

## Chapter 6 Color in Fashion - a brief historical excursus

Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis, Professor Emeritus, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano

Angelo Sabbioni Architect and designer. Professor of Fashion Design at Politecnico di Milano.

### Abstract

Colors are the main characters of the history of fashion. Designers and fashion houses; over time, have built their own color palettes so as to make them real *chromatic icons*. Color is in fact both the result of our *perception* of light and an effective and direct *means of communication*. And it is precisely the latter that shall be analysed in the following text in order to trace a brief *excursus* to testify how strongly color is linked to the world of fashion.

### Keywords:

Color, Fashion, Communication, History

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## **1. Introduction**

“Color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul.”

W. Kandinsky, *Sguardi sul passato*, Se, Milano 2017 (2006-1999-1962)

"Colors, like features, follow the changes of the emotions"

M.Tosi, *Pablo Picasso: I Grandi dell'Arte*, GoodMood, Milano 2017

In the fascinating and wonderful history of fashion, colors have always been among the undisputed protagonists of creations and proposals specially studied by designers and/or by and for specific fashion houses; which, over time, have built their own color palettes so as to make them real chromatic icons. However, giving a scientific definition of what color is, becomes rather complex since, to be able to do so, it would be necessary to involve different disciplines such as physics, chemistry and last but not least psychology. But if we want to summarize its definition more immediately we can simply say that the color is:

our eyes' perception of light

an effective and direct means of communication able to "express", convey feelings, emotions, even discordant with each other, because they are linked to its variations in tone, to its nuances, more or less bright, more or less intense, more or less faded.

And it is precisely on this second important aspect, communication, that I want to pause, in order to trace a brief excursus to testify how strongly color is linked to the world of fashion. The value of communication, which takes place through the use of a specific color, in the fashion system, is so strong that it is inextricably linked, like the brand, to the maison itself if not directly to the stylist, fashion creator, designer, who used it, or strongly desired if not "created" it.

Color therefore becomes an important *fil rouge* through which it is possible to retrace the career of famous international creatives; because, in turn, it takes on the role of: companion, architect of successes, symbol of revolutions, means of communication, but, above all, it becomes an identification tool of which, to name a few, are an example the Blue Lanvin, the Blue Tiffany, Hermes' Orange, Dior red, Valentino red and Armani greige.

Having made these premises, let's go further, by way of example, into the importance of color in the Fashion System.

The Introduction section should include the background and aims of the chapter in a comprehensive manner.

Once you have focused on the specific topic of your study, you should investigate the latest and most relevant literature related to your study. Your literature review should be complete, but not overly long.

## **2. The eternal combination of black and white**

“With black and white you can get to the essentials. It allows for greater clarity; it has the ability to capture the character of a person on his marked face, to express the essence of a place through the play of lights in a landscape, or to stop a moment out of time against the background of an action. Black and white helps to extract the message; it helps to see beyond the blanket of color the essence of a thing, person, or place. It is out of time.”

Richard Olsenius, National Geographic Photography Field Guide: Digital Black & White

### **2.1 Black and white**

In symbology, black and white are both assigned to the range of non-colors or achromatic values. They represent the opposite of each other, the alpha and omega of the chromatic scale and as such they "attract" each other because symbolically they are "complementary" to each other.

Among the various protagonists of fashion linked to this chromatic combination, one cannot fail to mention the brilliant designer Coco Chanel (1883-1971) and her style that revolutionized the concept of femininity in the twentieth century and with which she helped free women from the constricting clothing typical of the Belle Époque. Thanks to her simplicity becomes chic, refined to be put at the service of a modern, dynamic, hard-working woman who needs comfortable, practical clothing. The designer was able to transform the rigor, spent during her childhood at the orphanage of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart, into the cornerstone that represents her idea of elegance, where the monastic style was borrowed above all in the chromatic choices. This dichotomy between black and white is clearly evident not only in her collections but also in her accessories which in this way are loaded with a strong symbolic value, or rather an idea of authority. Black and white, according to the couturier, were undisputed colors of extreme refinement, elegance and, consequently, all other colors were placed in the background. Certainly the essence of the diarchy between the two colors was fully revealed by Coco Chanel in 1919, when she created Chanel n. 5. The packaging, a simple, transparent pharmacy bottle, was not

the only peculiarity introduced by the French couturier. Certainly the container was clearly different from the very elaborate ones of the time, but the real novelty was contained in the label: minimal, with a white background and black lettering. The two iconic "Cs", silhouetted on white or black backgrounds, re-proposed and re-propose today as yesterday this continuous game of decisive, clear and essential contrasts, and they do so in such a strong and innovative way that they become and then remain the official logo of the House of Chanel.

Since its origins, the history of costume and fashion, however, shows these two non-colors, white and black, as authoritarian, elegant, formal tones, at least until the 1950s, after which this value is however scratched, thanks to Optical Art [1] that, through its optical illusions, brings to the stage a visual deception made of graphics and textures. Subsequently, in a very short time, the style of Optical art contaminates the world of fashion. From that moment on, the "optical illusions" were also adopted by the great designers of the time [2], thanks to which creations that are still current will come to life. From that moment on, nothing will be the same, the juxtaposition of the two non-colors will escape the rigid formality to fully experience the daring time of the sixties and seventies. To fully understand this transformation one might look at the historical images of 1960's fashion, starting from Mary Quant (born 1934) up to the Space Age collection (1964) created by André Courrèges (1923-2016). As one can easily see with Courrèges, however, the two colors are never used in a balanced, homogeneous way, giving each the same weight as the other, the same value. In fact, in his creations it will always be white to prevail over black, which instead will be limited to defining lines and graphics which are the result of a rigorous, orthogonal geometry. Optical fashion and its declinations, as parts of a recurring fashion, however, will not end in the Sixties or Seventies but will return to relive other lives parading once more on the catwalks. At the beginning of the nineties, for example, Jean Paul Gaultier, inspired by the traditional haute couture of the Orthodox Jews, would propose a winter collection characterized by: long coats, haute couture shirts, huge fur circular hats or ushanka hats, in some cases with models parading with shaved heads, wearing the typical Jewish headdress, while moving in a range of colors in which black predominates together with white. But black and white would be proposed again in the autumn-winter 2013-2014 collections and beyond. For this collection, for example, Ann Demeulemeester re-elaborated the combination of these two non-colors, restoring the image of a more contemporary clothing. Alberta Ferretti and Valentino instead opted for these colors in order to create *bon ton* dresses;

Byblos proposed a baroque texture on a white knitted dress; Burberry used a combination of the two to create an *animalier* pattern; while Tom Ford relied on elegant tribal motifs; Fendi, on the other hand, made white and black prevail one at a time; and a black backdrop was chosen by Marni to design white graphics upon; finally Viktor & Rolf that also set up their collection starting from the historical diarchy of the two non-colors.

But there is of course no end to the possible combinations of black and white and this contrast will make people talk again, because, as we know, fashion is cyclical, so, sooner or later, it will reappear on the market. The return will certainly be revitalized and adapted according to the latest trends and this will also be possible thanks to the use of new technologies and/or new materials. For this reason, few years after autumn/winter 2015-16 collections, the combination of the two colors is proposed again, with stripes, checkers and triangles, all mixed in the two-tone Valentino dress; in the abstract graphic lines that characterize the mini dresses and trench coats by Carolina Herrera and in the *animalier* inspiration, in the optical version by Céline which characterizes the coats.

### **3. Total black**

"Women think of all colors except the absence of color. I have said that black has it all. White too. Their beauty is absolute. It is the perfect harmony."

Coco Chanel

M.Tosi, Pablo Picasso: I Grandi dell'Arte, GoodMood, Milano 2017

#### **3.1. Black**

Different symbolic meanings, positive and/or negative, closely connected to each other, are attributed to the black color. It is undoubtedly a hue strongly linked to the past and tradition, which are recognized with meanings of majesty, authority and power. But this same color can also embody both sides of the same coin at the same time, which on the one hand contains positive values as it "guides" every ethical and moral conduct in an irreproachable way, and on the other it can be charged instead with negative values such as destruction, the fear of the unknown, disintegration to the point of penetrating into the world of the occult. In several ancient languages this ambivalence is also strengthened, on a lexical level, by attributing a negative value to the opaque black color, and a positive one to the bright black color. Or again, black as an abstraction, as a spiritual, ascetic expression, as sacrifice, mortification but also, continuing the game of duality, awareness of the space it occupies and/or an instrument of

seduction. This color tells us of a belonging that can be real or presumed but still made accessible to everyone thanks to fashion, which allows you to shift between many possible identities. Especially in womenswear, more than in menswear, fashion with its looks, at times eccentric, at times controversial, has made it possible to diminish the rigour of black, through multiple tailoring creations. Whether simple or with lace, minimalist or baroque, black is a sign of awareness and sums up the extremes of the dichotomy in which fashion has always struggled: exclusivity and diffusion. However, one thing is certain, everyone is fascinated by it, because whatever its value is, it has the ability to adapt to the most different styles so as to make it, today as yesterday, the main character, a symbol of elegance and purity. Even if the attraction towards this non-color sometimes seems to disappear, overwhelmed by the momentary precepts of fashion, inevitably, after a few seasons, it will return forcefully to the forefront, overshadowing the rest of the colors, from reds to pinks, from yellows to greens up to the range of browns. And here the black color returns once again to impose itself with decision, leaving a single glimmer of visibility to those hues that counterbalance it, blues and neutral tones. The importance and the value of black, as a sign and as an expression of a visual thought, has been evident since its first fifteenth-century manifestations. Although its maximum diffusion occurs between the second half of the sixteenth century. and the first half of the following century, both in the Catholic and in the Reformed world. And in this case also, in order to analyze the use of this color in the fashion panorama (in the most modern sense of the term) we have to start from the figure of Coco Chanel, because it is with her legendary little black dress, combined with flowing and considerable pearl necklaces, that Chanel characterises the first postwar period. As already mentioned, this fashion pillar, in addition to introducing an idea of simplification in dressing (not an obvious step at that time), also helped the "black color" catching on not only for evening dresses, but also for day dresses [3], therefore making it suitable for any occasion because of its elegance and sensuality. Another important milestone for the black color was reached in the twentieth century due to the existentialists [4], who adopted this hue so as to make it the main color of their clothing. A clothing made up of cigarette trousers, sweaters with a very high collar, austere and extremely buttoned shirts where the chromatic dictatorship of black dominates, interrupted only at times by the use of candid blouses and Breton sweaters, in a marine style, with blue stripes on a white background. Since 1950 on the French scene appeared the *blouson noir*, a group of young hooligans, analogous to the English *teddy boys*, whose name allusively refers to their way of dressing strictly black leather

jackets. While a couple of decades later, the Punk movement [5] was born in the mid-1970s, followed by the slogan "no future". The movement starts from rock music (Patti Smith, Sex Pistols, Dead Boys) but progressively invests all the arts: from literature, to fashion up to visual arts. At the base of this sub-culture there is undoubtedly a nihilistic aesthetic, which in the fashion scene sees Vivienne Westwood [6] as an undisputed icon. She deserves the merit of having been able to visually interpret the discomfort of those young people, through the black color, the safety pins, the studs, the shiny skin of the tight trousers and the ripped tights. In the seventies, therefore, Vivienne Westwood helped to create the punk style, through extravagant and provocative creations. But it is since March 1981, with the *Pirate* collection show held in London, that we fully learnt how her models no longer drew inspiration only from street fashion and/or the youth world: they were not simply eccentric, but also had a foundation strongly rooted in history, tradition and in the tailoring technique. The continuous search for her, borrows from the past continuous references, exploring all the eras, drawing from them the style, be they costumes of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. In fact, her inspiration seems to regenerate itself by drawing lifeblood from the love she has towards history, painting and her social and political commitment. It is no coincidence that Vivienne Westwood was the first contemporary designer to reintroduce the corset with extreme conviction, a complex element of haute couture now buried in the distant past, updating it both in terms of manufacturing and image.

Perceived as a fashion by now, the *punk* style still remains a moderate expression, compared to that developed in the eighties through the so-called *gothic* fashion, in Italy known as *dark* fashion. Those belonging to the *dark* style rejected any mediation or irony: if the former contrasted their black clothing with improbable gaudy colored hair, thus managing to mitigate the severity of total black, with the arrival of the *darks* instead, the register changes because what they show is all their extremism by choosing only the non-color black as a means by which to express themselves.

This continuous game of opposites goes on in the eighties, when the black hue, sober and refined, contrasts with color, connoting itself as a distinctive element of luxury and elegance. In fact, it was in these years that the Dolce & Gabbana brand made itself known on the international scene, through a look inspired by the Sicilian woman. Starting from the model of a woman strictly dressed in black clothes and surrounded by men of honor, a stereotype well represented in the film "The girl with the gun" [7] the stylists, Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, set up their advertising campaign drawing inspiration from the *Italian Neorealism* [8], focusing

strictly on a black and white photograph. The two stylists thus lay the foundations of their following imagery, made of laces, rosaries and madonnas all rigorously orchestrated and wrapped in a wise and mysterious black color.

Moreover, with the arrival in Paris of the Japanese designers, Yamamoto, Miyake and the Japanese fashion house Comme des Garçons, in the eighties the language of fashion undergoes a substantial transformation, since the concepts of elegance and beauty are overturned and redefined by lowering the tones. In a moment the sparkling colors of the Eighties ranging from bottle green to fuchsia up to electric blues are completely obscured by entirely black collections like the one that Rei Kawakubo [9] proposes in her first fashion show. Monochrome collections that could be monotonous, flat, two-dimensional, repetitive but which are instead made non-trivial by the skilful combination of different fabrics. The same happens for Yohji Yamamoto [10] who in 1981 proposes a collection dominated by black as a characterizing element, borrowing it from the ninja culture of the samurai who adopted it as a "weapon" of defense, to better blend in. The garments are enriched by subtraction, the concept of *less is more*, which is also dear to Coco Chanel, becomes the "fil rouge" that unites different designers. The black color, then relegated to sporadic occasions, mourning and/or important evenings, takes on a new meaning and returns as a symbol of elegance and purity. Up to the point of representing a watershed between a cultured and refined aesthetic, which makes its use of black, and a simpler and more modest one, which instead puts color at the center of one's style. Some social categories will therefore begin to tame the chromatic exuberance, progressively transforming their wardrobe, becoming, in spite of themselves, fashion victims. No doubt *total black* is the real *passe-partout* of every season, elegant, sober, seductive, chaste, the ally of our physical form: it streamlines it, makes us confident, user-friendly, does not require long (wasted) time in combinations (especially when you have to pack your bags).

If you check the sales of many fashion houses, regardless of the season, black, of any garment, size, or material, will be the best-selling color. In short, total black can sometimes become boring but it is definitely effective. However, in order not to make it boring and trivial, it is important to take care of the details, such as the cut of the dress itself, the type of fabric or the right accessory, shoe, bag, hat and/or jewel to be combined in a strategic way. In addition, there are garments that were born to be exclusively black, such as tight leather trousers, or the typical short leather jacket popular in



the eighties, or a certain type of centaur boots, characterized by buckles and sturdy soles.

And this is how black, in western culture known as the color of death, then relaunched by the anti-bourgeois movement par excellence, punk in the early 80s, today becomes a symbol of different types of women, sometimes diverging from each other. That is the sexy woman, the fashionable one, the modest one, the overweight one and the undecided one who, not knowing what to choose, feels reassured when wearing a color that she knows will not cause any discussions. It must be admitted: a black dress solves many situations because it is able to completely change the look through a simple change of accessories, whether they are sneakers, elegant or casual shoes, or important, minimal, eccentric jewels or even more demanding bags, jackets or outerwear.

In short, with a little creativity and a bit of good taste, a simple black dress multiplies our possible outfits, for different occasions of use. Black can become extremely sexy when, for example, combined with a lace dress, a silk slip or a guêpière. But it can also be extremely aggressive, provocative, when combined with leather dresses, zips and studs. Finally, it can also become very elegant, when you think of tailored day suits or evening dresses among which we cannot fail to mention the strictly black tuxedos by Yves Saint Laurent the symbol of a radical change in womanswear.

Getting closer and closer to the present day we arrive at the Twisted Fantasy collection where the designer, Alexander McQueen (1969-2010,) for autumn 2009 in a provocative way shows us a collective hallucination where the protagonists constantly move, in the balance between a refined style and the monstrous being almost to reveal the fleeting border. Very pale faces contrasted with red or black lips, accentuated by a make-up with smudged contours that overflows as if to make them caricatures of themselves. Faces framed by improbable hats, cages, cans, plastic bags expertly revisited and ennobled not in substance but in style. A style capable of restoring a haughty image and redefining a new concept of beauty at times terrible, well embodied by the Black Duck Feather dress. This frightening creature of the night, perhaps a bearer of misfortunes, of bad omens, advances decisively on the catwalk, towering on her very high busts and her proud gaze creating around her an aura of mystery, mixed with terror as in the most frightful nightmares. This is a tailoring virtuosity, made of volumes and plumage, which gives rise to a spectacular dress that is strongly suggestive, so that it deserves to be exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Obviously the use of this color is not limited to just the stylists mentioned, whether they are from the present or from the past, but the dissertation could continue indefinitely therefore we limit ourselves to mentioning just a few: Ann Demeulemeester (1959), Gareth Pugh (1981) , Rick Owens (1962) and the London label Kokon To Zai (1996).

#### **4. Total White**

"White is a world so high compared to us that we hardly hear its sound, it is nothing before its origin."

Vassili Kandinsky

C.Vanoni, *A piedi nudi nell'arte. Una passeggiata alla scoperta dei capolavori antichi e moderni*, Solferino, Milano 2019

##### **4.1. White**

White is simplistically considered an emblem of light, the color of divinity and intended as a generating principle, an archetype of resurrection and eternal rebirth. It is the color of purity and for this reason it is traditionally chosen and worn in religious ceremonies. It offers a sense of peace and tranquility, comfort and hope, it helps relieving emotional disturbances, stimulates openness, growth and creativity. But like any color, it also contains some negative elements. An excess of white in environments can make them appear cold, isolated, sterile, voids, uninteresting, and for this reason they can be fully experienced only by those who have a strong mental stability and a strong charisma, in short, by those who are not scared of a white sheet of paper, but rather find in it the generative strength of a new creativity. This is what white represents for the Belgian designer Martin Margiela (1957). In fact, in the aesthetics of the Maison Margiela white arises conceptually in the making, it provides the true freedom of expression in the name of which it is worth removing, from the label of the garment, the name of the Brand to give the floor to the main characters of this process: his creations. The designer's unconventional and provocative concepts combined with a scrupulous creative design process and tailoring mastery make it difficult for the press to classify him. His *avant-garde* research becomes a work of art, a democratic fashion that shuns luxury and ostentation as it favours the use of recycled materials and clothes that he deconstructs by cutting and reassembling them, showing what it was usually hidden. Linings, padding, reinforcements, first unstitched and then reassembled, give life to a new style and to new creative expressions.

The white hue can also be connected to the stylist Laura Biagiotti. In 1972, the lady of cashmere showed a collection of a few very versatile white

garments at Palazzo Pitti, demonstrating that white, despite being a simple color, can be truly chic and refined, so that it can be worn at any time of day or night. Candid, with more or less cold, ethereal tones, this color represents to her a means through which she can emphasize femininity and elegance, also accentuated through soft lines and almost impalpable shapes that delicately embrace the silhouette.

White has also fostered the design creativity of another main actor of international fashion, Gianfranco Ferré in as much as for him it becomes a whole with his iconic garment, the strictly white shirt. A style icon that in 2015 relives in the exhibition [11] dedicated to it: "The white shirt in my opinion". A real tribute to the sartorial poetics and creative genius of the "designer and architect" who defines this garment "*a sign of my style*", "*contemporary lexicon of elegance*". "*For me fashion is poetry, intuition, fantasy, but it is also a method and design attitude that is based on the conception of the dress as the result of a planned intervention ....*" I would say that a large part of my creative process is explained in the light of my background and my training as an architect ". And it is precisely this continuous dialogue between architecture and fashion that gives life, through research, to the creation of a new way of conceiving clothing, a new innovative way of designing it. The candid white shirts enhanced by skilful plays of light and shadow come to life in this exhibition that through photographic images, conceived as if they were x-rays of the dress, reveal the secrets of its design to those who have the technical know-how.

After talking about two non-colors, white and black, let's now proceed with our analysis by addressing the color par excellence, namely red.

## **5. Total Red (i.e. Colour)**

*"Red, as we imagine it, like a typically warm color, without limits, acts internally as a very lively, bright, restless color, which, however, does not possess the character of prodigality of yellow, which is consumed by spreading on all sides , but rather generates, despite all its energy and intensity, a strong note of immense energy, almost aware of its purpose. In this agitation and ardor, turned mainly towards oneself and a little towards the outside, a so to speak virile maturity is expressed "*

Wassily Kandinsky

W. Kandinsky, Tutti gli scritti – volume II- dello spirituale nell'arte- Scritti critici e autobiografici – Teatro -Poesie, Feltrinelli, Milano 1974 e 1989

## 5.1. Red

Red is the color *par excellence* because it communicates and signals something special: it is extraordinarily attractive, extravagant, provocative and corresponds to energy in all its forms. In the Book of Genesis, for example, the color red is given a very important symbolic value, in fact it represents the generating principle of life. It is therefore no coincidence that the name Adam in Hebrew is linked to a double meaning, red and living, and that it is he who was created by shaping red clay.

Present in almost all archaic languages, the term red is often used as a synonym for color: in Latin, for example, the adjective *rubeus* (red) also means colored, while in the Spanish language the word *colorado* can also mean red. In other languages, such as in Russian, this double meaning resides in the root of the adjective red, *krasni*, which is the same as the adjective beautiful, *krassivi*.

Its extraordinary *nuances*, from the most subtle to the darkest, are loaded with multiple meanings, sometimes ambivalent, which find in the creativity of the designers a fertile territory that soon pours onto the catwalks. The collections light up with scarlet, Venetian, cardinal, amaranth, burgundy, cherry, coral, crimson, magenta, ruby red, which, in the darker shades of garnet, claret, burgundy, carmine, is charged with a noir halo, which has the aim to seduce and stun the senses. Among the major promoters of this shade, the stylists Christian Dior and Valentino certainly occupy a first-rate place, of which we will discuss more detail later on, analyzing their brand identity. This common thread that links this vivid color to fashion continues on the catwalks in every season. For F/W 2012-13, for example, stylists seem to affirm that red, in all its shades, is the color of the year. Alexander Wang moves towards a very dark red which, thanks to the sheen of the fabrics used, gives life to different nuances. Similarly, Acne prefers shiny fabrics dyed an ox blood red for this season; the carmine red instead distinguishes the Blugirl coat while at the same time the hibiscus red defines the Cacharel look. Comme des Garçons is also attracted by this hue to the point of inserting it into the three-dimensional coat in carmine red. Then, also for this season, the flaming red of Christian Dior is inevitable, followed by Christopher Kane who chooses to contrast two shades of red, blood red and ruby red. But the S/S 2013 collection by Alexander McQueen is also tinged with flaming red with the corolla dress, the blood red suit and fuchsia lapels by Costume National, the long dress by Valentino (this time with a *noir* kind of red), a cherry red and a blood red for Miu Miu. The red look of Micheal Kors is glamorous and sporty at the same time, while Moschino uses it as a background tone on which white profiles stand out. The

presence of this color, in its different nuances, also continues with the S/S 2014 by Fendi, Burberry Prorsum, Miu Miu, Dolce & Gabbana, Jean Paul Gaultier, Alexander McQueen, Etro, Trussardi, Prada, Valentino, Marc Jacobs, Dior, Saint Laurent, Stella McCartney up to touch its darker variations for the maison Martin Margela and Tod's. The love for this color is also renewed in the following A/W 2014/15/16/17/18 with Louis Vitton, Valentino, Vivienne Westwood and Christopher Kane, Acne Studios, in the Max Mara and Fendi, Prada, Gucci fashion shows, Les Copains and Emporio Armani. Up to A/W 2020/21 where again an intense, brilliant red pervades the catwalks of great designers. Alexander McQueen, for example, uses it to characterize his suits consisting of jacket and trousers. Saint Laurent for latex dresses, Givenchy for languette and long shrugs, Valentino for covering tight-fitting sheath dresses with sequins and Miu Miu for her long coats. As it is easy to guess, this analysis could continue indefinitely, managing to find, for each season, for any year, its right shade of red, confirming once again that red is the color *par excellence*.

## 6. Brand Identity

As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, there are specific colors that more than others contain in themselves, in their tone, in their nuances, stories inextricably linked to the designer and/or the brand that used them. Guardians of a glorious past, strong in the present and, above all, hopeful of an ever-changing future, these shades have gradually proved to be the real keystone of successes and aesthetic revolutions. Able to "transform" and reconfirm itself every time, becoming the real winning element that, linked to a marketing operation, has been able to establish itself on the market at times even in a more effective and recognizable way than the very brand or becoming a brand itself. Color, in that specific shade, thus becomes the true janitor of a potential that allows companies to create their own brand identity. An example of this is the orange color that identifies the Hermès packaging, the Tiffany blue, the Lanvin blue, the Greige Armani and the Valentino red that we will now go into in more detail.

### 6.1. Brown - Beige - Louis Vitton

The products made by the French *maison* Louis Vuitton are undoubtedly identifiable in the leather color and its nuances, ranging from darker shades of browns to lighter beige ones. Dark brown, a shade linked to the nuances of earth and nature, is in fact the background color on which the beige initials, LV, stand out, making up one of the best known and most imitated monograms in the world.

The history of the brand begins in 1845 in Paris in Rue Neuve des Capucines at number 4 when its founder, Louis Vuitton, after a period of profitable apprenticeship, carried out with a trunk manufacturer, decides to channel his innate craftsmanship skills into a business of his own. In addition to the undoubted aesthetic aspect, initially the first trunks created by Louis Vuitton also stand out from all the others for a series of innovations such as the use of a gray cotton oilcloth, the "Gray Trianon", which covers them making them so waterproof. The added value, introduced with the application of this simple intuition, makes the object, conceived by Louis Vitton, functional, practical and, above all, successful, therefore soon copied so much that, in 1872, to defend itself from imitators, he decides to stand out again by introducing in their trunks a red and beige striped pattern. In 1886, animated by continuous research, he transferred further value to his suitcases by revolutionizing the closures, thus making his trunks even more airtight. In 1888, however, the novelties began to be introduced by the founder's son, Georges Vuitton, with the creation of the iconic brown and beige checkered canvas [12], "sealed" by the writing, "Marque L. Vuitton déposée", suitably positioned with the purpose of protecting the logo from further imitations; and it is again he, Georges, who continues his father's business after his death [13], and creates the LV monogram in his honor in 1896, thus making the memory of his father "immortal". To complete the work, Georges also creates a contrasting beige texture [14] on a brown canvas, which shows all-over the interlaced LV monogram [15], his father's initials, surrounded by stylized designs of flowers and diamonds. This canvas will then be registered as a trademark in 1905 and today it is the hallmark of the brand. Soon the high quality and innovations introduced in its travel items, (initially trunks, then mainly bags), elevated these products to fundamental style icons. Thus in 1913 the historic boutique was inaugurated on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris and, on the threshold of the outbreak of the First World War, the Louis Vuitton stores were already present in various cities around the world: New York, Washington, London, Bombay, Alexandria (Egypt) and Buenos Aires. The designer Paul Poiret, the photographer Dora Maar and the painter Francis Picabia, were among the first to appreciate the value of the LV-logged artifacts; but later, between the fifties and sixties, the fame of the brand also reached the glossy world of the printed media by appearing in the travel columns of *Vouge*, to then move on to the world of the jet set with, one above all, the actress Anna Magnani which will then be followed, in more recent times, by many other illustrious characters such as Madonna, Angelina Jolie, David Bowie, Uma Thurman, ...

Another fundamental date for the longevity of the brand is 1997, the date on which Marc Jacobs was appointed creative director of the Louis Vuitton maison. Thanks to the intuition of the emerging designer, focused on the modernization of the monogram, the company experiences a second youth. The operation is carried out by initially involving the artist/stylist Stephen Sprouse, who creates a graffiti version of the monogram canvas and, subsequently, in 2003/2005, involving the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami. The latter will give life to different reinterpretations of the canvas. Among the most famous: the version with a white background and multicolored logos and characters; the one with cherry blossoms and finally the one with cherries. Taking up the diktat to dare, the designer, even in the following years spent at the maison, continues to rework and modernize the monogram bags. Needless to say, the bags quickly turned into real cultural phenomena. Jacobs' profitable experience in the Vuitton maison then concludes with the spring summer 2014 collection, in which he proposes the graphics of Stephen Sprouse, but this time transferring them directly to the statuesque body of the model Edie Campbell, thus charging them with a strong symbolic value and a new communicative power. In November 2014, the maison then releases to the market the limited edition *Celebrating Monogram* [16]. A line created with a dual purpose: to celebrate 160 years of their history and at the same time to give modernity to the brand.

The secret of this perpetual success probably lies primarily in the genius of its founder and in the generations that have succeeded him; as it certainly also resides in having managed to create real evergreens, of which the Speedy bag and the Lockit bag are an example. The company, riding the wave of success, was then able to evolve by extending its production also to the field of clothing, footwear, accessories, goldsmithing and watchmaking, becoming a multinational of luxury goods, proving once again to always stay in step with the times.

## 6.2. Orange - Hermès

The bright, citrusy orange of Hermès packaging, the iconic color of the French brand, was born in 1945 thanks to an entrepreneurial choice made by Émile-Maurice Hermès, grandson of the founder of the homonymous Maison. Thanks to the difficulty of finding the traditional cream-colored boxes, until then used to package their products, the grandson was forced to fall back on packaging of another color. And this is how in a short time this bright orange managed to make the brand recognizable all over the world, so much so that it became its true symbol. Even today, when thinking of Hermès, we automatically think of this orange color that, since 1949, has

been made even more refined by the presence of the now classic brown ribbon, characterized along the edges by a contrasting stitching that since then closes the Hermès packages. In 1994, the Hermès Maison received the Packaging Oscar for its folding boxes, now countless in type and size (more than 700 types). As further evidence of how important this orange shade has become over time since 1996, the same color is extended to all Hermès packaging. Consequently, even the boxes for bijoux and Art de la Table items hitherto characterized by the first gray color, and the second by the green color make this shade their own.

In March 2020 Hermès launches the first lipstick collection, Rouge Hermès, and it is no coincidence that one of the colors of the collection is “Orange Boite”. But the French maison Hermès, in addition to the color linked to its packaging, is also represented by other colors that characterize its products of excellence such as the timeless bags Kelly and Birkin, known all over the world, as the symbol of Hèrmes par excellence. in orange, burgundy, green and leather.

### **6.3. Tiffany blue - TIFFANY & CO**

In 1837, far from the European aesthetic (still linked to a sumptuous Victorian style) at 259 Broadway in Manhattan, in the city of New York, the new Tiffany & Co. store was inaugurated. Initially specializing in the sale of stationery and small precious objects. the shop responded perfectly to the new "American style" centered on the harmony and simplicity of those years. Following the same entrepreneurial path in 1845, with the publication of the Blue Book, the first mail order catalog in the United States, Tiffany sought a widespread diffusion of its refined and high quality jewels. Subsequently, in 1848, the brand decided to devote itself solely to the jewelry trade by introducing the use of precious stones. Thus was born the historic US company Tiffany & Co, founded by Charles Lewis Tiffany and his partner/friend John B. Young who with their jewels "set" in small and captivating packaging have always embodied, in the female universe, the archetype of the object of desires. As it is easy to understand in this case, however, its brand identity is not linked to the color of a dress but like the Hermès brand it is linked to the color of the packaging, a chromatic shade of blue that oscillates between the aquamarine green hue and the peacock blue or Pantone No. 1837 [17], also called robin's egg blue [18], better known as *Tiffany blue*.

In 1886, the success of the Tiffany & Co company became unstoppable thanks to the introduction of the diamond engagement ring. From that moment onward, having a Tiffany blue box becomes the fulfillment of a



dream for everyone regardless of the beauty and/or preciousness of the object it contains; this is testified by the newspapers that begin to attribute to the now famous “boxes” an inestimable value equal to that of Tiffany jewels themselves. In 1961, the release of the film "Breakfast at Tiffany's" based on the novel by Truman Capote and starring a young Audrey Hepburn, an undisputed icon of elegance and style, contributed to act as an additional sounding board. During the filming, which took place partly inside the renowned store, unfortunately the company forbade the appearance of the now famous blue packaging which, starting from 1998, together with the tiffany blue hue, the white satin bow that wraps it and the same term "Tiffany Blue Box", is further "protected", by a patent duly registered as a trademark and consequently no longer reproducible by other companies.

#### **6.4. Red and green - Gucci**

The history of the Gucci brand, strongly linked to tradition and innovation, is clearly identified in two omnipresent colors, red and green. It all began in 1921 thanks to Guccio Gucci, who, returning to Florence, after a period spent between London and Paris [19], decided to open shops in his hometown dedicated to the production of leather goods and travel items that have their leitmotiv in the world of horse riding. To this brand, the primary color red [20], often related to the feelings of love and passion, finds its complementary [21] in its secondary color, green [22], to which it is constantly combined. And on this combination, which best expresses the communicative power of the two colors, Gucci creates its own trademark. And this is how the colors of the saddle girth, bits, stirrups, which belong to the aristocratic world of riding, lose their function in an instant to acquire a new one. They become textures, graphic and decorative elements, details that distinguish both the accessories and the clothes of the brand and that have undisputed style icons such as Audrey Hepburn, Jackie Kennedy, Grace Kelly, Maria Callas as best “testimonials”.

#### **6.5. Trafalgar Red - Christian Dior**

The attraction and love of the French designer Christian Dior towards this color was immediately evident from his first collections. Unmistakable in its bright and refined shades, the red color was initially used by Dior, with the aim of reviving the souls of the society, which had just emerged from the war, and of those who today we would call its followers. Thus the idea of the red "Trafalgar" was born. In the little dictionary of fashion, published in 1954 by Cassell, Christian Dior, about the color red said: “*Very*

*stimulating and attractive, it is the color of life. I love red, and in my opinion, it works with any skin tone. Scarlet red, shiny red, English red, crimson or cherry, there is one for everyone and if you don't want a red dress you can use a red hat that, in combination, provides a great effect [...]*". The following year, 1955, Dior's lipstick was born because of the love for this shade. Today Dior red continues to be present in the Haute Couture collection created by Raf Simons, former art director of the Maison, and to identify the Dior-Trafalgar make-up.

## **6.6. Red Valentino - Valentino**

In the Italian panorama, on the other hand, this color is inextricably linked to the designer Valentino Garavani, who distinguished himself for his recognizable style and for having created a particular shade of red, called Rosso Valentino. A particular, very bright, gradation, between carmine, purple and cadmium red, created specifically by the designer to connote only some of his collection clothes. Tradition has it that Valentino's predilection for this color began to manifest from an early age, in his aunt's trimmings shop, where he spent entire afternoons, and was then strengthened, following his stay in Paris, during an apprenticeship with Jean Dessès. But the real awareness of this color occurred only when he, still a student, went to the representation of Bizet's Carmen at the Barcelona Opera. Valentino was so fascinated, enraptured, by this shade that characterized the costumes that in that precise moment he understood that after the inevitable black and white, there couldn't be a more beautiful and stimulating color than red. Since then, the color red occupied a special place in its collections, so much so that from 1968 until 2005, he never failed to complete the show, both for prêt-à-porter and haute couture, with one or more items of that hue. Further evidence of this perennial love for red are: the retrospective organized in Rome in 2007, "45 years of Style", the autumn/winter 2008-09 collection (the designer's latest) and the Shanghai fashion show-event, organized in autumn 2013.

Valentino red is undoubtedly a sensual nuance perfectly attributable to its creator, so much so that it can also be used as the name of the brand, REDValentino, to identify the second line of the Maison dedicated to a younger audience.

## **6.7. Red - Christian Louboutin**

In the fashion field, the red color is also associated with the shoes of the French designer Christian Louboutin, made immediately recognizable by the characteristic red sole. The idea, simple but brilliant at the same time,

seems to be born in Milan, in 1992, during the refinement of the Pensée model. The designer, not entirely satisfied with the prototype, decided in an instant to dye the sole of the shoe with the red nail polish with which, at that precise moment, his assistant was coloring her nails. Thus a myth was born and, although copied over time, it remains the progenitor of many who have then imitated it.

## 6.8. Green - Carven

The French couturière Marie-Louise Carven, aka Carmen de Tommaso better known as Madame Carven, the "lady of the green color", founder of the fashion house of the same name, owes her success to a complex linked to her stature. She has always been passionate about tailoring, she entered this world as a perfect self-taught person to create perfect clothes on herself and in proportion to her stature. In 1945, at the age of 34, Carven opened his fashion house on the Champs-Élysées; her talent began to be recognized and appreciated so much that it conquered the celebrities of the time, young French actresses, such as Martine Carol, Leslie Caron, Brigitte Fossey, the dancer actress Zizi Jeanmaire and the singer-songwriter Édith Piaf. All women united by a single characteristic, height, an obsession of the couturière but at the same time the driving force behind her success that led her in 1951 to focus her line precisely on this type of user. Her women, thanks to skilful sartorial games of pleats that highlight the shapes, are able to be sensual without resorting to artificial padding. Her clothes are fashionable, refined, at the same time handy, youthful and fresh. Among all of hers, in her first collection (1945), one stands out: the summer dress *Ma griffe*, a cotton dress with vertical white and green stripes, with a long and wide skirt and a generous neckline. It seems that the fabric used to make the dress was found by chance in the attic of an old castle, probably purchased shortly before the outbreak of the First World War to make maids' uniforms. At the time no one would have thought that that bright green would have made the fortune of the newborn brand that from that moment on became the emblem, the distinctive signature of the Carven house, so much so that it was used not only in clothing, but also as a means of communication. and brand identification, in packaging, perfumes and obviously in fabrics. With this color still present on the catwalks today, we want to pay homage to a great woman, Madame Carven, who was able to masterfully combine her technical, tailoring, stylistic skills with communicative and managerial skills. In 1946, for example, with the aim of advertising her first fragrance, she "rained" on Paris, hundreds of perfume samples, "parachuted" over the city. Then in the fifties, in conjunction with the release in France of the film

*Gone with the Wind*, she created a collection inspired by it. In the same year she is also among the first to: develop prêt-à-porter and show her collections abroad, influencing high fashion with the use of African fabrics, madras, batik, raffia, wefts exotic and ethnic motifs. But perhaps her greatest teaching is contained in her willpower, in her ability to be able to transform her "weak point", her stature, into her strong point that generates collections and styles that have conquered the world.

### **6.9. Shocking Pink - Elsa Schiaparelli**

Elsa Schiaparelli is certainly the archetype of the talented woman, with brilliant inventions and intuitions. She comes from an aristocratic, cultured family, a lover of literature, of art, she comes into contact with some of the greatest exponents of Dadaism such as Marcel Duchamps and Man Ray for whom she also poses as a model. In the thirties she collaborated with various surrealist artists such as: Elsa Triolet, Alberto Giacometti, Salvador Dalí, with whom she created, in 1937 the Aragosta dress and the shoe hat and a few years later, for the Circus-1938 collection, the Lacrime dresses and Skeleton. With Pablo Picasso, on the other hand, she creates the gloves painted on the fathers hands of the subsequent black gloves with red python nails.

Elsa Schiaparelli approaches the world of fashion during the years in New York, but it is in Paris that she begins to devote herself full time to this activity, first becoming a pupil of the designer Paul Poiret, for whom she creates her first models, then starting a business of her own. In fact, in 1927, with the help of an Armenian refugee, the designer began making black pullovers decorated with white designs, arousing the interest of US department stores. The shapeless sweater, which until then was relegated to rural use, underwent a qualitative leap with her, finally conquering a shape of its own. In the field of knitwear her most memorable outcomes are: her sweaters characterized by large *trompe-l'oeil* [23] bows in a black and white optical style then further declined in the creation of tattoo-sweaters, with pierced hearts, up to "X-ray" pullovers, on which the structure of the human skeleton [24] was reproduced as in an X-ray. In those years her provocative creations were in contrast to those of another very famous designer of the time, Coco Chanel. Both protagonists and antagonists of the twentieth century, they gave life to a "rivalry" carried on with collections characterized by dream dresses, which undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the fashion universe. Coco Chanel is responsible for bringing simplicity and naturalness to the fashion system, while Elsa Schiaparelli is credited with having fueled the creative flair by offering clothes and special

accessories that are never banal. Although different, they both have several points in common, such as: the need to abandon the conventions and constraints in women's clothing of the time; approaching the prêt-à-porter dress, produced following standard measurements and through mass production; designing not only clothes but also accessories and new fragrances, for example. But, always remaining faithful to her own style, linear, almost austere, for Coco Chanel and creative, research for Elsa Schiaparelli who proposes a bold woman, able to be ahead of the times, the first for example to use visible zippers on dresses. A woman who, in the Paris of the thirties, with her surreal and provocative creations manages to upset and at the same time thrill the souls of the bourgeoisie. Finally, the perfume bottle is very famous, inspired by the curves of the American actress Mae West and modeled for her by Léonor Fini. The designer's favorite nuance is derived from this fragrance, contained in a bright-colored box, a vivid fuchsia, which she renamed Shocking pink, a very intense shade of magenta so as to be impertinent, a pure concentrate of energy and exoticism that in a moment seduces the world of fashion by crowding the catwalks.

*"The color appeared before my eyes: bright, impossible, bold, pleasant, full of energy like light, all the birds and fish in the world; a color from China and Peru, not Western; a "shocking" color, pure and undiluted ... "* [25]

### **6.10. Lavin Blue - Jeanne Lavin**

Among the most important designers of the 1920s and 1930s, Jeanne Lanvin [26] is undoubtedly remembered for her extraordinary sartorial skills and for having created the shade that takes her name from her, Lavin blue. A very precise nuance that can be described as a soft cobalt, a celestial blue with touches of mauve, specially created in the 1920s following a trip to Italy, perhaps inspired by a fresco by Fra Angelico, by the blue of his skies. Blue has always represented, together with burgundy, the color of elegance, in many ways very similar to black, because it is suitable for any time of day or evening.

From 1923 onwards, with the purchase of a dyehouse located outside Paris, in Nanterre, her natural inclination and attention to color found the right dimension, thus enriching her creations with always refined and inimitable palettes. For example, the satin dress that Anna Eleonor Roosevelt wore in 1932 following the election of her husband, Franklin Roosevelt, was a Lavin blue.

Among the most well-known colors, besides Lanvin Blue, we remember Polignac Pink [27] and Velasquez Green, another testimony of her boundless love for art.

### **6.11. Blue Crossbow - Renato Balestra**

The transport and passion for the color blue is for Renato Balestra an innate attraction that has always lived with him, it is a natural, almost unconscious choice that is difficult to explain otherwise: *"...they tell me that if I had to choose an object, a dress, I always chose the blue one by instinct"*. The Balestra Blue treads the catwalks for the first time in 1958, enjoying immediate success that leads it, from that moment on, to become the most recurring color proposed by the designer, a color that will often characterize his collections enough to lead the press, eager to give everyone and everything a "label", to call it blue Balestra.

### **6.12. Blue - Giorgio Armani**

According to several interviews, it emerges that blue has always been the color that the designer personally prefers. In it, and in its shades, he sees an alternative elegance to black materialize: calm, less austere but equally strong, profound, able to confer equal dignity to the wearer. Some memories of the designer are also linked to this nuance, such as the dress worn for confirmation and the uniform worn during the military period, as well as some fundamental stages of his career; the color blue appears in fact in the palette of the first women's collection (spring / summer 1976), and in the following years it continues alternatively to be proposed to once again become a true protagonist, in more recent times, with the A/W 2019/2020 fashion show, staged in the rooms of the Armani Silos, an exhibition space that contains the history and aesthetics of the designer. On this occasion Armani brings to the catwalk for the first time the union of the two collections, feminine and masculine, in a yarn that plays on the continuous alternation between day and night declining in different shades of blue that gradually fade into black both in women's and men's outfits.

### **6.13. Neutral colors - Greige - Giorgio Armani**

However, the distinctive trait of the dresses created by Giorgio Armani is certainly attributable to soft lines, defined and characterized by neutral colors. With the term, neutral color, we mainly tend to identify three colors: white, black, gray but at the same time also all those various shades that tend to them [28]. In the field of fashion, they also come to include browns starting with lighter shades such as camel [29], and then gradually reaching

darker shades such as khaki, taupe, or very dark shades such as Van Dyck Dark Brown. The variations of these neutral colors, be they warm or cold, are well embodied in the gray color, which, in its changes of tone, flows on one side, in the warmer version tending to brown, in the shades of dove gray and on the other side, in the version colder tending towards shades of blue, in nuances of payne gray, cadet gray, baby blue gray, avio gray, etc... all shades united by a common denominator: the ease of being able to combine them with other tones. However, it was only at the end of the seventies, with the Giorgio Armani's pret-à-porter design [30], that tone moderation was achieved through the use of these neutral, indefinite, versatile colors. In fact, the designer is responsible for the "creation" of various shades of gray, more or less cold, more or less warm, among which the greige undoubtedly stands out, a neutral, borderline nuance, in perfect balance between warm and cold tones.

*"I was looking for a shade that was warm but at the same time metropolitan, sober but not obvious. And greige is all this to me: discreet, sophisticated and natural. I love natural colors, they give a deep sense of tranquility and serenity, and they are a base on which anything can be built". "They allow you to connect other colors together, they make a link between distant shades possible. Greige is like a background color. Something that remains, above which you can imagine different combinations from time to time. "* [31]

As you can easily guess etymologically the term greige, comes from the fusion of two words/colors, gray and beige, to define a shade that embodies the evocative summa of both tones and that, thanks to the King Midas of fashion, Giorgio Armani, it becomes an integral part of its men's and women's collections, so much so that it was identified in the eighties with the nickname of "King of Greige". The greige color [32] soon became a philosophy of life, a distinctive trait, synonymous with elegance, testimonial of a whispered luxury, and therefore frequently used by designers and interior architects.

#### **6.14. Yellow - Fendi**

The color yellow, especially for the shyest people, can at a first glance appear as an unusual color, difficult to wear, yet this hue has many precedents in the fashion system. After 1920, thanks to Coco Chanel, yellow becomes an innovative must-have color that on the Italian scene finds its home in the Fendi maison, which elects it as its official color. Yellow has always embodied sunshine, as it expresses the joy of living. It is a color that cannot be forgotten which is suitable for the complexion of

many women, whether they are brunettes, blondes, reds, Caucasians or olive-colored, just knowing how to choose the right nuances for each type of woman. It is suitable for summer, but also for colder seasons when taken in its darker shades, such as ochre, mustard or gold. In its browner shades, for example, it is a particularly accessible color for a wide range of complexions that can be enhanced further when combined with colors highlighting brown nuances through accessories or jewelry in gold, brass or copper. For those who have a less exuberant personality and do not always want to be the center of attention, the approach to this color can take place gradually through the use of accessories. Foulards, hats, sunglasses, shoes and bags can thus help to liven up a classic basic outfit by giving brightness to the wearer. Yellow is also often used in combination with purple (its complement), magenta and orange, especially in its mustard shades. When experimenting these shades, however, and in order to avoid appearing dull, it is advisable to combine a mustard yellow or a bright yellow with a daring make-up that highlights eyes and lips through bold colors. In short, wearing this color with mastery and ease it is difficult not to get noticed because, according to the nuances used it can certainly be of great impact or refined beauty.

### **6.15. Yellow - Versace**

At the end of the seventies it was the turn of the emerging Versace brand to forcefully bring the yellow color back on the scenes, this time in its gold version.

Gianni Versace left Reggio Calabria in 1972 when he moved to Milan to pursue his dream that began to materialize only a few years later, in 1978, with the foundation of the homonymous company Versace then led, after his untimely death, by his brother Santo and his sister Donatella.

A great lover of art and classicism, a passion that he pours into collecting, magnetically attracted to the theater, for which he will create various stage costumes, Gianni Versace brings to Milan his boundless love for Magna Graecia, and inevitably pours it into his style as its main feature. The figurative elements, borrowed from Hellenic vase painting, the geometric or floral meanders, and the acanthus leaves are now colored in gold and become, together patterns and shapes that embellish his creations together with Baroque decorations revisited in an eccentric, pop rock version. The continuous references to classicism thus lead him to coin, in 1993, the iconic medusa head since then perpetually present in the collections in various forms: as a brand, as a texture on fabrics, or as a detail of an accessory that embellishes, as if it were a rigorously gold-colored jewelry,



dresses, shoes, bags, belts, glasses, brooches and perfumes. The choice of the gorgon, a mythological figure capable of petrifying anyone who looked directly into her eyes, obviously gives rise to different interpretations. Using it, the designer almost seem to transfer the power of the magnetic gaze of medusa to his creations in order to leave anyone who is in front of it speechless, “petrified”. Therefore a symbol of good luck but also a seductive figure in which vanity and lust coexist, in short, vices that are well suited to represent the dissolute and intriguing world of fashion.

Research and the desire to explore new solutions lead him to experiment with new fabrics; 1982, is the year in which the designer, draping the Oroton [33], a technological metal mesh fabric, brings "gold" dresses to the catwalk, then it is the turn of the "Africa" fabric through which delicate transparencies come to life thanks to the combination of viscose and nylon threads, then, in 1993, a smash hit: the sexy and glamorous “bondage” style and, in 1994, the “Safety pin dress” worn on the red carpet by Elizabeth Hurley. The long black dress, characterized by a generous slit, a deep décolleté and strategic cuts held together by maxi golden safety pins, in a jewel version with the effigy of the medusa, the following day occupies the pages of all the magazines, thus becoming one of the most iconic dresses in the history of fashion.

Even after the painful changes that have marked the history of this maison, the color yellow still remains the color that best represents it, both in clothes and as an expression of creativity. In 2015 Donatella Versace pays homage to her brother through the line of accessories inspired by the classic way of Magna Graecia, and then seals this memory in 2017 with the S/S 2018 collection dedicated to the timeless classics of Gianni Versace. For the occasion, the most famous top models who wore his clothes, Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Claudia Schiffer, Carla Bruni and Helena Christensen, all rigorously dressed in Oroton sweaters, do not fail to pay homage to him.

### **6.16. Multicolor - Emilio Pucci**

Emilio Pucci is the Italian designer who has made color his distinctive feature through which he has been able to introduce light-heartedness and *joie de vivre* into fashion. Sportsman, adventure lover, honored with medals [34], stylist, politician, heir to one of the most important families in Florence, he approaches the world of fashion almost by chance thanks to a fortuitous coincidence. In fact, in 1947, on the Swiss snows of Zermatt, the well-known photographer Toni Frissel immortalised the unaware designer together with a friend for whom he had specially designed a ski suit. The

success was such and immediate that the following year, in Harper's Bazaar magazine, his first collection appeared.

His creations, essential in lines, elegant in the designs of polychromatic fabrics, sometimes optical [35], but always characterized by fine fabrics, earned him the nickname "The Prince of Prints" [36]. While the world of Haute Couture looks to Christian Dior's New Look, to the elegance of his structured, *corolla* dresses, squeezed at the waist, Emilio Pucci prefers to move towards a comfortable style of clothing, with soft lines and bright colors, thus anticipating sportswear fashion. The collaboration with the textile industries is also significant and profitable, allowing him to be the first to experience the potential of stretch fabrics, which well embody his idea of beauty generated by freedom of movement and lightness. His chromatic vein will then seal his success. Energetic, reinforced by a skilful and sophisticated taste for using color, it undoubtedly draws inspiration from the vivid colors of the Mediterranean and exotic landscapes. His skill and sensitivity allow him to combine and harmonize different shades, passing from more or less bright greens to aquamarine blues, to then get to the gradations of yellows, pinks and lavender shades declined in cobalt blue and at times invigorated by black and/or white strokes. After a few years, in 1954, in America, the official consecration arrives with the assignment of the "Neiman-Marcus Award" and puccimania spreads everywhere, it inevitably arrives among the famous personalities of the jet set with actresses such as Marilyn Monroe, Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida but does not spare even the first lady Jackie Kennedy.

### **6.17. Multicolor - Missoni**

The homonymous brand was born in 1953 from the artistic and non-artistic partnership of Ottavio Missoni and Rosita Jelmini. With them knitwear, previously innovated and brought closer to fashion thanks to illustrious precedents such as Luisa Spagnoli [37] and Elsa Schiapparelli, enters fully into fashion, confirming the Missoni brand as a leader in the luxury knitwear sector. The brand is immediately recognizable thanks to the kaleidoscopic use of color, a use that has its deepest roots in the artistic avant-gardes that characterised the early twentieth century. The artistic references range from the abstract art of Kandinsky, Klee to the geometric one, made of pure colors, by Sonia Delaunay to continue with the futurist movement of Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini. It is by operating in this context that the Missonis mature their distinctive mark based on the use of multicolor geometric combinations. Zigzag motifs, waves, twists, patchwork, made of pure colors, wisely mixed, and of continuous research

and experimentation that has been able to interpret the world of knitwear in an ever new and innovative way over the years. Wearing a Missoni designed dress is therefore equivalent to wearing a color that's become material that takes its shape almost as if it were molded directly onto the body, continuously weaving these aesthetic references borrowed from art that becomes with them true art applied to the fashion system.

## **7. Manufacturing quality and originality of creation**

### **7.1. Creativity**

Creativity, according to the rules conforming with the etymological interpretation of the term itself, tends to express the capacity of reason and imagination to work together in design projects.

According to J.P. Guilford, the founder of studies on creative intelligence (in studies which suggest the need to develop diagnostic tools capable of individuating, in particular during youth, the dynamic and expressive aptitudes which are omitted in the intellectual process as it is evaluated by the tests normally used), creativity is characterized by nine principal factors:

a particular sensibility to problems

a capacity to produce ideas

flexibility of principles

originality in forming ideas

a capacity for synthesis

a capacity to define and structure one's ideas in new ways

experience and knowledge

a capacity for evaluating.

Among the most important traits of creativity for educational purposes, and, as a consequence, for social ends, are curiosity or the disposition to wonder, inventiveness, the capacity to personalize one's experiences, to reconfigure the knowledge one has acquired.

It is generally believed that the capacities normally listed under the concept of creativity are not traits held exclusively by geniuses or by talented people, but, rather, that each person, to a different degree, possesses them potentially.

Schumpeter, the great Austrian sociologist- economist, affirmed that the true entrepreneurial function lay in innovation and creativity, not in the possession of capital; he therefore predicted that at the origin of competition one would find creativity and competitiveness, not a price war; today these views are found to correspond increasingly to reality.

Surely, without some originality in the initial ideas, new products would be nothing more than corrected revisiting of existing products. But "creativity

must be thought of not just as a source, but in a broader fashion, as a fertile ground on which a process occurs which leads to innovation." It is indispensable, not only for stylists, designers, and art directors, but for anyone working in a factory or company. A few decades ago, the traditional company system featured a relative stability in terms of its markets, technology, and competition: the objective was to maintain this routine. Today, creativity is needed in order to develop new products and processes, to conceive effective marketing strategies, to launch new, winning sales campaigns, to find new solutions to ever more complex and rapidly evolving external challenges.

Placing creativity at the service of research and technological innovation can represent a valid and indispensable strategic factor for success in the textile sector and for fashion in particular. One can verify that the creative and innovative aspects in the textile sector, through the conception of new products, is acquiring a decidedly strategic role for companies. It is to the planning activities of designers that companies are entrusting in greater measure the spread and development of innovation in all strategic forms, both in those planned and in those unforeseen by marketers. By giving them shape, planning designers render concrete some possibility for transferring an innovation into a usable resource, and they are capable of bringing together aesthetics, technology, and marketing, and of coordinating the various company charges toward a common objective.

## **7.2. The Italian Manner**

In matters of design and related activities, Italy is a world center of innovation, a particular node of the global network of relations from which, for some reason, *the new* is generated. On the other hand, we may observe that the creation of the new always results from a complex, in many ways unrepeatable alchemy. It is always the fruit of a particular context which came to be over time as the stratification of an unpredictable plurality of events. It is the product of a set of interactions which have given rise to a particular *system*.

Within this general setting, the system's specific and individuating aspects may be traced back to an original intertwining of diverse polarities. A dynamic equilibrium — conflict-riddled but rather productive — between business and culture, between the individuals and community, and between local and global.

To speak of textile design in Italy means making reference to a particular mix of people, institutions, and places, all interacting: a varied assemblage of professionals, but with its theorists, artists, and communicators; of

manufacturing companies, publishing ventures and craftsmanship, of centers of cultural promotion and centers of technological innovation (such as universities).

This is precisely the essence of this varied network of interactions which generates a context suited to making Italy, in particular, a unique center of innovation.

Indeed, it is just because doing design has been an activity so constantly exposed to multiple stimulations that a city such as Milan has revealed itself to be such an extraordinary laboratory of ideas.

The intertwining of business and culture, of higher technology and widespread craftsmanship, between individual entrepreneurship and team work are typically Italian facts: "Italian character" is not merely a geographic label, it is rather the expression of a complex historical narrative (local and unrepeatable) from which emerges the uniqueness (and so the originality) of its creations.

Italian design, as we have mentioned, is an open system (today it includes international professionals and companies), crossed by the most heterogeneous flows of information (as part of economic and cultural globalization), stimulated by all of the great dynamic factors (demographic, technological, economic, cultural) which distinguish contemporary societies. Indeed, as we have already observed, for a series of fortuitous events, it offers a mode of existence which prefigures the operative and cultural models, at the same time local and global, which are currently being spoken of as the most original expression of the contemporary world. It would seem contradictory to speak of material innovation for companies in textiles for interior decoration and, in particular, for fashion.

The Italian manner of innovating is founded above all on research and on creativity and it has developed a cultural technique which is much closer to the logic of a craftsman's workshop than to those of great industry, even though behind the majority of the products of this sector there lies extensive research into technology and materials, which is of some relevance in explaining the success this industry has enjoyed in international markets.

This innovation is not ostentatious, however, being composed of many small inventions introduced "from product to product" and not of "once-off" innovations, as happens in big industry.

This way of creating innovation, based on a territorially widespread technical potential which is hardly ever the exclusive possession of a single company, has grown and developed thanks to a network of small and medium-sized companies, working in specialized areas and often organized in

integrated districts. They are microsegments of a vaster production, halfway between an artisan's shop and a factory, capable of constantly bringing forth innovations thanks to the fact that they have small, flexible plants.

The overall system which is its outgrowth is capable of switching between industrial modes of production and artisanal ones so that it can produce large numbers of "hand-made" products so as to endow, on the one hand, an industrial product made in large numbers with the quality of high-level craftsmanship, and on the other hand to offer industrial prices even for limited series pieces.

This wholly Italian manner of introducing innovation chooses, both by necessity and by choice, to invent on its own the technical solutions it requires in order to adapt new technologies to its aesthetics and practices, and not the way round.

Never does one find the complete acceptance of what technology offers, rather, we find an intuitive capacity to seize its innovative potential so as to reinterpret it according to the material innovation of the Italian interior decoration industry.

Materials, technology, and manufacturing processes, taken together, constitute the essential contribution which manufacturing companies make to the complex and fascinating, wholly Italian itinerary which, from a designer's innovative idea, leads to a finished product, that is to say, their contribution to textile design.

In reality, this propensity for innovation is the peculiar characteristic of our small and medium-sized companies. It is due to the happy coexistence of various factors: a traditional competitiveness, the immersion in a society and an environment made to respond to ever more stringent quality requirements, to the fact that each company works as part of an integrated production cycle, with ties both upstream and downstream, and laterally, and with a higher degree of specialization.

Now just as one cannot speak of an Italian style in decoration or in fashion we cannot speak of an Italian style of innovation, but simply of a common logic for the greater part of these firms: constant research. Italian textile firms in fashion design are used to shouldering the burden of research. They know that to get from the birth of an idea to its translation into a high-quality industrial product requires enormous investments and an indispensable propensity to experimentation, that curiosity, a capacity to adapt to changes, and industrial inventiveness are all needed.

A high aesthetic level remains an element which cannot be forgone in luxury goods, but what marks the difference is the capacity to express one's personality in two elements: narrative and comfort.

Luxury is increasingly acquiring the features of luxury cocooning.

Thus it is clear why the world of fashion design is rediscovering with renewed interest these textile components which it had for too long forgotten in a superficial leveling rejection of decoration in general and, more often, because of a lack of acquaintance by designers with textile materials.

The pervasive rapport with the technical-informational element, cold and detached, is being counterbalanced by an increased pleasure in and desire for the past, for traditional things, fibers and traditional materials, fabric which rediscover decorative elements from history and local culture. These values assume a greater relevance in every aspect of daily life as one's garment becomes ever more the area for warm interaction between technology and tradition. In this context, the Italian manner of innovating appears entirely strategically appropriate.

Innovation represents the conclusive, fundamental phase of a process of economic and technological growth of a firm initiated by an invention and later defined thanks to its development. The modalities with which innovation emerges vary: a new product, a new productive process, new forms of industrial and financial organization, new outlet markets, new raw materials and semi-finished products.

As an external variable, innovation is not subordinated to economic trends. It follows, instead, its own development; it often becomes a propulsive factor which guarantees additional profit to the entrepreneur-innovator, although as the innovation is imitated by other economic players, the additional profit margin will be eroded in the medium-long term.

The legislative framework prefigured for Italy in the last two years as regards the "protection of design", subsequent to the coming into force of law #95 of 2001, has changed considerably with respect to the past. The new law establishes a carefully updated juridical arrangement concerning new market dynamics, the production and diffusion of design products, including textiles. In addition, differently from the past, the legislation addresses industrial design specifically, thereby greatly reducing interpretive ambiguities which arose in the past because of having to generalize over different contexts in applying the law. Meanwhile, innovation is becoming the keystone of industrial competition. In this sense, design should be considered a powerful stimulus factor for the development of innovation in companies. We have observed how design research represents a characteristic and systemic element which is widespread throughout the firms, their activities, their actions, and the products of the system of Italian fashion industry.

The key words of this concept are natural ease, technology, luxury: a natural ease exalted in technology and sublimated in luxury. True luxury involves transmitting

by means of a precious object a sensation of genuine well-being and of closing in on one's own most intimate desires: the relation with the object aims at ensuring an improvement of the quality of one's life in perceptive and introspective terms.

The traditional technologies properly of the fashion sector are witnessing today new hybrids which associate indistinctly natural and artificial fabrics, with high-performance high-tech fabrics including bistretch fabrics, polyamidic fibres of great physical quality, with exceptional wearing properties and new expressive values. New finishes, beyond the classic coating, offer mixes with metal threads, pairings with translucent materials so as to obtain products with wonderful structural bearing and lighting possibilities.

### **7.3. The revisitation of textiles in schools of design**

In its traditional definition, textile design ties curtains to decorative patterns which industry renews through styling. Modern textile design, instead, is born from the efforts to find new materials which speak to the very nature of their components. These studies are directed at designing advanced textile products, including new materials, starting from new technologies and exploiting the intrinsic properties of these fibers. Modern textile design was born in the Bauhaus where, for the first time, attempts are made to mix within woven yarns materials with different expressive capacities (paper and cellophane, rayon and cotton, etc.) to try to create a material shock so that this new material would convey tension internally and not from the external addition of signs and decorations. It is through these experiments in textile "alchemy" that a glimpse is caught, for the first time, of the possibility of obtaining new, artificial materials whose technical aspects and expressive force may be controlled.

### **7.4. Industrial creativity upstream from the planned diversification of decoration**

Today a new relationship between industry and designers, more precisely between large industrial firms of raw materials and designers, is coming to light. The production of raw materials no longer coincides with the straightforward supply of raw material to transformation industry. Rather, it is evolving toward the concept of an "industry of services," in other words, toward a policy which tends to identify the great producers of raw materials with a center linking companies and providing them with information, a new service policy providing added value which serves as a guide through all the stages of the industrial market. Design is included among these services,



particularly as an activity of coordination and a provider of selected information for professional concerning transformation.

In this new kind of relationship, design, which had traditionally been tied to consumer goods, finds new avenues opening before it. This coordination work is no longer addressed to a single industry through direct designing projects, it is addressed to the whole transformation industry, by means of instruments or tools of coordination and work. For instance, in the textile market this type of activity involves planning information about colors, about new applications for textiles, and new quality levels reached in traditional products. The very organization of the world of textile industry makes it difficult to undertake research for new applications. This difficulty is increased by the ever present possibility of renewal based on a simple seasonal change of colors and decors. The textile industry has developed an agile mode of production, but one too often based on traditional business relationships. The presence of new materials opens new possibilities for production and new areas of study for designers.

### **7.5. Innovation**

Every innovation sinks roots into a past formed by research, studies, and experimentation.

"The soundest managers have discovered the importance of innovation to reaching success: estimates indicate that about 90% of the volume of sales in successful companies is formed by products which only ten years ago were unknown to the market. Even more impressive is the fact that in industrialized countries 45% of domestic product derives from creative research."

The requests for innovation which today's consumers make to firms is different from that of the past: what is new is considered more for its greater satisfaction of needs and for its problem-solving, rather than as a variation on a theme; the fashion manufacturers' answer has concentrated on employing newer and newer raw materials, enhanced by innovative finishes. We are in a period in which technical textile for fashion is clearly on the rise, and we are launched in the discovery of new products and markets, and this influences development and innovation in the field of textiles for fashion . Innovation is not based only on technology: although this last may play a very important role in the creation of added value for the client, not only as regards the product, but also for the organization which revolves around it.

## **7.6. Technology**

One of the most important characteristics of the system of textile firms for fashion to have emerged in the last few years is technological progress which has always influenced the greatest part of industrial sectors, leading to a genuine explosion of new products. Research in technology plays today an entirely different role from the one it had thirty years ago: product and process innovation continuously stimulate change, as well as being stimulated by them, in turn.

There is great sensitivity for all that the textile sector expresses of the contemporary world of which technology is surely one of the fundamental aspects: that notwithstanding, technology continues to be overlooked.

## **7.7. Research and development**

The effectiveness of a firm's innovation depends on the integration of its research and development with its marketing. Traditionally, the principal aims of R&D were to increase sales volume and, especially, to increase profits: today, these have been joined by the aim of meeting the demands of consumers. At the same time, the uniqueness of single products must be stressed since only brands and goods with a well-defined personality, with an image which is clearly distinct from its market alternatives, and with features that are difficult to reproduce are holding their own before the challenges of the present and the future: this is why firms often avail themselves of patents to protect their rights

## **8. Conflict of interest declaration**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## **9. Funding source declaration**

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### **Short biography of the author(s)**

**Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis.** Industrial Design honorary professor of the Politecnico di Milano, where he was Dean of the School of Design and Head of the Design Department. Chief and Senior Professor of Textile Design degree course and Manager of Fashion Design degree courses. He is one of the founders of the College of Design of the Politecnico and of the Interior Design PhD course. He lectured in many international universities.

**Angelo Sabbioni:** Architect and designer. After a period of work in architecture and design, he had worked (2001-2006) as fashion designer for primary word brands.

In 2005 he started teaching Textile and Fashion design at Politecnico di Milano. Since 2011 he has been the chief of the Fashion laboratory in Polimi and since the academic year 2006/2007 he is professor of Fashion Design at Politecnico di Milano.

## Notes

- [1] Optical Art, also known as Op Art, is an abstract art movement, linked to kinetic art movements. Born in the late fifties in Europe and the United States. Consecrated in 1965 with The Responsive Eyes exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, it will then develop in the seventies of the twentieth century.
- [2] 1960
- [3] We recall that at the time, black dresses, especially for women, were worn during periods of mourning.
- [4] Philosophical current born between the 18th and 19th centuries, then spread widely in the 20th century, which attributes a specific value to the individual. This current of philosophical thought has embraced various human cultural and social spheres, from literature to the arts, to costume, affirming the freedom of choice and the authenticity of existence.
- [5] Term coined to identify a youth subculture that flourished in the mid-1970s in the United States and the United Kingdom.
- [6] With the beginning of the relationship with Malcolm McLaren, destined to become the manager of the Sex Pistols, Vivienne Westwood starts to create the punk style in the seventies.
- [7] Film by director Mario Monicelli released in 1968 which sees Monica Vitti as the leading actress.
- [8] Developed in Italy during the World War II and in the immediate post-war period, neorealism was a cultural movement that had very relevant repercussions on contemporary cinema and sees among its major exponents Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica, Alberto Lattuada.
- [09] Famous Japanese designer, founder of the Comme des Garçons brand.
- [10] Defined as the poet of black
- [11] The exhibition "The white shirt according to me" was organized at the Palazzo Reale in Milan.
- [12] Damier canvas
- [13] Louis Vuitton died in Asnières-sur-Seine on 02/27/1892.
- [14] For the creation of this canvas it seems that Georges Vuitton was inspired, for the four-petaled flowers, by the famous majolica tiles of his family kitchen (made in the city of Gien).
- [15] The LV logo can be present in black and white colors or in their monochrome versions, but depending on the context, it can be supplied in other colors: brown and orange

- [16] Six different artists are involved in the design of this line: Karl Lagerfeld, Frank Gehry, Cindy Sherman, Marc Newson, Christian Louboutin and Rei Kawakubo.
- [17] 1837 is the year in which the first jewelry shop was inaugurated.
- [18] This is a shade of blue whose name derives directly from the color of the American robin's eggs.
- [19] Probably in those years he has the opportunity to see the growing success of Louis Vuitton products
- [20] The primary color is that color that cannot be reproduced by combining other shades with each other.
- [21] Complementary colors are pairs of colors that are diametrically opposed to each other in the color circle, such as blue and orange, yellow and purple, red and green. Each of these pairs of colors contains within itself the complete triad of primary colors and they are often used next to each other, because from this combination they enhance each other, reaching the maximum of their communicative strength. For this reason they are often used in design, product graphics and marketing campaigns
- [22] Green is a secondary color that is obtained by mixing in equal parts two primary colors, blue and yellow
- [23] Vogue called the trompe l'oeil sweaters an "absolute masterpiece" and they soon became the brand's best sellers.
- [24] It is with the skeleton dress, created in 1938, that the Americans remember and still call Elsa Schiaparelli "Skeleton Dress" today.
- [25] In her autobiography (*Shocking Life*, 1954 - Author: Schiaparelli Elsa Donzelli), Elsa Schiaparelli defined her beloved Shocking pink in this way.
- [26] Madam Lanvin was the first to have a color with her own name.
- [27] Soft tonality dedicated to her daughter Marie-Blanche de Polignac
- [28] Other neutral colors are for example milky white and ivory.
- [29] Other variations of neutrals tending to light brown are beige and ecru.
- [30] Giorgio Armani S.p.A. is an Italian company founded in 1975 by Giorgio Armani and his partner Sergio Galeotti.
- [31] Giorgio Armani quote from the Vogue article, 8 October 2020, written by Selene Oliva Greige of Giorgio Armani, the elegant and timeless color - Vogue <https://www.vogue.it/moda/gallery/giorgio-armani-greige-color-fashion-elegant-timeless-look-photo>
- [32] Maison Chanel in 2010 chose this shade too: greige, as the ideal color of its Particuliere enamel
- [33] As a lover of metal mesh in collaboration with a German craftsman, he creates the Oroton, a metal mesh able to follow the features of the body, giving it the feeling of being immersed in gold.
- [34] After the Second World War he was awarded the War Cross for military valor and three Silver Medals for military valor.
- [35] In the 1950s, inspired by Optical Art, he created the first summer collection in black and white and again in those years he began to develop his prints signed with his own name "Emilio".
- [36] The title: "prince of prints" was coined by the British press

[37] In 1928 Luisa Spagnoli founded the Angora Spagnoli company, experimenting with an innovative system for processing angora wool.