemical manufacturers and they made fibres destined for fashion and textile production alongside other products such as cellophane.<sup>20</sup> These manufacturers therefore needed to collaborate with companies that could turn these fibres into yarns and then into textiles (by knitting, weaving or blending them into fabrics), and with fashion designers and couturiers to design fashion garments using these. Because of their nature as primary products at the start of an extensive production process, the fibres could not be advertised as finished products. The same problem, although to a lesser extent, continue to afflict textile manufacturers as Prato based textile manufacturer Roberto Sarti explains.<sup>21</sup>

For synthetic and artificial fibre companies, in comparison to producers of natural fibres, there was an added urgency to make sure that consumers knew, understood and valued the qualities and characteristics of their innovative fibres.<sup>22</sup> Blaszczyk's thorough analysis of the American chemical giant and fibre producer DuPont in the post-war period shows how companies sought to address this issue. DuPont employed market research technologies to connect with the final consumers and set up a Public Relations Department to communicate, through photographs and press releases, the connections that it established with French and Italian couturiers who had been contracted to employ DuPont fibres such as Orlon and Qiana in their designs.<sup>23</sup>

In Italy, as we will see in this section, the largest producer of man-made fibres, SNIA Viscosa, the *Società Nazionale Industria Applicazioni Viscosa* (National Viscose Manufacturing and Application

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<sup>20</sup> Established in 1802, DuPont, started as a gunpowder producer. In the 1910s the company started to diversify production and in 1930 it discovered nylon. *History*, <https://www.dupont.com/about/our-history.html> [Accessed 22 August 2019].

<sup>21</sup> Roberto Sarti interview with the author 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>22</sup> It is outside the premises of this thesis to define what can be defined as natural, artificial or synthetic. While others, such as Ezio Manzini and Jean Baudrillard, have challenged these notions, I am interested here to understand the cultural status of artificial and synthetic materials within Italian fashion. (Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by James Benedict (London; New York: Verso, 1996) and Ezio Manzini, *The Material of Invention: Materials and Design* (London: Design Council, 1986).

<sup>23</sup> Lee Blaszczyk 'Styling Synthetics'.

Company), promoted its innovative products by including them as key players in the historical and cultural narrative of Italy through various initiatives.<sup>24</sup>

Since the 1930s, according to Butazzi, the artificial fibre industry was considered a flagship enterprise of the fascist regime, and Italy was highly productive in the manufacture of proudly self-sufficient autarkic textiles that bore strong and evocative names such as Virutex and Rayontex, two brands owned by the Zegna company.<sup>25</sup> SNIA Viscosa participated in this trend too. As historian Jeffery Schnapp shows they commissioned and published in conjunction with the Regime the Futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's poem *Il poema del vestito di latte* (The Poem of the Milk Dress) (1938-39), 'a poetic and typographical tour de force retracing in minute detail the making of Lanital', one of SNIA's innovative and autarkic milk textiles.<sup>26</sup> The poem was illustrated by the designer Bruno Munari and was published in a tricolour opulent edition. This wasn't the only example of Italian poets' interest in the production of modern textiles; other examples can be found in promotions of rayon in Italy in the 1930s and in SNIA's competitors CISA-VISCOSA's publicising of their innovative fibres.<sup>27</sup>

In the same vein, in 1949, SNIA Viscosa commissioned a film from the young director Michelangelo Antonioni to promote the production of rayon viscosa. The ten minutes-long black and white documentary *Sette Canne and un vestito* (Seven reeds. One dress) was shot in the industrial city of

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<sup>24</sup> SNIA was first founded in Turin in 1917 by Riccardo Gualino and did not have anything to do with production of chemical fibres at first. SNIA stood for *Società Navale Italo Americana* (Italo American Naval Society) and only in 1919 started alongside the production of ships and cement, to produce also chemical fibres to face the economic difficulty after the first World War. The following year SNIA acquired the majority share of Viscosa Pavia, the second Italian producer of chemical fibres and it quickly changed permanently its name in SNIA Viscosa. For a complete history of SNIA Viscosa see *Mezzo Secolo di Snia Viscosa*, pp. 15-20.

<sup>25</sup> Butazzi, 'Gli Anni Trenta', p. 18; Savi, 'Italy's Autarky', p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> The important role played by SNIA Viscosa in Italy and the scale of its pre-war business has been mainly studied in relation to the Fascist regime's artificial autarkic fibres policy. For this, see Grazietta Butazzi, 'Gli Anni Trenta. La Moda Italiana Si Mette a Confronto, Tra Autarchia E Nuove Prospettive', in *Moda Femminile Tra Le due Guerre*, ed. by Caterina Chiarelli (Livorno: Sillabe, 2000), pp. 12-19., Sofia Gnoli, *La Donna, L'Eleganza, Il Fascismo: La Moda Italiana Dalle Origini all'Ente Nazionale Della Moda* (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma, 2000)., pp. 69-70. Schnapp, 'The Fabrics of Modern Times', p. 203-204. Marinetti also wrote in conjunction to the 'Poem of the Milk Dress' another poem, 'Il Poema di Torre Viscosa' [The Poem of Viscose Tower] (1938). As soon as the war finished, the fascism regime was overturned, American Allies came to Italy and the production of Lanital ceased immediately. Although SNIA Viscosa stopped Lanital, it carried on a similar production with an improved formula and a new name: Merinova. SNIA continued to be a leader in the Italian textiles sector, and its chairman since 1939, Franco Marinotti, was a fervent believer in the successful connection between fashion, textiles and art.

<sup>27</sup> Schnapp, 'The Fabrics of Modern Times', p. 215.

Torviscosa (see Figure 10).<sup>28</sup> The documentary shows how in the post-war years, as was the case during the fascist regime with Marinetti and Lanital, artificial fibres needed a mythology or, as the voice-over describes, a 'fable'. In Antonioni's film the production building is described as a 'maestoso misterioso castello' (a magical mysterious castle) and the chemical reactions are equated to miracles. The spectator witnesses the magical transformation of natural canes, through various chemical processes, into a one-hundred-kilometre length of viscose. As Alfred Gell explains when speaking about the power of art to enchant, 'The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form'.<sup>29</sup> The phases of transformation, although very technical and far from the viewers' knowledge, are shown in the film in a manner that plays with what Gell defines as a 'spell' and offers the spectators a fable to be enchanted by and to believe in.

As SNIA was a producer of fibres and not of textiles, no weaving or any other techniques that transform the thread into fabric is shown in this film. This absence is key to understand the ways in which company such as SNIA wanted to portray. The film jumps over this gap and ends with a parade of models on the Milan Trade Fair fashion show, displaying the final use of viscose in action. The rhetoric and the vocabulary used in Antonioni's film is similar to Marinetti's earlier 'Poem of the Milk Dress'. Both present a modern mythology of innovative fibres and connect these fibres with dresses.<sup>30</sup>

SNIA Viscosa also formed alliances with silk producers to encourage them to use its new fibres. Such alliances had a double aim: on the one hand garments made with synthetic and artificial fibres were presented in the same setting as those made of silk, and on the other hand silk producers, with already established names in the eyes of the public, were justified to produce new textiles with the new fibres. A long report published in the 1954 winter edition of the magazine *Linea* is emblematic

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<sup>28</sup> *Sette Canne Ed Un Vestito*, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x20muu> [Accessed 1 September 2018]. Paulicelli speaks about this documentary in connection with another Antonioni film. Paulicelli Eugenia, 'Cronaca Di Un Amore: Fashion and Italian Cinema in Michelangelo Antonioni's Films (1949-1955)', in *New Perspectives in Italian Cultural Studies. Volume 2*, ed. by Graziella Parati (Madison [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), pp. 107-129 (pp.108-109).

Rayon is a fibre that is developed from the cellulose of the canna gentile (*Arundo donax*). During the fascist regime, local forestation programmes were encouraged to produce giant cane that could provide Italy with a home source of cellulose, the main material for rayon production.

<sup>29</sup> Gell Alfred, 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. by Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 40-63. More work can be done in the future to analyse the relationship between the ways in which synthetic fibres have been represented in the arts and the reactions of consumers.

<sup>30</sup> Schnapp, 'The Fabric of Modern Times'.

of this approach. It presents models and their garments against an identical white background so that there are no apparent differences between those made with natural silk and those made with nylon. Only the captions revealed the full information by describing the types of fibres used (see Figure 11).

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 10. *Still from 'Sette Canne and un Vestito' showing Torviscosa.*  
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmAjnQVObCk>.

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 11. *Two photographs depicting on the left, a Fercioni model in printed satin silk by Alberto Ambrosini; on the right a model by Tizzoni in satin nylon, photographs by Carlo Mocchetti.* Caption on the left: 'Raso di seta stampato di Alberto Ambrosini' [Printed silk satin by Alberto Ambrosini]. Caption on the right: 'Raso di nailon di Carlo Mocchetti' [Nylon satin by Carlo Mocchetti].  
Source: [n.t.], Linea, Winter 1954, pp. 4 and 19.

The drive to explicitly connect chemical technical procedures with the much more relatable and visual dress parade was at the basis of the marketing strategy devised by SNIA in the post-war period. In 1948, Marinotti established, along with the ex-Fascist Edoardo Alfieri, *Il Centro Italiano della Moda* (the Italian Fashion Centre (CIM)), drawing together in one national event the diverse initiatives of the sector with the aims to attract the press and buyers, to strengthen the relationship between fashion and textile manufacturers, and to promote the use of artificial and synthetic fibres. These events were considered important international shows, and journalists from newspapers such as the *New York Times* participated and reported regularly on the latest fashion news.<sup>31</sup> In 1950, Franco Marinotti also founded *Il Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume* (The International Centre of Arts and Costume (CIAC)).<sup>32</sup> This new venture operated from 1951 in the freshly restored Palazzo Grassi in Venice. The *Centro* was an ambitious endeavour; as well as organising exhibitions and fashion shows, it published books on costume and the magazine *Arti e Costume*, and held a collection of textiles, costumes, and fashion prints, and also housed a specialist library open to the public.<sup>33</sup> Initially the *Centro* was meant to focus only on the textile industry, clothing and furnishing, however, from 1951, Franco Marinotti appointed his son Paolo as its secretary to open up these other fields and include costume and art.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For more information on Marinotti see *Biografia*, [http://www.impresesanbeniculturali.it/web/impreseprotagonisti/scheda-protagonista?p\\_p\\_id=56\\_INSTANCE\\_6uZ0&groupId=18701&articleId=60615&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=1&p\\_p\\_state=normal&viewMode=normal&articleIdPadre=60603](http://www.impresesanbeniculturali.it/web/impreseprotagonisti/scheda-protagonista?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_6uZ0&groupId=18701&articleId=60615&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&viewMode=normal&articleIdPadre=60603) [accessed 1 September 2018], Maura Garofoli and Bonizza Giordani-Aragno, *Le Fibre Intelligenti: Un Secolo Di Storia E Cinquant'Anni Di Moda* (Milano: Electa, 1991), p. 129. This is the only publication devoted to the subject, but it only gives an historical overview of synthetics and artificial fibres without assessing their significance. On CIM see also Ivan Paris, *Oggetti Cuciti*, p. 188 and 190. Paris believes that CIM was the first organisation of its kind in Italy with missions abroad, such as those to Zurich in April 1950 and to Austria in 1952, which involved different dressmakers and couturiers from around Italy similarly to what Giorgini would do in Florence from 1951. Paris also states in a recent essay (Paris Ivan, 'Italian Fashion Centre', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014), pp. 260-263.) that CIM was ex-Fascist Edoardo Alfieri's idea. Jane Cianfarra, 'Old, New Blended in Italian Style', *New York Times*, 10, September 1951. FAS, G.B. Giorgini, album 1, code 94.

<sup>32</sup> Further information on Marinotti and his son and activities of International fashion centre for the arts and costume in Elsa Danese, 'The High Fashion Shoes at the International Center for the Arts and Costume', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014), pp. 302-305.

<sup>33</sup> *Snia Dal Filo Allo Spazio* (Milano: Arti Grafiche Occhipinti, n.d.c). Andrea Merlotti believes that the most important Italian art historians were called to write on this magazine. Andrea Merlotti, 'I Percorsi Della Moda made in Italy (1951-2010)', in *Enciclopedia Italiana Di Scienze, Lettere E Arti, Appendice VIII, Il Contributo Italiano Alla Storia Del Pensiero*, ed. by F. Profumo V. Marchis, Vol. 3, Technica vols (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2013), pp. 630-640 (p. 631).

<sup>34</sup> For more information on Paolo Marinotti and CIAC see Collicelli Cagol, *Venezia e la vitalità del contemporaneo*.

The section that follows focuses mainly on the CIAC's activities between 1951 and 1958 to consider its promotion of synthetic and artificial fibres and its connection with the contemporary fashion scene. This is because the CIAC's concentration on textiles, fibres and costumes diminished after 1958 to give space to the promotion of contemporary art.<sup>35</sup>

An article in a 1951 edition of the Swiss newspaper *Il Ticino*, comments on how the CIAC's initiatives were initially thought to be purely promotions of the textile industrialists, but also underlines how the intention behind them was not merely economic, but mainly cultural, aiming to establish the history of costume as the history of civilization.<sup>36</sup>

### *The Legitimation of New Fibres*

The historical and cultural legitimation of SNIA's synthetic and artificial fibres, was achieved, amongst other initiatives, through the organisation of large exhibitions that took place mainly at Palazzo Grassi in Venice. The first of these, titled *La leggenda del filo d'oro: le vie della seta* (The Legend of the Gold Thread: The Ways of Silk), was set up in 1951. The connection with silk and its history was made explicit in this show through a combination of the history of silk and of the Silk Road with human attempts, from the time of alchemists, to produce artificial silk.<sup>37</sup> This kind of narrative provided synthetic and artificial fibres with a legendary connection to a mythical past.

In the 1954 exhibition *I Tessili dell'Avvenire* (The Textiles of the Future), the focus shifted from past to future. Here the aim, as declared by Marinotti himself, was to show the alliance between science and nature as the basis of every human achievement.<sup>38</sup> A fashion show labelled the *Parata del tessuto e della moda* (The Parade of Textile and Fashion) was organised at the Palazzo Grassi to coincide with the exhibition. The intention of this event was for eleven fashion houses, six fur houses and twenty-seven textile producers to demonstrate to an audience consisting of Italian and foreign journalists, industrialists and observers, how artificial and synthetic yarns could achieve great results in the hands of Italian textile manufacturers.

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<sup>35</sup> Collicelli Cagol, *Venezia e la vitalità del contemporaneo*, p.34.

<sup>36</sup> 'Il Centro Internazionale Delle Arti E Del Costume Di Venezia', *Il Ticino*, 10 September 1951.

<sup>37</sup> *Storia Della Bachicoltura Dalle Orgini Ai Giorni Nostri in Una Mostra a Venezia*, [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000042223/2/storia-della-bachicoltura-dalle-origini-ai-giorni-nostri-mostra-veneziana.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22palazzo%20grassi%20mostra%201951%22\],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22\\_perPage%22:20}}](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000042223/2/storia-della-bachicoltura-dalle-origini-ai-giorni-nostri-mostra-veneziana.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22palazzo%20grassi%20mostra%201951%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}}), [Accessed 1 September 2018].

<sup>38</sup> Franco Marinotti quoted in *'La Mostra Dei Tessili Dell'Avvenire'*, *Linea*, Summer, 1954, p. 87. This exhibition was organised by the Comitato Italiano del Congresso Internazionale dei Tessili Artificiali e Sintetici and supported by the CIAC.

Here again the materials, rather than the final fashion objects, were given central stage and importance. Newsreel footage of the show describes it as a very persuasive display of the textiles of the future, where the use of synthetic and artificial fibres in accessories and sportswear achieves both beauty and practicality. As a result, with its translation into rayon, nylon and Lilion, *alta moda* would no longer be a prohibitive luxury and would instead be within the reach of everybody.<sup>39</sup>

Two years later, having explored the past and the future in the previous exhibitions, the CIAC showcased the present in the show *La moda nel tessuto contemporaneo. Prima Rassegna Internazionale dell'Abbigliamento* (Fashion in Contemporary Textile. The First International Festival of Apparel) that took place between 21 and 23 August 1956. Here the connection between artificial and synthetic fibres, textiles and fashion was more explicit than in the previous editions, and was displayed through parades of garments by Italian and foreign designers from the USA, Spain, Germany, Japan, India, England and Ireland, made with artificial and synthetic fibres in combination with natural fibres.<sup>40</sup>

Each country presented a selection of sportswear, boutique, ready-to-wear, high fashion and fur. The show's catalogue openly legitimises synthetic materials by thoroughly listing one by one the models presented along with an indication of materials, and, for each country, a description of the fashion and textile industry's contemporary landscape highlighting the role of synthetic materials.

The analysis of these documented exhibitions and cultural events organised by the SNIA Viscosa's CIAC, demonstrates a clear intention to promote artificial and synthetic fibres in national and international contexts. It shows that these so-called 'future textiles' were promoted, not in isolation, but in conjunction with other natural fibres such as cotton, silk and wool. It further reveals how these new fibres were given an historical dimension by justifying their genesis through an emphasis on their relationship with the Silk Road, and by presenting them as a product of progress and modernity through their connection to scientific improvements.

Italian and foreign mass-production was showcased alongside high and boutique fashions, especially in the 1956 event *La moda nel tessuto contemporaneo*. This represented a clear distancing from the

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<sup>39</sup> Mostra Del Tessile Dell'Avvenire, [https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000042219/2/mostra-del-tessile-avvenire.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:\[%22tessili%20dell%27avvenire%22](https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000042219/2/mostra-del-tessile-avvenire.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22tessili%20dell%27avvenire%22) [Accessed 1 September 2018]. From this newsreel it is also evident how the textile exhibition 'I Tessuti dell'avvenire' was supported by the parade of models on mannequins. Here once more the synthetic and artificial fibres are described as within the reach of everybody.

<sup>40</sup> *La Moda Nel Tessuto Contemporaneo. Prima Rassegna Internazionale Dell'Abbigliamento* (Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1956).

events at the *Sala Bianca* that foregrounded *alta moda* as the ambassador of Italian production. This is probably due to the fact that synthetic fibres were much more suitable for machine-made production at the time.

In this context, not only was fashion a pretext to promote and showcase textiles and their fibres, but cultural and historical references and settings were also drawn to strongly root new materials within the country's heritage and tradition. The lack of an explicit commercial agenda for the CIAC added a further layer of legitimisation.

This investigation into the materials of fashion in magazine photography for Bemberg, in the *Sala Bianca's* promotion, and in the SNIA Viscosa parades, has revealed a more complex view of Italian fashion production. As early as 1953, Italian couturiers, fashion houses and silk producers, started to heavily employ and promote synthetic and artificial fibres through specialised shows, magazine features and newsreels. The traditional coupling of Italian fashion and natural fibres was challenged, and synthetics, such as nylon, and artificial fibres, were commonly produced, used and exported in the early 1950s.

## Chapter 2 – The American Export Market and its Influence on Italian design

### Introduction

This chapter investigates the role textiles played in the embryonic period of the late 1940s to early 1950s by looking at two events organised in the USA and Italy at the time. The first, the exhibition *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today* at the Brooklyn Museum, promoted Italian goods in North America, while the second, the Italian High Fashion show, better known as *Sala Bianca* showcased Italian fashion for foreign buyers.<sup>1</sup> As Chapter One demonstrated, while Italian fashion was trying to find its own voice during this period, the Italian textiles industry was continuing a path of growth and recognition almost uninterrupted since the 1930s. This, as seen in Chapter One, was partly a result of the policy of autarky that the Fascist regime imposed on the Peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

These two events, although located as far apart as New York and Florence, reveal common roots in their export-focused aims and offer the backdrop of the case study investigated in the second part of this chapter, a silk and wool dress designed by Italian couturier Simonetta. An in-depth analysis concludes the section and aims to unravel the convoluted journey that Italian fashion took when exported and copied in the USA.

### Textiles Make Fashion: *Italy at Work* and *Sala Bianca*

*Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*, was a collaborative exhibition organised by the director of the Brooklyn Museum Charles Nagel, the curator of Decorative Arts and of Industrial Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago Meyric R. Rogers, and the *Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana* (National Artisan Company (CNA)). It was made possible by Marshall Plan funds and the support of the Italian and American governments. This touring exhibition showed around two-thousand five hundred Italian-made objects such as furniture, textiles, glassware, ceramics, and also included five designed interiors. After opening at the Brooklyn Museum in November 1950, it toured the USA for the

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<sup>1</sup> Because of its undeniable international importance, Italian fashion accounts have often been based on the role and relevance of the *Sala Bianca*, and investigations have rarely looked beyond the borders of the Florence event.

<sup>2</sup> Grazietta Butazzi, *1922-1943 Vent'Anni Di Moda Italiana: Proposta Per Un Museo Della Moda a Milano* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1980)., Caterina Chiarelli, *Moda Femminile Tra Le due Guerre*, Galleria Del Costume (Livorno: Sillabe, 2000)., Mario Lupano and Alessandra Vaccari, *Fashion at the Time of Fascism : Italian Modernist Lifestyle 1922-1943* (Bologna: Damiani, 2009). Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism*.

following three years, stopping in eleven other museums and bringing Italian craft and design to the American public.<sup>3</sup>

The *Italy at Work* exhibition has been studied by a handful of British and Italian design and economic historians such as Penny Sparke, who, through this exhibition, describes the proto-design nature of Italian design in the post-war period, and Catharine Rossi, who highlights how this exhibition ‘constructed Italy as America’s non-industrialised, non-modern other’.<sup>4</sup> Rossi further stresses how ‘*Italy at Work* aimed to boost Italy’s post-war reconstruction by presenting the nation’s hand-made wear to the American consumer’.<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, Italian economists Merlo and Polese explain that this exhibition brought Italian skills to the attention of the American public, but also that it had the effect of helping Italian producers to understand the potential of the North American market and the ‘necessity of making goods to suit its tastes’.<sup>6</sup> The connection to the Marshall Plan made *Italy at Work* more than just an exhibition: its role was closely related to wider export aspirations and to the aim of re-establishing links between Italian and American companies in the aftermath of World War II.

The second event takes us back to Italy, to Florence, where foreign buyers (initially only from North-America) were invited to participate in a collective Italian high fashion shows twice a year from February 1951. This first took place in the exporter Giovanni Battista Giorgini’s house, before moving to Florence’s Grant Hotel and finally finding its permanent location in the Palazzo Pitti’s *Sala Bianca* (The White Hall). Italian dressmakers and couturiers were required to exclusively showcase original creations that were not inspired by the French style. Chronicles of the success of the *Sala Bianca*, as these events became known, have been widely investigated, but the role that textiles played in them has been largely overlooked.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For *Italy at Work* see Rossi, *Crafting Design in Italy*, p. 10. After opening at the Brooklyn Museum, the exhibition travelled to the Art Institute of Chicago; the De Young Museum, San Francisco; the Portland Art Museum; the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas; the City Art Museum, St. Louis; the Toledo Art Museum; the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York; the Carnegie Art Museum, Pittsburgh; the Baltimore Museum of Art; and finally the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design. ‘Institutional Sponsors’, *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1950), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Sparke, *The Straw Donkey*; Catharine Rossi, *Crafting Design in Italy*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Rossi, *Crafting Design in Italy*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Merlo and Polese, *Turning Fashion into Business*, p. 440.

<sup>7</sup> Orsi Landini Roberta, pp. 324-327, Guido Vergani, *La Sala Bianca*. Apart from some authors like Nicola White mentioning the tie-ups (White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, pp. 25-26), no further research has been devoted to the effects that textiles might have had.

### *Italian Fashion in Italy at Work*

The primary objective of the exhibition *Italy at Work* was, according to its organisers, to 'represent the first concerted effort of any group of American museums to implement the Marshall Plan by bringing to the attention to the potential buyer in America the full range of Italian contemporary achievement in the field'.<sup>8</sup> This means that the objects included, and, indeed, the ones not included in the show indicated the taste and preferences of the North American market in relation to Italian-made goods.

The textiles section was one of the largest of the exhibition and several designers and producers were represented, showcasing many specialities of Italian production, such as linen, wool, embroidery and hand-painted silks. The display included a two-toned silk with a chariot design by manufacturer Guido Ravasi of Como (see Figure 13).<sup>9</sup> My study of the Ravasi company order books demonstrates that the same chariot silk was successfully commercialised in the United States in the 1950s. The history of this silk twill offers insight into the commercial opportunities that the touring exhibition offered within the American market and will be examined in the next section.

This section gives an account of the relationship between Giorgini and the organisers of *Italy at Work*. It explains that Giorgini's failure to organise an Italian fashion show in New York in connection with the exhibition had wider implications for the future promotion and export of Italian fashion.

A letter from Michelle Murphy, the research consultant in the Industrial design division of the Brooklyn Museum, addressed to Alice Perkins of *WWD* clearly lays out that Italian fashion was not originally included in the show because the jurors did not feel they could select objects to represent the rapidly changing field.

There will be costume accessories such as: shoes, jewellery and many examples of textiles for cloth. The jury however did not feel qualified, or they were concerned with the more rapidly changing aspects of fashion so that no plans were made for the showing of the work of dressmakers and tailors.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *'Italy at Work. Her Renaissance in Design Today'*, *The Brooklyn Museum Bulletin*, Fall 1950, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ratti foundation curator Francina Chiara confirmed that the Chariot textile is a printed textile by the company Guido Ravasi printed for the first time in 1949. Email correspondence with the author, 5 September 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy, letter to Alice Perkins, 4 August, 1950, Brooklyn Museum Archive (BMA), *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. [11/30/1950 - 01/31/1951]. [01]. (1950-1951). Murphy, Michelle.

Yet the necessity to represent fashion was felt, since there had been no major public presentations of the clothing made in Italy. The letter goes on to ask for advice regarding the idea to select current Italian models to be shown at the beginning of 1951 in the museum.

The answer from Alice Perkins came with straightforward views on the status of Italian fashion in 1950. In the eyes of the *WWD* journalist, 'the majority of garments made by the Italian dressmakers are either direct copies of Paris, or Paris inspired'.<sup>11</sup> Although she notes some exceptions, such as Marucelli, she explains that 'Many Italian dressmakers admit quite frankly they copy Paris; others do not admit, but do', listing Emilio Schuberth as an example. She concludes:

To have a sincere exhibit of Italian clothes fashion, the garments would have to be selected by someone thoroughly familiar with both Paris and Italian markets, or you would run the risk of presenting something Italian which was really Parisian – and perhaps being exposed by the Paris house. Certainly the New York trade would recognize any such plagiarism.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this negative assessment of the idea of an Italian fashion show, both Roger and Nagel appeared enthusiastic when the Florentine exporter and impresario Giovanni Battista Giorgini arrived in New York in August 1950 and talked to them about the possibility of organising a fashion show in conjunction with their exhibition.<sup>13</sup>

A letter by Giorgini following this visit highlights his plan to present some Italian dresses from the fourteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in 'order to make a background of the modern Fashion Show'.<sup>14</sup> Giorgini also wanted to know how to export all the merchandise he had assembled in Italy for the exhibition and wondered whether the objects would enter free of duty or in temporary importation.<sup>15</sup> The level of detail in these queries suggests that Giorgini was already trying to organise the show. However, a letter from Rogers to Giorgini dated 20 September 1950 reveals that, although he was interested, Michelle Murphy, who worked very closely with Fairchild

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<sup>11</sup> Perkins, letter to Michelle Murphy, 10 August 1950, BMA, Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today. [11/30/1950 - 01/31/1951]. [01]. (1950-1951). Murphy, Michelle.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Rogers, letter, to G.B. Giorgini, 24 August, 1950, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, Album 2 - Feb 12-14, 1951. Also on *Italy at Work* see Carlo Marco Belfanti, 'Renaissance and 'made in Italy': Marketing Italian Fashion through History (1949-1952)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 20 (2015), 53-66; Catharine Rossi, *Crafting Design in Italy: From Post-War to Postmodernism* (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2015); Sparke, 'The Straw Donkey'; Guido Vergani, *Fashion Dictionary* (New York: New York: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Letter from G.B. Giorgini to M.R. Rogers, 15 September 1950, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, Album 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Publication and was in charge of this kind of activities for the Museum, had reservations. Rogers explains that

Owing to her close contact with the field she had heard that a good deal of unfavourable comment had followed the last show of Italian fashions due to the fact that certain Italian couturiers had been rather too free in adopting French designs. In the event the museum did have the fashion show they would have to be sure this source of criticism was eliminated.<sup>16</sup>

He goes on to describe talks about involving a French representative who would go over the potential material in order to eliminate any problematic designs.

Despite these criticisms, Giorgini continued to work on developing the show and tried to convince the New York department store B. Altman to sponsor the event. But the high cost of import duties and of the models, in addition to the uncertainty about their originality and quality, prompted the B. Altman department store to decline Giorgini's idea of a tie-in sponsorship between the museum, the department store and nascent Italian fashion.<sup>17</sup>

The final letter retrieved from the correspondence between Giorgini and the Brooklyn Museum shows Giorgini trying to convince Nagel that he could sponsor the show himself without B. Altman's input. No answer to this letter has been found, but an internal museum memorandum dating from a few days earlier clarifies that the show had already been shelved.<sup>18</sup>

In this memorandum, Murphy explains how she met with Mr Kellior, the executive Vice President at B. Altman;

Mr Kellior subsequently conferred with Violet Mason, Altman's fashion specialist and others and advised us today that the picture on the quality and variety of Italian Fashions was not sufficiently well-known nor clear to undertake by long range such a show.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from M.R. Rogers to G.B. Giorgini, 20 September 1950, BMA, Exhibitions: Italy at Work (8): fashion show. Principal respondent: Giorgini, G.B.. Corresp re proposal for show to be sponsored by Altman's. (1950/09 - 1950/10). Records of the office the director - D|50-51|CN.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Altman to G.B. Giorgini 11 October 1950, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, Album 2.

<sup>18</sup> Murphy, Memorandum to Mr Nagel regarding the Italian Fashion Show, 13 October 1950, BMA, Exhibitions: Italy at Work (8): fashion show. Principal respondent: Giorgini, G.B.. Corresp re proposal for show to be sponsored by Altman's. (1950/09 - 1950/10). Records of the office the director - D|50-51|CN.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

She continues to say that ‘it does appear from the careful investigation of Altman’s and the advice of Alice Perkins that the fashion show idea is fraught with hazard and that it would be wisest for us to forget about it under present conditions’.<sup>20</sup> The absence of Italian fashion in the *Italy at Work* exhibition, then, was not an oversight, but the result of a lack of originality and of a sense of unique identity for Italian fashion.

However, only two years later, in 1952, Bernard Sakowitz, president of Huston Sakowitz Brothers department stores, wrote to Giorgini inform him that the exhibition *Italy at Work* was at the Houston Fine Arts Museum and that:

Tonight they will have a costume dance \$50.00 per person to raise funds for the museum and they are also having a Style Show of original Italian dresses. These dresses were bought and imported by several stores in New York City and with special arrangements through the Ambassador in Washington, we managed to borrow these dresses for our show tonight.<sup>21</sup>

This letter highlights how Giorgini’s idea from 1950 to have a fashion show to accompany the *Italy at Work* exhibition became a reality, but with a few variations from his original idea. Instead of having both historical and contemporary Italian fashion on show, the 1952 event showcased only Italian contemporary couturiers’ creations, ‘the originals’, bought by New York’s department stores along with a charity costume dance. This highlights how, only a couple of years after the opening of *Italy at Work* when Italian fashion was not deemed original enough and only Italian textiles were on display, the American appetite for Italian fashion creations was growing.<sup>22</sup>

Giorgini dedicated the next decade of his professional life to address the issues raised in the *Italy at Work* exchange of letters and to perfect a system that would allow Italian fashion to become one of the USA’s favourite markets. The *Italy at Work* experience, as journalist Giulio Vergani explains, drove Giorgini to put together in a very quick span of time, from October 1950 to February 1951, a fashion show in his house specifically aimed at North American department store buyers.<sup>23</sup> The interest in export influenced the Florentine fashion displays and the critiques and comments Giorgini received helped him shape his catwalk show in response to the American market’s needs.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Sakowitz to G.B. Giorgini, 22 February 1952, FAS, G.B. Giorgini, album 1, code 224.

<sup>22</sup> More on ‘originals’ and ‘copies’ in the Simonetta case study in this chapter.

<sup>23</sup> For Giorgini’s first fashion show: many publications have talked about this event, including Sonnet Stanfill, *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014).

In the existing literature, the above correspondence has only been considered through the copies of the letters available in the Giorgini archive, with analysis of these documents pointing to the fact that Giorgini's failure to organise a fashion show at the Brooklyn Museum became the pretext to organise the first 'Italian High fashion Show' in February 1951 in his house.<sup>24</sup> Thanks to the unearthing of the other set of letters from the *Italy at Work* archive in the Brooklyn Museum, a more multifaceted situation with wider implications has emerged. As shown above, the absence of fashion in *Italy at Work* was due to the fact that Italian fashion was judged too derivative of the French style and therefore not original. This is a key point to make because awareness of this weakness encouraged a change of direction in Italian fashion in the following years. On the other hand, the textiles field was acclaimed and displayed at the time, as seen in the next section.

### *Italian Textiles in Italy at Work*

In the introduction to the *Italy at Work* catalogue, Rogers describes the renaissance of Italian craftsmanship and production after Fascism and the destructions of the war:

As might be expected under present conditions, the renaissance in design is finding its expression, in materials that are either basically less costly or readily obtainable from local natural resources. [...] The most complete development will in general be found in those objects which skills, imagination and a sense of the material itself are the most important ingredients.

This text highlights how Italian craftsmen reached the highest achievements through creative and skilful transformation of cheaply available materials.

Although full fashion garments were not on display, and no section was specifically dedicated to fashion, the catalogue and exhibition featured costume jewellery, accessories, textiles, embroideries and ecclesiastical garments. These kinds of objects were considered worthy of being displayed due to their originality and creative use of materials.<sup>25</sup> As demonstrated above, at that stage the derivative French-influenced style of Italian fashion did not appeal to the Americans. But items involving close engagement with the quality and intrinsic characteristics of the materials, are praised by Rogers who declares that 'On the whole, the most successful commercial production in the field is to be found in the fashion-driven ingenuity shown by the designers of women's bags, purses and shoes'.<sup>26</sup> An example of this is shoemaker Salvatore Ferragamo's use of the native and traditional

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<sup>24</sup> Stanfill (ed.), *The Glamour of Italian Fashion*, p.12.

<sup>25</sup> Rogers, *Italy at Work*, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

material of straw, which he reinterpreted to create an original and 'fashionable' product as seen as Figure 12.

The section on textiles and embroidery was the second largest in the exhibition after the one on ceramics. In the catalogue, after giving an historical overview of the success and prestige of the textile arts over the centuries, Rogers concludes that the Italians preferred natural forms and not 'radical' design, and that they mainly relied on colour and greater freedom in the printed fabrics. When speaking of the work of Maria Chiara Galeotti, a producer of hand-woven fabrics and outfits better known by the brand name Tessitrice dell' Isola, besides highlighting her sensitivity to colour and texture, Rogers describes how she mixed raffia with normal and artificial fibres, and indicates that hand-loomed fabrics in cotton, hemp and linen were new to the American tastes. This remark, together with the selection of the textiles and accessories displayed in the exhibition, emphasises the selection of goods that would not compete with American production and that could therefore be 'safely' imported by prospective buyers.<sup>27</sup>

According to Rossi, besides limitations due to economic restrictions or the favouring of contemporary design, some objects were rejected from the exhibition for 'not being sufficiently craft-like'.<sup>28</sup> This consideration was evident in the case of textiles, where preference was given to hand-woven examples in hemp and linen. Moreover, it appears that silk was only present as a craft production, whereas its industrial production, which exported to the USA the majority of its raw silk output, was largely overlooked. Additionally, rayon, nylon or any other synthetic and artificial materials were almost not mentioned, although they were being produced in the country from as early as 1947. This favouring of particular fibres and materials over others in the exhibition highlighted how, in the 1950s in America, Italy was still associated with natural fibres, a notion that, as seen in Chapter One, was about to change.

The craft-like goods on display were also considered as the new and 'other' to bring to the attention of the museum public. For example, in July 1950, a few months before the opening of the exhibition, an article in *WWD* describes three textiles by the Italian silk mill Ravasi that were selected to be shown there.<sup>29</sup> *WWD* was the USA's most famous trade fashion newspaper at the time, so its readers would have been interested to know in detail what types of fabrics would soon be seen and

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<sup>27</sup> Catharine Rossi, 'Crafting Modern Design in Italy, from Post-War to Postmodernism' (PhD, Royal College of Art, 2011), p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> Rossi, *Crafting Design*, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> 'Ravasi Silks Selected for Forthcoming Travelling Exhibit of Italian Goods', *Women's Wear Daily*, 31 July 1950, p. 12.

bought in the USA.<sup>30</sup> The magazine describes the three fabrics chosen as: a silk twill in rust and white depicting an ancient chariot scene; a 'yarn dyed, hand loomed silk in shades of muted blue, gold and red'; and a 'modern design in light blue and silvery white brocade, called 'the clouds''. These textiles were representative, in their natural fibres and traditional manufacturing, of the types of objects displayed in *Italy at Work*.<sup>31</sup> Further investigations in the Ratti foundation archive brought to light a swatch of the chariot textile, reproduced in Figure 13.<sup>32</sup> The fabric is also present in the company order book. Here, as seen in Figure 14, the names of the textile agents selling the piece are listed in the column near the textile swatch, and the USA is recorded in the column devoted to the countries where the product was sold.<sup>33</sup>

In 1954, when the touring of the exhibition ended, the Ravasi chariot swatch was acquired by the Brooklyn Museum to be part of the permanent collection, along with pieces by other producers such as Cheti and Myrica.<sup>34</sup> This acquisition, the archival evidence of sale in the USA, and the interest shown in the fabric and producer by *WWD* testify to the wider repercussions that *Italy at Work* had for Italian goods. The Chariot textile was particularly significant as a symbol of the 'renaissance' of Italian design in America. The American trade press offered the Ravasi company, and possibly the other textile mills involved in the exhibition, a visibility that could have helped boost their sales.

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<sup>30</sup> Although the name of the exhibition was not directly reported, the textiles described by *WWD* article were evidently the ones selected from the boutique opened by Ravasi to be shown in the *Italy at Work* exhibition. This can be proved by the presence of the name of Ravasi in the catalogue of *Italy at Work*, and the fact that the exhibition opened in Brooklyn on 30 November 1950 while the article mentions an opening in the Fall of the same year. *WWD* further refers to a jury in Italy selecting fabrics for the exhibition, and it is well documented that Rogers travelled to Italy with Amy Alexandre, the American Vice president of CAN, and two other CAN representatives in June 1950. The article was written in July of the same year. For more information on CAN see Rossi, *Crafting Design in Italy*, pp. 12-18.

<sup>31</sup> They were identified in collaboration with former Ratti curator Francina Chiara during the research for this thesis.

<sup>32</sup> Fondazione Antonio Ratti FAR/C.P.4-2214, 1949.

<sup>33</sup> The *WWD* article concludes that, apart from the prints, the Ravasi firm was not strongly influenced by fashion trends. However, Rosina and Chiara demonstrate that Ravasi was indeed involved in fashion, as it was the collaborator and producer of the famous Emilio Pucci silk design. For a comprehensive overview of this relationship see Margherita Rosina and Francina Chiara, *Emilio Pucci E Como: 1950 - 1980* (Como: Nodo Libri, 2014). More information on Ravasi, *Guido Ravasi: Il Signore Dell Seta*, ed. by Rosina Margherita and Chiara Francina (Como: Nodo Libri, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Brooklyn Museum Collection number 54.63.2.

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*Figure 12. 'Valle' pink straw shoes, Salvatore Ferragamo, 1945-1940 displayed in Italy at Work exhibition.  
Source: Brooklyn Museum of Art Library Collections, BMA, institutional files,  
Italy at Work, Her Renaissance in Design Today, 11/30/1950- 1/31/1951.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 13. Swatch of Chariot textile and detail.*  
*Source: Fondazione Antonio Ratti/FAR, cat. CP 4-2214.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 14. Order book Ravasi, showing the clients of Chariot fabric and the indication of United States.*  
*Source: Fondazione Antonio Ratti/FAR cat.LC 1220.*

This case study has given the opportunity to follow the fate of one of the textile manufacturers involved in *Italy at Work* beyond the museum realm and into the commerce and export of fabrics. In so doing, it underlines the importance that the exhibition had in terms of giving visibility to Italian mills in the USA.

### *Sala Bianca*

The first *Sala Bianca* show is generally heralded by fashion historians as marking the birth of Italian fashion, and 1951, the year of the first Giorgini fashion show at his house, is largely seen as a watershed moment in Italian fashion chronology.<sup>35</sup> However, foreign buyers were visiting the peninsula before that: Italy's most famous fashion journalist Elisa Massai notes that American buyers were already visiting Italy to purchase dressmaking models from as early as 1949.<sup>36</sup>

This section focuses on the importance of textiles in the economy, marketing and promotion of the early *Sala Bianca* fashion shows. As textile historian Margherita Rosina notes, the strength of Italy's textiles offered a way to overcome the dominance of Paris in the fashion context while fashion design was still reliant on French inspiration.<sup>37</sup>

A 1951 *Life* magazine report titled 'Italy gets dressed up', for example, stresses how even Italian cocktail dresses 'were weak as compared to the French masters'.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, journalist Walter Lucas explains how the Italians did not want to steal the thunder of French couturiers, but nevertheless 'felt that they had something that was peculiarly their own to offer: richness of materials and color, delicacy of handwork- and price'.<sup>39</sup> In a similar vein, fashion press authority Carmel Snow describes how 'Italians have always used the very finest fabrics and lean war years

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<sup>35</sup> See for example Gianluca Bauzano, 'The High Notes of High Fashion', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014) pp. 268-271 (p. 268). Virtually every article, publication and monograph on Italian fashion mentions the Sala Bianca.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Canella, 'Elisa Massai', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014), pp. 276-279 (p. 277), Guido Vergani, *Fashion Dictionary* (New York: Baldini Castoldi, 2006), p. 814.

<sup>37</sup> Rosina, *Textile*, p. 76.

<sup>38</sup> 'Italy Gets Dressed Up', *Life*, 20 August, 1951pp. 104-112 (p.107).

<sup>39</sup> 'Florence has Designs on Fashion', *The Christian Science Monitor*, n.d.b., FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 1, code 23.

have whetted this taste. Their fabrics are magnificent, woven with love and care that spring from this national craving for the best'.<sup>40</sup>

Aware of these considerations, Giorgini, encouraged and set up partnerships between couturiers and textile producers, especially in the year 1953. White describes these connections, but records them as arrangements whereby Italian fashion was only employing Italian textiles. She states, for example, that USA ready-to-wear manufacturers who bought Italian design for reproduction, 'customarily bought the fabrics from the 'linked' Italian textile producers'.<sup>41</sup> However, as seen in the Simonetta case study below, the equation was much more nuanced. The analysis of fashion garments, labels, advertisements, and fashion magazine editorials reveals a more complex relationship. Italian fashion was not exclusively employing Italian textiles. American fabric producer Cohama, for example, was advertising Italian couture made with Cohama fabrics available in the USA in a 1951 issue of *WWD* (I will examine this more in the Simonetta case study).

The Italian magazine *L'Europeo* reveals how, in the January 1953 *Sala Bianca* edition, each textile manufacturer had paid a big sum for each model presented and had given dressmakers the textile for free. The idea was to sell to the department stores of America, the UK, Switzerland and Germany not only the dress to be reproduced in thousands of copies but also the textiles to go with the garments. The Italian critics at the time suggested that this might not work because it was easy to reproduce the Italian textiles elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> But the Americans had a different opinion, as seen in Carmel Snow's article written as a response to the same show:

what struck me was the close collaboration of the Italian dressmakers and the fabric manufacturers. Italians have a way of blending all kinds of fibres, silk cotton, wool, rayon acetate, or anything that comes along and catches their fancy. No buyers could refrain from touching the fabrics- first, because of their beauty then because it was often impossible to know whether they were silk, satin, cotton or wool. <sup>43</sup>

Once more an interest in the Italian's innovative blends of natural and artificial fibres is picked up by American observers. The journalist also highlights that this fascinating mix was the result of the partnership between couturiers and textile producers, and between beauty and technology. These

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<sup>40</sup> Carmel Snow, 'Italian Designers Grand Entrance', *New York Journal-American*, 26 August 1951. FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 1, code 50.

<sup>41</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 48

<sup>42</sup> Gian Carlo Fusco, 'Dietro Tante Donne C'E' Quest'Uomo', *L'Europeo*, 5 February 1953. FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 6.

<sup>43</sup> Carmel Snow, 'Dresses show originality of style and fabric', [n.t.] 16 Feb 1953. FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 6.

would become staple characteristics of the Italian textile and fashion production in the 1960s and 1970s, as we will see in Chapters Five and Six.

Archival research in the Giorgini papers further demonstrates that some of the more multifaceted connections between couturiers and textile producers continued well after 1953. For instance, a correspondence between Fibrafil and the *Centro di Firenze per la Moda* (Florence Centre for Fashion), the organisation that ran the Giorgini events, reveals a request for the speaker to announce models made in DRALON during the *Sala Bianca* show of 1961. The price was one million Lire for ten mentions. The letter explains:

Moreover, we confirm that, although it was produced by Farbenfabriken BAYER AG, and are therefore of German provenance, our raw materials and the textile used for the High fashion models will be only of Italian provenance. Amongst the weavers, we can quote Lanificio Breschei, the Lanificio Figli di Pietro Bertotto, Tessilprato and Maffioli.

[Confermiamo inoltre, che, nonostante sia prodotta dalle Farbenfabriken BAYER AG, e quindi di origine tedesche, la nostra materia prima, i tessuti utilizzati per i modelli di Alta Moda, da diffondere in tal modo, saranno esclusivamente di origine Italiana. Tra i tessitori citiamo il Lanificio Breschei, il lanificio Figli di Pietro Bertotto, Tessilprato e Maffioli].<sup>44</sup>

It is fascinating to note how the German synthetic fibres became 'Italian' as the raw materials were processed by the expert machines of the Italian textile mills.

In an advertisement from the same year published in *Novità* (Figure 15), the fibre Dralon also has a substantial presence on the printed page as it is promoted in connection with Italian couturier Cesare Guidi and Italian wool mill Lanificio Figli di Pietro Bertotto (mentioned in the caption), which was responsible for weaving the blend of Dralon and wool. This advert uses a similar strategy to the one used by SNIA Viscosa for its fibres, as seen in Chapter One.

Such evidence shows how an analysis of both fibres and textiles reveals a more complex network of makers and reveals the way in which Italian products from as far back as the fifties were not exclusively 'Italian' but the result of more articulated synergies.

Giorgini directed Italian dressmakers and tailors to create designs that suited America's taste, undoubtedly because the USA was a more lucrative market. A report about the eighteenth Florence fashion show (July 1959), listed how the USA represented 30 percent of the buyers, and Germany 27

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<sup>44</sup> Letter from Fibrafil to *Centro di Firenze per la Moda*, 8 June 1961, FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued, folder Ex 107.

percent, while the British represented 20 percent of the commercial and industrial compounds. The report emphasised that forty million lire from the guaranteed deposit amount that buyers had to pay in order to participate in Giorgini's shows were in foreign currency.<sup>45</sup> This detail stresses the importance of the export markets at this time and the necessity to please foreign buyers with designs and styles that would appeal to their customers.

For this reason, Giorgini kept on faithfully following his American clients' suggestions, as a letter exchange with a representative of the San Francisco department store 'I Magnin', Mr Carpenter, demonstrates.<sup>46</sup> Carpenter first notes that he considers the choice of the Tuscan capital good as a neutral ground, but states that it is necessary to organise an airplane service from Paris to Florence.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, as a result of too many experimental models presented being deemed unsalable to American customers, he suggests that a committee be established to leave out any 'freakish' models. He also indicates that he would prefer a presentation of fewer models in fewer days, and with the shows of smaller houses relegated to the end. This and other such letters show how Giorgini was regularly asking American stakeholders, including journalists and buyers, their opinions about his shows. Evidence in the Giorgini archive further shows how sometimes, as in the case of the entrance fee, their suggestions were put in practice quite literally and immediately.

The influence of America on Italian fashion has already been unpicked by Nicola White, but this study only covers the influence that America had as a market on Italian export and fashion design.<sup>48</sup> The next section will endeavour to bridge the gap in the literature and shed new light on this relationship by enlarging the scope of study to include the investigation into the multi-layered business of transatlantic copies.

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<sup>45</sup> 'G. B. Giorgini/Moda/XVIII/4 Manifaestazioni Luglio 1959', July 1959, FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued folder Ex 92.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Carpenter to G.B. Giorgini, 26 September 1952, 1959', FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 5.

<sup>47</sup> The 'neutral ground' refers to the fact that Italy had many fashion cities, such as Rome, Turin, but also Venice. This had caused many polemics and Carpenter thought that Florence was a good compromised amongst them all.

<sup>48</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*.

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*Figure 15. Advertisement Dralon promoting the collaboration with Italian couturier Cesare Guidi and Italian wool mill Lanificio Figli di Pietro Bertotto (mentioned in the caption).*  
*Source: Novità, November 1961, p. XXV.*

## Italy and the USA: Export and Domestic Market

### *The Value of Hand-Made and Machine Made in Italy and USA*

The mechanisms of clothes making in Italy in the post-war period were significant in informing the direction of made-to-measure and mass-produced fashion in both Italy and the USA. This section shows how Italian textiles and fashion have been closely intertwined from their inception. The interdependency of fashion and textiles is palpable from the ways in which Italian fashion has been produced. The considerations that follow are key to understanding the significance of textiles and their fibres in analysing Italian fashion outputs.

'The women in Italy wear only custom-made clothes, since they have no mass production'.<sup>49</sup> This quote from an American newspaper article dated circa 1951 aptly summarises Italy's domestic fashion market in the immediate post-war years, when very few Italian women bought ready-made clothes.<sup>50</sup> It is worth noting that custom-made can designate different levels of hand-made, including the dressmaker (*sarta*) and the couturier. Italian women would not always attend the atelier of the couturiers as most women could not afford such a luxury. However, they still had in their wardrobe handmade clothes, as middle-class women would mainly purchase garments from their local dressmaker, the *sarta*. Conversely, the elite or high society Italian ladies would be clients of French couturiers and Italian *alta moda*. The rest of the population would use second-hand clothes as often garments would be passed down through the family.<sup>51</sup>

By contrast in North America, as fashion commentator Elizabeth Hawes notes in 1938: 'There are only two kinds of women in the world of clothing. One buys her clothes made-to-order, the other buys her clothes ready-made'. The writer states that wealthy American women could buy made-to-measure from Lanvin or Paquin in Paris for example, or from the Bergdorf Goodman department store. Furthermore, they could buy style, while the middle classes could only buy mass-produced from department stores such as Macy's and were at the mercy of 'fashion'.<sup>52</sup> Although this

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<sup>49</sup> Virginia Drane Mc Callon, 'Italy's Bid for Fashion Fame was Started by Houston Visitor', *Houston Post*, n.d., unknown page. FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 1.

<sup>50</sup> Merlo, *La Moda Italiana*, p.75.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion in Spinach. Experiences of a Dress Designer in France and the United States of America* (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 3.

statement dates from before the war, the situation in the immediate post-war continued unchanged.

Despite the differences in the fashion systems and economic situations of the USA and Italy, women from different classes in Italy and the USA had their wardrobes made by hand. Although the results were similar, their allure was different and carried distinct values. The norm in Italy was to commission a few pieces made to last from a dressmaker, typically a low-paid worker who could do it from home. This practice was widespread and was not considered glamorous.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, in the USA, the most common habit was to purchase off-the-peg standardised garments that could last the span of a season, a practice that was not considered glamorous either.

Italian consumers would go to the dressmakers with the textile they purchased in a textile shop and ask them to copy items from photographs or to reproduce patterns from fashion magazines.<sup>54</sup> This type of hand-made fashion was not widespread even within Europe, and an article from *Novità* remarks how made-to-measure dresses in Switzerland were an exception reserved for a group of few.<sup>55</sup>

In 1951, an incredulous American commentator could not believe that in Italy women had their clothes hand-made.<sup>56</sup> In Italy, however, this was considered to be a sign of backwardness, as seen in a report from 1945 by the managing director of Lo Presti-Turba, one of the first Italian producer of *confezione* (mass-production) of female garments, noting the underdevelopment of the Italian industry in this field.<sup>57</sup> These opposite perspectives indicate how one country had a large skilled and low-paid workforce, while the other had an abundance of consumers with high income. While Italy saw its situation as synonymous with the lack of a modern clothing industry, this translated into an admiration of Italy's artisanal skills by the USA. The hand-made origin of Italian fashion constitutes, along with textiles production, one of the principal foundations on which the Italian ready-to-wear

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<sup>53</sup> Emanuela Scarpellini, *La Stoffa Dell'Italia: Storia E Cultura Della Moda Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Roma: Laterza, 2017), pp. 42-44.

<sup>54</sup> A paper pattern for a Jole Veneziani's skirt cost Lire 150, as seen in *Novità*, December 1950.

<sup>55</sup> 'La Moda in Svizzera', *Novità*, February 1952, p. 12.

<sup>56</sup> Mc Callon, 'Italy's Bid for Fashion Fame was Started by Houston Visitor'. [n.t.], FSA, G.B.Giorgini, Album 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ivan Paris, 'Associazione Italiana Industriali Dell'Abbigliamento. L'Autonomia Del Settore Industriale Da Quello Artigianale E i Primi Tentativi Per Un Controllo Istituzionale Della Moda', *Università Degli Studi Di Brescia - Dipartimento Di Studi Sociali.Paper*, (2005), p. 7.

system was built, and one of the key characteristics by which it was recognised worldwide. It is therefore necessary to reconstruct (and deconstruct) its history.

## Boutique Fashion as Proto Italian Ready-to-Wear

While there is no evidence that the Italian *confezione* had any success with the American market, boutique fashion, which can be defined as the Italian equivalent of American sportswear, is presented by many scholars as the sector that differentiated Italian fashion from its French rival, a niche that Italy carved out for itself internationally and through which it reached commercial success.<sup>58</sup> The strength of boutique fashion relied on the price tag, the simplicity of the lines, the quality of textiles and, as entrepreneur Gianni Ghini defines it, on being ‘different, novel and fantastic, though not extreme’.<sup>59</sup> Ivan Paris also highlights how this sector combined the potential for high-volume production with the allure of known couturiers.<sup>60</sup> With its multifaceted nature, Boutique fashion had the advantage of acting as a bridge between nascent Italian fashion and the demands of the American (and other) export markets.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, both the foreign and Italian press agreed that what distinguished Italian Boutique was the craftsmanship in the techniques employed to produce the pieces such as the use of knitwear or the type of fabrics employed and their designs and colours.

American sportswear originated as a type of clothing for active sports and then ‘evolved to encompass resort wear, town and country, and travel clothes, all of which enable ease of movement’.<sup>62</sup> Italian Boutique wear had its origins in Italy’s relationship with America. Encouraged by the demand of the overseas market, Italian couturiers opened Boutique branches of their ateliers to appeal to the new consumers. They even added the name ‘Sport’ to their own brand names, such as Fontana Sport, Simonetta Sport and Veneziani Sport. There was no direct evolution in Italy from the demand for comfortable sportswear to practise sports and its morphing into a fashion trend as happened in the USA. While some Italian brands such as Emilio Pucci designed specifically for sport with skiwear and beach ensembles, the majority of Italian ‘sport’ boutique lines adapted the existing

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<sup>58</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Gianni Ghini in White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 100.

<sup>60</sup> Ivan Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 534.

<sup>61</sup> Paris, *Oggetti Cuciti*, pp.114-117.

<sup>62</sup> Rebecca Arnold, *The American Look: Sportswear, Fashion and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s New York* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), p. 16.

enterprises of hand-made couture ateliers for the demand of a different market, mainly North American, by opening new boutiques and designing for a small artisanal mass-production. Despite the 'sport' designation, Boutique fashion labels remained prominently associated with the couturier's own luxury name in Italy and had practically no connection to the idea of sport itself.<sup>63</sup>

The spectrum of Italian production ranges from the hand-made tradition embedded with historical know-how and craft (high fashion/*alta moda*) at one extreme to the machine-made mass production (ready-to-wear/*confezione*) at the other. Although several nuances exist in the gamut between hand- and machine-made, Boutique fashion was exceptionally well-placed at the intersection between artisanal craft and industrial production, and was able to exploit the allure of Italian textiles in combination with the nascent reputation of Italian couturiers' brands. In that sense, Italian fashion historian Enrica Morini defines Boutique fashion as the production of small quantity *prêt-à-porter*.<sup>64</sup>

In December 1951, Jole Veneziani opened in Milan a new branch of her atelier, the Veneziani Sport boutique, with an entire new 'sport' collection. According to Italian fashion magazine *Novità*, this was encouraged by the success of her sport models with American buyers in July of the same year.<sup>65</sup> Her stamp of originality were new colour combinations, such as green and purple, that had not been used before in sport lines, the unique dyed fabrics as well special solutions to waterproof her silk and cottons. The article concludes with the news that one of the most elegant department stores on Fifth Avenue invited Veneziani to present one of her sport lines in New York.

The news of the opening of Jole Veneziani Sport was also of interest for the trade magazine *Woman Wear Daily*, as shown by an article titled: 'Italian Boutiques. Metallic Sweaters to Raincoats in New boutique at Veneziani-Sport' (Figure 16). The article, accompanied by a sketch of one of the products, describes how the boutique was opened on the fashionable via Montenapoleone in Milan with a press party. The shop, it explains, was conveniently located near the Veneziani Couture House so that the two 'branches of Mrs Jole Veneziani's activity will be more differentiated than they have been in the past'. 'The boutique displays and sells slacks, raincoats, skirts, sweaters and accessories

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<sup>63</sup> Arnold described how American sportswear was mass-produced and inexpensive. Arnold, *The American look*, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> Enrica Morini, *Storia Della Moda: XVIII-XXI Secolo* (Milano: Skira, 2010), p. 315. Here she defines *moda boutique* as a producer of small quantity of *prêt-à-porter*.

<sup>65</sup> 'Jole Veneziani Apre La Serie Veneziani-Sport', *Novità*, December 1951, p. 22.

to wear with separates and sportwear [...].<sup>66</sup> *WWD*'s report describes in detail the type of products on offer at the shop, such as skirts in 'beautiful hand-printed white satin' sold with matching scarfs 'with splashes of colours like moss green, rust and gold'. Raincoats represented an important product of the boutique, and they epitomised Italian ready-made production in synthetics and artificial materials. The careful consideration given to the models, also represented with a sketch, and to the accessories, along with the detailed description of the boutique's interior, emphasise how attentive the American press was to the news of products that could appeal to their readership.

These two reports, one in the Italian and one in the American press, demonstrate once more that the materials of Italian fashion had much more impact on American clients than their line. Boutique fashion was acting as a great ambassador for promoting and selling materials such as silk with its inventive prints, and the wool and cottons that Italy was very skilful at producing. Its intrinsic quality was mostly bestowed by the materiality of its products rather than their style.

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<sup>66</sup> *Metallic Sweaters to Raincoats in New Boutique at Veneziani-Sport*, *Women's Wear Daily*, 11 December 1951, p. 3.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 16. Article in WWD titled 'Metallic Sweaters to Raincoats in New Boutique at Veneziani-Sport'.  
Source: Women's Wear Daily, 11 December 1951, p. 3.*

## The Mechanisms of Copies– Italy and the USA between ‘Made in Italy’ and Export

### *Made in Italy and Export*

Giorgini’s correspondence with Bernard Sakowitz, a Houston-based department store owner, reveals that ‘Made in Italy’ labels were very important in the early 1950s in the USA and were requested to certify the provenance of the merchandise. In a letter dated 24 January 1952, one of Bernard Sakowitz’s employees complains to Giorgini that the Italian company Nicky Chini had shipped an order of ties with only the Sakowitz labels and not the ‘Made in Italy’ ones. They therefore requested to have the missing labels urgently shipped separately so that they could sew them in.<sup>67</sup>

Another letter from Sakowitz’s auditor to Giorgini reveals more about the import/export laws of those years. The letter regarded an issue with the invoice from La Rinascente to Sakowitz in which a home value in Lire was indicated next to the goods.<sup>68</sup> It transpired that if the value in Lire was indicated, then the reference ‘made solely for export’ would have to be omitted. In that case, if the goods were not exclusively for export, they incurred a 3 percent addition in duties for the importer in the USA. This probably means that at least until 1953, garments in the USA with a ‘Made in Italy’ label were made especially for export and not available on Italian soil. This suggests that Italian fashion history could develop in a different way if analysed through objects made for the USA as opposed to (or in comparison to) those made for internal consumption in Italy.

The idea of ‘Made in Italy’ has had a fluid definition since the 1950s. The contemporary widespread notion that Italy was producing beautifully made garments and accessories has been built in an irregular way. Italy was not exclusively producing fashion in the country in the 1950s, just as it is not today. Even when self-sufficiency (autarky) was the priority of the Fascist regime, not everything purchased by Italian women was made in Italy and the Italian elite was still buying elegant gowns in France.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the idea that Italian fashion was always made in Italy in the period I am considering, 1945 to 1985, can be disproved.

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<sup>67</sup> Letter from Bernard Sakowitz’s company to G.B. Giorgini, 5 January 1952, FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued, folder 11.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Bernard Sakowitz’s auditor to G.B. Giorgini, 30 March 1953, FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued, folder 11.

<sup>69</sup> Merlo, *Moda Italiana*, p. 71.

This section challenges, through a series of examples, the traditional understanding of the 1950s 'Made in Italy' label and presents evidence of the existence of a more complex network of relationships between makers, designers, creators, manufacturers and diffusion. As Paulicelli states, 'On closer inspection, what is known as 'Italian style' or paraded under the label of 'Made in Italy' often turns out to be more multinational and less purely original than its name suggests'.<sup>70</sup>

A French article from the 1950s reports that the Italians had an attractive business on their hands. Salaries in Italy were less expensive than in France: for example Anny Blatt, a designer who had launched the fashion of the knitted jumper in Paris, had all her models made in Italy and then imported back to France and still achieved strong savings despite the custom duties. Furthermore, labour was abundant in Italy, and an order could be executed in one week, while in France the same work would take at least six weeks.<sup>71</sup> This article highlights an important point: the mechanism of delocalised production that we have witnessed in the last forty years in Europe was already in place in the early 1950s. As we shall see in Chapter Five, fashion production moved from Western Europe to east European countries in the 1970s, then later moved to China. As anthropologist Simona Segre Reinach aptly puts it: 'The act of questioning or examining the concept [of Made in Italy] in depth addresses what is in part a history of fashion, and in part still a living market'.<sup>72</sup>

#### *The Transatlantic Commerce of Italian Couture: Simonetta Case Study*

This case study addresses the mechanism of transatlantic copies and garment translations. It aims to understand the various stakeholders, modus operandi and repercussions of these processes on the creation of Italian fashion in the 1950s. This is an important area of interest for this research as it highlights the difference in material quality between export goods and domestic ones and demonstrates the direct influence of foreign markets in shaping Italy's fashion output.<sup>73</sup> These

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<sup>70</sup> Eugenia Paulicelli, 'Italian Fashion: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 20 (2015), pp. 3-7 (p.5).

<sup>71</sup> 'La Bombe De Florence a E 'Branle' Les Salons De La Haute Couture Parisienne', *N.T.*, n.d.a. FSA, G.B. Giorgini, album 1. The same news was also reported in an article by Edna McKenna, 'Italy Views for Fashion Lead', *N.T.*, n.d.: 'In Italy a suit can be bought for \$68 and an evening dress for around \$120. Labour in Italy is cheap, and Anny Blatt finds it worthwhile to have all her work done in Italy and then imported to France. (She is a famous name in woollen designs)'. FSA, G.B. Giorgini, album 1, code 47.

<sup>72</sup> Simona Segre Reinach, 'Fatto in Italia: La Cultura made in Italy (1960-2000) by Paola Colaiacomo (Ed.), and Oggetti Cuciti: L' Abbigliamento Pronto in Italia Dal Primo Dopoguerra Agli Anni Settanta by Ivan Paris', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress*, 13 (2009), 121-126.

<sup>73</sup> The difference between export goods and goods available for domestic consumption is evident in the English system. Several fashion and trade magazines openly speak about the export effort that Britain was putting up after the war to win the export market, while in the country raw materials and fashion were still being

aspects, along with the previous section's analysis of the meaning of the 'Made in Italy' label in the immediate post-war period, provide a rounded vision of the role that Italian textile and fashion played in these years.

The beginning of this investigation is an object: a short evening dress by Italian couturier Simonetta Visconti held in the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (Figure 17).<sup>74</sup> The archival study conducted in the Giorgini and Simonetta archives in Florence revealed the existence of several photographs, drawings and reproductions of the same dress in Italian, American and English newspapers and magazines (see Figures 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23). The examination of these copies, or translations as they were called by the American department stores, offers initial insight into the ways in which Italian couture was exported into the American market, an area so far underexplored.<sup>75</sup>

The dress was donated in 1982 by Janet A. Sloane, a stylist for millinery company Madcaps Inc., a regular at European fashion shows and one of the earliest patrons of nascent Italian fashion.<sup>76</sup> Madcaps was featured in *Vogue US*, and her hat designs were sold in the 1950s in department stores such as Lord and Taylor, Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Fifth Avenue.<sup>77</sup>

As noted in the previous section, in the early 1950s, even before the exposure that Giorgini offered through his collective shows, Simonetta Visconti was already a well-known name in the American and British markets, and pictures of her works were featured in the pages of UK *Vogue* as early as 1948.<sup>78</sup>

Research in UK *Vogue* has brought to light an image of the aforementioned Simonetta dress in the September issue of 1951. In the black and white photograph (Figure 19), the dress is worn by a

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rationed. On this see '*British Fashions Go Abroad*', *Harper's Bazaar UK*, July 1948, p. 24; '*Editorial*', *Fashions and Fabrics Overseas*, July-August 1946, p. 51.

<sup>74</sup> Short evening dress, (1950) wool and silk, gift of Janet A. Sloane 1982, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, 1982.427.6a, b.

<sup>75</sup> White mentions this in *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>76</sup> Janet A. Sloane, 82, a Millinery Stylist, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/06/nyregion/janet-a-sloane-82-a-millinery-stylist.html> edn, 2016 vols (May 6, 1996), [Accessed 10 April 2016].

<sup>77</sup> *Fashion: What it Takes to be the New Young Fashion Whiz* 1958, *Vogue US*, Aug 15 1958, Condé Nast, New York. *ProQuest*. [accessed 10 April 2016]. Janet A Sloane donated other pieces to the Met alongside the Simonetta, including garments by Dior and other French designers. For more see Search the Collection on the Met's website <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search>, [accessed 10 April 2016].

<sup>78</sup> '*Black on the Beach*, *Vogue UK*, November, 1948, p. 60.

model resting on a travertine wall probably located either in Rome, where Simonetta had her atelier, or in Florence, where the fashion show took place. The picture was part of an article reporting on the latest Italian fashion show in August 1951 and titled 'Italy shows a new trend in her fashion trade'.<sup>79</sup>

The success of certain designers of Italian fashion in the post-war years can be attributed to many factors. What emerges in the study of the relationship between North America and couturiers such as Simonetta, is the fact that she agreed to sponsor, like many others such as Veneziani, Noberasko, Fabiani and Pucci, all sorts of different products and lines. This included nylon socks, Cohama fabrics, underwear, and artificial and synthetic fibres.<sup>80</sup>

For example, Emilio Pucci designed underwear for American manufacturer Formfit Rogers from 1959. Research in the Bath Fashion Museum collection revealed a couple of Pucci undergarments made in the USA and bought from an English woman living there in the 1960s (Figure 20).

The Pucci archive also holds several sketches of Pucci's work for Formfit Rogers. It is unclear whether Pucci was simply sending sketches as the one above (Figure 20 on the right) to the American company or whether he was more involved in the realisation of the finished products.<sup>81</sup> Having analysed the underwear pieces first-hand, and knowing the quality of material and design that Pucci was known for, my first assumption was that the pieces were a cheaper unauthorised copy. This was reinforced by seeing that the iconic Emilio Pucci signature, omnipresent and unchanged throughout his years of producing unique prints and designs, was now substituted with the monogram EPFR as seen in Figure 21.

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<sup>79</sup>*'Italy shows a New Trend in Her Fashion Trade', Vogue UK, September, 1951, p. 102.*

<sup>80</sup> The Simonetta press clipping books in Galleria de Costume, Palazzo Pitti, contain several articles and advertisements showing the various products Simonetta endorsed.

<sup>81</sup> I elaborate further on the relationship between designer and industry in Chapter Four.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 17. Simonetta Visconti, short evening dress, (1950), wool and silk, gift of Janet A. Sloane 1982, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York: 1982.427.6a, b.

Source: <<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/98031>> [accessed 27 December 2015].

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 18. Simonetta Visconti, labels inside short evening dress, (1950) wool and silk, gift of Janet A. Sloane 1982, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York: 1982.427.6a, b.

Source: <<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/98031>> [15 March 2016].

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 19. Photograph of a model wearing an evening dress by Simonetta, photography by Henry, Clarke.*  
Source: 'Italy shows a new strength in her fashion trade', Vogue UK, September 1951, p. 103.

This consideration is twofold: the immediate success of designers such as Simonetta and Pucci in the post-war years exposed them to a visibility that was unprecedented for Italian designers and that contributed to the popularity of Italian fashion more widely. On the other hand, this overexposure might have been too much too quickly for some of them. Journalist Gloria Bragiotti Etting reports in September 1951 on how the Italian ‘unspoiled designers said “Yes” to anything anyone asked them’, referring to the enthusiasm that followed the Grand Hotel’s fashion show in Florence in August 1951.<sup>82</sup> This unquestioning consent might have contributed to the rapid disappearance of some of these designers’ names. Indeed, the businesses of almost all of the couturiers who were active and hugely popular in the early 1950s, apart from Emilio Pucci, were discontinued past the 1960’s mark.

Most of the designers that made the ‘international jump’, such as Vanna, Noberasko, Marucelli, Simonetta, Fabiani and Mirsa, were also the ones that regularly participated in Giorgini’s and other fashion shows both in Italy and abroad. Giorgini was a buyer for many American department stores, including I. Magnin and B. Altman, and his first export office opened as early as 1923.<sup>83</sup> As demonstrated above, Giorgini catered mainly to the need of the American market in the 1950s, therefore designers working with him were more likely to collaborate with Americans companies. I was able to demonstrate for the first time, with my research in the Giorgini archive, that any deals sealed would benefit both the designers and Giorgini, since he was charging the buyers with a commission of 7 percent on every sale.<sup>84</sup> Doing business with American department stores was very lucrative as the case of the Rome-based menswear tailor Brioni illustrates. In 1952, Brioni’s men suits paraded in the third *Sala Bianca* show, after their debut there in 1951, and gained international success. As a result, the New York department store B. Altman bought the whole evening collection, and the orders that followed the show increased the company’s sales by 52 percent from 1951 to 1952.<sup>85</sup>

Italian fashion designers were keen on signing exclusivity deals and rights to reproduce and copy abroad as the cases of Pucci and Simonetta have shown. In Italy during the 1950s, no

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<sup>82</sup> Bragiotti Etting, ‘Florence in Fashion’, p. 176.

<sup>83</sup> Giuliana Chesne Dauphine Griffo, pp. 66-71 (p. 66); Stanfill, ‘The Role of the *Sartoria* in post-war Italy’, pp. 83-91. Neri Fadigati, ‘Giovanni Battista Giorgini, La Famiglia, Il Contributo Alla Nascita Del made in Italy, Le Fonti Archivistiche’, *ZoneModa Journal*, 8 (2018), 1-15.

<sup>84</sup> In 1953 the percentage was 7% as seen in a letter from G.B. Giorgini to Bernard Sakovitz, April 20, 1953, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued, folder 11, file 3.

<sup>85</sup> M. Sargiacomo, ‘Institutional Pressures and Isomorphic Change in a High-Fashion Company: The Case of Brioni Roman Style, 1945-89’, *Accounting, Business and Financial History*, 18 (2008), 215-241., (p. 224).

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 20. Emilio Pucci, Underwear ensemble, (circa 1965-69), synthetics, Bath Fashion Museum: BATMC 2005.273, and Sketch of similar ensemble, Emilio Pucci, (1960s).*

Sources: *personal photograph by the author (28 July 2016)* and

*<http://www.europeanafashion.eu/record/a/f01dcc3e852bbb99c518710237a0d7e1fff5fdb410c7cbf2664f9ce52da64303> [accessed 30 July 2016].*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 21. Emilio Pucci, Monogram EPFR on underwear ensemble, (circa 1965-69), Bath Fashion Museum: BATMC 2005.273.*

Sources: *personal photograph by the author (28 July 2016).*

such deals existed, and textile producers, couturiers and clothing manufactures were fighting their corners. A 1954 report by Enzo Picone, a cultural clerk at Italian embassy in USA during the *Congresso Internazionale della Moda, del Tessile dell Abbigliamento* (International Congress of Fashion, Textile and Apparel) in Naples, candidly describes how Italian fashion had enjoyed the exclusive privilege of free advertisement in North America worth several dozen millions of dollars until the mid-1950s. This is followed by a warning that this tide was changing in 1954, and that it was therefore necessary to act quickly and coordinate efforts in order to preserve the advantages and privileges till then freely obtained.<sup>86</sup>

The early success of Italian fashion in the USA was in its infancy and, as the report above stresses, there was a need to institutionalise and consolidate the singular designers' advertising deals and success. This need is also expressed in the words of a journalist from Houston declaring in the early 1950s:

Although 90% of the fabrics used by French designers are woven in Italy, the Italian original model prices are from 30 to 50% lower than the French. The next problem they are tackling is to increase production enough to make prices even lower so that original models may be sold here. Now the models are purchased primarily for copying.<sup>87</sup>

The quote highlights two key aspects when considering this period: the importance of the Italian textiles even in the French production of fashion, and issues related to copying and mass-production that will be examined further in the next section.

### *Ready-to-Wear versus Couture*

As curator Andrew Bolton puts it: 'Since its birth in the mid-nineteenth century, haute couture has been defined by the tension between the model and the multiple between the original couture dress and the mass-produced copy'.<sup>88</sup> Bolton explains that 'this tension between originality and reproduction intensified between the years 1900 and 1929, a period that saw a rapid growth in the ready-to-wear industry and a concomitant growth in the department store'. He describes how

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<sup>86</sup> Enzo Picone, *La Moda Italiana in America*, Congresso Internazionale Della Moda Del Tessile E Dell' Abbigliamento (Napoli, 2-4 Settembre 1954), (Napoli: E Pironti e Figli Editori, 1954), p. 69. CIAC, Venice.

<sup>87</sup> Virginia Drane Mc Callon, 'Italy's Bid for Fashion Fame Was Started by Houston Visitor', *Houston Post*, n.d., FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive album 1.

<sup>88</sup> Andrew Bolton, 'Response', in *Fashion and Modernity*, ed. by Christopher Beward and Caroline Evans (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 147-150 (p. 147).

couturiers at the turn of the twentieth century employed strategies similar to those of fine artists to highlight the idea of the uniqueness of couture. These included featuring the couturier's signature on labels, giving names to dresses, and organising mannequin parades.<sup>89</sup>

The tension described by Bolton was also notable in Italian fashion during the 1950s. A letter from Giorgini to Bernard Sakowitz presents a deal for an Italian manufacturer from Milan to export large quantities of ready-to-wear to the USA at competitive prices:

The count Borletti owner of 'Rinascente' of Milan has organised a wonderful factory with American machinery and they are now making dresses in American sizes designed by one of the leading dressmakers of Milan'.

Giorgini states that he was impressed by the dresses and notes that the ones in Italian pure silk average at around 19 to 30 dollars in price. He then continues regarding the cotton dresses:

I do not know if the cotton dresses may compete in prices with your home-made ones, but being imported, you would have special designs and colors which your competitors would not carry.<sup>90</sup>

The letter is very interesting because it reveals the intention of exporting large quantities of Italian ready-to-wear as early as 1953. Moreover, the letter concludes with the following: 'Besides, having the Manufacturer a very large collection [sic] [,] any model at our Florence Fashion Show could be copied by this Manufacturer in quantities, in all sizes at extremely low prices'.<sup>91</sup> What is revealed here is extraordinary: while on one hand Giorgini was promoting Italian couture on the catwalk of the *Sala Bianca*, on the other he was also advertising to his clients in the USA Italian manufacturers such as the Rinascente who could directly copy and manufacture couture items, using Italian materials and American machinery, for the USA market. This would have probably undermined Italian couturiers, especially if rights for reproducibility were not paid to them, but it would have benefited Italian textile manufacturers who would be guaranteed orders for hundreds of meters to satisfy American demands for high numbers.<sup>92</sup> This deal further highlights how Italy fashion, influenced and tooled by the USA, was developing its weaker side in the mass-production of clothing.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Giorgini, Letter to Bernard Sakowitz, March 21, 1953, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued folder 11, file 3. He also says that he had offered the same deal to other of his accounts such as I. Magnin and B. Altman.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> No evidence of rights to couturiers have been found yet.

Although it remains unclear whether B. Altman, I. Magnin or Sakowitz ordered any of these ready-to-wear dresses, the fact that Giorgini offered such a deal demonstrates a change in the promotion of Italian fashion abroad and highlights the growing importance and desirability of Italian fashion design, which now almost equalled the established desirability of Italian-made fabrics.

The next section delves into the mechanisms of copying and translating original Italian garments and into the shifting relationship with their materiality as they moved from Italy to the USA.

Italian originals, American copies

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 22. Illustration of Simonetta evening dress.

Source: 'I primi modelli dell'inverno sono apparsi', [*Novità*, circa 1951]<sup>93</sup>, Simonetta Visconti press cutting archive, Volume 2, p. 4, Galleria del costume di Palazzo Pitti Florence.

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<sup>93</sup> This undated article comes from the press clipping archive of Simonetta Visconti and probably dates from 1951, since the other articles in the book are all from 1951. It was probably published in the magazine *Novità*.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 23. Simonetta Visconti wearing an evening dress designed by her.  
Source: 'Florence in Fashion', by Gloria Bragiotti Etting, *Town and Country*, September 1951 in Simonetta Visconti press clipping archive, Volume 2, p. 12, Galleria del costume di Palazzo Pitti Florence.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 24. Article 'Fashion' with illustration on the right of Simonetta evening dress.

Source: unknown magazine in Simonetta Visconti press clipping archive, Volume 2, p. 15, Galleria del costume di Palazzo Pitti Florence.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 25. *Article 'Fashion significance: of Italian dressmaker showings- Empire Coats, Rich Dress Fabrics', by Matilda Taylor with illustration of Simonetta evening dress in the top right.*

Source: Women's Wear Daily, 27 July 1951 in The Women's Wear Daily Archive

< <https://arts.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1523122761?accountid=10342> > [accessed 17 March 2016].

Photographs and illustrations of the Simonetta Metropolitan Museum dress were published in 1951 in a number of American and Italian newspapers and magazines, demonstrating the circulation and success that this dress had amongst the press and buyers (as seen in Figures 19, 22, 23, 24 and 25).<sup>94</sup>

In a *Town and Country* article titled 'Florence in Fashion', the couturier herself is photographed full-page, modelling her dress and posing similarly to UK *Vogue's* photograph of the same dress (Figures 19 and 23).<sup>95</sup> The dress appears again half sketched in an unidentified American article titled 'Fashion' (Figure 24) where the copy declares:

At Bergdorf Goodman they're understandably proud of having secured a fashion collection, designed for themselves alone by Italy's Simonetta Visconti. The clothes are all made to order, of-of [sic] course, the most magnificent fabrics, and are to be had nowhere else.<sup>96</sup>

A further article from New York's *Herald Tribune*, features a picture of Simonetta's basket dress with the caption: 'Short evening dress has checkerboard skirt of contrasting squares of Shirred black velvet and plain jersey. By Simonetta Visconti. From a collection of Italian Imports at Bergdorf Goodman'. The article explains that Bergdorf Goodman was ready with an edition of the recent fall fashion openings in France and Italy:

Eighty-eight imports, hand-picked by Andrew Goodman, catch all the highest, youngest moments of the French and Italian designers. Many of them are exclusive with the store and will never come face-to-face with less-expensive ready-to wear duplicates.<sup>97</sup>

This press coverage indicates that the department store Bergdorf Goodman acquired the exclusive rights to reproduce an original import designed and worn by Simonetta. According to journalist and writer Guido Vergani, this practice was carried through to 1952 when the collections of Fabiani and

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<sup>94</sup> The reproduction of the dress changed in nature depending on whether it was used for an advertisement, an editorial, or a quick report. The use of photography or illustration raises issues of costs, market and readers. Some magazines and newspapers, for example had limitations in image reproduction means, and illustrations would have been easier to reproduce in such cases.

<sup>95</sup> Bragiotti Etting Gloria, 'Florence in Fashion', *Town and Country*, September 1951, pp. 138 and 176, Italy, Florence, Galleria del Costume di Palazzo Pitti, Simonetta Visconti Archive, volume 2, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> Article 'Fashion' from unknown magazine, GCPP, Simonetta Visconti Archive, volume 2, p. 15.

<sup>97</sup> Sheppard Eugenia, 'Imported Fashions here Bergdorf Goodman shows 88. Around 50 at Henri Bendel', *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 September 1951.

Simonetta were purchased outright by Bergdorf Goodman.<sup>98</sup> The original dress was probably imported into America and then, according to the orders, reproduced in a large number of copies.

A *WWD* article on Simonetta's collection gives further insight into the deal by specifying that the collection was 'designed exclusively for their custom-order department' and that customers had the choice to request garments made in the original fabrics or choose domestic ones.<sup>99</sup> The option for the clients to select either Italian or American materials exposes an important shift in the relationship between Italian textiles and fashion. Italian couturiers were gradually gaining celebrity status, as illustrated by the numerous interviews, TV appearances and profiles of Simonetta, including a full-page colour portrait in *Vogue US*.<sup>100</sup> The predominance of Italian textiles in those years, which initially differentiated Italian fashion, started to make way for the emergence of the names of couturiers. Italian fashion did not suddenly substitute the allure of Italian textiles, but a shift in that direction happened in a slow and uneven manner.

The coexistence of different practices of export and consumption of fashion and textiles is further demonstrated by the availability of thirty-five original garments from Simonetta's collection at Bergdorf Goodman: the store planned to sell both originals and reproductions.<sup>101</sup>

A series of drawings in the archive of Bergdorf Goodman and in Sophie Gimble's folders in the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) archive in New York help clarify further the nature of the transactions between Italian couture and the American department stores. Amongst these drawings signed mainly with the names of Italian couturiers such as Simonetta and Fabiani, a pink and cerise drawing inscribed Schuberth seen in Figure 26 is particularly informative.<sup>102</sup>

A comparison between this drawing and those produced by the Schuberth atelier demonstrates that the American sketch was not made by the same draftsman who usually worked with the designers

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<sup>98</sup> Guido Vergani, *La Sala Bianca: Nascita Della Moda Italiana* (Milano: Electa, 1992), p.99, footnote 18. Evidence found in the FIT archive (Bergdorf Goodman folders) indicates that Bergdorf Goodman continued importing Simonetta designs until at least 1969. FIT Archive, folder US.NNFIT.SC.201.193.

<sup>99</sup> 'Visconti Collection shown by Bergdorf's for Custom Order', *Women's Wear Daily*, 14 November, 1951, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> 'Italian Designers Visiting New York', *Vogue US*, 15 February, 1952, p. 70. GCPP, Simonetta Visconti Archive Album 2, p.24.

<sup>101</sup> 'Countess Visconti here with Collection for Bergdorf Goodman', *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 November, 1951.

<sup>102</sup> The back of the drawing is inscribed: 'Fall '52 evening dresses Imports'. FIT archive, SUNY, Gladys Marcus Library Department of Special Collections

associated with the atelier in Italy.<sup>103</sup> Instead, its style is similar to other drawings marked Schubert and many others marked Simonetta conserved in the same folder, which suggests a continuity of hand. All these drawings are fully executed and include details such as the model's hairdo, jewellery gloves, and details of constructions, such as back shoulder straps.

These drawings were probably commissioned and designed in Italy and functioned as illustrations for reports on the couture collections that were sent to Bergdorf Goodman and became part of the company's internal records.<sup>104</sup> It is therefore possible that they were shown to clients of the department store as a catalogue to survey the collection and select pieces in the absence of originals or ahead of their public display.

A Schubert dress in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) collection (Figure 27) bears striking similarities to the one depicted in the aforementioned drawing, which is also portrayed in a black and white photograph published in *Harper's Bazaar UK* (Figure 26 right). The gradient pink to cerise silk fabric and the black lace decorations are identical. However, the cut and shape of both the skirt and the bodice are very different: the first dress features a full skirt and shoulder straps, while the second has a very narrow tailored skirt and is strapless. The Met dress bears the label 'Emilio Schubert, Roma', suggesting that it might have been ordered as an original through the Bergdorf Goodman couture department and modified at the request of a specific client.<sup>105</sup> This is indicative of the mediating role that the store's couture department played in the transatlantic 'business of copies', on one hand commissioning drawings to report on the latest Italian shows, and on the other working with local clients to provide customised modifications of original pieces.

A *New York Herald Tribune* article from September 1951 reports on Italian couturier Micol Fontana showing her new Fall collection in the US West Coast and explains that the orders she receives in America would be made in Rome according to individual measurements. The house of Fontana was used to 'this rarefied kind of custom mail-order business'.<sup>106</sup> The Simonetta collection purchased by

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<sup>103</sup> Extensive research was undertaken in the CSCA Parma archive that holds more than 2,000 drawings from the Schubert atelier.

<sup>104</sup> A letter from the company Gimbel-Saks Purchasing S.A. to Saks Fifth Avenue refers to sketches sent alongside reports on the 1950 autumn -winter French couture shows. FIT archive, Gimbel Sophie, Box 3, Folder 2.

<sup>105</sup> *Evening Ensemble*, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/87361?sortBy=Relevance&ft=emilio+schubert&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=3> [Accessed, 4 June 2017].

<sup>106</sup> 'Micol Fontana, Rome Fashion Designer, Here', *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 September 1951. FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 1, code 148.

Bergdorf Goodman was similarly all made to order.<sup>107</sup> These examples show how Italian fashion garments could be bought in New York by American clients and still be hand-made in Italy. This gave American customers the opportunity to purchase originals without having to go to Rome in person. The department store experience was different from visiting a couturier's atelier in Italy, an exclusive practice which was limited to celebrities like Ava Gardner who is known to have developed a very personal relationship with couturiers such as Sorelle Fontana. Department store custom-made purchases were probably less expensive, but they still retained a foreign allure and they were explicitly aimed at what *WWD* termed a 'sophisticated audience whose wardrobe needs [to] include many gala occasions and varied settings'.<sup>108</sup>

It is worth noting that the Bergdorf Goodman copies of Simonetta and other couturiers' designs, despite being reproductions, still retained a sense of exclusivity due to their connection with the 'original' as previously discussed, but also because no cheap ready-to-wear copies were allowed for production. As proudly stated in the caption from the *New York Herald's* article quoted before, such models were exclusive to the department store that sold them. This system was in place across North America, as demonstrated by a deal signed between Simonetta and the Canadian department store Holt Renfrew for the exclusive rights to reproduce in Canada.<sup>109</sup>

These exclusive practices were, however, not the only ways through which Italian fashion garments could be obtained in the USA. As White explains, 'It is apparent from *WWD* coverage, that from 1951, US ready to wear manufacturers (pronominally from Seventh Avenue), come to Italy in increasing numbers to buy both boutique and couture designs for translation and "volume reproduction"'.<sup>110</sup> These models, once in North America, would be copied or, as the Americans described this procedure, 'translated' for both mass-production and the taste of the US market. This usually meant simplifying the lines, and in many cases replacing natural and more expensive fabrics with more easily-available and often synthetic ones. Such changes in material are well-illustrated by the case of a Fabiani suit originally made in silk as shown at the Italian collective high fashion show of July 1951 and documented in *Life* magazine, which was then translated into synthetics for the American market where it could be purchased for ninety dollars.<sup>111</sup> This kind of production is also in

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<sup>107</sup> Article 'Fashion' from unknown magazine, GCPP, Simonetta Visconti Archive, volume 2, p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> 'Visconti Collection Shown by Bergdorf's for Custom Order', *Women's Wear Daily*, 14 November, 1951.

<sup>109</sup> Palmer, *Couture and Commerce*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>110</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p. 48.

<sup>111</sup> 'Italy Gets Dressed Up', p. 104.

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 26. On the left, sketch of Emilio Schuberth dress; on the right, Photograph of Emilio Schuberth dress.  
Sources: personal photograph by the author (25 October 2016) FIT archive, Image courtesy of Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY, Gladys Marcus Library Department of Special Collections and Harper's Bazaar UK, November 1952, p.55.*

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 27. Emilio Schuberth, Evening dress, (Autumn-Winter 1952-1953), silk and cotton, MET Museum: C.I.55.76.12a-d.  
Source:<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/87361?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=emilio+schuberth&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=3> [Accessed, 4 June 2017].*

evidence in a 1951 advertisement by the Russek Designer Shop in Fifth Avenue on 36th street that features Fabiani's Double Silhouette Dress for sixty-nine nighty-five dollars in crisp, black rayon taffeta faille, in sizes ten to sixteen.<sup>112</sup>

A further type of mass reproduction, described as 'Literal American Translation', was available at a price bracket ranging from less than forty dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars. This compared to European originals that would cost from four hundred fifty to one thousand one hundred dollars.<sup>113</sup> The US department store Macy's referred to this type of reproduction as 'line-for-line copies' and, as seen in the advertisement in Figure 28 of a Simonetta Visconti line-for-line copy in black silk available in sizes ten to sixteen and costing sixty four dollars and ninety-five cents.<sup>114</sup>

The advertisement of cheaper copies indicates how couturiers like Simonetta did not reserve their creations for the upper-end markets, but also disseminated their brand names through cheaper mass-produced imitations targeted at the American middle-class.

The Seventh Avenue ready-to-wear manufacturers who carried out the high-volume production of copies did not always change the fabrics to domestic and synthetic ones: they were also able to buy textiles from the Italian mills linked to the couturiers.<sup>115</sup> 'Linked' in this context refers to agreements between textile manufacturers and couturiers whereby, for example, textiles would be provided for free to the designer and advertisements of the garment with the textile producer's name would be paid for by the textile manufacturers. Such arrangements served to associate the Italian textile producer with the allure of a couturier's name, and American industrialists often emphasised this prestige in advertisements of their American 'translated' models.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, US department stores could also purchase Italian textiles and produce garments in the USA without a specific designer in mind. A letter from Sakowitz to Giorgini illustrates this practice as he requests, in relation to the pure silk fabric he purchased in Milan: 'please place the order for delivery

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<sup>112</sup> Advertisement Russeks Designer Shop, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 1, code 140.

<sup>113</sup> Fay Hammond, 'Europe Styles, U.S. Copies Draw 750 to Orbach Show', *N.T.*, n.d., GCPP, Simonetta Visconti Archive, volume 2, page 6.

<sup>114</sup> Advertisement of Macy's in *New York herald Tribune* March 9, 1952, GCPP, Simonetta Visconti Archive, volume 2, page 26.

<sup>115</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, p.48.

<sup>116</sup> 'Large Italian textile companies were known to send representatives to the USA to search for new markets', White, 'Max Mara', p. 68. Similar arrangements between couturiers, *carnettisti* and textile producers continued in the 1960s, as seen in Chapter Four of this thesis.

as soon as possible as it is our intention to manufacture shirts with this fabric in New York'.<sup>117</sup> An article from *WWD* also highlights this in its report:

Fabrics will get bulk of money spent in Italy. Most manufacturers and designers have been at the fabrics centres before coming to Florence and others plan to visit them before taking off for Paris. One Seventh Avenue coat man declares he has spent \$40,000 for fabrics alone for the next spring's line.<sup>118</sup>

Arrangements such as the one between Simonetta and Bergdorf Goodman probably had a time limit, as demonstrated by an article in the May 1953 issue of *WWD* reproduced in Figure 29. Here, the model Illiria Pompilli is once again parading the Simonetta's dress in Chicago, but this time alongside Italian menswear and womenswear made by Bartlay Ltd. for Jerrems clothing. The durability of this copy demonstrates how a dress originally created in 1950s could still be reproduced, photographed and commercialised three years later in a different American city by a different department store. The longevity of this type of design is testament to the long-lasting appeal of the Italian couturiers' names.

The in-depth study of the cheese basket dress and of its copies, has shown a complex and multileveled engagement between American department stores, mass-producers and Italian original designs. As we have seen, Italian originals were copied in the USA as part of an institutionalised system in which various levels of reproduction coexisted without necessarily competing with one another, as they catered to different types of customers. A picture reproduced in *WWD* which shows representatives of high-fashion stores, big volume retailers and Italian couturiers posing together in Florence attests to the openness about such arrangements in Italy (Figure 30).

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<sup>117</sup> Letter from Bernard Sakovitz to G.B. Giorgini, 13 June 1952, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued, folder 11.

<sup>118</sup> Matilda Taylor, 'Fashion Significances: Of Italian Dressmaker Showings. Empire Coats, Rich Dress Fabrics', *Women's Wear Daily*, 27 July 1951, p. 3. FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 1, code 29.

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*Figure 28 . Macy's advertisement showing a Simonetta Visconti line-for-line copy in black silk*  
Source: New York Herald Tribune, 9th March, 1952, Simonetta Visconti Archive, Volume 2, page 26.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 29. Model Illiria Pompilli wearing Simonetta Visconti evening dress.*  
Source: Women's Wear Daily, Italian Formal for Men's Shop Show, 15 May 1953.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 30. Article in WWD title 'High Fashion Stores and Volume Retailers at Italian Show' with pictures showing representatives from US volume retailers and Italian couturiers such as Simonetta and Fontana Sisters.*  
*Source: Women's Wear Daily, 25 July 1951, p. 18.*

### *The Value of Copies*

In the case of clothing, normally the translation or copy was aimed at adapting garments to different tastes and body shapes, and it was a practice regulated by US government standard pattern measurements. However, Alberto Fabiani and other Italian designers sometimes also designed patterns for American seamstresses in a different way; instead of adhering to standard patterns, the sizes were cut to their own measurements, which were probably based on Italian sizes.<sup>119</sup> Such practice shows how American clients could be exposed to different, more European, ways of fitting garments.

The USA fashion industry openly copied Italian fashion, but at the same time dictated, through its buying power and the profitable practice of mass-producing original Italian designs, a type of fashion that would be easier to copy. In this way they almost 'imposed' a style upon the Italian designers who were eager to sell to the lucrative American market.

This section has established the circumstances and characteristics of the Italian-North American copy-translation business. This practice could be described as the production of what I term 'valuable copies' because of their monetary value and legitimacy, and in order to distinguish them from what could be called 'clandestine copies' which were not regulated by an agreed system and were therefore illegal. The matter of copies was not a new one in nascent Italian fashion, and it worked in both directions. As previously mentioned, Italian couturiers looked to France for inspiration in order to please the demands of their domestic clientele. This practice, although forbidden by the Fascist regime, picked up again at the end of World War II and filled columns of French and Italian newspapers with news of arrests and conspiracies of Italians spying on the French couture shows to illegally copy their creative models.<sup>120</sup>

On the domestic front, Italian couture houses were very attentive to how their original models were photographed and shown as a preventative measure for the risk of illegal copies by the *confezione* (Italian mass-production) and other couturiers. One letter in particular reveals how the distinction between what I described above as a 'valuable copy' as opposed to a 'clandestine one' manifested in the Italian fashion system. Dated 13 January 1951 and addressed to Giorgini, it confirms the

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<sup>119</sup> 'Italian Designer Caters to Home Seamstresses', *Oregonian*, 8 March 1953. FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, Album 9.

<sup>120</sup> Although the practice of going to Paris was forbidden it continued illegally. For more on this see Sofia Gnoli, *La Moda*; Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism*. Also see Irene Brin, 'Dirottati in Italia i Buyers Americani', *n.t.*, n.d., GCPP, Simonetta Archive, album 2, p. 28, the journalist states how until the 1940s Italians went twice a year to Paris where they would officially buy a number of models, and not-officially also buy a number of toiles provided illegally by 'secret pirates' of the French ateliers.

participation of the Sorelle Fontana atelier, along with the other Roman houses of Schuberth and Carosa, in the collective fashion show organised for North American buyers in his house in February 1951. The couturiers specify two conditions in the letter: first, that at least seven or eight buyers of American houses would be present at the show, and second, that journalists, photographers and other Italian observers who were interested in Italian fashion would be excluded from both days of showing.

The second condition highlights how the Italian domestic fashion system, unlike the American one, was not regulated enough to prevent unapproved or illegal copies of original designs. The Fontanas knew that the Americans would pay for both their original creations and for rights to reproduce them. An article by renowned Italian journalist Elsa Robiola also points to these distinctions, as she explains how the Italian fashion collections of 1951 were actually inaugurated earlier in the year than the usual presentations of fashion.<sup>121</sup> Robiola reveals that the Giorgini fashion show was kept secret at the request of the American buyers to enable them to export the dresses to America before press and public were informed. After this secret preview, the normal fashion show took place in March and was documented in the press as usual. This means that the press and public were only able to see the dresses months after they were made. This delay had a double aim. On one hand, Italian *confezione*, could not copy illegally couture garments before they were exported to America, and on the other hand Italian models were shown at the same time as the French couture, and therefore could not be derivative copies of French models. This meant that American buyers had the reassurance that could buy some of the best and original European production. Towards the end of the article, Robiola puts forward an important question about the difference between models made for the American market and those produced for Italian use, but suggests that at that stage, the experiment was too small for its impact to be assessed. We now know, as seen above, that in the long run the experiment had a significant impact on both Italian and American fashion output.

The starting point for this case study was the Simonetta short evening dress in the Met collection. The so-called cheese basket dress is made of natural textiles such as silk velvet and sheer wool. It was 'made in Italy', as indicated by the label attached within it, and was probably produced using Italian silk (Figure 18).<sup>122</sup> It is therefore most likely an 'original' that came from Italy in 1951, either purchased directly by the donor in Italy or bought from a range of originals on sale at Bergdorf

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<sup>121</sup> Robiola Elsa, 'Collezioni Italiane in Anticipo E in Orario', *Il Tempo*, 31 March 1951 .

<sup>122</sup> In Italy in 1950s, the silk industry was one of the few in the country that could draw raw material from the homeland and export a final product. Other European centres had to import silk yarns to feed their looms.

Goodman.<sup>123</sup> Irrespective of the details of its biography, from the moment it was created to the moment it reached the Met collection, the dress offers through its materiality a valuable means to understand the 'translation' business between Italy and the USA and its influence on the future development of Italian fashion.

## Conclusion

Part One of my thesis has highlighted contrasts and extremes that coexisted in the 1950s Italian fashion system. Through an analysis of the core material of fashion, namely fibres and textiles, it has demonstrated how post-war Italy was Janus-faced not only in its relationship to modernity, but also within its fashion and textile industries. The coexistence of craft, handmade and couture, along with the drive towards reproducibility fuelled by the success of Boutique fashion and the transatlantic business of copies highlighted through the Simonetta case study, has presented a complex and multifaceted Italian textile and fashion manufacturing industry.

This complex layering was also carried through in the combination of natural and artificial materials which were often used in the same piece of textile or promoted alongside each other as seen with SNIA Viscosa's promotion strategy for its synthetics fibres. A study of the goods presented at the exhibition *Italy at Work* proved that the USA was mainly interested in acquiring textiles new to them such as hemp and other natural fibres. However, as seen in the discussion of the business of copies, when translating original couture Italian garments, Seventh Avenue manufacturers often replaced natural materials with synthetic and artificial ones.

Right after the end of World War II, it was Italian textiles, rather than Italian fashion, that first offered a way for Italy to step out of France's dominance. At the same time, the American export market, with its influence and buying power, played a decisive role in determining what Italian fashion designers and textile manufacturers were producing. The investigation into *alta moda* and its boutique equivalent mainly created for the American export market has presented an important precedent of mass-produced quality garments to the Italian ready-to-wear trend that would explode in the 1980s.

Part One has also discussed different promotional strategies for Italian fashion, focusing in particular on the role played by textiles. In some cases, textiles and fibres were the main protagonists, as seen in the CIAC shows. At other times, they served as an attractive feature to promote specific outputs of Italian design, fashion lines or general goods. By focusing on the role of materials, the study of

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<sup>123</sup> For more information on the original fashion shows see Palmer, *Couture and Commerce*, p. 133.

thoroughly-researched events such as Giorgini's *Sala Bianca* was able to reveal previously unnoticed aspects, for example the promotion of artificial and synthetic fibres.

The Simonetta case study has put forward the challenges presented to Italy's textile manufacturers by the transatlantic business of copies, whereby Italy's fashion designs could be easily copied in the USA using local synthetic fabrics that were not made in Italy to create a cheaper hybrid. Further research into transatlantic exchanges however also showed how Italian textiles were simultaneously being sold to Seventh Avenue manufacturers with no connection to Italian fashion design. These various relationships complicate the idea of 'Made in Italy', notably challenging the notion of Italian fashion was mainly associated with natural Italian textile and fibres.

Part One has also shown how Italian manufacturers used innovative strategies to promote their textiles, including pay-per-mention arrangements at fashion shows and free advertising through American department stores. While these initiatives were not part of a formal strategy, Chapter Three will show how, through the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, a clearer plan was later devised to organise the Italian fashion and textile industries, with the Italian fashion-Italian textiles combination presented as the winning formula to promote a unified Italian system.

## Part 2: 1958-1972 – New Links Between Fashion and Industry

Introduction

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 31. Photo spread titled 'Forever Italy' in US Vogue showing Italian models on Rome's Spanish steps.  
Source: 'Forever Italy', Vogue US, 1 October 1967, pp. 98-99.*

In a double spread image published in American *Vogue* on October 1967, seven models descend the iconic Spanish Steps in Rome wearing creations made by seven Italian couturiers: Lancetti, Galitzine, Forquet, Antonelli, Fabiani, Sorelle Fontana and Carosa (Figure 31). The captions name the type of textiles used, as well as details of the textile companies that made them or commercialised them such as Feudella, Nattier, Gandini and S.A.N.E.T, including the names of the cities where they were based, such as Turin and Milan. The bold photograph depicts a young and fiery image of Italy, fully in tune with international fashion codes.

The use of Rome's iconic Spanish Steps as the backdrop for these modern and colourful outfits shows once more how Italy's heritage was used to promote Italian products abroad. Compared to earlier black and white Italian fashion photographs which used the national historical setting of the 1950s, this image, with bright colours and low perspective offers a modern image of the 1960s Italian fashion system. The models were not only observed by the magazine readers, but they were also scrutinised by a large group of bystanders visible at the edge of the picture. The presence of this audience suggests the theatricality and the staging of the photoshoot and how the Spanish Steps were consciously used to promote the new system.<sup>1</sup>

The models in their dynamic poses gaze down at the viewers, confidently occupying the centre of the frame. This image, as with other similar photographs created in the 1950s, still relies on the allure of *alta moda* as an ambassador of Italy's taste and beauty. However, now the name of textile producers, as well as *carnettisti* (a type of wholesaler discussed in detail in Chapter Four) such as S.A.N.E.T and Nattier, are beside the names of the couturiers, some of which had already been famous for a decade, such as Alberto Fabiani and the Sorelle Fontana.

However, in this chapter, the couturiers are no longer the subject of the investigation. New forms of production that combined industrial manufacture and *alta moda* were emerging to accommodate the rise of different types of consumers: for example, the new industrial working class, young students, and even children. Developments such as industrialisation, migration, and increased disposable income for the working class, were factors that contributed to make a wider slice of the population more fashion-conscious.<sup>2</sup> These new consumers viewed *alta moda* as a desirable

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<sup>1</sup> Italian heritage was already used as a promotional tool as early as the immediate post-war period see Lucia Floriana Savi, 'La Moda in Vogue', in *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945*, ed. by Sonnet Stanfill (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), pp. 248-253. See also the Simonetta case study in Chapter Two in this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Scarpellini, *La Stoffa dell'Italia*, p. 49.

product, but turned to mass-produced garments to express their fashionability. The buying power of the new consumers encouraged various players in the fashion industry to cater to their needs: these included magazines, TV shows and manufacturers such as the *Gruppo Finanziario Tessile*, (Financial Textile Group (GFT)), who in 1965 opened alongside their other lines, a fashion range aimed at younger consumers called *Ventanni* (twenty years old). I will analyse some of the factors that contributed to this rise in fashion consumption: the agency of these new players is important and needs to be taken in consideration. However, it will not be the main focus of Part Two. I will instead focus more on this decade's experiments in new types of mass-production, such as *alta moda pronta*, Boutique fashion and ready-to-wear (*confezione*), and how these were challenging *alta moda's* undisputed leadership. These were new ways of collaboration between industry and *alta moda* that laid the foundations, in the 1970s and 1980s, for the new powerhouse of Italian *prêt-à-porter*.

Although fashion exports were important for Italy in this decade, the domestic market also began to grow and take shape. It is therefore critical to investigate how the domestic market operated. As the caption of the image that opened this chapter showed, more players, such as textile manufacturers and wholesalers were coming into the limelight, and their role needs to be assessed.

Part Two examines the years between 1958 and 1972 and focuses on the complex and often uneven history of how production and promotion changed during the decade. This period is particularly challenging to analyse because it sits at the intersection between two much more defined and known periods, the 1950s on one hand and the 1970s-80s on the other, and therefore there isn't so much research material available on these years.

The period 1958-72 has been previously considered merely a transition between the humble beginning of Italian fashion in the 1950s and the international explosion of the 1980s. Only rarely have these years been analysed independently and in their own right.<sup>3</sup> Italian fashion historians have mainly characterised this period in a general way, as the moment of crisis of *alta moda* and the rise of youth culture. Often these authors, to explain Italian fashion, focused heavily on countries that influenced Italy, such as France and the UK, rather than investigating in depth the characteristics of Italy's national fashion development.<sup>4</sup> Aurora Fiorentini Capitani in her book on 'fifties and 'sixties Italian fashion chronicles these years but finds no space in her analysis for a deeper reading of the

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<sup>3</sup> Paris, *The Fashion System* is one of the few articles specifically focusing on this decade and that tries to characterise it with its own specific role. Aurora Fiorentini Capitani, *Moda Italiana Anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Firenze: Cantini, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Gnoli, *Un secolo di moda Italiana* and Enrica Morini, *Storia Della Moda : XVIII - XXI Secolo* (Milano: Skira, 2006).

overlapping presence of production methods, such as the *confezione* (mass-production of clothing) and *alta moda*.<sup>5</sup> Her account reads more as a narration of events than a critical analysis of sometimes contradictory aspects of this period. The literature in general, instead of offering an analytical, unified reading of these years, is fragmented and each author decides to focus on a specific aspect without putting them in dialogue. For example, in the very influential double volume, *La Moda Italiana*, one essay was dedicated to the *confezione* in the 1960s and another to the rise of the fashion designer, without a connection from one to the other.<sup>6</sup>

To assess this long decade in a new light and to understand the unique contribution of Italian fashion, I will therefore piece together several secondary sources that have looked at this decade from different angles. In this way, I offer new readings and connect them to new archival research that highlights the roles played by official bodies such as *La Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* (The National Chamber of Italian Fashion (CNMI)).<sup>7</sup> I do so by giving relevance to the country's mass consumer culture, the fashion production hence developed and export activities rather than chronicling the designers who worked in the period or the sources of their influence.

Part Two is divided in two parts. The first one, Chapter Three, provides an overview of the years from 1958 to 1972 and gives examples of innovative collaboration between *alta moda* and industry. Furthermore, a case-study of Cleonice Capece investigates a first attempt to combine ready-to-wear with the allure of a designer at the helm. The second part of the section, Chapter Four, focuses through an in-depth case study on the role of the Italian textile wholesalers: the *carnettisti*. These little-studied intermediaries had well-known company names, but they acted behind the scenes of the Italian textile-fashion system. The assessment of their story and an investigation into their role reveals the wider impact of the *carnettisti* on the development of Italian domestic and foreign

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<sup>5</sup> Fiorentini Capitani, *Moda Italiana*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>6</sup> Enrica Morini and Nicoletta Bocca, 'Stylism in Women's Fashion', in *Italian Fashion. from Anti-Fashion to Stylism.*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi, 2 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 64-101., Elisabetta Pagani and Rosanna Pavoni, 'Clothing Manufacturing in the Sixties: Between Crisis and Innovation', in *Italian Fashion. from Anti-Fashion to Stylism.*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi, 2 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 32-43.

<sup>7</sup> *Collaborazione tra l'Industria Tessile e l'alta moda*, 12 march 1964, Italy, Milan, Università Commerciale L. Bocconi, Biblioteca e Archivi, Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana (CNMI), folder 2, file 2. The role played by CNMI in shaping the Italian fashion production and promotion in this decade has been so far little acknowledged in the literature other than by Elisabetta Merlo, 'Le Origini Del Sistema Moda', in *Storia D'Italia*, ed. by Carlo Marco Belfanti and Fabio Giusberti, 19 vols (Torino: G. Einaudi, 2003b), pp. 667-697.

markets and their contribution towards building an established and highly-regarded Italian production system.<sup>8</sup>

The *carnettisti* belong to the category of new players, who, although already active during the fifties, came to the fore in the sixties. The *carnettisti* were a well-organised cog in the fashion-textile mechanism, and the investigation into their genesis, their modus operandi and function within Italian fashion's production and promotion system reveals the existence of a complicated network of suppliers, small companies and studios.

In Part Two the inside-out method is no longer used to scrutinise the object, but to look at the mechanisms of production. The priority here is putting the spotlight on how things are made and what players have been influencing the making. In so doing the primary attention has been devoted to assessing the role that the governmental body CNMI had played in directing the course of Italian fashion especially in the 1960s. Furthermore, the investigation into the work of the textile-fashion intermediary *carnettisti* looks inside the process itself and interrogates how the cogs in the fashion production mechanism fit together and operate.

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<sup>8</sup> Recent works that emerged from 'The Enterprise of Culture: International Structures and Connections in the Fashion Industry since 1945' research project have focused on, as Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Véronique Pouillard highlight: 'the work of fashion professionals who worked behind-the-scenes as intermediaries'. *European Fashion : The Creation of a Global Industry*, ed. by Lee Blaszczyk Regina and Pouillard Véronique (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)., p. 5.

## Chapter 3 – The 1960s: A Decade of Metamorphosis in Italian Fashion

The period between 1958 and 1972 is characterised by the expansion of the embryonic Italian textile and fashion industries. In the 1950s these were still in a phase of experimentation. Their rise culminated in the 1970s, ‘the decade of consolidation’ as economic historian Elisabetta Merlo describes it, which saw ‘Milan emerging as the new fashion capital’, and the establishment of an Italian fashion system with industrial and economic significance.<sup>1</sup>

The years between 1958 and 1963 have been traditionally defined as the Italian ‘economic boom’.<sup>2</sup> In this period, the Italian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached 6.5 percent of growth and 8 percent for the industry, a historic record for Italian economic development. In this five-year period, exports grew by 14.5 percent and, more importantly, private domestic demand grew by more than 8 percent in 1963, thanks also to increases in salaries. New products such as cars, motorbikes, white goods, and fashion represented a new material culture, and played a crucial role in building new identities. As consumption historian Emanuela Scarpellini explains, ‘material culture plays an important part in constructing new identities and materialising values and behaviours, becoming the means of determining how one relates to society and tries to be part of it’.<sup>3</sup>

However, historian Silvio Lanaro prefers to define this period as an acceleration rather than an economic boom, and the result of an expansive process already started around 1951-52. The changes that transformed Italy in this period were the result of earlier phenomena that continued to produce their effects until the 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

Writing in 2011, Scarpellini reminds us how this period is presented by researchers and journalists as a sort of golden age, in contrast with contemporary sources which had a different tone. These were also the years of mass immigration, with its consequences of unpleasant living conditions and building speculations. Scarpellini’s analyses of Italian family consumption rates conclude that the Italian ‘miracle’ came later than in other European countries, and that when it did arrive it was selective, since it did not apply to all levels of the population. Therefore, ‘at the “height” of the

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<sup>1</sup> Merlo, *Le Origini del Sistema Moda*, p.667 Ivan Paris, , pp. 524-599 (p. 525).

<sup>2</sup> Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> Emanuela Scarpellini, *Material Nation: A Consumer's History of Modern Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Silvio Lanaro, *Storia Dell'Italia Repubblicana : Dalla Fine Della Guerra Agli Anni Novanta* (Venezia: Marsilia, 1992), p. 223.

miracle, it was the middle class that made great leaps in consumption, while many urban and rural workers were largely excluded'.<sup>5</sup>

Both the economic continuities and the radical economic shifts between the 1950s and 1960s, and the co-existence of different cultures of consumption, can be traced in the development of the textile and fashion systems during this period. Despite academic disagreement over the nature of the socio-economic shifts that occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s, it is still clear that they had a big effect on fashion. As Italian economic historians such as Ivan Paris note, the 1960s were a crucial decade for the rising Italian fashion industry in ways that were fundamentally different from the fifties.<sup>6</sup> The innovations and changes developed in the sixties brought the country to establish a fashion system both vertically and horizontally integrated; an 'authentic fashion system' as he defined it, as we will see in Chapter Five. Paris describes these as the years of the metamorphosis of Italian fashion, when the increase of demand triggered changes that profoundly impacted supply.<sup>7</sup> Merlo is also convinced that the mid-1950s and the 1960s were crucial years in the history of Italian ready-made clothing. Many firms modified their production. For example, textile producers Marzotto and Lanerossi became a vertically-integrated producer of clothing, a term that describes how the supply chain was owned by the same companies that were producing the final garments. Furthermore, ready-to-wear manufacturers Max Mara and Lubiam became synonymous with industrial manufacturing, and even small firms ventured in the clothing business.<sup>8</sup>

The year 1959 became the symbol for the start of a new era in Italy, rather than the closure of a decade. Between 1958 and 1962 fashion production rose to represent 17 percent of all the country's manufacturing activity, becoming a very important player in the Italian production system. By 1965 the clothing industry was responsible for 56 percent of all Italian consumption, while a decade earlier the proportion was only 22 percent.<sup>9</sup>

American fashion trade magazine *Women's Wear Daily* in 1962 reported that the annual growth in Italian apparel was estimated at 25 to 30 percent, the highest in Western countries. It was thought that the reason for this fast development was connected more to the 'booming exports rather than

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<sup>5</sup> Scarpellini, *Material Nation*, p.133.

<sup>6</sup> Paris, '*Fashion as a System*', p. 524.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Merlo, '*Size Revolution*', p.920.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 26 and 28.

the rising of the domestic demands'.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the 1960s, alongside the increase in importance of the export market, also the domestic market started to become significant.

## Treaty of Rome and Export

From the first of January 1958, the Treaty of Rome, which was ratified the year before, started removing customs barriers between European countries. This, on the one hand, opened markets such as France to easily exported Italian goods. On the other hand, it put Italy in direct competition with European countries, such as Germany, which, especially in the field of clothing manufacturing, were much more technologically-advanced and streamlined in their production processes, and therefore could offer their clothing at lower prices. Ginsborg believes that the Italian industry had now reached such a level of technological development, and differentiation in the production of a range of goods, that it was in the position to react positively to the Common Market.<sup>11</sup>

As Ginsborg reports, in the so-called miracle years between 1958 and 1963, 'export became a driving sector behind expansion with an average increase of 14 percent per annum'. The role of the Common Market in this growth is clear: the percentage of Italian goods exported to the EEC increased from 23 percent in 1955, to 29.8 percent in 1960, to 40.2 percent in 1965.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, a 1961 dossier on Italian export produced by the magazine *l'Abbigliamento Italiano*, reported that between 1958 and 1960 the value of Italian exports of ready-to-wear and knitwear to EEC member states increased by more than 130 percent.<sup>13</sup> As early as 1958 CNMI was also seeking to quantify export outputs and its foundation document highlighted that the value of export was around five hundred billion lire, of which two hundred billions were earned from textiles.<sup>14</sup> This data shows that export-driven sales were substantial in this decade and need to be taken into consideration when valuing fashion and textile production and output.

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<sup>10</sup> 'Italy Needs US Technicians to Lead the Way From the Cottage' *Women Wear Daily*, March 1962 quoted in Merlo, *Size Revolution*, p. 929.

<sup>11</sup> Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 213.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>13</sup> Germani, 'L'esportazione Italiana nel settore della moda in *Abbigliamento Italiano*', 1961, quoted in Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 535.

<sup>14</sup> Camera Nazionale Moda Italiana, [n.d.], p. 5, CNMI, folder 2, file 1.

## The *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* (CNMI) and the Promotion of High Fashion

This period also saw an intensification of the activities of the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, (Italian National Chamber of Fashion (CNMI)) that was established in 1958 as *Camera Sindacale della Moda Italiana* (Union Chamber of Italian Fashion). This body was created by the same group of couturiers who joined Giorgini's venture in Florence in 1951, discussed in Chapter Two. However, this new entity, created on the model of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*, was inactive until 1962. That year the name was changed to *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* to mark its changed aims; the CNMI then started to organise multiple national efforts and to promote Italian fashion in collaboration with parliament, government, ministers, public bodies, and trade associations.<sup>15</sup>

The CNMI strategy was to organise a close relationship between the textile sector and all the other fashion players, with *alta moda* and its original creations at the helm. This was justified because *alta moda*, with its history and the fact that it successfully challenged the traditional hegemony of French fashion, was recognised as the sector that opened doors internationally for other fashion ventures to flourish.<sup>16</sup> CNMI relied on a certain idea of "trickle down" theory by economist Thorstein Veblen. In his 1889 book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen regards fashion as a phenomenon generated between innovators and imitators, in which the newly affluent imitate the original styles of the upper class.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, CNMI based its action on the premise that the international success of Italian *alta moda* influenced the success of the Italian textile industry.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the duo of Italian fashion and Italian textiles was considered to be the natural combination for a swift development and domination of the foreign markets.<sup>19</sup> CNMI's official document that set out this vision highlighted how the Italian internal market had a problem of domestic distribution.<sup>20</sup> Although

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<sup>15</sup> Merlo, *Le Origini del Sistema Moda*, p. 692. For a good summary of the partnership developed by Camera Nazionale della Moda between textile manufactures and couturiers see Elisabetta Merlo, *Moda Italiana : Storia Di Un'Industria Dall'Ottocento a Oggi* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2003a), pp. 94-101.

<sup>16</sup> 'Camera Nazionale Moda Italiana', [n. d.], p. 5, CNMI, folder 2, file 1.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Carter, *Fashion Classics from Carlyle to Barthes* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> 'Rapporti industrie tessili- moda Italiana', [n.d.], p. 2, CNMI, folder 2, file 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

no further details were given, this clearly hinted at the activities of the *carnettisti*, their role and the complex mechanisms of production they were responsible for, as we will see in Chapter Four.

The CNMI set out to 'elevate the quality of textile production and strengthen Italian high fashion' (*elevare la qualità della produzione tessile e potenziare l'alta moda Italiana*).<sup>21</sup> It therefore promoted convergence between the textile and *alta moda* sectors, through several initiatives: among them, the establishment of a fashion design prize; the coordination of advertising between the two sectors; and the requirement that *alta moda* use at least 50 percent of Italian textiles in their seasonal output. These ideas were intended to have three effects: first, to spur the Italian textile industry to devote at least a part of their quality production to the Italian high fashion sector; second, to establish a stricter connection between textile manufacturers and couturiers so that they could guide their respective productions; third, to help finance the *alta moda* houses to acquire high-quality fabrics and therefore drive national and international promotion.

These endeavours were developed under the auspices of the *Ministero del commercio con l'estero* (Italian Minister of trade and foreign affairs), while the prize was managed by the *Mercato Internazionale del Tessile per l'abbigliamento e l'arredamento* (International Market for Furnishing and Fashion Fabrics (MITAM)). The latter consisted of a total prize of eighty million lire to allocate to the best women's fashion designs presented to national and international press and buyers. Eligible designs had to be made exclusively with Italian textiles. No single fashion house could receive more than three million lire in prize money. A key part of the prize stipulation was that the link between textile producers and fashion houses had to be mentioned in every phase of presentation, description, promotion and sale of the outfits.<sup>22</sup>

However, this promotional plan, as admitted by the CNMI itself in 1966, proved difficult to carry out, because it came after 'decades of complete disorganisation during which had been accumulated misunderstandings, polemics, mistrust [...]'.<sup>23</sup> As we will see in Chapter Four devoted to the *carnettisti*, the Italian fashion system in the 1960s was a complex network of companies, institutions and players. The CNMI's efforts did not always result in immediate changes and success, but they set the basis for a more unified system in the 1970s, as Chapter Five will investigate.

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<sup>21</sup> 'Collaborazione tra l'industria tessile e l'alta moda', 12 March 1964, p.1 and 'Premi ed incentivi per elevare la qualità della produzione tessile e potenziare l'alta moda', CNMI, folder 4, file 2.

<sup>22</sup> 'Attuazione dell'accordo tessile alta moda', 3 December 1966. This document refers to the prize of 1967, but a previous prize of the same type was already present since 1964, CNMI, folder 4, file 2.

<sup>23</sup> [...] decenni di disorganizzazione completa durante la quale si sono accumulati malintesi, polemiche, diffidenze [...]', 'Relazione del consiglio direttivo', 29 Ottobre 1964, p. 28, Italy, CNMI, folder 3, file 1.

It would be restrictive to think that CNMI had the strength to command such deep changes in the Italian fashion and textile panorama on its own. It must be considered that other agents helped to drive change. Changes were commended by an interaction between production, the mediation of such institutions as the CNMI, and the demands of consumption, clearly displaying the value of mobilising Lees-Maffei's PCM paradigm in this study.

### **New Ways of Production, with New Products and New Ways of Consumption**

Outside Italy, especially in the USA, Germany and other more industrially advanced nations, mass-production for women's clothing had begun in the middle of 1800s. Even after World War II, there was scarce production of women's ready-to-wear in Italy, although the male counterpart was already available. As highlighted in Chapter Two, in the 1950s made-to-measure was still the mainstream method of clothing production in Italy. Fashion historian Messina Rietta argues that even in 1959 the Italian ready-to-wear industry was less developed than that of other European countries. Italy was only mass-producing one-and-a-half million women's dresses while Holland was producing four million, France twenty million and Germany twenty-seven million.<sup>24</sup>

Although CNMI believed *alta moda* had to be promoted as the pinnacle of taste, Ivan Paris states that the course of change in the 1960s was set not by *alta moda*, but by the industrial mass-production sector, and by advances that predate the decade.<sup>25</sup> He identifies two innovations originating in the period before War World II that facilitated change in the 1960s: the development of ready-to-wear, and advances in synthetic fibres. These had the effect of 'radically transforming the traditional character of the textile and clothing industry'.<sup>26</sup> This was the case with the ready-to-wear company Max Mara, based in Reggio Emilia. In the period 1951-65 Max Mara was sourcing its fabrics from Italian companies. However initially the fabrics produced were not suitable for industrially-mass-produced clothing. Max Mara's problem was that the delicate fabrics manufactured in Italy were not suitable for the new industrial steam press. As textile producer Roberto Sarti explained, in the 1950s the textile manufacturers were catering mainly to dressmakers and couturiers who created made-to-measure garments by hand or by sewing machines. With the advent to ready-to-wear and its mechanised industrial system, the textiles were undergoing a

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<sup>24</sup> Messina Rietta, 'Italian Woman's Wear: A Successful Industrial Product', in *Italian Fashion. from Anti-Fashion to Stylism.*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi, 2 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 26-31 (p.26).

<sup>25</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 525.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.526. The first will be analysed in their first experimentations in this chapter and later in Chapter Five. The second element has been the subject of investigation in Chapter Two.

heavier treatment under industrial steam machines that could shrink the wool cloth of 2 or 3 percent impacting on the size of garments. In response, the textile industry adapted to produce a new 'stabilised cloth' which would not shrink in the steam.<sup>27</sup>

By 1959, consumers were fully supportive of both synthetic fibres and ready-to-wear, as demonstrated by a consumer survey that indicated the public preferred 'skirts made from synthetic fibres as opposed to those made from wool, silk and linen'.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, Italian expenditure on ready-to-wear apparel grew more than 30 percent in the course of the decade and its ready-to-wear production at the end of the 1950s equalled two million units.<sup>29</sup> This consumer direction emphasised how mass-production was taking over the centre-stage previously occupied by *alta moda*.<sup>30</sup>

Textile historian Margherita Rosina notes that in this period there was a split at the production level in terms of the type of fabrics used: on the one hand silk production for *alta moda*, and the other hand, synthetic fibres such as Lilion, Rhodainzino, Rilsan nylon as well as Lurex and Terital (also known as Terylene) for the nascent *prêt-à-porter*.<sup>31</sup> However, *alta moda* houses, both Italian and from other countries such as Germany, the UK, and Switzerland, participated in shows organised to promote the use of the modern new fibres. *Alta moda* was experimenting with new materials and not only relying on silk. An example of this, separate from events organised in the 1950s and discussed in Chapter One, comes from the event set up by the *Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume* (CIAC) of Palazzo Grassi in Venice, from the 8th to 11th September 1960. Entitled 'Images of a century', this was a play that told the story of the technological advances and changes in the last century that had transformed everyday life, such as the telephone, the first flight and the phonograph. Amongst these there was the invention of rayon, the first artificial fibre, which in 1889 was introduced into the clothing world. A fashion show followed the play, consisting entirely of dresses in new fibres. The names of couturiers who participated were Capucci, Fabiani, Fercioni, and Veneziani Antonelli, as well as leaders of English high fashion Frederick Worth, Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies.

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<sup>27</sup> White, *Max Mara*, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana, *Annuario 1958*, p. 131-5, Comitato Italiano per il cotone. *Abitudini e Preferenze* as quoted in Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 533.

<sup>29</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 533; Rosina, *Como Printed Silk*, p.74.

<sup>30</sup> Gnoli, *Un Secolo di moda Italiana*, p. 177.

<sup>31</sup> Rosina, *Como Printed Silk*, p. 72 and Rosina, *Textiles*, p. 83.

The *Sala Bianca*, which was traditionally associated only with *alta moda*, started to adopt new strategies to develop links between Italian *alta moda* and the apparel industry. On the 13<sup>th</sup> October 1962, during a meeting between representatives of these two sectors, it was decided that starting in January 1963, the Italian industrialists (*confezionisti*) could attend the Palazzo Pitti fashion shows.<sup>32</sup> This marked a change of tendency compared to the early 1950s when Italian *confezionisti* were banned or discouraged from attending the catwalks in the *Sala Bianca* in favour of buyers from overseas (as seen in Chapter Two). This was because it was feared that Italian manufacturers would only copy illegally the couturiers designs without paying royalties. A decade later, as the system was regulated by CNMI, the industrialists were encouraged to participate and, from March 1963, to forecast trends for the following seasons. In July 1964, the list of buyers at the *Sala Bianca* fashion show included the usual buyers from North America, Great Britain, Japan, Germany and Switzerland, as well as Italian buyers from clothing manufacturers and retailers such as Cori, Max Mara, Rosier, La Rinascente and Pirelli Confezioni. Pirelli, a company today mostly only associated with rubber tyres, had been producing overcoats, capes and military uniforms alongside haberdashery and medical supplies since 1877.<sup>33</sup>

The privileging of these industrialists over overseas buyers attested to a growing domestic market. This move was also connected to the fact that later in the 1960s, the fashion shows at Palazzo Pitti became more and more associated with Boutique fashion and ready-to-wear.

As will be shown in Chapter Five, the new protagonists who emerged at the beginning of the 1970s were the clothing manufacturers working in collaboration with fashion designers, in what became known from 1978 as the Italian *prêt-à-porter*.

During the sixties consumers of mass-produced objects took into consideration factors including: price; material characteristics such as fabric and cut; and adherence to the high fashion trends of Paris, Florence and Rome, as part of a desire to project social values through clothing. An increased awareness of fashion, also gleaned through a wider readership of fashion magazines and television shows and the increased industrialisation of *alta moda* production that made available luxury and fashionable garments to a wider slice of the population, all played a role into what has been defined as the 'democratisation of luxury'. Here luxury means fashionable garments in conformity with

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<sup>32</sup> 'Incontro Nazionale tra la Moda e l'Industria dell'Abbigliamento', 13 October 1962, CNMI, folder 2, file 1.

<sup>33</sup> Vergani, *Fashion Dictionary*, p. 908.

prevailing trends and image content that equalled the embodiment of lifestyle suggested by the garment's designer.<sup>34</sup>

Pairs states that 'the centrality of demand, in the form of new consumers and modes of consumption was a determining factor in the radical transformation of the Italian Fashion Industry'.<sup>35</sup> Migration played a big role in these shifts. Aside from migration overseas to Australia and the USA and to Europe, mainly to Switzerland and Germany, between 1955 and 1971 around nine million Italians were inter-regional migrants. Many of these people were moving from rural areas to industrial cities, such as Milan and Turin.<sup>36</sup> In this context of national changes, Italians also transformed their mores, cultures, and family life, and the population used their growing income to buy consumer durable goods for the first time.<sup>37</sup>

Paris believes that even at the beginning of the 1960s the Italian clothing industry, both mass-production and *alta moda*, lacked the understanding to react effectively to contemporary socioeconomic changes.<sup>38</sup> I would suggest that this is also because institutions such as la *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* continued to see *alta moda* as the point of reference of the market, in which all the other sectors, such as textile and mass manufacturers had to 'depend'.<sup>39</sup> CNMI, which aimed to defend and develop Italian fashion as an economic sector, believed that *alta moda* with its prestige, tradition and original creations had to lead all the other strands of the wider sector of fashion and apparel.<sup>40</sup> This approach assumed that the upper classes, the only people able to afford couture, would 'dictate' the direction of the Italian fashion system in a Veblen manner. Another implication of CNMI's aims was the assumption that only *alta moda* created original pieces. This assumption of superiority of the craft and artisanal products implied that the industry of mass-production could not lead on creativity. This was reinforced by a habit that persisted in some strata of the population during the sixties, to go back to the dressmaker and couturier and obtain a hand-made special piece to add to one's wardrobe.

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<sup>34</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 540.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 526.

<sup>36</sup> Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 211, 212 and 219.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>38</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 539.

<sup>39</sup> (no title), p. 3 and 5, CNMI, folder 2, file 1.

<sup>40</sup> This is still nowadays the way in which the sector is named in the economic and export realms.

However, *alta moda* was not always the product the new emerging consumers wanted or could afford. This challenged the entrenched hierarchy. As Scarpellini highlights, this period in Italy also saw the rise of a 'revolution fashion' or anti-fashion. With these terms, she referred to fashion trends made popular by a variety of youth subcultures, mainly of foreign origins such as the beatniks, the Yé-yé, hippies, mods and teddy boys. These youth movements came with their specific fashion codes that challenged the middle-class fashion system and embraced clothing as a new way of expressing their personalities and beliefs.<sup>41</sup>

Some of these tendencies found their apex in the iconic boutiques that opened in these years in Milan and Rome. These new retail spaces tended to feature innovative shop designs and they often mixed Italian designed ready-made garments with imports of products from abroad, mainly inspired by the fashion tendency in London and Paris. They were located mainly in Milan – such as Cose, Gulp!, La Drogheria Solferino, Carnaby Street and Fiorucci – but also in Viareggio where a boutique selling miniskirts, handbags and scarves by Paco Rabanne, Cacharel and others, was placed inside the discotheque Piper.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Industry and Alta Moda*

In this panorama in which industry and *alta moda* were mainly divided and working on parallel lines, new ventures and ways of producing that attempted to bridge the gap were undertaken in various part of Italy.<sup>43</sup> I will explore here a sample of three different types of experimentations: the GFT-Biki agreement; the Sorelle Fontana-owned factory for *alta moda pronta*; and Brioni's industrialised craftsmanship. These examples highlight different ways of collaborating between designers and manufacturers, a collaboration that Merlo defines as 'one of the pillars of the Italian fashion's ascendance to international standing'.<sup>44</sup> As we have seen in Chapter One, a sporadic dialogue between fashion designers, textile and clothing manufacturers had started in the 1950s. In the 1960s such ventures continued to evolve and, as we will see in this section, took on a different shape. They did not always last for a long period of time: when the political, social and productive environment changed, they became obsolete.

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<sup>41</sup> Scarpellini, *La stoffa dell'Italia*, pp. 96-104.

<sup>42</sup> Segre, *La Moda nella Cultura Italiana*, p. 629 and Gnoli, *Un secolo di moda Italiana*, p. 185; Pierre Restany, 'Breve Storia Dello Stile Yéyé', *Domus*, January 1967, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> Schuberth with Delia Biagiotti exported 'ready-made' haute couture items. Capucci created boutique clothes distributed by Krizia; in Bianchino, *Designing Italian Fashion*, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> Merlo, *When Fashion Met Industry*, p. 92.

The pioneer was the GFT-Biki project. In 1957 the Milan couturier Biki, who had established her brand in the city in 1934, partnered with Turin-based industrial textile and clothing manufacturer GFT. Biki was associated with the allure of Milanese high society and was well known for her close relationship with the Greek opera soprano Maria Callas.<sup>45</sup> An example of her glamorous creations can be seen in the coat she designed for the famous singer (Figure 32). The quality of the materials used and the precise tailoring make this garment a very exclusive creation for the opera star off stage.

The fact that such an accomplished and renowned couturier signed a deal with a mass manufacturer is indicative of a certain shift towards an integration between industry and creativity. However, in 1957 there were no standard procedures set in place: the roles and responsibilities of the two parties were defined as a work-in-progress and changed through the years. In 1957, according to the first deal with GFT, Biki was responsible for designing a number of sketches for garments that might subsequently be mass-produced by GFT. The industrialist would then select some sketches to prototype and those suitable would be produced on an industrial scale using GFT fabrics.

In this first stage, twelve sketches were prototyped and five were produced. However, these were put into production without having been previously tailored by Biki. This meant less input from Biki on the final garment which would have resulted in a lack of wearability. This happened because, according to Merlo, the couturier was not keen on working in her atelier on designs that then would be mass-produced by others. Such an attitude testified to the belief that industry and *alta moda* were still two separate entities.

This deal continued up to 1959, during which time Biki designed in this way five collections. The agreement was modified in 1960 to add, on top of the designer's creativity, also her name. Therefore, each product made by GFT featured a label stating, 'model designed by Biki for Cori', where Cori stood for Confezioni Rivetti, the owners of GFT. A full-page colour advert (see Figure 33) promoted the *già pronto* (ready-made) garments exclusively created by a great name of *alta moda*. The image of an elegant woman with pearl jewellery, purple wide brim hat and gloves, and a polished look, appealed to a certain audience that could recognise themselves in the image or aspired to such sophisticated look. The red ensemble was not specifically described in the advert and was quite loose on the wearer. The woman depicted is divided in half almost in an attempt to allude to the reproducibility of such garments.<sup>46</sup> This contract only lasted one year as Biki wanted to

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<sup>45</sup> Fiorentini Capitani, *Moda Italiana*, p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> Merlo, *When Fashion Met Industry*, pp. 98-99.

renegotiate the terms; she felt that deal did not adequately take into consideration the fact that the Cori line was benefitting from her fame. She then proposed to be involved in the manufacturing process with her son-in-law and the co-designers of her lines, Alain Reynauld. The couturier had probably understood that there was much profit to be gained if she was involved in the production. After Biki, more Italian couturiers got involved with industry and this practise slowly started to be considered a normal way of working rather than the exception.

In response to the designer's requests, Rivetti increased the minimum number of prototypes they would buy from Biki and agreed to pay the use of Biki's name with 3 percent of the Cori-Biki line revenues. However, the involvement in production did not last long, and GFT continued producing the Cori-Biki line in a way that the couturier thought poorly represented her *alta moda* creations. In different forms, the deal continued until 1972.<sup>47</sup>

This was one of the earliest experiments undertaken to regenerate Italian women's ready-to-wear clothing.<sup>48</sup> Merlo, in her analysis of the GFT-Biki association, argues that although this was a milestone in the relationship between fashion and industry, it was not a commercial success.<sup>49</sup> She believes one of the reasons for failure was that the Cori-Biki style was not considered fashionable by clients. Furthermore, GFT's attitude of not entirely involving the designers in the manufacturing process, and therefore not fully exploiting Biki's creativity, resulted in concentrating on mass-production aspects such as standardisation and the sizing system rather than on working towards customising the industrial product with the aid of a couturier, to make it more appealing.<sup>50</sup> The results of this collaboration can be seen for example in Figure 34. Here it is evident that the glamour associated with Biki's *alta moda* creations did not necessarily translate into the GFT garments. The Cori-Biki coat seen in the editorial, in contrast to the glamorous Callas coat, was not fitted and was worn quite loose on the wearer without highlighting her figure. Despite the striking difference between the Biki for *alta moda* and the Biki for GFT, the collaboration with the industry made available to a wider public previously very exclusive designs, making luxury seem more available and therefore democratic. The move of couturiers towards the industry can be ascribed, amongst other factors, to the new middle-class and working-class demand in this decade.

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<sup>47</sup> Merlo, *When Fashion Met Industry*, p. 102.

<sup>48</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 530.

<sup>49</sup> Merlo, *When Fashion Met Industry*, p.105.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

Although, as Merlo states: ‘the partnership [...] never really worked’, this archetypal relationship posed the basis for the 1970s collaborations between GFT and designers such as Emanuel Ungaro and Giorgio Armani, which have been considered by many the start of the Italian *prêt-à-porter*’s success, as we will see in Chapter Five. While with Biki, her creativity was only considered on a marketing level, in the partnerships that followed there was deeper collaboration, and GFT transformed ‘from a production-driven company into a designer- driven business’.<sup>51</sup>

Following the Cori-Biki partnership, more and more ready-to-wear experimentations sprung up through the country. In Rome in 1966 the couturiers Sorelle Fontana started the *Fontana Alta Moda Pronta* (Fontana ready-made couture), a ready-to-wear production in Cecchina, near Rome. Thanks to funds from the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South), three hundred workers were employed in the automated system of production of garments that applied ‘American production practice using Italian Necchi sewing machines and complex patterns’.<sup>52</sup>

In the television show *Linea contro Linea* aired in October 1967, the Sorelle Fontana extensively illustrate the difference between couture and ready-made couture. One of the sisters compares *alta moda* garments with similar ones produced for the couture ready-to-wear, as seen in Figure 35. Here the same tweed textile was employed for both ensembles. However, with a shorter length, fewer seams and details, the garment on the left, reproduced in hundreds, if not thousands of copies, would cost the consumer a third of the price of the more refined *alta moda* garment on the right.<sup>53</sup>

The Sorelle Fontana *alta moda* creations version is shown being paraded in the sisters' traditional salon, that recalls in its style a French haute couture atelier. One of the sisters, talking to a renowned actress, highlights how *alta moda pronta* and *alta moda* catered to different types of women, with different needs and economic means. The Fontana stress how it had become necessary to industrialise the *alta moda* as it was fundamental to redistribute the high cost of research and design of the *alta moda* collections not only to the few exclusive clients that could afford it, but to the ready-to-wear realm.

The film has a cut-away, and from the elegant salon, the viewers are catapulted onto the Sorelle Fontana’s factory floor where machines and employees are seen working at the pace of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.107.

<sup>52</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 530 and Capalbo, *Storia della Moda a Roma*, p. 153. In 1972 the workers at Sorelle Fontana were around three hundred.

<sup>53</sup> *Linea Contro linea 1967/ 68: Le Sorelle Fontana - Rai Teche*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfpZPWdLc7E> [Accessed, 24 November 2018].

a faster and robotic music. Here the technical characteristics of the ready-to-wear versions are unpicked. The way in which the ready-to-wear garments are described is all to do with finding ways to reduce the number of hours of work, and therefore decreasing their prices.

The juxtaposition of the glamour of the atelier, with its unique creations with a higher price tag, and the efficiency of mass-production and consequent availability of the garments for a wider clientele, aptly stresses the tension between the two types of productions.

The fact that such a programme was aired on television, at a time of rising TV ownership, suggests the will to expose Italian TV viewers to a new kind of product; one not hand-made, but instead machine-made.<sup>54</sup> In this context, the industrial product was not demonised, but instead accepted and promoted as a vital aspect of a new kind of society. At the same time, although machine-made, it was associated with the allure of a quality product via the prestige of the Sorelle Fontana, traditionally known for their couture output.

Despite the encouraging outlook and the Sorelle Fontana plant producing more than two hundred dresses daily, the venture closed in 1972. This, according to fashion historian Cinzia Capalbo, was caused both by Italian economic crisis and by union protests.<sup>55</sup> As we will see in more detail in Chapter Five, production-line workers were coming together to demand fairer treatment, and they took control of the factories.<sup>56</sup> Especially for small enterprises that could not afford to stop production for a long period, such as the fashion enterprises of the Sorelle Fontana and Cleonice Capece, this had the consequence of closing down their workshops and factories.<sup>57</sup>

In the menswear sector, Brioni represented a successful example of merging the quality of couture with industrial organisation. In so doing the company increased the growing demands for its suits. The approach adopted by Brioni was defined by sociologist Massimo Sargiacomo, who studied it in-depth, as 'tailors and industry' or 'industrialisation of craftsmanship', which

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<sup>54</sup> In 1954 only 88,000 TV licence were requested in Italy, while by 1960 there were over two million tv sets were present in Italy. John Foot, 'Television and the City: The Impact of Television in Milan, 1954–1960', *Contemporary European History*, 8 (1999), 379–394., (p. 381 and 383)

<sup>55</sup> Capalbo, *Storia della moda a Roma*, p. 153.

<sup>56</sup> Piore, *The Second Industrial Divide*, p. 155.

<sup>57</sup> Cleonice Capece interview with the author 18 May 2017 in Appendix 1. This was also the cause that brought Cleonice Capece to close her Italian workshop and to move to the UK. For more information on this aspect, see also in Goodman, *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, p. 18.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 32. Biki, coat for Maria Callas, (1960s) on show during the exhibition 'The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945-2014'.*  
*Source: Exhibition photograph, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 33. Full page Biki- Cori Advertisement promoting the già pronto (ready-made) garments exclusively created by Biki.*  
*Source: Novità, April 1961, p. XLI.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 34. Editorial photograph showing a Cori-Biki coat.*  
*Source: Amica, October 1967, p. 47.*

he defines as 'a combination of the principles of industrialisation to achieve high productivity while retaining high quality craftsmanship and maker creativity'.<sup>58</sup>

In Brioni's case, a menswear atelier originally set up in Rome by Nazareno Fonticoli and Gaetano Savini in 1945, the production was moved in 1960 from Rome to the small town of Penne in Abruzzo in central Italy. The region was a historically-recognised supplier of skilled labour: since Medieval times it had had a reputation in tailoring, and generations of tailors and seamstresses had their workshops in the area. The Brioni plant resembled a large-scale tailoring workshop but was organised in an industrial fashion.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Swedish serial production was introduced together with the adoption of the Anglo-Saxon sizing system which offered a 'more efficient regime for measuring, cutting and assembling suits without losing the sartorial character of each garment'.<sup>60</sup>

This system resulted in an increase of production and in 1961 Brioni started to distribute in the USA through the concessionary Cezar Ltd.<sup>61</sup> The 1960s export sales were between 70–80 percent of the total, of which 40 percent went to the USA, and 20 percent of the sales were absorbed by Italian clients. This integrated system of craft and industry proved successful and Brioni in the 1970s ventured into production of ready-to-wear suits.<sup>62</sup>

The above examples were not the only businesses experimenting within this sector. *WWD* reported how in March 1967 the Italians were the new challengers of the European ready-to-wear (rtw): 'Italy is ready-to-go... ready-to-wear [...] Italy is on of the rtw rise. Her rtw exports to the United States jumped from \$2,500,000 in 1965 to \$4,600,000 in 1966'.<sup>63</sup> The article gives a list of the ready-to-wear brands showing in Florence, and detailed information on names, place of production and trends. For example, Antonelli Sport is described as a pioneer of couture ready-to-wear, with its collection designed by André Laug and made in a factory in Bologna, where the less expensive Mary Antony collection was also produced. Other designers involved in ready-to-wear were Enzo, already onto his third rtw collection made in Nerviano; Alberto Fabiani, whose rtw line was made by Camel of Turin; and Pino Lancetti with two

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<sup>58</sup> Sargiacomo, *Institutional Pressures*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 230-231.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>63</sup> 'The Fashions: European Rtw: The Challengers', *Women's Wear Daily*, 30 March 1967, p. 10.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 35. Still grab from RAI television show Linea contro Linea, showing a couture ensemble on the right and a couture ready-to-wear one on the left.*

*Source: Linea contro Linea, (7 October 1967) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfpZPWdLc7E>, [accessed 24 November 2018].*

collections: one couture ready-to-wear, made by Genoese manufacturer Ci. Bi., and the other of printed knits made by Icap of Perugia.<sup>64</sup>

A few months later, in October, *WWD* reported again on the Italian *alta moda pronta* which they translated as de Luxe rtw, this time investigating more of the inspirations for the ready-to-wear collections. The Italian trend was to 'pull the best from their high fashion collection and put it on the assembly line for the volume sales'. For example, Irene Galitzine, who started her ready-to-wear only the previous year, was translating 'all the best sellers from her couture collection in a more simplified way, using high fashion fabrics' and manufacturing them in Turin using the company Camel.<sup>65</sup>

These experiments in mass-production relied on the experiences in the previous decade of couturiers that had developed the Sport lines for the American export markets, as analysed in Chapter Two. Luciana Antonelli, who started her ready-to-wear collection seven years prior, (which was known as Antonelli Sport), declares in her interview to *WWD* that before designing a new collection she travelled around shops and stores in Italy and Europe to understand what women liked. She continues: 'I watch them at the restaurants and on the streets to get the feeling of their mood. Then I go back to the factory in Bologna and I design for young, chic, modern women at reasonable prices'.<sup>66</sup> The words of Antonelli foreshadow, by a few years, the *modus operandi* of the Italian fashion designers of the next generation that were active in the 1970s and found their habitat in the city of Milan, as we will see in Chapter Five.

#### *Boutique of Ready-to-Wear*

An alternative avenue of production to the partnership between *alta moda* and industry during the 1960s was offered by the boutique of ready-to-wear. This kind of business, unlike the Biki-GFT agreement and the Brioni or the Sorelle Fontana ventures, did not have connection with *alta moda* and was only mass-produced in its own right. This new avenue of fashion manufacturing combined the allure of a brand name, a boutique in a prestigious street near other high-end fashion

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> 'Alta Moda Pronta in Advance', *Women's Wear Daily*, 17 October 1967, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

businesses, 'where buyers used to orbit', the participation in the Pitti *Sala Bianca* shows, and a production in series although not in high numbers.<sup>67</sup>

The Italian designer Cleonice Capece epitomised this new way of making Italian fashion. Capece recalled how she was not formally trained in fashion business or design, a characteristic she shared with many Italian couturiers of the previous decade. She described the beginning of her venture as quite fortuitous. She opened her boutique in the prestigious Roman Via Gregoriana where she had a shop with a workroom. The name on the door read 'Cleonice Capece Ready-to-Wear Couture'.<sup>68</sup> The English words were a very interesting choice for the Italian fashion panorama of the 1960s. This was due mainly to her foreign, rather than domestic, clientele. The production in series of her garments had an artisanal nature. Capece would design her collection and have the models parade at the Palazzo Pitti fashion shows; she would then take orders from clients she would meet at Florentine Palazzo Strozzi, where the commercial agreements were made. These orders were reproduced in series by a circuit of off-site workers, mainly women who would specialise in one sector of production, for example shirt collars or sleeves. They would be paid at *cottimo* (piece rate) and the final product would come back to the via Gregoriana atelier, for quality control, labelling and packing to fulfil the orders.<sup>69</sup>

An example of the type of clients and quantity Capece was dealing with is given in a group of invoices submitted to the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* (Figure 36). These numbers are far from the quantity the big ready-to-wear manufacturers were producing, but nevertheless produced an important export revenue.

According to Capece, the number of pieces reproduced rose exponentially when the model was bought in by a manufacturer, as was the case in Japan, for example. When a Japanese mass-manufacturer bought a style to be reproduced and distributed in Japan, Capece was requested to make a prototype and a paper pattern in a Japanese size. She would fly to Japan to supervise and approve the prototype before production commenced. This would become a Cleonice 'made in Japan' collection, distributed by the company Intermode and the department stores Isetan and

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<sup>67</sup> Capece, *Fashion by Chance*, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup> Cleonice Capece interview with the author 18 May 2017 in Appendix 1

Matsuya.<sup>70</sup> This ready-to-wear collection would be sold at a cheaper price to Japanese consumers than the Cleonice Capece 'Made in Italy'. The Japanese distributors would pay Capece royalties for their right to reproduce.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Isetan according to *WWD* was one of Tokyo's largest department stores. J. W. Cohn, 'Japan Reveals Plans for Couture Deal with Italy', *Women's Wear Daily*, 24 June 1963, p. 16. Isetan is still open and Dolce and Gabbana had a show there in September 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Capece, *Fashion by Chance*, pp. 103 and 108.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 36. Cleonice Capece's list of export Invoices, (1965)  
Source: CNMI, Folder 4, File 7, p. 1*

Capece was not the only Italian designer collaborating with Japan in these years. As early as 1959 the Japanese department store Isetan was presenting Italian Fashion.<sup>72</sup> In 1963 *WWD* reported on the news that a joint Italian Japanese venture had been launched to promote Japanese dress fabrics on the world markets. The new company was called Lucrezia and had its headquarters in Palazzo Corsini in Florence. The players behind this venture were 'Isetan, Asahi Chemical Industry Co. Ltd., Osaka, one of the leading producers of acrylic fibres in Japan and G.B. Giorgini'. The capital for such a collaboration were provided by two Japanese companies, while Giorgini was in charge of marketing know-how and recruiting and managing staff. The *WWD* article continued describing in detail the aim of the Italo-Japanese operation:

Initially the new firm will concentrate on producing a line of apparel, principally in the boutique and couture sportswear category, featuring Japanese fabrics, although some European fabrics will be used as well. Isetan will supply fine quality silks, cottons and blends, including kimono silks cut to dress widths and some hand made fabrics. Some of these fabrics will be aimed at the home furnishings field. Asahi Chemical will furnish acrylic fabrics. The line will feature between 300 and 400 original models, according to present plans. Models will be sold mostly to stores but a small boutique shop will be maintained at the Palazzo (sic) Corsini site. Faustino Gonzales has been engaged to produce about 40 models per season.<sup>73</sup>

It is very important to emphasise that this new venture was planning to promote Japanese fabrics through the creation of a fashion brand because there were restrictions in place in Italy on the import of goods from Japan.<sup>74</sup> Therefore it was easier to bring into Italy raw materials for manufacture in Italy, and then to 'partially re-export' the resulting products. The further aim for the Japanese was, once the restrictions in place were eased, to shift the emphasis onto selling fabrics directly to manufacturers and couturiers. Furthermore, 'Although Italy is the headquarters of the company, the aim is to sell to all of Western Europe and eventually to enter the American Market through buyers who visit European fashion showings'.<sup>75</sup>

The Cleonice Capece collaboration with Isetan and Giorgini's venture between Italy and Japan highlights a very key factor. Italian fashion and textiles were putting in place international collaborations and projects aimed at expanding their export appeal further than the North American

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<sup>72</sup> Isetan Company LTD *Fascicolo Italian Fashion Show Summer '65*, FAS, G.B. Giorgini Archive, album 61, code 14.

<sup>73</sup> Isetan according to *WWD* was one of Tokyo's largest department stores, Cohn, 'Japan Reveals Plans for Couture Deal with Italy, p. 16.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

focus explored in the previous chapters. In the 1960s, collaborations intended to mass-produce and distribute Italian design were set up not only nationally, as seen with the examples of Biki and Sorelle Fontana, but also intercontinentally, such as the Japanese example has shown.

The Cleonice Capece label started as an export-focused enterprise, but in 1969 the *Salone Mercato Internazionale dell'Abbigliamento* (The international clothing show (SAMIA)) opened a section called *Moda Selezione* that took place right after the Pitti Fashion shows in the *Sala Bianca*. It was dedicated to ready-to-wear with a high fashion content and the buyers invited opened the Italian market for Capece.<sup>76</sup>

Capece's label was a successful international business. However, it was not recognised as worthy of being part of the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* and despite her attempt to become a registered member, her application was rejected several times.<sup>77</sup> This is probably because Capece was operating more on a mass-production level, and using not only Italian materials, and CNMI wanted to promote and highlight the *alta moda* as the ambassador of Italian fashion together with Italian textile exclusively.

The case of Cleonice Capece, a lesser-known protagonist of Italian fashion, highlights how in the 1960s in Italy that although there was no well-organised national system of mass-production that was satisfying the national clientele, the boutiques, designers and some segments of industry were still managing to experiment by adopting new solutions of design, production and distribution. Some of these such as the GFT collaboration with couturiers such as Biki would fully develop and institutionalise in the 1970s (with the collaboration with fashion designers such as Armani and Ungaro) and would form the basis of the Italian fashion system, as we will see in Chapter Five.

As seen in these examples a number of attempts were undertaken to connect high fashion with the ready-to-wear industry in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the majority of these experiments did not have a long-lasting life beyond the early 1970s. There were many reasons for this, such as changing consumer tastes and behaviours.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, many couturiers who had previously had success in the 1950s with the American market then disappeared from the Italian fashion scene at the beginning of 1960s. This was mainly due to their incapacity to adapt their production to the shifts in consumption, and their unwillingness to collaborate with Italian industry. As couturier Jole Veneziani

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<sup>76</sup> Capece, *Fashion by Chance*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>77</sup> 'Relazione', CNMI, folder 4, file 7. In 1972 the application was finally accepted. 'N.T.' 7 September 1972, CNMI, folder 4, file 7.

<sup>78</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 538.

argued in an interview in 1969, the price the fashion industrialist would pay to collaborate with high-fashion couturiers, which amounted to five million lire at the end of the 1950s, was considered too little for the contribution the couturiers were to make with her or his brand name and creativity.<sup>79</sup> This lack of synergy was caused by both the couturier's inability to adapt to the new environment, the new society and new consumers, as well as the choice of the industrialists who would not pay enough for the visibility that the association with a label will give them. As described in the case of GFT-Biki line, the industrialist at the beginning of the venture was not paying royalties to use the couturier Biki's name.<sup>80</sup>

In this period, the couturiers still carried the allure of a trusted brand. Their names, such as Biki in the fifties, were associated with tradition, elegance and taste. According to Merlo, the use of these attributes formed the strategy GFT employed to ennoble their ready-to-wear. Female consumers, although increasingly likely to embrace the new fibres, were still doubting the adoption of off-the-peg garments and nearly 65 percent of them still relied on dressmakers for made-to-measure dresses.<sup>81</sup>

Biki, like many other couturiers such as Sorelle Fontana, was working simultaneously for exclusivity in their *alta moda* ateliers and for the mass-production of their line through industry. This stresses how, in this decade, the craft-based exclusivity of *alta moda* and the industrialization of mass fashion co-existed. The distinction between the two was nebulous and it was not evident which direction fashion would take: some couturiers, such as Barocco, even declared to *WWD* that their *prêt-à-porter* line was so similar to their couture line that they could not sell it in their shop together otherwise nobody would have bought anymore *alta moda*.<sup>82</sup>

The fact that *alta moda* could not be distinguished from an industrialised product at this time, makes sense in this period of experimentation as new forms were tried out and not fully institutionalised. Scholars also disagree on the key to use to read this period. On one hand Merlo thinks that the driving force is industry, in the form of players such as GFT, trying to broaden the appeal of the industrial product by involving the allure of the couturier. Conversely, Paris states that consumer demand for new products was driving the changes. This contrast highlights an issue of agency. There is no definitive answer to what caused the changes in this decade and it cannot be stated with

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Merlo, *When Fashion Met Industry*, p. 102.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>82</sup> 'Alta Moda Pronta in Advance', p. 9

certainty if it was production or consumption-driven, or both. What is certain is that these forces contributed to the shaping of this decade. Surely these different actors were interacting and as we have seen, CNMI tried to interpret this panorama and put in place initiatives that could benefit the sector through a more partnership-based approach.

What clearly emerges from this panorama, is that the new players in fashion production were the mass-manufacturers. However, they did not yet possess the allure of their *alta moda* counterpart. Their collaborations, although not entirely successful or well-developed, nonetheless laid the basis for a more sophisticated integrated system between industry and design in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Gnoli, *Un secolo di moda Italiana*, p. 200.

## Chapter 4 – *Carnettisti* and Italian Domestic and Foreign Markets

This chapter acts as a case study and delves into the mechanisms of production and commercialisation of textiles in Italy during the 1960s. It investigates the role played by the little-known intermediary, the *carnettisti*, who worked behind the scenes in Italian fashion and textile production. Their companies acted as a bridge between the many textile producers and couturiers and dressmakers scattered around Italy and beyond. In their role as intermediary they used their technical knowledge of production, as well as their understanding of the fashion market. Their main function was to choose fabrics from many manufacturers. The result of their selection was a *carnet* signed with their name. They attempted to sell these textiles to couturiers and, as we will see in the latter part of the chapter, also to dressmakers and department stores. While originally the *carnettisti* mainly acted as agents, some of them started to produce their own textiles, blurring the differentiation between manufacturing and commercialisation. The term *carnettisti* has been translated in the English literature as both textile converter and wholesaler. This ambivalence can be attributed to the multifaceted and often ambiguous role of *carnettisti*, which this chapter investigates.

The *carnettisti* represented a driving force in the late 1950s to 1960s Italian fashion system, and my exploration of their role shows how textiles and their commercialisation had a greater relevance than previously acknowledged in the literature. This chapter explores the role of the *carnettisti*, from a position of relevance and prestige at the beginning of the 1960s, to a deep crisis at the beginning of 1970s that led to profound changes in their role and visibility.

In fact, the role and functions of the *carnettisti* have deep historical roots. A similar function to the *carnettisti* was performed by the *merchants merciers* during the French *Ancien Régime*. According to historian Carolyn Sargentson, the *merchand merciers* played a crucial role in the French luxury market in late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mainly marketing 'imported and exotic goods, fashionable and novelty items'.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the *carnettisti*, the *merchants* were prohibited from manufacturing, and their main strength was in marketing. The *merchand mercier's* history goes back as far as the twelfth century. By the fourteenth century their trade focused on silks, and by the late-seventeenth century their trading practice became capital-intensive. Although they were not

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<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Sargentson, 'The Manufacture and Marketing of Luxury Goods: The Marchands Merciers of Late 17th and 18th Century Paris', in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in Ancien Régime Paris: Studies in the History*, ed. by Anthony Turner Robert Fox (1998), pp.99-137 (p.99).

allowed to manufacture, the *merciers* could finish products. This practice enabled them to offer a high variation of products, and Sargentson explains that ‘such flexibility in the finishing process is typical of luxury production, producing a high degree of variation and individuality, association of novelty and fashion and a significant element of consumer choice’.<sup>2</sup> These characteristics of capital, luxury, variety and trend, as we will see, had much in common with the *carnettisti*.

Italian textile historian Chiara Buss believes that the role of the *carnettista* started in France in the mid-1800s and was a progressive mutation of the figure of the wholesaler. She defines the *carnettista* as an intermediary between the manufacturer and retailers or fashion houses, who offered an added service of ‘selecting from each season’s vast production those fabrics which, because of their pattern, weave and colour, will best represent the ‘latest fashion’’. The *carnettisti* displayed their selection in a pattern-book, called *carnet*, from which they could work out their orders. Amongst this earliest type of *carnettista* was the Parisian firm Claude Frères who supplied Lyon silks internationally, combining them with the allure of Paris haute couture.<sup>3</sup> Firms continued to trade in similar ways for many decades: Brenda Azario cites as a much later example the French Pierre Besson, a supplier of textile for haute couture active in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>4</sup> This name, as Figure 37 shows, was included in an advertisement in *Vogue Italia* associated with the French designer Givenchy and the textile manufacturer Corisia.<sup>5</sup>

Anecdotal evidence suggests that similar figures to *carnettisti* existed outside Italy and France, at least in the 1960s. Franco de Felice, a former sales representative for the Como-based silk manufacturer Clerici Tessuti, states that *carnettisti* were also present in this decade in Belgium, Holland and England, and Brenda Azario remembers *carnettisti* in Spain in the same period too.<sup>6</sup>

The section that follows examines in-depth the general characteristics of the Italian *carnettisti*. This offers a background to analyse the development of one *carnettista* company in particular, Nattier.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> *Silk : The 1900's in Como*, ed. by Chiara Buss (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2001), p.11.

<sup>4</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> In *Vogue Italia* his name is still present at least till 1971.

<sup>6</sup> Franco De Felice interview with the author, 25 May 2016; Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

## *Carnettisti* in Italy

Especially after World War II, the *carnettista* in Italy was not only selecting for their catalogue from existing production but actively setting up their own manufacturing company, called first a 'studio', then more generically, *seteria* (silk mill). This shift towards production widened the range of services they could offer. In this setting, some *carnettisti* designed their own silks, either with the aid of designers within the firm or by outsourcing the textile drawings to professional textile design studios. These were then manufactured by external weaving factories or home-weavers, and/or printed by printing workshops.<sup>7</sup>

Some of these companies developed beyond the *carnettista* phase to become manufacturers, such as the companies Mantero and Ratti who became major producers of Como silks. This probably happened because they found it more profitable to invest into production, or because they had at their disposal larger capital to invest in more expensive machinery. Other *carnettisti*, such as Lucchini, Sisan, and Gandini, maintained their 'stylistic' role, more attuned with the selection and forecasting side of the business. In this role, they became better-known than the producers that made their textiles.<sup>8</sup> Some *carnettista* companies became "converters", a type of operator who could either totally plan and design the collection of fabrics, or simply select already manufactured products. The same degree of differentiation happened to manufacturers. Some simply produced items instructed by designers or converters, while others developed their own collections to be offered to buyers.

Distinctions amongst these various players were further complicated because all the companies in the silk sector used the name *seterie* (silk mills) whether they were physically producing silk or simply selecting a carnet of silks from manufacturers. Furthermore, when these companies were advertising their products, they all used indiscriminately the formula 'fabric by'.<sup>9</sup> Distinguishing between textile producers, converters, *carnettisti* and wholesalers, when they use very similar names, is very complicated and it might seem superfluous. However, as Buss declares, 'it is essential to make this identification in order to understand where a piece of silk with all its connotation came

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<sup>7</sup> Buss, *Silk*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Buss, *Silk*, p. 12, note 8, copied here: 'The Lucchini firm was already active in Milan in 1831 in the sale of fabrics and garments made according to pattern. Since 1950 it has been a converter, supplying fabrics for the Italian and French high fashion industries. The Gandini firm, after successfully working as *carnettisti* in Milan from 1925, became a firm of converters in 1962. They supply fabrics for the French, Italian and U.S. high fashion industries'.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

from' and also to understand the structure of the Italian fashion industry, and how these different actors shaped it.<sup>10</sup> Buss specifically reconstructs the role of the *carnettista* in the Como area, a region traditionally dominated by silk production. However, the *carnettisti* were also active in other sectors, such as wool production.

In Italy, the names of *carnettisti* first appeared in the press around the 1950s and by 1959 they jointly sponsored a ball in Florence's Boboli Gardens in honour of the buyers at the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Sala Bianca* fashion shows.<sup>11</sup> Their involvement in this important event reveals their status at the time, their economic ability and their strategic positioning within Giorgini's enterprise. In 1958, the year of foundation of CNMI, the *carnettisti* together with textile manufacturers, centres of fashion, chambers of commerce from associated cities, and representatives of the high fashion houses, all became associates of the CNMI and they were represented in the board meetings, in the board of directors and in the study commissions.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the *carnettisti* were part of such an important association from the day of its inception demonstrates that already these little-known players in the market had already established their role and its centrality by the late 1950s.

De Felice recalled that the silk mills and the silk printers' roles developed at the same time. He remembered that in the 1960s many silk producers started making their own printed silks. In his interview, De Felice often calls these companies 'weavers' because at the time they were mainly weaving silk and not designing, finishing or distributing it. A few had their own printing facilities within the factories and many subcontracted to other producers. Often the designs for the patterns came from the style offices (*uffici stile*) within the silk mills, which acquired them from external design studios. At that time, the profession of the pattern designer was external to the silk manufacturer, whereas nowadays it has been incorporated. De Felice explains that around twelve girls were employed in each of these design studios to paint and design patterns. They were coordinated by a head designer, who would tour the world with files containing hundreds of drawings on paper with various patterns, in order to sell them to silk manufacturers. The companies Boggia, Spadaccini and Gualdo Porro, an independent studio for woven silk design, were some of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Rosina, 'Como Printed Silk', p. 77: The name of the *carnettista* Lucchini for example was already present in 1947 in the magazine *Bellezza*; Relazione della XVIII presentazione di Moda 20-24 Luglio 1959, G. B. Giorgini/Moda/XVIII/4 Manifestazioni Luglio 1959, FSA, G.B. Giorgini Archive, uncatalogued folder ex 92.

<sup>12</sup> 'Camera Nazionale della Moda', [n.d.], p. 3, CNMI, folder 2, file 1.

names in the Como area.<sup>13</sup> New drawings were developed each season and were priced at around two hundred and fifty thousand lire each. Each drawing was unique and once purchased it became exclusive to the buyer, and could not be reproduced by others.<sup>14</sup> After selecting the drawings, the silk mill commissioned an external engraver to translate the initial patterns into a screen that was then sent directly to an external printer.<sup>15</sup> The weaver's style office, in contact with the printer, tested colours on small pieces of textile, to create printed proofs ('maquettes'). Once the final print, the *pezza tipo*, was approved, the whole production, including variations and at least seven colourways, could start. The final printed collection consisted of around fifty or sixty designs that together with block colour fabrics and jacquards completed the seasonal collection of a silk mill. This network of small, highly-specialised, often family-run companies, all working together in synergy to produce one final product, has been defined as *distretti industriali* (industrial districts). The *distretti industriali* have been heralded as the distinctive characteristic of the Italian industrial system and basis of the success of the 'Made in Italy' label in the 1980s, as we will see more in detail in Chapter Five.<sup>16</sup>

De Felice believes that, in the post-war period, the textile producers were not very important strategically: they simply manufactured textiles, while the wholesalers/*carnettisti*, with their communication strategies, oversaw the commercialisation and distribution of the final products, and often directed the weavers by commissioning specific types of textiles. De Felice pinpoints the distinction that, although the wholesalers and the *carnettisti* had a similar role, their clientele was different: the wholesalers had a much more ordinary clientele, while the *carnettisti* supplied the higher end of the sartorial clientele and presented their products with photographs and special editions that increased their desirability. The *carnettisti* were not only salesmen. They also invested substantial capital because, as Azario recalls, they had to buy the full bolt of fabric produced by the manufacturers. This represented an advantage for the producers as it guaranteed that their products were sold without having to worry about the distribution.<sup>17</sup> The *carnettisti*, as Sarti explains,

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<sup>13</sup> Francina Chiara, 'An Outlining of Index of Companies', in *Silk : The 1900's in Como* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2001) pp. 332-341, (p. 338). Interview with Franco De Felice with author, 25 May 2016 in Appendix 1.

<sup>14</sup> Franco De Felice interview with author, 25 May 2016 in Appendix 1.

<sup>15</sup> De Felice highlights that the engravers were always external, because no weaver was equipped with this type of internal department. Franco De Felice interview with author, 25 May 2016 in Appendix 1.

<sup>16</sup> Merlo, *Moda Italiana*, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

presented the fabrics to dressmakers and couturiers, cut the lengths of textiles ordered and finally distributed them.<sup>18</sup>

While in the 1950s the wholesaler/*carnettista* was considered the *deus ex machina* of the textile operation, the silk producers were often small family enterprises, awaiting orders from the *carnettisti*.<sup>19</sup> Azario agrees that the manufacturers produced without any sense of direction, as they were simply making what people asked them to. The *carnettisti*'s role in directing style had a direct impact on production. Their function was to give the textile an identity, what we would call nowadays a brand identity. For example, a Nattier fabric would be associated with quality, bold colours and modern design.<sup>20</sup>

Sarti confirms that the wool producers were considered simply as mechanical weavers of the textiles, with no ambitions of being identified as creative 'authors'. It was the *carnettisti*, with their sophisticated approach, who were more oriented to the presentation and commercialisation of the products. While these roles were distinct, there was also a dialogue between producer and *carnettista* about what products to develop. Decisions were taken because either a couturier had expressed interest in a specific fabric, or because they had seen a fabric in Paris which they wanted to be reproduced. Sarti confirms that textile mills and *carnettisti* worked together, and were not competitors.<sup>21</sup>

This intermediating role meant that the *carnettisti* needed to interpret how each textile could be commercialised, and to what kind of clientele. For example, if a textile with a specific design was published in a magazine as used in a couturier's model, this increased its visibility and encouraged more dressmakers to order the same fabric.

Rosina, however, prefers to translate the term *carnettista* as 'converter and distributor', highlighting their role in choosing the fabrics that met the 'mood' of the season from silk mills they were in contact with. They therefore made what she defines as a 'collection of collections' branded as their own, which could help the couturiers navigate the massive seasonal production. As seen above, they became increasingly influential towards the end of the 1950s, and Rosina believes this was due to their ability to fulfil the needs and the demands of fashion houses and dressmakers thanks to their position as intermediaries between the manufacturers and the consumers. This included their

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<sup>18</sup> Roberto Sarti interview with the author, 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>19</sup> Franco De Felice interview with author, 25 May 2016 in Appendix 1.

<sup>20</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>21</sup> Roberto Sarti interview with the author, 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1.

competence to pre-select from a vast range of fabrics and therefore save their clients the time to view and negotiate with too many producers.<sup>22</sup> Although many of the *carnettisti* did not have their own weaving, printing or design studios, they became the virtual producers of fabrics, so much so that they marked them with their names on the selvedge and are accredited in fashion editorials and advertisements near the name of the couturier.<sup>23</sup>

In the post-war period, the term *carnettista* was widely recognised and used in everyday fashion language and official reports. Nowadays it is very obscure and almost no longer in use. This is probably due first of all to the disappearance of such companies from the system and the evolution of some of them, such as Lucchini, into different realms.

As we have seen, the term *carnettista* has been translated in many different ways, as wholesaler, distributor, converter and also sometimes as silk mill. In this chapter, the term *carnettista* follows the more general set of meanings used by the industry in 1960s, the decade of interest here. It stands for a group of companies with a spectrum of functions beyond mere textile production; a spectrum including converters and wholesalers. CNMI did not distinguish amongst them even if they performed slightly different functions. As seen below, they were grouped together under the official name of *Assortitori Tessuti Novità* (Sorters of New Textiles), but they continued to be called *carnettisti* in correspondences and amongst the industry specialists.<sup>24</sup> The spectrum ranged from *carnettista* companies turned converters, such as Gandini, to Nattier, which was a textile-producing company that doubled up as its own *carnettista*.

#### *The Assortitori Tessuti Novità (Sorter of New Textiles)*

In May 1965 an exchange of letters between Ferdinando Chiri, the spokesman for eight *carnettisti*, and Amos Ciabattoni from the CNMI, demonstrate the *carnettisti*'s desire to establish a recognised body, *Assortitori Tessuti Novità* (Sorters of New Textiles), that could protect their 'elevated category of textile sale'.<sup>25</sup> In response, CNMI asks them to draw up a statute that would define their role and would regulate the acceptance of other companies that wanted to be part of the new group.<sup>26</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Rosina, *Como Printed Silk*, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> By 1965 the *Assortitori Tessuti Novità* were in total fourteen and they were mainly based in Milan, with a few in Turin and one in Rome. 'Elenco assortitori tessuti novità', 23 September 1965, CNMI, Folder 5, file 2.

<sup>25</sup> The *carnettisti* who started this group were the following: Satam, Sassi, Sanet, Gandini, Start, Lucchini, Poggio, and Chiri; Letter 'Inserimento in seno alla Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana quale Gruppo qualificato', 13 May 1965, CNMI, folder 13, file 10.

<sup>26</sup> Letter 15 May 1965, CNMI, folder 13, file 10.

creation of a register of 'approved' companies was, in CNMI's view, a way to establish a more direct rapport between the *carnettisti* and high-fashion creators.

The rules however, remained quite vague. The companies eligible to be part of this register had to fulfil four characteristics: they had to be enrolled at the *Camera di Commercio* (Chamber of Commerce); they had to have mainly business with high-fashion dressmakers and couturiers at a commercial and national level; they had to present a selection of new textiles with a carnet or pattern book at least twice a year to the creators of high fashion; and finally, they should not have in their collection copies of other Italian or foreign textiles belonging to other *Assortitori*.

Not everybody agreed with the proposed rules and at least one letter details some remonstrations. The 1965 letter from Walter Pession to Ferdinando Chiri highlights some of the problems with these regulations. Pession is especially concerned with the non-copy clause and with the choice of name for the new body, believing that the name *carnettisti* would have been much more recognisable and familiar than *assortitori*.<sup>27</sup> Despite the different opinions, the CNMI established the register of the *Assortitori Tessuti Novità* with an official document dated 9 October 1965, and later published a full-page advertisement in *Linea Italiana* with all the names of the companies in the sector (as seen in Figure 38).<sup>28</sup>

Until the set-up of an official body, the *carnettisti* had been free from a strict organisational structure and their role was mainly unknown to the general public. However, from the mid-1960s, the names of *carnettisti* such as Satam, Gandini, and Nattier started appearing more prominently. National and international fashion magazines such as *Novità*, *WWD*, *Vogue US*, and later on, *Vogue Italia* mentioned *carnettisti* in editorials, captions and articles, to identify the provenance of the fabrics. The text accompanying the images did not normally make a distinction between textile manufacturer and *carnettista*, as can be seen in the caption of Figure 31 that opened this section.

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<sup>27</sup> Letter from Walter Pession to Ferdinando Chiri, 31 May 1965, CNMI, folder 31, file 4.

<sup>28</sup> 'Verbale della riunione per la costituzione del gruppo 'Assortitori tessuti novità', 9 October 1965, CNMI, folder 10, file 3 and Advertisement *Assortitori Tessuti Novità*, in *Linea Italiana*, Spring- Summer, 1969, [n.p.].

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 38. Advertisement Assortitori Tessuti Novità.  
Source: Linea Italiana, Spring-Summer, 1969 (n. p.).*

Furthermore, from around 1966, a number of full pages of mainly black-and-white advertisement started to appear in *Vogue Italia* showcasing the *carnettisti*.<sup>29</sup>

The *carnettista* Bruno Sassi's advertisement in *Vogue Italia* in Figure 39 shows how his name was associated with *tessuti novità* (new fabrics), *seterie* (silk mills) and *lanerie* (wool mills), making it very difficult for the general public to understand the difference between the producers and the *carnettista*. This lack of clarity was probably not perceived as a problem and only the industry specialists knew the differentiation amongst the real producer and the *carnettista*. For the magazine's readers, the important message was that the name associated with the fabric was synonymous with quality and innovation.

The black and white image also reveals a hierarchy between the *carnettisti* and fashion designers. The *carnettista* Bruno Sassi's name is prominently placed at the upper-left corner of the page, with the writing even overlapping the image of the model. The name of the couturier Lancetti is only indicated after the address and telephone number of the *carnettista*. The font choice and its size are also telling of the companies' importance. Bruno Sassi's logo is a signature, rather than a plain capital letter font as for the couturier. The *carnettista* in this instance is seen as the creator, who, like an artist, signs the product of its labour: sourcing and commissioning the fabric, the primary material of fashion.<sup>30</sup> The caption continues by mostly describing the fabric type and its colour, rather than lingering on the design characteristics of the day suit. From this analysis it is clear that the material, rather than the design, is given priority in this instance. The role of the textile however is not evident at first glance, and the general public would still probably see fashion as the protagonist here. The subtlety of the message testifies to the technical role of the *carnettisti*, often far from the limelight. This advert also had a double aim: to showcase the final product, fashion, while the real protagonist of the page was supposed to be an obscure intermediary such as the *carnettista*.

This type of page was not an isolated occurrence and similar adverts were featured in *Vogue Italia* in the mid-to-late 1960s. The images in Figure 40 are similar in their composition, colour scheme and caption hierarchy. They demonstrate what the *carnettisti* wanted to be known for and associated with. From the almost-anonymity of their name buried in the captions of fashion magazines, as seen in this chapter's opening picture, they emerged with full-page

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<sup>29</sup> *Vogue Italia*, the new Condé Nast magazine, was born in November 1965 with a first issue titled both *Novità* and *Vogue*, priced at 500 lire. It featured the model Benedetta Barzini, photographed by Gianpaolo Barbieri only adorned with Bulgari jewels.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Bolton in *Fashion and Modernity* p. 147, describes how couturiers in France used signature to attest themselves at the beginning of twentieth century.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 39. Bruno Sassi and Lancetti advertisement.  
Source: Vogue Italia, March 1967, p. 66.*

images, which represented also an important monetary investment. When shown these pages, Brenda Azario, owner of the *carnettista* Nattier, was convinced that this type of full-page advertisement would have been paid for by the *carnettista*.<sup>31</sup> In addition to paying the magazine, the *carnettista* also had to pay the couturier, as revealed in a CNMI document which indicated that couturiers should request a payment of 200,000 lire when advertising one of their models with producers of high-fashion textile and textile manufacturers.<sup>32</sup>

These images showed female models shot in black and white on a neutral background, standing, walking or posing wearing fashionable high-fashion garments. The only text information emerging from the monochrome pages were the name of the *carnettista*, sometimes with their addresses and telephone numbers and the name of the couturiers. The textile, although it was the main product *carnettisti* were handling, was not necessarily in the foreground and explicitly highlighted in the image. The focus appeared to be the connection to the final products, the garments, and their desirability and fashionability.<sup>33</sup> These adverts functioned as a manifesto of the *carnettista*: they stated their role and made more explicit the connection between high-quality textile and high fashion. Although featuring different *carnettisti* and couturiers, these pages have in common the same language and communication strategy.

From the above analysis, we can conclude that the *carnettisti* offered a varied and complex service and were not acting as a mere intermediary. Firstly, their position of connection between manufacturers and dressmakers offered a link between two industries which often did not have a direct contact. The *carnettisti* were able to define styles and trends for each season and commission products from the manufacturers, thanks to their knowledge of the needs of the couturiers and dressmakers, and their markets; and equally their knowledge of the textile producer's side of the business.

During the 1960s fabric trends were an important side of the fashion business, and trade magazines such as *WWD* reported on them on a regular basis. For example, an article in the February 1963 issue of *WWD* described all types of fabrics used in the Paris haute couture

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<sup>31</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Pietro Parizio to the associates, 30 November 1967, CNMI, folder 4, file 2.

<sup>33</sup> Roberto Sarti, in his interview with author, 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1, states his belief that the textile alone was nothing and that it needed the couturiers for the textile to come alive.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 40. Top right: Fabiani and Gandini advertisement; bottom left: Bruno Sassi advertisement; bottom right: SISAN advertisement; top left: Sanet and Antonelli advertisement.*

*Sources: Top right: Vogue Italia, March 1969, p. 189; bottom left: Vogue Italia, March 1968, p. 117; bottom right: Vogue Italia, March 1969, p. 192; top left: Vogue Italia, September 1966, p. 27.*

shows from linens, to woollens to silks, together with names of the producers and *carnettisti*, such as Nattier and Forneris.<sup>34</sup>

The *carnettisti* also acted as representatives of the manufacturers, providing branding and marketing, and thereby offering a face to an otherwise anonymous product. Furthermore, the *carnettisti* bore the cost of distribution around Italy and abroad through their national and international offices. This cost included the overheads for a wholesale stock room in which to cut the fabric ordered before distribution. These infrastructures demanded an investment of capital, and the acquisition of large stock involved further risk-taking.

These characteristics depict the *carnettista* as a flexible figure able to communicate effectively with technical skilled people in production; to answer to the demand of couturiers offering solutions to their requests, and to promote, distribute and market an otherwise anonymous product such as a textile and transform it into a luxury and exclusive item.

#### Nattier

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the *carnettisti* played an important role in the Italian fashion system, especially in the 1960s. In this context, investigating the story of Nattier – one of Italy's most successful *carnettisti* during the 1960s – exposes the relationship between Italian textile manufacturers and couturiers/dressmakers and exemplifies ways in which taste and materials used in the making of Italian fashion were produced, selected and commercialised.

The short-lived Nattier company (1962-1972), epitomised the experimental, young and courageous attitude typical of the 1960s-economic boom in Italy and its rapid decline from the beginning of the turmoil of the *anni di piombo* (years of lead). An examination of Nattier's history exposes mechanisms and partnerships essential to understand the fashion system of this decade. For example, the strict collaboration between Nattier and high fashion designers (such as in the case of Fabiani striped suit in the next section), marketing strategies used, the type of advertisements and relationships with clients.

The story of Nattier starts in the Piedmont region in Northern Italy, where the Azario family owed a textile company called Litex, *Lanificio Italiano Export* (Italian Wool Mill Export) in Strambino, near Turin. The family business was established by Vittorio Azario's grandfather in the 1920s and it only initially produced average-quality tweed for the Italian men's mass clothing industry. Vittorio Azario was trained at the Biella Textile School and in the late 1950s took over the family business.

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<sup>34</sup> Marie Christine Martin Guyot, 'Spring Fabrics in Paris', *Women's Wear Daily*, 6 February 1963, p. 48.

In 1959 Azario and his then fiancée, Brenda Tandy (later Brenda Azario) an Englishwoman who had a job as a radio announcer, began producing women's fabrics. According to Brenda Azario's 1980s recollection, Vittorio Azario did not think the production of ordinary men's fabrics would keep his interest and he thought that 'for a factory of our size, there was only one way to go and that was for the top'. The later decision to undertake men's or women's business was probably taken 'on the roll of a dice'.<sup>35</sup> So, from 1959, they specialised in wool fabrics for womenswear.<sup>36</sup> Brenda Azario recalls in a 2013 interview that, at that time, 'it was unusual for textile manufacturers to be in direct contact with fashion houses'.<sup>37</sup> Since the market was dominated by fabric distributors and *carnettisti*, the Azarios tried to sell their new products to the leading Italian *carnettisti*, such as Satam, Sassi, Gandini and Bises – without much success. According to Brenda Azario, these *carnettisti* preferred to buy from manufacturers that were already selling to French haute couture houses and enjoyed their 'stamp of approval'.<sup>38</sup> This attitude revealed a well-established mode of collaboration in which links were created in the past and newcomers were not easily accepted.

While Litex and the Azarios were struggling to find recognition, Rodier was a well-known Paris textile manufacturer founded in 1852 that worked with many couturiers, such as Poiret, Chanel and Dior. When Rodier closed down in 1962, the Azarios bought part of the company's archive and hired one of its former employees, Roger Dietsch, a so-called 'placier', a key man in the business who had the role of getting the fabrics into the couture houses. In a period when business was made in person and agents established long lasting relationship with designers and couturiers, a man like Dietsch was key to the development of a relationship with French couturiers and he acted as a consultant for the Azarios. Dietsch also helped to bring on board other experts, such as the so-called 'loom fixers', technicians able to modify the old looms to produce complex structures and special design elements.<sup>39</sup>

In 1961 the Azarios, encouraged by sales achieved in America, decided to open their own carnet with the French name Nattier, that would only distribute the vanguard women's fabrics produced in

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<sup>35</sup> Unpublished notes from a lecture given by Brenda Azario titled 'Fashion 1900 to 1982' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, 29 March 1982, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> Brenda Tandy and Vittorio Azario married in 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Brenda Azario interviews with the author, 18<sup>th</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Azario, 'Fashion 1900 to 1982', p. 5 and interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

Italy by Litex, and that would mainly be associated with couture. The Azarios' decision to become *carnettisti* acknowledged the importance and position this sector of the business had at the time.

Nattier became the name behind the bold, inventive fabrics mainly sold to the couture houses of Italy and France, and 'Litex manufactured both the luxury fabrics and the less expensive textiles destined for a less-specialized market'.<sup>40</sup> For the first years of business the Italian owners remained in the shadow of the French name, putting French representatives in charge, and not revealing the real 'nationality' of their fabrics. The reason for this concealment was because 'there was a great resistance to these Italians knocking on doors'.<sup>41</sup> At first they used the Parisian distributors/*carnettista* Pierre Besson, but they later opened their own Nattier office in 220 Rue Rivoli, Paris.

In the 1960s the Azarios bought several other archives of French textile companies that were closing down. Part of the Nattier archive of historical sample books is today conserved in the private archive of Cristina Azario, one of the daughters of Brenda and Vittorio. A close analysis of this archive established the presence of several French textile sample books dated from the late 1880s to the early 1930s, amongst them one book dated 1930s with Rodier textile samples (Figure 41). In a recent interview, Brenda Azario explains how many of the techniques and the effects they found in the French sample books inspired many Nattier textile 'innovations' in the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> As Azario stated in a talk she gave at the V&A in 1982: 'we started by emulating others'.<sup>43</sup>

Back in Piedmont, Vittorio was responsible for manufacturing. According to the English textile and fashion trade magazine *Trends Fabrics and Fashion*, in 1966, at the height of Nattier's success, Vittorio Azario was described as a 'superb technician' who created double, triple and even quadruple layer gabardines. Vittorio, with the aid of his technicians, studied the structure of the oldest fabrics, yarn and special effects of the 1920s and 1930s and tried to emulate them.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Savi, 'Nattier', p. 257.

<sup>41</sup> Azario, 'Fashion 1900 to 1982', p.3.

<sup>42</sup> Brenda Azario interview with author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>43</sup> Azario, 'Fashion 1900 to 1982', p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Brenda Azario interview with author, 18 January and 5 July 2013.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 41. Rodier samples, (1930s).*

*Source: personal photograph by the author (1 November 2016), Book M, n. p., Cristina Azario Archive, New York.*

In her interview, Brenda expresses the belief that Vittorio's technical knowledge, his ability to exploit the old machinery's capabilities and his risk-taking made it possible for Nattier to reform the look of fashion fabrics in the 1960s. In Brenda's words: 'we innovated by breaking the rules'; her husband, although warned by its workers of the impossibility of some of his requests, wanted to experiment and he would try different combinations directly on the machines.<sup>45</sup> Brenda also recognises that in order to innovate, they relied on the skills and knowledge of very experienced textile workers. For example, although at Litex they did not do a lot of yarn spinning, they specialised in twisting and finishing of the fabrics.

In yarn, one is blessed in Italy to have around a lot of other producers, and I remember that one of our great successes was a tweed for which we used old English spinning machinery lying around in Italy, lying idle when we found it. It was a stub yarn, where, because the machinery was old, the thick was thicker and the thin was thinner. You got regularity that you cannot get on modern machinery, and that gave a character to our fabrics that we didn't have to worry about anyone copying it, they were miles away from it.<sup>46</sup>

Nattier was encouraged by customer demand also to invest in research and experimentation. Brenda recalls how customers did not want cheaper fabrics, they wanted better, and the quality was made to measure and made to last.<sup>47</sup>

In relation to textile production, Nattier's innovations included a brushed mohair bouclé yarn and a triple gabardine which, according to Brenda, revolutionised the way garments were made. The fabrics available until then were made with lining and interlining and these internal constructions caused flaws in the external appearance of the textile. The French designer Andre Courrèges asked Vittorio Azario to produce a textile that could be sculpted and that had equal strength in each direction. This is how Nattier started to experiment and produce triple and later quadruple gabardine. Weighing up to eight hundred grams per metre, these fabrics were very thick and stable and did not require internal padding. They started first with the plain fabrics and then they continued by adding patterns to them, printing on them and also embroidering and brushing them. The name Nattier became synonymous with these multi-layered gabardines so heavily used in 1960s sculptural dresses both in Italian and abroad, as seen for example in the Ungaro outfit in Figure 42.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Azario, 'Fashion 1900 to 1982', p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Savi, 'Nattier', p. 257.

<sup>48</sup> Azario, 'Fashion 1900 to 1982', p. 3 and interviews with author 18 January and 5 July 2013.

While Vittorio supervised the technical side of manufacturing, Brenda was the face of the business. She oversaw sales and one of her strategies was to always wear couture garments made from Nattier fabrics. This included a wool gabardine light blue and green striped 1966 Ungaro outfit matching the ones worn by her two daughters (Figure 42). A significant part of her job was to open new markets and acquire new clients. At the height of Nattier's success, she was responsible for 60 percent of the sales.<sup>49</sup> Her marketing strategy was based on a one-to-one approach. She recalled how she would go to a new city such as Berlin, Barcelona or Tokyo. Having researched fashion and textile magazines, she knew which brands and shops to visit. She might also decide 'in the moment', while she was on the high street, on the basis of the type of products a shop had in its windows. She would walk in, ask to see the manager, and when encouraged to show what she was selling she would simply reply 'what I am wearing'. She believed that the trick was very effective, since nobody refused to see her and discuss further business.<sup>50</sup> Azario's schedule was very hectic: she used to take a plane on Monday and come back on Friday night. In this way, she would visit all possible markets in Europe and Australia that could buy their fabrics. However, this was only one part of the business. Many of Nattier's clients were couturiers and small dressmakers, as will be analysed in the next section of this chapter.

By the mid-1960s Nattier was a very successful enterprise and there was no further need to hide the identity of the Italian owner. Strong from their success, Brenda and Vittorio were now featured in articles in English magazines such as *Trends Fabric and Fashion*.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in 1967 one of their fabric designs was featured on the cover of the March issue of the important English trade and export magazine *The Ambassador* (Figure 43).

The company expanded and had up to two hundred employees. It opened offices in New York and contracted representatives as far afield as Beirut and Japan. Nattier's US presence was key, and the company was supplying to the most important American manufacturers of the time, such as Ben Zuckerman and Originala, and also to designers such as Geoffrey Beene and Oscar de la Renta.

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<sup>49</sup> Azario, 'Fashion 1900 to 1982', p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Savi, 'Nattier', p. 257.

<sup>51</sup> 'Design Trendsetters. Azario Architect of Fabric', *Trends Fabrics and Fashion*, June 1966, number 1, p. 29.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 42. Brenda Azario with her two daughters wearing matching Ungaro outfits, (1966).  
Source: The Glamour of Italian Fashion Since 1945, p. 257.*

The names of both Litex and Nattier were featured in editorials in many issues of *Vogue US* and *Vogue Italia*. For example, Litex was featured on the *Vogue US* cover in August 1963, depicting a ready-to-wear Ben Zuckerman suit made with a Litex wool textile, as seen in Figure 44.<sup>52</sup>

In the early 1960s the Neiman Marcus department store also became a client and the owner himself was the first to ask the Azarios to advertise pages in *Vogue US*.<sup>53</sup> The result was an Italian issue in 1960 that saw Litex advertised in conjunction with the car manufacture Fiat, liquor producer Strega, airline Alitalia and Italian couturiers such as Pucci, Sorelle Fontana and Fabiani. The collaboration with such important Italian companies marked a crucial moment for the Azarios' visibility and success.

The occasion of such extensive coverage was the 'Italian Fortnights or at Neiman Marcus' a two-week programme of events and performances at the Dallas department store. Attractions included a charity ball honouring the Italian ambassador, an Italian film festival, a concert of Baroque Music on Stradivarius instruments and even Italian police to direct traffic. In conjunction with the exhibitions at the department store, which included amongst many other things, Italian sculpture, Capacci and Lucenti ceramics, Fiat cars and Fanchi guns, special Italian exhibitions were organised around town in the city museums, such as *New Generation of*

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<sup>52</sup> *Vogue US*, Cover, August 1963.

<sup>53</sup> Savi, 'Nattier', p. 257.

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*Figure 43. Nattier Textile on Ambassador cover page.*  
*Source: Ambassador, March 1967.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 44. Suit by Ben Zuckerman, of Litex wool tweed.*  
*Source: Vogue US, Cover, 15 August 1963.*

*Italian Artists* at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts and *Italian Sculpture Show* at the Museum of Contemporary Craft.

The eight-page 1960 *Vogue US* advertisement is titled 'Italy via Neiman-Marcus'. It depicts in black-and-white images of Italian life, in which models wearing Italian fashion ride Fiat cars, with Italian cities and their historic buildings as backdrop. The atmosphere in these shots is refined and classic, very different from the way in which Italy was depicted in the images at the beginning of Part Two.

Azario's Litex is described: 'LITEX of Torino, designers and weavers of couturier textiles, creates a trend-setting sculpture wool and mohair fabric... selected by CAPUCCI for his town and travel suit'. Evidently the emphasis here, as in the *carrettisti's* advertisement previously analysed, is on the fabric and the producer rather than on the name of the couturier, as seen in Figure 45.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 45. Neiman-Marcus advertisement featuring LITEX.*  
*Source: Vogue US, 1 October 1960, p. 50.*

### *Distribution of Textiles in the 1960s*

This section uses extensive archival material, and the recollection of Brenda Azario, to understand the market destinations for the products that the *carnettisti* commissioned and bought from Italian mills scattered around the country. The detailed recollection that follows, generated by a Nattier textile employed in the making of an *alta moda* red and blue striped suit by Alberto Fabiani (Figure 47), observes how the textile was further advertised and used by other segments of fashion production.

This system worked like a pyramid. At the top was *alta moda*, with few clients, therefore absorbing few metres of fabric. This section follows the path of one fabric as it sold in progressively larger quantities to dressmakers, textile retailers and department stores associated with a wider middle-range customer base. This demonstrates how, although *alta moda* bestowed the kudos and glamour to the textiles commissioned by the *carnettisti*, its limited market did not guarantee the sales of enough metres to cover the expenses of such exclusive textile production. Such a precise analysis is important because it acknowledges the presence of layers of fashion production (or reproduction) that although not as recognised and studied by the literature, equally contributed to the development and survival of the system of distribution and consumption of Italian textiles during the 1960s.

#### The journey of a textile: a Fabiani striped ensemble

Brenda Azario recalls how she would target big couturiers in both France and Italy as possible clients for Nattier fabrics. For example, she used to visit the master couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga in Paris, and she would bring with her a suitcase with large textile samples of circa half a metre that could be easily examined and touched to feel the way they would drape (a similar sample by Bruno Sassi in Figure 46).<sup>55</sup> Although both French and Italian couturiers used the same textile suppliers, such as Nattier, even by the 1960s Italian couturiers did not yet have the same status, and the French were considered to be the makers of taste.

Similarly, Mrs Azario would visit Italian couturiers such as Alberto Fabiani. These Italian and French clients, however, would buy only around twenty to fifty metres of a certain fabric because they only produced few items for the catwalk shows. They choose existing fabrics in the collection, or they could request a custom-made design. This would be the result of discussions between the

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<sup>55</sup> No examples of such large samples by Nattier have been found, but a sample by the *carnettista* Bruno Sassi has been found (figure 46).

*carnettista*, who knew what was technically possible to make, and the couturiers. Once the textile was sold, it was used by the couture house to make a specific

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*Figure 46. Bruno Sarti sample fabric, (c. 1960s).*

*Source: personal photography by the author, (22 June 2017), Max Mara Archive, Reggio Emilia.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 47. Alberto Fabiani, dress and jacket (Spring-Summer 1967), wool, Victoria & Albert Museum: T.322 & A-1978.*

*Source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O366035/dress-and-jacket-fabiani-alberto/> [accessed 18 May 2019].*

model that then paraded in the catwalk of the *Sala Bianca* in Palazzo Pitti.<sup>56</sup> An example of such a production is represented by the Alberto Fabiani red-and-blue suit depicted in Figure 47.

The specialised press published reports from the catwalk, as well as also publishing fashion photographs. The caption describing the photograph normally mentioned and described the fabrics, with the textile manufacturer or more often the *carrettista*, as seen in Figure 48, published in the fashion magazine *Amica*. This was a weekly magazine launched in 1962 and associated with the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. It mainly heralded ready-to-wear fashion, although articles on couture fashion were also present. Fashion photographs, such as this one, would appear in press only several months after the deal between the *carrettista* and the couturier, and after the fashion show at Palazzo Pitti. Only if the couturier sold more than one model, which was not always guaranteed, would he or she order more of the same fabric. This system meant that only a very small quantity of fabric was sold to the couturier. The couturier represented a small market, but, as we have seen in the *Vogue* advertisement pages analysed in the previous section, generated good visibility in terms of image for the *carrettista*, and provided kudos for the textiles.

However, the few metres sold could not absorb the cost of production which included setting up the looms and machines and the investment in the research for the product. More metres needed to be sold and, as this chapter goes on to demonstrate, the dressmakers and textile retailers fulfilled these requests.

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<sup>56</sup> Brenda Azario, interview with author, 18<sup>th</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 48. Fabiani ensemble.*  
*Source: Amica, Spring-Summer issue 1967.*

Copying couture: selling fabric to dressmakers

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 49. Nattier sample books, (1960s).*

*Source: personal photograph by the author (18 October 2016), Bauman Books, New York.*

Nattier books like the ones shown in Figure 49 testify how the textile employed in the making of the aforementioned Fabiani suit would have a second life. These volumes, similarly to the ones produced by other *carnettisti*, contain hundreds of pages filled with stamp-sized textile samples. These colourful fabrics are merely identified with a number, and they are often associated with names of couturiers, such as Balenciaga and Fabiani (as seen in the detail of Figure 49). In order to understand the function of these books it is necessary to examine the dressmakers' businesses more in details.

In the 1960s, French couture was still a source of inspiration for Italian dressmakers. Brenda Azario recalled how the Paris and Florence fashion shows came first, then, after about a month, more shows took place in Milan. The *modellista* Rina Modelli showed the French and Italian models she had acquired from the couture fashion shows and sold their equivalent paper patterns or cotton *toile* to the Italian dressmakers.<sup>57</sup> This practice was widespread and Christian Dior himself talked about a system of record keeping in which 'for professional buyers, the file shows whether they purchased the paper pattern, canvas, or the original dresses'.<sup>58</sup>

The pattern maker and dressmaker Enrichetta Pedrini, the owner of Rina Modelli, was one of the few *modelliste* in Italy, together with Guidi in Milan and Ricci in Bologna. Their role was to go to Paris and acquire the exclusive rights to reproduce in Italy some garments, and to sell the *toile* (*tele*) to more than one dressmaker. Exclusivity, together with the right to use the Parisian couturiers' name, was bought at a high price.<sup>59</sup> This is probably the case for the models by Madeleine de Rauch reproduced in the February Issue of *Bellezza* 1952. The captions that accompany the photographs of the French models associate the name of couturier with a garment from Rina Modelli's collection, as seen in Figure 50. According to the fashion journalist Maria Pezzi, Rina had very refined taste, and she bought up to two hundred and fifty models per season in Paris.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The term *modellista* in this period is different from the *modellista* working in clothing production companies in the 1980s as seen in Chapter Six. Nicola White defines the *toile* as 'a cotton reproduction of the original model, bearing the crucial details of cut and finish, but sold at a substantially lower price', White, 'Max Mara', p. 76.

<sup>58</sup> In Palmer, *Couture & Commerce*, p. 45, the author reproduces this quote from Christian Dior, *Talking about Fashion: Christian Dior As Told to Elie Rabourdin and Alice Chavane*, trans Eugenia Sheppard (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1954), p. 106-7. Palmer however has never been able to find the original files.

<sup>59</sup> White, *Max Mara*, p. 76.

<sup>60</sup> Guido Vergani and Maria Pezzi, *Maria Pezzi: Una Vita Dentro La Moda* (Milano: Skira, 1998), p. 10.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 50. A dress by Madeleine Rauch in Rina Modelli's collection.*  
Source: *Bellezza*, February 1952, p. 28.

This system of authorised copying of French couturiers through their drawings and patterns started in the interwar period and continued in the 1950s.<sup>61</sup> An example of drawings reproducing French design is seen in Figure 51. Here a Jaques Fath model is reproduced with all its details, and was sold by Modelli Ricci. Many of these drawings, or *croquis*, have been found in Italian couturiers' ateliers such as Schuberth, Sorelle Fontana and Antonelli.<sup>62</sup>

Fashion historian Gloria Bianchino defines the *croquis* as

design on thin pasteboard, in tempera or water-colour, that faithfully reproduced the original French model and bearing the stylist's name at the bottom, with a few directions for sewing - more often these are merely suggestions for the material. For the most part, the designs are almost identical - as if they were traced - with the female figure always reproduced in the same position, always almost frontally, [...]

On a *croquis*, the design had to be clearly legible for the dressmaker to decipher it, and conventions were codified, such as the use of opaque tempera for heavy materials or very diluted for transparent ones. Often, these designs were shown to perspective clients so that they could choose their model.<sup>63</sup>

This business of copies and French inspiration, however, did not stop in the 1950s with the advent of Giorgini's fashion shows aimed at showcasing only Italian models. It continued at least for the duration of the 1960s, as the drawing in Figure 51 shows. Here a 1960s Jean Patou ensemble, composed of an orange coat and a purple/orange patterned mini-dress, is reproduced in detail providing the dressmaker with three different views, and a description of its construction, in Italian, on the reverse of the page.

In Milan in the 1960s, between five and six hundred dressmakers from every part of Italy flocked every season to Rina Modelli's workshop and salon in the central via Manzoni, at the corner with the fashionable via Montenapoleone.<sup>64</sup> First, in the morning, they bought paper patterns to reproduce in their ateliers for their local clientele, then, in the afternoon, they attended the fashion show where

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<sup>61</sup> According to Butazzi this was started by the Americans, who after the crisis of 1929 and after the introduction of high costume duty for foreign imported goods, started to acquire patterns and the right to reproduce them from the French couturiers. Grazietta Butazzi pp. 12-19 (p. 12)

<sup>62</sup> Bianchino, *Italian Fashion Designing*, p. 17.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Vergani and Pezzi, *Maria Pezzi*, p. 10.

they could see the original models parading. According to the account of a dressmaker from Rimini, Ilva Semprini, the dressmaker could not afford to

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*Figure 51. Drawing by Ricci Modelli of a Fath original design, (1950s).  
Source: personal photograph by the author (20 July 2017), Schubert folder 1950s, Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 52. Italian Drawing of Patou's ensemble, (1960s)*  
*Source: personal photograph by the author, author's private collection.*

buy more than a couple of models as they cost a few million lire. It was also usual for a couple of dressmakers from the same city to buy together up to four models that they would then exchange.<sup>65</sup> In Rina Modelli's account books, the names of couturiers such as Carosa and Curiel have been found alongside those of local seamstresses.<sup>66</sup> This indicates how the business of French copies was not only relegated to local makers, but also to high-end Roman couture houses.

After purchasing patterns or *toiles*, the dressmakers went to Nattier, located a few minutes' walk away from Rina Modelli in their central offices in via Santo Spirito. There, they consulted the sample books and they bought the fabrics corresponding to their paper patterns. In this instance, the fabric was automatically allocated according to the model already purchased. The textile sample surviving in Nattier's book is therefore small, a mere reference, as it does not need to showcase its quality, pattern and feel. Sometimes instead of the sample fabric, only a small photograph is present, as in the case of some of the Ungaro samples in Figure 53.

These books became a record of the Nattier textiles employed in each season. The books were specifically produced to fulfil the dressmaker business, which, according to Azario, was a big source of revenue for a *carnettista* like Nattier. Although they did not sell many metres to each dressmaker, their total number was high enough to represent a very important market outlet for the *carnettista*.<sup>67</sup>

Looking through these books it is noticeable that on some occasions the same textile with the same code was sold to more than one couturier. This was the case for the white and bright green striped fabrics number 2855/63 sold to Lapidus in Paris and Ektor in New York, as shown by two details in Figure 54.

This duplication was not just a coincidence or a mistake, but a normal practice in textile and fashion dealings. A textile, unless bought 'in exclusivity', could be sold to more than one client. Publications like *WWD* would report how a particular Nattier stretch gabardine in Madras colouring, first shown in Italy, was then used by French couturiers like St. Laurent, Balenciaga, Venet and Ricci.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, when a textile was exclusive to one designer this was clearly stated and advertised as in the case of Nattier exclusive to Valentino, Feathers and Flowers seen in Figure 55.

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<sup>65</sup> Tosi Brandi, *Artisti del Quotidiano*, p. 88.

<sup>66</sup> Vergani, *Dictionary*, p. 1066.

<sup>67</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>68</sup> 'Technology in Fashion: Nattier's Triumph', *Women's Wear Daily*, 8 august 1966, p. 25.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 53. Nattier textile samples for Ungaro, (January 1968).*  
*Source: personal photograph by the author (18 October 2016), Bauman Books, New York.*

Although couture was at the forefront of the fashion image, the most profitable sales for Nattier were made in this second stage, when garments were reproduced for a wider public. Couture models would offer visibility and allure to a design and to a fabric, but not all the population could afford the exclusive models.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 54. Nattier sample 2855/63 for Lapidus and for Ektor, (circa 1968).*  
*Source: personal photograph by the author (18 October 2016), Bauman Books, New York.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 55. Feathers and Flowers textile Nattier exclusive to Valentino.*  
*Source: 'Modern Jazz', Women's Wear Daily, 14 February 1967, p. 16.*

## Fabric Shops

A further layer of sale, but not less important for a *carnettista's* fabric, was to the textile retailers or fabric shops. Rosina states that:

In Italy, a country where artisanal traditions had always been very strong, seamstresses and small dressmaking shops survived much longer than elsewhere, encouraging the growth of a large number of draper's shops where it was possible to buy Italian and foreign fabrics by the metre.<sup>69</sup>

The *carnettista* sold their fabric in these kind of shops after six months from the date of the production. This type of business was a common feature on Italian high streets. Rosina believed that the survival of this kind of outlet in Italy, longer than in other countries, was due to Italy's ongoing artisanal tradition and the widespread presence of small ateliers of seamstresses and dressmakers. These businesses had guaranteed the growth of draper's shops where Italian and foreign textiles could be purchased by the metre. These shops were regular features of the main Italian shopping streets, and catered to a large market of tailors and dressmakers who were key producers of clothing at the time. By 1957 an ISTAT (*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* - National Institute of Statistics) study showed the presence in Italy of thirty thousand textile shops.<sup>70</sup>

One of the best-known chains of fabric shops was Galtruccio, which had branches in several Italian cities.<sup>71</sup> As De Felice remembered, the *carnettista* usually added 30 percent to the price of sale of a given textile; and textile retailers such as Galtruccio would then double this price. Such an increase was due to the fact that the retailers were the last links of the chain and if they did not sell, they would be left with the stock unsold.<sup>72</sup> These retail outlets had very nice shops in central locations, like the Galtruccio headquarters in Milan's Piazza Duomo, or Bassetti and Polidori in Rome. The latter company engaged in two types of distribution, one as a wholesaler/*carnettista* and the other one as a retailer.<sup>73</sup> While the visual identity of the *carnettisti* was closely associated with the fashionable final product, retail textile shops like Galtruccio aimed at showcasing their variety of textiles, patterns and quality. This visual emphasis can be seen in the *Vogue Italia* advertisement page in Figure 56. In such shops, consumers could find the striped red and blue Nattier fabric, and thanks to the patterns

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<sup>69</sup> Rosina, 'Textiles', p. 88.

<sup>70</sup> Emanuela Scarpellini, *La Stoffa Dell'Italia : Storia E Cultura Della Moda Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Roma: Laterza, 2017) p.43.

<sup>71</sup> Rosina, 'Textiles', footnote 40, p. 268.

<sup>72</sup> De Felice in interview with author, 25 May 2016, in Appendix 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

published in *Vogue*, similar to the one reproduced in Figure 57, they could commission local dressmakers to reproduce the *alta moda* ensemble.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

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*Figure 57. Fabiani suit, Vogue Pattern packaging, (circa 1967).  
Source: photograph courtesy Enrico Quinto Archive.*

### Textile Designers, Department Stores and Other Outlets

Nattier not only sold textiles manufactured by their own Litex plant. As they catered to designers' needs, they commissioned and produced fabrics that designers requested. Therefore, they collaborated with a variety of textile designers, printers, producers and yarn spinners.

One of their younger clients, the French designer Emanuel Ungaro, requested some fabrics to be designed by his then girlfriend Sonia Knapp, a talented graphic designer. A collaboration started: Knapp designed, Nattier executed with the aid of external printers such as Savinio, Jermi and Bellotti. This is how many of Nattier's most "iconic" printed fabrics were created, such as the wool in dark blue and turquoise with a wavy motif, reproduced in Figures 58 and 59.

The fabric could be then sold to North American department stores, which acquired the exclusive right to reproduce the models; in their turn, they advertised the model in the pages of US *Vogue* (Figure 60).<sup>74</sup> The American market guaranteed the *carnettisti* the sale of many more metres of a textile originally created for a French couturier.

Finally, as the fabric was exclusive to Europe only for six months, Nattier also sold to big Japanese wholesalers such as ITOH, who could buy more metres. This expansion of the market beyond the western borders would allow Nattier to sell more of the fabric that it had invested in producing in the first place; but these sales would also lengthen the fabric's 'life' beyond the season in which was made.

As seen in the journey of the Fabiani-Nattier striped red-and-blue wool, a fabric in the *carnettista's* portfolio could gain second and third lives thanks to its different uses, retail and marketing. Through these practices, 'unique' couture models were made reproducible and their copies, with the same textile quality, would be available for a broader sector of the population. The *carnettisti* were the orchestrators of a complex mechanism linking consumer, producer and designer.

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<sup>74</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1 and '*WWdeadline*', *Women's Wear Daily*, 11 May, 1967, p. 12. 'the success of Ungaro rtw – always the slight flare, lifted waistline, and those splendid Nattier fabrics – is spreading like oil. And yet no one has seen the delivered goods [...] Bonwitt Teller, which has New York exclusivity, is now up to 50 to 60 pieces'.

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 58. Textile designed by Sonia Knapp for Nattier, (c.1968).

Source: personal photograph by the author (18 October 2016), Bauman Books, New York.

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 59. Emanuel Ungaro, coat made with Sonia Knapp wool for Nattier, (1968), wool, The Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology, FIT: 72.112.73, Gift of Rodman A. Heeren.

Source: [http://fashionmuseum.fitnyc.edu/view/objects/asitem/People\\$0040651/1?t:state:flow=a0e9ae90-75b3-4c77-bd56-0a7a4e3449ba](http://fashionmuseum.fitnyc.edu/view/objects/asitem/People$0040651/1?t:state:flow=a0e9ae90-75b3-4c77-bd56-0a7a4e3449ba) [accessed 18 May 2019].

## IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 60. Ungaro - Bonwitt Teller coat with wool designed by Sonia Knapp for Nattier.

Source: Vogue US, 15 September, 1968, p. 114.

*Carnettisti in CNMI: Towards a Codified Role and Crisis*

Towards the end of the 1960s, the *carnettisti*'s existence was being threatened, and within a few years they would either change their nature radically, or disappear. As we have seen, the Italian fashion market was changing, and *alta moda* was giving way to ready-to-wear fashion. The *carnettisti*'s role started to be tarnished, and their key services were gradually substituted by a more direct relationship between high fashion and textile manufacturers – a link that the CNMI was actively promoting.

A sign of the shifting times is an exchange of letters dated early 1967, between Roman couturier Patrick de Barentzen, Dr Amos Ciabattoni, the then CEO of CNMI, and Como silk manufacturer Tessitura Serica Bini. The correspondence started because de Barentzen called upon Ciabattoni to help him establish contact with textile manufacturers for his growing production of ready-to-wear. The request of such an intervention came because two manufacturers, Bevilaqua and Vezzoletto, had turned down the request of collaborating directly with de Barentzen because of their pre-existing rapport with the *carnettisti*.

In response to this call for help, Ciabattoni wrote letters to all the textile producers de Barentzen listed, to facilitate a meeting between De Barentzen and the producers. The aim would be to establish a direct collaboration for the supply of textiles for de Barentzen's growing line of – as Ciabattoni calls it – the '*prêt-à-porter* Italiano di Alta Moda'.<sup>75</sup>

The most telling response to this request came from Tessitura Serica Bini, clearly explaining the reasons for their refusal to collaborate. The problem for De Barentzen began because more and more couturiers, as seen in Chapter Three, had started developing *prêt-à-porter* lines. Serica Bini did not have distinct pattern books to offer to the *carnettisti*, (who catered for *alta moda*) and to the producers of ready-to-wear. This meant that if Serica Bini was to have a direct relationship with De Barentzen this would compromise the existing relationship with the *carnettisti*, that represented one of their major sale outlets.<sup>76</sup> This is a clear sign of how highly the textile mills regarded the role the *carnettisti* played for their business: they were keen to maintain such rapport even though this would mean rejecting a new partnership with ready-to-wear business.

These letters highlighted a series of interesting points on the role of the *carnettisti*. Firstly, the *carnettisti* and textile producers by 1967 had a longstanding and mutually-profitable relationship. In

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<sup>75</sup> Letter from Amos Ciabattoni to Serica Bini, 11 February 1967, CNMI, folder 4, file 4.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from Serica Bini to Patrick de Barentzen, 13 February 1967, CNMI, folder 4, file 4.

fact, the *carnettisti* working as a bridge between producer and couturiers, selected and bought high quantities of textiles and offered them to the high fashion designers who, as we have seen, bought them in limited quantities due to the nature of their business.<sup>77</sup> This system worked for many years as the three players were satisfied by the deal: the producer sold high quantity to one client, the *carnettista*; the *carnettista* achieved its profit by offering the products to couturiers and, as we have seen, progressively in larger quantities to dressmakers, textile shops and department stores. Finally, the couturiers were satisfied, because by consulting the *carnettista*'s stock, they could easily select the best of the textile production without having to search the output of many manufacturers around Italy.<sup>78</sup>

In this correspondence, the silk manufacturer expresses clearly that they had very tight relationships with the *carnettisti*, and condemns a Milan newspaper that attributed the success of the Rome high fashion show to direct contact between high-fashion houses and textile manufacturers. The Serica Bini silk manufacturer expresses the belief that all the fabrics seen in the Roman fashion show were supplied by the *carnettisti*, with the small exception of two or three textile producers who eliminated the *carnettisti* intermediary and were in contact directly with dressmakers. The letter continues to highlight the exclusive and important role played by the *carnettisti*, who owned a vast variety of new fabrics (*tessuti novità*) - buying many meters of these with their own capital and at their own risk in advance of the fashion shows, so that the high-fashion designers could use what they needed at a later stage. The biggest merit that Serica Bini attributes to the *carnettisti* is their quick response to the demand of couturiers and dressmakers. Therefore, they owned a large stock that often remained unsold, and therefore in so doing they bore the financial risk.<sup>79</sup>

What follows is key to understanding the *raison d'être* of the *carnettisti*. Serica Bini makes it clear to Ciabattoni of CNMI that the *carnettisti* perform the key role of liaison with designers and consequently they were a source of continuous orders. Serica Bini was aware that this relationship came with the loss of visibility for the manufacturer in terms of advertising.

This state of things leads me to fully recognise the utility of the *carnettisti* and to use a decisive policy to protect them: it would be highly acceptable to us as well, clearly, to be able to work directly with the dressmakers, in order to be considered a direct supplier and therefore have the advertisement

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<sup>77</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Serica Bini to Amos Ciabattoni, 15 February 1967, CNMI, folder 4, file 2.

<sup>79</sup> As we will have seen, the *carnettisti* had a number of possible buyers for the meters not taken by designers and dressmakers, such as department stores, fabric stores and even *Vogue* magazine readers who bought the paper patterns.

advantages that this entails, but it is obvious that one has to give away something in comparison with the advantage of dealing with the *carnettista* who offer early and remarkable orders.<sup>80</sup>

[‘Questo stato di cose mi induce a riconoscere pienamente l’utilità del *carnettista* e ad usare una decisa politica di protezione nei suoi confronti: sarebbe gradito anche a noi, evidentemente, poter lavorare a contatto diretto con la sartoria per essere considerati fornitori diretti ed avere tutti i vantaggi pubblicitari che ne derivano, ma e’ ovvio che si deve pur rinunciare a qualche cosa di fronte ai vantaggi che il carnet ci offre con ordini cospicui e anticipati’]

Ciabattoni's response to Serica Bini further clarifies the situation of the *carnettisti* in the mid-1960s. In this letter, the CEO of CNMI takes the time to analyse the relationship between couturiers and *carnettisti*. Ciabattoni recalls how the *carnettisti* ‘in the past’ were the almost exclusive vehicle for the couturiers to get textiles. However, their *carnet* (selection of fabric) was often composed of non-Italian textiles, mainly French. The CNMI wanted to change this tendency and promote Italian textiles, and therefore, as previously seen, they set up prizes for those fashion houses that employed at least 50 percent of Italian textiles in their collections.<sup>81</sup> This did not mean an exclusion of the *carnettisti* from the system, but it was a change of rules that was not in their favour. The CNMI's policy, as we will see towards the end of this chapter, meant the inclusion in advertisements and specialised press of three players: the designer, the textile manufacturer and the *carnettista*.

Furthermore, in the considerations highlighted in the Serica Bini exchange of letters a new definition of ‘Made in Italy’ emerged. In fact, the monetary prize established 1964 by CNMI to promote the use of Italian fabric by Italian couturiers suggested, by its very existence, the reason for its introduction: that in the years up to 1964 *carnettisti* were supplying Italian designers with materials that were not necessarily Italian. There were two possible reasons for this. First, perhaps Italian textiles were considered so prestigious that they were primarily sold to the more lucrative export markets, leaving the Italian market with only a partially-Italian supply chain. Or perhaps Italian fabrics were not deemed good enough, and the more prestigious French textiles were supplied through preference to Italian couturiers. Second, CNMI was aware that the brand ‘Made in Italy’ needed to be protected. *Alta moda* was therefore chosen as the ambassador to bring prestige to the entire Italian clothing system.

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<sup>80</sup> Letter from Serica Bini to Amos Ciabattoni, 15 February 1967, Italia, CNMI, folder, 4, file 2.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Premi e incentivi per elevare la qualità della produzione tessile e potenziare l’alta moda Italiana’, n.d., CNMI, folder 4, file 2.

CNMI's intention to connect high-fashion producers directly with textile manufacturers had the consequence of redefining the role of the *carnettisti*. The types of services that the *carnettisti* had been offering, as the Nattier example has shown, included: bearing the financial burden of buying meters of fabrics from the producers; responding to customers' demands by producing new exclusive fabrics; opening new markets and partnerships; and being in charge of sales, marketing and advertising. CNMI perceived them only as the middle man and therefore responsible for inflating costs, and in the 1970s all these activities were brought in-house by the textile mills themselves. Silk producers like Clerici Tessuto developed an in-house 'ufficio stile' (style office) that selected fabrics that would become part of the collections. This was similar to what the *carnettisti* were doing with their carnet. Furthermore, commercial representatives were hired to travel from market to market to place their products, a responsibility similar to that of Brenda Azario at Nattier.

In 1970, the trade magazine *L'Abbigliamento Italiano* published an investigative report across five articles, by journalist Laura B Piccoli, scrutinising the crisis of the *carnettisti* during the previous few years. Each article contains interviews with representatives of the *carnettisti*, such as the owner of Sassi or the CEO of SELETEX. The problems highlighted in the articles are mainly related to the new tendency of *alta moda* to have direct relationships with textile producers in order to obtain lower prices. This development diminished the role that the *carnettisti* had played until that moment. Piccoli's investigation suggests that the real reasons for this new alliance were not connected to choices of taste, or the needs of professionals, but driven by the implementations of national agreements. Probably this conclusion refers to the activities of CNMI, which since 1964, had been aimed at encouraging the direct relationship between textile producers and couturiers. This, according to Bruno Sassi in his interview with Piccoli, deeply subverted the textile and fashion productive system in place until that moment.

In the new 1970s panorama, couturiers, instead of buying textiles from the *carnettisti*, preferred to buy directly from the textile producers. Sassi says he believes that this was not only a matter of substituting the *carnettista* with the textile manufacturer, but that couturiers tended to choose a supplier only because it offered them free full-page advertisements in specialised magazines. Such an agreement offered the couturier visibility at no extra cost. However, Sassi laments that this often results in the advertising of fabrics chosen not because they were in tune with the season, but merely to look good on the page. In Sassi's opinion, advertising ephemeral or non-existent fabrics bewildered the consumer and unbalanced the productive circle, because the fabric had no commercial life beyond the page and the catwalk.

Notwithstanding the reasons so far listed, the factor that most challenged the *carnettisti's* role was the progressive disappearance of dressmakers' and seamstresses' businesses, and the parallel success of *prêt-à-porter*.<sup>82</sup> In the aforementioned interview, one of the solutions to the *carnettisti's* crisis, suggested by Sassi, was for the *carnettista* to supply not only high fashion but also *prêt-à-porter*, albeit with a less prestigious and less expensive selection of textiles. However, many *carnettisti* were not able to adapt to the new system and the changing market that was emerging. Furthermore, the shift was already taking place, as seen in the case of Cleonice Capece, who produced only ready-to-wear. She already bought, as early as the 1960s, directly from fabric manufacturers and not through the *carnettisti*.<sup>83</sup>

Although many *carnettisti* closed after the crisis at the beginning of the 1970s, some remained and continued their activities, such as Gandini, Lucchini and SATAM.<sup>84</sup> As described above, multiple reasons contributed to the gradual disappearance of the *carnettista* and each company followed a different trajectory. For Nattier, the period of success came to an end in 1969. The Azarios borrowed heavily to buy new machines to modernize some of the production. Brenda recalled how at the time the interest rate was 7 percent, but that it quickly rose to 15 percent and the business suffered as a result. The already unstable financial situation was aggravated by personal circumstances, especially the accident that in 1969 caused Brenda to be hospitalised for two years. Her prolonged absence had an immediate negative impact on the sales for which she was responsible. As a consequence, Nattier-Litex were put into receivership in 1971 and closed the following year.<sup>85</sup>

Ciabattoni's reply to Tessuti Serica Bini's view of the *carnettista's* dilemma is revealing in terms of the direction that the next decade took.<sup>86</sup> Although CNMI did not want to explicitly exclude the *carnettisti*, it wanted to include a third protagonist, the textile producer, in the system of promotion of Italian textile and fashion. This meant that the names of fashion creator, textile manufacturer, and

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<sup>82</sup> Brenda Azario interview with the author, 31 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>83</sup> Cleonice Capece in interview with the author, 18 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>84</sup> In *Vogue Italia* March 1985 an article described how Susy Gandini and Pietro Lucchini worked as interpreters and mediators between designers and textile producers.

<sup>85</sup> Prudence Glynn, 'Brenda Azario: Not really Crippled, just Someone Who Sits Down a Lot', *The Times*, (23 September 1976), 12.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Amos Ciabattoni to Serica Bini, 21 February 1967 CNMI, folder 4, file 2.

*carnettista* had to be compulsorily presented and clearly stated in the presentation of the fashion collections, in the specialised international press, and in the advertisement.<sup>87</sup>

The *carnettisti* were reluctant to adopt the new system, because if they openly revealed their sources, this would cause the loss of many revenues and invalidate most of their work behind the scenes. Although not all the *carnettisti* complied with the rules, many did, as demonstrated by the advertisements and editorials in the Spring-Summer 1966 issue of *Linea Italiana*, where both the *carnettista* and the producer were mentioned. As seen in Figure 61 for example, the *carnettista* Seletex name is prominent and clearly connected to the image of the model descending the stairs, and the name of the designer (Tita Rossi) and of the producer of the tartan wool (Ferrarin) are listed in the caption describing the image on the top right of the page.<sup>88</sup>

Ciabattoni believed that the promotion of the nascent Italian *prêt-à-porter* could only be achieved with a precise ‘policy of prices’ and the increased involvement of the textile producers. This resulted in the direct connection between fashion brands and textile manufacturers or the involvement of *carnettisti* willing to follow the demands of the new system. Examples of adaptable *carnettisti* were Lucchini and Gandini, who survived the moment of shift because they managed to collaborate with *prêt-à-porter*.

The shift in the panorama of the Italian textile and fashion system during the 1960s from couture to *prêt-à-porter* inevitably resulted in the disappearance or change of role of the *carnettisti*.

The 1968 Spring-Summer issue of *Linea Italiana* features eighteen pages of advertisement of the couturier Biki. The numerous pages include black and white or colour photographs representing models either in full page, three-quarter or shoulder height in a variety of poses wearing Biki’s creations. The pages are introduced by a frontispiece (Figure 62 top) designed by the Italian illustrator Brunetta, while the eighteen pages of photographs are united by the same graphic treatment. This consists in a full-page picture with four bevelled corners on a white background, the logos of the products advertised at the bottom of the page, and Biki’s signature on each page reversed out in white either at the top right, or top left corner of each picture.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. With the exception of a percentage of exclusive textiles that could be indicated only with the *carnettista*’s name.

<sup>88</sup> Roberto Sarti disclosed that the advertisements which published the names of textile producer, *carnettista*, and couturier were paid for jointly by the *carnettista* and the textile producer. The *carnettista*, the producer and the couturier decided together what piece to photograph. As a result, the textile producer had an advertisement, the *carnettista* sold some metres, and the *alta moda* atelier was satisfied because their name was circulating. This system meant that everybody was happy. Sarti in the interview with the author, 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1.

*Linea Italiana's* glossy pages, its editorials' standpoint and the fact that it was translated at the back into French, English and Spanish, pointed at, according to White, to a middle-to-high market level and a mixture of trade and public consumption.<sup>89</sup> The magazine first appeared in 1965 and it was a biannual publication. As fashion historian Gabriele Monti states, it was a

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<sup>89</sup> Nicola White, 'The Role of America in the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry 1945-1965' (unpublished MPhil, Kingston University, London, 1997), p. 33.

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*Figure 62. Biki's advertisement campaign.*  
*Source: Linea Italiana, Spring-Summer, 1968.*

crucial publication that in its pages celebrated the qualities and characteristics of Italian fashion.<sup>90</sup> The magazine was the official mouthpiece of the *Centro Italiano Tessili Abbigliamento Alta Moda* (Italian Centre of Textile, ready -to-Wear and Haute Couture (CITAM) and the Ministry of Foreign Commerce. It had the aim to support cooperation between textile manufacturers, couturiers and garment makers, and to promote abroad the union between Italian fashion and Italian textiles.<sup>91</sup>

Biki's multipage advertisement, amongst many similar others included in *Linea Italiana*, visually summarized the effort CNMI had put in the previous year to create a much more organic and united fashion-textile system. Textile producers, *carnettisti* and designers were advertising side-by-side with other fashion-system companies such as make-up brands, sewing machines, and fibre producers. The *carnettisti* who decided to play by the rules of the new system foreseen by CNMI, and to reveal their sources, managed to adapt their role and continued their business. These pages attempted to offer the readers and trade the impression of a fully-organised and organic fashion system. This would continue and be refined in the following two decades, as will be highlighted in Chapter Five.

## Conclusion

Part Two has delved into the specific mechanisms that regulated fashion, industry and textile production in 1960s. Chapter Three investigated CNMI's agency in shaping the direction of fashion and textile production in the 1960s. Existing literature had not previously investigated the role of this governmental body, and this suggested a lack of importance. However, my archival research shows that CNMI policies and initiatives had an important impact on the existing system. With the advent of ready-to-wear in the late 1970s, CNMI became an important and recognised player in the Milanese ready-to-wear system.

Chapter Three also explored early attempts at collaboration between couturiers and mass-production. Some aspects of these early ventures, such as the collaboration of designers with a manufacturer such as GFT, as seen in the Biki example, survived into a series of collaborations that, during the 1970s, shaped the success of Italian ready-to-wear, as we will see in Part Three.

Chapter Four investigated details of the mechanisms, commission, and promotion of textile production for *alta moda* through the *carnettisti*. During the 1960s this sphere of fashion was still influential, and considered the pinnacle of taste.

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<sup>90</sup> Monti Gabriele, 'Through a Paper Looking Glass', in *Bellissima: Italy and High Fashion, 1945-1968* (Milano: Electa, 2014), p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Rosina, 'Textiles', p. 85.

As we have seen, although a textile was initially created for *alta moda*, it 'trickled down' to fashion productions that reached a wider number of customers. During the 1960s the *carnettisti* became more visible to the eyes of consumers, through full-page advertisements, and debates on their role in the specialised press; yet at the same time, their position of leadership was threatened by changes in the fashion-textile system. The period under consideration in Part Two ended with the crisis of the system, and the advent of the new powerhouse of ready-to-wear, which the majority of *carnettisti* seemed unable to cater for.

There were signs that *alta moda* was about to give way to the new *prêt-à-porter*. Not only was *alta moda* venturing into synthetic fabrics, but for several seasons *prêt-à-porter* used the same textiles supplied to *alta moda*, especially woollen ones.<sup>92</sup> What seems to be a contradiction is well explained by Rosina who highlights how, in this decade of changes, *alta moda* 'was losing the leading position it had enjoyed in previous decades, unable to transform itself from a creator of unique garments for the elite, into a creator of prototypes for industry'.<sup>93</sup> Gradually, as we will see, Italian textile manufacturing decided to supply the luxury ready-to-wear businesses, as they would order a higher number of meters compared to *alta moda*. Furthermore, the manufacturers gradually retreated from the market of retail and drapery shops, because many *stilisti* who started to work for the industry requested exclusive use of the textiles.<sup>94</sup>

Part Two has been dominated by the relationship between *carnettisti*, textile producers and *alta moda*, but in the next section and decade, the trio will be the *stilista*, the textile producer, and the clothing manufacturers. As the relationship between production and consumption shifted, the system reshaped itself by focusing on new players and intermediaries

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<sup>92</sup> Rosina, 'Textiles', p. 88.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

## Part 3: 1970s-1985, a Mature Italian Fashion System. Design and Textiles for Mass-Production

### Introduction

In the early 1970s, Italy was deeply entrenched in a period of workers' protests, political terrorism and, like most of the western world, was also involved in the oil crisis. Despite the political and economic situation, Italian fashion was living a moment of deep changes that would lead to the affirmation of a mature fashion system.

Part Three investigates the years between the beginning of the 1970s and the mid-1980s, a period that saw the establishment of a solid industrialised Italian fashion system mainly associated with the *distretti industriali*, also known as *distretti produttivi* (productive districts) in the centre-north of Italy. The city of Milan sits at the core of this fashion and textile network of small and medium companies. Although Milan was part of production even in the previous decades, the city now rose to national and international attention as the capital of Italian *prêt-à-porter*.<sup>1</sup>

I have chosen to analyse the productive system of the *distretti industriali* because of its innovative structure based on clusters of small companies localised on the Italian territory. However, this kind of industry did not start up suddenly in the 1970s. The system had its roots in the years after the Second World War and it reached an obvious statistical significance by the mid-1970s.<sup>2</sup> As a result, several economic studies have been written about this period, as analysed in detail in Chapter Five. Although I mention the districts in Chapter Two, I investigate this typical Italian economic model in Chapter Five for two reasons. The first is that in the 1970s and 1980s there is a proliferation of international interest by economists, sociologists, and anthropologists in the Italian manufacturing model. The way in which Italy was producing goods, including fashion, seemed to offer something for other nations to learn from. Secondly, this model has been heralded by fashion scholars as one of the pillars of the success of Milanese ready-to-wear. Anthropologist Simona Segre, for instance, believes that the industrial districts, along with design, manufacturing, service industries and

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<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Locke, 'Unity in Diversity: Strategy and Structure of the Italian Apparel Industry in the 1980s', in *Per Una Storia Della Moda Pronta : Problemi E Ricerche : Atti Del V Convegno Internazionale Del CISST, Milano, 26-28 Febbraio 1990* (Firenze: EDIFIR edizioni, 1991), pp. 251-269 (p.256).

<sup>2</sup> However, Bull and Corner believe that certain characteristics found in the 'third Italy' can be found elsewhere in Italy and in an earlier period. They demonstrate this through the Como Silk industry case study.

communications (TV, press, advertisement agencies and PR), were the key ingredients of Milan's success.<sup>3</sup>

The seventies, in terms of Italian fashion production, have been defined by economic historian Ivan Paris as the period of consolidation and maturation of the previous decades' experimentation and metamorphosis. This resulted in the establishment of an 'authentic fashion system' that saw Milan become the stronghold of Italian fashion, affirmed as one of the top four worldwide fashion centres, together with New York, Paris and London.<sup>4</sup> Although Paris in his paper does not define the 'authentic fashion system' directly, he is probably referring to what historian Messina Rietta had previously described as

an organic and integrated relationship between the various components of production and services, in the textile sector as well as in that of clothing and knitwear, which made it possible to cut down on the time required to bring in innovations, to expand the choice of materials and to increase the range of products.<sup>5</sup>

By early 1970s the designer Walter Albini, together with the labels Krizia and Missoni, had left the *Sala Bianca* in Florence to present their mass-produced collections in Milan. This was the start of a phenomenon that saw a growing number of designers getting together in events such as Milanovendemoda and Modit. Milanovendemoda was started in 1969 by the agents and the commercial units of the garment sector. The idea was to initiate a direct dialogue with buyers in the city of Milan, where more and more designers chose to locate their headquarters. Nine years later in March 1978 Modit took place in the *Fiera Campionaria* of Milan. This event was organised by the *Associazioni Industriali dell'Abbigliamento e della Maglieria* (Association of Garment and Knitwear Industrialists) together with consultant Beppe Modenese. This show was a catalyst for the relationship between the *stilista* (designer) and industry, and it consecrated Milan as its capital.<sup>6</sup>

Segre argues that between the 1970s and 1980s Milan did not become the capital of fashion, but specifically the capital of *prêt-à-porter*.<sup>7</sup> This is a key distinction to make as Italy continued to have a

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<sup>3</sup> Simona Segre Reinach, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter in the World of Fast Fashion', in *Fashion's World Cities*, ed. by Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006), pp. 123-134.

<sup>4</sup> Paris, *Fashion as a System*, p. 525; John Foot, *Milan since the Miracle: City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 125., Simona Segre Reinach, 'Milan as a Fashion City', in *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, ed. by Joanne Eicher, 8 vols (Oxford: Berg, 2010b), pp. 259-263 (p.259).

<sup>5</sup> Messina Rietta, 'Italian Woman's Wear', p. 29

<sup>6</sup> Vergani, *Dizionario*, p. 834.

<sup>7</sup> Segre, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter in the World of Fast Fashion', p. 124.

larger fashion landscape not limited to Milan. From 1967, when an agreement was signed between the *Centro di Firenze per la Moda Italiana* and the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, couture fashion shows moved to Rome, while Florence maintained its role in representing the *moda boutique* and knitwear production. Furthermore, in 1972 Florence also became synonymous with menswear fashion with the debut of Pitti Uomo shows.<sup>8</sup>

As *prêt-à-porter* became the new language of fashion, it is the centre of this investigation. Part Three returns to another facet of my thesis's argument, namely the important role that production played in Italy's history of fashion and textiles. Therefore, in Chapter Five I survey economic theories that define the Italian network of production in the form of the *distretti industriali* and how they supported the development of *prêt-à-porter*. I investigate the city of Milan and how it acts as the helm of widespread regional production. Here the *stilisti*, a new breed of designer/entrepreneur/creative intermediary, found the ideal place to establish their headquarters and the studios from which they could design their collections. In Chapter Six I examine how working fashion drawings, in their complex layering of signs, materials and authors, offer the lens through which peek at *prêt-à-porter's* creation and before the final products are commercialised.

As in Part Two, Part Three's 'Inside-out' method implies disassembling and investigating the industrial and operative apparatus typical of Italian fashion and textiles production in 1970s and 1980s.

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<sup>8</sup> *Dagli Anni '50 a Oggi*, <http://www.pittimmagine.com/corporate/about.html> [Accessed 4 April 2017].

## Chapter 5 – Milan and the *Stilisti* at the Centre of the *Distretti Industriali*

### Rise of Milan

The city of Milan becomes important for my thesis in the early 1970s because the media, such as magazines, the main fashion shows, and trade fairs, were located here in this period. As explained in the Introduction, Lees-Maffei's PCM model highlights how mediation is a key aspect of a system. While in the previous chapters I have focused on production and how this has driven Italian fashion, there has been a shift from production to mediation as the key driver of the fashion industry since the 1970s that has made Milan the centre of attention for this investigation.

In 2002 the volume *Moda a Milano: Stile e Impresa nella Città che Cambia* was published to promote the role that Milan and Lombardy played in the success of the Italian fashion system.<sup>1</sup> From its first pages, it highlights how fashion in Italy is an industrial product. Such a statement was obvious by 2002, but at the beginning of the 1970s industrialised fashion was a phenomenon that had just started to develop.

This chapter brings together secondary sources to demonstrate the importance that Milan assumed in the fashion panorama from the beginning of the 1970s. It sheds light on what has been traditionally considered the 'rise' of Milan as a fashion city and its establishment as the centre of a regional hub of industrial districts. As seen in Parts One and Two Milan was already part of the Italian fashion landscape throughout the period analysed so far. However, it was only in the early 1970s that the city took centre stage of a new phenomenon, a new system, that saw the designer of *prêt-à-porter* gaining 'international commercial and media success'.<sup>2</sup>

Segre has widely written about Milan as a fashion city, arguing that the relevance and role of Milan in fashion history is strictly connected to the arrival of 'a particular model of production and consumption: fashion designers' *prêt-à-porter*'.<sup>3</sup> Segre establishes that until the 1960s Milan did not play a major role in fashion. The only exceptions she mentions are the 1906 Milan International Expo (as mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis) when Rosa Genoni exhibited, thus encouraging

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<sup>1</sup> Paola Iannace, 'La Moda, Macchina Economica E Laboratorio Di modernità', in *Moda a Milano: Stile E Impresa Nella Città Che Cambia* (Milano: Abitare Segesta Cataloghi, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Segre, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter in the World of Fast Fashion', p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Segre, 'Milan as a Fashion City', p. 259.

Italian couturiers to free themselves from the dictates of French haute couture; and the 1948 Expo, when the *Centro della Moda Italiana* opened (see Chapter Two).<sup>4</sup>

However, economic historian Elisabetta Merlo believes that the economy of fashion in Milan goes back at least at the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century:

during these years, Milan boasted a well-developed, diversified economy of fashion in which all elements were present, from production and distribution of fabrics, to complete garments, to the entire range of accessories, and finally, with decorations such as ribbon, lace and bows.

This system had its historic roots even further back. For example, in the mid-1500s the word 'millinery' derived from 'Millaners' which indicated merchants from Milan, who traded in northern Europe in silks, ribbons, gloves and Florentine straw hats.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, after Italy's unification, Milan also became the capital of the fashion press. Merlo and Polese point out how the presence of a specialised press highlights the strict connection between fashion and industry in Milan, as many magazines were backed by the city's clothing and textile manufacturers. Between 1861 and 1920 seventy-five of the one hundred and forty-nine Italian fashion magazines were published in Milan.<sup>6</sup> This increased with the launch, between 1920 and 1945, of another fifty-two new magazines in Milan.<sup>7</sup> In 1945 *Bellezza*, which until that moment had been based in Turin, was transferred to Milan where it remained till 1970.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in the 1950s, two more specialised magazines *Linea Italiana* and *Novità*, appeared in the Milanese panorama. The latter was bought by Condé Nast and became *Vogue Italia* in 1966.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Susie Hopkins, 'Milliners', in *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, ed. by Valerie Steele (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 508-512.

<sup>6</sup> Merlo and Polese, *Turning Fashion into Business*, p.432.

<sup>7</sup> Such as *Lidel* (1919-35), *Grandi firme* (1924-39) and *Annabella* (1933), *Grazia* (1938) in Merlotti, 'I percorsi della moda made in Italy (1951-2010)', p. 636.

<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, from 1945 onwards, publishers such as Mondadori and Rizzoli all had their own fashion magazines. Mondadori continued to publish *Grazia*, flanked in 1957 by *Arianna*, which from 1973 became the Italian version of *Cosmopolitan*. Rizzoli published *Annabella* and *La Donna*, and Rusconi *Gioia* and *Rakam*. Also, the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* in 1962 started its fashion magazine *Amica* in Milan. See Merlotti, 'I percorsi della moda made in Italy (1951-2010)', pp. 636-637.

<sup>9</sup> The first few editions of the magazine were still published under the title *Novità*, from October 1964 to November 1965. Then the name was changed into *Vogue* and *Novità* and finally in May 1966 to *Vogue Italia*. Thereafter, a concentration of fashion journalists and photographers, such as Ugo Mulas, Alfa Castaldi, Adriana Mulassano and Maria Pezzi lived in the city, see Segre, 'Milan as a Fashion City', p. 260.

Moreover, Milan was not only synonymous with the fashion industry: it was an economic city. As historian John Foot describes, it was the 'central market city, a place of exchange and finance dealing for buyers, producers, mediators'.<sup>10</sup> The 'market' locations were concentrated mainly in the Stock Exchange, the *Camera di Commercio* (Chamber of Commerce) and the *Fiera Campionaria*.<sup>11</sup> In September 1946 the *Fiera*, as it came to be known, was the second biggest universal fair organised in the world, after the one in Paris in August of the same year. Three thousand six hundred exhibitors from every production sector were represented.<sup>12</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s the results of each edition were spectacular. Italy's main architects designed unique buildings viewed by millions of visitors.<sup>13</sup> This was one of Europe's most important industrial and commercial exhibitions and all the fashion players, from *alta moda* to men's tailors, from accessories producers to textile companies, exhibited there. A picture of a fashion show held in *Fiera* in 1948 (Figure 63) testifies to the way that fashion was presented very soon after the war: this show appeared to be initiated as a promotion of the fibre producer Italviscosa.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the *Fiera*, from 1957, another international specialised textile fair took place in Milan, the *Mercato Internazionale del tessile per l'abbigliamento e l'arredamento* (MITAM), as discussed in Chapter Two. MITAM represented the most important showcase for the country's textile production, but like all fairs of this kind, it consisted of a long series of variously sized impersonal stands hosted in anonymous pavilions. However, in 1967 a small group of Como silk industrialists tried out an alternative model, organising fashion show-performances in the stunning setting of the Grand Hotel Villa D'Este in Cernobbio on Lake Como. The innovative idea was to add value to the Como district's textile production.<sup>15</sup> The change of setting, the glamour of the location and quality of the materials on show, made this event an annual unmissable appointment for textile producers and designers from all over the world. Fashion

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<sup>10</sup> Foot, *Milan after the Miracle*, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Anty Pansera, *L'Anima Dell'Industria : Un Secolo Di Disegno Industriale Nel Milanese* (Milano: Skira, 1996) quoted in Foot, *Milan after the Miracle*, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup> 'Un Evidente Certezza', *Ripresa Delle Fiere*, 12 August 1946, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>14</sup> Picture number 1948\_096, Italy, Milan, Archivio Storico Fondazione Fiera Milano.

<sup>15</sup> Morini and Rosina, Taroni, pp.140-141, from *IdeaComo*, more trading and commercial shows were also springing up in the city and its vicinity, such as *Mipel Mercato Italiano della Pelletteria* (Italian Fur Market) 1962.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 63. High fashion show in the Italviscosa pavilion at the Milan Trade Fair, (1948).  
Source: picture no. 1948\_096, Archivio Storico Fondazione Fiera Milano, Milan.*

designer Cleonice Capece recalls how she used to design her collection in the Villa D'Este hotel after purchasing some fabrics at the fair.<sup>16</sup>

As seen in Chapter Four, during the 1960s, Milan was also the headquarters of many of the *carnettisti* and of the influential *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*.<sup>17</sup> The city was also key for fashion retail: Foot argues that the department store La Rinascente was another important factor that made Milan the international capital of design more generally. Designers in the field of fashion and furniture such as Bruno Munari, Ignazio Gardella and Giorgio Armani were all located there.<sup>18</sup>

This concentration of industry, trade, and design created the backdrop for a series of events that helped shaped the city into the capital of *prêt-à-porter* around the end of 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. In 1967, Fiorucci opened its Milan boutique in Galleria Passerella in San Babila: with its lighting, its imported goods, and its innovative products such as jeans, it was the pioneer among the plethora of spectacular designer shops that would open in Milan in the following decade. In the same year the Missonis organised their fashion show in the Solari swimming pool, featuring inflatable plastic sofas. It was the first of many such avantgarde and spectacular performances created in Milan's most disparate locations to promote fashion.

Milan has been considered the centre of the industrial districts. In the immediate vicinity lies Como with its century-old silk production, Legnano and Gallarate, known for their cotton, and Biella, known for fine wool. The further one moves from the Milanese epicentre, the more centres of specialised production can be found, such as knitwear in Carpi, leather in Tuscany, shoes and jeans in Marche and wool in Prato.<sup>19</sup> It was mainly in Milan, though also to some extent in Florence and some regions of the north-east, that fashion products were designed, programmed, created and communicated in strict connection with the factories spread around the nearby territory. Milan is intimately connected to the industrial system of the country, a system that in the post-war year was changing drastically, as explained in the next chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with the author 18 May 2017 in Appendix 1.

<sup>17</sup> Half of the *carnettisti* registered in 1969 were based in Milan and these were: Lucchini, Etoile, Gandini, Sassi, Satam, Scotlaine and Star, *Assortitori Tessuti Novità*, in *Linea Italiana*, Spring- Summer, 1969, [n.p.]; The *Camera Nazionale della moda Italiana* was established in Rome in 1958 (see Chapter Two) and it definitely moved to Milan in 1988 (personal email correspondence with Dr Tiziana Dassi at Bocconi University, Milan, 28 August, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Foot, *Milan after the Miracle*, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> Abbigliamento, Accessori Moda, <http://www.osservatoriodistretti.org/> [Accessed 08 June 2018].

The success of Milan, as has been illustrated, happened gradually and did not rely on a singular factor. The concurrence of circumstances such as the presence of specialised press, the vicinity of textile and fabric production, and the historical legacy of the city as a commercial and industrial hub all contributed to the rise of Milan as the capital of Italian ready-to-wear. Finally, the city became the virtual capital of the production clustered around the country in what have been defined as the *distretti produttivi*, as will be analysed in the next section.

### *Distretti Industriali* (Industrial Districts)

In the period under consideration in this chapter, Italian manufacturing was not uniform. It is complex to unpick the kind of industrial production on which Italian fashion is based. On the one hand, there were larger factories such as Marzotto and Zucchi, based on the American mass-production method, and characterised by vertical integration (or integrated corporations) and a high number of standardised goods.<sup>20</sup> These mass-production factories shared similar characteristics to each other, such as the internalisation of all stages of production ‘from spinning and weaving to garments manufacturing’.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, a completely opposite structure existed, of small independent firms dispersed in the territory, each producing only a small phase of the final product, all specialising in the same sector, and together almost constituting a virtual factory.

Furthermore, the differentiation between these two models was quite blurred, especially in the 1980s, when it was evident that ‘many Italian apparel firms combine elements of both the integrated corporation and the network firm’.<sup>22</sup> For example, some vertically-integrated companies would rely on smaller firms by way of subcontracting orders that could not be fulfilled within their integrated plants. Companies such as GFT encompassed within their boundaries, different types of production; and some companies started with one production model and evolved over time.<sup>23</sup>

Regional concentrations of companies working in the same field – specialising in silk, or wool, or leather, but also yarns and the finished products – are known (then and now) as *distretti produttivi* (productive districts) or *distretti industriali* (industrial districts). The firms are usually small to

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<sup>20</sup> Locke, *Unity in Diversity*, p. 256.

<sup>21</sup> For a more in-depth description of the integrated corporation see Locke, *Unity in Diversity*, p. 256-257.

<sup>22</sup> Locke, *Unity in Diversity*, p. 257.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

medium-sized and often family-run. They are highly specialised but also very flexible. The regional network system, with its focus on quality and attention to detail, has been considered the backbone of the 'Made in Italy' brand.<sup>24</sup> As textile historian Margherita Rosina puts it: 'By the 1970s Italian Fashion was well established and relied on a solid network of professionals, ranging from pattern-makers and cutters to embroiderers and furriers'.<sup>25</sup>

The term 'industrial district' is a concept created by the English economist Alfred Marshall, who, according to economist Marco Bellandi, remarks in his definition that:

the division of labour which characterizes the area is not by individual workers in a single factory but by different highly specialized firms which both compete with each other and complement one another.<sup>26</sup>

Marshall uses this notion in the context of the end of the nineteenth century to describe the production of Lancashire cottons, amongst others. His concept was later recovered by others such as economists Giacomo Becattini and Sebastiano Brusco to label some Italian regions.<sup>27</sup> What emerges from these economic theories is that there is no universally-agreed definition of industrial districts. The nature of the Italian district, during the 1980s in particular, has been the subject of debate.<sup>28</sup> It is not the aim of this study to report on these differences. However, in this chapter, I will provide a literature review of the main economic theories that describe the phenomenon of small firms in Italy and highlight how they related to the production of fashion.

The economic literature considers fashion and textile production as a well-stocked field from which to draw examples to describe this phenomenon. For instance, the Marche shoemaking district is described in *Made in Italy: Small-Scale Industrialization and Its Consequences* by anthropologist

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<sup>24</sup> Scarpellini, 'The Business of Fashion', pp. 226-239.

<sup>25</sup> Margherita Rosina, "The Thousand-Carat Dresses", in , ed. by Enrico Quinto and Paolo Tinarelli (Milan: Skira, 2013), p. 195.

<sup>26</sup> Marco Bellandi, 'The Role of Small Firms in the Development of Italian Manufacturing Industry ', in *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, ed. by Edward Goodman, Julia Bamford and Peter Saynor (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 31-52 (pp. 20-21). For more information on Marshall's definition of industrial district see Fiorenza Belussi and Katia Caldari, 'At the Origin of the Industrial District: Alfred Marshall and the Cambridge School', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Volume 33 (1 March 2009), 335-355.

<sup>27</sup> Zeitlin, *Industrial Districts and Regional Clusters*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>28</sup> According to Bellandi, some such as Becattini define a territorial system of small and medium firms 'producing a group of commodities whose products are processes which can be split into different phases'. Others refer to as 'a system of firms rather than as an exact geographical concentration' in Marco Bellandi 'Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy', p. 21. For more information on the debate also outside Italy, Zeitlin, *Industrial Districts and Regional Clusters*, pp. 222-224 and also Anna Cento Bull and Paul Corner, *From Peasant to Entrepreneur: The Survival of the Family Economy in Italy* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 131-153.

Michael L. Blim. The Prato district is considered in *The Second Industrial Divide* by economists Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, and the Como silk-production region is at the core of the study *From Peasant to Entrepreneur: The Survival of the Family Economy in Italy* by Anna Bull and Paul Corner.<sup>29</sup>

Although very insightful, these studies have mainly analysed fashion and textile production as case studies convenient to illustrate larger economic models and trends that emerged in Italy. As Bull and Corner explain: 'The silk industry, and the Como and Brianza region above Milan, have been selected therefore as an industry and a region which exemplify certain aspects of a specifically Italian process of industrialisation'.<sup>30</sup>

Conversely, in this section I will use economic definitions and analysis to better understand the complex network of small firms of fashion and textile production that have been considered the foundation of the Italian fashion boom between the 1970s and 1980s.

By the first half of the 1980s, Italy was Europe's fastest-growing economy. Edward Goodman stresses how in these years another 'economic miracle' occurred, and the country became the fifth, if not the fourth, economy worldwide.<sup>31</sup> What happened in the decade preceding this phenomenon is key to understanding how Italian industrial production in general, and Italian fashion production in particular, evolved. Piore and Sabel attribute the 'radical decentralisation of production', very familiar in the Pratese example, as a response to the strike waves of the 1960s. This was meant to be a short-lived ploy until 'the worker militancy had passed'.<sup>32</sup> However, although initially the conditions of work in the small firms were brutal – as these firms insisted on long hours, evaded taxes and did not pay into the social-security system – after a while dependent subcontractors started to federate.<sup>33</sup> According to Piore and Sabel, these changes were visible in terms of rising wages and decreasing unemployment from the mid-1970s. Statistics also suggested that the small firms were by this time selling their products directly to foreign buyers. This transformation was

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<sup>29</sup> Ed. Piore and Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide*, pp. 213 -216.

<sup>30</sup> Bull and Corner, *From Peasant to Entrepreneur*, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Goodman, Julia Bamford and Peter Saynor (ed.), *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Piore and Sabel (ed), *The Second Industrial Divide*, p. 226.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226-227.

mirrored by changes in Italian machine-tool industry: for example, Italian shoe machinery began to be marketed in North America because of its flexibility.<sup>34</sup>

By the mid-1970s a global recession caused by the oil crisis of 1973 had hit the clothing industry worldwide. Most countries affected tried to find a way out by reducing production costs. This was carried out by the delocalisation of production to places where labour was cheaper and plentiful. For example, the USA relocated production to Central America, France to North Africa, and Germany to East Europe.

The Italian clothing industry was facing the same kind of problem. However, according to Merlo and Polese, in Italy the 'delocalization resembled more a decentralization in a domestic scale, as it occurred within the boundaries of the country'.<sup>35</sup> After this crisis the Italian textile and clothing industry emerged deeply transformed.<sup>36</sup> Data show how, between 1971 and 1981, the big companies with more than one hundred employees lost eighty thousands jobs, while smaller companies with fewer than one hundred employees hired more than one hundred thousand people. The data show that Italy overcame the recession with a process of 'deverticalization and decentralization of production'.<sup>37</sup> This strategy was aimed at reducing the high cost of labour that had caused the recession. As we will see in this section, along with decentralisation, Italian firms also introduced labour-saving technologies, and these made the industry more flexible. Nonetheless, as historians Bull and Corner explain there is no agreement about the origins of what can be also called 'diffused entrepreneurship'.<sup>38</sup>

This process of decentralisation was not only occurring in the fashion sector but of the whole industrial panorama, and 'in 1985 it was estimated that small firms employing fewer than ten workers made up 80 percent of all the Italian manufacturing firms'.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Blim believes that

The emergence of small-scale industrialization in Italy's central and northeaster region is in many ways the most stunning and interesting facet of the remarkable

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.227 and note 13.

<sup>35</sup> Merlo and Polese, 'Italy', p. 255.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Bull and Corner, *From Peasant to Entrepreneur*, pp. 139 and 142.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Goodman, Julia Bamford and Peter Saynor (ed.), *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, p. 10.

industrial renaissance that has propelled Italy's economy well past Great Britain and perhaps even France in the Western capital order.<sup>40</sup>

One of the interesting questions Goodman asks himself in the introduction to *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy* is: ' [...] how is it that the Italian Lilliputian firms have stood up to a world of giants?'.<sup>41</sup> His answer is that the success of Italian small firms was based on the craft and self-employed workers who relied on values of family and community.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Piore and Sabel pinpoint four factors as essential to the Italian innovation:

the Italian extended family, the view of artisan work as a distinct type of economic activity, the existence of merchant traditions connecting the Italian provinces to world market; and the willingness of municipal and regional governments (often allied to the labour movement) to help create the infrastructure that firms required but could not themselves provide.<sup>43</sup>

The central and north-eastern economic development of Italy is described in a nutshell by Blim: 'spontaneous, small-scale, and flexible in the production method, export-led and niche finding in its marketing, familial in organization, and petty entrepreneurial in character'.<sup>44</sup>

As Bull and Corner remind us, though, 'the literature on industrial district has, for some time now, crossed paths with the literature on the Third Italy' [defined below].<sup>45</sup> In their study they compare these two sectors, on one hand the Third Italy industrialisation between the 1960s and 1970s, and on the other, the region of older industrialisation such as northern Lombardy and other sub-Alpine regions.

The 1980s and '90s literature on the Italian industrial system groups Italy into three macro-regions: 'the unhappy southern combination of state assistance, Mafia, and rural exodus'; 'the northern large-scale industrial expansion'; and the Third Italy (*la Terza Italia*), a concept introduced in 1977 by Italian sociologist Arnaldo Bagnasco in *Tre Italie: la problematica territoriale dello sviluppo Italiano*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Blim, *Made in Italy*, p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Ed. Goodman and Saynor, *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

<sup>43</sup> Piore and Sabel (ed), *The Second Industrial Divide*, p. 227.

<sup>44</sup> Blim, *Made in Italy*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Bull and Corner, *From Peasant to Entrepreneur*, p. 138.

<sup>46</sup> Blim, *Made in Italy*, pp.1-2. Sabel divides Italy in the same way in Charles F. Sabel, *Work and Politics : The Division of Labour in Industry / Charles F. Sabel* (Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 220.

His Third Italy consists of the central and north-eastern regions of Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna, Toscana, Umbria and Marche. Blim believes that the economic development of the triangle between Genova, Milan and Turin is not distinctive, while the economic progress of the Third Italy 'has been extraordinarily successful'.<sup>47</sup> In formerly marginal regions, such as Marche, gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of 3.5 percent between 1970s and 1980s, this is to say 0.4 percent per year more than the national gross domestic product.<sup>48</sup>

Goodman declares that the backbone of the small firms of *la Terza Italia* – especially of the traditional industries such as 'fabrics and clothing, shoe-making and leather goods, ceramics, carpentry and furniture' – is the idea of the *artigiano*.<sup>49</sup> The *artigiano* or master craftsman is an independent skilful individual with a passion for details and an eye for relevance. Goodman believes that a good mix of these traits has kept the *artigiano's* firm in business for hundreds of years and such firms became the model for Italian small businesses.<sup>50</sup> At the base of the *artigiano's* economy is the conservative structure of the family which generates a strong sense of commitment among members of the firm. It is also the group that teaches its members to be productive, and that measures the maximum expansion of the firm, which is between five and ten people.<sup>51</sup> The small size of both firm and factory according to Goodman, encourages dialogue amongst workers, clients and entrepreneur and stimulates new ideas. The Italian small firm therefore differentiates itself from other nationalities because 'it has family, social and artistic aspects as well as economic'.<sup>52</sup>

Goodman's ideas of family and *artigiano* resonate very well with the landscape of fashion and textile production. Most of the Italian fashion and textiles businesses are strongly based on a family network: some like the Missoni and Versace are still pretty much family-run, although some others have in recent years transformed from family enterprises into international multimillion-euro brands.

In the Italian *Vogue* issue of July-August 1975, an editorial titled *I clans degli italiani* (The

<sup>47</sup> According to Blim, *Made in Italy*, pp.1-2.

<sup>48</sup> Blim, *Made in Italy*, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Goodman, Julia Bamford and Peter Saynor (ed.), *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, p. 29 footnote: 'The term *Terza Italia*, the third Italy, distinguishes the area of north-central and north east Italy from the south of the country and from the area of heavy industry of the north -west[...]' and p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.7-8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Italian Clans) was published to report on the various trends of Italian *prêt-à-porter* of that season. Each spread was occupied full bleed by one designer's gang surrounded by either his/her family, such as the Missonis, friends, family, business partners and their entourage (as seen in Figure 64). The copy states how Italians typically have an individualism that tends to separate them into many small groups, each one of them with its precise style code. This article aptly summarises the essence of what Italian industry and *prêt-à-porter* came to signify: not a national style, but an array of very distinctive styles, each based on their *stilista* (fashion designer) and his or her family or group as we will see in the next section.

As seen in each picture of this article, the designers are not isolated entities: they are surrounded by their collaborators, workers and family all dressed in the brand's clothing and accessories. This visualises the core attributes of Italian *prêt-à-porter*, a total look that is created in collaboration. The word 'clan' not only defines the designer's closed entourage, but also the consumers that buy into the specific style; as for example in the Gianni Versace 'clan' picture where amongst his collaborators and family there are also the countess Cristina Augusta and Anna Falk, followers of his fashion.

Within this landscape of small firms or 'clans', Goodman believes that 'one of the secrets of Italian success has been the ability to revive traditional industries by the careful application of new technologies'.<sup>53</sup> This is very true for the Italian fashion and textile industries, many of which, such as Gucci and Prada for example, started as craft family-run industries at the beginning of the twentieth century and evolved into international multimillion-euro brands also quoted on the stock market.<sup>54</sup>

Economic literature around the small firms and industrial districts in Italy has shown how this phenomenon is not static but has evolved through time in the way in which has been studied and described. As Sabel declares in *Work and Politics*, the studies carried out in the early 1970s have tended to consider the spread of small firms as an escape for troubled entrepreneurs making fashionable consumer goods for the export market.<sup>55</sup> During the second part of the decade however, and also due to the fact that this industrial structure reorganised itself, the small workshops came to be seen as a 'distinct system of production capable of adapting

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<sup>53</sup> Edward Goodman, Julia Bamford and Peter Saynor (ed.), *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the *stilista* often designs the machinery for the realisation of new forms, therefore he/she intervenes directly in how the garments are produced. Bianchino, *Disegno della Moda Italiana*, p. 47.

<sup>55</sup> Piore and Sabel (ed), *The Second Industrial Divide*, p. 220, note 63.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 64. The Missoni family featured as an example of an italian "clan" in Vogue Italia.  
Source: 'I Clans degli Italiani, Vogue Italia, July, August 1975, pp. 50-51.*

technology to its own purposes and producing goods, such as sophisticated machine tools , that cannot be dismissed as peripheral to the advanced economies'.<sup>56</sup>

Economists agree that during the 1970s, traditional industries such as textile clothing, shoemaking and leather making, showed a special liveliness in the regions where the proliferation of small firms was greater and these companies continued to contribute to the overall Italian exports.<sup>57</sup> Blim discusses this liveliness with reference to the Marche region, whose formidable post-war economic development lay in 'transformation of preindustrial regional specialities such as shoemaking, clothing, furniture-making, and musical instruments into industrial export goods'.<sup>58</sup>

Although the industrial districts were booming between the 1970s and 1980s, nowadays they are still considered an important motor of the Italian economy. Around two hundred thousand manufacturing companies are located in the districts: they employ around two million people, and produce 27.2 percent of the gross domestic product and 46 percent of the export. Furthermore, 45 percent of the districts are connected to the clothing industry. As Scarpellini notes, in 2001 the Istat census recorded for the first time the variegated panorama of the districts. It emerged that around forty-five districts were specialised in textile and clothing, and another twenty were specialised in leather, hides and footwear, making the overall fashion sector the employer of seven hundred thousand people.<sup>59</sup>

### The *Stilista*, the Link between Textile and Fashion Production

As analysed previously, there are several different theories about why the industrial structure of Italy changed radically from the 1970s onwards. In this section I analyse how the network of small, flexible family-run high-tech companies, and the industrial districts in general, have supported the Italian fashion and textile industry.<sup>60</sup> In practice, this interaction required the presence of an intermediary who could work in synergy with the manufacturing landscape.

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<sup>56</sup> Sabel, *Work and Politics*, p. 26, note 63.

<sup>57</sup> Bellandi, 'The role of small firms in the development of Italian manufacturing industry', p. 31.

<sup>58</sup> Blim, *Made in Italy*, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Scarpellini, 'The Business of Fashion', p. 232 (Since 2001, another census was done in 2011 and the results on the districts are here: <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2015/02/Distretti-industriali.pdf>).

<sup>60</sup> Piore and Sabel (ed), *The Second Industrial Divide*, pp. 222-223.

As demonstrated earlier, the city of Milan offered a context of successful design production, established textile industry and fashion press. Within this milieu, a new professional fashion figure took their first steps in the 1970s, a figure who came to define the Italian fashion production of this decade. In Italian they were called a *stilisti*, which literally means stylists, but the terminology is confusing. As fashion curator Sonnet Stanfill explains:

the word *stilista* is more nuanced and multifunctional than either the English translations 'designer' or 'stylist' suggest. It came to refer to someone who mediated between the practicalities of industry, the requirements of retail buyers and the needs of the public, while also being aware of the importance of the press.<sup>61</sup>

According to historian Andrea Merlotti, the term *stilista* was first used in studies of Italian literature, and described authors that devoted attention to the question of style. In the 1950s the terminology was transported to the industry setting to define someone whose job was to elaborate the design of large-scale goods: in particular, cars.<sup>62</sup> Slowly the terminology moved to fashion. According to Rosina, references to the figure of the fashion *stilista* started to appear in the mid-1960s.<sup>63</sup> This figure is nowadays considered the backbone of the success of the Milanese *prêt-à-porter*. However, writing in 1983, journalist Silvia Giacomoni remembers that this terminology was derogatory in the 1960s, and remarks that it still carried negative connotations in the 1980s.<sup>64</sup> In her opinion, the *stilista* was simply a designer for the clothing industry. Therefore, she finds it useful to compare the differences between the *stilista* and the product designer. She believes that the *stilisti* stood at the crossroads between the designers of the old school and the new ones. Like the old school designers, they worked towards the simplification and the acceleration of the production processes. However, like the new designers, they tried to influence consumers to choose products not only for their qualities, but for their power to define them socially and psychologically.<sup>65</sup>

In her 1983 book, Giacomoni is also very polemical about the *stilisti*. She accuses them of not being deeply-rooted in their city of Milan, and of being unable to get together as a group and reflect on their profession. She believes that the *stilisti* were very talented in what they were doing, but they did not have a cultural dimension, probably because they were unable to reflect on their role and

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<sup>61</sup> Sonnet Stanfill, *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945* (London : V&A Publishing, 2014), pp.23-24.

<sup>62</sup> Merlotti, *I Percorsi Della Moda made in Italy (1951-2010)*, p. 637.

<sup>63</sup> Rosina, *Textile the Foundation of Italian Couture*, p. 88.

<sup>64</sup> Silvia Giacomoni, *L'Italia Della Moda* (Milano: Mazzotta, 1984), p. 59.

<sup>65</sup> Giacomoni, *L'Italia della Moda*, p. 62.

unable to connect it to similar professions.<sup>66</sup> Her analysis is based on comparison with designers of the 'old generation', such as Marco Zanuso, Gae Aulenti, and Enzo Mari, who were working in the industry but were able to theorise their work.<sup>67</sup> Giacomoni hopes that the idea of having a museum of fashion in Milan could help in this direction.<sup>68</sup> She envisages a museum that could put together the preservation of historic treasures of the past, an archive of contemporary production, and a school for *stilisti*, photographers and models. Such a Milanese museum of fashion has not yet become a reality.<sup>69</sup>

It is important to highlight how in the 1950s, as we saw in Chapter Four, only a very few isolated textile producers programmed production in synergy with the designers. Materials were designed independently of the fashion houses' later designs. This, therefore, created a divergence between the products and their materials. Conversely, one of the innovations that the *stilista* generated was his/her involvement in textile design in collaboration with textile producers: this would become an important aspect of the *prêt-à-porter* system. Furthermore, with the change of production mode, from couture to ready-to-wear, there was also a shift from the uniqueness of the spectacular dress to the mass-produced dress that could be reproduced in many copies. In this new panorama, the accent was therefore placed on the creativity and centrality of the *stilisti* and their ability to encompass a particular style.<sup>70</sup>

The *stilista*, together with the fashion designer more generally, has been mythologised in the fashion literature and has been considered the main motor behind the success of the Italian *prêt-à-porter*.<sup>71</sup> However, I would like to analyse this phenomenon from a different angle. I see the *stilista* as the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>68</sup> This is a battle that the director of the Civiche Raccolte di Arte Applicate del Castello Sforzesco, Clelia Alberici, had been fighting since 1976.

<sup>69</sup> Since 2010 Palazzo Morando in Milan has been allocated as the museum to exhibit the Milanese historic textile collection and the collections of dresses, accessories and uniforms from Raccolte d'Arti Applicate del Castello Sforzesco. *Costume Moda Immagine Palazzo Morando*, <http://www.costumemodaimmagine.mi.it/edn>, Accessed, 4 September 2018 vols (d). However, this museum does not respond yet to the need for an institution that could preserve and promote contemporary Italian fashion. More on this aspect in the Introduction of this thesis.

<sup>70</sup> Ed. Bianchino, *Disegno della Moda Italiana*, p. 46

<sup>71</sup> Gnoli, *Un Secolo di Moda Italiana*, pp. 189-196; Segre, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter in the World of Fast Fashion', p. 124.

result of a changed approach to industrial production; and as Segre puts it, the *stilista* 'also indicates the assertion of a different fashion culture and underlines the dramatic change that *prêt-à-porter* represents in relation to Italian Style'.<sup>72</sup>

Walter Albini has been heralded as the prototype of this new professional figure.<sup>73</sup> He was the first designer who experimented in Italy with new contractual and aesthetic ways.<sup>74</sup> In the contractual sphere, he created an equal relationship between producer and designer. Albini did that by opening a small company to produce clothing with his business partner Luciano Papini. The company was called Mister Fox and it had a huge success with its autumn-winter 1970-71 collection, presented at Palazzo Pitti in April 1970 in Florence.<sup>75</sup> In the aesthetic sphere, Albini understood that in the new climate of young fashion, already emerging in Italy in the 1960s (and described in Chapter Three), the fashion creative should not only design singular pieces of clothing. Instead, they created a style, encompassing a complete collection and including accessories that consumers could buy into.

Fashion historians agree that Albini's fashion show at the *Circolo del Giardino* in Milan 27 April 1971 (for the 1971-72 autumn-winter collection) was the point of departure from the old conventions.<sup>76</sup> Albini presented one hundred and eighty garments produced by five companies. Each company specialised in one sector: Basile for day suits and coats; Escargot for knitwear; Diamant's for shirts; Callaghan for jerseys; and Mister Fox for evening dresses. The collection was unified by the name of Albini which appeared on each label as 'Walter Albini for', followed by the name of the producer.<sup>77</sup>

As Chapter Three demonstrates, experimental collaborations between industry and couturiers were appearing across the country. Although not always long-lived, they started the dialogue between creative personalities and mass production. In the case of GFT the history of dialogue was uninterrupted, as a collaboration was instituted with *alta moda* and Biki in the 1960s and, in the next decade, the company devised a new method of production in response to the international competition and the shift in consumers' taste. The strategy involved the switch of some of its

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<sup>72</sup> Segre, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter in the World of Fast Fashion', p. 124.

<sup>73</sup> Morini, *Storia della Moda*, p. 326 and Simona Segre Reinach, 'Albini, Walter', in *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, ed. by Valerie Steele (Oxford: Berg, 2010a), pp. 19-20. Merlo and Polese, *Italy*, p. 256.

<sup>74</sup> Morini, *Storia della Moda*, p. 326.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 326-327.

<sup>76</sup> Gnoli, *Un secolo di Moda Italiana*, p. 192, Enrica Morini and Nicoletta Bocca, 'Stylism in Women's Fashion', in *Italian Fashion. from Anti-Fashion to Stylism.*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi, 2 vols (Milan: Electa, 1987), pp. 64-101.

<sup>77</sup> Morini, *Storia della Moda*, pp. 330-331.

production from its long-established middle-market products to the one of high-quality ready-to-wear. The typical GFT production was characterised by high quantity and standardised goods organised in many similar, parallel lines of products. To better exploit the Taylorist production lines a collaboration with the *stilisti* was established. This new relationship started from 1971 with Emanuel Ungaro and continued in 1978 with Giorgio Armani.<sup>78</sup> The GFT/*prêt-à-porter* products signed by the *stilisti* were instead very differentiated, both in the composition of the collections and in the fact that they rapidly followed one another. Furthermore, the quantity was limited to avoid massification and therefore overproduction and the production timing was very strict as to follow the calendars of events that the *stilista* needed to be part of.<sup>79</sup> As described by political scientist Richard M. Locke, this kind of high-end ready-to-wear was the most specialised and it produced limited quantity, not more than ten or twenty units and using quality, high-cost materials often 'especially designed for each model'.<sup>80</sup> The *stilista* was authoring lines that the GFT could rapidly and effectively distribute to the domestic and international market. The *stilista* had the freedom to design their products autonomously, and was aided by a team of specialists and collaborators who helped with the textile research, and with prototyping the collections for production.

The system of partnership between *stilista* and GFT was radically different from the collaboration between the same company with *alta moda* and Biki in 1957 as seen in Chapter Three. While earlier the couturier was kept out of the production line and only provided drawings, here a whole team was employed to translate in the best possible way the idea of the *stilista*. Locke describes this process as starting with the *stilista's* sketch. The initial idea on the drawing was interpreted by the *stilista's* collaborators, the *modellisti*, highly-skilled workers who translated the first design into a prototype and then into a manufacturable product. However, this process, instead of being completely taken over by GFT as in the case of Biki, was now a strict collaboration between the whole team. This kind of experimentation between manufacturers and designers was crucial and it showed the way to others around Italy, who devised similar partnerships.

In this period, the *stilisti* were tied to the manufacturing companies that produced their designed goods by consultancy agreements, in the first instance. Subsequently, consultancy agreements were gradually substituted by licensing agreements, which regulated the right to use a design by a

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<sup>78</sup> These collaborations continued with Valentino (1979), Louis Féraud (1982), Massimo Osti (1984), Chiara Boni (1985), Claude Montana, Jimmy Taverniti e Dior (1987); as detailed in Giulia Caccia and Sara Micheletta, *Gruppo Finanziario Tessile Inventario*, 1 vols (Torino: 2014), p. xi.

<sup>79</sup> Caccia and Micheletta, *Gruppo Finanziario Tessile*, p. xi.

<sup>80</sup> Locke, *Unity in Diversity*, pp. 260-261.

manufacturer who was not the original creator. Merlo and Polese pinpoint an evolution of this type of contract that supported the designers and their style, in various ways and through the various stages of their brand development.<sup>81</sup> Merlo and Polese believe that this contractual relation between designer and industry was the backbone of Italy's fashion success in this period, as it allowed Italian *stilisti* to 'become increasingly independent as far as retailing strategies are concerned'.<sup>82</sup> The partnership of Italian fashion designers with industrial clothing companies, such as Armani with GFT or Albini for Zama, gave the designers an understanding of the 'business world before becoming entrepreneurs themselves', and they were thereby equipped to create their own independent labels at a later date.<sup>83</sup>

Although there were common characteristics, the relationship between *stilisti* and manufacturers could differ greatly. As Giacomoni describes them, partnership models could range from full ownership of the brand name by the manufacturer, to a simple consultancy agreement. Therefore in some cases, one can speak about turnover, in others about royalties or commissions. In some cases, the *stilista* benefitted from forms of shareholding within the company that produced the goods. One way, as we have seen, was represented by the model GFT and *stilista*, which meant the stylistic qualification of the industrial product in which the GFT had the role of 'silent' producer and the *stilista* was promoted as the author. The opposite was also a viable method, as with Max Mara where the designers were employed but their names never emerged, and the only name put forward was that of the brand.<sup>84</sup> Later, the Gianni Versace s.r.l. had a different structure: it was much more self-directed, with production given to many companies chosen according to their specialisation. These production companies did not have a share in the designer's company.<sup>85</sup> Each *stilista* found their own way of collaborating with the manufacturer to guarantee both the maximum of flexibility as well as reliability.<sup>86</sup> These agreements provided the *stilisti* with the 'financial

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<sup>81</sup> These included an emerging stage, a style extension, production of related articles, such as accessories and cosmetics and the final stage of internationalisation. Merlo and Polese, *Italy*, p. 257.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Morini, *Storia Della Moda : XVIII - XXI Secolo*, p. 336.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Giacomoni, *L'Italia della Moda*, p. 77.

resources – the royalties paid by industrial firms for licence to use the brand and for the promotion of the collections – which made them increasingly independent in matters of business strategy'.<sup>87</sup>

The *stilisti*, in their desire to create innovative and distinguished goods, exploited the Italian industrial system very effectively, and in return the manufacturers supported the stilisti with creative original products. A *stilista*, either for their brand or for the companies they worked for, would get in touch directly with the producers of raw materials or textiles, and through this interaction they oriented the manufacturers' choice of products, material and colours. In this way the manufacturers acquired a new sensibility, and got closer to the needs of the market's final products. This is not to say that the vitality of the Italian fashion industry in this period is to be ascribed solely to the intervention of the *stilista*. The *stilisti* in Italy could draw on a lively tradition of artisanal know-how, and instead of just making use of the products available, they always requested goods made with innovative production techniques. In this way the *stilisti* pushed back the boundaries of what manufacturers could achieve. The new relationships between *stilista* and the manufacturers of yarn and textiles created new incentives for manufacturers' innovation, competitiveness, and productivity.<sup>88</sup>

### ***Stilista* and Industrial Production**

By nature, fashion is not a homogeneous product. It is made of a variety of materials, manufactured in many ways. According to economist Salvo Testa, Italian fashion supply chain differs from other competitor countries, because it is made up of multiple, distinct parts and at the same time complete as it can satisfy all market levels. Furthermore, because in the fashion business seasonal timing is of the essence, it is a strategic advantage to have business partners and collaborators close by (both logistically and culturally). This advantage is the prerogative mainly of Italian *stilisti* and garment makers. Testa also argues that the ease with which the Italian producers of yarns and textiles interact with clothing manufacturers, knitwear producers and *stilisti*, favouring the innovation of the product, is linked not only to the geographical and cultural closeness of the players, but also to these companies' smaller dimensions in comparison with the other European producers. This offers Italian suppliers a certain level of flexibility. Finally, in Italy the industries have managed to retain an artisanal culture that, on the contrary, has been lost in other countries such as Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Merlo and Polese, 'Italian Fashion Business', p. 351.

<sup>88</sup> Giacomoni, *L'Italia Della Moda*, p. 13.

<sup>89</sup> Testa, 'La Specificità Della Filiera Italiana Della Moda', p. 711.

Italy's fashion industrial districts entail a certain degree of delocalisation. As Bianchino explains, this means that the design of *prêt-à-porter* takes place inside the atelier (possibly in Milan) and the production happens somewhere else probably far away.<sup>90</sup> Conversely, for the *alta moda*, the design project was done externally by professional designers and then the garment was made inside the atelier. This implies that in the period under consideration, the places of design and realisation of the projects were changing drastically. For Milanese *prêt-à-porter*, it was no longer the atelier, but the factory where experimentation and research were taking place, as innovative technical solutions were to be found at the factory. Therefore, the Milanese atelier has become the centre of design and distribution towards the factories located around Italy, and no longer the place where the garments are made and prototyped.<sup>91</sup> This shift has had implications not only for the location of design, but also for the drawing practice, as will be investigated in Chapter Six.

### Transition from *Carnettista* to *Stilista*

As explained in Chapter Four, the *carnettista* started to disappear with the decline of the *sartoria* and the contemporary rise of *prêt-à-porter* at the end of 1960s. At this point textile manufacturers such as Faliero Sarti opened commercial departments within their companies and started to contact designers and couturiers by themselves without the aid of the *carnettista*. Roberto Sarti recalls how he oversaw the commercial aspect of his father's company, and how he travelled to Rome with their own sample books and went directly to couturiers such as Irene Galitzine.<sup>92</sup>

In the same period the figure of the *stilista* started to appear, and, as in the example of GFT, anticipated trends in the planning of industrial production.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, the *stilista* could give directions to the textile producer in matters of taste and style. As Roberto Sarti explains, Giorgio Armani at the beginning of his career would examine the Sarti's new seasonal textile production himself and if he did not like something he would tell Roberto Sarti 'to sell it to the Germans', and that it was not something he would buy.<sup>94</sup> The textile producer would then take on board the suggestions and produce something that would please a given designer. These requests needed to

<sup>90</sup> Bianchino, *Disegno della Moda Italiana*, p. 47, Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Breve Storia Della Moda in Italia* (Il Mulino, 2014), p. 183. She describes how in the industrial district of Carpi, knitwear was produced and designed, but signed somewhere else.

<sup>91</sup> Bianchino and Quintavalle, *Moda: dalla fiaba al design*, p. 132.

<sup>92</sup> Roberto Sarti interview with the author 18 July 2017 in Appendix.

<sup>93</sup> Merlo and Polese, *Italy*, p. 256.

<sup>94</sup> Roberto Sarti interview with the author 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1.

be balanced as there was the risk of making a collection ‘too Armani’, for example, with a danger of losing other clients with different aesthetics. There had to be a fine balance between following a *stilista*’s directions and producing textiles for a wider clientele.<sup>95</sup>

At the end of the 1960s, with the decline of the *sartoria*, some of the *carnettista*’s functions were either internalised in the textile companies, such as the style office and commercial department. The *carnettista*’s function as a barometer of style and taste was taken over by the *stilista*, whose taste was incorporated into their own brand. Just as the *carnettista* was associated with quality and taste for *alta moda*, the *stilista* bestowed an aura of glamour and style to the machine-made garments and collection that bore their name. Although the *stilista* fulfilled a different function than that of the *carnettista*, they both operated as connections between industry and fashion. They linked different producers dispersed in the territory and districts, and with their knowledge of both the fashion industry and textile production, they acted as mediators as well as authors by signing their products.

The roles of both *carnettista* and *stilista* make sense in the Italian fashion landscape of small industries, for two reasons. Firstly, they give a unified name in a collection to products coming from different manufacturers. As an example, Walter Albini, merged under his name the production of various specialised companies, just as the *carnettisti* would do by collecting under their name the products made by different textile producers.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, the *stilista* also ‘helped create specialised companies in different sections of industry, so that they could collaborate to produce a collection with recognizable brand names’.<sup>97</sup>

To better understand how the *stilisti* operated in such a panorama, it is important to consider the ways in which they created their own collections and lines. Chapter Six will delve into this aspect by examining their design process.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, some *stilisti* such as Armani for GFT worked for a bigger company directing the production.

<sup>97</sup> Segre, ‘Albini’, p. 19.

## Chapter 6 – Designing for Mass-Production

### Designing Fashion

Chapter Five has analysed how *prêt-à-porter* was produced in the *distretti industriali* and coordinated by the *stilisti*. This chapter takes a step back and focuses on how the *stilista's* creativity is put on paper, on fashion working drawings, and communicated to the production line. It is argued that these drawings are not merely creative ideas, but they represent a way of communicating between the designers and the intermediary based at the factory.

During the 1950s, fashion drawings were used mainly for presentation; the designs for *prêt-à-porter* are instead operational drawings. They feature indications of modifications, sizes, models, order of entry for the fashion show. For these reasons there are cuts in the paper, while additions may be glued, stapled and attached with Sellotape. They are working documents. However, these are not only operational drawings; they have also been considered as aesthetic works in their own right. For this reason, traditionally the fashion working drawing has been studied mainly to explain the designers inspiration and origin of their ideas or as a finished fashion illustration.<sup>1</sup> As the field has not been the subject of in-depth academic studies, this section firstly chronicles the ways in which fashion drawings have been approached in previous literature and how the focus has been put on fashion illustration rather than on the more technical drawings.

The second part of the chapter attempts to decode working fashion drawings by unpacking a corpus of 1970s and 1980s works on paper, and highlighting their characteristics such as their materials, style, aesthetics, inscriptions and presence of textiles. The analysis of these drawings reveals both creative and productive processes, such as the way the *stilista* visualises the idea of a product on paper, and how they direct the use textiles and other materials in the final garment. The drawings can also reveal the way in which the *stilisti* collaborate with various stakeholders. Furthermore, these documents disclose some of the specific mechanisms of the Italian fashion and textile system in the 1970s and 1980s: they underline and expose the behind-the-scenes process of fashion ideation and production. These are very different from the drawings that Italian couturiers used to copy from French designs, as seen in Chapter Two. These are designs for mass-produced, manufactured ready-to-wear clothing, and as such they are new and specific to this period. Working

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in fashion exhibitions such as *The Glamour of Italian Fashion*, the sketches by Mila Schon and Jole Veneziani were used to accompany the display of their respective garments. Furthermore, recently Maison Valentino, for their haute couture high-profile garments worn by celebrities at the Festival of Cinema of Venice, shared on Instagram what they call a sketch of their creation. This however is not a working drawing or sketch where the idea is tested and worked out, but it is a very finalised drawing. Instagram Maison Valentino on 2 September 2018.

fashion drawings are not pure illustration, they are operational documents and therefore shed light on the process and they sit at the intersection between creativity and production and this chapter employs them to scrutinise the creation and production of *prêt-à-porter* fashion.

In Chapter One of this thesis priority was given to the analysis of garments to understand production. Here the focus is on working fashion drawings used during the creation of ready-to-wear garments. This is because the drawings better show the process behind producing fashion as they incorporate different voices and testify to the ways in which things were made much better than the final garment.

## Literature Review for Fashion Working Drawings

Fashion working drawings have rarely been the subject of academic investigation, as they have been often treated as fashion illustrations.<sup>2</sup> These two categories, although very similar and made in the same medium, sit at opposite ends of the fashion production process. Fashion historian Laird Borrelli has written profusely about the subject of fashion drawing without sufficient distinction between the various types. In her 2008 book *Fashion Illustration by Fashion Designers* she declares that this publication, because it displays the work of fashion designers, differs greatly from her other books on fashion illustration that showcased the production of professional illustrators. Although she explains in the introduction that most of the drawings in her book were not meant for public view and that these drawings need to be regarded as ‘working documents to inspire and instruct design’, the fact that the book is called *Fashion illustration* makes the distinction between the two categories even less clear.<sup>3</sup>

An exception to the lack of interest in such documents is represented in Italy by the work of Italian fashion historian Gloria Bianchino and historian Arturo Carlo Quintavalle at the *Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione* (Communication Study Centre Archive - CSAC) in Parma. Bianchino and Quintavalle have been collecting and studying the working fashion drawings of Italian *stilisti* together with *croquis* made for couturiers.<sup>4</sup> This rich material has been thematically investigated in a series of exhibitions and publications that have looked at the medium in depth. These include,

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<sup>2</sup> No academic English books have been specifically written on the subject. Only fashion illustration has been analysed much more in detail, however, there has not been much critical work. For an overview on fashion illustration history see Laird Borrelli, 'Fashion Illustration', in *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, ed. by Valerie Steele (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 288-290. There have been few Italian books written on the subjects.

<sup>3</sup> Laird Borrelli, *Fashion Illustration by Fashion Designers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> The CSAC collection preserves circa 70,000 fashion drawings from 1940s to 1980s by Italian fashion designers, see *Moda*, <https://www.csacparma.it/portfolio/moda/> [Accessed 2 September 2018].

*Brunetta, Moda, Critica e Storia*, in 1981; *Sorelle Fontana* in 1984; *Italian Fashion Designing*, in 1987 and *Walter Albini* in 1988.<sup>5</sup> These publications systematically scrutinise the corpus of fashion drawings with analytical entries and, in the introductory essays, they contextualise them in the historical, national and international background. These publications offer a helpful framework to better interpret the medium.

In a further publication on fashion drawings, *Moda: dalla Fiaba al Design*, Bianchino reflects on the lack of scholarship and believes that working drawings in the French fashion ateliers at the beginning of the twentieth century were discarded, because they were considered redundant in comparison with the ateliers' beautifully-rendered symbolic illustrations in the Art Nouveau style. Furthermore, she highlights a contradiction within the working fashion drawing itself. Because by nature it refers to a process, and often may not fully represent a finished product, it is usually transformed into fashion illustration. Working fashion drawings have therefore been variously transformed, superseded or destroyed, leading to a shortage of primary material to investigate, and a consequent paucity of studies in this field.<sup>6</sup>

Although the academic field has not devoted much attention to these objects, there is a proliferation of manuals for fashion students, aimed at teaching them how to draw for the fashion industry. These books offer a better identification of the different types of drawings. Illustrator Patrick John Ireland in his 1982 manual devoted to 'students and people in the industry to develop fashion sketching techniques', divides the field into sketches, designs within the fashion industry, presentation drawings, and fashion illustration.<sup>7</sup> These headings help clarify some of the variations within the larger field of fashion drawings. Sketching techniques are mainly taught to students to develop skills when recording fashion shows, reporting on trends and on a manufacture full collection.<sup>8</sup> The design for the fashion industry is mainly related to designing for a production sheet; it can also be referred to as technical drawing. This type of drawing gives the details of costing and is used to 'verify that

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<sup>5</sup> Gloria Bianchino and Arturo Quintavalle, *Sorelle Fontana* (Parma: Università di Parma, Centro studi e archivio della comunicazione, 1984)., Brunetta Nodolini and A Bernasconi, *Brunetta, Moda Critica Storia* (Parma: Università di Parma, Centro studi e archivio della comunicazione, 1981)., Bonizza Giordani Aragno, Francesca Zaltieri and Gloria Bianchino, *Walter Albini* (Parma: Università di Parma, Centro studi e archivio della comunicazione, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Gloria Bianchino and Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Moda: Dalla Fiaba Al Design. Italia, 1951-1989* (Novara: DeAgostini, 1989).pp. 140-141.

<sup>7</sup> Ireland, *Fashion design drawing and Presentation*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

every aspect is accurate and been accounted for, such as for darts, seams, buttons'.<sup>9</sup> Presentation drawings, on the other hand, are used when a designer is showing a collection to potential clients.<sup>10</sup> Finally Ireland gives a very useful definition of fashion illustration, as aimed at promoting designs which are already finished. Therefore the 'fashion illustrator does not design, but rather illustrate[s] clothes for promotion'.<sup>11</sup> Although these definitions are useful to clarify an otherwise confused field, Ireland does not decode the characteristics of fashion working drawings.

## Working Fashion Drawing Decoded

Although the distinction between fashion illustration and designers' working drawings is blurred in Borrelli's book title, she gives a few definitions and designers' opinions that help us to better understand the nature of, as she puts it, 'designers' sketches'. Borrelli does so by asking some designers what their relationship with the medium is. From their answers, it emerges that drawings can create atmosphere, tactile sensations and emotions. Furthermore, for some of them the drawing is an immediate way to translate an idea, but as many designers declare, often the drawing is only the beginning of an idea, and does not always correspond to the final objects. In the words of a Central Saint Martin's graduate, Molly Grad, '[the fashion working drawing] is a way of seeing into a designer's thought process'.<sup>12</sup> For others, however, the drawing and the final garment completely correspond.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the singular opinions, it is clear that in its unfinished nature the working drawing encompasses, and results from, a process.

Through the words of many of the designers interviewed by Borrelli, a polyphony of opinions emerges. Often the drawing is disassociated from the final garment because of the process that operates between idea and product. The drawing does not have physical limitations and can carry an atmosphere that sometimes is difficult to translate in the final garment.<sup>14</sup> The creatives behind the Boudicca British label define drawing as 'the major printer of the imagination'.<sup>15</sup> For some, such as Herve I. Leroux, the drawing is only a starting place, for others, the drawings are the ideal to which

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>12</sup> Borrelli, *Fashion Illustration by Fashion Designers*, p.7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

the final garment needs to aspire.<sup>16</sup> In yet another view, James Thomas sees the drawing is a space where accidents can happen, which are important for his design process.<sup>17</sup> For some, drawings are the start, but for others, such as Icheal Vollbracht, the fabric is the outset of the process and the drawing comes second.<sup>18</sup> On the contrary Jens Laugesen believes that the final garment is a better version of the design on paper because it is real and not an 'illustration of an idea'.<sup>19</sup> The above quotes demonstrate how, whatever the value that a given designer puts on the working fashion drawings, these are mainly the onset of the creative process. Whether done by hand or using computers, they are the direct contact with the designer's inspirations and visions. In ready-to-wear these initial unique ideas are then multiplied in the making of hundreds of reproducible garments.

However, while working drawings can be positioned at the beginning of the process of making fashion, they are also composite and multi-layered testimonies to the complex path of fashion production. If carefully decoded, one can unearth the textile producers, accessory makers, name of the model, order of fashion show entrance, and much more.

As we have seen, these sorts of documents are difficult to study as they do not often survive in designers' archives, as they are considered ephemeral objects not worth preserving. Their working nature is often visible in the poor-quality paper employed, or the different hands (authors) present in the same page. Often words are crossed out, notes are scribbled, and stains of ink, coffee or glue are scattered around. These documents were never created to be seen in a public setting. However, they are often incredibly detailed and artistic. In this section I analyse working fashion drawings by some Italian *stilisti* of the late 1970s and 1980s, such as Krizia, Gianni Versace, Gianfranco Ferré and Walter Albini, to understand their function, and thereby to unpick some aspects of the process and production of Italian ready-to-wear.

A seminal exhibition on Versace's work, *L'abito per pensare*, was organised in 1989 at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. On that occasion a thorough examination of the *stilista's* production was displayed. Amongst the many objects in the exhibition were working fashion drawings. The editor of the catalogue, fashion historian Nicoletta Bocca, unpicks a wealth of information from them, revealing a level of detail only possible because the information was retrieved in collaboration with

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 108 and p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.114.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>19</sup> Ireland, *Fashion Design Drawing*, p. 118.

factory workers, designers and collaborators for the exhibition. For instance, Bocca states that one ensemble was requested as a prototype, but no indication on the drawing hints at this as the information came from verbal communication.<sup>20</sup>

She differentiates the drawings made for the Versace production according to four stages. The first stage is a very stylised drawing by Versace with a wealth of written indications and few garment details. The second is a more detailed drawing (*disegno preparatorio*) made to express the *stilista's* ideas. The third stage is a drawing of a look, a very detailed drawing with the addition of accessories, a model's face and hair style. This is made to communicate to the *modellisti* the total vision and look wanted by Versace. Finally, the fourth stage is a drawing for illustration used by the press office to present the model to journalists.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the fashion working drawings had to be translated into a 'technical drawing'. Most designers do not do this by themselves: it is usually the responsibility of a team of junior designers. The technical drawing includes all the information for the realisation of the garments, as well as the photocopy of the drawing, the list of all materials needed for the final piece. The quantities are necessary to measure the cost of production related to the use of materials.<sup>22</sup> Only by analysing this technical sheet can one work out exactly what textiles were finally employed in the garments included in the final collection. This is because different materials from a variety of producers are tried out in the making of the prototypes.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it is not necessarily the fabric that is attached to the working fashion drawing that is used in the final product.<sup>24</sup>

Bocca argues that the temptation to realise a beautiful drawing can be damaging to the design project, because it focuses on details that are not essential, that do not respond to the real problems of production, and that slow down the creative process. While a client, the designer, or maybe the press would appreciate better a finished, beautiful drawing, the factory workers preferred Versace's

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<sup>20</sup> Nicoletta Bocca, 'La Forma Del Processo Creativo', in *Gianni Versace: L'Abito Per Pensare*, ed. by Nicoletta Bocca and Chiara Buss (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore Arte, 1989), pp. 194-204., (p. 202).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203, drawing 162 d.

<sup>24</sup> In case of the aforementioned Versace exhibition, many of the technical drawings were conserved in the factory in Novara. It is important to highlight this because the rest of the drawings preserved by the CSAC centre in Parma were normally kept in the style office of the designer. The significance of provenance is important to highlight who the end-users of these objects were.

bare preparatory drawings because they were very clear about the proportions that were crucial for the *modellisti*.<sup>25</sup>

This is more of a concern in the ready-to-wear setting, as the fast and accurate production of the garment is the key to its success. In couture, there was the need to illustrate the garment for a client, but now the communication with production is paramount, as the two operations were not happening in the same environment. This fashion manufacturing shift leads to the decline of the *figurinista*, the person responsible for visualising garments for the clients to choose from. With *prêt-à-porter* the *figurinista* and the *stilista* merge into one person who must be able, through drawings, to communicate to the factory floor. The 'selling' role previously performed by fashion illustration is then taken over mainly by the photographic image.<sup>26</sup> According to Testa, the changes to the structure of the atelier and to the relationship with the industrial production also change the way in which a garment is created. The sketch, as he calls it, is only a small part of the process that arrives at the production of a dress. The *stilista* constantly intervene in this process to guarantee the quality and aesthetics.

Bocca also explains that Versace changed many details in the prototyping stage and that his final garments were very different from the initial drawings for this reason. Each designer works in a different way, but there are some general rules that can be extrapolated to better understand these drawings.<sup>27</sup> What follows is an analysis of the working fashion drawing in its various forms: type of paper, drawing, style, aesthetic and textiles.

#### Paper, Type of Drawing and Inscriptions

In absence of a specific literature on the field, I believe the best approach to understand working fashion drawings is to use the Inside-Out method and to unpeel the layers, starting from the type of paper employed. This will reveal how every aspect matter, and that each has a function that can be decoded.

Often the drawings are on white thin anonymous photocopy paper, but nicer cardboard has also been employed. Sometime the page is stapled on to thicker cardboard with punch holes on the sides. This is probably done to collect and organise the final selected drawings of a collection in a folder, as seen in Figure 65.

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<sup>25</sup> Bocca, 'La Forma del Processo Creativo', p. 198, drawing 160a.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

On this type of material, the *stilista*, or the person who physically make the drawings, designs in pencil, pen, markers, pastels, his or her idea of a certain model or collection.

The drawings on the page can take several forms, for example in Figure 66 Walter Albini is experimenting with different types of collars for a blouse and therefore, as he is working out a specific detail, the lines are just sketched.

On other occasions, details such as the back, an accessory, or an alternative element may be enlarged and carefully defined to better communicate the final desired effect (Figure 67). Interpreting the various hands and inscriptions on a fashion working drawing can be a very fiddly and painstaking activity. The handwriting does not always belong to the designer; and often it is hard to decode them. The multiplicity of voices, detected on the drawing through the different handwriting, testifies to the collaborative nature of such projects. In this light, the designer is not seen as the lone genius who is producing single-handedly the collection, but each garment can be seen as a collaborative effort.

Often the inscriptions describe some aspects of the garment, such as specifying that the hem is meant to be in *passenterie*, or the colour and fabric that is supposed to be used (especially when the drawings are only black-and-white sketches in pencil).<sup>28</sup> Some of the words are inscribed to explain the sketch of the designer, as per Figure 67. Here, the arrow explains how part of the t-shirt should be produced. In this case there are alternating bands of eyelets and chains. The handwriting is not necessarily the *stilista's* but could possibly be the *modellista* or a collaborator who had worked out what kind of production method is best applied to the initial ideas.

The inscriptions are often in different colours, and this helps us to detect who is writing. Sometimes a dialogue can almost be reconstructed by reading these words on some of the drawings. In one instance an inscription on a Krizia Maglia drawing reads: 'Gisella call me before making the model - I am afraid that this textile will roll up'.<sup>29</sup> In some cases, questions and answers are indicated on the drawing: such as: 'cotton or wool?' 'I prefer wool'.<sup>30</sup>

At the factory, more than one trial and prototype would be made to interpret the drawing. As evident in Figure 68, the modifications, such as shortening the sleeve or centring the plait, are listed precisely under the headings 'first trial' and 'second trial'.

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<sup>28</sup> Walter Albini drawing for Krizia 1965-70, Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

<sup>29</sup> Krizia, drawing 117, 1979, Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

<sup>30</sup> Krizia Maglia, drawing 2, Estate 1981, Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

When the drawing is very elaborate and the item represented has probably been selected for production, or is in a much more advanced creative stage, the inscriptions became more prominent. Often they are extended on the reverse of the main drawing, as seen in Figure 69.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 65. Krizia, working fashion drawing, (1975).  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

These indications are very precise, and they imply that some sorts of prototypes have been already tried out. They refer to the lengths of waistcoat and seams, for example. Also, there are suggestions as to how to try to 'make the shoulders more squared' or how to make the pockets. The most precise and refined drawings also tend to have the largest number of written indications. In this case, the figure is in colour, has a face and is smoking a long cigarette and all the elements of the outfit are carefully drawn, even the little elastic band at the arm. Furthermore, buttons and cufflinks are shown in enlarged detail, the types of fabrics have been finalised, and samples of the wool yarn are attached with Sellotape. According to Bocca a drawing densely surrounded by writing indicates how the *modellista* technically will make the piece. In this specific case, the indications on the verso represent the variations decided during the first trial that have to be implemented in the second prototype.<sup>31</sup>

The drawing in Figure 69 by Walter Albini for Krizia has been found in a folder together with similar drawings, probably part of a collection that was produced. On the drawing number 24 of the same series (Figure 70) there is a picture of an editorial pinned on to the paper that shows how the final look was photographed and modelled. The striking difference between the initial drawing and the finalised cardigan strikingly shows how the mood or the initial idea of a collection can get modified or even lost when the garment is finally made and styled for press purposes.

Often the drawings are beautifully rendered with plenty of details, such as facial features and hair styles. Colours are applied carefully and the whole composition is deliberately balanced. If the drawing remains in a pristine status with no corrections and writings, it probably did not pass the idea stage, and it was never translated into a finished garment. However, the lack of writing or alterations on the drawings could mean that the dialogue between *stilista* and *modellista* happened orally as it happened with Versace.<sup>32</sup> Another explanation, according to Bianchino, could be that the 'clean' drawings are executed after the garment was already finished, and became just an illustration of it. However, the more the initial drawing has been modified and worked on, the more it represents an advanced stage of production. In a 1979 Krizia drawing (Figure 71) the delicate nuance of colour and precious details are coarsely superimposed with quick sketches of flowers, and arrows that indicate their planned position. Operational needs are clearly superimposed and gain priority over the aesthetic of the composition.

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<sup>31</sup> Bocca, 'La Forma del Processo Creativo', p.202.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 66. Walter Albini for Krizia, Working fashion drawing, (1965-70).*  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 67. Walter Albini for Krizia, Working fashion drawing, (1965-70).*  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 68. Krizia Maglia, working fashion drawing for a blue silk cardigan, (1979).*  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 69. Walter Albini for Krizia, Working fashion drawing, (1971).*  
*Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 70. Walter Albini for Krizia, Working fashion drawing, (1971).*  
*Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

## Style and Aesthetics

As seen in the previous section, every designer has a very personal and particular relationship with fashion designing. Gianfranco Ferré, for example, designs his garments himself, with a very distinctive style.<sup>33</sup> According to the director of the Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Rita Airaghi,

for Ferré creating an outfit means starting a process of formal constructing through the elaboration of simple geometrical forms into complex structure developed into their three dimensionality the first step required in this process of elaboration in the 'definition' of the forms themselves by means of a *bozzetto*, a sketch'.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, Krizia *stilista* and brand owner, Mariuccia Mandelli, does not design herself; instead a team of designers is in charge of putting on to paper her various ideas. If they propose their own ideas, these need to be verified and approved by the head.<sup>35</sup> According to Quintavalle and Bianchino Krizia's project planning and designing form an example of the industrialisation of fashion even in its ideation phase. These authors believe that the drawings realised for Krizia by different designers all follow the same structure, they are precise and feature details, they are drawings on which one could work, and they are either physically sent to the factory or their photocopy is.<sup>36</sup>

In Italian *prêt-à-porter* the different brands and *stilisti* develop a unique and specific style not only for their garments and accessories, but also for their drawings.<sup>37</sup> This is a significant change from the previous decade, when fashion drawings for the Italian couture houses were commissioned from the same *figurinisti* and they ended up looking very similar one to another. The couture atelier was more concerned to create a typified style that reconnected to French couture, rather than to develop its unique trademark.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Bianchino and Quintavalle, *Moda: dalla fiaba al design*, p. 153.

<sup>34</sup> Rita Airaghi, *Disegni*, ed. by Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré (Milano: Skira, 2010), p.5.

<sup>35</sup> Bianchino and Quintavalle, *Moda: dalla Fiaba al Design*, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>37</sup> Gloria Bianchino in the book *Italian Fashion Designing*, pp. 44-53, defines genres of Italian fashion drawing and she find artistic references for some of them (i.e. Ferré connected with Russian constructivists, Armani was more influenced by the 1930s). She compares the design inside the atelier of *prêt-à-porter* to the one in an architectural studio: the *stilista* is similar to the architect who designs the project. However, its development, layout, and execution are done by another designer within the team.

<sup>38</sup> Bianchino, *Italian Fashion Designing*, p.20.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 71. Krizia, working fashion drawing, (1979).  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

## Textiles

Working drawings are not only made of paper. Textile samples, sometimes leather and yarns are glued, stapled, or attached with Sellotape on the page.

Although the sample dimensions are small, the samples are important, as skilful designers can get a wealth of information about the pattern, consistency, touch and materials. Bigger material samples are however employed in other types of documents that are used to record an entire collection. These sheets are sometimes called *schede colori*, and they offer an overview of the materials used within the final collection. An example can be seen in Figure 73 for a collection designed by Karl Lagerfeld for Krizia.

The samples of fabric or other materials such as leather or wool would not only be present to indicate the fabric for the main outfit, but also for accessories, such as hosiery and shoes (Figures 74 and 75). Such documents remind us that at this stage of production, the collection is only a prototype, hence the indication of how many pairs of tights and shoes are needed for the setting up of the fashion show.

How these little pieces of material reach this position is the result of a journey from the textile mill to the designer and back. Prato wool textile producer Roberto Sarti remembers how some *stilisti* like Armani would come to his mill to view his textile collection, and they would pair the drawings to the fabrics. Sarti remembers that the *stilisti* would go to him with their drawings and take samples of textiles, saying, ‘this textile I will use for this drawing; this other textile for this other model’. Sarti said: ‘it was like playing cards’.<sup>39</sup> According to this recollection, the fashion drawing came first and then the *stilisti*, who had deep knowledge of the Italian production panorama, sourced the material they wanted to use. As per the admission of Sarti, sometimes the designers would ask for special textile production or a special colour. This was the case with Versace. He liked the houndstooth wool fabric Sarti produced in 1983 (for the Autumn-Winter collection 1983/84), but he requested a special colourway for himself in black and white to use for the leather and wool ensemble seen in Figure 72.

Textile historian Chiara Buss writes about the relationship between Gianni Versace and the material he used, that:

When considering direct intervention in the production of the material itself, it is essential to clarify the extent to which a stylist can influence the actual

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<sup>39</sup> Roberto Sarti, interview with the author, 18 July 2017 in Appendix 1.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 72. Krizia, textile sample for collection, (1971).  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

Figure 73. Gianni Versace, Wool and leather ensemble (Autumn- Winter 1983-84), wool and leather, Victoria and Albert Museum: T.316&A-1985.  
Source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O233293/skirt-suit-versace-gianni/> [accessed 18 May 2019].

making of the material. In the majority of cases, textile manufacturers present fashion designers with a vast range of textiles each season, and it is the designer who narrows down the selection choosing the textures, patterns and colours best suited to transforming his idea into shapes and volumes. He often introduces only marginal variations so that the resulting material remains in keeping with his own style. Very often these variations aim to neutralize an overly characterful fabric, as too flamboyant a fabric can detract from the designer's formal concept. But Versace intervened in the most fundamental aspects of the fabric itself, involving himself with yarns and their blends, the weave, the pattern and the finish. He asked for the fabrics to be put through unprecedented processes in order to achieve something that had never been done before. Rather than choose any of the samples shown to him, he let them serve as trials for the fabrics he wanted.<sup>40</sup>

She adds that without the support of the centuries-old Italian artisanal tradition and the constant technical updating of the industry, the creativity of Versace could not have emerged. Although this is a very strong claim, a different industry would have certainly changed the nature of his brand's output. Analysing the working drawings of one designer, it is evident how a polyphony of producers is involved in the making of the final garment.

However, many drawings remain only on paper and were never developed into three-dimensional garments. In the case of Versace, around one thousand drawings would be made for a particular collection. This number would be reduced by the *stilista* in consultation with collaborators, including the person responsible for the relationship with the factory. Of these, some would be prototyped after a second selection made inside the factory for reasons of economic rationalisation. A further selection would be made to decide what became part of the collection to be sold and still fewer garments were presented in the fashion show, which according to Bocca included around one hundred exits with four hundred pieces combined with each other.

The textile applied to the drawing is often marked with the reference production number of the textile producer. This is a very important little code that identifies a given fabric in its specific colourway, and it allows us to trace the path that a textile travels from production to final use.

For instance, if one looks for this unique number within the Faliero Sarti archive, it is possible to follow the various steps in the production of the fabric. The same code is present on many pieces of fabric. The *tirelle*, big sample pieces of fabric, are used to show to the client the range and variety of the company's production. They are big enough that it is possible to appreciate the pattern repeat, and how they feel when physically touched. They are normally preserved

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<sup>40</sup> Claire Wilcox, Valerie Mendes and Chiara Buss, *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace* (London: V&A Publications, 2002), pp. 122-123.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 74. Krizia, material for Malerba hosiery, (1971).*  
*Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 75. Krizia, material for shoes and hosiery, (1971).*  
*Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

together with their colour variations to show alternatives. Hence, they almost work as a record of the company's production through the years.

The same reference production number is present in the *libri tecnici* (technical books). These are books that testify to the technical characteristics of the fabrics, the name of the client, the name of the product and its code as well as the method of production, as shown in Figure 76. In this case the code is 3778 Perlina.

The same code and textile can be also found as a small textile sample in big books such as the one in Figure 77. The purpose of such collections is to give an overview of the whole production of a given year. They are for internal use, a practical reference for workers in the factory. Once more we can find code 3778 Perlina. Here the fabric is cut into a small rectangle and gives an idea of what the final product would look like. Furthermore, as it is put into the context of the year of production, the book represents the creativity of the wool producer.

Samples of these fabrics would then leave the textile manufacturing company once the designers came and decided what textile they wanted to use. The type of material attached to the drawings varies depending on the garment produced. In the drawings for Krizia Maglia, the company's knitwear collection, a variety of wool and silk yarns are attached to the drawings, as they are the real foundation material of the garment (such as in Figure 78). In some drawings the yarn is also knitted to show the technique employed to use the yarn and a knitted sample is added to the drawing as seen in Figure 79.

The textile samples are also arranged to visualise how the colours would have looked together in an attempt to work out the *stilista's* ideas as seen in Figure 80.

From my analysis of Krizia, Albini and Versace, it appears that textiles are present when the drawings are more finalised. However, not all the designers would work in the same way.

Investigating the role of textiles in connection to these drawings reveals how they have been used in the production setting. Here textiles are a tangible part of the creative process. Whereas in Sections One and Two I have investigated textiles through their production aspects – their fibres, the production methods, the way in which they were commercialised – here we can see their function integral to a collaborative creative process. The swatches of fabrics attached to these drawings represent different players. If we look at them from a production prospective, they represent the textile manufacturers. These little squares stapled or simply glued to the page bear witness to the inventiveness and technical knowledge of the textile mills as well as representing the variety of their

production. They also however just exemplify 'the tip of the iceberg', as not all of the season's production would be selected by a designer,

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 76. Faliero Sarti, technical Book, featuring Perlina textile for client Sisan, (1967).*  
Source: Faliero Sarti archive, Parma.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 77. Faliero Sarti, sample books for internal consultation, (1960s).*  
Source: Faliero Sarti archive, Parma.

and only relatively few fabrics would leave the factory floor to be used in the final garment manufacturing.

As we deduced from the drawings, there is no longer an exclusive relationship between one designer and one textile producer. In the *Sala Bianca*, as seen in Chapter One, one designer was, for promotional reasons, associated with one textile manufacturer. Now, there is instead an assortment of voices and players involved in the production of fashion. For example, in Krizia's drawings a number of producers emerge.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, more than one silk or wool supplier is present, and this indicates that a given fashion house would choose a producer according to the specific fabric available in a yearly collection, and not because of a formal pre-arranged agreement. This could also happen before, but for example in the 1960s, the *carnettista* would work as intermediary, whereas now the textile mills were equipped with internal departments devoted to the relationships with the *stilisti* and the system is more structured and institutionalised.

We can conclude that these drawings expose how different suppliers and manufacturers collaborated to make a final look. In the 1970s, there was no *stilista's* unique company that produced the totality of the garments and its accessories from scratch, and all within the same factory floor. The production, however, happens in a system of synergy between small and medium firms. As seen in Chapter Four in the case of the silk weavers and printers, the production of fashion happens in a diffused territorial system, instead of being under the same unified factory floor of one company.

To give an idea of the variety of sources and the interconnections and synergies of the industrial districts, it is useful to reconstruct the network of the production of a specific designer. I have taken the example of Gianni Versace. The V&A's catalogue *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace* names the producers of many of the materials he employed in his collections.<sup>42</sup> These companies mainly make materials such as wool, silk, cotton and leather, but no information is given in the catalogue about shoes, gloves and other accessories manufacturers. I have listed the producers' names and their

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<sup>41</sup> List of producers detected on Krizia's drawings: Galtruccio, Mantero, Faliero Sarti, Curi, Bevilacqua, Canepa, Bini, Ricceri, Borgomaneri.

<sup>42</sup> *The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace*, ed. by Claire Wilcox (London: V&A Publications, 2002).

locations in the table in appendix 2, and it is evident that they were mainly located in small centres in the North of the country , in regions such as Lombardy and Piedmont.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Regarding the manufacturing of the final product, the company Alias Novara is the company that produces Versace's menswear and womenswear (except for the knitwear and for leather goods) and for the majority it has been owned by the Finanziaria Versace since 1983. Bocca, 'La Forma del Processo Creativo', p. 194.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 78. Krizia Maglia, working fashion drawing 66, (1979).*  
*Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.<sup>44</sup>*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 79. Krizia Maglia, working fashion drawing 56, (1979).*  
*Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.*

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<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that the yarn could come from a supplier, while the sample knitted would come from the knitwear mill.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 80. Krizia, working fashion drawing, (Summer 1975).*  
Source: Archivio Moda, CSAC, Università di Parma.

## Gianfranco Ferré: a Case Study

To better understand the delocalised system of fashion and textile production in the 1970s and 1980s, it is useful to take as an example the structure of the Gianfranco Ferré's company. Compared to other Italian *stilista's* companies, the Ferré structure was simpler, as it was only based on the collaboration between Gianfranco Ferré and the industrialist Franco Mattioli from Bologna. The two were business partners with 50 percent each of two limited companies; Gianfranco Ferré SRL and Diffusione Ferré. Gianfranco Ferré SRL owned the trademark, and was mainly a stylistic studio based in Milan. It designed the production of the Gianfranco Ferré lines in collaboration with twelve manufacturers: Baila for womenswear made in fabric, Nadini for knitwear, La Matta for leatherwork, Boulevard for men's shirts, Redaelli for menswear made in fabric, Marvel for swimwear, Sir Robert for belts, Dei Mutti for handbags, Harpers for ties, Pasquali for shoes, Gambini for eyewear and Abbigliamento Abbruzzese for sportswear for both men and women.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Abbigliamento Abbruzzese, together with the aforementioned manufacturers, also produced Oaks by Gianfranco Ferré, a second line designed by Ferré himself but very different from his first line, as it was aimed at a younger market, colourful and at lower price.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Ferré was giving anonymous consultancy to the companies Baila, Nadini, La Matta, Boulevard, Redaelli e Marvel for their production made for different brands.

According to the contracts with the twelve manufacturers, Gianfranco Ferré SRL had the right to choose the types of textiles to use, the manufacturing procedures and the final prices. The companies for which Ferré worked were all autonomous: for example, Baila was owned 100 percent by Mattioli. It had one hundred and forty workers and commissioned a significant part of its work from a third party. Seventy per cent of its turnover was the production for the Ferré lines.

In a 2018 interview with the author, Rita Airaghi, then personal assistant of Gianfranco Ferré, explains how the royalties system worked.<sup>47</sup> Gianfranco Ferré SRL oversaw the creative input into a collection, which included the design process, and the final stage of distribution of the finished products. The producers, such as the companies owned by Mattioli, were responsible for paying for raw materials, producing the collection, and their employees' salaries. Gianfranco Ferré SRL would then get a percentage of the items sold and the producers would get another percentage.

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<sup>45</sup> Giacomoni, *L'Italia della Moda*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>46</sup> Rita Airaghi in interview with the author on 18 June 2018 in Appendix 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

In this way, the direction came from the studio in Milan while the production was diffused on the territory, only to be reunited in the final product back at the Milanese studio before being distributed. This system, although quite complicated to describe, provided flexibility to the *stilista's* label, as it made it possible to collaborate directly with smaller companies specialised in the manufacturing of a given type of garment or accessories. The *stilista* had to maintain the overview of the collection and its unity, while its various parts were being produced in several companies distributed on the territory. To understand how this worked, we can find many clues in the fashion drawings for a particular garment or collection.

Airaghi explains that Gianfranco Ferré worked with different styles and types of fashion drawing, according to their function: one might be a technical drawing; another a more refined drawing to visualise the fashion show. At the beginning of the creative process, the very sketchy initial idea was laid out on a drawing (an example of which can be seen in Figure 81). Although only just outlined on the paper with a quick pencil line, this design contains already all the characteristics of the final garments: the oversized jacket, the blouse, the pleated skirt and the belt. However, this sketch represented just an initial, embryonic stage of the final product. Since the look was selected to be included in the collection, Gianfranco Ferré then produced more precise working fashion drawings as seen in Figures 82, 83, and 84. Airaghi recalls how these kinds of drawings were never just sent over to the factory to be translated by the *modellista*. There was always a meeting between Gianfranco Ferré and the *modellista*, an occasion for the two to clarify aspects of the garments not included in the drawing. At first, the original drawings were given to the *modellista* at the factory and a photocopy retained at the *stilista's* Milan office for reference. Later, the company realised the value of such drawings and the opposite was done. The original drawings were all kept in the style office, and they are now conserved in the Gianfranco Ferré Foundation in Milan.<sup>48</sup>

Ferré's initial working drawings were almost always sketched on photocopy paper, often A4, but sometimes, for a larger composition, also on A3. The drawing was normally made just in pencil, often with a red number indicating the model code on the top right-hand corner. Sometimes, especially for straightforward garments, the drawing is the only element on the page, with no further inscriptions. On other occasions, the *stilista* adds indications for the *modellista* to clarify some aspects of line, materials or constructions.

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<sup>48</sup> Except for a donation of a number of drawings that was made to the CSAC Parma archive.

On the drawing of the jacket (Figure 82) an inscription reads '*Giacca come modello 23*' (Jacket the same as number 23 model). This is a clear message to the *modellista* to make this item the same way as they did for number 23, which they had probably already discussed.<sup>49</sup>

It is evident from Figures 81, 82, 83, and 84 how the outfit that was only drafted in the preparatory sketch gets further developed and constructed in the working drawing, where each element of the outfit is designed on a different sheet of paper. In Figure 82 the jacket is occupying almost the whole of the page without details of the body which is wearing the garment. In addition, on the bottom right corner, a piece of fabric by the Biellese wool mill Fila is attached to the paper together with the indication of the product code. This number, as we have seen in the previous section, is very useful to understand what type of textile the designer wanted to use. According to Airaghi, Ferré, together with his research team, found the fabrics that best worked for a collection, and then passed the information on to the factory that was making the garments. The whole economic burden to acquire the metres necessary to make the collection would fall on the manufacturer and not on Gianfranco Ferré SLR.<sup>50</sup>

Figures 83 and 84 refer to the skirt of the outfit. Figure 83 indicates the fabric to use, its length, and the type of pleating, as well as the belt. However, it was probably not clear what the *stilista* wanted to achieve, and so a second, more detailed drawing was made (Figure 84). In this case both a front and a back view of the skirt are drawn out. A couple more inscriptions clarify the length, the slit, and how the sash was meant to be attached to the skirt. The inscription reads: '*Fascia attaccata solo nel fianco*' (sash attached only on the side). With these few adjustments, the idea of the *stilista* became clearer to the *modellista*, and the garments

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<sup>49</sup> The relationship between *stilista* and *modellista* or the specialist worker in a manufacturer could last for years, and they came to know each other's needs very quickly. This is the case for example of the relationship between Gianni Versace and the company specialised in embroidery, Vichi Ricami, with which he collaborated for most of his very elaborated pieces. Cristina Vichi recalls how her mother Olga Bolognesi would meet Versace and he would show her some reference photos of the theme he had in mind, together with the working drawing. She would then start the research on the materials, on the types of manufacturing and the design. She would then make a sample. Versace trusted the creativity of Mrs Bolognesi, but he would not hesitate to admonish her if he did not like the samples. (Conversation via Facebook Messenger between Cristina Vichi and the author, 2 September 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Rita Airaghi interview with the author 18 June 2018 in Appendix 1.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 81. Gianfranco Ferré, sketch for look 32, prêt-à-porter, (Spring-Summer 1982).*  
*Source: Archivio della Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Milan.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 82. Gianfranco Ferré, technical Drawing for jacket, model 32, prêt-à-porter, (Spring-Summer 1984).*  
*Source: Archivio della Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Milan.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 83. Gianfranco Ferré, technical drawing for skirt, model 32, prêt-à-porter, (Spring-Summer 1984).  
Source: Archivio della Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Milan.*

were later produced. It is interesting to note how the crêpe de chine printed silk, produced by the Como-based Stucchi silk mill to be used in the manufacturing of the skirt, is applied on the paper already pleated, probably to show how the *stilista* wanted the final pleat to look.

The photographs of the models on the catwalk wearing the finished garments show the complete look including shoes, accessories such as the tie folded inside the jacket pocket, and hairstyle (Figure 85). Images such as these are important documents to show the overview of the ensemble and how the finished garments would have looked when worn by a model. However, the drawings allow for a deeper investigation into the layers of production, the choice of garment's material and the *stilista*'s creative input.

As seen previously, textile samples bear witness to the designer's vision for a garment, and they play an important part in the creation of a collection, as well as representing the myriad of textile mills involved in the fashion production. Yet they are also employed at the end of the creative process to visualise the succession of colours and patterns in a final collection, as shown in *scheda colori* in Figure 86. Here the fabrics, attached on a black cardboard, are grouped to represent the final ensembles. Each sample stands for a component of the final look, such as a jacket, skirt or shirt, and each group is indicated by a symbol, such as a triangle, a square or a moon wedge. The same symbols are repeated on the technical drawings to identify the items belonging to the outfit. These groups together give an immediate portrayal of each ensemble, its colour, pattern and material as well as, when seen together on the page, the overall look of the collection. A working document such as this was most likely made when the collection was in a more final stage of programming. It would offer designers and their team a visual aid to plan the fashion show's catwalk exits of each model, as well as to balance the overall composition of the collection in terms of colours, materials and patterns.<sup>51</sup>

This case study has shown how Gianfranco Ferré utilised drawings to pin onto papers his creative ideas. It also showed how these working documents were the medium of communication between the designer's team in Milan and production expertise scattered around Italy.

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<sup>51</sup> Each group is identified with a symbol, such as a square or a wedge; this is also reproduced on the *stilista*'s drawings so that the two sets of documents can be reconnected.

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 84. Gianfranco Ferré, technical drawing for skirt, model 32, prêt-à-porter, (Spring-Summer 1984).*  
*Source: Archivio della Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Milan.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

*Figure 85. Gianfranco Ferré, model 32 during the fashion show, prêt-à-porter, (Spring-Summer, 1984).*  
*Source: Archivio della Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Milan.*

IMAGE AVAILABLE ON HARD COPY

## Conclusion

By offering another behind-the-scenes look at textile and fashion production in Italy, Part Three has shown how fashion manufacturing in the country shifted from a verticalized to a more delocalised model, based on the *distretti industriali*. This, together with changes in the social and economic aspects of the country, brought the city of Milan, after years of working at the margins, to come centre stage and become synonymous with ready-to-wear fashion.

Furthermore, the detailed investigation into working fashion drawings has revealed how a plurality of voices and authors is included in the making of a garment, from the *modellisti*, who translate the designer's creative sketches into workable prototypes, to the various textile mills who offer their technical know-how to satisfy the requests for innovative materials. This, together with the analysis of the Italian fashion designer, the *stilista*, destabilises the idea of the fashion design as a one-man process.

However, as this system started to be pin-pointed and theorised by economists from all over the world, it started to change once more. The *distretti industriali* were the industrial structure at the core of the success and development of the Milanese *prêt-à-porter*. However, at the beginning of the 1980s, at the peak of its success, new directions were taken by designers, such as Giorgio Armani, who started diffusion lines such as Mani and Emporio Armani, leaving at the helm the brand 'Giorgio Armani, Via Borgonuovo 21'. This system worked like a pyramid. At the top, the first line had the role of maintaining the brand's name and its exclusivity. This production was much more artisanal, and here Armani could experiment with his creativity both in terms of a project and in terms of materials. The second line was aimed at mass sales, and therefore the ideas of the first lines had to be adapted to a much more industrial product that had to appeal to a wider public. The last, younger line had much more provocative ideas, more connected to an advertising image.<sup>52</sup> As Merlo and Polese declare, the Armani company provided the blueprint for other Italian fashion companies set up between 1970s and 1980s.<sup>53</sup> Other designers such as Franco Moschino followed this lead, and in this way, the branded designer products reached a wider, more often international public.<sup>54</sup>

Conversely, in its top lines, Italian *prêt-à-porter*, which started as a way of democratising exclusive fashion and reconfiguring industrial production for a younger, less elitist public, was now getting closer to the prices and exclusiveness of *alta moda*. *Stilisti* like Gianni Versace, Gianfranco Ferré and

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<sup>52</sup> Morini, *Storia della Moda*, p. 343.

<sup>53</sup> Merlo and Polese, 'Italian Fashion Business', p. 355.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Giorgio Armani, who made their name by designing an industrial product, started their own couture lines.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, from the start of the 1990s, a new panorama of production and consumption started to appear. According to Segre, *prêt-à-porter* was hit by a crisis, based on a further delocalisation of fashion production, Chinese competition, counterfeits, the 'fluctuating meanings of the idea of 'Made in Italy' and the creation in Italy and abroad of large luxury groups that encompassed various brands.<sup>56</sup>

Still later, towards the end of the 1990s, some brands like Armani and Versace decided to go in the opposite direction from delocalisation around the country and to take control of the whole supply chain.<sup>57</sup> Armani took over a factory in Settimo Torinese from the GFT group, its main licensee. He also bought Miss Deanna, a knitwear company in Emilia Romagna.<sup>58</sup>

According to Merlo and Polese, the fact that major brands like Armani, Versace and Moschino were based on large textile manufacturing firms and tailoring traditions demonstrates that the role played by the industrial district needs to be revisited.<sup>59</sup> However, this statement is based on how the companies' business strategy has evolved in the 1990s and 2000s. This chapter has exclusively investigated the period between the 1970s and 1980 and has demonstrated that at the beginning of the relationship between industry and designers, the districts played an important role. That inevitably has changed as successful brands expanded and internationalised their operation in an attempt to compete with French and American counterparts.

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<sup>55</sup> Rosina Margherita, pp. 76-93, (pp. 89-91); Morini, *Storia della Moda*, pp. 341-343.

<sup>56</sup> Segre, 'The City of Prêt-À-Porter', p. 128; Segre, *Italian Fashion*, p. 244.

<sup>57</sup> Merlo and Polese, 'Italian Fashion Business', p. 356.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

## Conclusion

In the introduction of this thesis I stated, quoting Zeitlin, that the past can be (re)discovered if it is investigated through questions motivated by current developments. For me, this moment of re(discovery) was ignited during field work in 2012, when I was faced by the rich manufacturing know-how and expertise behind Italian fashion products. I started to ask myself questions such as: what were the relationships between design and materials, of final products and production? Were these separated? Or we should look at them together to better understand the success of Italian fashion?

Furthermore, it was obvious to me that Italian ready-to-wear was acclaimed internationally since the 1980s, but the history that led to that success was unclear. Italian mass manufactured fashion seemed to have appeared from nowhere. Ready-to-wear Italian fashion was, and is, acclaimed for the quality of its materials, so much so that many French brands today produce their goods, such as shoes and bags in Italy and many of their suppliers of textiles and leather are Italian companies.<sup>1</sup> This aspect it is so widespread that it passes almost unnoticed. If we look at the soles of worldwide famous shoes by the likes of Manolo Blahnik and Christian Louboutin, they clearly state 'MADE IN ITALY'. Why is this and what does it mean? Is today Italy merely a supplier and producer for products designed elsewhere, or there is a deeper relationship? A possible answer to this is that Italy, although now an industrialised country, still retains an artisanal know-how which is paramount when making complex accessories like shoes and bags that required technical knowledge and hand-made processes. Answering these questions are beyond the realms of this thesis, but the investigation carried out with my research helps understand better the present by (re)analysing the past.

The importance of materials is often heralded in the literature as a key aspect of Italian fashion.<sup>2</sup> The mechanisms behind textile and fashion production and how this relationship had pushed forward the development of the successful Italian ready-to-wear have however not been clear. Today Italian fashion brands such as Gucci, Valentino, Prada and Fendi are still at the top of the international

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Specter, *High-Heel Heaven. A visit to the madcap world of Manolo Blahnik* (2000), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/03/20/high-heel-heaven> [Accessed 6 July 2019] and Rita Airaghi in interview with the author on 18 June 2018 in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rosina Margherita, 'Textiles: The Foundation of Italian Couture', in *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945*, ed. by Sonnet Stanfill (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), pp. 76-93 (76-78); Reinach Simona Segre, 'The Italian Fashion Revolution in Milan', in *The Glamour of Italian Fashion since 1945*, ed. by Sonnet Stanfill (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), pp. 58-71 (69).

fashion scene. It is still very relevant today to examine the roots of the Italian fashion system to better understand the present. This thesis investigated exactly this and connected the Italian know-how in terms of techniques and materials with the development of ready-to-wear in the country.

This thesis has made a number of original contributions to the field. The initial research question of this thesis aimed firstly to examine the role that textile manufacturing played in the transformation of the Italian fashion landscape from hand-made and couture garments to mass-produced fashion, and secondly why and how Italian fashion and textile production worked together and influenced each other in developing an integrated fashion system in Italy between 1945 and 1985. The unique point of view and strength of this research is the focus on materials and production as this is the aspect of Italian fashion that has been largely under researched. By examining how the system worked and what were its mechanisms, I shed light onto innovative aspects that have mostly passed unnoticed. The 'inside-out' method employed here offers a new directionality to the study of Italian fashion.

The thesis starts with the analysis of the fibres employed in the making of Italian fashion in the 1950s. It continues by looking at how textiles were commercialized in the 1960s by the *carnettisti* and how their role helped Italian textiles manufacturers emerge as strong players behind the success of fashion in the next decade. It closes by examining the design and production of garments in network of small companies around Italy in 1980s. Throughout these six chapters, the main focus has been on the production of Italian textiles and fashion, and how the two sectors influenced and interacted with each other to build a coherent and integrated system during the forty years following the end of World War II. I have navigated the chronology 1945 to 1985 by adopting a case study approach, guided by a focus on materials that highlighted a series of previously unknown aspects that are fundamental to understanding Italian textiles and fashion production and design.

Changes within the system were not immediate, and it often took years for their repercussions to be appreciated. Therefore, examining the Italian textile and fashion industries over a four-decade period allows for a full investigation of the evolution of the fashion system. The analysis of a large chronology also offers the opportunity to examine historical processes not just in their immediate context, but to trace their roots further back towards their origins, and to see their influence on future developments.

By deconstructing the mechanisms and understanding how things were working, this thesis systematically addressed a number of 'myths' around the aura of Italian fashion. These demythologised aspects include: the genesis of ready-to-wear; how couturiers and designers were not solely responsible for the success and the making of products; how a number of intermediaries

were essential cogs in the system; and how 'Made in Italy' is a complex and multi-layered term that shifts in every decade.

While, in the existing literature, ready-to-wear has mainly been analysed from the end of the 1960s onwards, this thesis has continued the work started by Nicola White with *Reconstructing Italian Fashion* and built on this to demonstrate that *moda boutique* incorporated aspects of high-quality mass-production much earlier than previously understood, in the 1950s. The Simonetta case study in Chapter Two and its focus on *moda boutique* has redefined the role of Italian *alta moda* and exposed the mechanisms for how Italian fashion had been, at least from the start of the 1950s, already made in series, as opposed to being made exclusively by hand. Undoubtedly, as was examined in Chapter Two, *alta moda* played an important role as an ambassador of Italian style, especially with the events organised by Giovanni Battista Giorgini for the American market in the 1950s. These early mass-produced experimentations therefore shaped the development of Italian ready-to-wear later in the 1970s and 1980s. The *Gruppo Finanziario Tessile* (GFT) is a key example of the continuity between decades, from the early collaboration between GFT and the couturier Biki at the end of the 1950s to the subsequent success of the relationship with the *stilisti* at the base of the Italian *prêt-à-porter* success. As investigated in this thesis, the GFT story provides a red thread to follow to understand the origin of Italian ready-to-wear. This thesis has provided historical evidence of the success of the Italian ready-to-wear system in the 1980s as it has been seen as the result of a slowly progression from the end of the World War II rather than the sudden late 1980s international success.

What this thesis has clearly demonstrated, is that is paramount to investigate two systems in parallel to truly understand the history of Italian fashion. Points of contacts need to be investigated in order to understand how these two separate realms worked with and communicated to each other. This research has also shown how fashion comes into being thanks to a range of stakeholders, beyond the fashion designer or producer. The in-depth unpicking of stages of production has revealed the importance and position of various players. This is the first study that analyses in depth the role and history of the *carnettisti*, little known players, who were fundamental for influencing the type of textile production that could better serve the needs of *alta moda*. This research has also put a spotlight into the *modellisti*, factory workers who were responsible to translate the vision of the *stilisti* into technical drawings and prototypes that could be efficiently mass-produced by

manufacturers. Including more players reveals a complex system that does not rely exclusively on the designer as 'genius', which has been the dominant idea in fashion history.<sup>3</sup>

This type of analysis could only be done by breaking down the system into different moments. I looked at the fashion system, of which textile manufacturing is a part, as a process and not as a given complete unity. What I have learnt by juxtaposing the Italian textiles and fashion systems is that fashion is not the only the driving agency, but also that textiles, on certain occasions, were pushing innovations. The quality of Italian textiles were the aspects that the press and critics were celebrating in the 1950s. This opened up opportunities for Italian dressmakers and couturiers. In the 1960s the relationship swapped and *alta moda* was seen as the pinnacle of the fashion system while textile manufacturers were influenced by the demand of fashion through the careful and important work of the *carrettisti*. With the emergence of the *stilisti* in the 1970s, Italian textile manufacturing once more played a key role in defining fashion aesthetic and its allure.

The key innovative angle of this thesis has been to examine fashion from the perspective of materials and production processes. This has led me to devise a multidisciplinary approach that encompassed textiles, fashion and design history. Existing studies had neglected to analyse the close and reciprocal relationship between textile and fashion, production and product, inside and outside. In current literature the focus was mainly placed on the outside, on the style and surface of the finished fashion products and their designers. I reversed this approach and instead examined the Italian fashion phenomenon through different lenses. This has been achieved through a focus on the rediscovery of primary sources, on examining the inside of objects, such as textiles and their component (fibres), on the unpicking of productive processes, and on the roles played by intermediaries and lesser known figures in textile and fashion system. I defined this as the 'inside-out' method because it brings to the fore aspects that had been kept hidden or in the background. This thesis has demonstrated the richness of the 'inside-out' method to investigate fashion and textile production. With this approach I have shown how the 'Made in Italy' label operated behind the cliché characteristics associated with its brand image. By foregrounding the role of materials and production, this approach has exposed elements that were previously overlooked, such as the use of artificial and synthetic material in *alta moda*, the existence of proto-mass-production as early as the 1950s, and a complex network of players, makers and intermediaries.

This concluding chapter focuses on the elements that make this thesis innovative and highlights aspects that this new research has brought to the fore and elements that I did not expect to

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<sup>3</sup> Kawamura, *Fashio-ology*, p. 45

discover. These can be grouped in two categories: the importance of archival research and the production perspective. The chapter will conclude by highlighting paths of future research that this thesis has unlocked.

## Archival Research

This project has been shaped by extensive research in archives which have previously been little-investigated, such as *La Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* and *Archivio Storico Fondazione Fiera Milano*. This has added new knowledge and enhanced our understanding of post-war Italian textile and fashion history.

The notion that Giovanni Battista Giorgini acted as the ‘father’ of Italian fashion has been omnipresent in virtually every single book and article ever written on Italian fashion.<sup>4</sup> Because Giorgini’s role had been so widely established, at the beginning of this research I was tempted not to research Giorgini. However, by undertaking primary archival research, it quickly became clear to me that other researchers had only repeatedly referred back to the same sources within the Giorgini archive. The materials that constitute the Giorgini archive were deposited in the Florence State archive in 2005 and it is not entirely catalogued.<sup>5</sup> Amongst the available documents to request to study are fifty-eight albums dated between 1951 and 1965. These leather bounded volumes with G.B.G initial embossed on the spines, contain a mixture of newspapers and magazines articles, promotional materials, photographs and correspondence connected with the organisation of the fashion events in Italy that started in 1951 in Giorgini’s house.<sup>6</sup> These albums were the primary sources mainly used by researchers to define the role Giorgini played during the early days of Italian fashion in Florence in the 1950s. Notwithstanding the important of such materials, it is paramount to highlight that these albums were put together by Giovanni Battista Giorgini’s daughter Matilda Giorgini as instructed by her father.<sup>7</sup> In reading and researching such material it is important to keep

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<sup>4</sup> Neri Fadigati, ‘Giovanni Battista Giorgini, La Famiglia, Il Contributo Alla Nascita Del made in Italy, Le Fonti Archivistiche’, *ZoneModa Journal*, 8 (2018), 1-15.

<sup>5</sup> Monica Gallai ‘Il riordinamento e l’inventariazione dell’Archivio della Moda Italiana di Giovan Battista Giorgini: resoconto del primo anno di lavoro’ in [http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/asfi/fileadmin/risorse/allegati\\_materiali\\_di\\_studio/archivio\\_moda\\_giorgini.pdf](http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/asfi/fileadmin/risorse/allegati_materiali_di_studio/archivio_moda_giorgini.pdf) [accessed 22 June 2019]. According to Neri Fadigati, there are 72 boxes with around 60.000 documents and around 100 photographs dated between 1951 and 2002, Fadigati, ‘Giovanni Battista Giorgini’ p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> These materials are organised chronologically, and each album is dedicated to one of the events.

<sup>7</sup> Fadigati, ‘Giovanni Battista Giorgini’, p. 13.

in mind that these documents were collected and put together as scrapbooks and therefore the decision of including some material rather than other, would have formed a particular point of view.

I, like seemingly every other researcher, started to study this archive by reading the wealth of information included in these albums. However, instead of stopping there, I continued further by also consulting unbounded, lesser known folders together with a wealth of uncatalogued material.<sup>8</sup> As I wanted to know other points of views different from the one of Giorgini's only, I also travelled to New York to retrieve relevant correspondence included in the *Italy at Work* archive at the Brooklyn museum. This offered the unique opportunity to reconstruct the full correspondence that is not completely represented in the Giorgini archive.

In so doing I built a complete picture and I was able, for the first time, to shed new light on what seemed to be a well-established story. Furthermore, letters found in the yet-to-be catalogued folders of the Giorgini archive have demonstrated how Giovanni Battista Giorgini's activities went beyond solely promoting Italian *alta moda*, which is what was previously believed. His enterprise branched out much wider in a very strategic way, for example in the realm of mass-manufacturing. This supports the idea developed in the thesis that elements of Italian mass-manufactured fashion were being developed earlier than previously thought. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, because Giorgini and his office took 7 percent commission on sales, he prioritised the promotion of items which would sell best to the most profitable foreign market, which in this case with the USA. This often meant that Giorgini not only promoted *alta moda* on its own, but also used its allure to endorse the more lucrative realm of mass production by fostering collaboration between industry and fashion. This is a very important aspect that this thesis has uncovered, as he was not previously known to promote this sector 'officially' and visibly, but, as letters I have found in the archive demonstrate, he was interested in developing it and getting a slice of the profits.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the archival research brought to light his involvement in little-known fashion label 'Lucrezia' set up in the 1963. This venture demonstrates his far-reaching influence and explains the different types of internationalisation that Italian fashion participated in, as will further examine in the next section. Researching new material in a known archive was at the basis of my redefinition of Giorgini's role within Italian textile and fashion promotion. By giving a more rounded portrait of

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<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Sonnet Stanfill for pointing out the existence of this material to me.

<sup>9</sup> In 2018 Sonnet Stanfill highlights that she was not able to find evidence of details of Giorgini's fee. Stanfill Sonnet, 'American Buyers and the Italian Fashion Industry, 1950-55', in *European Fashion : The Creation of a Global Industry*, ed. by Lee Blaszczyk Regina and Pouillard Véronique (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 146-169.

Giorgini's activities it has been possible to describe other types of productions that were encouraged.

Giorgini was also one of the promoters and founders of the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* (CNMI), an organisation still active today and responsible for organising Milan Fashion Week, but whose previous history and role was still little-known in the literature, where scant mentions of CNMI suggested a lack of importance.<sup>10</sup> However, through researching the documents in the archive located at Milan's Bocconi University, I have shown that while the CNMI was sometimes slow and over-bureaucratic, it played a significant role in promoting a shift towards a much more integrated system of fashion and textile production in Italy.

Archival research also offered the opportunity to investigate fashion production from the point of view of fashion drawings. The very rich collection of CSAC in Parma containing thousands working fashion drawings by several *stilisti*, such as Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace, Krizia, and Walter Albini, presented the unique opportunity to compare bodies of work by different hands operating in the same environment, the city of Milan. The overview of hundreds of sketches and drawings allowed me to identify common characteristics and threads in the work of different creative personalities. I have demonstrated how, the inscriptions, and the multiple hands identifiable on the same sheet of paper, testify to a complex and structured system of fashion production that not only relied on the *stilista's* creativity, but operated on a close collaboration with specialists based in textile companies, embroidery workshops, leather specialists, and so forth. This general assessment of the field of Italian fashion drawings formed the basis for the analysis of one *stilista's* drawing production, as seen in Chapter Six with the focus on the work of Gianfranco Ferré.

The process of researching these visual materials has been as rich and significant as the document-based analysis. I examined fashion drawings as a primary source worthy of consideration in their own right and not simply used as an illustration, as often happens in fashion history. While drawings are the principal primary source in Chapter Six, they have been vital sources throughout the thesis, as they are key means for better understanding the processes of ideation, copy and commercialisation. For example, my examination of the drawing of the Schubert cerise dress in Chapter Two, together with other sources such as press photographs and existing garments, brought to light the process of adaptation that some Italian couture pieces undertook, once sold in overseas department stores. This process, although well-documented for French fashion, was still little-

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<sup>10</sup> The little-known archive of this organisation was in the process of being catalogued at the time of my research and the inventory has now been published in Elisabetta Merlo and Maria Natalina Trevisano, *Lo Stile Italiano Nelle Carte: Inventario Dell'Archivio Storico Della Camera Nazionale Della Moda Italiana (1958-1989)*, Pubblicazioni Degli Archivi Di Stato Strumenti CCII, (Ministero per i Beni Culturali Direzione Generale Archivi, 2018).

studied for Italian couturiers. Furthermore, the fashion drawings I utilise in Chapter Four represent some of the few surviving documents to chronicle the existence and operational activities of the *modellisti* in the transnational business of copies between Italy and France, and shed new light on that operation.

Archival research has deeply influenced, at different levels, the direction of this thesis and enriched the perspective from which to scrutinise complex structures of production. It also underpinned the inside-out method that I developed in this thesis.

## Inside Fashion: the Role of Materials and Production

In May 2017, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London staged the exhibition ‘Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion’ on the Spanish couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga curated by Cassie Davies-Strodder (27 May 2017 – 18 February 2018). One display case in the first part of the exhibition included an analysis of Balenciaga’s collaborative relationships with textile manufacturers such as the Swiss company, Abraham Ltd, and London-based Ascher. On display were not only the final garments, but also textile samples, sketches, and collection boards that testified to the working process of couturiers and his rapport with textile manufacturers. The exhibition also mentioned the high-quality copies of couture garments produced by department stores such as Harrods. Although these aspects were just a small part of an exhibition that displayed over one hundred couture pieces, they indicated a shift in how museums display and investigate fashion. The analysis of how Balenciaga designed and produced his revered couture creations played an important part in showing a wider public some behind-the-scenes aspects of fashion manufacturing, which was also my aim with this thesis. My investigation into the mechanisms of production, and into the use of materials, highlighted a number of aspects that will be relevant not only for the understanding of Italian fashion production, but also for the wider field of fashion history – and I hope that my approach will be part of a broader emerging interest in production. These aspects are the role of fibres and materials, the internationalisation of the country’s output, and the industrialisation and use of machinery in Italian textile and fashion production. I will illustrate them in more details in the sub-sections that follow.

### *Fibres and materials*

Focusing on the inside of objects and on the use of materials led me to also investigate the types of fibres employed, an aspect that is been almost completely overlooked in the literature.<sup>11</sup> In Chapter One, I looked at Italian textile fibres that were used for Italian fashion. I have shown how, as early as

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<sup>11</sup> The only exception is a very technical book: Maura Garofoli and Bonizza Giordani-Aragno, *Le Fibre Intelligenti: Un Secolo di Storia e Cinquant'Anni di Moda* (Milano: Electa, 1991).

the 1950s, artificial and synthetic fibres were also present alongside natural fibres in the making of Italian fashion. This finding transforms the accepted image of Italian *alta moda* solely employed natural fibres such as wool, cottons and silks.

I could show how the choice of fibres and raw materials to use in fashion production is not only a matter of aesthetics, but also relates to political and economic realms. The Marshall Plan aid, for example, encouraged Italy to import and use American cotton, as the USA had surplus of the fibres that needed to be sold. Similarly, the use of synthetics in Italian fashion was the result of the domestic long history and success of the Italian synthetics industry alongside Italy's aspiration to modernity. The synthetic producer Snia Viscosa played an important role in popularising the use of synthetic fibres in fashion and help to legitimise the new fibres with the public and buyers via the organisation of large international fashion shows and exhibitions. Furthermore, my analysis stressed an important point: fibres and textiles, because of their unfinished nature, were difficult to promote. Fashion was therefore used to popularise their use with a wider public. Finished garments were employed in fashion shows and advertisements because they were more familiar and 'useable' products that would immediately capture the buyers' and wearers' attention.

Italian fashion has been often praised for the quality of its materials and still nowadays Italy is world famous for the quality of leather and silk, just to name a few, and for some manufacturing specialties, such as tanning. However, I was surprised to discover during this research that the formula, 'Italian materials equal Italian fashion', has not been always valid throughout the period analysed in this thesis as Italian designers did not always use exclusively Italian materials. As early as the 1950s Italian couturiers were collaborating with foreign textile and fibres manufacturers such as Cohama in the USA and employed foreign fabrics in their creations. In the 1960s, it was a widespread practice for the Italian products not to be fully 'Made in Italy' as Italian designers were not necessarily using a fully Italian supply chain. This had become a problem that institutions such as CNMI set to rectify through the establishment of special prizes to be given to those designers that were exclusively creating models with Italian materials. In the 1970s and 1980s this trend was reversed and the majority of the *stilisti* relied more and more on the Italian factories and producers based on the territory. This thesis has demonstrated how the close relationship between producers and designers played a major role in defining the success of the Italian *prêt-à-porter* system that developed in this decade.

### *Internationalisation*

As discussed in the Introduction, the field of fashion history has not questioned fashion production in depth. Certain aspects and players have not been analysed, and therefore our understanding of

fashion history is incomplete. In this thesis I demonstrated how, for instance, it is important to look beyond national borders in examining fashion history. My analysis of the role played by materials, specifically fibres and textiles, and their sometimes complicated production mechanisms, revealed a combination of influences from different countries that affected the design of the finished fashion products. Such considerations further problematise the meaning of 'Made in Italy'. I have shown the fluidity that lies beneath the label, not only by looking at the role played by the USA in Chapter Two, but also with the case of the Italo-Japanese company Lucrezia in Chapter Three. This research has established that the internationalisation of Italian fashion happened early and did not only involve the binary relationship with USA. Italy needed also other trading partners. In the 1960s this trend did not diminish, but actually grew beyond the binary relationship Italy - USA, as brands such as that of the Italo - Japanese company Lucrezia demonstrates. Giorgini was behind such an enterprise which had aimed to promote Japanese fibres and textiles through the allure of Italian fashion. This venture was also backed by a Japanese synthetic fibre producer and a department store, and it is a testament to how Giorgini's entrepreneurial abilities were not only put to the service of 'purely' Made in Italy products. His scope was much wider-reaching, and transnational. He saw an opportunity in a new market, such as Japan, and used his marketing ability to promote Italian fashion in the country, at the same time as bringing Japanese products, financial resources and commercial scope to Italy.

This research has also shown how the influence of the USA was not only confined to 1950s and Marshall Plan aid, as has been previously understood.<sup>12</sup> It continued into the 1960s and permeated many aspects of manufacturing, design, style and commerce. Events such as the American-organised *Italy at Work* exhibition promoted Italian textile companies, such as Ravasi, to the American market. The USA as a market and as an industrial pioneer also influenced the ways in which manufacturers were reorganised, as the GFT, Max Mara, and La Rinascente examples have shown. In addition, the USA, as a powerful and wealthy export market, had the economic weight, with its buying power, to influence certain outputs of Italian fashion. This was the case for Italian couture, which transformed some of its output into mass-production with the creation of lines of *moda boutique*. This influence continued well into the 1960s, as seen in the Nattier example: the USA became the first market to buy Nattier's products at a moment when the French companies rejected them. In this way, the US market was a direct influence on the success of certain companies.

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<sup>12</sup> White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*.

### *Industrialisation*

The Italian fashion system experienced a late industrialisation. This became evident when, at the end of World War II Italian brands and manufacturers were eager to produce in high numbers, however they did not have the know-how and appropriate machineries to do so. They had to look elsewhere for help. This clearly can be seen with the collaboration of Milan based department store La Rinascente and US ready-to-wear manufacturers Donnybrook and Rosenfeld which offered American-made machinery to the Italians. This example is just the start of a process that gradually placed *moda boutique* side by side with *alta moda*. This leaning toward high-quality standardised semi-machine-made products continued in the 1960s with experiments by Biki and GFT, Sorelle Fontana and Brioni, as Chapter Three has shown. By the 1960s Italian production had adapted to foreign demands and adopted more industrialised manufacturing strategies and machines in order to standardise production and make it more efficient. However, as the Capece story showed, in the 1960s some brands still produced Italian ready-to-wear '*a cottimo*' (piece rate) without a fully industrialised plant. This is a recurrent aspect of Italian fashion very much still a defining characteristic of the country type of production. Although industrialised, the country retained pockets of hand-made and almost artisanal production that co-exist with the big manufacturers.

The various attempts to combine industry and fashion became more standardised and efficient in the late 1970s when a new type of player, the *stilista*, came to work across factories and design studios. The *stilista* collaborated organically with the industry to produce high end *prêt-à-porter*, the output that came to define Italian style by the 1980s. When industrialisation came to Italy it was different as it was based on a system of the industrial districts centred on family businesses. The late industrialisation also meant that the country retained much artisanal know how and traditions that were later married up with localised industrialisation organised around industrial districts.

Industrialisation in Italy was never so widespread as to wipe out the artisanal traditions and more 'hand-made' ways of working. Although Italy came late to ready-to-wear, it succeeded in becoming one of the world's fashion centres for ready-to-wear with the city of Milan at its helm.

My thesis concludes in 1985, because after the international success of Italian *stilisti* and the high-end *prêt-à-porter* in the 1980s, a new shift occurred in the fashion panorama. The 1990s were a difficult period for Italian fashion for various reasons. According to Segre, one factor was that many Italian brands lost touch with their 'democratic' origins, an important aspect of their initial success.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Simona Segre Reinach, 'Milan as a Fashion City', in *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, ed. by Joanne Eicher, 8 vols (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 259-263.

Furthermore, production shifted once more with the introduction of new players such as China. The equilibrium and synergies reached in the previous decade between fashion and textile production changed to become more global and delocalised. New designers and brands also emerged in the new panorama, such as Dolce & Gabbana and Miuccia Prada.

The 'inside-out' method at the core of this thesis, with its analysis of textile production when investigating fashion, reveals Italian fashion as a more complex and multilayered system in which agency is not only exercised by fashion designers and consumers demands, but also by fibres, textiles and intermediaries. This approach is the key contribution that this thesis has made to the field of textile, fashion and design history. It has unlocked aspects previously under-researched. This method is applicable to other fashion areas outside Italy and could reveal, as it did in this case, a richer understanding of fashion production worldwide. This means that, if the model of my thesis was to be applied to other fashion centres, this could show a richer panorama and a portrait of other fashion outputs. This thesis has therefore contributed not only to Italian fashion history, but potentially to transnational and global histories of fashion. It has shown that, by including in the investigation the realms of materials and production when studying fashion previously under-researched and yet vital aspects are revealed, ultimately leading to a more rounded picture of fashion.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Participant Interviews.

### 1. Interview with Franco de Felice from Clerici Tessuto, Grandate, Como 25 May 2016

*We met in Clerici Tessuto's office in Grandate, Como. The interview took place in Italian. What follows is a transcript and translation of selected excerpts from the interview.*

**Franco de Felice: FdF**

**Lucia Savi: LS**

#### Italian Selected Transcript.

This interview is 3000 words long and I extracted some important sections from the words of Franco de Felice

[00.01.40]

FdF: Il produttore di tessile è sempre venuto come un produttore di tessile quindi non molto importante strategicamente.

Il prodotto tessile veniva diciamo, veicolato, subito dopo la guerra e anche prima poteva essere, veniva veicolato da grossisti di tessuti. Questo era per questione di comunicazione. C'erano grossisti in alta Italia, grossisti in media Italia e in Sicilia e isole che distribuivano stagionalmente i prodotti che loro stessi commissionavano alle tessiture.

[00.02.37] Le tessiture praticamente erano degli esecutori di ordini.

[00.02.52] Le tessiture ad un certo punto della stagione mettevano le pezze tipo cioè i campionari dell'estate e più tardi i campionari dell'inverno. Questi campionari venivano commissionati dai grossisti. Posso accumunare sotto questa definizione i carnettisti

[00.03.19].

Il grossista era quello più terra terra il carnettista aveva anche l'allure di presentare il proprio prodotto con fotografie con edizioni straordinarie e andavano a coprire la fascia alta della clientela sartoriale.

[00.04.00]

Il carnet nasce come se non sbaglio, come descrizione, queste mazzette di tessuti che erano maggiormente impiegati nella drapperia. La drapperia è tessuti per uomo. [...]

Il carnet erano queste mazzette di diverso colore e di diverso stile, rigato non rigato, punto a spillo etc. nei vari colori uomo e venivano dati ai sarti [...].

[00.07.27] Ci sono tessuti pregiati che per loro prezzo e per educazione non potevano andare ad un pubblico vasto e a questo proposito c'erano dei grossisti, carnettisti che avevano nella loro funzione di servire i sarti. Tra i sarti e le sarte c'era quello che era capace di cucire e c'era anche quello che era capace di inventare allora lì nelle sartorie nasceva il know how per la creazione e poi c'era qualcuno che eccelleva e diventava famoso.[...] tipo Schuberth Sorelle Fontana Capucci [...] nasceva Valentino.

*Lucia domanda sui carnettisti.*

I carnettisti erano commercianti. Compravano la bisogna (non in più) del campionario stagionale e lo presentavano ai loro sarti. [...] Stava alla capacità interpretativa del grossista capire, questo qui andrà questo qui non andrà.

*Lucia domanda sui carnettisti.*

I carnettista quindi comprava più metri e quindi il fabbricante si doveva dar da fare a consegnare entro poco. [...]. Bisognava essere molto reattivi alla domanda. [...]

Negli anni 50' il grossista era il deus ex machina dell'operazione tessile.

All'inizio degli anni 60 già cominciavano i primi confezionisti. Quelli importanti, non legato al grossista, che avevano degli uffici acquisti e le comunicazioni cominciavano ad essere più facili, perché i treni e i telefoni funzionavano. I confezionisti hanno iniziato con i grossisti poi hanno capito che in questo sistema c'era un sovrappiù di costi. Perché il grossista al dettagliante prendeva il 30 % grosso modo. Se costava 10 lo faceva pagare 13 al dettagliante. E il dettagliante lo faceva pagare 26 [...] Il doppio. Perché il dettagliante aveva più rischio, il rischio della rimanenza era suo.

[Parlano del dettagliante]. C'erano dei gran bei negozi, perché a Milano Galtruccio aveva di tutto, A Roma ce n'erano tre o quattro grossi Bassetti Polidori che quasi quasi fungevano da grossisti dettaglianti. Conoscevano la fabbrica e avevano due distribuzioni, una parte come grossista, un'altra parte come dettagliante [...].

le tessiture erano solo la mamma papà figlio. Facevano facevo, e poi aspettavano gli ordini dei grossisti. [...]. Le tessiture e le stamperie sono nate assieme, negli anni 60 e ogni produttore di tessuti aveva cominciato a fare la collezione di stampa. Una propria collezione.

[00.45.46] Qualcuno aveva la propria stamperia, altri stampavano fuori.

I disegni per la stampa arrivavano dalla tessitura che si era dotata di un ufficio stile. A quel tempo gli uffici stile acquistavano i disegni da degli studi di disegni. C'era una professione di disegnatore. Che adesso è sparita. [...] In cui c'erano 12 ragazze che dipingevano fiori. E il capo stilista girava il mondo con delle cartelle enormi con dentro centinaia di disegni di fiori piccoli, uccellini[...] E vendevano la carta disegnata, il disegno. Ogni disegno era unico ed era tuo esclusivo. [...]

Per esempio Boggia o Spadaccini. [...]

49.00 i disegni costavano tipo lire 250.000 l'uno. Poi si decideva cosa entrava in collezione.

[00.50.00] I disegni erano stagionali. Venivano acquistati esternamente Poi venivano incisi dalle società di incisione esterna. Il segreto di un buon disegno è l'incisione se ci mette un po' di cuore nella selezione dei colori. [...].

L'incisione era esterna. Nessun tessitore aveva l'incisione interna.

L'incisore mandava la tavola che mandava direttamente alla stamperia ( esterna).

L'ufficio stile della tessitura in contatto con la stamperia cominciava a fare le prime prove di stampa, si guardavano i colori, si facevano le maquette ( un pezzettino di tessuto prova). Quando viene approvato viene stampata la pezza tipo. La pezza tipo più dei metri con le varie interpretazioni del disegno, con diverse combinazioni di colori. Un disegno veniva presentato almeno con sette varianti. 50/60 disegni facevano la collezione che insieme alla produzione di tessuti in tinta unita, jaquardini, [...] completava la collezione stagionale al quale veniva allegata una cartella colori che indicava la tendenza [...].

*Lucia domanda*

La pezza tipo era necessaria per fare i 20 /30 campionari (circa 12 metri) che si facevano girare.

[01.04.46]

Alla Clerici tessuto negli anni 70 c'era una collezione chiamata alta moda che veniva data ai sarti di Roma e Milano e loro facevano modelli che venivano fotografati per VOgue

I Vogue e I Bazaar degli anni 70 erano molto alti e pesavano 1.8 Kg l'uno e c'erano pubblicati le pagine dei vestiti fatti con i tessuti dati gratis. [...] Quindi i tessutai andavano in giro a vendere i tessuti mostrando la pubblicità su Vogue, ma questa era moda taroccata perché c'era solo un modello Quei tessuti venivano imposti dal tessutaio. [...]

[01.27.00] Parlando degli Stati Uniti [...] il mio primo rapporto nel 1969.

Negli Stati Uniti, per lungo tempo fino agli anni 80 la fonte per il prêt-à-porter della settimana strada è stata. Quei palazzi lì erano tutti palazzi di confezionisti. La fonte dei tessuti erano i grossisti. E ritorniamo alla parola grossisti. Quelli cheavano imparato ad andare a comprare in giro per il mondo i tessuti.

*Lucia Domanda: in quel caso erano grossisti americani?*

Erano Italo-Americani [...]

### **English Translation**

**FdF:** The textile producer was always and only a textile producer therefore not very important strategically

The textile product was sold, right after the war, [...] by big textile wholesalers. There were wholesalers in the North of Italy, wholesalers in the centre, in Sicily and the islands. They supplied seasonally the products that themselves they were commissioning to the textile producers

[00.02.37] The textile producers were merely executing orders

[00.02.52] The textile producers (weavers) at some point in the season they were putting together the samples of the summer and of the winter. These samples were commissioned by the wholesalers. The *carnettisti* could be put under the same definition.

[00.03.19]

The wholesaler was the one more basic, while the *carnettista* had the allure to present its own product with photographs, and special editions and it was serving the high sector of the clientele.

[00.04.00]

The name carnet was created as a description of a swatch book that mainly was used for men's textiles.

The *carnets* were these swatch books of different colour and of different style and they were given to the tailors.

[00.07.27] There are some precious textiles because of the price and education could not be sold to a wide public and for this purpose there were wholesalers, *carnettisti* that had the function to serve the dressmakers and tailors. Amongst them there were some that were able to saw and there were some who were able to create. So there in the workshop the know how was born to create and then somebody would excel and became famous [...] such as Schubert Sorelle Fontana Capucci, [...] Valentino.

Lucia asks about the *carnettisti*.

The *carnettisti* were salesmen. They were buying what they need seasonally and then they were presented it to the dressmakers [...] It was the interpretative skills of the wholesaler to understand what would sell and what would not.

Lucia asks about the *carnettisti*.

The *carnettista* was buying more metres and so the textile manufacturers needed to hurry up in order to supply quickly. [...] They needed to be very responsive to the demands [...]

In the 1950s the wholesaler was the *deus ex machina* of the textiles operations.

At the beginning of the 1960s were already started appearing the first mass – producers. The big ones not connected to the wholesaler had bought offices and at that time the communications started to be easier because the trains and telephones were working. The mass-producers started with wholesalers, but then they understood that in that system there was a surplus of costs. Because the wholesaler was charging the retailer 30 per cent circa. If it cost 10, you would charge 13 to the retailer and then the retailer was selling for 26. The double. This was because the retailer had more risk as if it didn't sale it would have remained with him.

[speaking about the retailer] there were very nice shops. In Milan there was Galtruccio that stoked everything. In Rome there were three or four big, such as Bassetti and Polidori that almost worked as wholesalers – retailers. They knew the producers and they had two type of distribution, one as wholesalers and one as retailer [...].

The weavers were only mum, dad and son. They were producing and producing and then they were waiting for the orders from the wholesalers. [...]. The weavers and the printers were born together , in the 1960s and each textile producer also started to do a printed collection. Their own collection.

[00.45.46] Some of them had their own printer and some other were printing externally.

The drawings for the printing they came to the weavers, that at the same time had open a style office. At that time, the style offices were buying drawings from external design studios. There was a distinctive profession of the textile designer. Nowadays has disappeared. [...] In the studio there were twelve girls that were drawing flowers. The head of the studio was going around the world with big folders containing hundreds of drawings with little flowers, little birds [...] They were selling the paper with drawing. Each drawing was unique and you would get in exclusivity [...] For example Boggia or Spadaccini. [...]

[49.00] The drawings costed around 250, 000 lire each. Then one had to decide what to put in each collection.

[00.50.00] The drawings were seasonal. They were bought externally. Then they were engraved by external engravers. The secret of a good design is the engraving if it used a bit of passion in the selection of the colors.

The engraving was external. No weavers had internal engraving facilities.

The engraver was sending the planks directly to the printer (external).

The weaver's style office in communication with the printer started to do the first prints trials, the colour were checked and *maquette* ( little trail fabrics) were made. Once it was approved, the first print was printed. The first print plus some metres with different interpretation of the drawing and different colour combinations. A drawing would have been presented at least with seven variation. Between fifty and sixty drawings made the collection together with solid colours, jacquard [...] the seasonal collection was completed with a colour folder that indicated the trend [...]

The final print was necessary to produce twenty / thirty sets of samples (around twelve metres) that were sent around.

[01.04.46]

At the Clerici Tessuto in the 1970s there was a collection called *alta moda* that was given to the designers of Rome and Milan. They were making the garments that then were photographed for *Vogue*.

In the 70s, *Vogue* and *Bazaar's* were very thick and they weighted 1.8 Kg each and there were published the dresses made with the fabrics that were given away for free. [...] Therefore the textile producers were going around selling the fabrics by showing the advertisement published *Vogue*, but

this was fake fashion, as there was only one dress made of textile that was imposed by the textile producer [...]

[01.27.00] Speaking of USA [...] I had my first contact in 1969.

In the USA, for a long time up to the 1980s, the source of ready-to-wear was the Seventh Avenue. Those building were all buildings of mass-producers. The source of the fabrics were the wholesalers. And we come back to the word wholesalers. Those who had learnt to go and buy textiles around the world.

Lucia asks if the wholesalers where American

There were Italo-American

## 2. Interview with Brenda Azario, London, May 31, 2017

*We met in Brenda Azario's house in North London. The interview took place in English. Brenda Azario slips between Italian and English, and italics are used to denote when she was speaking in Italian. Given the bilingual nature of the interview, only the English version has been included in this appendix*

### English Transcript

**Brenda Azario: BA**

**Lucia Savi: LS**

BA: *There are all textiles used by him in his collection* [she refers here to my question which was not recorded: what are these black sample books about? Why is there a designer name such as Balenciaga at the top?]

In July and January, *and of there were samples with his name*, that meant that Balenciaga used them in that collection

LS But my question is, what would you do with this book? Would you sell to others?

BA: *oh God so we start again from the beginning*

LS: *yes I want to dismantle understand everything*

BA: *however we have spoken about this. So, when we started as Litex we would be selling to people like Sanet, Satam etc to *carnettisti*. Sanet actually had a big shop in Turin as well, but when we took the name Nattier is when we became our own *carnettista*. So these books would be either with our salesmen or with our office or whatever. Then you had the chaos of people that was coming to buy directly. They could be other *carnettisti*, but they could also be the dressmakers. So, you would use these books during the collections in Milan. So first there was Paris and Florence, then after one month, what was the name of the big one, that one you know it, the one that supply the models, this is [...] The dressmakers were selling the paper pattern and they were selling to Rina Modelli in Milan. And then our office, that was located in via Santo Spirito. All the dressmakers were coming from all Italy to buy, they came to buy the paper pattern and then they had to come and buy the textile.*

LS: *But when you say *sarti*, not the big couturiers, you mean dressmakers*

BA: the dressmakers

LS: *so these books, were a kind of an advertisement?*

BA: no, because we sold from them, they bought *the paper patter and they could see that that was the textile*

LS: *ahh the paper patter of Balenciaga?*

BA: no, no if they had bought from Rina Modelli *the paper pattern number 808 of Balenciaga they knew that that was the textile.*

LS: *ahhhh now I understand*

BA: they would come into the office etc. to buy the fabric for the pattern they have bought.

LS: so these books were tailored towards the *sarti*, the dressmakers

BA: yes

LS: you would not use this to sell to Balenciaga. What would you use?

BA: the whole fabric

LS: the whole piece? Ah Ok. This is very interesting

BA: Not at all, you would not sell to Balenciaga from that (referring to the small sample of fabric from Baumann book). Visto che era Balenciaga, era fotografato c'era il cartamodello e poi Rina naturalmente sfilava gli originali. They bought the originals.

LS: So, it was a big business the *sarti's* business

BA: very big, not big enough would be the answer. Le quantità non erano alte, but they were thousand.

LS very interesting. So what was the difference between the black books and white books?

BA: *Spring-Summer.*

LS: so, when you were going to Balenciaga you would bring the whole bolt?

BA: no, you would bring suitcase. *There was a textile swatch this big* (indicating circa half a metre). *That you could touch and feel. If you were going to Balenciaga you had to go with a real piece of fabric.* You would never show a *stamp-size*. *The stamp-size fabric was only a quick reference.*

S: so this was a catalogue...

BA: yes of what actually was already modelled that season.

LS; that already existed, that was already used, ok fantastic. That makes complete sense.

*[From 05:15 to 06:54 LS shows pictures of Baumann books to Brenda]*

LS: these pictures are from DuPont, just a couple

BA: we definitely collaborated with them. What they needed us for was not the development of the fabric but to get the piece. *Exactly like today* what you need is to get people to use it. *Of course*, Orlon was more of a nature of a silk, there were five of us, and the other four were silk manufacturers. But they said we need Nattier to get the placement.

LS: so, would DuPont give the Orlon fibres for free?

BA: *of course*, I think so, probably

LS: because what I found there are entire books where they would take pictures for instance a Givenchy made of Litex-Nattier gabardine Orlon and wool [...]. Why would you use both names there at that point? [Referring to Litex-Nattier] [...]

BA: I remember him saying to me about the four French. God, I cannot remember these names [...]

LS: Bianchini Ferrier

BA: *of course*. Probably Zumstengh in Zurich, Abraham, Bianchini Ferrier, *there are also two or three more*

LS: so, they were using as well Orlon.

BA: we were probably the only Italian name actually to use Orlon at that time at the very beginning.

LS: and you used other things as well not only Orlon.

BA: yes we mixed Orlon with others.

LS: in terms of Orlon fibres, was it only Orlon or you used others?

BA: what I remember from DuPont was only Orlon, but I wish I could remember what we do with Courtauld. Yes definitely we worked with Courtauld.

LS: and can you tell me about synthetics in the Sixties in Italy? Was it hard to place them?

BA: I think it was looked down on. Orlon had a certain sheen [...] our fabrics were much more wool or whatever. I cannot remember the particular qualities, probably is written in there.

LS: Qiana?

BA: *Snia Viscosa and them what material was it?*

LS: Lilion... and you were working with them as well.

BA: *yes a lot with Snia Viscosa*

LS: *so why did you work so much with the producers of synthetics?*

BA: we embraced the new. We stood for innovation.

LS: although it was looked down

BA: yes it was looked down by some. I would think that even Givenchy or whatever would have used it once in a while. They used it, but not embrace it.

LS: so those pictures of Givenchy using Orlon ...

BA: means that they bought it.

LS: do you think that DuPont would give it.

BA: no, they bought it from us.

LS; so they would buy it from you...you were place it from them.

BA: that is right

LS you would convince them to buy and the designer would buy it. Would you know why you were called Litex-Nattier at that point?

BA: I guess it was a period of transition. Litex was the factory, Nattier was the wholesaler. I imagine that during a period of transition we would have been called both. *Then if you had to deal with Litex, you would deal with Litex.*

LS: yes because I have seen advertisement of Litex only for instance a Vogue cover with Litex.

BA: I don't remember us trying to differentiate much. I supposed Nattier was meant to be more for Paris and we certainly sold as Litex also.

LS: my question is, because I am really trying to unpick who were the *carnettisti* e what they were doing and why they disappear. Why did you decide to become a *carnettista* as Nattier?

BA: I can explain that easily. Well before, before we begin Nattier, we went through someone called Pierre Besson in Paris, so all the credits in the magazines were Pierre Besson. So if you wanted to get the credit of your own name, you had to have your own company, as simple as that.

LS: so, Pierre Besson was a French *carnettista*

BA: yeah.

LS: so, the carnets existed in Italy, existed in France. Did they exist in other countries as well?

BA: I imagine Spain,

LS: do you remember any names?

BA: Lorenzo a big big textile store on the Ramblas

LS: so what were the *carnettisti* doing?

BA: distributing

LS: just distributing?

BA: yes, just distributing nothing else. But you see, a carnet would buy the whole piece and then they would sell metre by metre

LS: so they had the capital to buy all this?

BA: yes that is right

LS: the textile manufacturer would like to do business with you because you were not only a small couturier doing few metres. You would buy the whole bolt.

BA: Carnet would always buy the whole piece. They had to.

LS: so you had the capital

BA: no, you needed the carnet in order to get through the distribution with the *sartorie*. Even when we had Nattier we did not immediately get through to the thousands of *sartorie*. That come later maybe 1966 -67 and 1968. In 1964 we were selling just to other carnet, we did the placing in the couture house, but then we would have sold to the carnet and only when we then began distributing with the *cartamodelli* then...when we had the office in Paris, maybe 1965.

BA: so the big customers were the carnet and the carnet was SANET for sure, SATAM, GANDINI big time. *Are you going to be able to see her?*

LS: I have asked she is alive. I have asked somebody at Ratti to put me in touch.

BA: if not *the sister is Rossana Orlandi*.

LS: do you have a contact?

BA: [...] [diversion on where Susy Gandini now].

LS: [Diversion on *Camera Nazionale della Moda*. And advertisement of FIAT].

BA: *since you have reminded me, we have done the uniforms for Alitalia in a year that maybe was 67.* Mila Schon did them they were bright green.

LS: so the fabric was yours?

BA: yes. The whole crew, the cabin crew

LS: Why did the *carnettisiti* disappeared? Because they went from a very big moment in the 1960s and then...

BA: *because the dressmakers did not exist anymore.* With the lack... *Back then you could make a dress I remember just for 40,000 lire* and just dried up, there were no more sartoria. The turning point was when Marella Agnelli wore a pair of jeans from Fiorucci. Life changed forever. *A woman like would have never put on a pair of jeans before.* That was probably 68 or something like that. Fashion is to be in tune with your time. *Before then,* [... bad sound]. The Italian ready-to-wear was not of particular good quality. *There was* La Rinascente, but Italy for department stores was much much less evolved. Then of course the French were the first ones. I am forgetting the names... and it became perfectly acceptable.

LS: [...] so your main clients, the *sartorie*, started to disappear

BA: prior to disappear, people did not want to do it anymore. And then the lack of skills and things like that. But I would not say that they stated to disappear when I went off the scene [...]

LS: coming back to the *carnettisti*. Do you think apart from the distribution and the capital, were they offering something else? Like, for instance you said you were the face of Nattier and you would go... could you represent as well the sale department. Let's say if you think about textile producers

today, they have the sale department, the style department, they do design. Were you offering something of that type? Would you design the fabric as well? You would decide more or less what the trend of that year would be. Were you offering a kind of consultancy?

BA: directions. I would not call it consultancy .no no .We would not tell them what to do and it would depend. You would not tell Balenciaga .But others drew, not inspiration, but drew comfort from the fact that it was used, you give confidence as you go down the line.

LS I am trying to understand, would it be only distribution that *carnettisti* would do

BA: frankly yes. I knew them very well, yes it was only distribution.

LS: nothing else?

BA: no

LS: and the capital

BA: of course, the cost of cutting in the wholesale room ... many people. The cost of that distribution was too great for the product. You did it for a while, but then... for all them...

LS: yes only Gandini and Lucchini stayed on till the 80s and all the others disappeared, probably because they changed what they were doing because they started to become converters as well and producing their own fabric

BA: yes producing their own fabrics

LS: while you with Litex were producing your own fabrics anyway. So Sanet and Bises were they producing their own fabrics?

BA: Sant was a very very big retail store, but very big ah. And that was Valerio Giacosa the owner. Sanet had a retail store. Bises had a retail store.

LS: but you did not have it

BA: no never

LS: why is that? You didn't need it? Or...

BA: we never went in that side of things

LS: because anyway you had all your representatives your offices. I am going to show you an advertisement of Sassi and I wonder if you could talk to me about it. Why they would use it. [...]

Bruno Sassi' name is very big... Lancetti smaller

BA: that is very rare, because usually you would have the name of the couturier. That is because he paid.

LS: he paid right? Yeah because there were a few ... I found more in 1966 in Vogue Italia... actually this is March 1967. Is that because in that period there was a boom? Or because they were about to die?

BA: no no, not necessarily, they probably felt that the couturiers were getting too much credit. Because you know the fabrics were credited in the big magazines, but it was always the couturiers' name, that was the problem. *At the time the textile did not carry the merit it had*, because we sustained Valentino and *all those people that otherwise they would have not existed*, by developing for them things like that without any real financial benefit. You were doing it in order to get your stuff in with the name. It is just like know, you know the name and the placement is everything. So many of those underwrote, doesn't mean that we wrote them a check [...] we supplied what they needed at less.

LS: so they were paying less but for you there was a return in image

BA: no no they were paying what we have asked them. But we didn't realise that our cost was greater [...] Satam and Sassi they would buy from the manufactures and then they would have a mark-up... but the cost of *distribution*.

LS for you a name like Valentino was important

BA: was important [...] Mila Schon worked first of all, *a dressmaker of the highest level*, she was producing the Balenciaga *for the people of Milan*. Before she started on her own.

LS: I am going to show you again an image we have been working a lot with. [...] Fabiani in Vogue Pattern. If you can explain me how would it work with Vogue pattern?

BA: it went to Vogue pattern? *I don't remember* how it would have worked. But if it went to vogue pattern they must have arranged for some kind of [...]

LS but I cannot see your name, but maybe was inside

BA: or not because they could have used any fabrics. I do not remember ay connections to selling fabrics

LS: so it was not a big business for you

BA: not at all. What could be a business, much more so, were the department stores. So Mays ... what were the names... (Lucia suggests) Bergdorf Goodman ... Sacks, B B B....

LS: Bonwit Teller?

BA: another B... they still exist. Anyway, they would buy the pattern and they would have produced limited series. That was the department store business... they would buy the paper pattern [...]... they would buy the metres...

LS: so they would buy the real fabric from you

BA: In London Debenhams and Harrods and probably at that time another department store... before Harvey Nichols ...anyway the department stores they did business buy doing the repeat

LS [...] and at the time you were telling me that you would then sell to Japan after 6 months the same fabrics

BA: yes you would go out to Japan and sell to the wholesalers, by far the biggest one would be CITO.  
Etc.

And they were again wholesale

LS: would your fabrics go to ready-to-wear?

BA: not really in those years... because I remember going to Japan in 62

LS: than not even in Italy, it would be couture or sartorial or mass-production, or limited mass-production for the department stores

BA: and maybe the department stores they did it in Japan also

LS: we wouldn't call it ready-to-wear, we would call it *Alta Moda Pronta*.

BA: yes *Alta Moda Pronta*

LS: so is the step before ready -to-wear

BA: yes

LS: speaking of *Alta Moda Pronta* [...] the Sorelle Fontana were they ever clients?

BA: yes [...]

LS: [...] diversion on Sorelle Fontana foundation]

BA: *Forneris* ah yes another wholesalers name of Rome

LS: Forneris would be a *carnettista*?

BA: yes a *carnettista* very closely tight to Capucci

LS: [...] some of the *carnettisti* would call themselves *seterie*... and you would confuse them

BA: with manufactures, which they never were

LS: exactly, so why they would do that? And the manufactures did not get upset. My idea is that, because you were buying, you had the capital, the manufactures were happy, because without you they would not be selling directly. They did not have the capacity at the time, as you said, to distribute

BA: they did not have the capacity to distribute and to get the name out there nor. It is also a question of how you see yourself, before. *The textile was the textile, then there was the model etc. The textile* became more important, *the textile* with Chanel in particular... you would think jersey first and tweed afterwards. So the fabric assumed an identity of its own.

LS that is why they needed somebody to sell it

BA: yeah

LS: because textile producers were just producing at the time and did not have a commercial entity

BA: They were always producing to a demand without the sense of direction. [...] These manufacturers produced what people asked [...]

LS: You were given them identity

BA: Yes

LS: the commercial, the distribution

BA: we made the fabrics having an identity of its own

LS: let's call it marketing and branding

BA: yeah, but we didn't call it that at the time [...]

LS: when you were buying Nattier, you knew you were buying into something

BA: yeah

LS: you were buying quality, bold colours, design...

BA: modern, modern design, yeah, yeah

LS: so, what would it be the Gandini's identity?

BA: quality. Gandini was quality. Sanet a little bit less so because they sold more across the range.

LS: my idea is as well that the carnettisti disappeared and the textile manufactures took over, they developed departments within the textile manufactures and they did your job later on. They did have commercial agents during the 70s that travelled all over the world. They had *un ufficio stile* [...] all these departments are all in the same building. Back in the days I am thinking you were kind the carnettisti were their agent

BA: that is it. They were the face of the fabric to the consumers or the couturiers, they were the face

LS would there be designers and couturiers who would go directly to the manufactures?

BA: yes. Ungaro definitely big time. We went to Balenciaga, he would not come to us. [...] Ungaro, they knew wave they would definitely (go directly to the producer) and they would also explain what they wanted. *The famous phrase from Courreges, a textile that can be sculpted.*

LS: you had an understanding of the situation , because you were talking directly with them

BA: *certainly*, you had to have that personal relationship. There were some we were much friendlier than others. The Italians were much friendly. And the young French also [...] and then again of course from couture you were staring to sell to the first wave of ready-to-wear in France [...]

LS: so you did a bit of ready-to-wear

BA: yes at the beginning. There was a time of lots of changes

LS: the politics and for your company as well. [...] when I went to research your archive at Cristina I found a Sassi book amongst your other books

BA: why we would have that one? *Nothing, because there were our textiles inside Sassi's book* [...] [Brenda comments on images of the books hold in Cristina Azario's archives 00.43.00-00 – 00.48.00]

LS: loom fixers is the translation, but what would be in Italian?

BA: loom fixers I don't know in Italian.

LS: we covered everything.

BA: another important characteristic of synthetics was the brightness of colour, *very important* [...] there was a brightness that wasn't before.

[...] [LS showing more pictures].

LS: Tell me a bit of Sonia Knapp

BA: she was his girlfriend [...] (of Ungaro). Ungaro came to us and said I want this and this.

LS: how would it work with textile designers?

BA: there was a man called Savino who was our main fabric designer. And there was Jermi and Bellotti.

LS: they were external to the company?

BA: yes, we would give them the fabric to print. All of this was printed we did not do printing.

LS it is interesting because the fabrics designers would be all external in this period.

BA: expect woven fabrics, woven fabrics was my husband, Savinio and then there were 2 younger guys. The woven was in house

LS: the printing it is very interesting, because now a days they have them inside again. Like Clerici Tessuto has its own design department.

BA: but don't forget, we were not printers. We were wool. If we were in Como it would have been different.

[...] [*Showing more pictures and Litex cover*]

LS: [Litex Vogue Cover] would that be that Litex was producing more... no more metres, but more for bigger markets? Because this I think is Ben Zuckerman.

BA: he was our first big client. There were two big clients Zuckerman and Originalia and they were doing this very high ready-to-wear. It was ready-to-wear and he would have bought Litex.

LS: ok there was that differentiation

BA: yes there was that differentiation

LS: was it a matter of branding? Or was a matter of meters?

BA: it was a matter of branding, Nattier was for Couture [...]

*[Showing a Gandini advertisement]*. LS: the Gandini name is more prominent BA: they paid.

[...] *[Personal conversation]*

LS: *[showing one of white book drawing]*.

BA: that is a Valentino. So that could be that Valentino had a designer who drew the drawing and we had it developed for them. [...]. And Mila Schon did her own (design) with someone called Chino Bert [...]

LS: so she would come with the design.

BA: or she would come with the start of a design and we would take it to someone like Jermi

LS so you were doing that as well. So you were doing much more than distribution.

BA; yes the link between the two.

LS: the link between production and design

BA: certainly, we were more than distributors. Nattier was just the name assumed, but we were inventive on the textile side. But was never someone in house.

LS: but you were the ones to know where to go

BA: yes

LS: because Valentino did not have the time. It is very important because nowadays is all in one company

BA: I am a bit tired.

LS: (showing another image of Knapp)

BA: ah this is beautiful [...]. It would be just paper and we would make it happen.

### 3. Interview with Cleonice Capece London, 18 May, 2017

*We met in Cleonice Capece's house in South London. The interview took place in English. Cleonice Capece's slips between Italian and English, and italics are used to denote when she was speaking in Italian. Given the bilingual nature of the interview, only the English version has been included in this appendix*

#### English Transcript

#### Cleonice Capece: CC

#### Lucia Savi: LS

LS: How consumption changed in Italy in the 1960s?

CC: before the 60s Italy had no industrial production except for a few man's textile... *like you know...* [Inaudible] something like that. Mainly there were *sartorie* where everybody used to go to have the dressed made. There were some boutiques but very very few or there was the *alta moda* where of course high society and people with money used to go to have their clothes made. If you read, I don't know if you have read my book, it tells you that in fact I have been one of the first to start this ready-to-wear. Why? Because it was a natural stage for a young person to have an idea how to mass-produce the young clothes for the young people of and for the middle age. Up to a certain age in any case. So it was a research, let's say that after my first and second collection, of course I started to work with *carrettisti* and with of course *textile producers*. And it was very... the choice was very important for making a collection, I was never a choice, a person, a designer who would choose many many fabrics in many many colours. I always produced my collection with very very few fabrics which had to mean something. I give an example, I would always wear a type, use, a type of fabric let's say linen, and linen would go from the morning from the office from sportswear into the evening. Or what was interesting at the time for me... the possibilities that I had with the *carrettisti* for doing whatever I had in mind. And because of course the production was going to be a big one, there were willing to do everything I wanted. Like for instance I would choose a design and I would use that design for beachwear, for day dresses, sportswear and evening. So let's say in a conception, in a concept like this one I would use Elstan, I would use cotton, I would use silk and I would use chiffon. Always with the same print, so that the whole collection would be followed from beachwear into evening wear. And that is the big collaboration between me and the *carrettisti*.

LS: can I ask? Would they come up with certain range of patterns or prints you could choose from or you were collaborating in creating a new one?

CC: no. Normally, I would choose from them, I would definitely choose fabrics which were always very interesting. In the sense that I was never one to go for big flowers, it had to be a special design. If I had that... or they also for instance came to me with paper design. And they used to ask me, what do you think? That was our collaboration then. But I would always have a say with the colours for the production.

LS: and how would they come. Would they come with books of samples?

CC: yes

LS: big luggage?

CC: yes of course.

LS: please tell me more about this aspect

CC: and also paper, it was always very interesting. But then don't forget that at the time, I have no idea if they still do it, it is possible, the big presentations for the fabrics was on the lake...

LS: Como? Was it Como?

CC: all'albergo

LS: Villa D'Este

CC: Villa D'este

LS: I am from Como originally that is way

CC: I would go to Villa d'Este and stay three, four days there. I would look at all the fabrics, and funnily enough I would stay extra two days and this is when I used to plan the collection based on the fabrics. So Villa D'Este had always a special part for me

LS: it's a beautiful place for me. But at the time, speaking about the 1960s I am assuming. Where you based in London? Or where you based in Italy?

CC: no no in Roma

LS: in Roma ok

CC: via Gregoriana

LS: yeah, and you were producing ready-to-wear? Where would you produce? How would it work? Did you have a company that made the collection for you?

CC: I had a very big showroom in Via Gregoriana and I had ... so there was showroom, office and workroom. Workroom with about 1/15 people working and all the collections were done there except of course if there were embroideries and special things that outside work would do and then of course for the production we had a lot of people working at home at *cottimo*

LS: ah ok!

CC: that was the big industry of the time

LS: yeah wow

CC: because you would have one lady who would do shirts, you would have one lady who would do bikinis, and they would always... *they were learning to do one given thing...*

LS: they specialised in one thing

CC: they could produce one after the other. And that was very important as I was exporting in 36 countries the production was quite high for the time.

LS: do you remember any numbers. How many?

CC: I remember the Japanese order for 900 pieces

LS: and would you produce only after they ordered?

CC: yes

LS: they ordered and then I don't know you would have 6 months...

CC: yes of course. Because after the showing at the Pitti Palace of course we would stay at Palazzo Strozzi and we would have all the appointments with all the buyers and then we would make plenty of the orders, but by then I became so famous, let's say, I don't like to say. I had agent practically almost in every country. And I was doing all the shows in New York, Germany France everywhere so of course the production was really big.

LS: it was done *on piecework*; you did not have an industry or...

CC: no, we would do, I don't know... the workroom was always working in via Gregoriana, because it was always very busy there was *control*

LS: so they would do it outside

CC: yes, finishing was very important. Then you had to hang the labels the *cartellini*, folded

LS: packaging maybe

CC: yeah, distributed for the various orders everywhere in the world so, it was a very big busy

LS: enterprise... I am just very... it makes sense because there were no big industries in Italy at the time that could actually produce... and maybe it was cheaper to produce *on piecework*? I don't know... it was more precise made by hand?

CC: it didn't exist the big industry. It did not exist. Before I started my business, because I was working with Harrods [inaudible]... it wasn't still an industry, but very big home-made production, let's say and that was Max Mara which I introduced to Harrods and it was the first order Max Mara made for export. It was through me to Harrods.

LS: oh wow

CC: and then that was very good because they were in Bologna and they had agent in Italy, but they never exported

LS: oh wow

CC: so that was a very ...

LS: do you remember when that was more or less?

CC: must have been ... aha ahah

LS: doesn't matter if you don't remember

CC: must have been '58

LS: 58. And what were you doing at Harrods, were you working ...

CC: yes ... I was introducing... because I had the connection with the Italian trade centre that was after... I was already working with Harrods then ... they were asking for anything shoes, gloves, jewellery everything. So the ICE would give me various *names* and when I thought that one was good for Harrods I would introduce them. And Max Mara, a friend of a friend of mine said to me... 'There is an agent who I know who's got a collection of coats and suits in case you want to show it to Harrods. SO when the buyer arrived in Rome I took them there because they used to buy only high fashion. That is how in a way I got into what I did because there was only high fashion

LS: so how would you define yourself back in the 60s? Were you a couturier were you a designer? Were you a *stilista*? Wat were you?

CC: no, just by sheer chance I decided to ... I must go back...

LS: please do

CC: when I come to London to study English I was working for a shop, an Indian shop that had all the Indian fabrics and so... every time when I sued to go to Rome, I would bring a lot of Sari because all my friends were crazy about it... and then ICE sent me to Salerno because there is somebody who does beautiful [inaudible] because they wanted to put together all the people who wanted to export. This person looks like he has got very good hand painted printed collection. So I said: 'ok I shall go and have a look' so I went all the way to Caserta to find out that he was only painting the fabrics and I loved them so much I just bought as much as I could afford for the money I had .. And I put them in the car and took them to Rome and that is how I did my first collection with the Indian Sari and the hand painted cottons.

*Oh sorry... I forgot that scusa...these were Indian Saris*

LS: *66 so the first collection of 66*

CC: *no I used them always, because the buyers were coming and they were saying ' where is the collection of Indian bikinis? And therefore for years it went on in this manner and you see [showing me pictures].*

LS: *and these? What materials?*

CC: *always Indian cotton*

LS: *always Indian cotton*

CC: *Indian voile cotton. And these were hand painted and they were ...*

LS: *di Caserta*

CC: *of an incredible modernity... you see they were very... how do you say it? ... they were super.. they were made by hand they were all the buckets with inside all the paints. There was a very long table from there to there and he was saying ahahahah*

LS: *fantastic. So you were buying the metres from him and then you were making the garments.*

CC: *and then if they ordered more I would go back to him and I would buy more metres. At that point .. then he could not do them anymore and the story of the hand painted finished... because I was giving him many ideas, they were things of a unique beauty.*

LS: *you don't have them anymore?*

CC: *no. This is the collection [showing me pictures from her book] still Indian, but in silk ... and so think that at that time... it was a very innovative thing because nobody ... to whom came to mind to make a normal collection for the ladies, because this was done for the ladies, in Indian saris?*

LS: *of course, very beautiful*

CC: *you see, Indian again, there are ... when I started to introduce jerseys. I wish I could remember the names... I will have to do a research for some names because I do not think I can remember. Because funny enough for the book was never really important to remember the names, so I will have to go back into in.*

LS: *no absolutely no problem, we can be in touch... ah these are the drawings you were talking about... this is the one you have?*

CC: *no the ones I have are hundreds.*

LS: *are they from the 1960s? Or only of the 70s?*

CC: *beh the book come up to '74.*

LS: *no the drawings that you own.*

CC: *the drawing I own... they range between 60s and 70s.*

LS: *because you started working in the 60s? Correct me if I am wrong.*

CC: *no, I started in '58 for Harrods. So I started in '59/'60 I believe more or less. My collection was made only with hand painted cotton and it was a cotton popeline very nice almost shiny, that could be work with nicely... and the color was resistant [...] and then I included silk saris and then slowly slowly I started buying. Have you ever heard of Falconetto?*

LS: *yes, yes*

CC: *eh then, I don't know if I have something here, because we were friends, the first textile for the first the winter collection that I made was with Falconetto's textiles.*

LS: *very nice.*

CC: *I believe that if it is not on the book, I definitely have in pictures, there they are.*

LS: *fantastic. And they were directly in contact with you... there was no carnettista*

CC: *you see? These three pieces were Falconetto..the fabric was Falconetto...*

LS: *Were they big textile producers?*

CC: *no they were very small. They were two partners friends and they were making a small collection. Now they are huge, I am not sure they still exist*

LS: *I don't know, I don't think so*

CC: *til very recently ... they must have died surely because they were old when I was young and now I am old ahah so*

LS: *Falconetto.. and I was wondering if you were participating at Pitti.. were you going to Pitti?*

CC: *the collection*

LS: *10/18 garments maybe*

CC: *no no the collection was much bigger*

LS: *but at Pitti I thought that there was a maximum number of garments that could be shown?*

CC: *yes of course, but the collection was of 40/50 piece now I don't remember*

LS: *so you were making a selection of some pieces*

CC: *of course of course...the fashion show at Pitti was the fashion show at Pitti then there was the show room at Palazzo Strozzi where they were coming to see the collection*

LS: *and Pitti was taking a percentage of what you were selling?*

CC: *No*

LS: *Or you were only paying an entrance fee?*

CC: *the buyers had to pay, I believe, 800 dollars to come and see the collections. But these 800 dollars were given back as vouchers that were given back to me when they were placing an order*

LS: *is it like they receive the back?*

CC: *it is like they receive the back*

LS: *because I have seen some of these vouchers in the Florence State Archive*

CC: *ah*

LS: *they have the Giovanni Battista Giorgini archive and I have seen some vouchers of the 50s and I was not sure how they worked... they were of 50.000 lire, 100.000 lire, 10.000 lire and there were the names of ...*

CC: *of the buyers*

LS: *of the buyers and of the designers*

CC: *of course*

LS: *and then to who you were giving the vouchers? To the Giorgini's office?*

CC: *of course*

LS: *and then they were paying back to you... interesting because I never understood how they worked [pause]*

*Interview resumed after coffee*

LS: another thing I wanted to ask. What was... how would you define your profession, were you a *stilista*, a designer, couturier, was a boutique you had... how would you define your profession in the 60s?

CC: I was supposed to become a teacher ... the last thing I was supposed to be was a designer, but as things went because of how things were, because I got into Harrods, which was a very big experience for me and also because when I went to work as an apprentice, a sale person in this shop while I was going to school in this Indian shop, I had fallen in love with everything Indian. And that was mine was my capitulation in always doing something ... I mean ... I even had a prize for the best window in Oxford. Because they had a big big store in Oxford Street and I had started doing the windows and I even got a first price for the best window in Oxford Street

LS: fantastic, so you became a designer

CC: so I think it was natural I would say you know... people ask me, 'but you didn't go to art school and you didn't do any' and that's why they only design I put in it was the only design ... because they look so stupid and I thought is quite fun to show that even somebody who has not gone... if you really want to do something you can do it

LS: absolutely

CC: obviously this has nothing to do with comes later, but that I was starting. That is how I started doing it ... to show what I wanted ... what I had done, you know, for the selling of the collection

LS: and what date were you... you know that at Pitti they had different days of presenting

CC: oh well the summer, summer collection and the winter collection

LS: no no I mean there was *alta moda* was presenting and then

CC: that was ... for me was prêt-à-porter

LS: so you were under the prêt-à-porter

CC: I was ready-to-wear I used to call it. Ok my show room... because I had all this experience with Harrods and I was taking the buyers everywhere, of course the best street in Rome was Via Gregoriana which is where Valentino was at that time [not audible] *who else was there?*

LS: Simonetta was there

CC: Tita Rossi. Simonetta, I took her showroom

LS: ahhhh

CC: because that's when Simonetta went to India... I took her furniture, dummies. This is was Simonetta's sofa and that is the first show room I had, but then when we became quite big and I had to change because we had no space then .. The only strange things I don't have beautiful photos of my showroom, I was always too busy to...

LS: photograph it

CC: *there is nothing ... ah there you go. Some small views of the showroom, you can't see much. This was my desk.*

LS: *and this was also in Rome?*

CC: *yes in Via Gregoriana at number 56 and I was at the first floor and at the second floor was Capucci, Capece, Capucci... it was very big, because started in via Gregoriana 12 and then was continuing in via Capolecase up to via Sistina.*

LS: *oh wow ... and you stayed there up to the 1970s when you closed?*

CC: *up to '74*

LS: *and then you closed in '74?*

CC: *and I opened in Conduit Street*

LS: *so you closed there and you moved to London... in '74... can I ask you what was the reason?*

CC: *first of all the strikes for the situation... nothing was working like it used to do... and there was already the first move towards Milan. So I told myself... if I really need to move... I go to London ... It was my second city for me... because I lived there for a long time eccetera and so I opened my first showroom, that was the first Italian showroom*

LS: *ah*

CC: *and yes of course, there were no Italian showrooms, I took it at Conduit Street where Moschino is now ...no Dolce Gabbana*

LS: *Dolce Gabbana, so in '74... from '74 up to when?*

CC: *so the showroom stayed there up to '92 ... and then I started... I was making collections for other brands... for Burberry..*

LS: *were you drawing?*

CC: *bha I was also looking at the commercial sides of things because I worked for two years in Perugia for a cashmere company ( that before was working for me) and because they were almost going bankrupt.. I helped them put them..*

LS: *back up again. In Italy in 1960s do you think there were other designers that were doing something similar to you, a prêt-à-porter, ready-to-wear not alta moda ... we know the names of alta moda, but others like you?*

CC: *Billy Ballo, I am trying to think ...*

LS: *who were your competitors? Or you were the only one?*

CC: *no, no, we were many, I have another blank*

LS: *you can write to me later on... I just wanted to understand... because it was not alta moda, it was not confezione, but was boutique ready-to-wear*

CC: *there was ready-to-wear, indeed in via Gregoriana there was Tita Rossi alta moda, I cannot remember other names ... there was Valentino, Capucci and I wrote Cleonice Capece ready-to-wear*

LS: *ah really in English even!*

CC: *yes, because I was selling very little in Italy*

LS: *ah so in Italy you were not selling much*

CC: *and then I was doing my collection.. the Japanese... they were doing my production in Japan*

LS: *ah,when? After the piece – work?*

CC: *no, no, from Rome .. so the Japanese were coming to Florence, let's say there were buying five garments, then these five garments ... they were making the paper patterns for the Japanese measurements and they were producing those five garments in Japan, so there was Cleonice Capece in Japan and then there was a second cheaper Cleonice Capece made in Japan*

LS: *ah wow, so made in Italy ... So Cleonice Capece Made in Italy and Made in Japan*

CC: *correct, and I was going twice a year in Japan because I needed to check the products*

LS: *and they were paying... how did it work?*

CC: *yes of course royalties*

LS: *royalties, ok. And these were high numbers? Big production of ready-to-wear?*

CC: *of course*

LS: *almost like confezione let's say... were they using Italian textiles of Japanese?*

CC: *maybe I have some pictures somewhere*

LS: *it would be wonderful if you then find them... it was Japanese textiles... so made in Japan designed in Italy.*

CC: *exactly*

LS: *super interesting, so you were doing it because it was clearly economically viable*

CC: *yes of course*

LS: *and they were buying in big numbers*

CC: *yes of course*

LS: *and they were selling...*

CC: *I did not have the collapse of the production... big part of the production was with the garments they bought... then they also ordered some Made in Italy, but that was a completely different business*

LS: *so Made in Italy maybe there were buying five garments , but five garments were produced in Japan*

CC: *there were two completely types of orders, because one was Matsuya and the other one was Torei, they were conglomerates and so what happened, Matsuya buyers were coming and they were placing orders for the shop Cleonice Capece Made in Italy. Then Torei was coming and was placing an order for three, four, five garments of which they did not have the textiles, but only the paper pattern*

LS: *so they were only buying the paper pattern*

CC: *yes, but I had to agree on everything, I had to agree that it was done in that way eccetera eccetera and then they produced them, once they made the prototype, I was going to Japan to review it and then they were mass producing for the Japanese market*

LS: *of course, what years are we talking about?*

CC: *up to '72*

LS: *from?*

CC: *could have been '66 which was the year of my first collection at Palazzo Pitti*

LS: *up to '72?*

CC: *yes... I did two collections that were inspired by Japan, one of Mikado, the Mikado textile, a very beautiful silk with a Japanese style and then I did another collection inspired by Japan*

LS: *and they you sold them to Japan?*

CC: *of course...let's see if I have something... there you go ... this was Mikado... and this is all hand woven*

LS: *very beautiful wow*

CC: *look at the colours! As you can see, as I was telling you ... for a collection I was using a small selection of textiles and so as you can see here there is white Mikado that I used to make the whole series of paintings inspired to Japan and then evening gowns in Mikado... so I was exploiting one type of textiles ... I don't remember if they were coming from a carnettista or a textile producer ...*

LS: *but there is a difference? Were you dealing directly with the textile producer? Or with the carnettisti?*

CC: *but no...there were...you see this is very Japanese... the sleeves eccetera, so I was making the most of the collection ... I was making the most of a textile in various ways [...]*

LS: *different garments... so you were applying the textile in different ways*

CC: *exactly yes yes*

LS: *the same textile in a collection*

CC: *but then I was putting something ... like this one ... what were you saying?*

LS: *ah yes I was wondering if for you the textile producers and carnettisti were the same or different?*

CC: *but no, normally I would deal...let's say the textile factory owners knew me... the directors, owners... indeed many were taking photographs for Vogue that they were paying ... it was a very important collaboration...*

LS: *directly with textile producers?*

CC: *of course*

LS: *already in the '60?*

CC: *a little bit later when I started to use many different types of textiles, I mean when I detached myself from India, because that went on for a while... because the buyers.. when I started to do beachwear with other textiles, it took time... because the bikini and the shirts made in Indian cotton were selling very fast*

LS: *so let's say that after you finished with India, you started to develop a relationship*

CC: *no, let's say that I always put some things because... I tried to... you see... because at a certain point... first I was doing summer collections... the first two years ... and they started to say... winter, winter, winter, so I had to start finding also, because I was not an expert... where could I find the textiles? And so almost immediately... I had the opportunity to have different... so for the first winter collection as you can see even if it was a day suit... I lined and the shirt was Indian ... and then I used jersey, organdie*

LS: *and the textiles where coming from all over Italy or?*

CC: *no, from the North*

LS: *north ... the textiles always from the North, apart from the ones from Caserta?*

CC: *yes.. Salerno..*

LS: *my parents are from Salerno*

CC: *oh really? I was born in Salerno.*

LS: *my parents are from Angri.*

CC: *ah my grandparents had a house in Vietri on the Sea*

LS: *very nice*

[pause phone ringing...]

CC: *so the first winter collection is the one that I made by using textiles from the carnettisti, or how you want to call them*

LS: *eh yes, because I am trying to understand what is the difference, because some of them did not produce textiles and they were selling them on behalf of others. For example, Nattier, Sanet, Gandini, Lucchini they were in theory, they were only selling, they did not produce them*

CC: *yes, but we are talking again of another era. Because at that time there was the producer and there was the agent or the representative*

LS: *but this in the '70s or also already in the '60s?*

CC: *between the '60s and '70s, we are talking about the first ten years '58, '60, '70. There wasn't... now I understand what you want to say ... you mean that there was a selection of drawings*

LS: *or of textiles*

CC: *or of textiles and you sell them... instead the representative was working for .... I cannot think the name of another company.. ISIS*

LS: *ISIS*

CC: *for example, I believe... let's say ... Isis had its own representatives that were going around to show their samples*

LS: *yes, but ISIS was producing?*

CC: *yes, they were not carnettisti*

LS: *they were not carnettisti*

CC: *they were producers. These were two completely different things*

LS: *exactly, so you were dealing directly with the producers?*

CC: *I was dealing mostly with the producers rather than with the carnettisti*

LS: *ok ok*

CC: *with the silk mills.. I was buying the silk from the silk mills*

LS: *you were going directly to the source*

CC: *I did not buy it from somebody that was buying it and then was selling it to me*

LS: *do you remember names of the silk mills?*

CC: *I have a blank, I cannot remember*

LS: *please write to me, maybe when we look at the drawings if you have time...*

CC: *yes let's see how we can organise an appointment.*

#### 4. Interview with Sarti Roberto, Faliero Sarti, Prato, 18 July, 2017

*The interview took place in the office of Roberto Sarti, in his factory Faliero Sarti in Prato, Italy. Transcription and translation below of selected excerpts.*

##### Selected Italian Transcript

**Roberto Sarti: RS**

**Lucia Savi: LS**

RS: inizialmente le dicevo che all'inizio il carnet era a diretto contatto con le sartorie, gli davano metraggi, dopo venivano fatti i carnet: 'guarda questo l'ha preso valentino' e allora le varie sartorie italiane..'dammene quattro metri per la signora...' insomma facevano

LS: questo sempre il carnettista faceva questo tipo di...

RS: il carnettista faceva questo tipo di lavoro, distribuiva a tutto il mondo questo tipo di carnet, a tutto il mondo, a tutta Italia penso parte dell'Italia a Milano erano magari un po' più allargati, a Roma ce n'erano un paio buone e dopo...

LS: la maggior parte dei carnettisti Milano, mi dice?

RS: a mi sembra più Milano che Roma, sebbene l'alta moda l'è stata più a Roma che a Milano. Perché' probabilmente ritorna più Milano era un po' più industriale rispetto a Roma

LS: era più semplice le relazioni con i produttori ... facevano i giri

RS: più semplice.. quello è un discorso... a Roma forse sono più portati alla politica che all'industria

LS: ma c'era produzione infatti a Roma?

RS: di cosa?

LS: di tessuto

RS: no

LS: eh quindi erano tutti al nord

RS: erano tutti al nord, si ma qualche carnettista, grossista c'era anche a Roma

LS: si si Polidori mi sembra fosse di Roma

RS: Polidori era di Roma e dopo c'erano.. più a Milano. Dopo c'erano stati anche diversi a Bologna come dicevo e loro erano a contatto con le sartorie, facevano vedere il capo alla sartoria, la sartoria lo faceva, veniva fotografato.. si può andare anche a vederli laggiù perché ci sarà tutta la storia e quello lo faceva girare. Inizialmente prima solamente i carnet, successivamente c'è stato anche l'avvento della stampa. Le riviste di moda, prima c'era solamente la francese *Officiel*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* e dopo sono venuti

LS: beh *Novità* e *Vogue*

RS: si sono venute anche poi quelle Italiane. Veniva fatto un abbinamento le dicevo, tessitore ...ehh grossista, casa di alta moda grossista e veniva anche chiesto il contributo al produttore e veniva dato anche il marchio

LS: si ne ho viste

RS: si le avrà viste

LS: chi è che pagava?

RS: Si pagava, si pagava, allora tra noi e il grossista

LS: quindi era..

RS: all'alta moda veniva...

LS: mettevano il nome

RS: mettevano il nome perché avevano fatto il capo e dopo serviva a loro .. lo divulgavano

LS: certo

RS: in definitiva il tessuto da solo è un semilavorato non serve a nulla. Il tessuto addosso..

LS: a una modella

RS: tanto è vero che quando noi abbiamo cominciato a fare della pubblicità nostra il difficile era far vedere un tessuto senza fare un abito .. quello era un esempio

LS: avvolgere

RS: ed è un fotografo molto bravo .. è del 85, ma potrebbe essere fatta anche ora questa foto...

LS: assolutamente

RS: per lo meno per quello che penso sia.. poi sia bene che me lo dite voi..

LS: no, no, no

RS: e perché se no si vede *de ja vue* eheh e allora bisogna prendere e cambiare .. perché per dire mia figlia sul discorso della pubblicità che fa .. chiaramente lì c'è una sciarpa quindi un prodotto già finito, ma cerca di dare una fotografia molto più contemporanea

LS: non le ho viste ancora le pubblicità ...

RS: non le ha viste per questo motivo, perché pubblicità su tabellare non vengono fatte ... vengono fatte .. un catalogo ... se stoppa può vedere

[interruzione]

RS: per dire come veniva .. le fotografie era... allora prima le fotografie ... il capo realizzato, sfilata, fatta la sfilata si decideva insieme...allora fotografiamo questo, anziché quell'altro ...pubblichiamo questo anziché quell'altro .. si pubblicavano insieme alla...

LS: quindi pagavate il carnettista e il produttore

RS: e il produttore .. si pagava.. si aveva noi una pubblicità sulla rivista, il carnettista vendeva un certo numero di pezze.. l'alta moda era contenta perché veniva il nome che girava.. e tutto in questa maniera

LS: e a voi ritornava perché il tessuto lo producevate voi, quindi più il carnettista vendeva

RS: e piu'noi si tesseva

LS: esatto, assolutamente. Quindi vinceva tutti

RS: vincevano tutti

LS: questo dopo, la fase in cui vi tenevano nascosti i carnettisti

RS: questa bella fase in cui ci tenevano nascosti.

LS: perché voi non avevate potere essenzialmente

RS: ma non solamente noi, ma in generale

LS: si si non voi, ma i produttori in generale

RS: i produttori in generale erano considerati: questi son dei lavoratori che tessono e noi invece si prende

LS: erano più sofisticati forse

RS: sicuramente più sofisticati e anche più orientati verso la commercializzazione perché anche quello è importante. Se uno pensa a tessere una certa maniera quegli altri pensano a vendere in una certa maniera

LS: quindi facevano anche marketing forse

RS: si sicuramente.

LS: cioè quello che noi chiameremmo oggi marketing

RS: sicuramente si... il discorso .. 'io penso forse va questa cosa qui sviluppiamola invece d'una facciamone tre'

LS: quindi ne parlavate del tipo di prodotto

RS: si si

LS: non è che venivano a comprare cose già fatte.

RS: tutti quei campioni che si vedono sono tutti sviluppati ... dopo noi in linea di massima si faceva un campionario, dopo da questo campionario dopo venivano fatte delle modifiche, venivano fatte delle volte ispirazioni da un'altra cosa. Uno più uno faceva tre ecco.. quello più quello più quello .. un discorso in questa maniera, c'era molta molta attività in quel senso.

LS: quindi per esempio veniva un Sisan e diceva, perché io so che gli stilisti stanno cercando.. c'è questo particolare stilista che mi cerca una cosa...

RS: anche... oppure diceva lui andava a Parigi ci andavano sempre .. ho visto da Chanel c'è questa roba penso sia abbastanza giusta facciamo qualcosa.. insieme si sviluppava

LS: c'era un dialogo

RS: c'era molto dialogo

LS: quindi si lavorava insieme

RS: si lavorava insieme

LS: non erano competitori

RS: no, perché avevano bisogno di qualcuno che facesse le pezze ahah

LS: ma quindi loro, con questo fatto che compravano queste pezze lunghe vuol dire che avevano un po' più di capitale, avevano dei soldi da investire

RS: sicuramente avevano anche dei soldi da investire. Perché a noi di prendere.. se la sartoria ci diceva: 'mi da tre metri' come si fa a darti tre metri. Cioè per avere tre metri bisognava levarla dalla pezza.. se io do tre metri e me ne rimaneva.. allora erano di 35 metri le pezze, me ne rimanevano 32 ed era un problema, perché non avevamo la distribuzione. E invece quell'altro prendeva e distribuiva e così tutto si metteva a modo.

LS: si si quindi facevano diciamo un lavoro che adesso voi fate internamente.

RS: noi si fa internamente.

LS: ai tempi era diciamo delocalizzato

[...]

LS: ma quindi per la storia di Max Mara, io leggevo da una parte che all'inizio di Max Mara, quindi si parla degli Inizi degli anni 50 i tessuti che l'Italia produceva erano troppo delicati per questa pressa industriale a vapore. Industrial steam press, e dice che il risultato fu un tipo di pezza stabilizzato che non si restringeva nella pressa a vapore. Cosa vuol dire che non si restringeva, che veniva fatta con del sintetico, artificiale?

RS: no, no, la lana per caratteristica sua.. prima cosa dipende dai tessuti come sono compassati. Dopo ci sono vari trattamenti Però e noi gli diamo tanto vapore e non sono stati fatti dei procedimenti prima, la lana tende a restringersi...

[...]

RS: ah! Allora che cosa succede. Uno prende e taglia. Se dopo cuce...se vaporizza e gli viene e gli rientra, invece di una 38 gli viene una 36 e quel che è peggio se ci sono differenze tra l'ordito e la trama e magari da una parte si allunga e dall'altra si restringe .. ecco perché vengono fatti dei trattamenti particolari sui restringimenti che si deve stare intorno al 2/3 %

LS: 2/3%?

RS: cioè un metro di roba quando vaporizzo.. ti diventa 97

LS: anche se rimane 100 % lana.

RS: anche, ma quello è solamente un discorso fisico.. vapore .. chi aveva questo problema, lo vaporizzava a così via ...ora c'è vaporizzi continui.. insomma

LS: si si

RS:[...] Scuramente i crepe che si aveva noi perché il crepe, la fibra più torsioni ha più che è nervosa.. come uno che ha i capelli ricci uguale.. e uno che ha i capelli dritti.. quelli con i capelli ricci tendono ad alzarsi con l'umidità e lo stesso succede con la lana.

LS: quindi voi Max Mara fornivate questi tessuti che non si stringevano...

RS: magari si stringevano anche i nostri. Il crepe, il crepe è più facile che si restringa di un cappotto ... mentre con le sartorie non c'erano molti problemi perché era un capo per volta e così via.. il discorso della confezione e della produzione era spesso una discussione per via dei restringimenti...

LS: perché le macchine erano più potenti..

RS: no, non erano macchine più potenti. Loro tagliavano il capo e bisognava che non gli restringesse perché non avevano come la sartoria... con il ferro uno può spingere, lo allarga.. la confezione va dritto. Se dopo la vaporizzazione finale ti rientra invece he entrare e me entra a lei.

LS: quindi avete dovuto adattare la produzione anche alla confezione

RS: di sicuro. Con la confezione c'è stata necessità di fare un prodotto più attento alle esigenze loro.

LS: più standardizzato forse?

RS: più standardizzato anche perché è un discorso di produzione e così via, ma più che altro anche più tecnicamente più messo a punto dal punto di vista del restringimento

[...]

RS: [...] perché allora cominciarono i primi stilisti della confezione...lo stesso Armani ha cominciato a fare le collezioni prima cominciò a fare il modellista, vetrinista, dopo cominciò a scegliere i tessuti a fare le collezioni e dopo cominciò a fare la collezione sua che siamo stati i primi che c'erano.. i nostri tessuti c'erano nella prima collezione di Armani.

LS: non lavorate più con loro?

RS: porca miseria si si si.. si lavora benissimo

LS: quindi una relazione che è continuata.. sono belle soddisfazioni

RS: tanto e' vero che mi sono trovato laggiù... il signor Armani sono tutti.. una volta magari io andavo a far vedere il campionario.. e lui magari diceva ciao Roberto come stai... una persona.. per lo me no con me, o on tutti è rimasto quello che era anche allora.. è tra i dieci più ricchi d'Italia.. per dire, tanto di cappello ..'Robertino ma cosa mi fai'.. prima li vedeva sempre lui i campionari ... 'questa tu me lo fai per i tedeschi ...' [...] ...'questo è per i tedeschi non me lo fare neanche vedere' perché allora si vendeva benino anche in Germani, allora il campionario .. non è facile farlo

LS: devi diversificare anche

RS: e' vero ci fu un periodo che si fece una collezione molto Armani, si vendette benissimo Armani .. è un periodo che Armani andava da morire ..

LS: negli anni 80 probabilmente.

RS: tutto il mondo a volere questa roba dopo però le cose non è che da una stagione ad un'altra .. oggi fo Armani e domani faccio tutto Versace, se ti rimane un po' di gusto.. dopo il boom, ' questo e' troppo Armani non va bene''

LS: quindi non vendevate in esclusiva ad Armani, c'erano dei tessuti... e se qualcun altro vi chiedeva lo stesso tessuto lo potevate vendere

RS: in liena di massima, si faceva la collezione, si faceva vedere la collezione e lui sceglieva la collezione. Dopo siccome lui era tanto minimalista non è che ... la cosa minimalista si nota meno se uno fa un quadrone in questa maniera.... Se devo dare ad Armani questo sicuramente lo vuole in esclusiva [...]... questo si riconosce lontano un km invece le cose... piccole.. potevano essere anche rivendute

### **Selected English Translation**

RS: I was telling you that initially the *carrettisti* were directly in contact with the dressmakers, they were giving them the metres, then they were making the swatch samples, and they were saying: ' look, this one was taken by Valentino', so the dressmakers were saying: 'give me four metres for Mrs...' so they were...

LS: the *carrettista* was doing this type of ...

RS: yes the *carrettista* was doing this type of business, it was distributing the samples all over the world, in Italy, in Milan they were more, but also in Rome there were a couple

LS: are you saying that the majority of *carrettisti* were based in Milan?

RS: I think yes, more in Milan than in Rome, even though the *alta moda* was more in Rome than in Milan. Probably because Milan was more industrialised than Rome.

LS: it was probably easier the relationship with the producers...

RS: easier .... also because in Rome they tend to do more politics than industry

LS: was there a production in Rome?

RS: of what?

LS: textile

RS: no

LS: therefore were all in the North

RS: they were all in the North, but some carnettisti, wholesalers, were also in Rome

LS: yes Polidori, I think was in Rome

RS: Polidori was from Rome and then there were... more in Milan. Then there were Sevalr in Bologna, as I was saying that were directly in contact with the dressmakers, they were showing the piece to the dressmaker, the dressmaker was making it and then it was photographed ... we can also go to see them ... [...]

RS: [...] I was telling you... there was a pairing, textile producer, wholesaler, high fashion house, wholesaler and then it was also requested a contribution to the producer and then a representation of the logo could be given

LS: yes I have seen them

RS: you have seen them

LS: who was paying for these advertisements?

RS: who was paying.... between us and the wholesaler

LS: so it was...

RS: alta moda...

LS: they were putting their names

RS: they were putting the name because they made the garment and they were publicising

LS: of course

RS: at the end of the day the textile by itself is a by-product and it does not do anything.. while the textile worn..

LS: by a model ...

RS: for example, when we started doing advertisement for our products it was difficult to show a textile without a dress ...

[interruption]

RS: so the photography ... so first the photographs ... the dress made... the fashion show, after the fashion show we decided together ... let's photograph this, or this other one ... let's advertise this one instead of the other one ...we were publishing it together ...

LS: so the producer and the *carnettista* were paying

RS: and the producers, we were paying... so we had an advertisement page on a magazine, so the *carnettista* could sell a number of textile lengths ... alta moda was happy because their name was going around ... and so it went

LS: and so for you was good because you were producing the textile and the more the *carnettista* was selling...

RS: the more we were weaving...

LS: exactly, absolutely. So everybody was winning

RS: everybody won

LS: this happened after the phase in which the *carnettisti* kept the producers hidden

RS: this is when they kept us hidden

LS: because you did not have any powers

RS: not only our company, but in general

LS: yes yes not only you, but the producers in general

RS: in general the textile producers were thought as only workers that weave and we [the others].. we take

LS: maybe they were more sophisticated?

RS: yes for sure they were more sophisticated and more orientated towards the commercialisation because that was very important. If one think to weave in one way and the others think to sell in a certain way.

LS: so probably they were doing marketing as well

RS: yes for sure

LS: I mean what we would call nowadays marketing

RS: yes certainly the thinking was ' I think about one product and the other think of develop that one product and make three out of it'

LS: so you were talking about the product?

RS: yes yes

LS: so they were not coming to buy already ready products ?

RS: all these samples were all developed ... after we were making a sample book and after the sample book was modified and sometimes some product were inspired by other things. One plus one equalled three. That one plus this one... there was a lot of activity in that sense

LS: so for example Sisan would come to you and would tell you: 'I know that the designers are looking for ... there is this particular designer that is looking for'

RS: also that, or they were going to Paris, they were always going there.. 'I saw ta Chanel this thing, which I believe is right...' we were developing products together

LS: there was a dialogue

RS: there was a lot of dialogue

LS: so you were working together

RS: yes we were working together

LS: they [carnettisti] were not competitors

RS: no, because they needed somebody that would produce the length of fabrics ahahah

LS: so with the fact that they were buying big length of fabrics, it meant that they had some capital, they had money to invest?

RS: certainly they had money to invest. Because for us, if we wanted to take ...], if the dressmaker was saying : 'can we please have three metres?' In order to give them three metres you had to take it off the whole bolt. If I was giving three metres I was left with... back then the bolts were long 35 metres, I would have been left with 32 metres and this was a problem, because we did not have the distribution. And so the other one (carnettista) would take and distribute and all was fine.

LS: yes yes, so they were doing a job that you now do internally>

RS: we are doing internally

LS: but back them it was delocalised

[...]

LS: regarding the Max Mara story. I was reading somewhere that at the beginning Max Mara, at the beginning of the 1950s the textiles that Italy was producing were too delicate for the industrial steam press . The result was a type of textile that was stabilised that would not shrink in the stream press. What does it mean that they would not shrink, it is because they were made with artificial or synthetic?

RS: no, no, wool for its nature... first al all depends how the textiles are *compassati*. Then there are various treatments. But if we give lots of steam and there has not been done procedures before, wool will shrink ... the problem is that of sizes

RS: if you cut and then you sew.. and then you vaporise and it shrinks... instead of a size 38, you get a size 36. What is worse is that there are differences between the warp and weft, and maybe it gets

longer from one side and it shrinks from the other. And this is way some special treatments are made and they need to be between 2/3 %.

LS: 2/3%?

RS: I mean that if you have a metre of textile, if you vaporise it become 97%

LS: even if it is 100% wool

RS: yes. But is only a physical discourse... the steam .. who had this problem .. was steaming and so on... ora there are continuous vaporisation, anyway

LS: yes, yes

RS: [...] for sure the crepe we had... crepe has fibres that are twisted and the more are twisted the more are 'nervous'.. like people with curly hair and straight hair, curly hair tend to get up with the humidity, the same happens with wool

LS: so you were supply Max Mara with fabrics that did not shrink

RS: maybe even ours were shrinking. The crepe it is easier to shrink that a coat... while with the dressmakers there was not this problem because they were producing a coat at the time, while with ready-to-wear and production often there were discussion because of the shrinking.

LS: because the machines were more powerful?

RS: no, not because the machinery were more powerful. They were cutting the piece and this was needed not to shrink because they did not have unlike the sartoria .. you know with iron in the sartoria, you can push and full and you can make it larger again. With mass- manufacture was all straight .. after the vaporization instead of fitting me would fit you.

LS: so you had to adapt the production to mass- manufacture

RS: yes certainly. With mass- manufacture there was the necessity to make a product more attuned with their requirements.

LS: more standardise maybe?

RS: more standardised because it is a matter of production and so on, but also more technical and more careful from the point of view of the shrinking.

[...]

RS: then the first stilista for the mass- manufacture started. Armani started as a *modellista*, the window dresser, then he starter to choose the textiles and to put together collections and the he started to make his own collection [...] our textiles were in the first Armani collection.

LS: you are not working anymore with them?

RS: absolutely yes, yes, yes, we work very well.

LS: so a relationship that continued, there are very good satisfactions.

RS: I have been over there ... Mr Armani and everyone are all.. maybe years ago I was going to show the textile collections .. and he was saying 'Roberto How are you?' ... a person that with me and everybody remained the same of years ago.. he is amongst one of the ten richest of Italy, hats off.. 'Robertino what are you doing' ... he used to always review the samples 'this you can give it to the Germans' [...] ' this is for the Germans , don't even show them to me' at the time we were selling well to the German too.... it is not easy to put together the textile sample collection

LS: you have to diversify too

RS: it is true that there was a period that we put together a collection that was very Armani, we sold very well Armani... it was a period that Armani was going strong.

LS: in the 80s probably

RS: everyone wanted these kinds of things, but then you cannot from one season to the other ... today Armani and tomorrow Versace, if you are left with a bit of taste ... after the boom 'this is too Armani is not ok'

LS: so you were not selling in exclusivity to Armani. There were textiles that if someone was asking you could sell them

RS: in principle yes, we were putting together the collection, we were showing the collection and he was choosing. Because he was a true minimalist ... you can understand less than if you do a square... if I had to give this to Armani [indicating a textile with a pattern] he would want it surely in exclusivity. you can recognise this from far away, while the small pattern you could resell them

## 5. Interview with Rita Airaghi, Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré, Milan, 18 June, 2018

*The interview took place in the office of Rita Airaghi at the Fondazione Gianfranco Ferré in Milan, Italy. Transcription and translation below of selected excerpts.*

### Selected Italian Transcript

**Rita Airaghi: RA**

**Lucia Savi: LS**

LS: [1.37] Come i disegni non sono solo quelli di Ferré ma anche di altri stilisti che ho visto a Parma, guardandoli riesci in teoria a capire che, almeno io ho questa idea, che non è lo stilista il genio caduto in terra, ma lavora con un network, un gruppo di persone per produrre una cosa, il prodotto indistricabile se guardo al pret-a-porter non se guardo all'alta moda. E dal disegno in teoria riesci a estrapolare chi sono i produttori, i dialoghi che ci sono tra almeno in alcuni disegni di Krizia si vede benissimo il dialogo tra lo stilista e come si chiama il modelista, la fabbrica. Non ovviamente da un singolo disegno, devi guardarti un corpus.

AR: Quello dipende dai personaggi. Per Krizia ti do ragione su altri no

LS: no infatti magari adesso magari mi dici tu

AR: perché il disegno è un dono di alcuni. È vero che Krizia non disegnava.

LS: no, erano altri che disegnavano

AR: però lei riusciva ad esprimersi molto bene. Altri invece avevano dei disegni talmente poveri, perché evidentemente non c'era capacità di rappresentazione

LS: no infatti ho visto nel caso di Versace, perché di pubblicazioni che parlano di disegni ce ne sono in realtà molto poche. Una che ho guardato recentemente che è un altro libro rarissimo e l'abito per pensare e hanno alcune schede dove hanno fatto un bel lavoro di definizione, cos'è una scheda tecnica e si parlava che Versace in realtà tante cose che faceva sul disegno, non venivano poi... lavorava molto sul prototipo, quindi non sto dicendo, ma su alcuni si può fare quel tipo di ragionamento. Volevo sapere prima di tutto se per Ferré un ragionamento del genere si può fare? Cioè lui disegna e poi questo disegno viene consegnato a qualcuno?

AR: sì

LS: viene interpretato?

AR: sì

LS: e vedo che ci sono dei dialoghi

AR: sì! di stagione in stagione, si sono ovviamente delle variabili che dipendono da tanti fattori. Secondo me da alcuni assistenti più o meno diligenti ....[not clear] perché alcuni hanno proprio il

pezzetto di tessuto o di materia attaccato, in qualche caso anche il nome del fornitore. In altri casi invece no

LS: a volte solo le indicazioni di colore magari

AR: esatto. In taluni casi ci sono delle indicazioni di misure o dei commenti su come lavorare. Questo per esempio e' uno dei piu' scritti [she is referring to a drawing on the screen]

LS: Il comment viene fatto dopo che gli e' stato fatto vedere un prototipo per esempio?

AR: no, no no a priori

LS: ah ok a priori ti dice voglio fare coci cosi cosi perche' quella e' la sua scrittura

AR: Il collo in organidy bianco doppiato e adesivato. Ordine prciso. Collo alto con scollo sul davanti. Costa cm 20, giunte a rimaglio, costa cotone nero. Interno collo in contone nero, piu' collo bianco, stesso materiale blusotto 019 parte maglia. Quindi sono indicazioni che lui scriveva nel momento in cui disegnava

LS: e con chi parlava?

AR: parlava con il tecnico di maglieria in questo caso xxx, molto spesso era presente anche il titolare dell'azienda perche' uno dei due, in questo caso parliamo del maglificio di Vignola, erano due Fratelli uno gestiva di piu' la parte come dire se vuoi, era un po' piu' vago, di rapporti istituzionali con il cliente etcetea, mentre l'altro era l'umo azienda

LS: l'uomo prodotto

AR: prodotto con una modellista straordinaria che e' rimasta la stessa per piu' di ventanni, motivo per cui tu vedi che andando Avanti nel tempo le scritte scompaiono

LS: perche' la modellista sa gia'?

AR: perche' alcune cose le conosce al volo, o per cui lui basta che le dica ti ricordi cosi? Così lei non ha bisogno di...

LS: fantastic questo perche'

AR: fantastico

LS: perche' questa modellista, chi ha scritto delle modelliste? Poco! Son personaggi

AR: sono d'appertutto, in effetti non me le ricordo. Questa si chiamava Denis. Il Famoso caselli per il prêt-à-porter a tessuto e Rosy per la pelle erano persone che Ferré non ha mai spedito un disegno se non la notte prima della sfilata che mancava una canottiera ... il disegno della canottiera veniva mandato per fax. Per domani mattina alle 9 la canottiera e' qua. Era l'unica cos ache veniva spedita, magari la gonna dritta... cioee' una cosa semplicemente elementare che serviva ...che in quell momento mancava, allora quel disegno veniva spedito

LS: se no?

AR: sempre consegnato di persona al responsabile...

LS: e quindi c'era un dialogo

AR: che loro venivano a Milano, si prendevano i disegni e Ferré glieli spiegava. Tanto è vero che questo è buffo, le primissime collezioni, a parte il fatto che abbiamo dato delle prime due o tre i disegni a Parma quindi abbiamo della brutte fotocopie, ma anche di qualcuna che non è a Parma, esistono le fotocopie, perché all'inizio non avendo ben capito come funzionava il mondo, davano l'originale e si tenevano la fotocopia ...e' durato poco. Eh si!. Appena se ne sono accorti

LS: perché infatti mi chiedeva come facevate ad averli voi

AR: fotocopia.

LS: quasi subito?

AR: assolutamente

LS: benissimo. Queste sono informazioni ...queste informazioni volevo da te e me le stai dando

AR: in questo periodo il tessuto... ho paura che sia una collezione intera di fotocopie

LS: ah eh sembrano, ah no... Ricceri, lì per esempio è indicato Ricceri

AR: fotocopie disegni con scritte originali. Questo vuol dire che probabilmente c'è.... eccolo qua guarda... no... è la stessa giacca, ma da qualche parte c'è l'originale... disegnato un'altra volta e c'è la fotocopia

LS: c'è una certa economia, non è solo un' espressione artistica

AR: no

LS: cioè lui l'ha fatta espressione artistica, però...è un tool

AR: c'è da dire che in questo caso, vedi Lessona, qui c'è un' indicazione molto precisa del fornitore, articolo, colore. Lana seta nero luicido, c'è un punto di domanda, che vuol dire che forse ... più Bucol che è un altro fornitore quindi chissà' cosa è successo

LS: certo

AR: c'è soltanto indicate una lunghezza. CM 82 di che cosa?

LS: però vedi la modella o il modella sarebbero stati in grado di capirlo, di interpretarlo. Fantastico

AR: lui chiramante ... poi c'era il controllo del primo prototipo, primo, secondo... che li ha sempre fatti Ginfranco di persona. TRanne forse gli ultimissimi tempi che ha mollato qualcosa... parlo della prima linea e dell'alta moda. Con le seconde linee qualcosa facevano anche gli assistenti da soli o i tecnici del prodotto

LS: certo

AR: questa e' una collezione particolarmente curata nei disegni

LS: questa e' del prêt-à-porter?

AR: ho aperto a caso.. e' del 85 ed e' prêt-à-porter

LS: magari lo guardo questo. Perche' non avete tutto online

AR: no. niente online. C'e' la collezione hai 10 foto

LS: poco infatti ...

AR; non possiamo mettere. Comunque scusa, per Ginfranco c'erano due tipologie di disegni necessary. Uno era questo, quello tecnico fondamentale, forse il primo che usciva dalle sue mani. In certi casi c'era, ci sono ma non sempre, ci sono degli studi che forse nascevano prima

LS: ahhhh

AR: che erano i primi abbozzi di idee di silhouette, di forme, che pero' non sono belle, non sono ... sono proprio delle cose ahhh. C'era il disegno tecnico da consegnare al modellista per il prototipo e c'erano i suoi disegni quelli che noi chiamiamo di uscite di sfilata

LS: ma questi sono a posteriori dopo che era gia' stato fatto l'abito?

AR: si, o quando comunque la definizione era ormai definitiva, perche' era il modo che lui aveva di visualizzare... quindi anche quelli erano fatti per se come disegni [sto cercando... questi qui ...questo e' palese che non e' suo... ] Questi disegni uscite sfilata sostituivano se vuoi quelli che per alcuni erano le polaroid. C'e' chi fa le polaroid e le mette in fila per vedere la sfilata, lui si faceva i suoi disegni

LS: ed erano prima della sfilata

AR: e si perche' gli servivano proprio per vedere la successione, in questo modo vedevi la successione ... si rendeva conto se questi erano troppo vicini a questi se erano troppo lontani e quindi questi noi li abbiamo chiamati disegni uscite sfilata perche' quello era lo scopo, poi magari ne faceva qualcuno particolarmente curato, perche' gli chiedevano per un giornale ...

LS: e lo pubblicavate, diventa quasi illustrazione? Perche' io nella mia tesi cerco anche di definire due cose, disegno tecnico ( working fashion drawing) e illustration. Son due cose diverse

AR: esatto. Questo e' un' illustrazione. Difatti questi son firmati perche' probabilmente gli chiedevo di farli per qualche giornale oppure il cliente che voleva il disegno eccetera

LS: sono piu' simili ai disegni che ci facevano negli anni 50 per l'alta moda, qualcosa di illustrative

AR: si

LS: del pezzo finite.

AR; si anche se i disegni dell'alta moda sono veramente illustrativi. Questi invece se tu li guardi...

LS: il suo stile e' completamente diverso

AR: c'è sempre un'idea di movimento di un capo che comunque non è statico e non è mai l'illustrazione precisa. La cliente da qui non capirebbe niente...

LS: più un mood

AR: il concetto era questo: la visualizzazione in ordine preciso delle uscite di sfilata tanto è vero che poi [noi qui lo abbiamo doppiato], per vedere se la successione era corretta, se mancava qualche cosa, se qualcosa doveva essere tolta. Infatti ogni tanto ci sono dei buchi

LS: e l'ordine lo sapevate? Perché non ci sono numeri qua? O ci sono scritti dietro?:

AR: ah sì ci sono e sono scritti dietro.

LS: Per quello che sapevate

AR: c'era il filmato, se c'è il dubbio, controlliamo. Soprattutto se in quegli anni uscivano ancora a gruppi di quattro o cinque, allora il numero diventa un po' complicato da dare, perché qual'è il 31 qual'è il 37. Adesso escono una per una e diventa facile. Quindi questi non sono neanche figurini. Neanche disegni illustrati. Sono proprio la visualizzazione della sua testa di successioni di colori e di forme di argomenti e anche questi sono tutti in originale

LS: E usava carte diverse per questi disegni più preziosi?

AR: sì. Questi sono su cartoncino. Mentre i disegni tecnici sono sulla carta normale

LS: tipo carta della fotocopie, carta della stampante diciamo, quelli proprio leggerini

AR: sì sì

LS: perché secondo me è importante anche quello. Perché ho visto a Parma che alcuni (poi mi spiegherai meglio tu per Ferré) che si disegna tanto... alcuni vengono selezionati, alcuni vengono prototipati, alcuni vengono prodotti ... quindi c'è una selezione naturale di tutti questi disegni

AR: noi li abbiamo tutti insieme

LS: e non sai ... voi lo sapete perché avete fatto la ricerca...

AR: su alcuni c'è scritto messo così per traverso ANNULLATO. Vuol dire che non è andato in produzione. Però sono stati tenuti tutti insieme. Sono stati divisi soltanto queste due tipologie, disegno tecnico, tra l'altro suddiviso nella categorie, maglieria, tessuto pelle, costume da bagno etc... e i disegni così detto di sfilata. Per noi è uscito sfilata perché è la cosa più semplice

LS: ma ha senso

[...]

LS: lui inizia il prêt-à-porter?

AR: la prima è il 1978 ufficialmente la prima Ferré

[...]

LS: La Oax? Lui faceva il prêt-à-porter, dove lo produceva?

AR: Il prêt-à-porter era prodotto a Bologna per la parte di tessuto Dei Mattioli che era poi il socio di Ferré, a Vignola Magificio di Vignola la maglieria e a Trissino nel Veneto, l'azienda si chiamava la Matta per la pelle. Poi c'era anche il bagno che non mi ricordo piu' chi era e le pellicce non erano ancora. Non c'erano ancora

LS: Poi produceva una seconda linea, Oacs

AR: si in questo caso era una seconda linea che era prodotta dall'omino di ferro. [...] from 1978 in poi. Mentre la Marzotto comincia nell'86? [ male colleague correct her and said 87]

LS: la Marzotto cosa produceva? [...]

AR: la Marzotto produce...Oacs e' una seconda linea giovane a poco Prezzo, abbastanza particolare, seguiva se vuoi quella collezione straordinaria che aveva fatto pria che era Ketch. Ketch era stata prodotta in India tra il '73 e il '78. La storia e' questa, esisteva una grossissima azienda San Giorgi impermeabili, produttrice di capi spalla a Genova. Il figlio di questa famiglia, probabilmente interpretando gli umori, stufo di stare in azienda, con una madre che essendo un metro e 20 provava i capi eccetera ....

Male colleague comes back and says: 87 inizia la collaborazione con uomo e donna

AR: 87 con Amrztotto la Linea Studio zero zero uno. La prima etichetta era proprio 00.1 by Ferré ed era una cosiddetta' seconda linea di qualita, prezzi piu' contenuti e grandi numeri perche' la produrine della Marzotto lo garantiva

Torniamo alla Ketch. Questo ragazzo decise di andare in India a fare un lavoro analogo a quello della famiglia ma ovviamente diverso. A quei tempi '73, in India andavano per fumare ... questo qui e' andato a fare i vestiti con un gruppetto minimo di tre o quattro persone. Ha conosciuto Ferré; che ancora era quasi Ferré ... e l'esperienza e' fondamentale perche' al di la' di inventarsi una collezione che doveva avere queste caratteristiche usare materiali assolutamente locali, ricerca di materiale. Lui ha fatto anche la parte se vuoi tecnico manageriale perche' era costretto ad andare in giro a cercarsi produttori che erano piccoli nuclei familiari che producevano tele, tingevano, tessevano su disegni di rigature etc, confezionavano, e quindi al di la' dell'amore per l'India che lui e' andato.. ci ha vissuto a lungo, faceva back and forth... e contemporaneamente in Italia faceva qualche collezione ...l'amore per i colori per i profumi per gli atteggiamenti, per l'eleganza del vestire. E' stato per lui fondamentale questa necessaria esperienza di lavoro pratico. Cioè non doveva solo disegnare e qualcuno si arrangiasse a interpretare, doveva cercare ... tanto e' vero che l'ultimo anno, il governo locale, sai che sono tutti governi regionali, gli avevano affidato l'incarico di fare una sorta di censimento delle unita' produttive... perche' lui le visitava, Villaggio per Villaggio, paese per paese e cercava i produttori in previsione di una ricostruzione del sistema artigianale. La cosa e' finita nel Maggio del '86 perche' oh scusa del '78, perche' il povero Morelli e' morto annegato sotto gli occhi di Gianfranco a Goa. Finita la collezione stavano in vacanza a Goa e lui.. per cui, finite quello con questa azienda che al tempo era molto importante, Omino di Ferro, un marchio molto forte da bambino [...]

LS; dov'era basata l'omino di ferro?

AR: l'omino di ferro era tra Milano e Pavia, qua. Quindi il nome Oacs era stato dato proprio per cambiare completamente da Ketch pero' per avere un'ideal continuita' con quelle collezioni: quindi giovane, povera di materiali, colorata, a prezzi bassissimi, a prezzi contenuti...

LS: bassissimi, al giorno d'oggi?

[...]

AR: prezzi esatti non me li ricordo, ma la proporzione poteva essere che ne so... a parte che eravamo ancora in lire... di 100,000 contro un milione. Mentre invece Studio era un prodotto di qualita' dove per esempio i materiali erano sicuramente meno preziosi che nella prima linea. Quindi non c'era il cashemere, c'era comunque la lana di grossa qualita'. Quindi il rapporto poteva essere 60 a 100.

LS: Ma una linea come la Oacs era pubblicizzata che la disegnava Ferré?

AR: Si era Oacs, by Ferré se poi tu guardi...[...]

LS: altra domanda per te: visto che parlo dei distretti produttivi, se tu parli di un prodotto Ferre. Se parli di Ferré tu pensi sia il frutto di quello di cui parliamo che sono i distretti produttivi? O non e' una di quelle aziende che si affida a quell sistema produttivo. Quando parlo di distretti produttivi parlo di piccole ovviamente compagnie che fanno parte della produzione totale. La Marzotto per esempio magari non aveva il tessuto all'interno....

AR; si la Marzotto comparava tessuti degli altri. La Marzotto produceva dei tessuti suoi

LS: quindi era una compagnia verticale quindi tutto all'interno quindi va bene

AR: ma invece queste che ti ho citato che sono la Matta, piuttosto che i Dei Mattioli etc sono delle piccolo- medie aziende tutte a carattere familiare almeno in questa fase. Poi negli ultimissimi anni, ma tanto tu non te ne occupi, quando e' entrato il Gruppo Olmi, e' entrato un fondo che fa parte di una struttura piu' grande. Quindi in questi casi sia, la Dei Mattioli, ma anche l'azienda che faceva le cravatte era composta da un padre, una madre e una figlia e i due omini che andavano in giro a cercare i tessuti. Cioe' quindi sicuramente devo dire che il successo non soltanto di Gianfranco, ma non soltanto di quella moda italiana, a differenza della moda francese, che e' rimasta seduta per un po', stava proprio nello straordinario connubio tra la creativita' di 3, 4, 5, perche' alla fine erano veramente pochi quelli che avevano inventato la creativita' e l'unione con queste aziende. Forse l'unico che aveva una grande azienda affianca era Armani con GFT, pero' anche li era una conduzione da quanto mi ricordo abbastanza legata alla persona

LS: si perche' non era tutto il GFT era una linea particolare solo per Armani

AR: esatto se pensi Gianni Versace con Girombelli che era un'azienda di medie dimensioni forse piccola di Ancora

LS: ed era anche a Novara Vercase con la Alias?

AR: si faceva Callaghan pero' Jenny, Complice la faceva ad Ancona, pero' quando ha fatto la Gianni Versace anche lui ha continuato a lavorare con queste aziende che diventavano produttori

LS: pero' quando parliamo di queste aziende dipo la Alias o quest'azienda di Ancona, sono quelle che mettono insieme il prodotto che producono. Se parliamo di tessuti uno deve andare poi a cercare i tessuti che e' esterno

AR: certo. Lo stesso era anche la maglieria, per cui uno doveva andare a cercare i filati. Pitti Filati per esempio aveva un ruolo fondamentale perche' d'anticipo dava delle tendenze. Adesso ora mai sono passata tutti a produrre in 15 giorni, 20 giorni un mese. Ma le tendenze di Idea Como e di Idea Biella avevano veramente un senso. Da li poi partiva la ricerca della specificita'. Cioe' a Idea como Ferré mandava i suoi e trovavano un generico sui cui lui poi interveniva e diceva me lo fate cosi cosa

LS: quindi era lui che parlava direttamente con i produttori?

AR: qualche volta si

LS: se no erano gli assistanti?

AR: se no erano gli assistanti. Ma molto spesso c'era un rapporto diretto soprattutto nei primissimi anni poi nel tempo. Nei primi anni Taroni, mantero ... erano con rapporti diretti

LS: o e' possibile che voi compraste qualcosa dal campionario?

AR: raro. Soltanto i basici. Ma molto spesso, lui aveva questa passione, se vuoi per la materia, per una forma di trasformazione che molto spesso chiedeva delle cose... a maggior ragione, quando poi e' arrivata l'alta moda... ma di quello non parliamo, li e' stata l'apoteosi del tessuto adattato o inventato

[...]

LS: quindi l'azienda... quindi parliamo ancora di distretti, e' una delle caratteristiche del distretto Che tu hai un'azienda abbastanza piccola, che se gli chiedvi una cosa cosi pazza come una roba.. la gessatura, sono in grado di modificare, o inventarsi una macchina

AR: certo, te lo avevo detto che ne valeva la pena di sentirla anche se adesso e' un po' vecchierella, e' la Dondi Gessi. Caso tipico, inizialmente erano lei, lui, la figlia Lorella ancora piccola e credo due macchine dentro non ti dico un garage, perche' starei esagerato. Ha cominciato a lavorare con Ginfranco, e' un aneddoto della Dondi, lo raccontava sempre, era che suo marito si lamentava perche' a letto erano sempre in tre Lui lei e Ginafranco. Perche' lei gli diceva, Ferré vuole questo, Ferré vuole quello devi fare cosi, perche' lui era il tecnico. Comprava le macchine in Germania le faceva arrivare, le doveva smontare e adattarle a certe richieste. Ferré era la maggiore spina perche' rompeva ma anche quello che li ha aiutato a diventare quello che sono diventati. Infatti per loro ha fatto per anni la consulenza Pitti filati. Loro presentavano, lui gli disegnava dei vestiti, li faceva realizzare, ma soprattutto gli dava le indicazioni sulle materie su come fare i vari tipi di jersey di cashmere, che ne so. Quindi era proprio un rapporto molto complicato, che lui voleva sempre qualcosa di diverso e in piu' Edda Dondi [...]

LS: e quindi i distretti produttivi, come vogliamo chiamarli. Piccole aziende hanno comunque sostenuto

AR: si se tu pensi negli anni 70, inizi anni 80 erano tutte aziende piccolo-medie dimensioni

LS: e non e' che tutte facevano ... quindi Ferré o I suoi assistant si dovevano interfacciare con tutta una serie di aziende diverse

AR: quindi I modellisti tutti ognuno specifico ... quindi le pellicce, I costume da bagno, il tessuto, la pelle, la maglieria... le piastrette... ognuno aveva un produttore e un nucleo produttivo. OPoi la distribuzione della linea era della Gianfranco Ferré; Distribuzione, cioe' quindi il produttore aveva il compito di lavorare il prototipo, produrre, consegnare, fatturare. La Ferré pero' provvedeva alla ricercarca dei clienti e delle vendite e riceveva roalties come da contratti

LS: perche' scusa royalties?

AR: perche' I produttori investivano dei soldi loro. Cioe' l'acquisto della materia prima

LS: Ah!

AR: cioe'.. La Ferré fungeva da azienda di consulenza. Cioe' [...] la Ferré creava il prodotto cioe' faceva la parte creative del prodotto. Che veniva dato da produrre da un'azienda la quale si affidava alla nostra distribuzione, pero' le consegne venivano fatte direttamente dall'azienda. C'e' stato un momento negli anni turbolenti degli ultimi periodic che abbiamo fatto insourcig. Che e' stata una follia, perche' avevamo trovato dei produttori .. avevamo portato tutto in casa...

LS: questo verso la fine. Quindi parlando dell'inizio vuol dire che le materie le compravano loro... era tutto a costo loro

AR: certo

LS: e la royalties funzionava che loro si prendevano una percentuale delle vendite e loro se ne prendevano un'altra.

AR: si

LS: e questo lo facevano tutti gli stilisti?

AR: credo abbastanza. Non credo che nessuno investisse e rischiasse. Perche' in fondo l'approvvigionamento delle materie prime era fatto abbastanza... soprattutto in fase di prototipia, perche' chiedere un prodotto esclusivo e volerne soltanto sette metri con il rischio poi di non venderlo era comunque un costo tanto piu' elevato.. dopo di che c'erano poi I tempi di lanci del prodotto prima... altrimenti non arrivavi in tempo alle consegne.,, quindi su alcuni materiali venivano fatti degli acquisti al buio sulla base di tendenze di opinion eccetera, su altri invece veniva fatto l'ordine solo in base alle vendite. Magari I primi tre giorni con I client pesci pilota e ti facevano capire anche dove poteva andare.

LS: parliamo anche del prêt-à-porter?

AR: Si parliamo del prêt-à-porter

LS non dell' alta moda. Quinid che se avevate un clente. Chi era un cliente?

AR: ti dico tra gli americani Bergdorf Goodman. Allora i primi tre giorni capivi che ci si orientava su quell tipo d materiale e scartava a priori qualcos'altro. Su quello tra I cinque, tre giorni facevi otto,

cinque clienti, capivi e quindi potevano fare gli ordini al buio su quelli che erano materiali di grande consumo. Se avevi un tailleur gessato che aveva tre varianti che andava per la maggiore, ti permetteva di ordinare 300 metri, 400 metri

LS: e poi producevano tutti i tailleur? Metti caso che Bergdorf Goodman ne aveva ordinati 100, ne facevo comunque ordinare 200

AR: e si certo c'erano tutti anche gli altri clienti. Sulla base di quello che i primi clienti ordinavano facevano poi delle previsioni. Certo che era, soprattutto perché erano in fondo i primi tempi di questo tipo di sviluppo del lavoro. Oggi è diverso, il computer. Ma non perché il computer o il fatto a mano. E quindi i costi delle materie prime di fatto incidono molto sul costo finale ovviamente. Direi che era il costo più alto

LS: però se lo accollava il produttore.

AR: se lo accollava il produttore

LS: quindi non era solo trovare un produttore, ma era anzi una relazione, c'era anche una relazione economica tra i due

AR: sì però comunque era evidentemente vantaggioso. Perché venduto a 100 se anche la royalty era del 40, 50 .. ce n'era abbastanza per coprire le spese di acquisti di materie prime, il personale, la produzione eccetera...

LS: certo. No è interessante non avevo capito che c'era questo tipo di ... Tu mi nominavi i francesi, in che modo sono diversi?

AR: beh, ai tempi, ma anche adesso non mi risulta che ci sia una rete produttiva capillare come era in fondo la nostra dei tempi. A riprova che ancora oggi i francesi producono in Italia

La forza del prêt-à-porter italiano perché è scoppiato in quegli anni e a quel modo.. sono nati tre che per caso si sono trovati a Milano. Vallo a capire, perché Milano e non Firenze. Si capisce...

LS: no si capisce, perché se devi fare questo tipo di relazione economica con le fabbriche a Firenze non avevi quel tipo di network

AR: esatto. Però tutti loro hanno fatto la loro fortuna professionale facilitati dal rapporto con le aziende. Questo sostengo. I francesi non ce lo avevano. Io mi ricordo che ai primi tempi, per carità esisteva anche il prêt-à-porter francese. A Montanara produceva in Italia, ma ancora adesso. E comunque il fenomeno del prêt-à-porter è nato qua, non lo hanno inventato loro. Proprio come Sistema

LS: Quindi si può dire che l'abito Ferré non viene fuori da una ditta Ferré che non esiste, ma da tutte queste... il bottone mi arriva da, la seta mi arriva da... quindi in teoria, se uno avesse un abito di quelli che avete qui magari. Potrei sezionarlo e fare delle frecce e dire seta da... e ricostruisci un distretto insomma

AR: però a monte cosa ci metti? L'idea, cioè la creatività e la visione

LS: sì sì senza quello è impossibile

AR: perche' secondo me e' proprio la visione d'insieme. Non c'e' niente affidato al caso. Oh dio manca una roba dove la troviamo, c'e' la previsione di un insieme di elementi che poi costruiscono il capo

LS: ma c'e' anche una conoscenza. Perche' se uno come Ferré o il Gruppo Ferré o I suoi assistenti non sanno che c'e' questa persona in questo paesino che fa questa specifica cosa...

AR: certo, ricercar. Difatti soprattutto I tecnici che lavoravano nella sezione tessuto soprattutto erano uno, due poi sono diventati tre e quattro con gli assistenti. Loro tutto l'anno cercavano novità o chi poteva sviluppare un certo tipo d'idea. Teniamo presente che almeno otto, nove mesi di gestazione una collezione ce l'ha, da una prima intuizione e una prima indicazione di tendenza, poi mano a mano, alcuni tessuti arrivavano la notte prima, ma quello fa parte del mondo della moda

LS: e' molto interessante perche' e' tutto .. come dire, e' tutto ovvio da una parte, ma metterlo

AR: bisogna conoscerlo, perche' molti non sanno che e' un mondo cosi complesso

LS: NO infatti. E questo libro devo dire aiuta molto. C'e' molta informazione da quell punto di vista. Abbiamo detto come comunicava Ferré con I produttori. C'era il disegno veniva dato di persona o comunque lo stista o in quel caso dell'emergenza il fax, ma altrimenti era una cosa di ...

AR: una cosa anche soprattutto nella maglieria, c'era una persona nostra che stazionava almeno due o tre giorni alla settimana dentro l'azienda quindi era una sorta di consulente in loco perche' mentre un capo spalla ha la necessita' di un taglio e poi il prototipo lo puo' coreggere, lungo, largo o stretto o cos, la maglieria invece essendo nella maggior parte dei casi dei punti e degli sviluppi di punti, andava smacchinato e visto per vedere il risultato. Quindi ci sono state nella storia tre persone fondamentalmente fisse che dal lunedì al giovedì stavano a Vignola per esempio venivano poi in sede con la modellaista con la responsabile a mostrare quello che era stato fatto per poi passare all'azione sul capo da fare perche' prima ovviamente soprattutto in maglieria, se non era maglia rasata la piu' normale del mondo, dove c'erano coste lavorazioni e punti particolari, andavano provati e quindi smacchinati e quindi c'era questa persona in loco che diceva si no si va Avanti, qualche volta tornava a razzo a Milano a far vedere delle cose. Perche' c'era una continua verifica, non c'era nulla...

LS: ...lasciato al caso. Invece parlando sempre di disegno. C'e' il pezzo di tessuto Ricceri, era la Ferre' Gianfranco Ferré parte creative che andava da Ricceri prendeva il tessuto e andava a dire a Bologna dove producevano, vogliamo quell tessuto di Ricceri.

AR: certo. Dava il disegno con l'indicazione che quel capo doveva essere fatto in quell tessuto.

LS: Poi la Dei mattiolo andava a comunicare direttamente con la Ricceri e si facevano fare il Prezzo. Questo non lo avevo capito

AR: il Prezzo si conosceva gia' perche' nel momento in cui veniva selezionato e scelto, ovviamente c'era gia' un'indicazione di Prezzo perche' il capo doveva rientrare in un certo parametron di costi. Pero' poi l'acquisto vero veniva fatto da ...

I tessuti piu' importanti, l'80 per cento direi non era soggetto a nessun tipo di discussione da parte del nostro produttore Mattioli, la flanella poniamo poteva essere acquistata da te o da me, magari Ferré

diceva Laura, Lucia, Francesca, Giuseppe, la Mattioli diceva lo compro da quello li ... pero' per sino sul cotone e sul lino c'erano variabili di tessuti e di produttori, quindi in genere una selezione veniva fatta nell'ufficio, poi veniva consegnato, non certo il pezzettino , il pezzettino era attaccato silo per referenza, ma veniva presa la tirella, e ancora alcune nelle skatole ne abbiamo e veniva dato alla Dei Mattioli. O per lo meno in alcuni casi passava l'ordine da noi direttamente al produttore e consegna e fattura da Dei Mattioli

LSL; Non tutti I disegni hanno il pezzettino, se no c'era una scheda technical che veniva fatta subito, o...

AR: veniva fatta pero' in azienda.. noi le schede tecniche non le facevamo

LSL: ... le informazioni venivano ricevute in certi modi...via telefono, via...

AR: quasi sempre via scritto. Via telefono poco

LS: scritto come?

AR: sui disegni...

LS: non sull'email.. nel 78 ahaha

AR: sui disegni o su documenti per cui sul modello 114 tessuto pinco pallo. L'alta moda aveva delle schede perche' il capo era unico ed era poi...

LS: Ci sono le schede tecniche anche per il prêt-à-porter?

AR: no, perche' sono tutte in azienda. Le facevano tutte in azienda

LS: ahhhhh.. devo fare un discorso che sono simili a quelle dell'alta moda? Posso?

AR: no sono

LS: perche' in azienda non c'e' piu' niente ovviamnte

AR: no sono molto piu' tecniche quelle del prêt-à-porter devono essere molto piu' tecniche perche' avevano ...forse ce n'e quacuna, fammi pensare..

LS: perche' quelle dell'alta moda sono qui?

AR: perche' l'alta moda era fatta in sartorial da noi

LS; ah ecco ok

AR: [...] schede dell'alta moda sono per esempio

LS: le schede le ho viste le abbiamo messe anche in mostr al V&A. E' la fotocopia piccolina del disegno

AR.. e il tessuto .. quelle invece della Dei Mattioli per esempio erano complete perche' c'era zip, bottone, fodera, quanti metri, quanto tempo, erano proprio schede tecniche. Che naturalmente noi non abbiamo perche' venivano fatte in azienda

LS: si ho visto qualcosa nell'abito per pensare ne hanno una per Versace che viene dall'azienda. Si e' anche interessante la provenienza. Ovviamente essendo loro a voi non interessava averla essenzialmente una cosa cosi

AR; no e forse posso pensare che fosse caso che c'erano... a fine stagione venivano anche eliminate ..perche' non avevano

LS: non aveva senso tenerle

AR: farebbero molto comodo a noi adesso se le avessimo. Ma non ce le abbiamo e punto e basta

LS: anche perche' immagino che la Dei Mattiolo non esita piu'

AR: no

LS: la relazione tra i due tra Ferré e Mattioli ...

AR: dunque inizialmente Mattioli ha conosciuto Ferré proprio nel periodo dell'India di quegli anni li attraverso conoscenze comuni e gli aveva subito affidato dal 74 la linea .... Mattioli era un confezionista se vogliamo chiamarlo con ...aveva iniziato lui la sua storia come venditore di tessuti. Quindi ha sempre lavorato nel mondo li. Quindi ha sempre avuto la sua azienda dove lavoravano essenzialmente lui e sua moglie, quindi si facevano, facevano i confezionisti, quindi creavano i modelli e li vendevano. Lui aveva di fondo due linee, una dei Mattioli che era quella piu' basica, quella piu' commerciale e Baila che voleva essere gia' piu' .... E inizialmente conoscendo Ferré, lui gli ha affidato l'incarico di fare Baila .. lui a voce diceva, sono stufo di fare tutto io qui. Per cui Ferré ha fatto il consulente per cui Baila era firmata Baila by Ferré

LS: anche quella, quindi veniva riconosciuto

[...]

AR: e poi gli ha affidato anche Dei Mattioli, cioe' prima l'uno e poi tutti e due. E Baila si decise di [...]

Quindi inizia cosi

LS: e questo nel?

AR: nel 73 con l'autunno inverno 74 e la prima sfilata difatti e' proprio nel 74 al [...] e' pazzesco che la prima sfilata sia una camicia bianca nel 74', ed era la prima sfilata fatta con il nome Baila, dopo di che...

LS: dove la sfilata? Qui a Milano?

AR: in una creperie in via San Maurilio dal nome l'elefante bianco.

LS: questi pero' non sono disegni di Ferré

AR: questi sono disegni di Ferré quando ancora non sapeva neanche disegnarne come diceva lui. Difatto e' una collezione di Baila del 74

LS: bellissimo che avete ancora questo

AR: poi man mano si evolve. Nel 78 quando finisce la storia di India perche' succede quella cosa. Decidono di fondare la Gianfranco Ferré e infatti la prima sfilata e' nell'ottobre del 78. Quindi Mattioli e' stato prima se vuoi, Ferré faceva il consulente per lui ... lui ci ha creduto... perche' sicuramente questa collezione delle camicie bianche ha fatto un successo strepitoso di critica e di vendita zwro... perche' troppo Avanti con questi cuissard, le camicie eccetera ... Mattioli ci ha creduto ed e' arrivato a decidere da fare la Gianfranco Ferré fino alle fine degli ann 2000. Poi lui a venduto la sua Parte perche' era stufo stanco, anziamo forse anche un po' malato non lo so e li e' cominciata la parte finale negetiva infondo... e' subentrato Berna ...e va bhe

LS: e' andata come andata, quindi fino al 2000 ha prodotto, oltre ad essere socio, ha prodotto

AR: certo certo la Dei Mattioli d fatti e' rimasta l'azienda che ha prodtoo dall'inizio alla fine. Prima che nascesse la Ferré gia' produceva e ha continuato fino alla fine

LS: e loro no ci sono piu'? Hanno chiuso?

AR: si eh si questo e' il problema di tutte le aziende o sono scomaprsse o si sono trasfomate a punto tale ... ci sono magari I discendenti di seconda generazione che non sanno piu' di tanto

### English Translation

LS: [...] Not only Ferré drawing, but also the ones of other stilisti I saw in Parma. By looking at the them you can understand, at least I have this idea, that the stilista is not the genius fallen from the sky, but that he/ she is working with a network, a group of people to produce something, the industrial product if we are talking about *prêt-à-porter* not if we are talking of *alta moda*. And from the drawing in theory you can extract who are the producers, the dialogue... at least in some Krizia drawings you can see very well the dialogue between the *stilista*, the *modellista*, the factory. Not of course from a singular drawing, but you need to look at a whole series

AR: That depends on the protagonists. For Krizia I agree for you for other not

LS: exactly, maybe you can now tell me

AR: the drawing is a gift of some. It is true that Krizia did not draw

LS: no, it was others that were drawing

AR: but she could express herself very well. Others had some very poor drawings, probably because there wasn't the ability of representation

LS: yeah, I have seen in the case of Versace, because of books that speak of drawing are very little. One that I have seen recently, *L'abito per pensare*, which is a very rare book, and there are some entries where they do a good job in defining, there is a technical drawing and they were talking of Versace ... many things that he was doing on the drawings were not at the end .. he was working a lot on the prototype ... I am not saying for everybody, but for some we can do that kind of thinking, I wanted to know first of all if we can do this for . I mean, so he was drawing and then this drawing was given to somebody

AR: yes

LS: was then interpreted?

AR: yes

LS: and I can see that there are dialogues

AR: yes! From season to season, there are of course variations that depend on many factors, I believe that depend on whether the assistant was zealous or not. [not clear] some [drawings] have the small piece of textile, sometimes even the name of the supplier. In other instances not!

LS: sometimes only the indications of colours

AR: exactly. In some cases, there are indications of measurements, or some comments on how to work. This is for example one of the drawings with more writings [she is referring to a drawing on the screen]

LS: the comments are done after a prototype has been shown to Ferré

AR: no, no no before

LS: ah ok, so before he [Ferré] is saying 'I want this to be done like this and this', so that is his own handwriting

AR: 'the collar in white double organdie and with adhesive 'This is a precise order 'High collar with front scollo. *Costa* cm 20, *giunte a rimaglio*, *costa* black cotton. Inside collar in black cotton, plus white cotton, same material as blouse 019 the knitted part' So these are indications that he writes when he was writing

LS: and who was he talking to?

AR: he was talking with the knitwear technician. In this case [inaudible] often was also present the owner of the company because one of the two, in this case we are talking about the Maglificio di Vignola, was owned by two brothers, one was in charge, as you can say he was more abstract and he was in charge of the institutional relationship with the client etc. While the other was the man of the company

LS: the product man

AR: that was produced with an extraordinary *modellista* who stayed the same for 20 years. And this is because as you move forward the writings disappear

LS: because the *modellista* knows already

AR: because certain things could be understood immediately, or because it was enough to say, 'Do you remember?'... So she did not need...

LS: fantastic, this because

AR: fantastic

LS: because this *modellista*, who wrote about *modelliste*? Little, they are important characters

AR: they are everywhere. I don't remember. This one was Denis. The famous Caselli for ready-to-wear in fabrics and Rosy for leather. They were people ... Ferré never sent a drawing. Unless it was the night before of the catwalk and a vest was missing, therefore the drawing of the vest was sent via fax saying, 'for tomorrow morning at 9 the vest needs to be here'. This was only thing that was sent. Maybe also a very straight skirt, I mean something so elementary that in that moment was missing. For these kinds of things the drawings were sent

LS: otherwise?

AR: always given by hand to the person responsible

LS: so, there was a dialogue

AR: so, they were coming to Milan, they were taking the drawings and Ferré explained them So much so, this is funny, the very first collections, a part the fact that we have given of the first two or three the drawings to Parma, and therefore here we have ugly photocopies. But also, of some of the ones that are not in Parma, photocopies exist, because at the beginning as they did not understand how it worked, they were giving away the original and they were retaining the photocopy it last little. I know... as soon as they realised

LS: yes, because I was about to ask, how did you ended up having the drawings

AR: photocopy

LS: almost at the beginning?

AR: absolutely

LS: very good. These are information, these are the kind of information I wanted from you.

AR: in this period the textile, I am afraid this is an entire collection of photocopies

LS: ah eh they look so Ricceri, there for example they indicate Ricceri

AR: photocopies with drawings with original handwriting this would mean, ah there you go, no, this is the same jacket, but somewhere there is the original [...]

LS: there is a sort of economy, not only an artistic expression

AR: no

LS: I mean he made an artistic expression but is also a tool

AR: you have to say for example here, you see Lessona. Here there is an indication very precise of the supplier, number of articles, colour. Wool, silk, shiny black, here there is a question mark, this would mean that perhaps, as well as Bucol, who is another supplier, so we wonder what might have happened

LS: of course

AR: there is only indicated a length cm 82, of what?

LS: but the *modellisti* would have been able to understand or interpreting it Fantastic.

AR: than there was the check of the first prototype, first, second. Gianfranco himself always did these. Maybe only during the last period that he let go of something I am speaking about of the first line and of *alta moda*. With the second lines, the assistants were doing something too.

LS: of course

AR: and this is a collection that was particularly curated in the drawings

LS: this is *prêt-à-porter*?

AR: I just open at random. It is of 85 and is *prêt-à-porter*

LS: maybe I have a look at this as you don't have everything online.

AR: no. nothing online only the collection 10 photos

LS: little indeed

AR: we cannot put. Anyway sorry, for Gianfranco there were two types of drawings. One was this one, the technical one, fundamental, maybe the first one that was coming out of his hands in some cases, there are but not always, some sketches that were made before.

LS: ahhhh

AR: that were the first attempts at ideas of silhouette, of shapes, but these are not beautiful they are not things you say ahhh. There was the technical drawing to send to the *modellista* for the prototype and there were his drawings. Those we call them 'catwalk exits'

LS: but these were made after the garment was already made?

AR: yes, or when it was almost definitive, because this was his way to visualise, they were made for himself as drawings [...]. These drawings 'catwalk exits' they were substitute what for others were Polaroids. Some make Polaroids and they put them in order to visualise the catwalk, he was making drawings

LS: and they were made before the catwalk?

AR: yes, because he was using them to see the succession, in this was you could see the succession. And he could see if these were too close to these ones, if there were too far. So, we have called them 'catwalk exits' drawings because that was the aim. Maybe sometimes he was remaking some that was particularly well made, or because they were asking for a magazine

LS: and you were publishing, so it almost became an illustration? Because in my thesis I am also trying to define two things, working fashion drawing and illustration they are two different things

AR: exactly. This is an illustration. And these are signed, because probably they have asked him to make them for some magazines or the client wanted the drawing etc.

LS: they are similar to the drawings that were made in the 50s for *l'alta moda*, something illustrative...

AR: yes

LS: ...of the final piece

AR: yes, even if the *alta moda* drawings are really illustrative, these ones ... if you see

LS: his style is completely different

AR: there is always an idea of movement, of a garment that is not static, is never a precise illustration. The client from here would not been able to understand anything

LS: more a mood

AR: this was the idea: the visualisation in a precise order of the catwalk exists. So much so that [...] to see if the succession was correct, if something was missing, if something needed to be taken out, sometime indeed there are holes.

LS: and how did you know the order? Because there are no numbers here? Or are they written behind?

AR: ah yes they are written behind

LS: this is how you knew

AR: there was the video, if there are any doubts we check. Also, because in those years they were coming out in groups of four and five, so the numbers became a bit complicated to assign, as you did not exactly which one was 31 or 37. Nowadays they come out one at the time and it is easy. So, these ones are not even *figurini*, not even illustrative drawings. There are just the visualisation of his head of the succession of colours, of forms and all of these ones are originals

LS: was he using different kind of papers for these more precious drawings?

AR: yes. These are on cardboard. While the technical drawings are on normal paper

LS: like photocopy paper, of the printer, very light

AR: yes, yes

LS: because for me also this is important. Because I have seen in Parma that some drawings (later you can explain me better how it worked for Ferré) there were a lot of drawings, some were selected, some were prototyped, some were produced, therefore there was a natural selection of these drawings

AR: we have them all together

LS: and you don't know... you know because you have done the research

AR: on some is written on top: 'ANNULLATO'. It meant that it did not go to production. But we kept them all together. We only divided these two types, technical drawings divided in categories,

knitwear, textile, leather, bathing suit, etc.... And the so-called catwalk drawings. For us it was catwalk because it was easier

LS: it make sense

[...]

LS: he starts there the *prêt-à-porter*

AR: the first one is 1978, officially the first Ferré.

[...]

LS: Oaks? He was doing *prêt-à-porter* where was he producing?

AR: The *prêt-à-porter* was produced in Bologna for the textile part Dei Mattioli who was Ferré business partner, in Vignola Maglificio di Vignola for knitwear; in Trissino in Veneto, the company was called La Matta for leather. Then there was swimwear I don't remember and fur were not there yet

LS: then he was producing a second line, Oaks

AR: yes in this case this one a second line that was produced by Omino di ferro. [...] from 1978 on. While Marzotto starts in 86? [Male colleague corrects her and said 87]

LS: what was producing Marzotto? [...]

AR: Marzotto produced...Oaks was a young second line that costed little quite particular, it followed that extraordinary collection Ketch that he made before. Ketch was produced in India between 73 and 78. This is the story, there was a very big company San Giorgio raincoats, who was producing coats in Genova. The son of this family, tired of staying in the company, [...]

[Male colleague comes back and says: in 87 started the collaboration with menswear and womenswear]

AR: 87 with Marzotto the Linea Studio zero zero uno. The first label was 00.1 by Ferré and it was a so called second line, smaller prices and big numbers because Marzotto production could allow it

Let's go back to Ketch. This guy decided to go to India to do a similar job of his family, but different. In those years in 73 in India you went to smoke, this guy went to India to make clothes with a group of 3 or 4 people. He met Ferré; who was almost Ferré. The experience was fundamental because he had to invent a collection using local materials, he was researching materials. He also did the technical and managerial part because he was forced to go around to look for producers that were small families that were producing textiles, they were dying, weaving, producing. So apart from the love for India, he lived there a long time and he was doing back and forth and at the same time in Italy he was doing some collections. The love for the colours, the smells, for the elegance of dressing. It was for him fundamental this necessary experience of practical work. He did not only draw and somebody else had to interpret, had to look, so much so that the local government, asked him to do a census of the productive units, because he was visiting them. Village by village, town by town and he was looking for producers in order to rebuild the artisanal system. .This thing finished in

May 86 or no sorry 78, because the poor Morelli died, drowning before the eye of Ferré in Goa. After they finished the collection they were on holiday in Goa and he... so finished that with this company that was quite important, Omino di Ferro, a brand that was strong in child wear. [...]

LS: where was this Omino di Ferro?

AR: Omino di Ferro was between Milano and Pavia. So the name Oaks was in order to completely change from Ketch, but to still have an idea of continuity. With those collections. Therefore young, poor in materials, colourful, with very low prices, kind of low prices

LS: very low compare to today?

[...]

AR: I don't remember exactly the prices, but the proportion could be in lire 100,000 against 1 million. While Studio was a quality product where for example the materials were for sure less precious than the first line, so it was not cashmere, but a very good quality wool. So the relationship could be 60 to 100

LS: But a line like Oaks was it advertised as being designed by Ferré?

AR: Yes it was Oaks, by Ferré [...]

LS: another question for you, since we are talking about productive districts, if you are talking about a Ferré product. If you are talking about Ferré, you think that it was the result of what we call the *distretti produttivi*? Or this is not that kind of company that replayed on that productive system? When I speak about *distretto produttivo*, I mean small companies that take part of the whole production together. Marzotto for example maybe did not have textile inside the company

AR; yes Marzotto did not buy textiles from others. Marzotto produced its own textiles

LS: so it was a vertical company with all inside, so ok

AR: but the ones I mentioned like La Matta, or maybe I Dei Mattioli etc. They are small- medium companies all family run at least in this phase. Then in the last few years, but you don't deal with this. When the Gruppo Olmi started, a big conglomerate entered. So in these cases yes, the Dei Mattioli, but also the company that was making the ties, was made up by father, mother and a daughter and two men who were going around to look for textiles. SO I can certainly say that the success not only of Gianfranco, but also of the Italian fashion, that was different from French fashion, that for a while sat down, the success was in that extraordinary union between creativity of 3, 4, 5. At the end they were very few the ones that invented creativity and the union with these companies. Maybe the only one that had a big company next to him was Armani with GFT, but even there the management was, if I remember correctly, connected to the person

LS: yes because it was not the whole of GFT, but only a specific line only for Armani

AR: exactly, if you think Gianni Versace with Girombelli that was a medium or even small company of Ancona

LS: and it was also in Novara with Alias?

AR: yes he was doing Callaghan there, but Jenny and Complice he produced them in Ancona. But when he did the Gianni Versace also him continued to collaborate with these companies that became his producers

LS: but when we are speaking about these companies like Alias, or this one of Ancona, they are the ones that put the product together, the ones that produce. If we are talking about textiles one have to go and look for textiles that were external

AR: of course and the same was for knitwear, so that you had to look for the yarns. Pitti Filati for example had a fundamental role because it was anticipated some trends. Now everybody is [producing in 15, 20 days a month. But the trends of Idea Como and of Idea Biella they really made sense. From there onwards it started the research of the specifics. I mean that at IdeaComo Ferré was sending his people and they were coming back with something generic and he was then giving his input and was asking to have it in a certain way

LS: so it was him that was talking directly with the suppliers?

AR: sometimes yes

LS: otherwise were assistants?

AR: otherwise were assistants. But often there was a direct relationship especially the first years, but then with time... In the first years, Taroni, Mantero had very close relationship

LS: was it possible that you were buying something from the existing stock?

AR: rare. Only the basics. More often, he had this passion, for the raw materials, for a form of transformation and often he was asking for things. Even more, when *alta moda* came, but we are not talking about that. That was the apotheosis of the invented textile or adopted textiles.

[...]

LS: so the company, so we are still talking of *distretti*. It is one of the characteristics of *distretto* that you have a small company, that if someone was asking for something a bit crazy, like let's say pin stripes, they are able to modify or to invent a machine

AR: of course. I told you that is probably a good idea to speak with Dondi Gessi. Typical example. At the beginning it was her, him and the daughter Lorella who was still very young. And they had two machines in a garage at maximum. They started to work with Gianfranco. There is a little anecdote they were always saying this. Her husband was complaining that in the bed they were always in 3: him, her and Gianfranco. Because she was telling him 'Ferré wants this, Ferré wants that, you need to do this'. Because he was the technician. He was buying the machines in Germany. They were coming, he had to disassemble and adapt them to certain request. Ferré was the more demanding because he was a pain, but he was also the one that more helped them to become what they became. Indeed he did for them the Pitti Filati consultancy. They were presenting, he was designing for them some garments, he was making them, but most of all he was giving them indication on the materials, on how to make the various types of Jersey, of cashmere. So it was a very complicated relationship. He always wanted something different and Edda Dondi [...]

LS: and so the productive districts, or how we want to call them, small companies, they have helped

AR: yes, if you think that in the 70s and early 80s they were all small-medium companies.

LS: and is not that all were making... So Ferré and his assistants had to work with a series of different companies

AR: so a *modellista* for each specific, one for leather, one for swimwear, textiles, knitwear, tiles, each one of them had a producer and a productive centre. Then the distribution of the line was Gianfranco Ferré. Distribution, so the producer had the task of making a prototype, then to produce and to deliver, to bill. Ferré company had to look for clients, had to sell and received royalties from contracts

LS: sorry, why royalties?

AR: because the producers invested their own money and they were buying the raw materials

LS: Ah!!

AR: I mean, The Ferré company worked as a consultant. What I mean [...] Ferré created the product, so they were making the creative part of the product. Then that was given to be produced at a manufacturer, that was relaying on the Ferré distribution. But the delivery were all done by the manufacturer. There had been some turbulent years when we did insourcing. It was crazy, because we found some producers we bought everything in

LS: this was towards the end. So if we speak of the beginning, it meant that the producers were buying the materials, so it was all their cost

AR: of course

LS: and the royalties because they were taking a percentage of the sales and you were taking the other

AR: yes

LS: and this was the case for all the *stilisti*?

AR: I believe in a certain extent. I don't think nobody was investing and risking. Because at the end the supplying of the raw material, it was enough, at least with the prototypes, because if you were asking an exclusive product and only wanting 7 metres with the risk of not selling it, it was a big cost. And then there were the times of launching of the product, otherwise you did not have enough time to deliver. So certain materials were bought blindly on the basis of trends and opinions, other were bought only according to the sales. Maybe the first three days with pilot clients that were directing and you could understand what could sell

LS: are we talking about *prêt-à-porter*?

AR: yes we are talking of *prêt-à-porter*

LS: so not of *alta moda* so if you had a client, who was the client?

AR: I can say that amongst the Americans was Bergdorf Goodman. So the first three days you could understand that they like certain materials and they were discarding others. In 5, 3 days you could do between 5 and 8 clients so you could understand and then you could order blindly some materials, the materials that were used a lot. If you had a pinstripe suit that had three variation that was the one that sold the most, you could then order 300/400 metres

LS: and then they were producing all the suits? Let's say Bergdorf Goodman ordered 100, were you ordering materials for 200?

AR: yes of course. And then there were all the other clients. On the basis of what the first clients were ordering they could dome some forecasting. These were the first times of the development of this kind of way of working. Today is different with the computer, not because the computer or the hand-made. And so the cost of the raw materials affect a lot the cost of the final piece. I would say that was the higher cost

LS: but this was on the manufacturer

AR: yes on the manufacturer

LS: so it was not only to find the manufacturer, but it was a relationship, an economic relationship between the two

AR: yes but it was clearly advantageous. Because if you were selling at 100, even though the royalties were at 40 or 50, there was enough to cover the cost of raw materials, employee, production etc.

LS: of course. I did not understand that there was this kind... You were mentioning the French, in what way they were different?

AR: bhe, at the time, but also now, I don't think they have a capillary network of production like ours. As a demonstration, French are producing in Italy today. The strength of the Italian *prêt-à-porter*, why did explode in those years and how? They find themselves there in Milan, and not in Florence

LS: you can see why. Because if you have to have that kind of economic relationship with the manufacturers you did not have that network in Florence

AR: exactly. But all of them have made their professional fortune thanks to the relationship with these manufacturers. The French did not have this type of help I remember that at the beginning, of course it also existed French *prêt-à-porter* Montana was producing in Italy, but also now. And anyway the phenomenon of *prêt-à-porter* was born here, they did not invent the French as a system

LS: So we can say that the Ferré garment does not come out of a Ferré manufacturer that not exist, but from all these companies: the button arrives from there, the silk from there, so in theory if one had a garment of the ones you have here, I could dissect it put some arrows and say the silk is from... and so you can reconstruct a district

AR: but at the top what do you put? The idea, I mean the creativity and the vision

LS: yes yes, without that is impossible

AR: because the vision of the whole. There was nothing done randomly. 'Oh god something is missing where do we find it?' There was a forecast of all the elements that made the garment

LS: yes, but there is also a knowledge. Because if there is Ferré or Ferré group or his assistants that don't know that there is this person in this village that can do that specific thing

AR: of course research. In fact especially the technicians that were working in the textile department and then they became 3 or 4 with assistants. All year long they were looking out for new things or for whom that could develop a certain idea. Let's not forget that a collection had a gestation period of at least 8 to 9 months. From the first intuition, then an indication of trend, then some textiles were coming in the night before, but is part of the fashion world

LS: it is very interesting because it is all, how can I say, it is all obvious, but to put it

AR: you need to know it, because many don't know that is such a complex world

LS: No, indeed. And this book I have to say helps a lot. There are many information from that point of view. We say how Ferré was communicating with the manufacturers There was the drawing that was given in person by the *stilista* and only in case of emergency by fax

AR: there was a thing mainly for knitwear, there was one of ours that was staying 2 or 3 days a week inside the manufacturer, so he was almost like a consultant. Because while a coat needs a type of cut, and then you can correct after the prototype, larger or narrower, with knitwear, because in the majority of cases were knitting stitches and development of knitting stitches, you had to take it out of the machine to see the result. SO in the history there had been 3 people that from Monday to Thursday stayed in Vignola and then they were coming with the *modellista* in the headquarter to show what they had done so to then start to work on the final garment [...] so there was this person at the manufacture that could say yes we go ahead or sometime he was coming back swiftly in Milan to show something. It was a constant verification, there was nothing left...

LS: ...left to chance. Talking about drawing. There was the piece of textile Ricceri. Was the creative part of Gianfranco Ferré Ltd that was going to Ricceri and was taking the textile and was going to Bologna to say where they were producing that they wanted that particular type of textile by Ricceri?

AR: of course. The drawing with the indication of that textile was given

LS: then la Dei Mattiolo was communicating with Ricceri and a price was given. This I did not understand

AR: you already knew the price at the moment in which it was selected because the garment had to fit in a certain cost bracket. But then the purchase was made by ...[...] The most important textiles, 80 % was not under any scrutiny from our producer Mattioli, but for example flannel could have been bought by from here and there. Maybe Ferré was saying Laura, Lucia, Francesca Giuseppe, but Mattioli could buy from who he wanted, but even on cotton and linen there were variation of textiles and producers, so a selection was done in the office. Then it was given, not of course the small piece, as the small piece was there only as a reference, but the big swatch (we still have some

in the boxes) was given to Dei Mattioli. Or in some instances, the order was given from us to the producer and was deliver and invoice were a Dei Mattioli

LS: Not all the drawings have the textile. Otherwise there was a technical sheet

AR: This was done in the manufacturer. We did not do technical sheets

LS: how the information were given? Via telephone, via...

AR: often written, little telephone

LS: how written?

AR: on the drawings

LS: not email? Ahahah 78!

AR: on the drawings or on documents: 'model 114 with that textile' *Alta moda* had some sheets as the piece was unique

LS: Do you have technical sheet for *prêt-à-porter*?

AR: no, because they are all at the manufacturer. They were all made there

LS: ahhhhh. . I need to say that they are similar to the one in *alta moda*?

AR: no

LS: because at the manufacturer they don't have anything else

AR: they are much more technical the ones of the *prêt-à-porter*, they have to be much more technical, let me think

LS: why the *alta moda* ones are here?

AR: because *alta moda* was done in the studio here

LS: ah that is why

AR: [...] technical sheet from *alta moda* for example

LS: I have seen the technical sheet we even used them for the exhibition at the V&A, the little photocopy of the drawing

AR: and the textile. While the one by Dei Mattioli for example, were very complex because there was the zip, button, lining how many metres, how much time they were real technical sheets. That we don't have because they were made at the manufacturer

LS: I have seen something in the *Abito per Pensare*. They had one for Versace from the manufacturer. It is also interesting the provenance. Of course because it was theirs, you were not interested in having them

AR: and I am also thinking that maybe at the end of the season they might even been thrown away because there was not reason

LS: no reason to keep them

AR: it could be very good for us now to have them. But we don't have them

LS: and also because I imagine that the Dei Mattioli does not exist anymore

AR: no

LS: the relationship between Ferré and Mattioli?

AR: so initially, Mattioli met Ferré in the period of India through common friends. Immediately it was given the role of since 74. Mattioli was a fashion manufacturer (*confezionista*) he had started his history as a textiles seller. So he always worked in that world. So he always had his company were initially was only him and his wife, so they were *confezionisti*, so they were creating garments and they were selling them He had two lines, one Dei Mattioli that was the most basic one, the most commercial and then Baila that wanted to be more... Initially he met Ferré and he gave him the appointment to design Baila. He was saying: 'I am sick and tired of doing all by myself', So Ferré was the consultant and Baila was Baila by Ferré'

LS: so for that one too, he was named

[...]

AR: and then he also gave him Dei Mattioli, before one and then also the other. So it started like that

LS: and this was in?

AR: in 73 with Autumn-Winter 74 and the first fashion show was in 74 [...] it is crazy that the first fashion show was a white shirt in 74 and it was the first catwalk with Baila name, but then

LS: where the fashion show? In Milan?

AR: in a *creperie* in via San Maurilio with the name 'L'elefante bianco'.

LS: but these were not Ferré s drawings?

AR: these are Ferré drawings, when he did not know yet how to draw, as he said of himself. It is a collection Baila 74

LS: amazing that you have all this

AR: then little by little it evolved. In 78, when the thing with India finished, because that thing happened. They decided to fund the Gianfranco Ferré and the first catwalk is in 78, in October 78. So Mattioli was the first if you want. Ferré; was a consultant for him. Mattioli believed in him, because this collection of white shirts had great success of critics, but zero sales. Because it was too ahead [...] Mattioli believed in it and decided to do the Gianfranco Ferré up to 2000. Then he decided to sell his share as he was tired and even a bit sick too. So maybe there it started the final negative part then Berna came in ... and you know

LS: it gone as it went, so up to 2000, Mattioli produced in addition to be a business partner

AR: of course, the Dei Mattioli it was the company that produced from beginning to end. Even before Ferré was founded and it continued till the end

LS: so they are not around anymore, they have closed?

AR: yes, this is the problem of all these companies, either they closed or they transformed in such a way ... so that the second generation doesn't know that much [...]

## Appendix 2. Gianni Versace Table of Producers

<b>Producer</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Material/Type</b>	<b>Status</b>
Faliero Sarti	Prato (Tuscany)	Wool	Still active
Loro Piana	Biella (Piedmont) check	Wool	Still active
Agnona	Borgosesia, Vercelli (Piedmont)	Wool	Still active
Vichi Ricami	Milan (Lombardy)	Embroidery	Still active
Redaelli	Mandello del Lario, Lecco (Lombardy)	Velvet	Still active (today owned by Marzotto)
Ratti	Como (Lombardy)	Silk	Still active
Modimex	Firenze (Tuscany)	Metal mesh	Still active
Alfredo Motta	Cinisello Balsamo, Milan (Lombardy)	Leather	Still active
Tonetti	Firenze (Tuscany)	Embroidery	Still active
Ruffo	Fino Mornasco, Como (Lombardy)	Embroidery/applique'	Still active
Cler-Prem	Vicenza (Veneto)	Polyurethane	Still active
Giovanni Crespi	Legnano, Milano (Lombardy)	Vinyl	Closed
Omniapiega	Carate Brianza, Milan, (Lombardy)	Pleating	Still active
Hurel	Paris, France	Lace	Still active
Luigi Verga	Bulgorello di	Silk, Printing	Still active

	Cadorago, Como (Lombardy)		
Ancilla Rigon	Vicenza, (Veneto)	Embroidery	Still active
Solbiati (linen)	n/p	Linen	Closed
Vivatex (silk)	Colverde, Como (Lombardy)	Silk	Still active
Limonta	Costamasnaga, Lecco (Lombardy)	Finishing	Still active
Sisan	Milan (Lombardy)	Carnettista	Closed
Dondi Jersey	Modena (Emilia Romagna)	Jersey	Still Active
Motta Alfredo	Cinisello Balsamo, Milan (Lombardy)	Leather	Still Active
Bini	Como,(Lombardy)	Silk	Closed
Braghenti	Como,(Lombardy)	Silk	Closed
Redaelli Velluti	Guanzate, Como (Lombardy)	Velvet	Still Active
Carpini	N/p	Wool	Closed
Taroni	Grandate, Como (Lombardy)	Silk	Still Active
Capritex	Milan (Lombardy)		Closed
Ormezzano	Biella (Piedimont)	Wool	Still Active
Tessitura di Crevacuore	Borgosesia, Vercelli (Piedimont)	Wool	Still Active
Ricceri	Prato (Tuscany)	Wool	Still Active

Torello Viera	Biella (Piedimont)	Wool	Closed
Clerici Tessuto	Como (Lombardy)	Silk	Still active
Tessitura di Novara	Novara (Piedimont)	Wool	Still Active
Castellanza & Borri	n/p	Cotton	Closed
Mario Boselli Jersey	Fino Mornasco, Como (Lombardy)	Silk	Still Active
Fila	Biella, (Piedimont)	Wool	Still Active

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