

PUT IT ON OR: USE IT AND ENJOY!
THE TRANSCULTURAL AND SYNERGIZING HISTORY
OF ITALIAN FASHION AND INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

Dr.phil. Dagmar Reichardt

Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia

Abstract

Among the three international fashion hubs Paris, Milan, and New York that have dominated fashion production since the 20th century, Italian fashion stands out through its transcultural Italophony. Since the historic beginnings of the West, the development of fashion, taste and etiquette in modern Italy plays both culturally and historically a key role in European politics, economics, literature, fine arts, music and theatre. This applies also to Italian design, which is – like fashion – a powerful nonverbal language in cultural, aesthetical and economic terms, expressing a unique and life-affirming sociological habitus.

This essay intends to pinpoint the outstanding impact of taste, fashion and design originating from Italy and perceivable all over the world on a transcultural and transdisciplinary level. Starting with antiquity and Renaissance, both disciplines enter a period of prosperity and success during the golden 1950s and 1960s, supported by the rise of Cinecittà, family business structures and crafts enterprises. In early postmodernity, a shift takes place from *Alta Moda* to *Pronto Moda*, from fashion as art to popular, serial industrial *ready-to-wear*, and a complex reciprocal synergetic effect builds up between the fashion and design brands. Both sectors are equal in terms of international influence and versatility, both are associated complementary to each other, and both disseminate a new standard of shapeliness, elegance and peachiness in the whole country as well as on a transnational scale.

Keywords: *Made in Italy, fashion and apparel manufacture, industrial design, transculturality, transdisciplinarity.*

Italy's history of fashion and its USPs

Among the three international fashion hubs Paris, Milan, and New York that have dominated fashion production since the 20th century, Italian fashion stands out through its transcultural Italophony (i. e. the transcultural radiation of a presumed *italianità*, meaning a supposed 'Italianness', 'Italian' style or italianized way of life). Since the historic beginnings of the West, the development of fashion, taste, and etiquette in the modern boot state plays both culturally and historically a key role in European politics, economics, literature, fine arts, music and theatre. Just think of the *melodramma* originating from Italy or the hybrid musical genre of the opera that oscillates between literature (e. g. in form of a *libretto*), performance (acting on stage), music (orchestra and singing) and theatricality (stage design, stage properties, outfits, costumes etc.).

As the long-standing chief editor of *Vogue Italia* Franca Sozzani (1950–2016) highlights – who in the postmodern history of international fashion photography set trendy and non-conformist accents with her socially critical special *Vogue* editions on topics like plastic surgery (*Makeover Madness*, 2005), black women (*Black Issue*, 2008) or domestic abuse (*Horror Movie*, 2014) – even in the 21st century we can still speak of an 'Italian' fashion, because until today almost all established fashion labels in Italy are in the hands of Italian designers or family dynasties [cf. Reichardt, D'Angelo 2016: 117].

The fact that in the 3rd millennium Italian fashion boutiques can be found in high density all across the globe is also an economically unique feature – or USP (Unique Selling Point) – of the Italian *Alta Moda* (literally: 'high' fashion). It proves a successful *country-of-origin* marketing and *nation-branding* strategy that manage to transform sustainably and soundly the *Made in Italy* label into a high-quality product [cf. Grünwald 2009: 8 f]. Today's Italy – building on a modern, educated and continuously growing class of citizens since the Middle Ages [cf. Paolicelli 2001] – has well succeeded in opening itself to the globalized transculturation in the sense of Wolfgang Welsch [Welsch 1999], both at the sales level and in terms of cross-border lifestyle trends. This happened in such a way that Italian fashion may be considered – according to Roland Barthes' (*Système de la mode*, 1967) definition – as a semiotic *ergo* systematic aesthetic language, which in an incomparably direct manner carries the Italian way, view and quality of life explicitly and consistently into the world. Today, customers of all nationalities combine exquisite quality, outstanding craftsmanship and a high, nonchalant, cultivated fashion style with names such as *Valentino*, *Versace*, *Armani*, *Prada*, *Gucci*, *Fendi*, *Cavallò*, *Zegna*, *Pucci*, *Moschino*, *Dolce & Gabbana*, *Bottega Veneta*, *Ferragamo*, *Furla*, *Sergio* and *Gianvito Rossi*, *Brunate*, *Trussardi*, *Etro*, *Brioni*, *Loro Piana*, *Fabiana Filippi*, *Brunello Cucinelli* and much more.

Antiquity and Renaissance

Already in the Greek-Roman period garments were modelled on Egyptian culture such as the chiton, himation, toga, tunica, palla or sandals as well as accessories such as pins, amulets, jewellery and hair ornaments, diadems or *coronae*. Still today, these suggestive patterns shape the basis of our classic aesthetics, that are taken up, among others, by the couturier Valentino Garavani (named Valentino, born in 1932) from the 1960s onwards. Valentino rediscovered their timeless elegance for his evening robes – in the sense of Anne Hollander’s garment theory (*Seeing Through Clothes*, 1975) – and decoded them symbolically by giving distinction to a specifically harmonized colour nuance in bright red, the typical so-called *Rosso Valentino* [cf. Reichardt, D’Angelo 2016: 85–87].

While fashion in the Middle Ages appears less country-specific and thus more static in the European comparison, the Italian dress code in the Renaissance clearly emerges in its style-defining courtyard culture. The latter is reflected in the clothing etiquette suggested to the courtier and lady of the court in Baldassarre Castiglione’s “The Book of the Courtier” (*Il Cortegiano*, 1528), in which Castiglione also recommends an effortlessly displayed maxim of ubiquitous stylistic *nonchalance*, studied carelessness, easiness, trendiness or ‘coolness’ to quote a modern buzzword: Castiglione coins it *sprezzatura*. Around 1600, Maria de’ Medici brought the Italian fashion of wearing underpants to the French court [cf. Loschek 2011: 499 f], and from the Baroque era on, a standard dress code rules in Italy, based on the French style, oriented from now on at reflecting the appearance of aristocrats, monarchs and the bourgeoisie. With some striking exceptions, such as politically revolutionary-connoted textile identifiers – one thinks of the red shirts (*camicie rosse*) of the Garibaldi followers in the Risorgimento, or later of Benito Mussolini’s notorious black shirts (*camicie nere*) – Italy is beginning to move gradually away from Paris only in the mid-nineteenth century, becoming increasingly independent in its fashion direction [cf. Paulicelli 2001: 287–289]. With the intention of promoting Italian fashion and fabrics and imposing an *italianità* in the sense of propaganda of the fascist regime, Queen Elena of Italy (also: Elena of Montenegro, 1873–1952) inaugurated in Turin, Italy’s first former capital from 1861, in April of 1933 a first national fashion exhibition. Turin then became the official fashion capital – the country’s first *capitale della moda*.

The golden 1950s and 1960s

After the Second World War, a new era dawned in Italy with the golden years of fashion’s rise. In the 1950s the fashion scene shifted from Turin to Florence, where in 1951 the wealthy Florentine aristocrat and businessman Giovanni Battista Giorgini (1898–1971) organized the first Italian Fashion show worldwide in context of the

new, international post-war fashion system in his Villa Torrigiani. Giorgini repeated the event in the following year in Florence in the impressive and representative, historic *Sala Bianca* of Palazzo Pitti, inviting journalists and buyers from the USA. The event achieved such a resounding economic and media success in Italy as well as overseas, that since 1954, transcultural fashion events have been taking place in and around the Palazzo Pitti organized by the *Centro di Firenze per la moda italiana* (renamed *Pitti Immagine* since 1988).

This significant concentration of fashionable discourse impulses on (and from) Italy that oscillate between a gradual increase in globalization and traditional transculturality [cf. Allerstorfer, Schrödl 2019: 287–289; Barnard 2020: 743–756], is accompanied and initiated from 1945 onwards from three historically significant, partially correlated factors:

1) The 1943 landing of the US allies in Italy and their subsequent presence in the country until the end of the war led to a “reciprocal attraction” [Paulicelli 2001: 288] between Italy and the USA, which resulted from the first large wave of Italian emigration to North America in the 19th and 20th centuries (1861 until around 1960) and from the ensuing Italophone diasporas in the USA, now being consolidated and at the same time radically renewed.

2) The rise of Cinecittà in the international film industry, already strongly supported by Mussolini, is the historical starting point for the success of Italian fashion trends in the 1950s in the post-war period, not least through the participation of Hollywood, which is still evident today in its iconographic aftereffects and media impact.

3) Italian craft and family businesses – which had grown since the Middle Ages, traditionally specializing in the production and processing of leather, wool and fabrics such as silk, linen, cotton, and from the 1970s on, also of mixed and synthetic fabrics – enjoyed a high prestige since the Renaissance thanks to the trade links of former maritime republics such as Venice or Genoa around the globe. Due to centuries of transgenerational cultural transfer, Italy, thus, possessed the necessary technical know-how, so that the textile production from Italy (such as the *Marzotto Group* founded in 1836) continues to play a major role in the fashion world market to date.

In the course of the 1950s, several fashion designers like the sisters Fontana, Emilio Pucci (1914–1992), the Fendi family, Germana Marucelli (1905–1983) and Valentino increasingly started to produce their designs and goods in a limited number of factories and in small boutiques. Among them, the Gucci family played a pioneering role in the heyday of the Italian fashion system. In 1921, the business-minded and imaginative saddle master Guccio Gucci (1881–1953) – whose initials still display the interlocking company logo as two intricate letters G – founded a simple workshop for leather goods, riding accessories and travel goods in his home

city of Florence. Guccio Gucci's design was inspired by equestrian sports, and because of a lack of resources due to war, after 1945 he first produced leather goods like belts, bags, gloves, and shoes, combining them with more cost-effective materials such as linen, hemp, jute, and bamboo. Decorated with a typically Italian or Florentine green-red-green ribbon, these accessories were sought after by Americans returning in their country from overseas in the 1940s as sophisticated, imaginative and fanciful souvenirs and laid the foundations for the brand's entrepreneurial expansion and international success.

If already this company's history may be seen as symptomatic of the *Alta Moda's* exemplary 20th century economic victory, then the 1950s and 1960s can be described all the more as the golden days of the Italian fashion industry on a sociocultural level. In these two decades, Florence and the capital Rome – where since 1964 an academy of fashion (*Accademia di costume e di moda*) offers the first Italian state vocational training centre for the various areas of fashion design – compete as an Italian fashion and film capital. In fact, in the 1950s, attracted by the emerging Italian cinema industry and the low-cost production conditions in Cinecittà's Roman film studios, many Hollywood and world stars flooded into Italy and in the spotlights of the capital Rome for filming. Among them were both American divas like Jackie Kennedy, Liz Taylor or Audrey Hepburn and their European colleagues Maria Callas, Anita Ekberg or Ingrid Bergman, as well as internationally renowned stars like Alfred Hitchcock, Burt Lancaster, Richard Burton or Marlon Brando, to name just a few who were active in the show business at that time. The synergies between film and fashion became manifest also in glamorous custom-made products that were meant to turn into classics of fashion history, as happened with, for example, the iconic *Flora* scarf created by Gucci in 1966 for Grace Kelly.

During those years, the efforts of the costume directors on the movie set promoted Italian stage designers, tailor's shops, industrial designers and fashion labels worldwide, leading them to international fame in cinema history and making them global market leaders. Such known productions were e. g. the sword-and-sandal epic film – a so-called *peplum* – entitled *Quo vadis?* (1951) directed by Mervyn LeRoy and shot in Cinecittà, or the romantic comedy "Roman Holiday" (*Vacanze romane*, 1953) by William Wyler, starring Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn cruising around Rome on a highly up-to-date Italian *Vespa* scooter, or – finally – the epic period drama film "The Leopard" (*Il Gattopardo*, 1963) directed by Luchino Visconti (1906–1976) with period costumes meticulously designed for the actors by the prolific stylist Piero Tosi (1927–2019).

In this cosmopolitan Roman environment, the idea was born of transforming the red carpet, that was rolled out on the arrival of the famous actors and actresses on the street – either in front of a hotel or a public entrance, or at the airport etc. – into

a fashion walkway or catwalk (*passerella*) and of picturing its staged performance. In *La dolce vita* (1960) by Federico Fellini (1920–1993), script writer Ennio Flaiano (1910–1972) had given an intrusive photographer the last name *Paparazzo*, which then became the international equivalent of every scandal or boulevard photographer. The combination of the so-called *Red Carpet Effect*, paired with the impact of the world press and of the jet set, promotes the fact – which is profitable for the golden years – that these innovative communication channels are systematically used not only to popularize new robes and fashion concepts from Italy among the stars, but also to bring them to as many customers in Italy and abroad as possible directly for advertising and thus to increase media coverage.

Pronto Moda versus fashion as art

In the 1960s and 1970s, the trend of *prêt-à-porter* or *ready-to-wear* – Italian: *Pronto Moda* – begins to establish itself as a cheaper alternative to the *Alta Moda*, which stylistically merged into the *Alta Moda Pronta*. In Italy, the phenomenon of designer personalities is developing, and here we might think of the Florentine nobleman Emilio Pucci, also known as the *Prince of Prints*, famous for his silk print, or of the knitting in the zigzag look of Ottavio Missoni (1921–2013), of the business outfits tailored by Max Mara (a firm name that derived from its founder Achille Maramotti, 1927–2005), or Elio Fiorucci (1935–2015), popular for his jeans and t-shirt production, as well as of Giorgio Armani in the 1980s (b. 1934), who reinterprets the men's suit and introduces the women's suit in a characteristic triangular silhouette [cf. Hollander 2016: 45–84], of Gianni Versace (1946–1997) and Franco Moschino (1950–1994). In 1967, after that the first men's fashion fair had taken place in Palazzo Pitti in Florence in 1963 – where twenty years later Italy's first large fashion museum (*Museo della moda e del costume*) would open in 1983 – the Roman fashion artists decided to use the *Pronto Moda* wave more target-oriented to present fashion more visibly in Rome, too. At the same time, as from the 1970s, due to the advantages of infrastructure and industrial location, the city of Milan is in the forefront and – thanks to the *prêt-à-porter* – is finally becoming Italy's definitive fashion centre [cf. Paulicelli 2001: 287–289]. Thus, the glocal de-centrality of fashion *Made in Italy* (i. e., its omnipresence on both a local and a global level) caused an effect of ubiquity already within the country's own borders – and will soon expand from here all over the planet.

Already during Mussolini's fascist regime, department stores with millinery such as *Upim* or *La Rinascente* were selling fashion goods from the rack to the people [cf. Paulicelli 2001: 287]. Now, from the mid-1960s onwards, fashion shows for the so-called *Alta Moda Pronta* were held regularly, which in the 1970s offered merchandise suitable for the mass-market enabling small family-owned enterprises

to ascend toward multinational companies – often remaining under the control of the founding family: starting with *Trussardi* (founded in 1911), *Brioni* (since 1945) or *Benetton* (since 1965), and spanning from *Laura Biagiotti* (1943–2017) known through her cashmere collections, and the famous knitwear by *Luisa Spagnoli* (1877–1935), which the Italians called *oro nero italiano* (in English: ‘black gold from Italy’) [Zentko 2020 16: 129], to *Krizia* (derived from Maria Mandelli, 1925–2015) or to the fashion creations of a Gianfranco Ferré (1944–2007), Gianni Versace and Romeo Gigli (b. 1949). They all contribute to the international reputation of the Italian designers and offer, following the British sales model through boutiques and department stores (e. g. *Mary Quant* or *Laura Ashley*), mostly youthful and avant-garde fashion.

The introduction of industrial mass production and synthetic fibre use is a revolutionary cost reduction and democratization of fashion, so that the inclusive *Pronto Moda* spreads a new kind of Italian mother tongue and allows everyone to personally express him- or herself *qua* clothing. This trend is condensed and reflected in the Milan youth and fashion movement of the so-called *Paninari* [cf. Paulicelli, 2001: 289; Reichardt, D’Angelo 2016: 75–84], who celebrate not only postmodern brand awareness in the 1980s. But they also demonstrate socially that since the *Dolce vita* in the 1950s, the fashion catwalk has moved beyond the liberated hedonism of the 1970s [cf. Zentko 2016] into the 1980s, which mark the age of emergent globalization and intensive mass production. As a matter of fact, the runway has shifted finally from the elitist fashion studio (*ergo* from a bottom-down-strategy) – with the potential of a counter-culture – to the downtown streets and hipster districts of major cities (*ergo* to a bottom-up-strategy).

If these trends, taken as a whole, form part of a fashion to be described as Western – mainly due to French and American style developments – then the globalized postmodernism confirms that instead of the historically and aesthetically traditional *abito* or ‘garment’, designed for a gentleman or a lady, now the *habitus* (the same term in the French original) as Pierre Bourdieu (*Questions de sociologie*, 1980) called the people’s mindset and stylistic attitude, is becoming more and more important. That the *habitus* becomes a crucial factor means nothing else than that today, sociologically coined and media-related lifestyles and discourses have a decisive influence on fashion as a third force, besides artistic and economic factors [cf. Reichardt, D’Angelo 2016: 15 f].

This is true of both the *Pronto Moda* and the *Alta Moda*, where the latter – other than the *easy-to-wear* fashion-styles – has so successfully expanded its role in Italy as a variation of modern art [cf. Pape 2008] that nowadays, all the major Italian fashion brands have their own museums or foundations and that since the New York *Armani* exhibition (*Art in Fashion*) took place in 2000 in the Guggenheim Museum,



Figure 1. Moschino fall 2014 ready-to-wear *Camp: Notes on Fashion* exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum, New York. Photo: © Rhododendrites. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license. Source: Wikipedia.

Italian fashion is omnipresent in the international arts scene throughout the world [cf. Reichardt, D'Angelo 2016: 16].

The cognition of fashion as art goes back to the *fin de siècle*, when the poet and fashion designer Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) was the first to equate fashion with art [cf. Sorge 2015: 10], regarding both categories as indispensable to life. Since then, figures of art such as Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973), to Capucci (b. 1930) or Roberto Cavalli (b. 1940), have repeatedly demonstrated the proximity of both areas (fashion and art) through their life's work, firmly enhancing their strong affinity to the spheres of performing arts as well as visual arts [cf. *inter alia* Lehnert 2008: 57–59; Lehnert et al. 2014: 151–164].

Italian industrial design: an international success story

Industrial design is like fashion – but also like architecture, fine arts, film, play-acting, music, dance, photography, cuisine, perfumes, sports and much more – a nonverbal language of culture, whose historical development allows modern product design to be comprehensible [cf. Bürdeck 2015]. With this, Italian design as well as Italian fashion can be read like a transcultural Italophone language of art – in the sense of Nelson Goodman (*Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, ²1976/1968) – that stands in the service of both communication and opposition [cf. Barnard 2014: 73–108]. Even if the term 'design' etymologically derives from the Italian lexeme *disegno* (verbatim in English: 'drawing'), meaning an experimental procedure, while *moda* (i. e. 'fashion') comes from the more regulative and controlling

Latin noun *modus* (in English: the ‘making’, ‘modality’ or ‘measure’) and ‘fashion’ from the realistic, proactive Latin verb *facere* (i. e. ‘to do’, ‘to make’, ‘to produce’), the history of the design *Made in Italy* is in no way inferior to that of fashion in terms of international influence and versatility [cf. Bertola, Manzini 2006; Grünwald 2009: 7 f.; Reichardt, D’Angelo 2016: 15–20]. It is rather complimentary associated with it.

However, Italian design looks back on its own history of ideas since 1945 and on areas of application that are separate from fashion, even if the input of both innovation fields originating from Italy plays a key role in Western history of aesthetics, culture and civilization. Already in the pre-industrial era, in 16th century Italy, there emerged not only groups of more specialized craftsmen who shared training and techniques, competing with and inspiring each other, but – doing so – they also began using common forms and duplicating models repetitively. In this exciting surrounding, certain styles and trends arose, documented by technical pattern books (in Italian called *libri di architettura*, i. e. ‘architectural books’, or *trattati*, i. e. ‘treaties’). They implemented and rediscovered ancient decorative forms and timeless motifs that could be applied to various products and/or transferred to works mostly designed by architects. Indeed, namely architects and shipwrights started to draft detailed plans and competitive patterns on paper, before they would materialize them in stone, wood, metal etc. They developed sophisticated production processes by reverting to the technique of drawing, first, in order to fix – in advance – the procedure of how to construct a building or a ship according to their visions and instructions. Therefore, the Italian Renaissance played a significant role by providing to the afterworld some standard aesthetic stimuli and an empirical basis for the industrial design – leaving a concrete and hands-on code of practice as well as a theoretical toolbox to future generations of entrepreneurs, ready to be used and stylistically applied when creating industrial products, machines or technical equipment three centuries later.

Next, the history of production related to certain design factories and offices marks the accomplishments of the success story that we associate with *Design Made in Italy* coming up with the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. Its main sectors belonged to:

1) the Italian textile industry, like the historic brand for linen goods *Bassetti*, that was founded in 1830 and was combined with the *Zucchi Group* in 2006;

2) furniture, household, and office items – like the coffee press that originated in France, respectively the French press, that the Italian Attilio Calimani patented and optimized in 1929, the kitchen utensils of 1921 from the metal lathe operator Giovanni Alessi, manufactured in the homonymous design factory founded for household items called *Alessi*, as well as the typewriter *Olivetti Valentine* designed



Figure 2. Delta + Alessi, 2016. Source and ©: Delta News Hub.
Available: <https://flickr.com/photos/142938205@N05/33040819480>

by Ettore Sottsass Jr. (1917–2007) in 1969, which was fabricated by the Italian office machine manufacturer *Olivetti* from 1969–2000 and is today a design classic; and, finally,

3) the auto industry and amusement rides.

The third – and latter – division includes the Milan-based development and design company *Zagato*, one of the oldest leading body designers in Italy, which Udo Zagato founded in 1919 and which soon collaborated with all major Italian and international car brands. Almost simultaneously, Italian motorcycles and scooters such as the *Moto Guzzi* (since 1921) or the *Vespa* (since 1946) and the *Isetta* (1953–1955) developed by Iso Rivolta came onto the market. From 1977 to 1998, the Turin design studio *Open Design* has shaped and modelled car bodies and car interiors, as has the *Pininfarina* design company, founded by Giovanni Battista Farina (1893–1966) in Turin in 1930, which alone would create over 100 Ferrari models in 65 years, planning and constructing, at the same time, also car bodies for Fiat and Lancia. *Pininfarina* formed also the design for the high-speed trains for the Danish train company *Danske Statbaner* (DSB) in cooperation with the DSB-designer team, specializing in Scandinavian design tradition, but finally assembling, building and producing them with the help of the Neapolitan company Ansaldo Breda (2001–2015) in Southern Italy – a truly European trans-border liaison.

Within the sector of fairground rides, Antonio Zamperla (1923–1994) founded the design and production company of the same name – (*Antonio*) *Zamperla S.p.A.* – in 1966, through which the firm (today in its 3rd generation) still supplies the world's

largest amusement parks with carousels, bumper cars and roller coasters, especially in North America. The best-known Italian product designers include Carlo Bugatti (1856–1940) from Milan, who also worked as a decorator and architect, and the son of an architect Ettore Sottsass Jr., who was born in Innsbruck, Austria, as well as his younger business partner Michele De Lucchi (b. 1951) from Ferrara, the Milanese designer for furniture and fittings Rodolfo Dordoni (b. 1954) or the product designer Giulio Iacchetti (b. 1966) originating from the Northern Italian province of Cremona.

The most famous and successful among all these ingenious and brilliant brains was – already in life – Ettore Sottsass Jr., who in his role of an architect and designer of home furnishings was significantly involved in coining the stylistic movement of the so-called *Anti-Design* by founding the Milanese Memphis Group in 1980. De Lucchi joined, among others, this association of designers of furniture, textile and ceramics, and so did Matteo Thun (b. 1952) from South Tyrol, a creative and award-winning product designer who has studied architecture like Sottsass. The Memphis Group was active until 1988 and turned definitely away from the minimalistic and functionalistic *International Style* of the 1920s and 1930s and its – meanwhile outdated – principle of design compressed into the common formula of *form follows function*. After the legendary design show *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* in 1972 and the experimental, cross-country, visionary movement of the *Architettura radicale* (English: ‘Radical Architecture’, active from 1960 until around 1975), the Memphis Group sympathized with the *Postradicalismo* (English: ‘Post-Radicalism’). The group invented a postmodern, anti-functional, fresh, emotional, colourful, fancy, funny and entertaining *Nuovo Design Italiano* (literally in English: ‘New Italian Design’), which went around the world as *The New International Style* [cf. Czempfer 1987].

If fashion, apparel and garments seem to encourage a spectator or client to simply ‘Put it on!’, then the design products of the postmodern *New International Style* launch to us the invitation to ‘Use them – and enjoy!’, thus transmitting to every single individual the transcultural message of a genuine, positive, smart, cheerful, vivacious, happy-go-lucky and easy-going, yet sophisticated and artistically elaborated ‘Italian’ lifestyle, full of zest for life, self-love and love for others, expressed by means of a topical aesthetic language. Employing deliberately a vivid but sensibly aligned range of colours from pastels to shock colours, the Memphis designers reinterpreted everyday forms in a new, sensual, playful and imaginative manner. They followed the intention to integrate as much as international cultural influences as possible in their design, in order to let their products find global sales opportunities on a transcultural scale. The objects patterned by Sottsass – who also designed and realized a widely noticed bus stop in Hannover, Germany, in 1994 (*Königswoerther Platz*) and whose life work was repeatedly shown in international museums from

1974 onwards – are on exhibition in almost all the important design collections today, as they set new standards and are considered as milestones in the history of Industrial Design.

Transcultural intersectionality with arts and economics

The fashion as well as the design sector influence altogether today's artistic consciousness and the "Lifestyle" feeling [Barnard ²2020: 765/766] that we associate worldwide with the Italian culture and arts. In addition, both transcultural discourses border or overlap with the economic sector, or are integrated into it to such an extent that – in analytical terms – culture and the economy form an almost indistinguishable hybrid due to multiple mutual references and transdisciplinary interferences, often merging into one entity. So, fashion and design highly synergize with one another and intersect – be it with each other, be it with the arts and/or with economic sectors – thus amplifying their radius and spheres of interaction.

In both cases, it is striking that neither Italian Studies nor linguistics or cultural studies have so far been systematically involved in Italian-related fashion and design parameters, even though they highlight key issues in Italian and European history and are repeatedly taken up on specific points from the perspective of many other basic disciplines (such as: economics, business management, creative industries, sociology, media and/or communication studies, film studies, theatre studies, art history, cultural studies, historical science, anthropology, etc.). In addition, the two topics offer a wide range of significant didactic uses in academies, schools and universities as both a discourse and a narrative [cf. Reichardt, D'Angelo 2016: 117–208], which are so far only reluctant to enter the education system in the West and – taken as a whole – usually maintain a low profile in the artistic and sociocultural curricula of all universities in the industrialized countries on both hemispheres.

No doubt that affirmative relief and remedial measures should be strongly encouraged from a multidisciplinary point of view and – not least – in the interest of a continuous transcultural enrichment and social cohesion, as well as of educational, economic and life-related practical progress.

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