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**Between Art and Fashion.
The World of Roberto Capucci.**

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Matteo Bertelé

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof.ssa Federica Maria Giovanna Timeto

Graduand

Valentina Lava
857852

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Abstract

Before the rise and popularisation of *prêt-à-porter* and the mass production of fashion products, the couture system was inhabited by the artisanal figure of the tailor.

Roberto Capucci is a symbol of that period. He has always represented an example of a fashion designer who dedicated most of his career not to the rules of branding or entrepreneurship, but rather to a free expression of his artistry, creating iconic designs that reflected his artistic background by being inspired or by following specific art movements. This creative journey led him to the creation of his fabric sculptures, making him the *trait d'union* between art and fashion.

Indeed, the purpose of the present thesis is to study the career of Master Capucci, analysing the different phases of his creative production. After an introductory study of the history of Italian fashion in the 1940s and 1950s, the figure of Roberto Capucci is introduced. The analysis will be done both chronologically and thematically, discussing the important decades for his artistic connections, and two key elements of his dresses: forms and colours. Particular attention will be given to his effective entrance into the art world when he began to be invited to exhibit in the most prestigious museums. The study is enriched by the memories of the *Maestro*, collected in an interview given for this research, and by historical materials, some of which unpublished, held at the archives of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Italian fashion in the 1940s and 1950s	6
1.1. Wartime fashion	6
1.2. Fashion reborn: the French dominance in the postwar years	9
1.3. The emergence of Italian fashion	13
1.4. Giovanni Battista Giorgini and the Italian fashion Renaissance at the Sala Bianca in Florence	20
1.5. Roberto Capucci: the rising star of Italian fashion	28
2. Roberto Capucci and the early stages of his creativity	35
2.1. The Parisian period (1962-1968)	35
2.2. The Roman homecoming (1968) and the bloom of experimentation (1968-1979)	48
2.3. The search for volume of a silk sculptor	59
2.4. A new approach to colour	63
3. Capucci in the art world	70
3.1. Roberto Capucci as Leporello in Mozart's Don Giovanni: the liberation from his service for the fashion industry	70
3.2. The very first exhibition, <i>Roberto Capucci, l'Arte nella Moda: Volume, Colore, Metodo</i> , Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze (1990)	73
3.3. Fabric sculptures at the Venice Biennale (1995)	75
3.4. The never born project: <i>Capucci&Cucchi</i> (2008)	86
3.5. Plissé in <i>Mariani chez Capucci</i> , Villa Bardini, Florence (2016)	89
3.6. An inside look at <i>Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma</i> , Triennale di Milano (2021)	96
4. The worlds art and fashion	107
4.1. The heated debate on art and fashion	107
4.2. The relationship of the two words in Roberto Capucci	115
Conclusion	121
Appendix A	122
Appendix B	125
Appendix C	130
Appendix D	135
Appendix E	149

Appendix F	155
Appendix G	167
Appendix H	175
Appendix I	177
Bibliography	181
Web references	189
Video references	193

Introduction

The relationship between fashion and art and fashion seen as art began in the nineteenth century when, the French *couturier* Paul Poiret (1879-1944) defined himself as an artist¹. This bond furtherly developed the following century, when artists dissatisfied with the fashion of their time, began designing their own clothes². A remarkable example is Elsa Schiaparelli collaboration with the Surrealists as in the case of her *Tear* dress (1938) or the *Skeleton* dress (1938) both designed together with Salvador Dalí; the first one referred to his painting *Three Young Surrealists Women Holding in Their Arms the Skin of an Orchestra* (1936), where the figures were depicted with torn flesh, while the second connects to Dalí's exploration of the skeleton³. During the history of fashion, however, there had also been tailors who saw fashion as the mean through which express their art and Roberto Capucci is one of them.

This research, indeed, wants to analyse the career of the Italian tailor Roberto Capucci, studying its phases both chronologically and thematically, and focusing on its connection to the art world, through inspirations or adhesion to art movements, as well as his effective entrance into the art world with the exhibitions to him dedicated.

The present study is divided into four chapters. The first one outlines the history of Italian fashion analysing its development from the postwar years, a period in which it was deeply suffering. From the economical point of view it was challenged by restrictions and shortenings, while, creatively, with the closure of many Parisian ateliers the couture world lost its pole⁴. Indeed, French fashion had always dominated and ruled Italian fashion⁵, until the Marquis Giovanni Battista Giorgini fought to create an Italian style independent from any influence. On 12th February 1951, was held in his Florentine Villa Torrigiani the first edition of the Italian High Fashion Show, where he offered to American buyers presentations of few fashion houses, among which,

¹ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l'Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, edited by M. Pedroni and P. Volonté, Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012, pp. 51-68, here p. 61.

² S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, in "Fashion Theory", 2:1, 11, 2015, pp. 51-71, here p. 53.

³ *The Surreal Fashion of Elsa Schiaparelli*, Victoria and Albert Museum, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Chnd04WsPfk&t=153s> [last access 6 February 2022].

⁴ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 6.

⁵ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, Roma: Carocci editore, 2012, p.15.

Sorelle Fontana, Emilio Pucci and Germana Marucelli⁶. It was in its second edition, in July 1951, that Giorgini also launched a rising star of Italian fashion: the twenty-one years old academy of fine arts graduate Roberto Capucci⁷.

The second chapter illustrates more thoroughly the career of the Roman tailor after his entrance in the fashion world. Its aim is to give deserved attention to two decades that strongly influenced the creative identity of the Maestro, in particular to the 1960s, a crucial period of his career, that led to a creative incubation that would bloom in the following years. Indeed, this decade was characterised by his abandonment of the Italian High Fashion Show events, opening his *maison* in Paris in 1962⁸. In the years in which couture was accused of being old-fashioned and in which Paris fell under the influence of London fashion trends, particularly addressed to the younger generations⁹, the fashion world was strongly influenced by the cultural movements of the period¹⁰. In particular by art movements, one above all the Op art¹¹. Even Capucci fell under its influence, creating unique designs where he created and experimented new techniques and materials, from the weaving of silk ribbons to phosphorescent bead-embroideries up to the use of plastic. However, his Parisian interlude lasted only six years and in 1968 he returned to his beloved Rome. Those were though years for his production, as working in a world always more chained to the rules of the market he did not feel free to express his creative identity¹², but it was his experience as a costume designer that freed him from that moment of melancholy and discomfort. By designing the costumes of Silvana Mangano in *Teorema* (1968) he found in her his muse and the ideal femininity¹³. After this experience, Capucci felt reconnected with his genius and started to act against the common rules that characterised the fashion world of the period, always more influenced by the spread of *prêt-à-porter*. His idea of

⁶ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2011, p.11.

⁷ R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, in *La Sala Bianca. Nascita della Moda Italiana*, edited by G. Vergani, Milano: Electa, 1992, pp. 15-25, here p.22.

⁸ Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Bibliography, <https://fondazionerobertocapucci.it/en/the-artist/biography/> [last access 13 September 2021].

⁹ J. Lobenthal, *Radical Rags. Fashion of the Sixties*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1990, p. 41.

¹⁰ Ivi., p.49.

¹¹ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., pp. 204-205.

¹² L. Bentley Lessona, *Italian Designer Sights End of High-Fashion Era*, in "Christian Science Monitor", 3 August 1971, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970-71.

¹³ G. L. Bauzano, *Roberto Capucci. Sperimentatore al di là del Tempo*, in *Roberto Capucci. Creatività al di là del Tempo*, exhibition catalogue (Venezia, Tese Cinquecentesche, Arsenale, 13-27 February 2001) edited by G. L. Bauzano, Milano: Skira, 2001, pp. 17-28, here p. 24.

independence met the belief proper of the Arte Povera movement where artists felt not free to act as artists, but they were just cogs part on the mechanism of mass production. So, adhering to the ideas of the movement, Capucci began to use uncommon materials as pebbles, straw, bamboo and rafia, creating unique and unconventional dresses. In this chapter will be analysed also two major themes characterizing the artistic production of Roberto Capucci, as volume and colours. The first explores his journey to achieve architectural structures and plastic definition; indeed as stages of the trip, the first is his choice of material, of silk, as his creative mean and with which, thanks to the particular techniques used, he was able to explore and experiment with volumes and structures as he did in the *Linea a Scatola* (1958) which earned him the Filene's Young Talents Award in 1958¹⁴. Secondly, his evolution in the use of colour is introduced. Relevant is his trip to India in 1970¹⁵; before this year he used to create monochromatic designs while this trip seemed to have freed and legitimized his love for colour, creating dresses with contrasting hues. As a matter of fact, his production can be divided into two different groups for his use of shades of the same tone as well as the combination of different colours.

If the previous chapters have dealt with the career of Master Capucci in the couture world, the third chapter studies his entrance into the art world. Indeed, his disillusionment after his return in Rome in 1968 slowly lead him to a detachment from the fashion system ending with his withdrawal from the calendar of the National Chamber of Italian Fashion in 1980¹⁶. From that year on, he presented his collections only when ready and in the most appropriate venues¹⁷. He also received invitations from museums that did not expose *couture*¹⁸. Despite his participation and organization of various exhibitions in Italy and worldwide, this chapter will discuss only a few of them, as the most relevant for his career. The first one to be discussed is *Roberto Capucci, l'Arte nella Moda – Volume, Colore, Metodo* held at Palazzo Strozzi, in Florence, in 1990. Such event is of much importance as, in Capucci's timeline, it

¹⁴ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 32.

¹⁵ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 22 November 2021, Codroipo.

¹⁶ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, Istituto Luce Cinecittà, 2019, DVD.

¹⁷ G.L. Bauzano, 1951. *C'era una Volta a Firenze*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, edited by G. L. Bauzano, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2018, pp. 27-39, here p. 39.

¹⁸ E. Minio Capucci, *Tesori Custoditi per il Futuro*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 263–266, here pp. 263.

represents his effective entrance into the art world, as it was the first exhibition to be completely dedicated to his work, tributing his career and creativity¹⁹. 1995 also signed a milestone for Capucci, as he was the first tailor to present at the Venice Biennale²⁰. Such event was crucial not only for his career in the art world but also for his production, as he here developed the quintessence of his creativity, designing such hyperbole of clothes as the twelve fabric sculptures²¹. Despite his presence unleashed many critics from the art world, thanks to Jean Clair's invitation, his career was here consecrated and fashion began to be seen, in its wider sense, as a creative practice on par with all the art forms there exposed²². This following part of the third chapter does not discuss about a realised exhibit, but is rather an unpublished analysis of a study realised by Capucci for an exhibition that should have been done together with the Italian painter Enzo Cucchi in 2008. Although the project never saw the light, the Roman tailor meticulously draw more than a hundred sculptures that should have dialogued together with the creations of the painter. The last two exhibitions to be treated are about artistical conversations, in the first case, between Capucci and an artist, Umberto Mariani, in which their medium was plisse, one of the key features of the production of Capucci, and a *manifattura*, in the second case.

The fourth, and last chapter, deals with the relationship between the two worlds of fashion and art; its aim is not to give an ultimate answer to the question on whether fashion should be considered art, but rather to illustrate the controversies that always characterised this debate. Finally, will be discussed this relationship in Capucci, posing attention to the elements that prove how his work is considered as a form of art.

From the methodological point of view, this research aimed at giving an in-depth analysis on the work of Roberto Capucci, relying on qualitative data both collected primarily and by external studies on the topic. Much of the primary resources used were collected during an internship at the Fondazione Roberto Capucci in Codroipo; here, thanks to the work done, it was possible to research and study many testimonials from historical press articles held in the Historical Press archive of the Foundation.

¹⁹ D. Pardo, *Taglio d'Artista*, in "L'Espresso", 10 December 1989, pp.95-97, here p.97, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1989-1990.

²⁰ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A.

²¹ Roberto Capucci, *Nessun Segreto. La Libertà*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 11–14, here pp. 12-13.

²² *Ivi.*, p.13.

Furthermore, together with the performed task of digitalizing many collection sketches from the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as seeing many of the dresses Capucci created over the years, it was possible to deeply understand his use of colour, a theme discussed in chapter two. This internship also allowed the study of the drawings sketched by the Maestro for the drafted project of *Capucci&Cucchi* (2008), contributing to new knowledge on the topic. By working together with Enrico Minio Capucci, the Director of the Foundation, and Paolo Alvisè Minio, manager of the historical archive, as well as both nephews of the artist; it was possible to discuss with them about periods of the career of the Roman tailor not deeply discussed in existing studies, as his Parisian period and some aspects of the following years after his Roman homecoming; all topics part of the second chapter.

The analysis is enriched by the memories of the Maestro, collected in an interview given for this research. The questions were sent by email and directly asked to the Maestro by the Foundation. The answers given were of great importance for this research as they gave to it the personal opinion of the *couturier* about different aspects of his career, from his research of volumes to his connection to artworks. Together with the above stated interview, this thesis also contains a study on Capucci's latest exhibition held at the Triennale Milano from November to January 2021, to which, during my internship, I witnessed the final stages of its organization and had the opportunity to select few among the collection sketches that had been displayed.

The secondary resources include, for its majority, catalogues of Capucci's past exhibitions, held in Ca' Foscari and IUAV University libraries as well as in the Centro Studi della Storia del Tessuto, del Costume e del Profumo in Palazzo Mocenigo, in the library of Fondazione Roberto Capucci and in the open online library Internet Archive. In addition to these, research articles and online websites were also consulted.

1. Italian fashion in the 1940s and 1950s

1.1. Wartime fashion

The outbreak of the Second World War brought many changes. Due to the military war necessities many industries were converted into the production of war supplies, leading to shortenings and restrictions in the use of everyday materials such as metals or fabrics.

From the beginning of the conflict onward the fashion world faced a huge crisis too. Among European countries, France was the one which suffered the most. In 1940, with the occupation of Paris by the Nazis, many fashion houses as Chanel or Vionnet were closed; not mentioning that many ready-made clothing industries were run by Jewish families²³. Parisian couture had always been renown for the fine quality of its models and the elegance that only French couturiers could create, making it a rich catch for the regime that wanted to move Paris' couture to Berlin²⁴. Just thanks to the efforts of Lucien Lelong (1889-1958), the president of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*, Parisian high fashion stayed under French control²⁵. According to the Nazis' plan, the whole system of couture houses would move to Germany with the intent to train the new generation of German dressmakers, in order to make Berlin the new capital of haute couture²⁶. Lelong pointed out that French fashion was made up by a network of artisanal workshops and small satellite ateliers, each of them contributing to the realization of each garment²⁷. It was unthinkable to transfer the whole fashion system to Germany, in spite the fact that it would have taken decades for German tailors to achieve Parisian *savoir-faire*.

Despite the victory of France over Nazi's intention to germanize the haute couture capital, the Germans succeeded in controlling and censoring many fashion magazines, while also redirecting couture workers into other industrial sectors²⁸.

²³ V. Steele, *Paris Fashion. A Cultural History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.268.

²⁴ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, cit., 1997, p.5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ L. Grant, *Lucien Lelong. The Man Who Saved Paris. Where Would French Fashion Be Without Lucien Lelong? Probably in Berlin, that's Where. Linda Grant on the Dressmaker Who Stood Up to Nazis – and Won*, 21 November 2008, <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG3497094/Lucien-Lelong-the-man-who-saved-Paris.html> [last access 8 June 2021].

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1997, p.5.

In spite of the closure of many ateliers, few couture houses remained open, producing about a hundred dresses a year to satisfy Nazi's wives and to be exported to Germany²⁹. What characterized these surviving collections was their extravagant and flamboyant style, where dresses had a tight waist, full and long skirts; probably taking inspiration by the historical film dramas of the period as Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939). At the end of the war, many French tailors tried to justify themselves for these extravagant trends, by saying that their intention was to ridicularize Germans making them look absurd³⁰. Others said that they just wanted to build up an image, in order to spread the idea that everything was as it was in the past and rather than cutting down the use of fabric or making less dramatic decorations, they preferred to reduce the number of models to be produced³¹.

Even though France never seemed to be subject to restrictions, national control and shortages were very common in many other European countries. In addition, due to the lack of fabrics and the war demand of some materials as silk or leather, many State regulations were enacted, such as the British Restriction Orders and the American Regulation L-85; both limiting the meters of fabrics to be used, as well as the number of pockets, buttons or pleats³². On the other hand, in Italy, the Fascist regime tried to minimize any war hardship, stating that the fashion sector had to be supported³³. Women had to just readapt their fashion expenses to the new war conditions but did not have to cut them off completely³⁴. Similarly, Italian fashion magazines continued to publish idyllic issues on ball gowns and evening outfits; but only in 1941, with the worsening of the war, the regime introduced a clothes rationing system based on coupons. Each citizen, had their own card on the base of their age and gender, and each garment was given a value expressed in vouchers according to the quantity of fabric and the overall hours spent to produce the item,³⁵.

With the scarcity of raw materials, the economic hardships and the Governmental control the fashion world was suffering, both economically and creatively.

²⁹ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, cit., p. 5.

³⁰ V. Steele, *Paris Fashion. A Cultural History*, cit., p. 267.

³¹ Ibid.

³² V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion: New Look to Now*, cit., p. 6.

³³ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.101.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ivi, p. 102.

Furthermore, with the occupation of Paris, haute couture lost its focus and foreign stylists were left on their own devices, as well as having to go blind as they had no more models to copy and repropose.

If in the pre-war era women were used to the opulence of furs, pearls and high-quality dresses created to make them look elegant and to enhance their beauty, they now had to get accustomed to new trends. The war silhouette consisted in squared torso jackets, padded shoulders and knee-length skirts³⁶. These uniform-like suits were made with poor materials, sometimes even recycled ones as they were tailored with curtains and blankets or by recutting and fitting some old men's clothes³⁷.



Ill. 1 - U.S. Vogue cover showing a typical suit in wartime, 1 March 1943, courtesy of Vogue Archives.

It should also be remembered that women had a leading role during the conflict as they replaced men's position in factories, producing war supplies among other things. Many women military corps were also founded, like the American Women's Army Corps (WACS)³⁸. This active female role in society led to the creation of the image of women soldiers and here fashion played a major role. During the daytime they wore uniforms or overalls, while for their free time, dresses were replaced by man-like suits. War

³⁶ Ivi., p.103.

³⁷ Ivi., p.104.

³⁸ K. Mulvey, M. Richards, *Decades of Beauty. The Changing Image of Women 1890s 1990s*, New York: Checkmark Books, 1998, p.100.

trends made female fashion austere, cold, gloomy and unfeminine, making women look like amazons.

1.2. Fashion reborn: the French dominance in the postwar years

The years immediately after the Second World War were a flourishing period for the fashion world. Life was slowly beginning anew and after the war rationings and the economic hardships, people wanted to forget the horrors of the conflict by starting new life and clothes were a reflection of this new beginning.

With the Liberation of Paris in August 1944, the city finally had its freedom back and French couture reemerged from the Nazi ashes, relaunching fashion industry as the fundamental sector for the national economy. In 1945 the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne* approved to showcase the vitality and enchantment of Parisian tailoring abilities with the itinerant project named the *Théâtre de la Mode*³⁹. Structured as a miniature theatre exhibiting a series of small size dolls, it grouped together the greatest French artists of the time. Set design was curated by Jean Cocteau and Christian Bérard, while the 237 small *maquettes*⁴⁰ were dressed, among many, by Elsa Schiaparelli, Hermès, Cristóbal Balenciaga and Christian Dior, who at the time was working at Lelong's atelier⁴¹. Supported by the Ministry of Reconstruction, the exhibit also wanted to give work to those artisans whose activity had stopped with the outbreak of the war⁴². Designers were accordingly assisted by milliners, hairdressers and jewelers as Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels⁴³. Debuting on 25th March 1945 the show

³⁹ V. Steele, *Paris Fashion. A Cultural History*, cit., p. 272.

⁴⁰ Miniature mannequins. Inspired by the *poupée de mode*, originally used in France during the Fourteenth century as ambassadress of the current fashion trends.

⁴¹ O. Hosken, *The Secret History of the Dolls that Inspired Dior's Couture Collection. Seventy Years After its Creation in the Aftermath of World War II, the Miniature Théâtre de la Mode Remains an Exquisite Example of Creativity and Resilience*, 14 July 2020, <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/style/fashion-trends/a33299889/dior-couture-2020-theatre-de-la-mode/> [last access on 29 May 2021].

⁴² I. Maselli, *Lucien Lelong and the Théâtre de la Mode. The Preservation of Haute Couture During Wartime*, in "Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development", 09, 2018, pp.129-137, here p. 130.

⁴³ O. Hosken, *The Secret History of the Dolls that Inspired Dior's Couture Collection. Seventy Years After its Creation in the Aftermath of World War II, the Miniature Théâtre de la Mode Remains an Exquisite Example of Creativity and Resilience*, cit.

proved to be a success; with 100.000 visitors⁴⁴, it was then repropsoed around Europe touring in London, Leeds, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Vienna and even New York⁴⁵.

It was in those years of reconstruction that many couturiers started their career in fashion; one above all was Christian Dior (1905-1957), who can be considered not only the patron of contemporary French couture but also the main European representative of the rebirth of fashion in the post-war period.

Following an unsuccessful career as an art gallerist and a brief experience as a fashion designer at the atelier of the Swiss couturier Robert Piguet first and at Lucien Lelong then, and thanks to the patronage of the French textile industrialist Marcel Boussac, Dior opened his atelier in 1946⁴⁶.

In his first haute couture show held in Paris on 12th February 1947 he presented a revolutionary collection: after the khaki monochromatic war years, on that occasion Dior reintroduced pink and patterns as a way to express the return to the former abundance⁴⁷. With his *Corolle* and *Le Bar* lines and their slim waists and full-skirted dresses he changed women fashion forever, sweeping away the austerity of the previous years.

After the show, Carmel Snow, America's "Harper's Bazaar" editor-in-chief applauded the designer by exclaiming "it's quite a revolution, dear Christian. Your dresses have

⁴⁴ I. Maselli, *Lucien Lelong and the Théâtre de la Mode. The Preservation of Haute Couture During Wartime*, cit., p. 133.

⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 134.

⁴⁶ *Christian Dior (1906-1957)*, 23 November 2015, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/christian-dior-1905-1957> [last access on 29 May 2021].

⁴⁷ *Dior. I Dieci Anni che Sconvolsero la Moda*, L. Prigent, Bangumi Deralf, 2018.

such a new look”⁴⁸. Without knowing, Snow coined the term that made Dior’s 1947 collection enter fashion history as the New Look⁴⁹.



Ill. 2 - Christian Dior, Bar Suit, Corolle Line, 1947, Haute Couture, Spring/Summer 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, photo credits Laziz Hamani.

As Monsieur Dior affirmed in his memoirs: “We were emerging from a period of war, of uniforms, of women-soldiers built like boxers. I drew women-flowers, soft shoulders, fine waists like liana and wide skirts like corolla”⁵⁰. Dior’s New Look was a tonic for post-war fashion; he was gifting women dresses that could make them feel feminine and opulent again, by conferring them a flower shape able to underline their figure.

The collection immediately became internationally famous. Women craved to wear a Dior design, but due to the high amount of fabric needed to make a dress, combined with the high prices of the raw materials, only European and American high societies could afford such expenses. Soon copies of Dior’s models started to be advertised in many countries at far lower prices, as \$24.95 in the U.S.⁵¹. Another reason for copying Dior’s dresses was that not all women could fit into the tight waists of the New Look⁵².

⁴⁸ A. Fury, *Dior. The Complete Collections*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2017, p.24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ C. Dior, *Christian Dior et Moi*, Paris: Bibliothèque Amiot-Dumont, 1956, p. 159.

⁵¹ V. Steele, *Paris Fashion. A Cultural History*, cit., p.275.

⁵² *Ivi.*, p.276.

The *femme fleur* created by Dior was not respecting the average measurements of many women of the time, as the classical 90-60-90 centimeters shape could not fit in such dresses⁵³. Only mannequins could wear Dior's suits and the copies were deliberately recreated in order to let women fit into them.

Dior's 1947 fashion show signed the return to power of French couture which proved to be able to dominate the world of fashion again. Aware of their innovations and of the international interest they attracted, French fashion houses began to further develop a licensing system they had originally ideated in the 1930s⁵⁴. In order to protect their models, French dressmakers started to introduce an entrance ticket in their shows. Indeed, buyers had to pay a deposit of half the price of a model, ranging from \$400 to \$1000⁵⁵ to see the collections. The fee was then credited when buying a specific garment or a *toile*⁵⁶ together with all the necessary information to recreate the model⁵⁷. Dior's dominance over global fashion never ceased as many consumers developed an obsession on the constantly changing trends proposed by Dior⁵⁸, as the risk was to immediately be outmoded.

Despite its success, Dior's flower-like silhouette was subject to a lot of criticism, especially by one of the most innovative fashion creators of the time. His modern reinterpretation of the 19th century fashion trends as the use of the corset and voluminous skirts horrified Coco Chanel. The designer who freed women from the strict tyranny of the corset and who introduced trousers in the female wardrobe⁵⁹, claimed that it was outrageous that the figure of the emancipated woman she strongly believed in, had to be canceled by models with an exaggerated hourglass shape⁶⁰.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, cit., p. 18.

⁵⁵ V. Steele, *Paris Fashion. A Cultural History*, cit., p.276.

⁵⁶ A basted outline of a dress generally made with economic fabrics. Thanks to its embryonic state it could be altered according to the preferences of the buyer.

⁵⁷ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, cit., p. 18.

⁵⁸ V. Steele, *Paris Fashion. A Cultural History*, cit., p.276.

⁵⁹V. Song, *The French Icon Who Revolutionised Women's Clothes*, 2 February 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20210201-the-french-icon-who-revolutionised-womens-clothes> [last access on 19 August 2021].

⁶⁰ M. Vignali, *Storia della Moda. Dior e New Look*, 9 May 2016, <https://www.alvufashionstyle.com/2016/05/09/storia-della-moda-dior-new-look-m-vignali/> [last access on 19 August 2021].

1.3. The emergence of Italian fashion

Since the reign of Luis XIV King of France, fashion has always been ruled by the francophone country⁶¹. Before Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895), the first couturier⁶², fashion trends had been dictated by nobles during their gatherings all over European courts⁶³.

It was only during the Italian Risorgimento that the first attempts to create an Italian fashion were made⁶⁴. However, despite the creation of the *Società italiana per l'emancipazione delle mode*⁶⁵ in 1872 nothing was really accomplished until the 20th century, when the debate on the creation of an Italian fashion was addressed in the International Exhibition in Milan in 1906, with the presentation of the dress *La Primavera* (1906) from the Italian tailor Rosa Genoni (1867-1954) and in the International Exhibition in Turin in 1911, with the creation of the *Palazzo della moda*, where the creations from the finest Turin fashion houses were displayed⁶⁶.

The 1920s marked the beginning of a strict fight against French couture. Indeed, on 19th March 1919 the *Primo congresso nazionale dell'industria del commercio e dell'abbigliamento* was held in Rome. Organised by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, its aim was twofold, on the one hand its main intention was to stop French dominance over Italian fashion, while on the other it implied the establishment of a national fashion body and a national institute of clothing which, in the end, were never founded⁶⁷. Nevertheless, even if the congress ended in a stalemate, it inspired one of the participants to further develop the idea of a national fashion independence.

The Italian journalist Lydia De Liguoro founded the magazine "LIDEL" in May 1919, its name stood for *Lettere, Illustrazioni, Disegni, Eleganze, Lavoro*. In the first release, she wrote that she wanted to offer to her country high quality artistic and aesthetic contents, as well as displaying the beautiful products of national dressmakers, making them known to the readers in order to stop the trade of imported fashion⁶⁸.

⁶¹ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.15.

⁶² Ivi., p. 17.

⁶³ Ivi., p. 15.

⁶⁴ Ivi., p.19.

⁶⁵ Ivi., p.20.

⁶⁶ Ivi., pp.20; 21.

⁶⁷ A. Malfitano, *Moda e Nazione. Lydia De Liguoro e la Creazione di "Lidel"*, 30 July 2016, <http://storiaefuturo.eu/moda-e-nazione-lydia-de-liguoro-e-la-creazione-di-lidel/> [last access 13 August 2021].

⁶⁸ *Programma e collaborazione* in "LIDEL", 5, 1919, p. 5.

Several years after, fashion became a concern for the fascist regime who wanted to boost domestic production of clothes while also promoting a national style. In 1932, Mussolini founded in Turin the *Ente autonomo per la mostra permanente nazionale della moda* which would then become the *Ente nazionale della moda* in 1934. By accomplishing one of the aims of the 1919's congress, Mussolini put the institution in charge of overseeing the fashion production through two biannual exhibitions and fashion shows⁶⁹. With the aim of promoting the national fashion industry, the body also persuaded Italian dressmakers to seek inspiration in their region of provenance, by including artisanal products typical of that area in their dresses; customs and folklore soon became a symbol of the true rural *italianità*⁷⁰.

While patriotically publicizing the domestic traditions through fashion, the regime was also purging the language from any foreign terminology, especially French, publishing in 1936 the *Commentario dizionario Italiano della moda* edited by Cesare Meano⁷¹. This campaign paved the way for a long process for Italian fashion that, after two decades, would then end up with a strong and renewed industry autonomous from the *couture Parisienne*.

Indeed, during the war, with the closure of many French boutiques and the consequent impossibility of importing their clothes, Italians witnessed the birth of the first national couturiers.

It is also important to note the American contribution to the rise of Italian fashion and its textile industry. The industrial poles of war-torn Italy had suffered from the bombardments even though the partisans succeeded in keeping the main factories from major devastation. Fortunately, the textile and fashion industries were the less damaged⁷². Thanks to American financial support from 1946 to 1947 the Italian industry, and in particular the textile one, registered a temporary small boom of production⁷³. Despite this in January 1947, the Italian Government asked the USA for financial assistance by entering in the European Recovery Plan, commonly known as the Marshall Plan. The aid played a crucial role in the Italian economic and industrial

⁶⁹ E. Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism. Beyond the Black Shirt*, Oxford: Berg, 2004, p. 21.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ivi., p.24.

⁷² N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p.10.

⁷³ Ivi., p. 13.

reconstruction, also favoring the development of the local economy⁷⁴. According to the fashion theorist Nicola White, Italy spent most of the given aid in refurbishing its industries with new and up-to date machineries⁷⁵. This also encouraged Italian industrialists to reorganize or open new companies, as thanks to the Marshall Plan, they had the necessary funds to purchase the needed tools; in addition, the costs of steel, energy and labour were low, while the war made trade unions almost powerless. The aid also helped to open up to new markets, especially with the U.S. To further encourage foreign trade the Italian government introduced import duties in 1950⁷⁶, protecting the national market while favoring the exports.

Especially for what regards fashion, Italy had always been strongly tied to the United States, as the latter found fascination in the fine Italian creations, as shown by all the fashion tours made around the US, as the 1958 promotional tour of Italian high fashion, where *alta moda* and boutique designs were shown in selected American cities, homes of the major department stores⁷⁷.

One of the elements that mostly attracted a rather young country as the United States was how ancient and full of history Italy was. This aspect is also linked to the presence of aristocracy in the Italian fashion world. In the post-war years, there were indeed two main types of dressmakers; the presence of aristocrats reinventing themselves as stylists can be added to the figure of the traditional tailor⁷⁸. Many aristocrats, suffering from financial crises caused by the war, found new opportunities in the fashion sector. Names as Marquis Emilio Pucci (1914-1992), Countess Gabriella di Robilant (1900-1999), Princess Irene Galitzine (1916-2006), Simonetta dei Duchi Colonna di Cesarò (1922-2011) and Princess Giovanna Caracciolo Ginnetti di Avellino (1910-1983), founder of Carosa, were aristocrats who were able to incorporate the Italian elegance, refinement and exclusivity in their creations, which helped to spread the Italian taste around the world.

⁷⁴M. Giorcelli, *Infrastructure, Development and the Marshall Plan*, 1 July 2020, <https://economics.ucla.edu/2020/07/01/infrastructure-development-and-the-marshall-plan/> [last access 30 June 2021].

⁷⁵ N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit., p. 14.

⁷⁶ Ivi., p. 17.

⁷⁷ Ivi., p. 31.

⁷⁸ Ivi., p. 38.

Among the previously cited couturiers, particularly relevant for their relationship with the American market are Emilio Pucci and Simonetta dei Duchi Colonna di Cesarò, known as Simonetta.

Unlikely many of the nobles working into fashion in the postwar period Emilio Pucci, Marquis of Barsento, started his fashion career almost by chance. Discovered in 1947 by Harper's Bazaar's fashion editor Diana Vreeland, who happened to see the photos of a ski suit he designed for a friend of his, he soon became famous. After an issue on his creations, the enchanted American department stores immediately started sending him orders for his creations. In 1949 he opened the boutique La Canzone del Mare in Capri, where his colourful and patterned designs were contended by jet setters like Jacqueline Kennedy⁷⁹. His mastery in the creation of leisurewear using prestigious Florentine silk and his experimentation of new textile techniques made him the most important boutique tailor in Italy and in the United States.

Simonetta, on the other hand, always found in American women her most loyal consumers. She opened her first atelier in 1946 in Rome with the name of Simonetta Visconti, using the family name of her husband, the Count Galeazzo Visconti di Modrone; she changed the name of her *maison* in Simonetta only after their divorce. Her fame in the US was partly due to her participation in a "Vogue" issue where she modelled wearing her creations. Her dresses, elegant in their minimalism and sporty in their wearability, gained her the nickname of the "Glamorous Countess"⁸⁰. The American market, which had always been intrigued by the refined and essential creations, appealing to modern women, found in Simonetta what it long craved for: charm and comfort, combined with the aristocratic and exclusive taste of this young Roman countess. She soon became the landmark for American women visiting Rome, to the extent that in 1951 "Life" magazine dedicated her the article *Titled Glamour Girl of Italian Designers*, praising the personal flair of her collections⁸¹.

Together with the aristocrat tailors there were also dressmakers of artisanal origins as Emilio Schuberth (1904-1972), Germana Marucelli (1905-1983), Jole Veneziani (1901-1989) and Sorelle Fontana, who were all representatives of that sphere of tailors

⁷⁹ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.180.

⁸⁰ Ivi., p. 148.

⁸¹ S. Kirkland, *Italy Gets Dressed Up. A Big, Hectic Fashion Show Attracts U.S. Style Leaders, Poses a Challenge to Paris* in "Life", 8, 1951, pp. 104-112, here p. 110.

who then became artists of the Italian Haute Couture. If the creations by Schuberth and Sorelle Fontana had a romantic nineteenth century allure and were enriched by particular embroideries, laces or pearls, those of Veneziani and Maruccelli were devoted to simple and essential lines⁸².

Despite the birth of new couturiers, Italy was still dominated by French couture.

It is not surprising that, after the war, there were not any particularly distinctive characteristics that distinguished the different Italian couture houses one from the other. Couturiers were used to copy Parisian designs, readapting them for the Italian market; there was not a creative process but just a translation of the French collections⁸³. The newborn Italian fashion was thus lacking identifying trends, as many couturiers were also employing the same fashion designers⁸⁴, meaning that their collections resulted to be quite similar one to the other. 1948 represented a turning point for the copying practice, as many Italian tailors declared to have had enough of the high prices they were charged by their French colleagues and they gradually became independent from the Parisian influence, creating an Italian style⁸⁵.

What made the Italian look so successful and worldwide desired was its connection with its heritage of art, culture and artisanal tradition. In the immediate post-war years many couturiers made references to their Italian craft heritage by embellishing their dresses with embroideries, laces or craft abilities typical of their region of provenance. This unique characteristic was appreciated also by international buyers as the American journalist Marya Mannes, who wrote that Italian couture was characterized by “wonderful materials and an apparently inexhaustible pool of hand labor”⁸⁶; also describing Italian clothes as “gay” and “charming”. In this article Mannes reported how astonished she was by the incredible quality of those dresses and how different they were from the French models, especially in their far lower prices.

The American fascination for the Italian style described by Mannes, was also spread by Hollywood movies which were conveying the idea of the Italian dream, emphasized

⁸² Ivi., pp. 163-164.

⁸³ N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit., p. 75.

⁸⁴ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., pp. 122-123.

⁸⁵ N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit., pp. 79-80.

⁸⁶ M. Mannes, *The Fine Italian Hand*, in “Vogue”, 1, 1947, pp. 118-119, here p. 119.

by the relationship between Hollywood and the Roman studios of Cinecittà. In the late 1940s and in the 1950s many films were shot in Rome, as Henry King's *Prince of Foxes* (1948) or Melvin LeRoy's *Quo Vadis?* (1951). But what was relevant for the development of Italian fashion was that in many of these movies, costumes were made by Roman couturiers hired by the Hollywood studios⁸⁷. Remarkable are Sorelle Fontana's dresses made for Ava Gardner in *Barefoot Contessa* (1954) by Joseph L. Mankiewicz⁸⁸.

Many fashion houses were located in strategic Roman locations, as for Fernanda Gattinoni (1906-2002) who was close to the American Embassy or for Sorelle Fontana housed in Piazza di Spagna⁸⁹. If Hollywood stars initially discovered Roman ateliers for their film costumes, what made them come back for their private wardrobe were the stylish models and the friendly and warm environment of these hotbeds of beauty⁹⁰. One of the favored fashion houses was the Fontana atelier, founded in 1943 by Zoe (1911-1978), Micol (1913-2015) and Giovanna (1915-2004) Fontana. Their success among American actresses came in 1949 with Linda Christian and Tyrone Power's marriage, when the sisters created the bride's dress, whose photos went around the world, published by many international newspapers⁹¹. Their friendship with the American couple offered them a paramount publicity among movie stars as in 1951, Christian and Power organised a fashion show in their Hollywood mansion⁹². This gave every American star the chance to witness the beauty of Fontana's collections. From such event onward the tailors could count as loyal consumers Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor and Kim Novak⁹³.

Through the medium of cinema, Rome became the stage of the most influential images of Italian style, one above all is Fellini's masterpiece *La Dolce Vita* (1960). Inspired by the sack dress created by Cristóbal Balenciaga in 1957, Fellini was charmed by the way this gown reshaped the hourglass female silhouette, wrapping women into an

⁸⁷ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.11.

⁸⁸ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.126.

⁸⁹ E. Paulicelli, *Fashioning Rome. Cinema, Fashion and the Media in Postwar Years*, in "Annali d'Italianistica", Vol. 28, 2010, pp. 257-278, here p. 257.

⁹⁰ Ivi., p.262.

⁹¹ N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit., p.136

⁹² Ivi., p.138.

⁹³ Ivi., p. 139.

envelope-like frock and saw in it the loneliness and vice of the Italian society during the economic boom⁹⁴.

The film depicts a truthful representation of life during the “Hollywood on the Tiber” phenomenon but also represents the elegance and glamour of Italian fashion, to the extent that the costumes used reached an iconic status⁹⁵; noteworthy are Anita Ekberg’s dresses. The clergymen dress inspired by the *pretino* model created by Sorelle Fontana in 1956⁹⁶, was used by Fellini in the scene where Sylvia, Ekberg’s character, is visiting St. Peter’s Cathedral in order to create a contrast between the sensuality of the actress and the spirituality of the location⁹⁷. On the other hand, Gattinoni’s black velvet dress that Ekberg wears at the Trevi fountain, became a milestone of film costumes and is still used as a source of inspiration⁹⁸.

La Dolce Vita represents in the collective consciousness the charming and magical atmosphere of Italy’s second Renaissance during the economic boom; it embodies the essence of Italianity⁹⁹. Even today, when displaying Italian fashion, many American department stores represents it as under the trope of Fellini’s masterpiece¹⁰⁰.

It is important to note however that, despite the crucial role played by Hollywood stars in making Italian fashion popular, American filmmakers benefited from Italian *alta moda* too. As in the above-mentioned movie *The Barefoot Contessa*, Mankiewicz could count on attracting a higher audience thanks to the presence of Fontana’s dresses. Roman couturiers, however, also used the relationship between Italian fashion and the film industry as a publicity tool, as in some cases few scenes of a movie were shot inside their atelier, like in Luciano Emmer’s *Le ragazze di Piazza di Spagna* (1951) which was shot in Fontana’s studio in via Liguria in Rome¹⁰¹.

⁹⁴ E. Paulicelli, *Reframing History: Federico Fellini’s Rome, Fashion and Costume*, in “Film, Fashion & Consumption”, Vol. 8, n. 1, 2019, pp. 71-88, here p. 74.

⁹⁵ Ivi., p.75.

⁹⁶ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.126.

⁹⁷ E. Paulicelli, *Reframing History. Federico Fellini’s Rome, Fashion and Costume*, cit., p.76.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ E. Paulicelli, *Fashioning Rome. Cinema, Fashion and the Media in Postwar Years*, cit., p. 260.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ivi., p.126.

1.4. Giovanni Battista Giorgini and the Italian fashion Renaissance at the Sala Bianca in Florence

It is generally considered that Italian fashion was born in 1951 with the first collective show of Italian fashion held by Giovanni Battista Giorgini in his Florentine house¹⁰². However, as it was previously demonstrated, Italian couture was already born by 1951, even though it was at an embryonic state.

The Marquis Giovanni Battista Giorgini (1898-1971) can be considered the father of “Made in Italy”¹⁰³. Coming from a family working in the business trade, after WWI he started his career in foreign trade as a buying agent for several American department stores, purchasing the finest Italian crafts on their behalf¹⁰⁴. This experience made him realise that exporting such goods was both a way to empower small businesses as to let foreign countries, especially the US, know the *Bel Paese*.

However, it was during WWII that he became an ambassador of Italian products. Due to his business relationships with the United States, the Allies gave him the task to open the Allied Force Gift Shop in Florence, Giorgini’s hometown¹⁰⁵. Here, he gave the stands to local artisans creating fine craft products. Beside empowering the local economy, Giorgini gave the opportunity to those handicraftsmen to represent their country abroad and to make their brands internationally known. An example is Gucci, who at the time was offering leather goods to the troops¹⁰⁶.

He already knew to what extent Americans were interested in Italian products due to his past business experiences, however, it was with the Florentine gift shop that he realised that the trade of these goods could turn into a great opportunity for his country. The Italian artisanal tradition had a great potential, but Giorgini understood that in order to attract the attention of foreign buyers he had to offer them something innovative and unique. He needed to build up an image, a symbol that could both represent Italian prestige and refinement, but at the same time had to include in itself the ideas of creativity and handicraft ability, and nothing like fashion could best

¹⁰² N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit., p.35

¹⁰³ C. M. Belfanti, *Renaissance and ‘Made in Italy’. Marketing Italian Fashion Through History (1949-1952)*, in “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, Vol. 20, n.1, pp. 53-66, here p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.11.

¹⁰⁵ N. Fadigati, *Giovanni Battista Giorgini, la Famiglia, il Contributo alla Nascita del Made in Italy, le Fonti Archivistiche*, in “ZoneModa Journal” Vol.8 n.1, 07, 2018, pp. 1-15, here p.6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

represent those aspects. In addition, the aforementioned trend of the “Hollywood on the Tiber” attracted American attention on the refinement of Italian clothing, so that many U.S. women visiting Italy reported feeling outmoded and unfashionable when compared to the Italian ones¹⁰⁷.

Being the best of businessmen, Giorgini understood that if Italian fashion could impose itself on the market, it would have boosted the economic wellbeing of the whole country.

As Patrick Mauriès reported in *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*:

[...] Giovanni Battista Giorgini suddenly became aware that the florid style of Schubert[h] and the others was not necessarily surpassed by French elegance. It was no longer a simple echo of forms cravenly derived from Parisian models, but a solidly based aesthetic likely to interest the American buyers. As always in Italy, the economic boom during those years was a matter of countless small family-run businesses, laying emphasis on *savoir-faire* and specialty items¹⁰⁸.

It was in this golden atmosphere of new possibilities that Giorgini started to outline what will then become the greatest achievement of his career: the Italian High Fashion Show¹⁰⁹. Despite offering garments that could merge comfort, elegance and the renown Italian taste, his main desire was to support the Italian textile industry while also promoting the newborn fashion system.

Crucial was the fact that in order to be perceived as attractive by foreign buyers, Italian couture had to be authentic and not a mere reproduction of French fashion. Here, stands Giorgini’s commitment to the “Made in Italy” as he asked to the invited dressmakers to present only dresses representing the purity of the Italian identity. In fact, the invitation to Italian couture designers was motivated by their complete emancipation from French collections¹¹⁰. Giorgini wanted to encourage dressmakers to free their creativity, designing fresh models no more ruled by the francophone trends but embodying the national *savoir-faire*.

However, Giorgini was well aware that the national tendency to reproduce French collections meant a lack of independence and identity that was not helpful to his idea of internationalizing Italian couture. In order to compete with French high fashion and

¹⁰⁷ N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit., p. 80.

¹⁰⁸ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers* in *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, edited by P. Mauriès, S. Ferino-Pagden, Milano: Franco Maria Ricci editore, 1993, pp. 139-160 here p.144.

¹⁰⁹ The presentation was specifically named in English because it was aimed at foreign buyers.

¹¹⁰ R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, cit., p.16.

to offer an alternative to it, there was a need of legitimization, and only with the rich legacy of the Renaissance, could Italian fashion counter the dominant haute couture¹¹¹. The Renaissance can indeed be identified as the historical period that more than any other was going to forge the renown Italian taste¹¹². Evidence is the splendour and the eternal admiration reckoned to masterpieces like Botticelli's *Spring* (circa 1480), Michelangelo's *David* (1501-1504) and Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* (1503).

That epoch was also characterised by discoveries and inventions. The developments on cartography broadened the knowledge of the world and explorers sailed to new and unknown lands. The first explorations to Asia and to the New World signed the beginning of a luxurious trade of unique and exotic products such as silk, gold or parrots, whose feathers were used to decorate men's hats¹¹³.

Although the Renaissance spread all over western Europe, Italy was leading with its centers of activity in Florence, Venice and Rome, and under the Medicis' patronage, in particular during the leadership of Lorenzo de Medici, Florence became the European artistic centre¹¹⁴. In Italy, the Renaissance was a period of great innovation in the arts, as new techniques and styles were adopted¹¹⁵. Tempera and fresco were replaced by oil painting and Leonardo da Vinci was one of the great masters of the technique.

On a further note, this era also brought a development in the textile industry, as what was once imported from the East, soon started to be produced in Europe; Flanders' cities as Ypres, Bruges and Ghent became famous for their production of taffeta and velvet¹¹⁶. However, the highest-quality materials, especially demask, brocade, satin, velvet or lace were produced in Italy¹¹⁷. Europe looked up to Italy and soon Italian good taste spread even outside its national borders; indeed, not only was the country leading in art and architecture, but also in fashion¹¹⁸. European courts were the ancestors of the modern catwalks and fashion trends were created by noble women.

¹¹¹ C. M. Belfanti, *Renaissance and 'Made in Italy'. Marketing Italian Fashion through History (1949-1952)*, cit. p. 56.

¹¹² Ivi., p. 55.

¹¹³ B. Cosgrave, *Costume & Fashion. A Complete History*, London: Hymlyn, 2000, p.119.

¹¹⁴ Ivi., p.117.

¹¹⁵ P. Burke, *The Italian Renaissance. Culture and Society in Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 16.

¹¹⁶ B. Cosgrave, *Costume & Fashion. A Complete History*, cit., p.131.

¹¹⁷ Ivi., p.132.

¹¹⁸ Ivi., p.119.

Particularly influential at the French court was Caterina de Medici (1519-1589), queen consort of King Henry II of France (1519-1559). She is remembered for introducing drawers¹¹⁹ as well as the folding fan¹²⁰ and the pocket handkerchief¹²¹ in the wardrobe of the French aristocracy. Likewise, Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497) duchess of Milan, distinguished herself at the court of the Sforzas for her elegant clothes and refined jewels. She was also known for her vanity, as in 1493 she possessed eighty-four gowns to be summed to the ones contained in her wardrobe in Milan¹²². Renaissance was the golden age of Italian genius which favored economic development, inventions and supremacy in the arts.

The first association between Italian fashion and its roots in the Renaissance refinement date back to the Italian dressmaker Rosa Genoni who was the first to promote the creation of a national style inspired by the marvelous *chef d'oeuvres* created by Italian Renaissance artists¹²³, as in her evening gown *La Primavera* (*The Spring*, 1906) (See Ill.3), first presented at the *Esposizione Internazionale di Milano* in 1906. Inspired by the peplum worn by Botticelli's Flora in the *Spring*¹²⁴ (See Ill.4),

¹¹⁹ Ivi., p.126.

¹²⁰ Ivi., p.124.

¹²¹ Ivi., p.125.

¹²² F. Malaguzzi Valeri, *La Corte di Ludovico il Moro, Vol. I, La Vita privata*, Milano: Hoepli, 1913, p. 333.

¹²³ C. M. Belfanti, *Renaissance and 'Made in Italy'. Marketing Italian Fashion Through History (1949-1952)*, cit. p.56.

¹²⁴ *The Spring (Evening Gown)*, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/evening-gown-la-primavera> [last access on 30 June 2021].

the dress was awarded by the international jury with the Gran Premio for the Decorative Art Section¹²⁵.



Ill. 3 - Rosa Genoni, *The Spring*, 1906, satin dress with tulle tunic and embroidery in relief in chenille, multi-coloured silk thread and cord, silver and gold thread, mother-of-pearl flake beading, round and bugle tube beads and sequins, 144cm x 180cm, Pitti Palace, Florence, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/evening-gown-la-primavera>



Ill. 4 - Sandro Botticelli, *Spring*, circa 1480, tempera grassa on wood, 207 x 319 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/botticelli-spring>

It was Germana Marucelli, one among the few tailors that strongly sustained the self-determination of Italian fashion, that recalled Genoni's idea in 1949 by presenting a collection of Renaissance inspired dresses in Milan; repropounding this performance the following year at Teatro della Pergola in Florence, where she displayed models reproducing famous Renaissance paintings¹²⁶.

Following the lead of Genoni first and Marucelli then, Giovanni Battista Giorgini adopted the binomial of Italian fashion and Renaissance good taste by including it in the Italian High Fashion Show, where different couture houses were able to present collectively their collections to foreign buyers for the first time. He accordingly decided to centralise Italian fashion in one single city: Florence.

This decision should not be undervalued. Giorgini's choice to elect Florence as the Italian capital of couture derived from the historical role that the city covered in its history; during the Renaissance, when it was the centre of Italian craftsmanship and in

¹²⁵ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.20.

¹²⁶ V. Steele, *Fashion. Italian Style*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2003, p. 17.

the immediate post war period of Italian exports and buying offices for foreign markets¹²⁷.

Combining his managerial abilities with the Florentine splendour, Giorgini was able to merge the presentation of different fashion houses in one single event. He understood that bringing together tailors from different Italian cities was also a source of convenience for the buyers, that could include Florence in their Grand Tour of fashion, avoiding moving from place to place all over Italy.

The first edition of the Italian High Fashion Show took place on 12th February 1951, in Giorgini's Villa Torrigiani in Florence, with the participation of only few fashion houses and journalists. He was here able to offer the buyers a presentation of collections from, among others, Carosa, Simonetta Visconti, Emilio Schuberth and Sorelle Fontana representing Rome, along with Jole Veneziani, Vanna, Vita Noberasko and Germana Marucelli from Milan. Together with couture, Giorgini also invited Emilio Pucci and Tessitrice di Capri, founded by the Neapolitan aristocrat Clarette Gallotti, as representatives of the boutique ready-to-wear fashion¹²⁸ that was silently gaining place in those years.

The show, structured as a three-day event, was so organized: on the first day the boutique, leisure and sportswear collections were presented, the second day guests were left free to explore the beauty of the city; while on the third and last day a cocktail reception and a ball were organized, where by combining pleasure and duty, the evening wear were shown¹²⁹.

One of the innovations of the show was not to present the collections by the name of the creator, but by grouping the different models according to the type of clothing they appertained to¹³⁰. So, brands such as Schuberth and Fontana were under haute couture, while dressmakers as Pucci and Veneziani presented their collections for sportswear. It was this last category that mostly attracted American buyers, leaving all the participants astonished, such that "Life" magazine described it as characterized by "a

¹²⁷ N. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry*, cit. p.38.

¹²⁸ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 11.

¹²⁹ Ivi., p. 12.

¹³⁰ R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, cit., p.16.

hard-to-copy native elegance”¹³¹. It was something unexpected and never seen before, an Italian exclusive as not even Paris ever introduced anything similar¹³². It embodied the national charm, the models were cheerful, colourful, fresh and refined in their quality¹³³. However, what showed Italian elegance and eager-to-please was high-fashion, relevant are the words used by Roberta Orsi Landini to describe it:

[...] the good taste, the measurement, the sense of proportions - the heritage of the Renaissance aesthetic – had soon be acknowledged as the defining characteristics of the Italian high fashion. To the cleanness line, proposed as the highest level of elegance, responded the meticulous tailoring and the tailored cut [...]. The simplicity of the line used to highlight the beauty of the embroidery or of the fabric, often identified as the real innovative element of the design¹³⁴.

By associating Italian craft and tailoring abilities to the Renaissance, Giorgini wanted to present Italian fashion as the legitimate heir of that age of artistic splendour, creating the so called “myth of continuity”¹³⁵ suggesting that fashion descended from the splendour created by masters as Leonardo and Michelangelo¹³⁶. Such belief had only a minimum of historic proof, but this strategy proved to be a success.

The American press identified in the boost of Italian creativity a second Renaissance¹³⁷. “Vogue” described the country living “on [...] [its] latest of the Italian renaissances”¹³⁸, comparing Italy to a phenix rising from its ashes¹³⁹; while “Life” magazine reported that “Italy had made a good beginning in its upstart attempt to enter fashion’s big league”¹⁴⁰ and fashion buyers were so delighted by the collections presented that begged the Marquis to repeat the show.

Validating itself as a fair reiterated regularly, the show was repropesed in July 1951. The word of the newborn Italian fashion’s success spread around, as from the initial nine U.S. buyers of the first edition, in July three hundred international fashion

¹³¹ S. Kirkland, *Italy Gets Dressed Up. A Big, Hectic Fashion Show Attracts U.S. Style Leaders, Poses a Challenge to Paris*, cit., p. 108.

¹³² R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, cit., p.16.

¹³³ S. Kirkland, *Italy Gets Dressed Up. A Big, Hectic Fashion Show Attracts U.S. Style Leaders, Poses a Challenge to Paris*, cit., p. 108.

¹³⁴ R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, cit., p.17. Translation made by the writer.

¹³⁵ C. M. Belfanti, *Renaissance and ‘Made in Italy’*. *Marketing Italian Fashion Through History (1949-1952)*, cit. p.55.

¹³⁶ Ivi., p.61.

¹³⁷ Ivi., p.63.

¹³⁸ *From the Italian Collections, Casual Clothes*, in “Vogue”, 9, 1951, pp.188-189, here p.188.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ S. Kirkland, *Italy Gets Dressed Up. A Big, Hectic Fashion Show Attracts U.S. Style Leaders, Poses a Challenge to Paris*, cit., p. 104.

representatives¹⁴¹, among which one hundred and seventy were Americans¹⁴², traveled to Florence to witness the magnificence of Italian creations. Even the great names of journalism as Bettina Ballard from the American “Vogue” and Carmel Snow from “Harper’s Bazaar”, flew to Italy to see why Italian *alta moda* was on everyone’s lips¹⁴³. Due to the higher number of guests and buyers, the Second Italian High Fashion Show was held in the more appropriate setting of the ballroom of the Grand Hotel in Florence and it was here that Italian fashion emerged internationally. The U.S. press was mesmerized, from “Vogue”¹⁴⁴ to “Time” magazine¹⁴⁵, all applauded how excellent in quality and pleasing in colours the collections were. This approval was also witnessed by the pick registered in the orders of the presented models; the novelty of sportswear and leisurewear combined with the beautiful fabrics and the low prices enticed the buyers¹⁴⁶. In addition, French fashion was unintentionally favoring the demand of Italian casualwear: with its sophisticated collections it was not respecting the new needs of the modern woman, no more caged inside the house but committed to her work life and leisure time.

After two editions Italian fashion officially gained a place in the fashion world and in July 1952 the show was moved to the formal setting of the Sala Bianca in Florence. This transfer from the Grand Hotel to the Medicean palace of Palazzo Pitti can be seen as a legitimisation of the show that was metaphorically overwatched by the Medici. From this year on the bond between Renaissance taste and Italian fashion started to be further reinforced, as in July 1952 the Giglio d’oro award was instituted, given to the best dressmaker who presented the most innovative and outstanding designs¹⁴⁷ which could represent Italian tailoring abilities worldwide. Furthermore, the marvellous and ancient venues and the historical collateral events organised helped in strengthening and making more credible the mythical relation linking Italian fashion to the

¹⁴¹ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.12.

¹⁴² S. Kirkland, *Italy Gets Dressed Up. A Big, Hectic Fashion Show Attracts U.S. Style Leaders, Poses a Challenge to Paris*, cit., p.104.

¹⁴³ C. M. Belfanti, *Renaissance and ‘Made in Italy’. Marketing Italian Fashion Through History (1949-1952)*, cit., p.61.

¹⁴⁴ *From the Italian Collections, Casual Clothes*, cit., p.188.

¹⁴⁵ *Italy’s Renaissance*, in “Time”, 2, 1952, p. 68.

¹⁴⁶ S. Kirkland, *Italy Gets Dressed Up. A Big, Hectic Fashion Show Attracts U.S. Style Leaders, Poses a Challenge to Paris*, cit., p. 104.

¹⁴⁷ C. M. Belfanti, *Renaissance and ‘Made in Italy’. Marketing Italian Fashion Through History (1949-1952)*, cit., p. 61.

Renaissance. Remarkable is the historical re-enactment of the wedding between Eleonora de Medici and Francesco Gonzaga that was performed during the fifth edition of the fashion show in January 1953 in Palazzo Vecchio¹⁴⁸, in which the actors were descendants of the nobles attending the actual wedding in 1584¹⁴⁹. Attracted by its deep roots in the magnificence of the typical Italian refined taste, Americans felt mesmerised by all the events buzzing around the Italian fashion shows, which had a twofold purpose. Besides their fundamental role in creating a deeper link between Italian couture and Renaissance they also helped to keep buyers' attention alive. Giorgini knew that due to the collective nature of the fashion show and its hectic schedule, buyers could easily lose their interest in the presentations and this led him to the organization of a series of collateral events, ranging from cocktail parties to the traditional closing ball, always hosted in enchanting locations as Giardino di Boboli or Forte Belvedere¹⁵⁰.

With the Italian High Fashion Show, Giorgini was able to achieve his aim. After 1951 Italian fashion began to be known and recognized worldwide. From this date onward, it is difficult to notice resemblances between Italian and French models, despite Parisian couturiers frequent accusations of plagiarism by Italians tailors¹⁵¹.

1.5. Roberto Capucci: the rising star of Italian fashion

The figure of Roberto Capucci is strongly intertwined with the rise of Italian high fashion and in particular with the events of the Sala Bianca. It was common during the Florentine fashion show to witness the launch of new talents discovered by Marquis Giorgini¹⁵². The first and probably the most illustrious one was the Roman couturier Roberto Capucci.

Born in Rome on 2nd December 1930, despite his parents' hopes for him to become an engineer or a lawyer, from a very young age he showed a strong interest and propension for art¹⁵³. He studied at the art school and then at the Accademia delle Belle

¹⁴⁸ V. Pinchera, D. Rinallo, *The Emergence of Italy as a Fashion Country. Nation Branding and Collective Meaning Creation at Florence's Fashion Shows (1951-1965)*, in "Business History", Vol. 62, n.1, pp.151-178, here p.161.

¹⁴⁹ L. Fortunati E. Danese, *Manuale di Comunicazione, Sociologia e Cultura della Moda, Vol. III Il Made in Italy*, Roma: Meltemi editore, 2005, p.81.

¹⁵⁰ R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, cit., p.19.

¹⁵¹ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.12.

¹⁵² R. Orsi Landini, *La Sala Bianca*, cit., p.22.

¹⁵³ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.12.

Arti in Rome, under the guidance of Marino Mazzacurati (1907-1969), Marcello Avenali (1921-1981) and Libero de Libero (1903-1981). Apparently, however, his major interest was in fashion drawing as even during his teenage years at art school, he unexpectedly found himself sketching thousands of skirts¹⁵⁴. His passion and his education influenced one another, as the Maestro affirmed his “[...] creations have been subject to the influence of my studies: every creative mind has its own style and I did a work connected to my studies”¹⁵⁵. When asked about his academic background and his later choice to vent his artistic streak in fashion, he replied by saying that:

My artistical education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome let me get in touch with the worlds of painting, sculpture, drawing and manual techniques. Afterwards, in the role of fashion creator I could use an articulated language. At the base all these elements. Since the beginning, I identified in high fashion my natural expression. [...] Only from high fashion could arise creations capable, season after season, to evolve and transform in what today I define hyperbole of clothes¹⁵⁶.

Capucci’s artistical training and particularly his need to create, to translate his fantasies into drawings was visible since the beginning of his career. His artistic visualization always begins through sketches¹⁵⁷, first drafting the design on grid notebooks and then defining and colouring them, in *bella copia*, on large sheets of paper¹⁵⁸. For each collection he was used to drawing thousands of designs, out of which he then strictly selected only a limited number. For him, drawing has always been a vital necessity, he needs “[...] the white sheet of paper, I make a point in the middle and then I start [drawing] with a pencil”¹⁵⁹. These sketches are not passive representations of his

¹⁵⁴ G. Vergani, *Il Vestito? Un Habitat di Tessuto*, in *Roberto Capucci. Creatività al di là del Tempo*, cit., pp. 13-16, here p.15.

¹⁵⁵ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author’s translation.

¹⁵⁶ R. Capucci, *Nessun Segreto: la Libertà*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, edited by G. L. Bauzano, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2018, pp. 11-14, here p.12. Translation made by the writer.

¹⁵⁷ S. Ferino-Pagden, *Introduction*, in *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, cit., pp. 129-137, here p.129.

¹⁵⁸ G. L. Bauzano, *Disegni Realizzati e Irrealizzabili*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.149.

¹⁵⁹ *Prima della Prima, Episodio 4, Festival dei Due Mondi 2020*, B. Napolitano, RAI, 2020. Author’s translation.

genius, but they have their own life; they can be identified as artworks, explaining his creative method¹⁶⁰.



Ill. 5 - Roberto Capucci drawing in his Roman studio, 1980, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

When asked about his source of inspiration, Capucci replies by asserting: “I get inspired, in principle, by all the arts; I think of everything I saw and admired and I capture its wholeness, it gets inside me”¹⁶¹. He never approaches a work of art as a unique source of inspiration, and he never copies it¹⁶². Capucci is inspired by Capucci¹⁶³; each of his designs is proof of how Capucci the artist and Capucci the tailor merge together in the divine process of creation.

His close friend and Italian journalist Gian Luca Bauzano, defined the Roman creator as *petites mains*, not simply referring to the physical presence of his hands but by identifying them as capable of creating magical, unique and precious masterpieces¹⁶⁴. Indeed, Capucci’s creations are able to transport the observer into a fairytale and dream-like reality, sanctifying him as the “master sculptor of dreams and fabrics”¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶⁰ G. L. Bauzano, *Disegni Realizzati e Irrealizzabili*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.149.

¹⁶¹ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author’s translation.

¹⁶² G. L. Bauzano, *Segreti d’Atelier. Costruzioni, Lavorazioni e Materiali*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.93.

¹⁶³ *To the Reader*, in *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, cit., p.17.

¹⁶⁴ G. L. Bauzano, *Segreti d’Atelier. Costruzioni, Lavorazioni e Materiali*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.75.

¹⁶⁵ F. Cologni, *Introduzione*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 5-9, here p.6.

The very first sketches of his career were seen by the Italian journalist Maria Foschini, who after seeing his drawings forced him to open his first atelier.

At the age of twenty years old, Capucci opened his studio in the central Via Sistina in Rome, home of the major art galleries of the post war period; as L'Obelisco and La Tartaruga. The former was opened in 1946 by Gaspero del Corso and Irene Brin and during the years staged the Italian debuts of many influential artists as Salvador Dalí in 1948 and Robert Rauschenberg in 1953¹⁶⁶. The gallery La Tartaruga played a crucial role in the promotion of American Avant-Garde artists in the mid 1950s and can be acclaimed for its contribution in introducing Abstract Expressionism in Rome¹⁶⁷. In this Olympus of the arts, Capucci moved his first steps in the fashion world, where he dressed his first consumers, from Italian actresses to members of Roman high society¹⁶⁸.

But it was in July 1951 that Capucci entered the world of high fashion. As the Maestro once recalled during an interview:

I had a stroke of luck, as in the same year Italian fashion took off, because it had never existed before [...] people used to go to Paris and imitate it. There was a combination between the birth of the fashion world in Florence and the opening of my first atelier in Rome.

My Director left for Florence and showed my designs to the Marquis Giorgini [...]. The best thing was that he came visit me the day after and invited me unofficially. [...] [B]ecause I seemed to be fourteen years old and looked like a child, but he told me: 'Quiet, nobody has to know, it has to be a surprise!' I was going to present five drawings of dresses: five suits, five capes, five cocktail dresses, five evening dresses. I had a place of honor.

I showed up in Florence, the same morning by chance a fashion model run into Schuberth [...] and she said to him: 'This evening there is a kid who will show some strange things, very curious, very architectonic' and Schuberth replied: 'And why didn't Giorgini tell us?'. All the tailors got together and stopped my debut. All of them, Antonelli, Carosa, Simonetta, Fabiani, Veneziani, Marucelli, Schuberth [...]. Giorgini said to me: 'Come to the ball, you will sit at my table with my wife and my daughters, who will be wearing your dresses. You will see that in life everything will work itself out'. I went to the table with Giorgini, his wife and his daughters and by the end of the evening the press was on my side. [...] Oriana Fallaci wrote her first article on me¹⁶⁹ and I gave my first interview¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁶ I. Schiaffini, *It's a Roman Holiday for American Artists of L'Obelisco After World War II*, in "Methodologies of Exchange: MoMa's 'Twentieth-Century Italian Art' (1949)" monographic issue of "Italian Modern Art", 3, 2020, pp.1-37, here p.2.

¹⁶⁷ Ivi., p.5.

¹⁶⁸ M. Capella, *Roberto Capucci. L'Abito Regale come Forma d'Arte* in *Roberto Capucci. La ricerca della Regalità*, exhibition catalogue (Torino, Sala della Arti della Reggia di Venaria, 23 March- 8 September 2013), edited by M. Cappella, Torino: Umberto Allemandi & C., 2013, pp. 9-31, here p.11.

¹⁶⁹ O. Fallaci, *A Firenze è Scoppiata una Bomba della Moda*, in "Epoca", vol. 43, 8, 1951, pp.40-44.

¹⁷⁰ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit. Author's translation.

According to Giorgini's plans, Capucci was supposed to present his dresses at the grand ball, on the last day of the show. Twenty mannequins would have worn his gowns while attending the gala¹⁷¹. However, Capucci's presence to the second edition of Giorgini's fashion show was considered a scandal. As a minor he was too young to participate to such events and in order not to lose the other couturiers, the Marquis had no choice than withdrawing Capucci's participation. Contrary opinions notwithstanding, he gave to the young tailor the chance to dress his wife and daughters and to present his dresses at Villa Torrigiani the morning after the event. As anything forbidden, Capucci's dresses attracted so much interest that the day after the ball buyers and journalists flocked to see his collection and every single gown was bought¹⁷². From then on, Capucci always presented his collections at the Florentine show, with just the exception of the Thirteenth Fashion Show, when he presented in Rome¹⁷³.

Despite his small presentation of medieval-inspired boutique dresses in January 1952, only in July of the same year Capucci could officially debut showing with the high-fashion group. The contrast between his simple and youthful silhouettes and the rococo charm of the Stucco Hall of Palazzo Pitti delighted and astonished the guests. The press went into raptures. A young Oriana Fallaci stated in her report from the Florentine catwalk that the talented Roman designer, "Robertino" as she nicknamed him, was the revelation of the fashion show¹⁷⁴. Other newspapers reported that despite his immaturity in technique he was gifted with a sensational taste and creativity¹⁷⁵, elements that would have made him a tailor of the highest order¹⁷⁶. His participation

¹⁷¹ M. Capella, *Roberto Capucci. L'Abito Regale come Forma d'Arte*, cit., p.11.

¹⁷² D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 12.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ O. Fallaci, *A Quaranta Gradi Moda d'Inverno*, in "Epoca", vol. 95, 8, 1952, pp.71-72, here p.72.

¹⁷⁵ "Tempo", 8, 1952, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anno 1952.

¹⁷⁶ "Settimo giorno", 8, 1952, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anno 1952.

to the third high fashion show signed the beginning of his successful career, making him one of the most important names of the Made in Italy¹⁷⁷.



Ill. 6 - Roberto Capucci (far right) with Giovanni Battista Giorgini (in the middle) and some guests at the Italian High Fashion Show in Florence, 1951, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

In February 1956, Capucci's designs were part of a two-weeks fashion cruise organised by Giorgini to show the latest Italian fashion trends¹⁷⁸. Designers were not present to this promotional trip to New York, as they had eight noblewomen as ambassadors, each of them wearing and representing a couture house¹⁷⁹. Together with his fashion show in London the following month, these initiatives helped spreading the name of Capucci in the United States and abroad, having a huge impact on his selling rate. British retailers as Peter Jones and Marks and Spencer bought many designs by Capucci over the years¹⁸⁰; American department stores as Neiman Marcus bought many pieces from Capucci's collections as well¹⁸¹. This interest by the American market also reflected in a predilection from many Hollywood stars as Marilyn Monroe or the actress and swimmer Esther Williams who made the dress *Novegonne* (1956) famous.

¹⁷⁷ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers in Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, cit., p.146.

¹⁷⁸ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

In a period characterized by couture houses still sharing the same fashion designers, Capucci has been frequently acclaimed for being one of the few tailors to sketch his own clothes¹⁸², being able to always present something unique and unrivalled to what his colleagues created. Indeed, he has always been praised for his simple lines while having an architectural and sculptural approach to his dresses¹⁸³.

One of Capucci's milestone years was 1958, when, going from a debutant to a major sustainer of Italian high fashion, in early June, together with eight other couturiers from Milan, Rome and Florence he established the *Camera Sindacale della Moda Italiana*, a precursor of the modern *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*¹⁸⁴. But it was the following month that he received one of the biggest recognitions of his career: at the Sixteenth Italian High Fashion Show introducing his Fall/Winter collection, he thrilled the audience with his revolutionary *Linea a scatola*, a sharply geometrical silhouette constructed by four silk and wool panels, vaguely recreating the shape of a box. This line marked his international success as on 17th September 1958 he received in Boston the Filene's Young Talents Award, the Fashion Oscar, in recognition of his creativity and innovations¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸² S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p.122.

¹⁸³ M. Di Forti in *Roberto Capucci. L'Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, exhibition catalogue (Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 10 January – 28 February 1990), edited by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte, Milano: Fabbri Editore, 1990, pp. 17-22, here p.19.

¹⁸⁴ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 30.

¹⁸⁵ *Ivi.*, p.32.

2. Roberto Capucci and the early stages of his creativity

2.1. The Parisian period (1962-1968)

The Sixties were characterised by Capucci's consolidation in the fashion world and his subsequent estrangement from the Italian *alta moda*, culminating in his move to Paris, preferring French couture over his home country¹⁸⁶.

In 1961 he opened the decade with a widely applauded show in Florence, the last one in which he would participate. His farewell collection presented at the twenty-second Italian High Fashion Show in July 1961 gained him a five-minute standing ovation¹⁸⁷. Acclaimed by the "New York Times" as one of his best collections¹⁸⁸, with his simple lines and geometrical shapes, Capucci was able to show his mastery in fashion creation. For the first time, his dresses were described as dramatic and theatrical to the extent to be labelled as TV clothes¹⁸⁹. Indeed, if for his day dresses he showed simple suits, with short jackets and straight skirts, his evening outfits implied satin coats and suits in shock colours¹⁹⁰. The long, linear dresses seductively draped, swished down the catwalk; from the front they looked trousered, while from the back they had long ballooning trains¹⁹¹. Some dresses with long, kimono-like sleeves, were characterised by different lengths as the short skirts were joint in the back by long trains (See Ill. 7).

¹⁸⁶ During his time in Paris, Capucci will also keep his Roman atelier in Via Gregoriana, opened in 1955.

¹⁸⁷ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.43.

¹⁸⁸ P. Peterson, *Capucci Seen at His Final Best in Final Italian Showing*, in "New York Times", 19 July 1961, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anno 1961.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.



Ill. 7 - Roberto Capucci, taffeta long evening dress with trousers, Autumn/Winter 1961/62, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

However, despite his increasing success, he also received many judgments for his avant-garde and ahead-of-the-times designs, as for the *Linea a Scatola* (1958). This situation led him to leave his beloved country choosing Paris as his home¹⁹², opening his maison at Rue Cambon 4 in October 1962¹⁹³.

His arrival in the Olympus of fashion happened with many critics from both the Italian press and his fashion colleagues¹⁹⁴. Oriana Fallaci was the harshest voice addressing him as the traitor of his own country, allaying to the French couture after all the efforts made by Italian *alta moda* to free from their dominance¹⁹⁵. Capucci's entrance in the French fashion system happened in a period in which French couture suffered a deep identity crisis. For Haute Couture the 1960s were a revolutionary decade and especially Paris felt under London's new fashion trends¹⁹⁶. French couture was

¹⁹² Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 12 October 2021, Codroipo.

¹⁹³ Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Bibliography, <https://fondazionerobertocapucci.it/en/the-artist/biography/> [last access 13 September 2021].

¹⁹⁴ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.43.

¹⁹⁵ O. Fallaci, *Il Traditore con le Forbici*, in "L'Europeo", 51, 12, 1961, pp.66-68, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anno 1961.

¹⁹⁶ J. Lobenthal, *Radical Rags. Fashion of the Sixties*, cit., p. 41.

accused of being old fashioned and incompatible with the independent and modern woman of the 1960s¹⁹⁷. With the development of industrialization and the consequent increase in the economic possibilities, prêt-à-porter started to gain place in the fashion system¹⁹⁸. In the years of the economic boom, the social developments gave to the younger generations a new awareness of the society they lived in and a consciousness of themselves as an empowered social group able to respond to social and political events¹⁹⁹. Many designers of the period, as the English designer Sally Tuffin (b. 1938), protested that there were not any clothes for youngsters, as mothers and daughters looked the same²⁰⁰. It was in those years that haute couture was challenged from below, as couturiers started to cater to a youth market²⁰¹; during the “Youthquake”²⁰², fashion was fighting the social protest by banning the pompous looks of the post-war trends, by creating instead informal and youthful clothes.

In April 1966 the American “Time” affirmed that “[i]n this century, every decade has had its city”²⁰³ and if the symbol of 1950s was Rome and its Fellinian atmosphere, in the 1960s London was bursting. “[...] Once a horizontal city with a skyline dominated by Mary Poppins’ chimney pots, London is now shot through with skyscrapers”²⁰⁴; the city, ruled by its younger generations, was experiencing a modernization process. 1960s London was the European capital of the counter-cultural rebellion, in particular the area of the West End absorbed anti-establishment movements, as the Mods²⁰⁵, who helped creating a subculture that could contrast that of the central London²⁰⁶. Britain was then shaped by new influences, a new image of Europe rising from the war’s ashes was emerging, as well as a rejection of colonial territory²⁰⁷. Thus, in the middle of these cultural stimuli, London shaped a new image of itself through the medium of art,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., p. 201.

¹⁹⁹ V. Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion. New Look to Now*, cit., p. 50.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Name of a cultural movement typical of the 1960s, which name was coined by Vogue’s editor in chief Diana Vreeland in 1965.

²⁰³ *Great Britain: You Can Walk Across It On the Grass*, in “Time”, 15 April 1966, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835349,00.html> [last access 29 November 2021]

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ A London influential subculture that affected the lifestyle of the Sixties.

²⁰⁶ S. Rycroft, *The Geographies of Swinging London*, in “Journal of Historical Geography”, 28, 4, 2002, pp. 566-588, here p. 566.

²⁰⁷ Ivi., p. 568.

media and fashion, finding its best representation in the swinging scene²⁰⁸. It was awakening from the dusty Victorian period in which it remained stuck for decades; it was blooming and, in many ways, it remembered that cheerful town of William Shakespeare in which the arts, and especially theatre and cinema, were undergoing a renaissance²⁰⁹. Years of freedom and rebellion, the Swinging Sixties also contributed to the creation of a culturally classless society²¹⁰; the working class and the lower middle class were part of the same audience as members of the Establishment such Princess Margaret and Anthony Armstrong -Jones²¹¹.

As a “manifestation of the cultural activities of our contemporary society”²¹², Optical Art, commonly know as Op Art, is what made the 1960s so iconic and remembered. Consisting in geometric repeated shapes “fooling” the eye, it wanted to give a visual representation of the basic forces of nature, while increasing the audience’s capacity for action and perception²¹³.

Even the elegant and sophisticated Paris fell under the influence of the Swinging London, and a new generation of young designers emerged²¹⁴. Despite many of them were educated by the old guard of Parisian couturiers, they understood that fashion had to change in order to satisfy the desires of the younger generations²¹⁵.

Indeed, the fashion world of the 1960s was strongly influenced by the cultural movements of the period²¹⁶ and if in the 1950s the common fashion binomial was between couture and famous people, in the Sixties it was between fashion and contemporary art, in particular with Op and Pop Art²¹⁷. The same happened to Capucci whose production, conforming to the stimuli of the period, fell under the influence of Op art²¹⁸. His optical dresses were created applying different techniques, from the unique processing of the materials to the beaded gowns.

²⁰⁸ Ivi., p.567.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ivi., p.575.

²¹¹ *Great Britain: You Can Walk Across It On the Grass*, cit.

²¹² G. Oster, *Optical Art*, in “Applied Optics”, 4, 11, 1965, pp. 1359-1369, here p. 1359.

²¹³ S. Rycroft, *The Geographies of Swinging London*, cit., p.574.

²¹⁴ J. Lobenthal, *Radical Rags. Fashion of the Sixties*, cit., p.41.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ivi., p.49.

²¹⁷ S. Gnoli, *Moda. Dalla Nascita della Haute Couture ad Oggi*, cit., pp. 204-205.

²¹⁸ G. L. Bauzano, 1951. *C’era una Volta a Firenze*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.35.

His first dresses connected to Op art were part of the Autumn/Winter 1960-61 collection, in which he used intertwined black and white silk ribbons. Further developing this technique, he also started to incorporate colours; first beginning with different shades of the same hue, he then experimented by creating dresses with multicolor ribbons (See Ill. 8). Remarkable are two two-pieces day dresses created in 1960; here Capucci incorporated in the weaving silk strips of different sizes, able to give a higher sense of depth (See Appendix B, Ill, 1-3).

In this period, what made him unique with respect to his fellow colleagues was the particular intertwining technique used to obtain the optical effect²¹⁹. If many other dressmakers used to print their optical designs on fabric, by weaving by hand his designs, Capucci was able to obtain a sharper and more defined effect, while in printed optical fabrics, the colour texture used to fade²²⁰.



Ill. 8 - Advertising page with a Capucci design with two-colours intertwined silk ribbons, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Codroipo, Press Archive, Scatola anni 1960/61.

²¹⁹ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

²²⁰ Ibid.

1965 was the year of his greatest optical production as, in his Autumn/Winter 1965-66 collection he presented “beautifully tailored black-and-white geometrically-patterned suits, coats and dresses”²²¹. Detaching from the seasonal trends dictating knee-high skirts²²², magazines reported how Capucci presented one of the best collections of that edition of the Paris Fashion Week^{223 224}. In 1965 A/W showings, the Op art idiom was reported to be fashion “in”²²⁵, a proof was Capucci’s collection of an almost straight and strict silhouette, with suits and seven-eighths coats made with gabardines and demask woven optic patterns²²⁶. He drew with great diligence even the most difficult graphic patterns²²⁷, as in a seven-eighths gabardine wool coat with raglan sleeves woven with a black and white optical pattern emphasized by a narrow black grosgrain band marking the waistline (See Ill. 9; 10). In this wool coat, he

²²¹ B. Henderson & Brindley, *Capucci’s New Idea*, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²² Extract from “Corriere del Giorno di Taranto”, 1st August 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²³ S. Sinclair, *Capucci Keeps His Touch*, in “The Daily Telegraph”, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²⁴ F. Hammond, *Paris Pulls Shades but Not on Fashion*, in “Los Angeles Times”, 3rd August 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²⁵ *Haute Couture Dazzles with Op Art*, 30 November 1965, in “Kingston Whig-Standard”, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²⁶ *Bead-embroidered Gowns Glow in ‘Light Out’ Show*, in “Kamloops Sentinel”, 6th August 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²⁷ *La Moda con l’«Op»*. *La Collezione di Capucci Si Basa Sulla «Op Art»*, in “Corriere Lombardo”, 4th August 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

recreated one of the key technical effects of Op art by creating a checkboard pattern with distortions, giving the illusion of concave and convex shapes.



Ill. 9 - Roberto Capucci, gabardine wool coat woven with optical motifs, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 10 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the optical effect, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

One among the most famous dressed presented in that collection was a unique evening dress with Capucci's signature ribbon-weave fabric in op-art patterning (See Ill. 11; see Appendix B, Ill. 4-6). The long suit, characterized by a hood and cuffs adorned in black and white ostrich feathers, was inspired by the artworks of the Hungarian-French artist Victor Vasarely. The *Ommaggio a Vasarely (Homage to Vasarely)* dress, acclaimed for having the most elegant trimmings of all collections²²⁸, is the quintessential example of Capucci's optical production.

Victor Vasarely born in Pecs, Hungary, in 1906, studied at the Mühely Academy in Budapest; then worked in poster design and graphic arts, where he developed the first patterns²²⁹. However, it was only after the Second World War that he focused on abstractions and on his signature geometrical optical illusion²³⁰. Relevant was his use

²²⁸ S. Lindsay, *Feathers for High Fashion*, in "Brisbane Truth", 5 September 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²²⁹ Victor Vasarely, <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/victor-vasarely> [last access 22 January 2022].

²³⁰ Ibid.

of black and white as, when obtaining the maximum optical effect, this contrast was ideal²³¹. Vasarely's use of black and white is to be seen as a development of his Crystal Gordes period (1948-1960); years in which he experimented with the perspectives of axonometry, where full elements transmuted into empty ones²³². A similarity in technique is to be seen here in Capucci²³³, where he developed his intertwining technique by combining larger and thinner black and white silk ribbons, also adding in the weaving brown strips (See Ill. 12); so to create a visual illusion that favored the optical effect²³⁴.



Ill. 11 – *The Omaggio a Vasarely dress reported in a German magazine, 1965, Codroipo, Press archive, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Scatola anno 1965.*



Ill. 12 - Roberto Capucci, details of ribbon-woven fabric in *Omaggio a Vasarely*, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli

²³¹ M. Joray, *Vasarely*, Neuchatel: Editions du Griffon, 1976, p.37.

²³² Ivi., p.29.

²³³ The dress *Omaggio a Vasarely*, was born by a pure inspiration of Capucci and not by a collaboration between the two artists, indeed Vasarely was not aware of the creation of such dress.

²³⁴ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

Among the evening outfits proposed, there were also ten long skirts²³⁵ in ducaflex velvet. Indeed, in order to obtain optical effects, Capucci also used to work with velvet. Such fabric was processed in order to get a sharp, geometrical pattern and thanks to the interplay of light obtained with this bright-surfaced fabric, he could achieve an illusion of fulness and emptiness, simulating concave and convex arrangements (See, Ill. 13). Similarly, he obtained the same effect by designing fabrics, as in the case of crimplene²³⁶ where he combined turquoise half-moons on a white background²³⁷ (See Ill. 14).



Ill. 13 - An advertisement page depicting two long velvet skirts with optical processing published in the Greek women's magazine "Gynaika", Codroipo, Press archive, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Scatola anno 1965.



Ill. 14 - A close up of the optical effect created in Capucci's Crimplene fabric published in a magazine, Codroipo, Press archive, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Scatola anno 1965.

In his experimentation with optical art, Capucci did not limit himself to the exclusive use of silk ribbons and processed fabrics, indeed, his passion for refined and elegant trimmings led him to introduce embroideries in his optical designs. As a surprising part of his Parisian A/W 1965 showing, he presented six floral bead-embroidered

²³⁵ M. Pezzi, *Silhouette Bianco-Nere nei Tessuti «Op Art»*, in "Il Giorno", 1st August 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²³⁶ A synthetic and resistant fabric.

²³⁷ *Capucci's Crimplene (3)*, in "Jersey Fabrics", March-April 1966, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

ballgowns in pastel colours (Appendix B, Ill. 7-14). Soon after their entrance in the salon, and before the audience could catch a single detail of the dresses, the light went out²³⁸. “Oh non, pas encore une grève!” was the disapproving moan of the public, accustomed to the frequent blackouts due to the trade union unrest of those years²³⁹, but in fact, Capucci deliberately turned the light off, with the intent to deceive the participants and soon they realized that, as fireflies, the six dresses were glowing in the dark²⁴⁰ (See Ill., 15). It was a *coup de théâtre*.



Ill. 15 - The six phosphorescent gowns presented at Capucci Autumn/Winter 1965-66 collection depicted in a French magazine, *Codroipo*, Press archive, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Scatola anno 1965.

²³⁸ *Bead-embroidered Gowns Glow in 'Light Out' Show*, cit.

²³⁹ R. Sgubin, *L'Atelier dei Fiori. Gli Abiti di Roberto Capucci Incontrano le Immagini di Massimo Gardone*, exhibition catalogue (13 September 2018 – 5 May 2019), Crocetta del Montello: Antiga edizioni, 2018, p.42.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

These revolutionary models, inspired by the phosphorescent beads of some rosaries worn by a group of nuns during a religious procession in Rome²⁴¹, gained him a loud applause²⁴² proving his flair for showmanship²⁴³.

1965 was also an important year for Op art, as the New York based Museum of Modern Art opened an exhibition titled *The Responsive Eye* curated by William C. Seitz (1914-1974), a scholar of Abstract Expressionism, the main idea that brought him to the creation of such exhibit, was the desire to offer essentially perceptual experiences²⁴⁴. He wanted the audience to look at things not in the ordinary way, but rather responding to the perceptual aspect of the artworks²⁴⁵. The exhibition catalogue reported how the main concern of the exposition was that of displaying groups or individuals representing every country²⁴⁶, indeed Seitz selected 102 artists studying how the eye responded to elements as colour, pattern or light²⁴⁷. Among the displaying ones there were also the British painter Bridget Riley (b. 1931), Victor Vasarely, Larry Poons (b. 1937) or little-known collectives, as the Italian Gruppo N or the Spanish Equipo 57²⁴⁸. However, in 1966 Capucci's creativity reached a new level, starting his first experimentations with unusual materials as plastic, together with Pierre Cardin (1922-2020) and Paco Rabanne (b. 1934), Capucci created some futuristic designs. Despite their different visions on fashion²⁴⁹, Cardin and Capucci both introduced the use of plastic in French couture. The Italian-born French fashion designer introduced in the 1960s futuristic outfits in which he experimented with vinyl and silvery fabrics

²⁴¹ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

²⁴² B. Henderson & Brindley, *Capucci's New Idea*, cit.

²⁴³ L. Hickman, *Op Art Patterns Used in Capucci Collection*, in "Regina Leader Post", 8, 1965, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1965.

²⁴⁴ *The Responsive Eye*, B. De Palma, 1965, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaUme6DY8Lk&list=WL&index=52&t=369s> [last access 29 November 2021].

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ W. C. Seitz, *The Responsive Eye*, exhibition catalogue (23 February – 25 April 1965), p.7, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2914_300190234.pdf?_ga=2.23799992.302747144.1640305182-1370633006.1640305182 [last access 22 December 2021].

²⁴⁷ C. Nicolai, *The Responsive Eye*, in "Flash Art", 18 February 2016, <https://flash---art.com/article/the-responsive-eye/> [last access 22 December 2021].

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Sustainer and precursor of fashion mass commercialization, Pierre Cardin displayed a ready-to-wear presentation at the Printemps department store in Paris, in 1959. This earned him a temporary exclusion from the Haute Couture guild.

creating strikingly geometrical dresses²⁵⁰. His was a forward-drawing fashion characterised by sleek, bold day dresses; with the arrival of the Space Age he understood that a new era had just started and that it gave a new dimension to art and fashion, so there was a need to think of the future and to adapt to it by creating something new²⁵¹. He so introduced the use of plastic and futuristic characteristic as well as the figure of the circle, recalling the moon²⁵² (See Ill. 16).



Ill. 16 - Pierre Cardin, Satellite cape with helmet and thigh high boots, 1969, <https://pierrecardin.com/%22Circles%22-cl23-en> [last access 21 January 2022].

²⁵⁰ *Pierre Cardin, Fashion Designer for the Space Age, Dies Aged 98*, 30 December 2020, <https://artreview.com/pierre-cardin-fashion-designer-for-the-space-age-dies-aged-98/> [last access 21 January 2022].

²⁵¹ *House of Cardin*, P. D. Ebersole, T. Hughes, I Wonder Pictures, 2019.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

Influenced by the years of the space race and of the Gemini program²⁵³, Capucci too designed a few plastic dresses. The first to be presented, and for the first time in haute couture²⁵⁴, was an elegant short cocktail dress part of his Spring/Summer 1966 collection, made of a white silk organza and covered in semi-rigid plastic (See Ill.17; 18). The skirt, embroidered with transparent plastic flower beads, has a floating hem, as by the introduction of a plastic panel, the cut-out seems to be detached from the dress, also revealing the model's legs.



Ill. 17 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress, semi-rigid transparent plastic dress on a silk organza base embroidered with plastic elements, Spring/Summer 1966, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 18 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the embroidered skirt of the cocktail dress, Spring/Summer 1966, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

Another design presented in the same collection is a white sheath organza cocktail dress covered by a plastic trapezoidal dress, revealing the gown underneath (See Appendix B, Ill. 15). Capucci's experimentation with plastic continued also in his Spring/Summer 1967 collection where he presented a two-pieces white linear evening dress with a plastic sleeveless jacket, decorated with two-colours plastic cubes of different sizes (See Appendix B, Ill. 16-18). However, that season, he also offered designs with movable or removable parts put together by zippers or Velcro

²⁵³ A NASA space lift program developed in ten missions, from March 1965 to November 1966.

²⁵⁴ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.52.

applications²⁵⁵; for instance, when removed, the lower part of a dress could become a jacket²⁵⁶.

2.2. The Roman homecoming (1968) and the bloom of experimentation (1968-1979)

Capucci's Parisian interlude lasted six years, from 1962 to 1968, when he returned to his beloved Rome, in his atelier in Via Gregoriana. The Parisian years allowed him to develop his expertise and refine his technique, reaching a deeper understanding of the sartorial technique and accuracy of the Haute Couture²⁵⁷. Despite this, his time in France had been difficult, high fashion was changing under the influence of the social upheavals due to the economic boom²⁵⁸ and Paris fashion houses were facing a decline in sales²⁵⁹. Financing Haute Couture had become increasingly difficult, it was losing interest among the young generations, more attracted to the cosmopolitan allure of ready-to-wear rather than to the refinement of high fashion and, in order not to close, couture houses were forced to extend their production into prêt-à-porter clothing²⁶⁰. To be added to this burdensome period, are the riots that afflicted Paris during spring 1968, when students and workers protested against de Gaulle's conservative government²⁶¹. In this tough atmosphere, Capucci realised he had to return to his hometown as, during an interview he asserted that "I missed the colours of Rome. [...] [I]t has this wonderful colour - I had to return"²⁶². However, even Italian fashion was facing some challenges too. Giovanni Battista Giorgini, Capucci's patron, resigned from the Sala Bianca events in 1965, and from that year onward fashion presentations were split into three different cities, Florence for boutique and sportswear collections, Rome for haute couture and Milan for ready-to-wear²⁶³.

²⁵⁵ P. Shelton, *Wardrobe Update. Paris Makes it Plain*, in "Christian Science Monitor", 31 January 1967, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1967.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ *The Sixties According to Roberto Capucci*, <https://fashionheritage.eu/object-voices-the-sixties-according-to-roberto-capucci/> [last access 6 December 2021].

²⁵⁸²⁵⁸ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 57.

²⁵⁹ G. Emerson, *Paris Couturiers Cheer Up. They Now Doubt a Delay in Showing Winter Styles*, in "New York Times", 5 June 1968, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1968.

²⁶⁰ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 57.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² C. McDowell, *Roman Splendour*, in "Country Life", 27 February 1986, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1986.

²⁶³ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 57.

In a later interview Capucci, expressed his frustration on how Italian fashion was on his return:

In the seventies I returned to Rome and I saw the change. Fashion has started becoming a [mere matter of] business. Important magazines asked you to buy ad pages, I did not feel free anymore. I felt I was in another world. Before I left Italy, if I made a beautiful collection everything went well and I was able to sell many pieces; with a bad collection you were criticized, everything was normal. With this new system you bought pages in a magazine even if your collection was bad, but if you bought ten ad pages you were the king of fashion.²⁶⁴

Fashion was no more about creativity and handicraft abilities, refinement and elegance, but rather it focused on the whimsical desires of an ever-changing market. Those were the years of glam rock music contamination into the fashion world, with platform boots, long skirts and layered looks²⁶⁵. Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008) was dominating with his Cossack-inspired outfits, while Italian designers as Gianfranco Ferrè (1944-2007) and Missoni were gaining a following²⁶⁶. To be added is also the disco look of Gucci and Fiorucci, that overpopulated the dance floors of the Manhattan based Studio 54²⁶⁷. However, despite the whimsical atmosphere that characterised such clubs, the Seventies were years of disillusionment; news about the Vietnam war, the Watergate scandal and the failed Apollo 16 mission were part of the daily routine²⁶⁸. Italy too was torn by the violent *Anni di Piombo* that led in 1978 to the assassination of the Italian politician and member of the Christian Democracy, Aldo Moro (1916-1978).

The world was running at the speed of consumerism, and so was fashion, who was scarifying creativity to satisfy the market. In such atmosphere, Capucci showed the first signs of suffer from the increasingly commercialised couture system, he said: “The happiest moment is the moment of creation...but a creator isn’t free to design what he likes anymore”²⁶⁹. This spirit of melancholy, that characterised the years immediately after his comeback, is well expressed in his experience as a costume designer in 1968²⁷⁰. In his first and only experience as a designer for films, he was

²⁶⁴ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell’Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit., author’s translation.

²⁶⁵ K. Mulvey, M. Richards, *Decades of Beauty. The Changing Image of Women 1890s 1990s*, cit., p.155.

²⁶⁶ *Ivi.*, p.160.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ivi.*, p.155.

²⁶⁹ L. Bentley Lessona, *Italian Designer Sights End of High-Fashion Era*, cit.

²⁷⁰ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 57.

asked by Pasolini to dress the leading actress in his movie *Teorema* (1968)²⁷¹. Capucci remembered this experience by saying:

I only worked with Pasolini, it was enough for me. [...] He explained the film to me in two minutes and I asked him: 'who is the actress I have to dress? 'Silvana Mangano' [when saying the name of the Italian actress, Capucci mimicked to have been shot at the heart, bringing his hands at the chest, smiling pleasingly]. I was so satisfied by the experience that I no longer accepted when other directors asked me to make costumes for their movies, I refused.²⁷²

He had here, to represent the bourgeois aspect of the Italian industrial middle class of the 1970s, particularly depicting how the movie characters were stuck in space and time. This experience with cinema also brought in him a moment of reflection as, by meeting Silvana Mangano, he found in her his muse. Described as evanescent and as the most beautiful woman capable to give him a great satisfaction thanks to her elegance, Capucci found in the actress the ideal femininity²⁷³. However, apparently, it was reciprocal as when first meeting the couturier, Mangano told him she was disappointed with her image in De Santis' *Riso Amaro* (1949), she looked too prosperous and sensual, while she wanted to become a really sophisticated woman²⁷⁴. So Capucci dressed Lucia, Mangano's character, creating extremely simple clothes and using a nude palette of whites, beiges and greys, furtherly tinged with red shades as coral at the end of the film²⁷⁵. An example are two designs worn by the actress in two different moments of the movie. The first is a short day suit in neutral tones worn at the beginning of the movie (See Ill.19), when Lucia still had not met the visitor, Terence Stamp's character, whom she would fall in love with. The second outfit otherwise, is tinged with vibrant red shades (See Ill. 20), underlining Lucia's passion and regained freedom. No more chained by the bourgeoisie cables, she let herself into the visitor's arms; with him she discovered herself, she found love and passion. Indeed, Capucci was asked to use light tones, while vivid shades of colours should have been used only when she would have found love²⁷⁶. With his admiration for her, Capucci

²⁷¹ G. L. Bauzano, *Anni 70*, in Roberto Capucci. *Creatività al di là del Tempo*, cit., p.63.

²⁷² *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit., author's translation.

²⁷³ G. L. Bauzano, *Roberto Capucci. Sperimentatore al di là del Tempo*, in Roberto Capucci. *Creatività al di là del Tempo*, cit., pp. 17-28, here p. 24.

²⁷⁴ Roberto Capucci – *Quando la Moda È Arte. Incontri Ravvicinati*, A. Agliotti, RAI, 2011. Author's translation.

²⁷⁵ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers in Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, cit., p. 158.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

strengthened his refusal of the trend of the Jolie Madame, a conformist way to perceive and dress the woman with a frou-frou femininity²⁷⁷.



Ill. 19– Silvana Mangano wearing an outfit by Capucci for the film *Teorema*, 1968, curtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 20 - Silvana Mangano wearing a light coral suit by Capucci in the film *Teorema*, 1968, curtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Relevant for his production of the late 1960s, is a tunic dress he created for the costumes of *Teorema*, in which he used, for the first time, cords to embellish the neck the shoulders and the waist of the gown²⁷⁸ (See Ill. 21).

²⁷⁷ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers in Luxe calme et volupté*, cit., p.150.

²⁷⁸ S. Lucibello, *Il Plisse e la Seta per Capucci*, in “AIS Design”, 4, 2014, pp. 1-11, here p. 7.



Ill. 21 - Silvana Mangano wearing a tunic dress with rope details, 1968, curtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Finally reconnected with his creativity, after a year of studies, in January 1969 Capucci presented his first collection after his return from Paris, at the Safa Palatino centre in Rome²⁷⁹. For the first and only time he created a huge collection including women, men and children's clothes²⁸⁰. However, monumental was his Autumn/Winter collection presented in July 1970 at Villa Giulia in Rome. Showed in the moonlit courtyard of the Etruscan museum, the collection was applauded for his classicism²⁸¹ and the bare-looking clothes²⁸². Characterised by a poetic aspect²⁸³, the unadorned and pale earth-toned dresses²⁸⁴, seemed inspired by monastic robes²⁸⁵. Indeed, one of the reviews of the collection reported that it “was more like watching a religious pageant

²⁷⁹ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 9 November 2021, Codroipo.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ E. Rossetti, *Le Sfilate dell'Alta Moda Autunno-Inverno a Roma. Tuniche Monacali. Capucci Si È Ispirato alle Novizie dei Conventi di Clausura*, in “Stampa Sera – Torino”, 13 July 1970, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ L. Boccardi, *L'Abito per Capucci è Anche Poesia. Colori Pastello e Linne di Purezza Prearffaelita nella Collezione del Sarto Romano Presentata a Villa Giulia*, in “Il Gazzettino”, 12 July 1970, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970.

²⁸⁴ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p.57.

²⁸⁵ E. Rossetti, *Le Sfilate dell'Alta Moda Autunno-Inverno a Roma. Tuniche Monacali. Capucci Si È Ispirato alle Novizie dei Conventi di Clausura*, cit.

than a fashion show”²⁸⁶. If prêt-à-porter was spreading, Capucci put himself in antithesis. The trend was to transform couture in an industrialised system, able to create large-scale products easily accessible to everyone; so Capucci decided to create an elite fashion for intellectuals, not encouraging the desire of luxurious and material possessions²⁸⁷.

In Germano Celant’s (1940-2020) *Appunti per una Guerriglia* (1967), the Italian art critic and curator wrote:

Mass production mentally forces him [the artist] to produce a single object that satisfies the market to the point of saturation. He is not allowed simply to create the object and then to abandon it to its destiny. He has to follow up on it, justify it, introduce it into the channels of distribution, turning himself as artist into a substitute of an assembly line. [...] he becomes a cog in a mechanism²⁸⁸.

These lines perfectly describe Capucci’s state of mind. Grown up as a tailor during the years of the magnificence of the Sala Bianca events and as a fervid advocate of haute couture, he developed a form of “intellectual” rebellion over ready-to-wear²⁸⁹. Couture did not require anymore its artisanal aspect if, then, implied the act of production, an economical act, where the product was standardised and there was no choice of customisation; on the other hand, Capucci was accustomed to the act of creation, an artistic practice, close to patrons’ commissions to artists, where he could create unique works that fitted the client’s requests.

If Op Art can be defined as a source of inspiration for Capucci’s 1960s production, the same cannot be said for Arte Povera²⁹⁰. For him, it was not a complete source of inspiration, but rather an adhesion to the movement where he felt free to experiment with unusual materials²⁹¹.

Capucci’s return in Rome happened in the years of the most fervid Arte Povera production. Art galleries as L’Attico run by Fabio Sargentini (b. 1939) strongly sustained Arte Povera, representing artists such as Jannis Kounellis (1936 - 2017) or

²⁸⁶ P. Shelton, *Italian Couture Takes a Lengthy Look at Fall-Winter*, in “Christian Science Monitor”, 16 July 1970, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970.

²⁸⁷ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 9 November 2021, Codroipo.

²⁸⁸ *In Memory of Germano Celant. Arte Povera. Notes on a Guerrilla*, <https://flash--art.com/article/germano-celant-arte-povera-notes-on-a-guerrilla-war/> [last access 2 December 2021].

²⁸⁹ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 9 November 2021, Codroipo.

²⁹⁰ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

Pino Pascali (1935 – 1968)²⁹². The gallery also hosted in 1967 the exhibit *Fuoco, Immagine, Acqua, Terra* displaying artworks from Pino Pascali, Piero Gilardi (b. 1942), Jannis Kounellis and Michelangelo Pistoletto (b. 1933) together with Umberto Bignardi (b. 1935), Mario Ceroli (b. 1938) and Mario Schifano (1934-1998)²⁹³. The name of the exhibition recalled the movement's philological idea to the return to nature and, for such reason, Sargentini sustained that his exposition was the one giving birth to the Arte Povera movement and not Celant's *Arte Povera – In Spazio* at the Galleria Bertesca in Genoa²⁹⁴.

Artists, members of the Arte Povera movement, gathered with the circles of the Roman high society and Capucci was part of it; many of them even frequented his house²⁹⁵. Capucci's dresses can be seen as a mirror of the society of a certain time, as it is possible to discern the cultural, political or artistical influences of the period²⁹⁶, and his 1970s gowns are evidence of this.

Developing a trend he began in his last years in Paris, with the use of phosphorescent beads and plastic, he so started experimenting with unusual materials²⁹⁷. His need to reconnect with his creativity and the feeling of disillusionment led him to get closer to the Arte Povera movement, experimenting with poor and raw materials as straw, pebbles, bamboo and raffia creating rare and uncommon designs. He felt part of it²⁹⁸, he did not feel the inspiration from the outside, but rather, far away from the rules of fashion he felt free to express his creativity. He also used earthy colours and special fabrics²⁹⁹, looking as sackcloth but made of natural materials as silk, wool, linen or cotton³⁰⁰.

The first poor-looking design was the *Cretto* coat (1969), nowadays also known as *Omaggio a Burri (Homage to Burri)*. When asked about his creations and Burri's one

²⁹² C. Gilman, *L'Arte Povera a Roma*, in *Il Confine evanescente. Arte Italiana 1960-2010*, edited by G. Guercio, A. Mattiolo, Milano: Electa, 2010, pp.43-74, here p. 44.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

²⁹⁶ E. Minio Capucci, *La Lezione di un Maestro per le Future Generazioni*, in *Metafore. Roberto Capucci, Meraviglie della Forma*, exhibition catalogue (17 November 2021 – 9 January 2022) edited by G. L. Bauzano, translation by C. E. Evans, Venezia: Marsilio editore, 2021, p.13.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

²⁹⁹ Such fabrics were created by some textile industries in Biella or Prato, experimenting combinations of different materials as silk and raffia.

³⁰⁰ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

Capucci said “the Cretto is a marvelous piece and my coat is another work”³⁰¹. Both operas recall the same idea but are not an imitation³⁰². Alberto Burri (1915-1995) started his first studies on his Cretti at the beginning of the 1970s using white poultice, zinc and vinyl glues³⁰³. The idea was then further developed between 1985 and 1989, when he created the *Grande Cretto*³⁰⁴. The project was a shroud of the city of Gibellina, destroyed by the 1968 earthquake, the cracks of the Cretto retrace exactly the streets of the city³⁰⁵, in a way bringing it back to life.

Capucci’s *Cretto* coat (See Ill. 22), on the contrary, is made in “white wool, in pieces as a broken wall with an internal lining in black chiffon, so that when the mannequin was walking on the catwalk it could move as a storm”³⁰⁶; this work can be considered the first of his dresses connected to the Arte Povera movement.



Ill. 22 - Roberto Capucci, Cretto coat, white wool inlays on a black silk base, Autumn/Winter 1969-70, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

³⁰¹ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author’s translation.

³⁰² Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

³⁰³ *Cosa Sono i Cretti di Alberto Burri e Cos’è il Mega-Cretto di Gibellina Distrutta*, 10 May 2017, <https://www.stilearte.it/anticipazioni-i-cretti-di-alberto-burri-al-museo-riso-di-palermo/> [last access 25 January 2022].

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author’s translation.

However, the real experimentation with raw materials began in 1971 when, unconventional designs first appeared in one of his collections. In his Spring/Summer 1971 showing, he presented two nude-colored dresses where he combined refined materials as silk georgette to raw ones as jute cloth and cord (See Appendix B, Ill 19-23). However, the Spring/Summer 1972 collection was the most representative of the period, as he created few among his most iconic and exhibited designs. Here, he played with different components. Always combining fine fabrics to poor ones, he created dresses characterized by simple and sinuous lines as in a long silk evening dress adorned by a braided straw bust (See Ill. 23; see Appendix C, Ill. 24; 25).



Ill. 23 - Roberto Capucci, Spring/Summer 1972 collection sketch of a silk georgette long evening dress with a straw bust, 1972, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

In a group of three day dresses he used, instead, pebbles that by being stick on a reinforced piece of fabric constituted the belt, neck or cuffs of the dresses (See Appendix C, Ill. 26-29). In such designs, Capucci was able to create a deceiving effect where, by using a dull surface fabric, the body of the dresses seem to be made of

sackcloth despite being of silk shantung taffeta with silk georgette sleeves³⁰⁷. In these cases, it is also remarkable Capucci's mastery in the colour combination between the fabric and the natural elements used. The pebbles, collected in a Sicilian beach³⁰⁸, were combined with fabrics whose colours recalled the pebbles' tones and that could emphasize their shade.

In his Spring/Summer 1972 collection, he did not limit himself to the single use of straw or pebbles, as he also included bamboo (See Ill. 24, see Appendix C, Ill. 30-32).



Ill. 24 - Stefano Canulli, graphite and watercolors illustration of two bamboo dresses by Roberto Capucci, 1972, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

In these designs, distinguishing themselves from the other gowns by their vivid and bright hues³⁰⁹, the designer embellished the necklines, shoulders, the waists and cuffs of the dresses by sewing together multiple bamboo sticks, previously hot folded³¹⁰.

The 1970s are a key period for Capucci's artistic production, not only for his use of unconventional elements, but also for the creation of one among his most famous artworks³¹¹. By living in an art city as Rome, surrounded by such masterpieces as the

³⁰⁷ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

³⁰⁸ TG2 Costume e Società, 1 December 2021, <https://www.rainews.it/rubriche/tg2costumeandsocieta/video/2021/12/Tg2-Costume--Societa-del-01122021-1c679384-fb1f-4e30-92b6-e5134989727c.html> [last seen 27 December 2021].

³⁰⁹ Fondazione Roberto Capucci owns just one of the two dresses, which was donated by a loyal customer of the Maestro.

³¹⁰ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

³¹¹ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 28 April 2021, zoom call.

Sistine Chapel and Bernini's creations, not only could he develop a delicate sensitivity to beauty but also an aesthetic taste for refinement, which led him to the urge to be continuously surrounded by beauty. Capucci found in fashion the best expression of his creativity, but it should not be forgotten his artistic background, that always brought him to a continuous experimentation in materials, colours as well as structure. It was at the end of the decade that he created *Colonna Romanica* (1978), his very first sculptural dress (See Ill. 25; see Appendix C, Ill. 33-35). As a Roman and as a "son of Bernini"³¹² he felt inspired by the beauty surrounding him and in this 1978 design he made an artwork wearable. Part of his Fall/Winter 1978-79 collection, he reconsidered the relationship of the body³¹³ and elevated it as the soul of this satin sculpture resembling a Doric column.



Ill. 25 - Roberto Capucci, *Colonna Romanica*, sculptural dress in silk satin, Rome, Autumn/Winter 1978-79, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

³¹² *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit., author's translation.

³¹³ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 68.

2.3. The search for volume of a silk sculptor

Capucci has always devised his designs by a research of the figure³¹⁴. “The line and the style have always been between the artistic and stylistic research, between form and structure, this since the beginning of my creative experience. The architectural elements have always been steady in my research”³¹⁵: this was Capucci’s answer when asked about the reason that brought him to his insatiable need to experiment with volumes and forms. Even though his approach to his dresses is similar to that of an architect or of a sculptor, he has to use a different processing technique; he is not using marble, clay or building materials, but fine and luxurious fabrics³¹⁶. If silk is his favorite material, silk taffeta is the most used³¹⁷ as its rigid texture can easily keep the desired shape, not limiting his creativity. This fabric was chosen for its lightness and density, it is highly malleable and allows the couturier to achieve his most fanciful wishes, as it can be used for sculpting, moulding, braiding, knotting and it can even be cut into pieces³¹⁸. Anyhow, despite the moldable characteristic of this fabric, Capucci also had to develop some techniques that could allow him not only to achieve the desired effect, but also to make it durable over time. In his *Banjo Line* (1955) (See Appendix D, Ill 36; 37) the voluminous effect of the shirt was achieved by a deep sewing then freed when forming the scrolls at the end of the dress. In the carmine silk taffeta dress *Nove Gonne* (1956) (See Appendix D, Ill. 38-40), inspired by the circles made by the throwing of a stone in the water³¹⁹, he developed instead a technique that he will then employ in many other designs. The model, structured as a simple sheath dress is adorned by nine corollas rotating centripetally around it³²⁰; each of them constituted by a structure of triple organza. With *Bocciolo di Rosa* (1956) and *Calla* (1956) (See Appendix D, Ill. 41-43), Capucci began considering women as metaphors

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. Author’s translation, see Appendix A.

³¹⁶ M. Di Forti, in *Roberto Capucci. L’Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, cit., pp. 17-22, here p. 20.

³¹⁷ G. L. Bauzano, *Le Anime Dell’Alta Moda. Ispirazione, Disegno, Colore e Tessuto*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.44.

³¹⁸ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers in Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, cit., p. 159.

³¹⁹ G. L. Bauzano, *Il Nove Gonne*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.47.

³²⁰ Ibid.

of flowers³²¹. The first one, faithfully recreates an upside-down bud of a rose, in which the taffeta petals seem to be created by crumpling up the red silk.



Ill. 26 - Roberto Capucci sketching Boccio di Rosa in his Roman atelier in Via Sistina, 1956, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

On the other side, for the creation of *Calla*, and in particular for his funnel shape, nylon threads were employed to mold the curved edges of the mantle, reconnecting with the skirt of the dress.

Pushing his imagination and architectural attitude at a further level, in 1957, Capucci designed a series of dresses incorporating unusual shapes. In his sketches for the 1957 Spring/Summer collection, many dresses were represented with particular volumes, recalling geometrical shapes, as two cocktail dresses with pencil skirts and a rounded, a half-circle or a pleated diamond shape overskirt, as well as an evening dress with a pleated, heart-shaped and double-layered skirt (See Appendix D, Ill. 44-47). These designs, seems to be preparatory sketches for what will then be the *Linea a scatola* (1958), and mark the beginning of Capucci's challenge to femininity.

In 1958 he locked up women bodies with his famous *Linea a scatola* (See Ill. 27; 28, see Appendix D, Ill. 48-53), part of his Autumn/Winter 1958/59 collection. His obsession with volume and space, with fulness and vacancy³²², and his anatomical studies made at the Accademia, led him to the urge of plastic definition in his creations³²³. If under an architectonic point of view the box-like dresses meant nothing special, in the couture world they represented groundbreaking, innovative and

³²¹ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers in Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, cit., p. 160.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

provocative designs³²⁴. To reach the desired squared shape, the dresses were structured by four flat silk and wool faille panels, stitched together by visible external seams³²⁵ at the front, back and sides³²⁶. Eleven years after Monsieur Dior's *New Look* (1947), Capucci opposed to it his square-sided silhouette challenging in its boxy lines the hourglass shape of *Le Bar*. Dior's black and white tailleur emphasized the feminine and fragile figure of postwar women with the tight waists of the white jacket, followed by a corolle pleated black skirt³²⁷; while Capucci's box line ignores the body shape, becoming a casing, almost a habitat for the body. This model marked a turning point in Capucci's career, as he then continued to develop a more architectural and sculptural approach to his designs³²⁸.



Ill. 27- Roberto Capucci, detail of the external seams, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 28 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the a crepon silk overskirt, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

³²⁴ M. Di Forti, in *Roberto Capucci. L'Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, cit., pp. 17-22, here p. 20.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 30.

³²⁷ G. L. Bauzano, *La Linea a Scatola*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.53.

³²⁸ Ibid.

His search for volume, however, did not culminate with the *Linea a scatola*, as in 1959, he created a series of three black and white cocktail dresses and a twelve-layers white day dress. In the two-colored dresses, the underneath little black dresses were enhanced by five-layers voluminous white bolero (See Appendix D, Ill. 54-56) or by a nine layers white collar (See Appendix D, Ill. 57-59). The silhouette created in the strapless twelve-layers white cocktail dress (See Appendix D, Ill. 60-62), was then developed in other designs from his 1959 collection recalling the layered aspect, some of them were even structured by following a specific geometrical shape, as a rectangle (See Appendix D, Ill 63-66), a diamond (See Appendix D, Ill. 67; 68) or a skirt with triangular volumes (See Appendix D, Ill. 69).

Within Capucci's first sculptural dresses, it is worth mentioning *Ventagli* (1980) (See Ill. 29, see Appendix D, Ill. 70-73) as one of his most iconic designs³²⁹. Inspired by the flight of colourful South African birds witnessed during a safari, the Roman couturier struggled for years in the vain attempt to recreate such memory until, a few years after, watching his sister and business partner Marcella playing with a paper fan, he had the idea on how to reproduce that touching memory³³⁰.



Ill. 29 - Roberto Capucci, illustration of Ventagli, signed illustration, graphite and coloured crayons, 1980, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Symbol of the first attempts to freely express his creativity, *Ventagli* was presented during the Autumn/Winter 1980-81 showing at Palazzo Barberini in Rome. At first, it presents itself as a linear long red silk sauvage taffeta evening dress, but in two long

³²⁹ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

³³⁰ Ibid.

lateral pockets it encloses two lateral fans in different tones of red and pink, reproducing his South African memory.

After his resignation from the official couture calendar, Capucci presented his first solo show at Palazzo Visconti in Milan in October 1982³³¹. This collection was characterised by sculpture dresses with the most innovative forms, inspired by nature or music³³²; as *Arancia* (1982) with sliced open half circles glimpsing in pink, light orange and deep yellow, suggesting the slices of an orange (See Appendix D, Ill. 74-76). From the same collection, Capucci also presented a long evening dress which folds, placed on the skirt, looked like reeds (See Appendix D, Ill. 77).

During the years, his search for volume and experimentation in the creation of unconventional shapes, led him to design models with sharpest geometrical effects, as in a 1992 dress with a sauvage silk taffeta folded panel applied on the sleeves (See Appendix D, Ill. 78; 79), or in a 2007 gown with a geometrical and rigid structured belt (See Appendix D, Ill. 80; 81). Indeed, the sharp geometrical shape of the belt resembles the graphic virtuosity of the before considered 1957 sketches, meaning that Capucci's research never ends.

2.4. A new approach to colour

Colour has always been an important aspect in Capucci's creativity. It is involved since the sketching process, indeed he never begins the realization of a dress before having coloured its sketch³³³.

In the first two decades of his career, he has always been applauded for his use of colour even though it was not as astonishing as in his latest designs³³⁴. In those years it was usual to see in his collections monochromatic dresses, as in the case of an orange woolen coat (See Appendix E, Ill. 82) and a magenta evening dress (See Appendix E, Ill. 83) part of his Autumn/Winter 1961/62 farewell collection at Palazzo Pitti in Florence, or in two 1969 dresses, a turquoise evening dress (See Appendix E, Ill. 84) and a red day dress (See Appendix E, Ill. 85). In those years he focused his attention more on the shape and the details of the dresses³³⁵, as in the above-mentioned designs.

³³¹ D. E. Blum, *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 81.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

³³⁴ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

³³⁵ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo

In the 1961 coat he created inlays in relief that recalled the coffered ceiling of the Sistine Chapel³³⁶, while in the evening dress, presented the same year, the sleeves look like bluebells. In the two 1969 designs he instead reinterpreted his famous *Linea a Scatola* (1958); it is usual indeed, to see in Capucci a development of some features of his famous designs as in these cases, where he developed an evening gown with box-like sleeves and a day dress with the traditional four-panels feature, but embellished with arabesque-like edges.

The 1970s were not only the decade of his greatest research and experimentation, but also an incubation period for his colour experiments. Crucial for his approach to the use of colour was his journey to India in 1970³³⁷. Hosted by the Indian Handicrafts & Handlooms Export Corporation he was asked to create a High Fashion collection to be produced in India³³⁸. As his first trip to the country, he was so fascinated by the use of colours and the sculptural and architectonic structure of the saree, that he even created a series of saree-inspired dresses³³⁹. Such trip touched him profoundly, to the extent that, during the years, he returned to the country thirty-six times³⁴⁰. When asked about his journeys to India and his use of colours the Maestro affirmed that: “I have always loved colours, for me, colour, is like breathing the air or eating when hungry. [...] There is always a meaning in life and that country has its meaning”³⁴¹.

Comparing the sketches made before and after his trip to India, it can be noticed the difference in his use of colours. By observing the designs from the 1969-70 Autumn/Winter collection, it is evident how he preferred the use of monochromatic hues characterized by light and dusty tones, while in his 1970 collection he was praised for the “play of colours in his draped peplums”³⁴² (See Ill. 30). In a season where

³³⁶ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 22 November 2021, Codroipo.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ *Designer Who Likes Indian Dresses*, in “Indian Express”, 14 March 1970, Codroipo, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Volume 1970.

³³⁹ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author’s translation.

³⁴² L. Olivetti Rason, *Moda con un Po’ di Luna*, in “Nazione”, 12 July 1970, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970-71. Author’s translation.

couturiers repropoed 1940s-inspired styles³⁴³ or copied Saint Laurent³⁴⁴, Capucci was noticed for his love for colours and how he considered them as an integral part of fashion³⁴⁵. Was therefore reported how his approach to them was that of a painter combining together different hues, as he used *bois de rose*, tangerine, lilac and mauve³⁴⁶ (See Ill. 31).



Ill. 30 - Capucci's design inspired by the Indian saree. *Vogue Italia*, 09, 1970, Press archive, Codroipo, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Scatola 1970.



Ill. 31 - One of Capucci's dresses inspired by the Indian colours reported in the Italian magazine "Linea Italiana", Press Archive, Codroipo, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970.

Indeed, despite his love for colours, his Indian escape seemed to have freed in him the worship for bright tones, somehow legitimizing his use of them³⁴⁷. From this date on, he abandoned the monochromatic use of colour, embracing instead the use of contrasting tones or similar shades. As he recalled in an interview:

[...] I did a turquoise and orange dress [...] and everyone said '[...] it is risky, this two colours that are not good together' but then it was really appreciated [...]. Then I went to

³⁴³ L. Bentley Lessona, *Florentine Flair*, in "Christian Science Monitor", 18 May 1971, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970-71.

³⁴⁴ B. Morris, *The Big Message from Rome. Real Clothes Are Back in Style*, in "New York Times", 21 July 1971, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970-71.

³⁴⁵ A. Paglia, extract from "Giornale di Bergamo", 24 July 1970, Codroipo, Archivio stampa, Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola 1970-71.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

India, crossing the fields I saw an old lady coming out from a hut and she had an orange and turquoise saree [...] they have this ease in combining colours and in loving them.³⁴⁸

Capucci so started delighting with his use of colours, indeed, by observing the extensive heritage held in his Foundation, it is possible to divide his use of tones into two categories: the use of shades of the same colour or the contrasting tones.

When considering nuances, to some among his most famous dresses must be given attention to. Firstly, a 1987 design previously own by the Italian actress Valentina Cortese (See Ill. 32; 33). The long evening dress is characterised by various shades of pink; if the frontal part is relatively simple, the real play of colour is to be found on the back of the dress. Decorated by double-layered ruffles starting from the back and developing towards the front of the skirt, they are thus contaminating the body of the gown with shades of deep purple and lilac.



Ill. 32 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the different colours on the back ruffles, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 33 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, silk faille dress in different shades of colour ranging from fuchsia to pink, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

In *Oceano*, a 1998 sculptural dress, the Maestro evoked the blue tones of the ocean (See Appendix E, Ill 86; 87). Commissioned by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

³⁴⁸ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit., author's translation.

the fabric sculpture was specially made for the Lisboa World Expo, themed “The Oceans, a Heritage for the Future”. “When sketching the first drafts I thought about [...] the fading of the blue [of the ocean] to the white, through the light refracting on the water. [...] The darkening of the colour of the water as and when looking towards the horizon”³⁴⁹, these were the words of Capucci when explaining his creation. Indeed, when looking at it, its colours recall the dark blue waves crashing into the calm and soft blue ocean.

In other designs, colour is developed in a different way; if the previous gowns distinguish themselves for their softest shades, some has instead a sharpest gradient effect. Evidence are two dresses presented at the Schauspielhaus in Berlin in 1992.

In the first one, a long evening dress, colour is explored through the various pleated flounces of the skirt where, as in a staircase of hues, the intensity of the warm shades used is developed by coloring each flounce of the skirt in a different shade (See Appendix E, Ill. 88; 89). Usually in Capucci’s designs, the lighter shades, here yellow, are placed in the highest part of the dress going towards darker tones, in this case going from red to plum³⁵⁰. Similarly, an equivalent colour blocking technique is used in another 1992 evening gown presented in Berlin. Here, the simple treatment of the fabric allows more scope for play of colour, as the bodice and the skirt of the dress are made of green alternated segments on a grey base (See Appendix E, Ill. 90; 91).

Opposed to the use of monochromatic shades, Capucci colours his dresses also with contrasting tones. One of the most famous examples is *Farfallone*, presented in New York in 1985. As a rainbow, the long-pleated dress with ruffle edges, displays a wide range of colours, from cool tones as green and purple to warmer ones as yellow, red and orange (See Appendix E, Ill. 92). However, despite the limited number of hues used, symbolic for his approach to colour is a turquoise and purple dress (See Appendix E, Ill. 93; 94). By recalling the colour combination of the orange and turquoise dress previously stated, the Maestro here created an even more audacious combination, by paring the blue-green shade with purple, his favourite colour³⁵¹. By

³⁴⁹ G. L. Bauzano, *L’Oceano*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., p.128. Translation made by the writer.

³⁵⁰ O. Da Pos, *Combinazioni di Colori in Opere di Capucci*, in *Davanti alle Opere di Roberto Capucci. Una Lettura Psicologica*, M. Armezzani, A Cavedon, G. Tibaldi, M. Zanforlin, Padova: Imprimatur Editrice, 1999, pp. 12-57, here p. 31.

³⁵¹ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 22 November 2021, Codroipo.

doing so, he proved how every hue can be beautifully combined with this deep cool shade³⁵². As proof of his love to experiment with colours, the audacious colour combinations were a key feature in his collections, remarkable in his entire production, are some designs he presented in 1989, 1992 and 2007. Another bold creation where Capucci played with contrasting colours is a 1989 silk sauvage taffeta dress in which the contrast between the two main tones, red and green, is underlined by a double-layered bow part of the skirt (See Appendix E, Ill. 95). Indeed, the top layer is made of four segments of different pleated shades of green, from a light tone up to a deep emerald; while the inner layer of the volant is made of a red smooth sauvage silk taffeta, helping to increase the colour contrast.

If in the previously analysed dresses Capucci employed pleats and smooth colour shading separately, in *Pagoda* (1992) he merged the two techniques together (See Ill. 34).



Ill. 34 - Roberto Capucci, Pagoda, 1992, long and multicoloured pleated dress in silk taffeta with four overskirts, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

³⁵² Ibid.

Developed as a five-layers dress paying homage to the Orient, the manufacture of the applications on the waist, which then give shape to the pagoda effect, are made of a double pleated taffeta coating, held together by a nylon thread sewn on the edge³⁵³. Each layer is made of pleated fabric strips of different shades of the same colour, sewn together by hand³⁵⁴. The dress, seen in its wholeness, does not provide a gradient effect as in the case of the previously considered 1992 design (See Appendix E, Ill. 88; 89); instead, here colour is developed through the use of cool tones dulled by a warm one placed in the middle.

Audacious and innovative in its structure is also *Crepe*, a 2007 design characterised by a cracked skirt (See Appendix E, Ill 96; 97), in which orange is unveiled through a crack in the middle of the pink and green dress.

During an interview Capucci declared that when a boy, he used to pick up all the flowers from his garden, just to line them up and silently admire their wonderful colours³⁵⁵ all different one to the other. Such practice seems to be still used by the *Maestro* as, in some of his designs, he employs a vast range of colours that could be considered by the masses horrendous when put together. However, in two 1992 designs (See Appendix E, Ill. 98-102) and a 2007 one (See Appendix E, 103; 104), despite being differently structured³⁵⁶, he proved how every hue can be beautifully combined one next to the other. Colour in Capucci is used as a sensual tool, shades are never randomly paired as they reveal with the movements of the dress when walking³⁵⁷. They are never used as an ornament, they are part of the dress and are missing when just a few are employed³⁵⁸.

³⁵³ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit.

³⁵⁶ The two 1992 designs of a monochromatic skirt with a rectangular overskirt made up of inlays of warm colours in the shades of orange, pink and plum (Appendix E, Ill. 98; 99) and of a double-layered skirt in which the outer layer is constituted by a pleated application of different colours (Appendix E, Ill. 100-102). The 2007 dress is instead made of multicolor inlays sewn together following a fishbone pattern; despite the use of a wide range of hues the shades of pink are predominant (Appendix E, Ill.103; 104).

³⁵⁷ C. Bertelli in *Roberto Capucci. L'Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, cit., pp. 11-13, here p. 12.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

3. Capucci in the art world

3.1. Roberto Capucci as Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*: the liberation from his service for the fashion industry

Notte e giorno a faticar,

Per chi nulla sa gradir, [...]

*E non voglio più servir, no, no, no, no, no, no, no*³⁵⁹.

These are the words sang by Leporello, Don Giovanni's servant, in the famous two-acts opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Leporello, tired of being subject to the foolery of his master, sings all his weariness in the *aria Notte e giorno a faticar*.

Capucci and Leporello, Leporello and Capucci, both subdued to a higher will, forcing them to act according to its rules³⁶⁰. As Mozart's character, Capucci felt chained and caged in a fashion world different from the one he contributed to build up.

Since his return to Rome after his period in Paris, the Roman designer suffered from the changes that characterized the fashion world of the 1970s³⁶¹. The increasing commercialization of fashion brought him a sense of discomfort and servitude. In particular, the presentation of his 1971 winter collection at the ninfeo di Villa Giulia in Rome, signed his slow detachment from the hectic and highly commercialized fashion system, always more characterized by prêt-à-porter rather than by couture. His collection was remembered as humble in its luxury and carefully studied in every detail³⁶². However, within the presentation there was a deeper meaning, it implied a reflection on the evolution of *alta moda* and on how it was defaced by the whimsical consumerism of ready to wear³⁶³. It had lost its focus and its *raison d'être*, and couturiers had to go back to its origins to bring it back to life³⁶⁴.

³⁵⁹ Night and day I work hard/ For someone who can never be satisfied, [...]/ I do not want to serve anymore, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

³⁶⁰ G. Mariotti, *E Non Voglio Più Servir, No No No No*, in *Roberto Capucci. I Percorsi della Creatività*, exhibition catalogue (Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 15 March – 12 April 1994) edited by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte, Roma: Fabbri Editori, 1994, pp.15-18, here p. 16.

³⁶¹ D. E. Blum *Roberto Capucci. Art into Fashion*, cit., p. 57.

³⁶² N. Calandri, *L'India è Servita ai Modelli di Capucci. Il Giovane "Couturier" dalla Vita Inquieta ha Offerto uno Spettacolo d'Eccezione*, in "Il Secolo XIX", 12 July 1970, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anno 1970-1971.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

In those years Capucci understood there was less and less space for a free expression of his creative genius and his desires were not matching the demanding necessities of the fashion system³⁶⁵, closer to the Fordist mass production system rather than to the artisanal process of creation.

Capucci's dresses are not "serving" the body, they are not a material and passive object; they are not following the rules dictated by the body³⁶⁶. His creations can better be described as *habitats*: dresses made not to be worn but to be inhabited, they can indeed be considered as homes rather than dresses³⁶⁷. Capucci applied to fashion, the architectonic design methodology, as couture had never been concerned with the hollow part of the dress, as it has always been seen as a casing, as something covering the body³⁶⁸. Indeed, Capucci wanted to give to the dress independence from the body, and more specifically, not to limit women's femininity to gowns³⁶⁹; something he already did in 1958 with his *Linea a scatola*. He always has had a philosophical perception of his dresses, considering them as habitats made of fabric, with a hollow and elaborated shape to be inhabited³⁷⁰. The soprano Raina Kabaivanska, a friend and loyal customer of his, well described what it is like to wear a Capucci model by saying that "It takes courage to wear a work of art [...] this dress can also become an enemy to you [...] At first you have to fight it, then make it your friend and in the end make it a part of yourself"³⁷¹. By wearing one of Capucci sculptural dresses, women become themselves a living work of art.

During a recent interview he declared that:

It was a world which no longer interested me, so I decided: I either had to close my atelier or change. I left the National Chamber of Italian Fashion, I wanted to be independent, and I no longer wanted to comply to two collections a year. One collection every year and I got my freedom back. I felt free to create as I wished, and I immediately started getting invited by museums³⁷².

³⁶⁵ G. L. Bauzano, *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime nella Moda*, cit., pp. 36-39.

³⁶⁶ M. Di Forti in *Roberto Capucci. L'Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, cit., pp. 17-22, here p.19.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ G. Vergani, *Il Vestito? Un Habitat di Tessuto*, in *Roberto Capucci. Creatività al di là del Tempo*, cit., pp. 13-26, here p.13.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ *Roberto Capucci. Arte da Indossare*, C. Barbati, Rai International, 1996. Author's translation.

³⁷² *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell'Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit. Author's translation.

His aim was not to create dresses to be sold, as his creative need prevailed over the commercial one³⁷³ and it still does. According to Capucci “A creative mind needs to have its own ‘pure’ ideas that rise from the head and the heart, without influence and without ‘labeling’ its collections”³⁷⁴. Three are the pillars of his creative work: autonomy, freedom of thought and independence, just the combination of these can lead to something unique³⁷⁵. In 1980, he remembered a few pieces of advice Giorgini gave him during his career; during his first presentation at the Italian High fashion Show in 1951 he told him: “You have to do what you think is best, because nobody has to tell an artist what to do. Artists should only do what they want”³⁷⁶ and “Do never be influenced by the temporary changes and by the commercial demands. Be always consistent with yourself.”³⁷⁷. Capucci so followed his patron’s advice and withdrew from the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana*, declaring that he would have presented his collections as *personali d’artista*, only when ready and only in the most appropriate places³⁷⁸.

After withdrawing the *Camera della Moda* and the marketization of creativity, he came back to the intimate and smaller dimension of “commision” couture, continuing to follow his trend to create dresses just for one person and not to be mass reproduced³⁷⁹, as in the case of *prêt-à-porter* collections. He returned to the initial rituals of high fashion, dressing aristocratic or important families and organising their fittings in their private *palazzi*³⁸⁰, becoming not just their trusted couturier but a close friend. It was in this atmosphere of freedom that his creativity started to flow plentifully and spontaneously, creating some of the biggest masterpieces of his career, as *Bouganvillea* (1989), *Pagoda* (1992) or *Oceano* (1998), still contended by the most important museums worldwide. With his detachment from the fashion system, arrived

³⁷³ M. Di Forti in *Roberto Capucci. L’Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, cit., pp. 17-22, here p.19.

³⁷⁴ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author’s translation.

³⁷⁵ R. Capucci, *Nessun Segreto: la Libertà*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 11-14, here p.14.

³⁷⁶ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell’Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit. Author’s translation.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Author’s translation.

³⁷⁸ G.L. Bauzano, *1951. C’era una Volta a Firenze*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 27-39, here p. 39.

³⁷⁹ Interview of the writer with Paolo Alvisè Minio, 12 October 2021, Codroipo.

³⁸⁰ P. Mauriès, *The Last of the Happy Designers in Luxe calme et volupté*, cit., p.159.

also the first invitations from great museums that never exhibited couture before³⁸¹; showing in such places as Palazzo Strozzi (1990), the Venice Biennial (1995), and more recently at Triennale Milano (2021).

It was with Capucci's entrance into the art world that was founded the Historical Archive Roberto Capucci, in 1990³⁸². Capucci always had the habit to collect all his sketches, as well as all the materials regarding him, from photos to press articles, including in this heritage even things that inspired him for his creations, like the flyers of the classical concerts he attended. At the time, the main aim of the Foundation was to collect all the sketches and the preparatory work of his creations, but it was in 2005 that the now Fondazione Roberto Capucci was founded³⁸³. Established along with Associazione Civita, the foundation is aimed at preserving and promoting Capucci's heritage³⁸⁴. Hosting 465 dresses, among which his famous sculpture dresses, 296 illustrations, more than 20.000 original sketches and 50.000 photographs circa; its purpose is to spread the Italian tradition for refinement, beauty and high craftsmanship³⁸⁵.

3.2. The very first exhibition, *Roberto Capucci, l'Arte nella Moda: Volume, Colore, Metodo, Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze (1990)*

Capucci began to be invited by museums to show his designs in the late 1980s, when he first exhibited three sculptural dresses in München, at the Münchner Stadtmuseum, in 1986³⁸⁶. Indeed, the very first exhibition completely dedicated to him, was held in the Florentine Palazzo Strozzi, in 1990. *Roberto Capucci, l'Arte nella Moda – Volume, Colore, Metodo*, organised by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte and Pitti Immagine, under the aegis of the Galleria del Costume di Palazzo Pitti³⁸⁷, wanted to pay a tribute to the Roman couturier by organising a showing that could emphasize the crucial aspect of Capucci's research: his architectonic concept of dresses, favoring their structural form

³⁸¹ E. Minio Capucci, *Tesori Custoditi per il Futuro*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 263–266, here pp. 263.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ivi., pp. 263-264.

³⁸⁴ Fondazione Roberto Capucci, <https://fondazionerobertocapucci.it/en/foundation/> [last access 25 October 2021].

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Fondazione Roberto Capucci, *Exhibitions*, <https://fondazionerobertocapucci.it/en/foundation/exhibitions/> [last access 29 December 2021]

³⁸⁷ E. Desiderio, *Quando la Moda è Scultura. Capucci, Ritorno alle Origini*, in "La Nazione", 2 January 1990, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1989-1990.

and not focusing on them as objects to be used, but rather as results of a creative invention³⁸⁸.

By refusing the commercialization of his creativity, he protected his world by the hectic trends of fashion, where trims and silhouettes were changed after every collection³⁸⁹. Instead, he chose his loyal consumers, the capuccine³⁹⁰, rejecting any glorification of his work³⁹¹, an exception was for this exhibition, held in Florence, where Capucci began his career in fashion. Debuting in 1951 in Marquis Giorgini's Villa Torrigiani, almost forty years later, Capucci's work was consecrated in the Renaissance rooms of Palazzo Strozzi, where 188 dresses representative of his career were displayed. To convince him to participate was Graziella Lonardi Bontempo (1928 – 2010), an old friend of his and an Italian art collector and founder of *Incontri Internazionali d'Arte* in 1970.

The exhibit should not be considered as a retrospective, as the then Director of the Galleria del Costume di Palazzo Pitti, Kristen Aschengreen Piacenti, declared that it had to be considered just as an art exhibition, as Capucci is a real artist³⁹². The same idea was shared by Bontempo, that clearly pointed out the difference between the fashion exhibitions of any other couturier and Capucci's showing; if other exhibitions were just a display of works of a tailor, that of the Roman couturier was that of an artist³⁹³.

Capucci's decision to withdraw from the *Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana* in 1980, brought with it a detachment from the fashion world and its network of designers, donors and sponsors. He once recalled that it happened sometimes that, while walking, some colleagues of his used to go to the other side of the street not to greet him or that his friends thought he was crazy to believe and pursue his idea of freedom and independence³⁹⁴. His colleagues found it difficult to bear his decision not

³⁸⁸ D. Pardo, *Taglio d'Artista*, cit.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Term coined by the Italian journalist Irene Brin.

³⁹¹ B. K. Ciullini, *Omaggio a Capucci Artista della Moda*, in "La Gazzetta di Prato", 11 January 1990, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1989-1990.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ D. Pardo, *Taglio d'Artista*, cit.

³⁹⁴ A. Boralevi, *In Mostra a Firenze i Capolavori di Capucci. Artigiano da Museo. Gli Abiti di un Creatore che Non Conosce la Moda. Ritorna il Fascino Esclusivo del Vestito «su Misura»*, in "Il Messaggero", 9 January 1990, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1989-1990.

to buy ad pages in the most famous magazines, as well as his choice to show his dresses only when ready and not by following the fashion calendar³⁹⁵. He made his own a quote by Friedrich Schiller “If what you do or create does not please the masses, try delighting the few. It is a mistake to want to be liked by everyone”³⁹⁶, something he still strongly believes in. Indeed, he does not create for the public or his customers, but he does it for himself first³⁹⁷, it is his way of communicating, of expressing himself and his creativity.

With the exhibition *Roberto Capucci, l'Arte nella Moda – Volume, Colore, Metodo*, Capucci got opened the doors of the art world³⁹⁸.

3.3. Fabric sculptures at the Venice Biennale (1995)

A further confirmation of Capucci's entrance into the art world came in 1995, when Jean Clair (b. 1940), the appointed Director of the Visual arts of the 46th edition of the Venice Biennale, invited the Maestro to take part in the Venetian events. Celebrating the centennial from the first edition of the *Esposizione Internazionale dell'Arte della Città di Venezia* opened in 1895, the Director titled the exhibition *Identità e alterità. Una breve storia del corpo umano nell'ultimo secolo*. Its aim was to address the issue of self-representation from when the society focused on the research of identity, something that distinguished humans from one to the other³⁹⁹.

When presenting the Biennial, Clair stated that it would have been sad to celebrate such an anniversary just by recalling the past, it had to address the present times by thinking about the issues concerning the young generation of artists⁴⁰⁰. Clair so decided to innovate the Biennial by introducing fashion in it.

The first meeting between Capucci and Clair happened in 1993, when the Roman tailor exposed a few of his dresses at the exhibition *Regards sur la Femme* at the Hôtel de la

³⁹⁵ D. Pardo, *Taglio d'Artista*, cit.

³⁹⁶ R. Capucci, *Nessun Segreto. La Libertà*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 11-14, here p. 14.

³⁹⁷ A. Boralevi, *In Mostra a Firenze i Capolavori di Capucci. Artigiano da Museo. Gli Abiti di un Creatore che Non Conosce la Moda. Ritorna il Fascino Esclusivo del Vestito «su Misura»*, cit.

³⁹⁸ Ivi., p.95.

³⁹⁹ P. Vagheggi, *Biennale È Già Polemica*, in “la Repubblica”, 26 November 1994, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴⁰⁰ U. Muzi, *Arte: Parigi Presenta la Biennale dei Cent'Anni*, in “Corriere della Sera” 30 March 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

Monnaie in Paris⁴⁰¹. Firstly, the French art historian invited Capucci to exhibit some of his dresses at the Museum of Picasso, where, at the time, Clair was the Director⁴⁰². Unfortunately, as happened for many other drafted exhibitions, this showing was never realised, but Clair kept in mind his idea until 1995, when he invited Capucci to be among the nineteen Italian artists to present at the Biennale⁴⁰³. Jean Clair declared that the invited artists never exposed to the Biennial before or, at least, not in the two previous editions, furthermore the commission also included creators from sectors never included afore in the Venetian exposition, as set design with Pier Luigi Pizzi (b. 1930) and *Alta Moda* with Roberto Capucci⁴⁰⁴.

The forty-sixth edition of the Venice Biennale opened with many critics; *Aperto*⁴⁰⁵ was not included in this edition, and this caused much discontent. To lament its closure there was also Franco Michieli, then president of the Italian auction house Finarte, who claimed what a loss it was for Italian contemporary art⁴⁰⁶. The Italian painter Piero Dorazio (1927-2005) wrote a harsh critique on the commission's choices, accusing their decision to include mainly new artists as in the past "could take part only well-known artists, or rarely, young people of outstanding genius"⁴⁰⁷. Dorazio also blamed the commission and the Director of inviting artists of their interest, as for Jean Clair choice to include two Parisian friends of his as Vito Tongiani (b. 1940) and Ricardo Cavallo (b. 1954) or Giulio Macchi's invitation to the tailor Roberto Capucci⁴⁰⁸.

The presence of high fashion in such a relevant art fair as the Biennale, caused many criticisms. The most condemning voices were that of Dorazio and his colleague and friend the abstract painter Achille Perilli. Dorazio sustained that it was a scandal to include a tailor in such an art exhibition when many talented young artists were not

⁴⁰¹ G. L. Bauzano, *La Moda alla Biennale di Venezia*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 153-181, here p. 166.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ivi., p.153.

⁴⁰⁴ *Biennale 1995. Gli Artisti Italiani a Venezia e la Nuova Commissione Architettura*, in "Flash Art", 189, 12/01, 1994/1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴⁰⁵ An art fair dedicated to emerging young talents opened in 1980 and co-curated for its first edition by Achille Bonito Oliva (b. 1939) and Harald Szeemann (1933-2005).

⁴⁰⁶ M. Passa, *L'Istituzione Veneziana Prepara la Mostra del 1995 Fra Mille Polemiche. Dopo Cento Anni la Biennale È Ancora in Guerra*, in "L'Unità", 12 April 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴⁰⁷ P. Dorazio, *Quale la Biennale Tale il Centenario*, in "Il Tempo", 15 December 1994, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996. Author's translation.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

even taken into account⁴⁰⁹. Similarly, Perilli declared that it was absurd to include a tailor, stating: “Enough with fashion and with this fair of prêt-à-porter⁴¹⁰”⁴¹¹. Capucci will then declare that those criticisms were due to the Italian vision of fashion as something rowdy and wild, but it was something he was not part of⁴¹². Knowing all the whisperings and the criticisms moved the months before the opening of the exhibition, Capucci tried to decline the invitation, but he always collided with Jean Clair’s firmness⁴¹³. A hundred years after his first edition, the Venice Biennale had its umpteenth scandal, if in 1895 it was Giacomo Grosso’s painting *Il supremo consiglio* (1895) to rattle the Venetian art institution, in its forty-sixth edition were Capucci’s twelve fabric sculptures to make it tremble.

In a recent interview, Capucci declared that: “The wonderful opportunity of being invited to the Biennale in 1995 was a great experience both creatively and professionally, unpredictable and unique, I was the first fashion creator to be invited at the Biennial”⁴¹⁴. After the opening the Roman tailor revealed to have been a little intimidated at first, just the thought of it held him back⁴¹⁵.

In an exhibition about the human body Capucci was asked, for the first time and by an art institution, to be himself, he was free to create his habitats⁴¹⁶. Initially, Capucci thought of creating grey and gold pieces, but Jean Clair begged him not to renounce to his usual vivid colours, he indeed created twelve long designs with exaggerated geometric shapes⁴¹⁷, each of them made not to be worn but to be exposed, as they all include an internal tailor-made mannequin.

⁴⁰⁹ P. Vagheggi, *Piero Dorazio Attacca il Curatore Jean Clair. “Mostra Antimoderna Artisti Mediocri”*. *Biennale Pasticcio Reazionario*, in “Repubblica del lunedì”, 8 May 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴¹⁰ By using such a word as prêt-à-porter, it can be noted how little was the knowledge of Capucci’s work, knowing that he always preferred Haute Couture over ready-to-wear, and had always been against the mass production and commercialisation of fashion.

⁴¹¹ V. Apuleio, *La Biennale degli Scandali*, in “Il Messaggero”, 27 Aprile 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴¹² *Biennale, Fresca Ancora di Vernice*, in “Il Piccolo”, 129, 8 June 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴¹³ G. L. Bauzano, *La Moda alla Biennale di Venezia*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp.153-181, here p. 169.

⁴¹⁴ Interview of the author with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. Author’s translation.

⁴¹⁵ D. Maestosi, *Sorpresa, gli Intrusi Capucci e Pizzi Sono le Vere Star*, in “Il Messaggero”, 8 June 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴¹⁶ G. L. Bauzano, *La Moda alla Biennale di Venezia*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp.153-181, here p. 154.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*



Ill. 35 - Roberto Capucci at the Venice Biennale in 1995, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Giorgio Lotti.

Mighty, intimidating, powerful, inflexible, fierce, are the words that first come into mind when approaching these sculptures. The twelve fabric architectures, characterised by elaborated structures, remind in their colours the minerals from which they take their names. “In Capucci’s atelier-forge even if using thread and needle, silk is processed as if it was steel, modulated as Etang, melted as bronze”⁴¹⁸; indeed, Capucci resembles Volcano, the Roman God of blacksmiths⁴¹⁹. The couturier always created dresses or, in these case, sculptural dresses, while the Roman God created armours, however, their work shares the same aim: enhance and protect those who are wearing their creations. In the exposition catalogue, Giulio Macchi (1918 – 2009) an Italian film director and part of the Biennale’s expert committee, wrote: “Entering the field with Capucci’s silks or with the shining bronzes of Volcano it is a sure victory. Their vision alone kills the enemy”⁴²⁰.

⁴¹⁸ G. Macchi, *Roberto Capucci*, in *46. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, Venezia: Marsilio, 1995, p.13. Author’s translation.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

Capucci's creative freedom can be witnessed in the sketches, despite the attention to the detail is featured in each of Capucci's designs made during his long career, here, they seem to speak to the viewer; they are telling a story of passion, patience and devotion, but also of structural research, studies on the materials and the influence exerted by Mother Nature. The similarity between the *bella copia* and the resulting sculpture is astonishing (See Ill. 36; 37), every detail, even the hardest one is perfectly reproduced, thanks to the team of fifty people that worked on their realisation for seven months⁴²¹.



Ill. 36 - Roberto Capucci, *Antimonite*, 1995, silver grey fabric sculpture in shantung taffeta, 195x150x150 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 37 - Roberto Capucci, *Antimonite*, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Allanite, Antimonite, Cinabro, Diaspro, Ematite, Fluorite, Lapislazzulo, Ossidiana, Pirite, Sagenite, Siderite, Violano, (See Appendix F, Ill. 105-128) these are the names of the twelve sculptures that proved Capucci's ability to process silk taffeta as if he was metaphorically twisting aluminium⁴²². *Siderite* (See Ill. 38) is an evidence of it. A

⁴²¹ L. Vincenti, *Tra Elogi e Polemiche Si È Aperta la Biennale del Centenario. In Mostra a Venezia Scarpe, Ferrivecchi e Aids*, in "Oggi", 21 June 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴²² F. Fabbri, *La moda Contemporanea. Vol. II Arte e Stile dagli Anni Sessanta alle Ultime Tendenze*, Torino: Einaudi, 2021, p.204.

pleated dress with big volants all around the shoulders and right under the hips, collects in its pleats the countless shades obtained when melting bronze⁴²³, going from light vivid orange, passing through a bright and iridescent bronze to deep brown.



Ill. 38 - Roberto Capucci, Siderite, 1995, silk taffera, 180x100x100 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Gianluca Baronchelli.

Noteworthy is also *Pirite* (See Ill. 39) a blue and gold design where both the skirt and the appliques recall the angular edges of the mineral to which it takes its name. The main feature of this dress is its cross-doubled plisse in a honeycomb pattern; the inspiration came by seeing the inner lining of a nun's bonnet that presented this checkers pattern⁴²⁴. The sharp applications on the dress and bodice seems to be floating in the air, challenging the rules of gravity, indeed this structure was obtained by *drittofilo* and the internal use of the *marcellina* fabric⁴²⁵.

⁴²³ G. Macchi, *Roberto Capucci*, cit., p.13.

⁴²⁴ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*



Ill. 39 - Roberto Capucci, Pirite, 1995, silk taffeta, 160x66x72 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.

Other geometric elements are also present in *Violano* (See Ill. 40), a sculptural dress representing fan applications at the bottom of the skirt. What amazes about this architecture, is the lights game obtained thanks to the use of iridescent silk taffeta which results in a countless number of purple shades looking like rays of sunshine⁴²⁶.

⁴²⁶ D. Maestosi, *Sorpresa, gli Intrusi Capucci e Pizzi Sono le Vere Star*, cit.



Ill. 40 - Roberto Capucci, Violano, 1995, silk taffeta, 160x100x180 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.

An element shared by many of these “minerals” is their unusual geometries. As seen in *Antimonite*, *Pirite* and *Violano* they do not represent common shapes, indeed they challenge the physical laws of gravity, including hoops applied all over the body following a spiral pattern, or with crumpled pleated silk applications else with hems going up. This latter experimentation was previously used also in *Fuoco* (1985) (See Ill. 41; 42), where the whole skirt is made of pleated going-up hems with ruffled edges, creating a gradient shading all over the skirt, going from a light to a deep red.



Ill. 41 - Roberto Capucci, Fuoco, 1985, silk sauvage bodice and silk taffeta pleated skirt, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 42 - Roberto Capucci, Fuoco, 1985, detail of the hems, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Indeed, the silk architectures shown at the Biennale are the synthesis of four decades of Capucci's career, they merge together all the most important aspects of his experimentation, the Box line, the use of monochromatic or contrasting colours, the reversed hems and the use of uncommon materials⁴²⁷; he enclosed in them all his creative being. As far as these aspects are concerned, *Sagenite* (See Ill. 43) is a significant example.

⁴²⁷ G. L. Bauzano, *La Moda alla Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. 169.



Top left: Ill. 43 - Roberto Capucci, *Sagenite*, 1995, 175x72x66 cm, bodice in gold cords and skirt in silk sauvage, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credit Gianluca Baronchelli.

Top right: Ill. 44 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the white silk organza layered collar of a black chermeuse cocktail dress, 1959, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom left: Ill. 45 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in silk sating with a cord bolero, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom right: Ill. 46 - Roberto Capucci, wool and silk faille dress with a crepon silk overskirt, 1958, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

In it can be recognised three different moments of Capucci's career, there are the use of uncommon materials as cords⁴²⁸, recalling a series of boleros created in 1987 and then developed two years after with the two dresses *Crete 1* (1989) and *Crete 2* (1989) (See Ill. 47; 48), the *Linea a scatola*, recreated in the skirt of the sculpture⁴²⁹ and finally, the layering, present in the squared geometrical collar of a 1959 cocktail dress (See Ill. 44-46).

⁴²⁸ G. L. Bauzano, *La Moda alla Biennale di Venezia*, cit., p. 181.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.



Ill. 47 - Roberto Capucci, Crete 1, 1987, long evening dress in silk taffeta with cord appliques, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 48 - Roberto Capucci, Crete 2, 1987, long evening dress in silk taffeta with cord appliques, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Even if the twelve fabric architectures recall Michelangelo's *I Prigioni* (1513-1530)⁴³⁰, as they enclose in themselves the creative identity of the Maestro, which was just waiting to be brought to life; a breath of life which was given by being exposed in such an art institution as the Venice Biennale. The twelve sculptures proved Clair was right, Capucci's exposition ended up being the most visited in the whole Biennale⁴³¹ and who thought that his sculptures would have failed the comparison with other masterpieces had to change their minds⁴³². The room where he exposed his architectural dresses were described as a soft-lighted space, one of the most pleasing of that edition, in which the creations appeared as a metaphysical installation⁴³³.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Conference made by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, zoom call.

⁴³² A. Fiz, *Effetto Pasticcio, il Padiglione Italia Perde Identità*, in "Milano Finanza", 17 June 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁴³³ G. Simongini, *Manca un Filo Conduttore al Nostro Padiglione, Travolto dalle Critiche. Biennale, Puzzle all'Italiana*, 11 June 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

3.4. The never born project: *Capucci&Cucchi* (2008)

The dialogue between art and fashion, sometimes can be harsh and not always successful as in the case of the Venice Biennial. An example is the project between the Maestro and the Italian painter Enzo Cucchi (b. 1949) drafted in 2008.

Conceived by Graziella Lonardi Buontempo, the Italian art collector wanted to host a unique exhibition at the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples⁴³⁴. The main focus of the display was supposed to be the dialogue between the specially made creations of Cucchi and Capucci. In this univocal project, the two artists had to give their own reading of forms and colours through a sculptural approach⁴³⁵.

Capucci sketched more than a hundred sculptures where he expressed his own interpretation of the theme (See Appendix G, Ill.129-157). He drew a wide range of objects, as simple and linear designs or those in which he recalled specific features of his dresses as the skirt of *Ossidiana* (1995) (See Ill. 49) in *Tramonto* (See Ill. 50) or the *Linea a scatola* (1958) features (See Ill. 51) in *Linea a scatola* (See Ill. 52).



Ill. 49 - Roberto Capucci, *Ossidiana*, 1995, viscose velvet bodice with a taffeta silk pleated skirt, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 50 - Roberto Capucci, *Il Tramonto*, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

⁴³⁴ G. L. Bauzano, *I Volti Inesplorati della Bellezza*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 223-233, here p. 223.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.



Ill. 51 - Roberto Capucci, wool and silk faille dress, Autumn/Winter 1958- 59 collection, Sala Bianca di Palazzo Pitti, Florence, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 52 - Roberto Capucci, Linea a scatola, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

In others, he recalled the colours like that of a yellow and purple 1984 dress with ruffles (See Ill. 53) in *Fioritura* (See Ill. 54) or a 1992 green peplum (See Appendix G, Ill. 129) in *Piumaggio* (See Appendix G, Ill. 130).



Ill. 53 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress in silk taffeta, 1984, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 54 - Roberto Capucci, Fioritura, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

While, in some cases, he went from simply transforming a dress into a vase, as in the case of *Malachite* (See Appendix G, Ill. 139; 140), to merging various elements of different dresses as in the *Ventaglio Geometria Fuoco* (See Appendix G, Ill. 141-144). Furthermore, he even used as reference objects part of our everyday life, as a road sign or a clock (See Appendix G, Ill. 145; 146). However, something he used more frequently in this project are natural elements as flowers and animals, using them as subjects of his designs; this happens in *Calle e oche*, *La prigioniera*, *La primavera* (See Appendix G, Ill. 147-149) or in *La conchiglia e la sirena*, (See Ill. 55) where he portrays a Pre-Raphaelite woman hidden in a shell. What amazes here is that, in some of the previously stated designs, can be detected a reminiscence of some existing dresses, but it must be noted that they are never a copy, they are rather a development and a reinterpretation, and always different from their original idea.



Ill. 55 - Roberto Capucci, La conchiglia e la sirena, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Cucchi was astonished by the beauty of the first sketches made by Capucci and wanted to create something that could make them the main subject of the exhibition⁴³⁶. Unfortunately, this did not happen as the project never saw the light.

⁴³⁶ Ivi., p. 226.

3.5. Plissé in *Mariani chez Capucci*, Villa Bardini, Florence (2016)

The *Maestro* research and experimentation did not limit exclusively to the creation of architectural dresses or to the use of uncommon materials, indeed, he also explored the ancient technique of pleating. He had always been enchanted by the fluidity and the movements of the pleated dresses, indeed he declared:

[...] pleating was a challenge to me: a moving element, a creasing with respect to the tradition. I wanted to create something different with this ancient technique, from this beautiful fabric so, since the first collections, I created some coats with an internal pleated lining and some black and white dresses with full skirts that opened up on this fabric, with this unknown and innovative plays of light⁴³⁷.

Capucci's production is studded by incredible draped dresses, from the linear to the patterned pleats, and his use of it evolved during the decades. Remarkable is a 1971 patchwork taffeta silk skirt in different degrading colours. The item is made of multiple squared and colored fabric scraps, all hand pleated and stitched together (See Ill. 56; 57).



Ill. 56 - Roberto Capucci, evening outfit with a silk shirts and a pleated silk taffeta skirt, 1971, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Robert Capucci, photo courtesy Cluadia Primangeli.



Ill. 57 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the drapes, 1971, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

⁴³⁷ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Rome. See Appendix A. Author's translation.

However, it was from the 1980s that he started to use drapery with a different consciousness, even his use of fabric changed, as he started to consider it as a structural decorative element⁴³⁸. Indeed, if people are used to seeing dresses with simple and linear pleats, Capucci created a patterned drapery. In a long evening dress from his collection presented at the Fondazione Carlo Erba, in Milan, in 1982 (See Ill. 58), he created a long green dress with orange and fuchsia inlays; both the skirt and the sleeves are characterised by a honeycomb pattern, giving it a rough and bristly visual effect.



Ill. 58 - Roberto Capucci, long evening skirt in pleated taffeta silk, 1982, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Similarly, the same technique was used for two designs, a 1985 pleated silk bolero and a two-piece gold silk cocktail outfit where the sleeves and the hem of the skirt were characterised by a creasing effect (See Appendix H, Ill. 158; 159).

⁴³⁸ S. Lucibello, *Il Plisse e la Seta per Capucci*, cit., here p. 6.

Inspired by classical architecture and sculpture, were instead a series of long pleated dresses from different collections. In one of them, presented at the Galleria Nazionale dell'Arte Moderna in Rome in 1989, Capucci was able to sculpt the smooth silk making it look more like a Corinthian column than a dress; the bodice recreates the acanthus leaves while the long-pleated skirt embodies the shaft (See Ill. 59). Similarly, inspired by the Greek peplums, in 1992 he created four variants of it, each with different degrading colours, blue, yellow, green (See Appendix E, Ill. 90; 91) and pink, with soft pleated skirts and voluminous and flowing trains on the backs.



Ill. 59 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in silk charmeuse with carved lamé leaf decorations, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

In the same collection he also presented three overcoats, a red pleated silk *marsina* in different shades of red with ruffled edges (See Appendix H, Ill. 160; 161), as well as a grey pleated cloak, which hem is made of pleated inlays in degrading grey colours (See Appendix H, Ill. 162; 163) and another grey coat. In the latter, developing the patchwork theme used in his 1971 skirt (See Ill. 56; 57), Capucci instead used single, squared, diagonally pleated pieces of fabric in different shades of grey, from the lightest to the darkest, that when sewn together creates a diamond pattern (See Ill. 60; 61). Here Capucci proved how this technique could be used in every item, from dresses to coats.



Ill. 60 - Roberto Capucci, taffeta silk coat with a pleated patchwork in degrading tones of grey, 1992, Codripo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 61 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the pleating, 1992, Codripo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

A further confirmation of the genius and virtuosity of the Roman tailor come in 2008, when he was able to do the unthinkable, pleating the raw and woolen cloth (See Ill. 62) typical of the Florentine valley of Casentino, to which the fabric takes its name. It was commissioned by the *Fondazione Clima & Sostenibilità*, by the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* and by the *Istituto di Biometereologia* for the project *Tessile & Sostenibilità*, whose aim was to safeguard the Tuscan small scale supply chain⁴³⁹.

⁴³⁹ G. L. Bauzano, *Il Casentino*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 131-135, here p. 131.

Together with the Atelier Milady⁴⁴⁰, Capucci so decided to create a *gran sera* sculptural coat using thirty-two meters of Casentino with different pleating patterns. Indeed, to create such draperies the tailor chose different *cartoni*⁴⁴¹, creating a total number of twenty-seven pieces to be then sewn together⁴⁴².

Dedicating this sculpture to Tuscan craftsmanship, the Maestro named it *Mahasaraswati*, the Indian mystical figure connected to the great Mother, who represents the power of work and of perfection⁴⁴³.



Ill. 62 - Roberto Capucci, sculpture in pleated Casentino wool, 2008, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Plisse, “A steady element of figurative civilization. A theme present in eighty percent of the painted and sculpted surface in art history”⁴⁴⁴ said the Italian artist Umberto Mariani.

⁴⁴⁰ An artisanal enterprise near Florence with which Capucci collaborated many times.

⁴⁴¹ The pleating method used by the Atelier Milady implies the use of paper molds, a “male” and a “female” one, between which is placed the fabric. Once enclosed between the two molds, the cloth is then steamed at a variable temperature, creating an irreversible pleating with a linear, intertwined or embossed effect. G. L. Bauzano, *L’Atelier Mille Pieghe*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit., pp. 137-145, here p. 135.

⁴⁴² Ivi., pp. 131; 132.

⁴⁴³ Ivi., p. 135.

⁴⁴⁴ M. E. Fiaschetti, *Affinità Tessili. La Piegata? Uno Scavo nell’Anima. Così l’Arte Dialoga con la Moda*, in “Corriere della Sera”, 26 February 2016, Codroipo, Archivio Stampa Digitale Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Capucci and Mariani, both devoted to the ancient technique of pleating, created a dialogue between their artworks in the exposition *Mariani chez Capucci* hosted at Villa Bardini, then the house of the Fondazione and of the Museo Roberto Capucci, in 2016. Born in Milan in 1936, Umberto Mariani studied at the artistic high school and at the Accademia di Brera under the aegis of Achille Funi, for whom he then worked⁴⁴⁵. Always fascinated by the drapery, in 1967 he started to develop the first works part of the series of *Oggetti allarmanti* (1967-1974). He once declared that the inspiration came one night, while strolling around via Montenapoleone, where he was attracted by the window of a famous American furniture firm and especially by an embossed armchair⁴⁴⁶, an element that he will then recreate in *La nevrosi di Madame Miller* (1969) and in many other pieces. Indeed, the characteristic of *Oggetti allarmanti* was the presence of pillows, armchairs or boots, something that Mariani will include in his artworks until 1973, when he will briefly develop the cycle of *Citazione differente* (1973)⁴⁴⁷. It can be seen in the piece *Ceci n'est pas un Magritte* (1973) how from this year onward, drapery becomes a steady element of his work, then blooming in the cycle *Alfabeto afono* (1974-1980), in 1974⁴⁴⁸ (See Ill. 63). The second half of the 1970s where the years of the struggle for incommunicability, a theme Mariani developed through his draped letters, hiding their real meaning⁴⁴⁹.

⁴⁴⁵ *Informazioni*. <https://umberto-mariani.it> [last access 17 January 2022]

⁴⁴⁶ M. E. Fiaschetti, *Affinità Tessili. La Piegata? Uno Scavo nell'Anima. Così l'Arte Dialoga con la Moda*, cit.

⁴⁴⁷ G. Serafini, *Umberto Mariani*, in *Mariani chez Capucci*, exhibition catalogue (Firenze, Villa Bardini, 28 February – 1 May) edited by G. Serafini, Milano: Skira, 2016, pp. 90-95, here p. 90.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Periodi*. <https://umberto-mariani.it> [last access 17 January 2022]



Ill. 63 - Umberto Mariani, *Alfabeto afono: X*, 1976, 70x70 cm, acrylic on canvas, <https://www.galleriaincontro.it/it/opere/mariani-alfabeto-afono-x> [last access 18 January 2022]

Other important phases of Mariani's creative production and of his use of drapery, were in 1977, when he worked on the series *Teorema*, where materials of different nature interfere with the pleat. While in the series *Taghelmoust: il velo* (1999), he reinvented the shapes and the materials used in the previous years coloring them in the indigo blue shade, typical of the Tuareg population from which the series takes the name^{450 451}.

In *Mariani chez Capucci*, exhibiting thirty of his artworks, Mariani and Capucci are conversing and plisse is their medium of communication. Giulio Serafini, the curator of the showing, stated that:

[...] aside from the shared motif of the fold, while Capucci has created with fabrics – the medium that is most congenial to his manual expertise – forms which for their sculptural inventiveness and experimental boldness deserve to belong to the world of sculpture and architecture, Mariani vice versa using the most unsuitable material [...] endows his work with the appearance and palpability of textiles, so that it seems to us like a fake *trompe l'œil*.⁴⁵²

Plisse so became the *trait d'union* between the art and fashion world.

⁴⁵⁰ *Taghelmoust* is the veil usually worn by Tuareg men.

⁴⁵¹ G. Serafini, *Umberto Mariani*, in *Mariani chez Capucci*, cit., p. 93.

⁴⁵² G. Serafini, *Mariani chez Capucci*, in *Mariani chez Capucci*, cit., p. 26.

3.6. An inside look at *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma, Triennale di Milano (2021)*

Part of the cycle of *Mestieri d'arte. Crafts Culture*, a series of exhibitions dedicated to craftsmanship, Triennale Milano dedicated the Quadreria to a continuous showcase of Italian craft abilities. Organised by the Milanese art institution and the Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte, whose founding purposes are to promote Italian craftsmanship among the young generations and to rescue the *métiers d'art* from extinction; *Mestieri d'arte. Crafts Culture* is completely dedicated to Italian handicrafts of excellence⁴⁵³. After *Mirabilia* (2 February – 4 April 2021), *Vitrea* (5 May – 22 August 2021) and *Fittile* (4 September – 31 October 2021), respectively about Milanese crafts, designer glass and ceramics; *Metafore* (17 November 2021 – 9 January 2022) is dedicated to the artistic production of Roberto Capucci⁴⁵⁴.

Created in collaboration with the Fondazione Roberto Capucci and Ceramiche Rometti, and curated by Gian Luca Bauzano, the exhibition wants to portray fifty of the seventy years of activity of Master Capucci thanks to some of the symbols of his career, taking the spectator on a journey through his creativity.

Capucci's return to the modern city of fashion happens thirty-nine years after his first show as an independent designer at Palazzo Visconti, in 1982⁴⁵⁵. If then his catwalk represented the liberation from the fashion system, now with *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma* he is experimenting with a new medium, with forms and colours⁴⁵⁶.

⁴⁵³ *Who We Are*, <https://www.fondazionecologni.it/en/chi-siamo/chi-siamo> [last access 4 November 2021].

⁴⁵⁴ *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: Meraviglie della Forma*, <https://www.fondazionecologni.it/it/eventi/ar/metafore-roberto-capucci-meraviglie-della-forma-spazio-della-quadreria-triennale-milano-dal-16-novembre-al-9-gennaio-2022> [last access 26 October 2021].

⁴⁵⁵ R. Capucci, *Dal Disegno all'Inimmaginabile*, in *Metafore. Roberto Capucci, Meraviglie della Forma*, cit. p.11.

⁴⁵⁶ At the opening night, during an interview to Rai 2, Capucci declared that he always experiments with new things, as it is part of his studies. TG2 Costume e Società, cit.

The exhibition presents itself as a purple space (See Ill. 64), a meaningful shade that refers to the iridescent hue of the skirt of *Diaspro* (1995), the symbol of the whole exhibition (See Ill. 65) where Capucci presents an unknown version of himself. The visitor is taken through a journey in the world and mind of the Maestro, where there is not any limit between the possible forms through which he can express his creativity, from sketches, to dresses, to vases.



Ill. 64 – The exhibition *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma* at the Triennale Milano, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.



Ill. 65 - *Diaspro* at the exhibition *Metafore*, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

By definition, metaphor means the transmission of meaning from one system to the other⁴⁵⁷ and in this exhibition Capucci's genius is expressed not only through his famous hyperbole of dresses but also through his drawings, the soul of his creativity. Something Capucci wants to give emphasis to is the importance that drawing has on his creative process; as he reports in the exhibition catalogue "A process, as I will never tire of repeating, that starts with a pencil and a blank sheet, on which the drawing then takes shape"⁴⁵⁸. In the exposition are included a total number of 34 drawings, between sketches from his collections and illustrations.

The "journey" starts from the collection sketches he made between 1984 and 1992, the period of his creative freedom. Particular attention is given to the models from 1985,

⁴⁵⁷ F. Cologni, *Dialoghi Straordinari, tra Bellezza e Poesia*, in *Metafore. Roberto Capucci, Meraviglie della Forma*, cit., p. 9.

⁴⁵⁸ R. Capucci, *Dal Disegno all'Inimmaginabile*, in *Metafore. Roberto Capucci, Meraviglie della Forma*, cit., p.11.

1987 and 1989 collections, years in which he reached the peak of his artistic expression. Evidence for this is proved by *Farfallone* presented at the New York Army National Guard in New York in 1985 (See Appendix I, Ill. 164), or the 1989 intertwined full-skirted design with an oversized bow on the back and a bodice made of flowers (See Ill. 66); both representing the voluminous and imaginative aspects of his designs.



Ill. 66 - Roberto Capucci, collection sketch of an evening dress from the 1989 collection, 1989, graphite on paper, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

When tributing Capucci's career, his use of colours could not be excluded, indeed were displayed many designs with multicolored combinations, as *Bouganvillea* (1989), or even with a mixture of patterns, as in a long evening dress with polka dot rouches and bodice, and a striped belt (1989) (See Appendix I, Ill. 165; 166). However, Capucci's mastery of the use of colour, is to be seen also in shaded-colors gowns, relevant are a 1987 long evening dress and a 1989 short dress. All embellished by volants and rouches, the designs were created with a decreasing use of vivid colours, in these specific cases blue (See Appendix I, Ill.167) and orange (See Ill. 67), beginning with the darker shades then fading into the lighter ones.



Ill. 67 - Roberto Capucci, collection sketch of a cocktail dress from the 1989 collection, 1989, graphite on paper, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Despite his love for colours, Capucci also created black and white gowns in which he experimented by creating a half white and half black pleated dress (1987) or by adding a short and geometrically decorated bolero made of silk panels (1987) (See Appendix I, Ill. 168; 169).

On a further note, when looking at these drawings, what also catches the eye is the definition of the stroke and the high number of details reported. If, in collection sketches, it is usual to see information such as the name of the fabric industries which cooperated to the realization of the collection, as well as the type of cloth used, together with some fabric remnants; it is unusual to see such meticulous and exact mannequins. The female figures represented are perfectly defined and are not missing any detail. With long, thin, athletic arms and swanlike necks, most of them are drawn posing, an element that helps to give reality to the drawings (See Ill. 68).



Ill. 68 - Roberto Capucci, one of the exposed sketches from the 1989's collection representing a long-pleated evening dress, graphite on paper, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

The next leg of the journey is represented by the most iconic dresses produced by Capucci during his career. A few meters away from Giancarlo Piretti's *Plia* (1967), Pietro Gilardi's *Series I Sassi* (1968) and Gio Ponti's *Superleggera* (1957) are displayed Capucci's masterpieces, as his 1966 silk organza and plastic cocktail dress, a long 1971 evening dress with rope edges and *Sassi* (1972). It could not have been chosen better examples of the Maestro's experimentation and creativity than the above-mentioned ones. Piretti's *Plia*, as well as Capucci's 1966 plastic dresses, represented an innovation in their worlds of provenance; the *Plia* chair for its elements in Cellidor plastic⁴⁵⁹ while Capucci's dresses for introducing the use of plastic in the couture world (See Appendix I, Ill. 170; 171). Similarly, in the rope dress from 1971 Spring/Summer collection and Gio Ponti's *Superleggera* (or *mod. 699*) rush chair, the use of natural elements, rope in both the cases, enhanced the linear and minimalistic

⁴⁵⁹ M. Sammiceli, *Museo del Design Italiano. Triennale Milano 1946-1981*, Milano: Electa, 2021, p. 201.

aspect of the designs (See Appendix I, Ill. 172; 173). At a further note, Gilardi and Capucci's pieces recall one the other. The famous seats produced by Gufram in 1968 looks like a large reproduction of the pebbles part of the belt and cuffs of *Sassi* (1972) (See Appendix I, Ill. 174; 175). To be added to these designs, are also a Box line (1958) dress, the *Cretto* coat (1969), the three white day dress with fiberglass masks inspired by the Nō theatre⁴⁶⁰ (1980) (See Appendix I, Ill. 176) and finally *Diaspro* (1995), one of the twelve sculptural dresses made for the centennial of the Venice Biennale.

Two are the symbols of the whole exhibition: the black and white cocktail dress of his famous *Linea a Scatola* and *Diaspro*; the latter representing the key moment of Capucci's career and the recognition of his work in the art world⁴⁶¹. When thinking about these particular creations, the Roman designer recalls that those dresses caused scandal in the fashion world but even more in the art world, where they were seen as an offense, while they were nothing else than a free expression of Capucci's creativity⁴⁶². Indeed, one of the founding elements of the exhibition is the pure expression of creativity.

Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the first edition of the Italian High Fashion Show, that took place in 1951, and consequently Capucci's debut in the fashion system, the Roman tailor is here showing to the art world another aspect of himself; he should not be just considered as a silk sculptor but rather as an artisan able to vent his creativity through every form of art. In *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma* the transmission of meaning, and in this particular case of creativity, from a dress to a vase was made possible thanks to an Italian artisanal excellence of ceramics. The Manifattura Rometti, was founded in 1927 by Settimio and Aspromonte Rometti together with Dante Baldelli, and is now run by Massimo Monini, CEO of the manifattura, and Jean Christophe Clair the artistic director⁴⁶³. The idea of the exhibition came from a mutual admiration between Capucci and the Rometti

⁴⁶⁰ Conference held by Fondazione Roberto Capucci, 8 April 2021, Zoom meeting.

⁴⁶¹ R. Capucci, *Roberto Capucci si Svela: «Sperimento senza costrizioni»*, https://www.corriere.it/sette/cultura-societa/21_novembre_03/cover-senape-capucci-44f66876-3cbb-11ec-8d73-6548a989c443.shtml [last access 17 November 2021].

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ *A Long Vibrant Journey*, <https://www.rometti.it/en/history/> [last access 17 November 2021]

manufacture, but the actual collaboration was born only during a meeting organised by Monini's lifelong friend and curator Nicoletta Giannoni⁴⁶⁴. Clair recalled that:

When Massimo and I entered [Capucci's] home for the first time he had already drawn at least 100 vases inspired by his clothes for our collection together, and had arranged them along the entire sofa. We selected the best, and this is where one of our biggest challenges began. I reinterpreted the designer's sketches wanting to make his dream come true [...].⁴⁶⁵

The vases are divided in five collections, all inspired by Capucci's designs. The first to be seen when entering the room is *Soirée*, a collection of three vases, *Palombara*, *Antamoro* and *Mantica*, inspired respectively by the *Cretto* (1969), a 1984 long evening dress in silk taffeta embroidered with a crystal jet, and an evening dress in white silk satin with black crystal tinsel embroideries, part of Capucci's 1987 collection (See Ill. 69-72).



Ill. 69 - Roberto Capucci, *Soirée* collection, 2021, hand-crafted in red clay, glazed and hand painted, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

Ill. 70 - Roberto Capucci, *Cretto*, 1969, white wool inlays on a black silk base, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

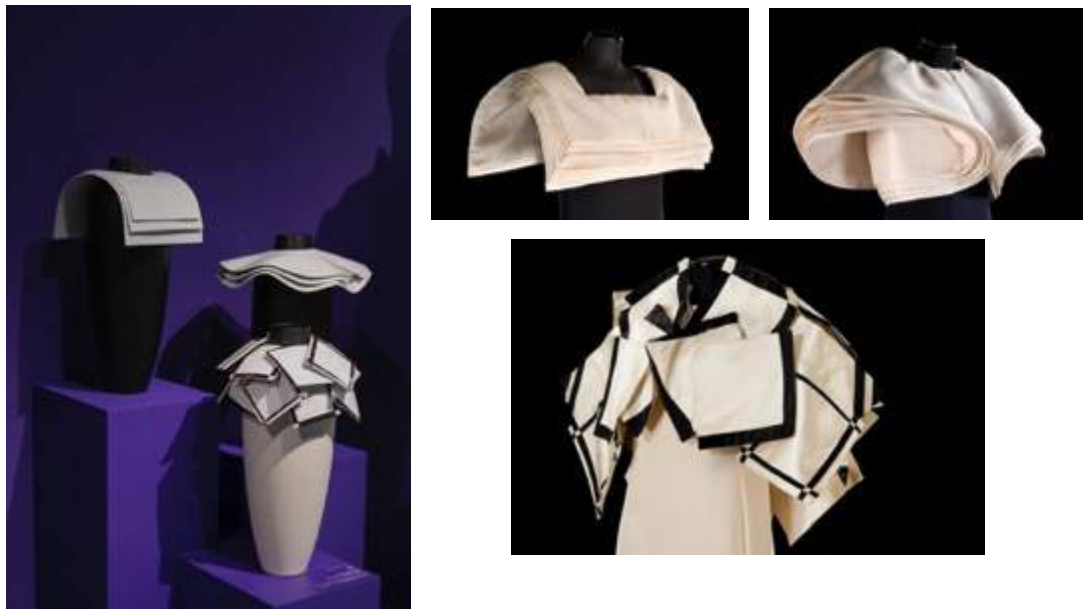
⁴⁶⁴ M. Monini, *Un Incontro tra Menti e Cuori*, in *Metafore. Roberto Capucci, Meraviglie della Forma*, cit., p. 17.

⁴⁶⁵ *The New Collection with Roberto Capucci*, <https://www.rometti.it/en/events-en/the-new-collection-with-roberto-capucci/> [last access 17 November 2021].

Ill. 71 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in embroidered satin silk, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 72 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress with crystal jet embroideries, 1984, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Cluadia Primangeli.

Right after, there is *Gala*, with *Livia*, *Fausta* and *Valeria*; the first two, two elongated black vases with interchangeable elements are reproducing the 1959 black cocktail dresses with layered white collars, while the latter, reproduces the geometrical details of a silk satin bolero part of a 1987 silk crepe evening dress (See Ill. 73-76).



Ill. 73 - Roberto Capucci, Roberto Capucci, *Gala* collection, 2021, red clay ceramic vases with interchangeable collars, glazed and assembled, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

Ill. 74 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the squared collar from a cocktail dress, 1959, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 75 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the collar from a cocktail dress, 1959, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 76 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the bolero from a long evening dress, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ballo is the most colorful of the five collections, as it includes *Fouetté*, a blue cone-shaped vase inspired by a 1992 cocktail dress, *Entrechats*, an orange design similar to one of the dresses exposed; a 1992 silk sauvage taffeta dress with ring-like applications

on the skirt, *Pas de deux* recalling *Ventagli* (1980), and *Pirouette*, a yellow and purple vase inspired by a 1980 short dress (See Ill. 77-81).



Ill. 77 - Roberto Capucci, Fouette and Entrechants, 2021, two vases part of the Ballo collection hand-thrown and carved ceramics, glazed and decorated by hand, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 78 - Roberto Capucci, Pirouette and Pas de deux, two vases part of the Ballo collection, 2012, hand-thrown and carved ceramics, glazed and decorated by hand.

Ill. 79 - Roberto Capucci, short dress in silk taffeta with applications around the skirt, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 80 - Roberto Capucci, iridescent silk sauvage taffeta dress with ring-like applications exposed at the exhibition Metafore, 1992, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.



Ill. 81 - Roberto Capucci, short dress with a crepe de chine silk blouse and a silk taffeta skirt in the shades of yellow and purple, 1980, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bambusetto and *Mezzoscuro*, otherwise, are two collections representing different interpretations of a single dress. *Meloca*, *Bambusina* and *Tamburo* are all inspired by the 1972 green silk georgette dress with bamboo applications (See Ill. 82). *Nottata*, *Serata* and *Ombra*, part of *Mezzoscuro*, on the other hand, are inspired by a silk satin dress with two half-sphere overskirts (See Ill. 83).



Ill. 82 - The Bambusetto collection with the dress from which it is inspired, 2021, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.



Ill. 83 - One of the three vases of the Mezzoscuro collection next to the dress to which it is inspired, 2021, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

The exhibition *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma* shows how Capucci the draughtsman, the sculptor and the craftsman all merge together in the act of creation.

4. The worlds art and fashion

4.1. The heated debate on art and fashion

Fashion has attracted scholars' interest since the late nineteenth century⁴⁶⁶, but its relationship with art started to be discussed only in the mid-twentieth century. The first to address it was Professor Remy G. Saisselin who, in his essay *From Baudelaire to Christian Dior: The Poetics of Fashion*, was the first to consider fashion as an art form⁴⁶⁷. Despite discussing the description of fashion by poets, Saisselin article is of great importance, as he can be considered the first scholar of the art world to approach fashion as art⁴⁶⁸.

A few years after, the debate between fashion and art was also addressed in the article *Is fashion an art?* by "The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin"⁴⁶⁹. Published in November 1967 and structured as multiple, short interviews, it asked the interviewed people their opinion over fashion and art. To participate in this survey were the American designer Normal Norell (1900-1972), the costume designer Irene Sharaff (1910-1993), and the French couturier André Courrèges (1923-2016) all representing the fashion world. For art, instead, there were the sculptor Louise Nevelson (1899-1988) and the choreographer Alwin Nikolais (1910-1993). Each interview opened immediately with the sharp question "Is fashion an art?", and the strongest oppositions were given by artists; both Nevelson and Nikolais stated that fashion could not be art. The sculptor considers fashion as a label, according to her words, its commercial and elitarian aspect prevails to the extent that "Today is the designer who gets all the attention. [...] every woman [...] [is] identified by who designed her dress"⁴⁷⁰. She thought that fashion could be art but is not, it took too much time and it was not addressing the dynamic years in which they were living, there still was too much elegance that was not fitting their present⁴⁷¹. A new approach to fashion was needed. The choreographer Alwin Nikolais, instead, was against the power of fashion to

⁴⁶⁶ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 51.

⁴⁶⁷ R. G. Saisselin, *From Baudelaire to Christian Dior. The Poetics of Fashion*, in "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", Vol. 18, n. 1, 1959, pp. 109-115, here p. 115.

⁴⁶⁸ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 53.

⁴⁶⁹ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l'Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 54.

⁴⁷⁰ N. Norrell, L. Nevelson, I. Sharaff, A. Nikolais, A. Courrèges, P. Tucker, *Is Art Fashion?*, in *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 1967, 26, 3, pp.129-140, here p. 133.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

equalize people. He argued that it could not be considered as an art form as to be art it had to express the wearer's identity, so women should have designed their own clothes; while, in reality, they relied on the designers who made them all equal one to the other⁴⁷².

Normal Norell, Irene Sharaff and André Courrèges had a different thought. The American fashion designer stated that yes, “[t]he best of fashion is worthy of the name art”⁴⁷³, indeed, according to him, names such as Madame Grès (1903-1993), Gabrielle Chanel (1883-1971), Madeleine Vionnet (1876-1975) and Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895-1972) were the artists of fashion in the twentieth century⁴⁷⁴. Sharaff, strongly sustained that fashion is an art, as the creative aspect of couture has always worked alongside the creative forces that defined a historical period⁴⁷⁵. This belief also comes from her job as, working as a costume designer for the Broadway musicals *West Side Story* (1957) and *Cleopatra* (1963), much of her work began after in-depth research of the period⁴⁷⁶. However, Sharaff believed that there was no great difference between costumes and real-life clothes, as costume design strongly influenced fashion trends, as the use of Asian bright colours in her costumes for *The King and I* (1951)⁴⁷⁷. André Courrèges, at first, was the least confident with his answer to the question but strongly stated that he would never say that fashion is not art. Throughout the whole interview, which in this case consisted only in the question of whether fashion could be considered art, he exposed his personal taste in fashion, his aim which was to dress women according to their needs, and after having described fashion designers as artists he interestingly agreed that “[i]f the function of art is to bring joy through harmony, color, and form, perhaps we can, after all, by dressing a woman to feel younger and to participate fully in life, bring her joy comparable to that she experiences in contemplating a painting.”⁴⁷⁸

The fascinating aspect of this article is the interest it was given by such a crucial art institution as the Metropolitan Museum of Art on such a theme as fashion, something

⁴⁷² Ivi., p.136.

⁴⁷³ Ivi., p. 130.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

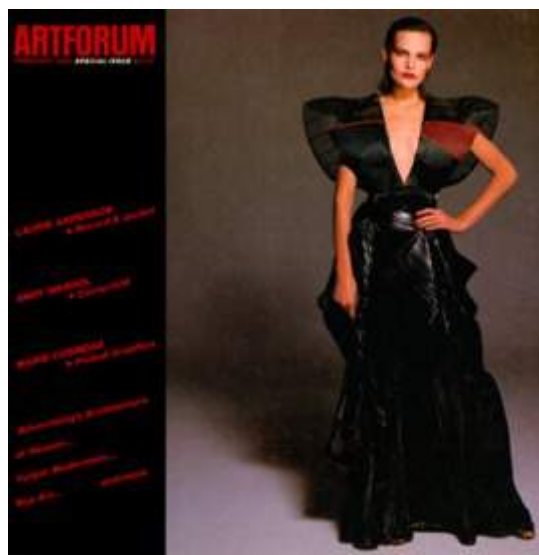
⁴⁷⁵ Ivi., p.135.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ivi., p.140.

to which was never given great attention as usually considered frivolous. However, it must be considered the year of its release, 1967; the second half of the 1960s were years characterised by the mass production of fashion items, and thanks to *prêt-à-porter* they were available to everyone, bringing fashion into everyone's wardrobe. However, it was just in the 1980s that the debate on these themes emerged more significantly, and this was thanks to two elements: art magazines and exhibitions⁴⁷⁹. In 1982, in its February issue, the contemporary art magazine "ArtForum" included in its cover a model wearing a design from the 1982 collection of the Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake (b. 1938) (See Ill. 84).



Ill. 84 - Cover of the February 1982 "ArtForum" issue depicting a dress with rattan bodice and nylon polyester skirt from Issey Miyake Spring/Summer 1982 collection, <https://www.artforum.com/print/198202#features> [last access 31 January 2022], photo credits Eiichiro Sakata.

In the Editorial, Ingrid Sischy the curator of the issue and her co-curator Germano Celant, explained such a controversial choice by stating that it was in the magazine tradition not to limit to just one visual world⁴⁸⁰, they were well aware of the controversy that such cover could unleash, but when describing the characteristics of the design they seemed to describe it as a contemporary piece.

⁴⁷⁹ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l'Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 55.

⁴⁸⁰ I. Sischy, G. Celant, *Editorial*, in "ArtForum", 02, 1982, pp. 33-36, here p. 34, <https://www.artforum.com/print/198202/editorial-35621> [last access 31 January 2022].

Innovation was also the introduction of fashion exhibitions in art museums, relevant is Yves Saint Laurent retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1983. For the first time, the annual exhibition organised by Diana Vreeland, special consultant at the Costume Institute of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, was not displaying historical fashion but was dedicated to a living designer, to “a genius [who] knows everything about women”⁴⁸¹. Indeed, the show, organised by themes, gave the spectators the chance to witness how the work and the innovations of the Parisian couturier influenced the everyday wear⁴⁸². Something similar happened also with the retrospectives dedicated to the Italian designer Giorgio Armani held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2002 and at the Royal Academy in London the following year⁴⁸³. Another groundbreaking exhibition, in this case presented as part of an artistic context, was Roberto Capucci’s presence at the Venice Biennale with his fabric sculptures, in 1995⁴⁸⁴.

Notwithstanding, despite both, fashion designers and many journalists often declared that designers are artists and the product of their activity should be considered as art⁴⁸⁵, neither art magazines nor fashion exhibitions helped in legitimizing couture⁴⁸⁶. Indeed, confusion still lingered, as hitherto it was not clear the relationship between art and fashion and if the latter could be considered art. Relevant is Diana Vreeland interview *Is Fashion Art?*⁴⁸⁷, where she asserted that fashion is not art, in fact she distinguished between the two by saying that art was a spiritual activity while fashion has to do with the most common and tangible aspects of the everyday life; it has a physical vitality⁴⁸⁸. Vreeland desire to maintain a clear distinction between the two forms of creative expression, opened up the debate on the theme⁴⁸⁹.

⁴⁸¹ D. Vreeland, *Introduction*, in *Yves Saint Laurent*, exhibition catalogue (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 14 December 1983 - 2 September 1984), edited by Y. Saint Laurent, London: Thames and Hudson. 1983, pp.7-9, here p. 7.

⁴⁸² C. Donovan, *Salute to Yves Saint Laurent*, in “The New York Times Magazine”, 4 December 1983, p.157, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/04/magazine/salute-to-yves-saint-laurent.html> [last access 29 January 2022]

⁴⁸³ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l’Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 57.

⁴⁸⁴ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 52.

⁴⁸⁵ D. Crane, *Fashion and Art. Unravelling a Complex Relationship*, in *Moda e Arte*, conference proceedings (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Milano, centro per lo Studio della Moda e della Produzione Culturale, 9 May 2008), pp. 1-20, here p. 2.

⁴⁸⁶ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l’Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 57.

⁴⁸⁷ L. Simmons Zelenko, *Is Fashion Art?*, in “American Artist”, 06, 1981, pp.87-88.

⁴⁸⁸ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 53.

⁴⁸⁹ Ivi., p. 54.

One of the main issues against fashion legitimization was, and still is, its commercial aspect, something the art critic Michael Boodro dealt with in his article *Art and Fashion*⁴⁹⁰. He too denies that fashion is art, mainly due to its industrial feature, while art is a higher entity who stands above commerce⁴⁹¹. This particular facet of couture is mainly due to fashion trends, indeed, since the spread of *prêt-à-porter* collections, designers tended to change the style of their outfits, shortening or lengthening the hems, or by using different colours or fabrics. All these new trends were created to arise in the consumer the feeling of being outmoded and to desire the new products of the latest collection. This aspect also connects with the durability of the items, as the Italian scholars Marco Pedroni and Paolo Volonté declared that “[t]he essence of fashion is to be out of fashion”⁴⁹², meaning that it is part of the fate of clothes to become outdated⁴⁹³. However, from the historical and conservative point of view, this also connects with the degradation of the raw material used. Indeed, despite the employment of uncommon but durable materials such as plastic, the most used element is cloth⁴⁹⁴, a very delicate good that needs to be treated very carefully, as it may suffer from sun damage and fading.

In contrast to these beliefs Roberta Smith, a “New York Times” contributor, stated in a “Vogue” article⁴⁹⁵ that it is no longer true that, with respect to fashion, art is eternal and without change⁴⁹⁶. It was Gabrielle Chanel to say that fashion evolves, following the trends of the public, while also creating them⁴⁹⁷, but is not it the same with art movements? Let us consider all the various movements that characterised our past history like Futurism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, all deeply rooted in the historical and social context of that period. The same happens with fashion, where Dior’s New Look (1947) wanted to give back joy and femininity to women after the tough and austere war years. Another aspect Smith touched in her article was that it is not true that fashion takes inspiration from art, indeed fashion is an inspiration to the

⁴⁹⁰ M. Boodro, *Art and Fashion*, in “Artsnews”, 09, 1990, pp. 120-127.

⁴⁹¹ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 54.

⁴⁹² M. Pedroni, P. Volonté, *Introduzione. Oggetti, Pratiche e Istituzioni di Due Campi Sociali Correlati*, in *Arte e Moda*, cit. p.20.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ R. Smith, *Art after a Fashion*, in “Vogue”, 01, 1996, pp.164-165.

⁴⁹⁶ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 56.

⁴⁹⁷ M. Di Forti, in Roberto Capucci. *L’Arte nella Moda, Volume, Colore, Metodo*, cit., p.18.

artworld⁴⁹⁸. Indeed she described art and fashion as two worlds strictly connected one to the other, as the arts had been attracted to fashion in the same way Andy Warhol or Roy Lichtenstein's art have been attracted to popular culture⁴⁹⁹.

To be on the same side of Smith's beliefs there was also the curator and historian Richard Martin, who found a few advantages from the commercial aspect of fashion. In an interview with Darryl Turner for the magazine "Artforum"⁵⁰⁰, Martin declared that there is no substantial difference between art and fashion and thus considers the latter as the most appropriate when dealing with issues of the body⁵⁰¹. Furthermore, his thoughts are totally in conflict with Vreeland and Boodro's ideas that art deals with something spiritual while fashion is about the daily routine and commodities. Martin's belief is that fashion's commercial aspect is an advantage; its characteristic of attracting customers' attention, also thanks to advertising campaigns, may raise the consumer's knowledge on the subject, while also attracting their interest⁵⁰². About this, he also discussed fashion houses' involvements and resonance to art, also dealing with designers' appropriation and reinterpretation of artworks, stating that despite some reinterpretations may be considered a mere copy, others may just have the same sensibility as the cited art⁵⁰³. Probably, the most famous example that may come into mind is Yves Saint Laurent *Mondrian* dress (1965) in which the designer was capable of creating a connection to planar clothing⁵⁰⁴, but let us also consider John Galliano's Autumn/Winter 1999/2000 ready-to-wear collection for the house of Dior. Here, the English designer paid a tribute to the Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) creating a *défilé* inspired both by the artist's paintings and by his colourful hues⁵⁰⁵, as ochre, burgundy and emerald green. Indeed, as Modigliani did, Galliano also looked at African art for the feminine and fertile silhouettes he then tried to recreate in his collection, designing smooth and harmonious dresses feminized by the use of knitwear⁵⁰⁶.

⁴⁹⁸ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 56.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ D. Turner, *Couture de Force*, in "Artforum", 3, 1996, 15-17.

⁵⁰¹ S. B. Kim, *Is Fashion Art?*, cit., p. 57.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ A. Fury, *Dior. The Complete Collections*, cit., p.306.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

In her study over fashion and art, Diana Crane touched the relationship about fashion and artification⁵⁰⁷, indeed, according to her, there are multiple reasons for which artification can be applied to fashion.

First of all, is the acquisition by fashion of a higher status; in the twentieth century, French couture seemed to acquire a certain level of artification⁵⁰⁸. Since mid-nineteen century French couturiers increased their prestige, an example is Charles Frederik Worth who, instead of satisfying the clients' desires, dictated the models they should wear, thus revolutionising the relationship between client and tailor⁵⁰⁹. Secondly, according to Crane, another form of artification is designers' collaboration with artists as Elsa Schiaparelli's white organza *Lobster* dress (1937) created in collaboration with the surrealist artist Salvador Dalí⁵¹⁰. The third aspect gave value to fashion as a cultural form, as were created fashion schools as well as the introduction of fashion studies and fashion design in art schools⁵¹¹. Such recognition of fashion role in the cultural world from both educational institutions and museums, testifies a slow acceptance of the value of fashion from the cultural world⁵¹².

Nevertheless, according to Crane the artification process is incomplete, this mainly because if, in the twentieth century, couturiers increased their prestige and business autonomy, nowadays many fashion houses are owned by corporations⁵¹³ as the Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, commonly known as LVMH, who owns many fashion houses as Loewe, Dior, Fendi and Givenchy among many others⁵¹⁴. This causes a lack of autonomy for couturiers as they cannot develop their creative innovations but rather have to satisfy the whimsical desires of the changing market. If artists are free to own their art, when selling their labels designers are not free to own their creations

⁵⁰⁷ Artification is defined as a process of social change which is characterised by the emergence of new objects and practices, and by the transformation of institutions. R. Shapiro, N. Heinich, *When is Artification?*, in "Contemporary Aesthetics", 4, 2012, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/ca/7523862.spec.409/-when-is-artification?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [last access 29 January 2022].

⁵⁰⁸ D. Crane, *L'Artificazione Parziale dei Mondi della Moda*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 113.

⁵⁰⁹ G. Lipovetsky, *L'Impero dell'Effimero. La moda nelle Società Moderne*, Milano: Garzanti, 1989, p. 72.

⁵¹⁰ Salvador Dalí, <https://www.schiaparelli.com/en/21-place-vendome/schiaparelli-and-the-artists/salvador-dali/schiaparelli-dress-with-lobster-print> [last access 31 January 2022].

⁵¹¹ D. Crane, *L'Artificazione Parziale dei Mondi della Moda*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 114.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ivi. p. 114; 115.

⁵¹⁴ Fashion and Leather Goods, <https://www.lvmh.com/houses/fashion-leather-goods/> [last access 2nd February 2022].

anymore⁵¹⁵, they are now part of the world of luxury. Indeed, there is a difference in how fashion items are perceived, as the creations of the past, particularly before globalisation are closer to the status of cultural heritage rather than the contemporary fashion items⁵¹⁶, perceived as puppets of the marketing strategies of big corporations. With regards to this, in her studies over the relationship between 1990s' British fashion design and the industry, Angela McRobbie showed how, in the late 80s and early 90s, the world of fashion designers was still barely known, and how the attitudes towards them varied. She indeed considered creative workers as employees experiencing privatised and deregulated market conditions, resulted from the strict reforms introduced by the government of Margaret Thatcher⁵¹⁷; indeed, describing future fashion designers to face lack of employment security⁵¹⁸. In those years, such figures were thought as the new cultural workers, but were interpreted in two different ways: from one side they were seen as the "Thatcher's children", for their commitment to consumer culture, while on the other they were considered as individualists⁵¹⁹. These political undertones could also influence the perception of fashion products, as designers were identified as "simple designers" or designers for capitalism⁵²⁰. In such distinction a tension and intromission of the world of business and commodities in that of fashion can be identified. The consumption of economic goods changed with much relevance in the 1980s, bringing higher designer fashion products within reach of the average income consumers⁵²¹. However, this also brought a process of social fragmentation as even low-income people could access to those goods, competing with the other social classes in the showing of designer consumer goods⁵²². Their availability was seen as an effect of the growth of the use of new technologies applied to the production of differentiated goods that could satisfy everyone's tastes⁵²³. The

⁵¹⁵ D. Crane, *L'Artificazione Parziale dei Mondi della Moda*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 115.

⁵¹⁶ Ivi. p. 116.

⁵¹⁷ Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013), Great Britain's Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, based her governmental policies on economic liberalism and conservatism.

⁵¹⁸ S. Taylor, K. Littleton, *Art Work or Money. Conflicts in the Construction of a Creative Identity*, in "The Sociological Review", 56, 2, 2008, pp. 275- 292, here p. 277.

⁵¹⁹ A. McRobbie, *British Fashion Design. Rag Trade or Image Industry?*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p. 1.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ivi., p.4.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

creation of such highly commercial goods meant also a continuous change of trends, bringing to always new items, making the old ones out of the trending market.

4.2. The relationship of the two words in Roberto Capucci

Roberto Capucci has always been one of a kind, a tailor that has nothing to do with the modern definition of what a fashion designer is. Indeed, his educational background is purely artistical, he declared that after his studies he decided to use fabric as his own way of expression⁵²⁴, instead of clay or marble he chose to sculpt silk, probably the most difficult material, knowing its fleetingness.

Indeed, Capucci's artistic education is strongly reflected in his creations, as it can be seen in the *Banjo* (1955) or the *Box* (1958) lines, the *Colonna Romanica* dress (1978), or the twelve fabric sculptures for the Venice Biennale (1995). He lives in a world unto itself, refusing to be submitted to the strict calendar of fashion and also to be glorified⁵²⁵. He created a parallel world where his artistry flows painfully, his only purpose is to create beauty, following his artistic genius. Nevertheless, Capucci lives across the two worlds of art and couture, being the *trait d'union* of both, and the exhibition *Roberto Capucci. L'Arte della moda – Volume, Colore, Metodo* held in Florence at Palazzo Strozzi in 1990, signed his effective entrance into the art world.

During his career, both in fashion and in art, he received many critics. Since his first day in couture he was criticized; during his participation in the Italian High Fashion Show in 1951 he was considered too young to show his designs together with the big names of Italian fashion, following are the harsh critics connected to his *Linea a Scatola* (1958) which was described by the Italian press as the coffin of femininity⁵²⁶, up until the denunciation for his alliance with French couture in 1962. Despite the many criticisms received by the fashion press, he was never directly accused by his colleagues, rather he was applauded. After an interview with Christian Dior, the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci wrote a letter to the Roman couturier by saying that Dior himself had a strong admiration for him and his work⁵²⁷. While, more recently, Anna

⁵²⁴ L. Vincenti, *Tra Elogi e Polemiche Si È Aperta la Biennale del Centenario. In Mostra a Venezia Scarpe, Ferrivecchi e Aids*, cit.

⁵²⁵ B. K. Ciullini, *Omaggio a Capucci Artista della Moda*, cit.

⁵²⁶ A. Boralevi, *In Mostra a Firenze i Capolavori di Capucci. Artigiano da Museo. Gli Abiti di un Creatore che Non Conosce la Moda. Ritorna il Fascino Esclusivo del Vestito «su Misura»*, cit.

⁵²⁷ G. L. Bauzano, *La Linea a Scatola*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit. pp.53-59, here p. 59.

Fendi (b. 1933) declared that “Roberto Capucci could be called the God of fashion, not only by those working in the industry but also by young people, by everybody. Because he himself made it, he started fashion history”⁵²⁸.

With his first exhibitions, and especially for his participation in the centennial of the Venice Biennale, he faced many barriers from the art world. However, in an interview during the Biennale, Capucci declared that when exposing for the exhibition *Regards sur la Femme* at the Hotel de la Monnaie in Paris in 1993, no one felt offended by his works, despite he showed his designs next to masterpieces from Picasso, Balthus or Giacometti⁵²⁹. This somehow recalls an aspect of Fedor Reshetnikov *The Secret of an Abstract Painter* (1958), where, in the central upper part of the triptych, the Italian masters of Renaissance art are hunted by abstract figures, representative of the art movement that was gaining place in those years. This exemplifies how Italy, a country full of great masterpieces, could be reluctant to innovative art forms and, in this specific case, to the introduction of fashion in the art world. In her study over the collocation in museums of objects originally created with aims different from that of being contemplated, Sandra Miller tried to explain the phenomenon. Taking into consideration three different objects as Costantin Brancusi (1876-1957) *Bird in Space* (1932-40), Paul Poiret *Sorbet* evening dress (1912) and the *Maestà* altarpiece (1308-11) created by Duccio Buoninsegna, she here proposed to reverse the perspective⁵³⁰. By applying Aristotle’s Four Causes⁵³¹, and especially the fourth one, the final cause, the *telos* as the ultimate aim of the object⁵³², she asked herself which was the purpose of those items; if Brancusi’s *Bird in Space* was to give aesthetic pleasure, Poiret’s dress to be admired and that of the altarpiece was to move the faithful to religious feelings, when taken out of their original contexts and placed in a museum, however, Poiret and Duccio’s creations lose their initial *teloi* becoming objects of aesthetic contemplation⁵³³. Indeed, applying the theory by Miller to Capucci’s fabric

⁵²⁸ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell’Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit. Author’s translation.

⁵²⁹ M. Vallora, *Biennale: il Sarto Fa Scandalo. Capucci Invitato alla Mostra da Clair*, in “La Stampa”, 2 June 1995, Codroipo, Archivio stampa Fondazione Roberto Capucci, scatola anni 1994-1995-1996.

⁵³⁰ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l’Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 59;60.

⁵³¹ In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle stated that truth requires a study on the causes being, the material cause (that out of which the statue is made), the formal cause (on the shape of the statue), the efficient cause (what made the statue) and the final cause. *Ivi.*, p. 59.

⁵³² *Ibid.*

⁵³³ *Ivi.*, p. 59; 60.

architectures for the Biennale, this change of perspective seemed to have not been understood by some critics or artists as in the case of Gino de Dominicis (1947-1998), who said that Capucci's participation was nothing else than: "the product of the dazed fashion of trespassing, which leads to believe it is licit to bring tailors into the visual arts"⁵³⁴.

Pedroni and Volonté, however, stated that those who believe that fashion could merge characteristics proper of art, refer to items produced by the fashion world that for their characteristics of innovation, uniqueness and beauty can be considered an artwork; and an example are the sculptures of Roberto Capucci⁵³⁵. The relationship between art and cloth, and between art and dresses, in the twentieth century gained the name of clothes art; indeed from the usual textile production, which aim was utility, it crossed the borders of the textile functionality going to the production of the dress meant as a contemporary art piece⁵³⁶.

As discussed in the previous pages, the first argument against fashion recognition as art, is its commercial aspect; however, this does not apply to Capucci, as his creations had always been above commerce. He was uninterested in the market and rejected the strict schedule of The National Chamber of Italian Fashion reaching, over the decades, an experimentation level that crossed the borders with the world of sculpture. He has always been part of the old guard of couturiers as Christian Dior or Cristóbal Balenciaga who were not considered such superstar fashion designers as Yves Saint Laurent was, but rather as artisans, tailors not interested in the mass commercialization of their creations⁵³⁷. He was not interested in following the trends and he never did, indeed he always created dresses that could be an expression of his imagination. This also reflects his refusal to be called a fashion designer, not because he ever saw anything negative in it but because his creations are the result of pure experimentation and wit⁵³⁸. Indeed, as the Italian journalist and fashion historian Adriana Mussolano said:

⁵³⁴ M. Passa, *L'Istituzione Veneziana Prepara la Mostra del 1995 Fra Mille Polemiche. Dopo Cento Anni la Biennale È Ancora in Guerra*, cit.

⁵³⁵ M. Pedroni, P. Volonté, *Introduzione. Oggetti, Pratiche e Istituzioni di Due Campi Sociali Correlati*, in *Arte e Moda*, cit. p.19.

⁵³⁶ M. A. Trasforini, *Abiti Smodati. Dall'Arte Tessile alla Clothes Art*, in *Arte e Moda*, cit. p.171.

⁵³⁷ Interview of the writer with Enrico Minio Capucci, 26 October 2021, Codroipo.

⁵³⁸ G. L. Bauzano, *Segreti d'Atelier. Costruzioni, lavorazioni e materiali*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit. pp.75-105, here p. 80.

Roberto was never willing to make compromises and he always said that ‘who is in fashion is already unfashionable’. [...] In the world of high fashion, especially in Capucci’s work, there is a very great level of craftsmanship, everything is handmade. Therefore, it requires the best première, the best seamstresses, and highly trained embroiderers⁵³⁹.

As a matter of fact, the works of Capucci require a high level of handicraft, few examples are his phosphorescent gowns from 1965, his bamboo dresses (1972) or even his pleated evening dresses draped by the Atelier Milady.

The American sociologist Howard Saul Becker (b. 1928) defined crafts as “the knowledge and skill which produce useful objects and activities”⁵⁴⁰, however, despite the element of utility, he also included beauty as a way to distinguish crafts⁵⁴¹. This distinction carries with it also the division between ordinary craftsmen, creating simple and useful objects, and artists-craftsmen, moved by ambitious ideologies⁵⁴². The latter, indeed, identify in their work a continuity with that of fine artists⁵⁴³. At the same time, it is also relevant the importance of cooperation, as Becker defines artworks “not [as] the products of individual makers, ‘artists’ who possess a rare and special gift. [...] rather, joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world’s characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence.”⁵⁴⁴ All these support activities are of great importance also in the couture world inhabited by Roberto Capucci. His creations could not exist if not thanks to the support of all the satellite artisanal realities that help Capucci in the creation of his masterpieces, as embroiderers, tailors or the Atelier Milady for pleats. Capucci always recognized their crucial role in its couture and always considered them as contributors to the creation of his works of art.

⁵³⁹ *La Moda Proibita. Roberto Capucci e il Futuro dell’Alta Moda*, O. Rosati, cit. Author’s translation.

⁵⁴⁰ H. S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, Berkley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982, p.274.

⁵⁴¹ *Ivi.*, p.275-276.

⁵⁴² *Ivi.*, p. 276.

⁵⁴³ *Ivi.*, p.277.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ivi.*, p.35.

However, Becker's distinction between useful and beautiful crafts does not address why some fashion designers decide not to follow fashion rules. Diana Crane explains this with five different strategies used: the use of unconventional materials, transgression, subversion, meaning to satirize the convention of couture, surrealism, creating unexpected associations between different types of clothing, and pastiche, as the combination of styles from different periods⁵⁴⁵. Two of these strategies apply to the case of Roberto Capucci. The first one is the use of unconventional materials considered inadequate, indeed, as stated in the previous chapters he used natural elements such as bamboo, raffia, straws and pebbles, as well as innovative materials as plastic, however, also his unusual weaving technique should be included in this area, as it represented a newness in the fashion world. The second one is transgression, meaning the violation of the basic conventions part of Western clothing, for example hems⁵⁴⁶, something Capucci completely revolutionized as in the case of the external sewing in the *Linea a Scatola* (1958), his challenge to gravity in the going-up hems in *Fuoco* (1985), *Violano* (1995) and in a 1989 cocktail dress (See Ill. 85) and in the ruffled hems of *Farfallone* (1985) (See Ill. 86).



Ill. 84 - Roberto Capucci, short day dress in silk sauvage taffeta, 1989, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 85 - Roberto Capucci, detail on the ruffled hems in *Farfallone*, 1985, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

⁵⁴⁵ D. Crane, *L'Artificazione Parziale dei Mondi della Moda*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 108.

⁵⁴⁶ Ivi., p. 108.

Actually, as before mentioned, Capucci never considered himself as a designer nor as an artist, but rather as an artisan, a tailor, who “collected and matured the experiences of great classical and Renaissance architects and sculptors”⁵⁴⁷; and this implies the essential element to understand the work of Master Capucci. His primordial source of inspiration is nature, for its forms and colours⁵⁴⁸, but immediately after this comes art and the work of the great masters⁵⁴⁹. His work transcends from the utility of clothes, even though his dresses were created to be worn⁵⁵⁰. Many of the most known gowns he made are thought not to be wearable, contrary opinions notwithstanding, they can be worn, with the only exception of the twelve fabric sculptures created for the centennial of the Venice Biennale. The works of Capucci are not just an expression of his creativity, but also of innovation and structural vanguard⁵⁵¹.

Relevant for this are the words of Giulio Macchi that, when discussing the work of Capucci said: “The license of artist can be given to whoever brings new values, may they be expressed with cloths, goose feathers or marble”⁵⁵². This very though is also reflected in the interview Capucci released for this research:

[...] In my opinion each creative mind is free to do what they think and want, even though it is difficult to state it; everyone is master of expressing their own thoughts. I am interested in drawing, working, creating and not betraying my style, everything else turns around me and goes away⁵⁵³.

In her work, Sandra Miller describes the products of the couture world as beautiful objects to contemplate, capable of favouring an aesthetic experience⁵⁵⁴ and this immediately reminds of Courrèges’ idea that, if art could give joy, so too dressing a woman could give the same delight as when contemplating a painting. In the case of Capucci, this bliss is given both when beholding his pieces as well as when wearing one of his creations.

⁵⁴⁷ D. Maestosi, *Sorpresa, gli Intrusi Capucci e Pizzi Sono le Vere Star*, cit.

⁵⁴⁸ Examples are *Calla* (1956) and *Bocciolo di Rosa* (1956). See Appendix D, Ill. 41-43.

⁵⁴⁹ G. L. Bauzano, *Segreti d’Atelier. Costruzioni, lavorazioni e materiali*, in *Lo Scultore della Seta. Roberto Capucci, il Sublime della Moda*, cit. pp.75-105, here p. 80.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ivi., p.93.

⁵⁵² G. Macchi, *Roberto Capucci*, in *46. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte*, Venezia: Marsilio, 1995, p.13. Author’s translation.

⁵⁵³ Interview of the writer with Roberto Capucci, 26 September 2021, Codroipo.

⁵⁵⁴ S. Miller, *Dal Ballo al Museo: Come l’Abito Diventa Opera Arte*, in *Moda e Arte*, cit., p. 67.

Conclusion

This research aimed to study the career of Master Capucci, analysing the different phases of his creative production. Based on the investigations done at the Fondazione Roberto Capucci and on the secondary resources analysed, it was pointed out the importance of the tailor in both the worlds of fashion and art.

Without the conducted research in the historical archives, it could not have been possible to properly discuss the different periods of Capucci's creativity, as well as the project with Enzo Cucchi (2008) and the exhibition *Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma* (2021). This fieldwork was expected to give a deeper understanding on the 1960s and 1970s' production of Capucci, as the most important period for the development of his creativity, that will then lead him to the creation of his more famous fabric sculptures; as well as apprehending his interpretations of colours and forms. Indeed, by working closely to his creations it was possible to furtherly comprehend Capucci's genius and creativity, fully immersing oneself into his world. Seeing first-hand the high quality of the materials used along with the refinement of the techniques, as his signature weaving of silk ribbons, the unthinkable geometrical patterns achieved with plisse, the virtuous volumes or the fierce allure of his twelve fabric sculptures, gave me the opportunity to witness the world through his eyes. The majority of the second chapter and most part of the third, were indeed based on these researches due to a lack of literature on the topics in the external studies.

The analysis on the career of the Roman tailor contributed to prove how he lives across the worlds of couture and art, linking the two with his creations. Despite the thought shared by many scholars, that fashion cannot be considered as an art form, during his career Capucci did prove that his designs could be considered art. If the main argument against fashion's legitimisation as art is its commercial aspect, the Roman tailor proved to never follow the rules dictated by the market as he created his dresses in order to freely express and vent his creativity. By doing so he confirmed to be the *trait d'union* between art and fashion.

Appendix A

Intervista dell'autrice a Roberto Capucci, 26 settembre 2021, Roma.

Valentina Lava: I volumi sono sempre stati un elemento distintivo delle sue opere, fin dalla *Linea Banjo* (1955), ma cosa la spinse a questa ricerca del volume tramite l'utilizzo della tecnica della plissettatura?

Roberto Capucci: Cara Valentina, il concetto di partenza è che ho fatto i miei studi al Liceo Artistico e all'Accademia di Belle Arti e pertanto le mie creazioni hanno subito l'influenza dei miei studi: ogni creativo ha un proprio stile e io ho fatto un lavoro inerente ai miei studi. La linea e lo stile erano sempre tra la ricerca artistica e quella stilistica, tra la forma e la struttura, e questo sin dall'inizio della mia esperienza creativa. Gli elementi architettonici rappresentavano costantemente la mia ricerca anche prima della *Linea Banjo* che l'ha tanto colpita. Così come la plissettatura che era per me una sfida: un elemento mobile, "accartocciabile" come la carta da pacchi, "indecifrabile" come la corteccia di un albero, una "spiegazzatura" rispetto alla tradizione. Volevo tirar fuori qualcosa di diverso da quella lavorazione antichissima, da quel tessuto bello, così feci, sin dalle prime collezioni, dei cappotti con gli interni in plissé e degli abiti bianchi e neri con gonne girevoli che si aprivano su questo materiale con effetti di luce ignoti e innovativi.

V.L.: Il 1970 fu un anno molto importante per lei, in particolare se si pensa al suo viaggio in India in cui rimase affascinato dai colori del paese. Cosa accadde di particolare da portarla ad una completa rivoluzione del colore?

R.C.: Il colore l'ho sempre amato; il colore, per me, è come respirare l'aria o mangiare se si ha fame. Non esiste una rivoluzione del colore: come sarebbe l'India senza i sari e senza i colori? C'è sempre un senso nella vita e quel Paese ha il suo senso, in India sorgono molte domande.

V.L.: In alcune interviste ha spesso dichiarato di "nutrirsi" dell'arte barocca che la circonda, ispirandosi in alcuni casi ad essa per le sue creazioni. Altre volte invece ha creato abiti dal gusto orientale, come quelli per Xi'an. Quale forma artistica è più vicina al suo io creativo?

R.C.: Io mi ispiro per principio a tutte le arti, penso a tutto quello che ho visto e ammirato e ne colgo l'insieme, mi entra dentro. Posso raccontare che, nel caso delle creazioni per Xi'an, mi fu richiesto dal governo cinese di creare con il mio stile occidentale e che avrebbero gradito un po' di spirito dell'oriente che ho inserito. L'importante è viaggiare e respirare assorbendo ogni cosa, ogni emozione. Un creativo deve avere le sue idee "pure" che gli nascono dalla testa e dal cuore, senza influenze e senza che le sue collezioni siano "etichettate".

V.L.: Nel 1990, stupendo la stampa ed il mondo della moda, presentò per la prima volta una collezione in un museo, inaugurando quella che qualche anno dopo sarebbe diventata un'abitudine. Cosa ricorda di quel momento?

R.C.: La mia prima personale in un museo fu a Palazzo Strozzi, a Firenze, nel 1990, dove Pitti Immagine organizzò una mostra antologica del mio lavoro alla quale vennero esposti 188 miei lavori. In ogni caso, la mostra che a me sta più a cuore fu al Kunsthistorisches Museum di Vienna, dove fui invitato da Sylvia Ferino Pagden, curatrice del settore Rinascimentale e dal direttore dell'armeria imperiale Christian Beaufort. Qui venne organizzata una mostra con mie creazioni e armature da parata del XV secolo, una collezione di grande ricchezza che hanno. Fui molto felice che un museo così prestigioso si interessasse a me, mi venivano aperte le porte di un mondo che rappresentava la cultura internazionale facendomi uscire dalla dimensione esclusiva della moda. Era il massimo della soddisfazione e il mio ricordo è la gioia che provavo nel vedere che anche nell'arte comprendevano il mio lavoro.

V.L.: In passato ha creato abiti per opere liriche e famosi soprani, mentre recentemente dei suoi disegni sono stati scelti per i costumi de *Le Creature di Prometeo*. È forse il teatro quella branca artistica che le permette di esprimersi al meglio?

R.C.: Si trattava di creazioni per una grande artista, il soprano Rajna Kabaivanska, per i suoi concerti e qualche costume per alcune opere liriche nelle quali appariva. Sono molto affascinato dal mondo della lirica, da sempre; anche l'esperienza del

balletto è stata molto stimolante, sia per l'ambientazione fiabesca di Spoleto che per la scelta dell'opera, la sinfonia *Le creature di Prometeo*, di uno dei miei compositori preferiti, il grande Beethoven.

V.L.: Nel 1995, Jean Clair, invitandola a presentare alla Biennale, le chiese di creare delle opere che fossero coerenti con la sua creatività. In una retrospettiva sull'identità e l'alterità del corpo, cosa la spinse ad ispirarsi a dei minerali?

R.C.: La meravigliosa opportunità dell'invito alla Biennale del 1995 è stata una grandiosa esperienza creativa e professionale, irripetibile e unica, sono stato il primo creatore di moda ad essere invitato alla Biennale. Le mie *Architetture di tessuto* sono state celebrate in tutto il mondo e i miei "minerali", come lei le chiama, erano delle opere complesse sia nella struttura che nella materia; non si trattava di minerali ma ne ricordavano il colore, si trattava di una questione estetica.

V.L.: Nel corso della sua carriera si è trovato più volte davanti ad un ostracismo da parte del mondo dell'arte verso le sue creazioni; cosa ne pensa del rapporto tra arte e moda e cosa direbbe a coloro che non considerano quest'ultima come una forma d'arte?

R.C.: Non sono interessato, non ho mai avuto contro nessuno. Per me ogni creativo nella vita è libero di fare quello che pensa e che vuole, anche se è difficile affermarlo; ognuno è padrone di esprimere il proprio pensiero. A me interessa disegnare, lavorare, creare, e non tradire il proprio stile, tutto il resto mi gira intorno e se ne va.

L. V.: In alcuni casi, come con il suo cappotto *Cretto* del 1968, ha anticipato dei capolavori artistici. Si descriverebbe come un antesignano di tali correnti artistiche?

R.C.: Il *Cretto* [di Alberto Burri, 1985-1989] è un'opera meravigliosa e il mio cappotto è un'opera diversa: in lana bianca a pezzi come un muro rotto con l'interno foderato di chiffon nero in modo che, nel movimento della mannequin in pedana, i pezzi si muovessero come un temporale.

Appendix B

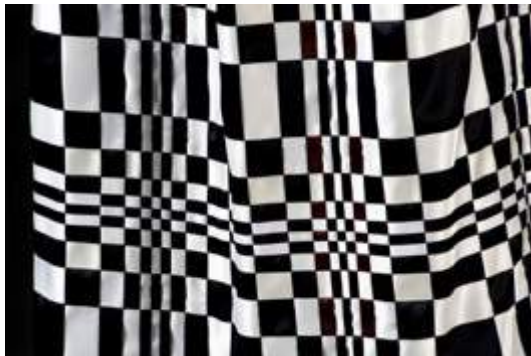
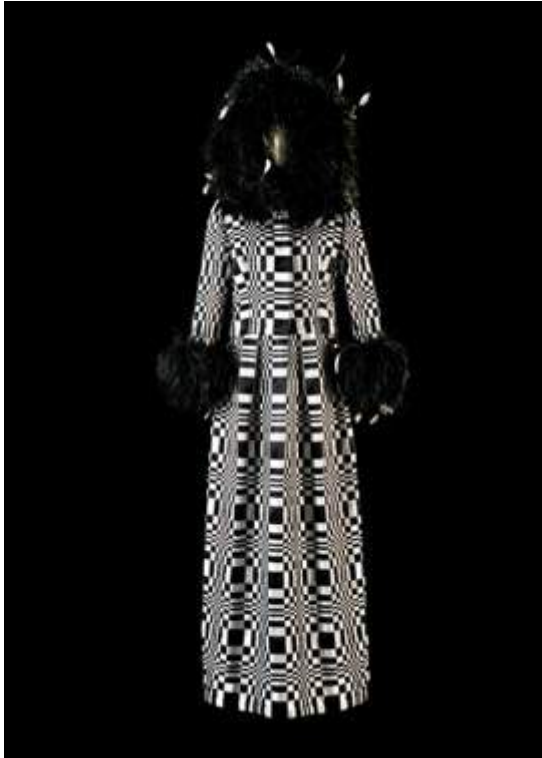
Capucci's Designs During the Parisian Period



Left: Ill. 1 - Roberto Capucci, two pieces day dress with intertwined silk ribbons in white and green tones, 1960, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Right: Ill. 2 - Roberto Capucci, two pieces day dress with intertwined multicolour silk ribbons, 1960, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom centre: Ill. 3 – detail, 1960, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 4 - Roberto Capucci, Omaggio a Vasarely, two pieces long day dress made with intertwined black and white silk ribbons creating an optical motif and ostrich feathers, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right and above: Ill. 5; 6 - Roberto Capucci, details of ribbon-woven fabric in Omaggio a Vasarely, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 7 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dresses in heavy silk crepe with phosphorescent embroideries, rue Cambon Paris, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 8 - Roberto Capucci, luminescent effect of the long evening dresses when in the dark, rue Cambon Paris, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



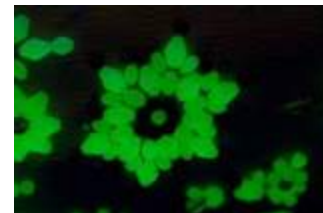
Centre right: Ill. 9 - Roberto Capucci, beige long evening dress in heavy silk crepe with phosphorescent embroideries, rue Cambon Paris, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Centre right: Ill. 10; 11 - Roberto Capucci, phosphorescent embroidery details, rue Cambon Paris, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Bottom left: Ill. 12 - Roberto Capucci, pink long evening dress in heavy silk crepe with phosphorescent embroideries, rue Cambon Paris, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Bottom right: Ill. 13; 14 - Roberto Capucci, phosphorescent embroidery details, rue Cambon Paris, Autumn/Winter 1965-66, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 15- Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress, short dress in rigid transparent plastic with a white silk organza sheath dress underneath, Spring/Summer 1966, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Umberto Gasche.



Left: Ill. 16 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long lamé dress with a semi-rigid plastic bolero with red plexiglass cubes, Spring/Summer 1967, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Above: Ill. 17; 18 - Roberto Capucci, details, Spring/Summer 1967, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Appendix C

Capucci's Designs After His Roman Homecoming



Top left: Ill. 19 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress, silk georgette and jute cloth, Spring/Summer 1971, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top centre and right: Ill. 20-21, - Roberto Capucci, details, Spring/Summer 1971, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 22 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress, silk georgette and rope edges, Rome, Spring/Summer 1971, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 23 - Roberto Capucci, details, Rome, Spring/Summer 1971, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 24 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress, silk georgette, and braided straw bust, Rome, Spring/Summer 1972, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 25 - Roberto Capucci, details, Rome, Spring/Summer 1972, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 26 - Roberto Capucci, Sassi, day dress in silk shantung taffeta with pebbles on the belt and on the edges, Spring/Summer 1972, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 27 - Roberto Capucci, Sassi, detail, Spring/Summer 1972, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Centre left: Ill. 28 - Roberto Capucci, day dress, grey silk shantung taffeta with pebbles on the neck and cuffs, Spring/Summer 1972, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 29 - Roberto Capucci, day dress, pink silk shantung taffeta with pebbles on the belt and cuffs, Spring/Summer 1972, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 30 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, green silk georgette with bamboo applications on the neck, belt and cuffs, Spring/Summer 1972, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right and above: Ill. 31; 32 - Roberto Capucci, details, Spring/Summer 1972, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top centre: Ill. 33 - Roberto Capucci, Colonna Romanica, later view of the dress, Autumn/Winter 1978-79, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 34 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the leaves on the belt, Autumn/Winter 1978-79 Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 35 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the grooves on the skirt, Autumn/Winter 1978-79, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Appendix D

Volumes in Capucci's designs



Left: Ill. 36 - Roberto Capucci, Banjo Line sketch, graphite, 1955, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Right: Ill. 37 - Roberto Capucci, Banjo Line, silk taffeta, 1955, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Top left: Ill. 38 - Roberto Capucci, sketch of Nove Gonne, Rome Autumn/Winter 1957-57, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 39 - Roberto Capucci, Nove Gonne, evening dress in red silk taffeta with nine overskirts, Autumn/Winter 1956-57, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 40 - Roberto Capucci, side view of Nove Gonne, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 41 - Roberto Capucci, Bocciolo di rosa, short dress in red silk taffeta recolling the shape of a rose, Spring/Summer 1956, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 42 - Roberto Capucci, Bocciolo di rosa, short dress in red silk taffeta recolling the shape of a rosebud, , Spring/Summer 1956, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom: Ill. 43 - Roberto Capucci, Calla, eveningt dress in white silk satin recolling the shape of a calla lily, Autumn/Winter 1956-57, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

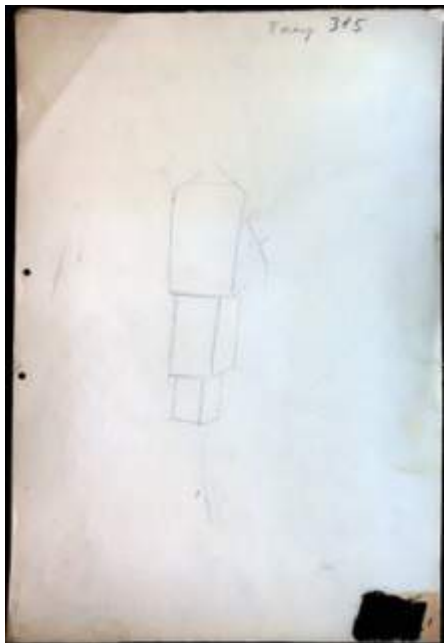


Top left: Ill. 44 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a rounded overskirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1957, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 45 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a half-rounded overskirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1957, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom left: Ill. 46 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a diamond-shaped skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1957, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom right: Ill. 47 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress with a heart-shaped skirt, graphite collection sketch, 1957, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Top left: Ill. 48 - Roberto Capucci, day dress with a mantle part of the Linea a Scatola, graphite, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Florence, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 49 - Roberto Capucci, wool and silk faille dress with a sleeveless mantle Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 50 - Roberto Capucci, day dress part of the Linea a Scatola, graphite, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom right: Ill. 51 - Roberto Capucci, wool and silk faille dress, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Left: Ill. 52 - Roberto Capucci, long dress part of the Linea a Scatola, graphite, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Right: Ill. 53 - Roberto Capucci, wool and silk faille dress with a crepon silk overskirt, Autumn/Winter 1958-59 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 54 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a voluminous layered bolero, graphite, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci

Top right: Ill. 55 - Roberto Capucci, black charmeuse cocktail dress with a white silk organza layered bolero, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 56 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the white silk organza layered bolero, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 57 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a voluminous squared layered collar, graphite, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 58 - Roberto Capucci, black charmeuse cocktail dress with a squared white silk organza layered collar, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 59 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the white silk organza layered collar, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 60 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a voluminous layered skirt, graphite, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Florence, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 61 - Roberto Capucci, white charmeuse cocktail dress with a layered skirt, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Florence, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 62 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the layered skirt, Spring/Summer 1959 collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 63 - Roberto Capucci, sleeveless cocktail dress with a layered rectangular skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 64 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a layered rectangular skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom left: Ill. 65 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a pleated layered rectangular skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom right: Ill. 66 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a layered rectangular skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Top left: Ill. 67 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a layered diamond shape skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Top right: Ill. 68 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with a diamond shape skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Bottom left: Ill. 69 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress with triangular volumes skirt, graphite, collection sketch, 1959, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Top left: Ill. 70 - Roberto Capucci, Ventagli, sculptural long dress in silk sauvage taffeta with lateral hiding fans, Autumn/Winter 1980-81, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 71 - Roberto Capucci, Ventagli with one open lateral fan, Palazzo Barberini, Autumn/Winter 1980-81, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 72 - Roberto Capucci, Ventagli with lateral open fans in different tones of red and pink, Palazzo Barberini, Autumn/Winter 1980-81, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 73 - Roberto Capucci, Ventagli lateral view, Palazzo Barberini, Autumn/Winter 1980-81, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 74 - Roberto Capucci, Arancia, long evening dress in viscose velvet with silk marcellina applications on the waist, 1982, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 75 - Roberto Capucci, Arancia, lateral view, 1982, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 76 - Roberto Capucci, Arancia, detail, 1982, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 77 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress with a viscose velvet bodice and a green cadu silk skirt with big folds lined in red or pink velvet, Palazzo Visconti, Milan, 1982, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 78 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in viscose velvet with savage silk taffeta applications on the sleeves, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 79 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the applications on the sleeves, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 80 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the with rigid silk applications on the belt, 2007, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 81 - Roberto Capucci, sculpture dress in silk satin with rigid silk applications, 2007, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Appendix E

Colour

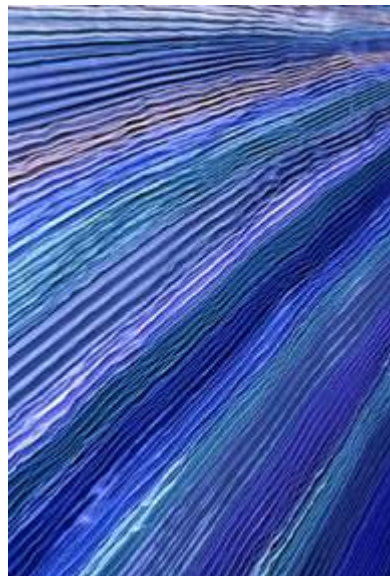


Top left: Ill. 82 - Roberto Capucci, wool coat with inlays in relief, Autumn/Winter 1961-62, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 83 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in silk mikado, Autumn/Winter 1961-62, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 84 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in silk faille, 1969, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 85 - Roberto Capucci, short wool day dress, 1969, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Top: Ill. 86 - Roberto Capucci, Oceano, sculpture in pleated silk taffeta with different shades of blue, 1998, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Fiorenzo Niccoli.

Bottom: Ill. 87 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the different shades of blue in Oceano, 1998, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Fiorenzo Niccoli.



Top left: Ill. 88 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long silk taffeta dress with pleated flounces in different shades of degrading colours, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 89 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the pleated flounces, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 90- Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long silk georgette dress with alternated coloured segments, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 91 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the alternated coloured segments, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Top left: Ill. 92 - Roberto Capucci, Farfallone, long dress in multicolour pleated silk taffeta, 1985, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 93 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long silk satin dress with voluminous corollas on its top lined in a contrasting colour, 1985, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 94- Roberto Capucci, detail of the coloured corollas, New York Army 1985, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 95- Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long dress in sauge silk taffeta with large scrolls on the skirt in pleated sauge silk taffeta on the outside and smooth sauge silk taffeta on the inside, 1989, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

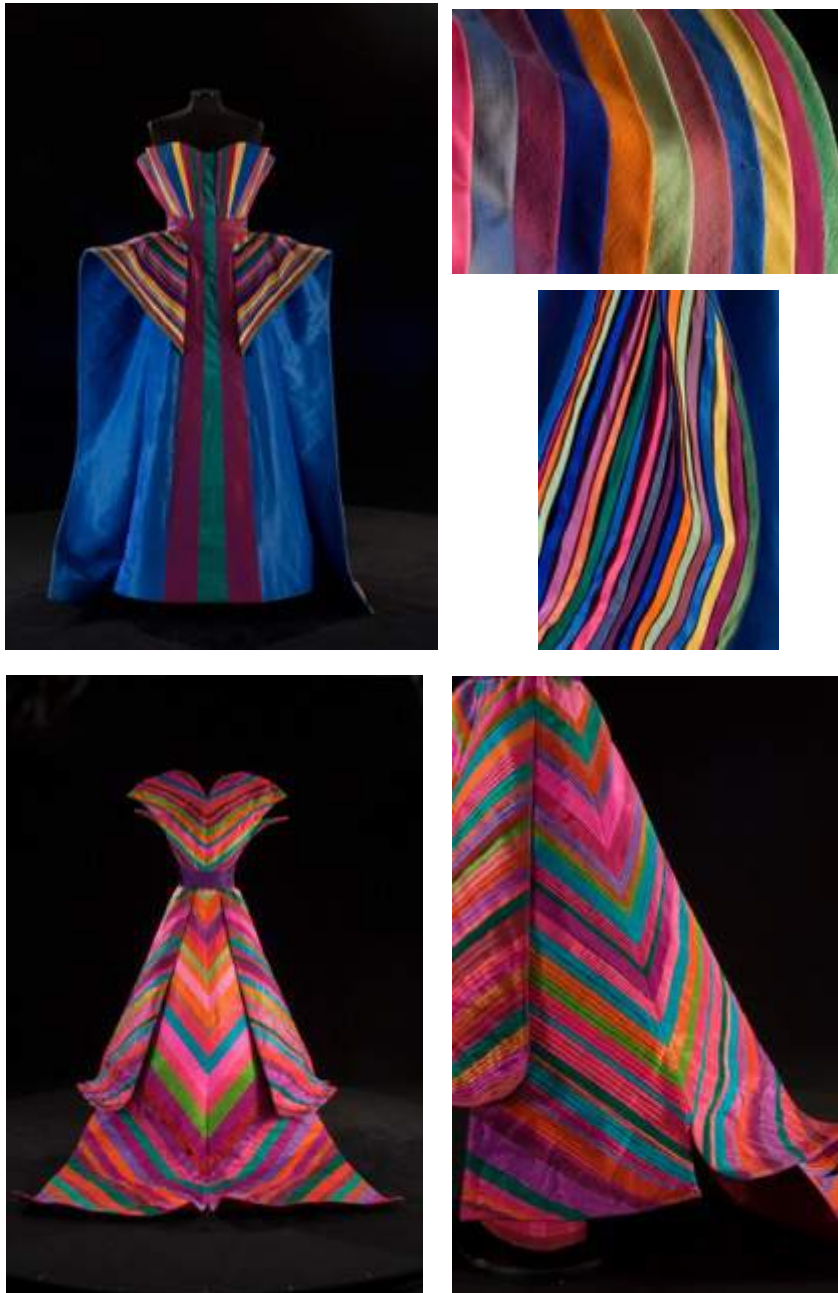


Top left: Ill. 96 - Roberto Capucci, Crepe, pink and green silk taffeta sculpture with an orange petticoat, 2007, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top right: Ill. 97 - Roberto Capucci, Crepe, detail of the open part of the dress, 2007, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom left: Ill. 98 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long silk taffeta dress with inlays of different colours, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Bottom right: Ill. 99 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the coloured inlays, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Bottom left: Ill. 100 - Roberto Capucci, evening dress, long silk taffeta dress with pleated applications of different colours, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Centre right and bottom right: Ill. 101; 102 - Roberto Capucci, details of the range of colours used in the inlays, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Top left: Ill. 103 - Roberto Capucci, Linee, silk taffeta sculptural dress with multicolour inlays, 2007, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli

Top right: Ill. 104 - Roberto Capucci, details of the range of colours used in the inlays, 2007, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Appendix F

Twelve fabric sculptures at the Venice Biennale (1995)



Ill. 105 - Roberto Capucci, Allanite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 106 - Roberto Capucci, Allanite, 1995, sculpture in silk taffeta with geometrical applications on the hips, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 107 - Roberto Capucci, Antimonite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 108 - Roberto Capucci, Antimonite, 1995, silver grey fabric sculpture in shantung taffeta, 195x150x150 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



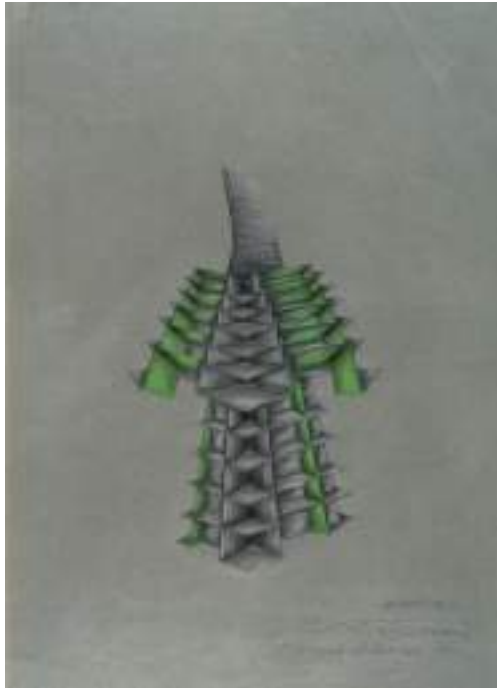
Ill. 109 - Roberto Capucci, Cinabro, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 110 - Roberto Capucci, Cinabro, 1995, sculpture in red taffeta silk, 160x120x80 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



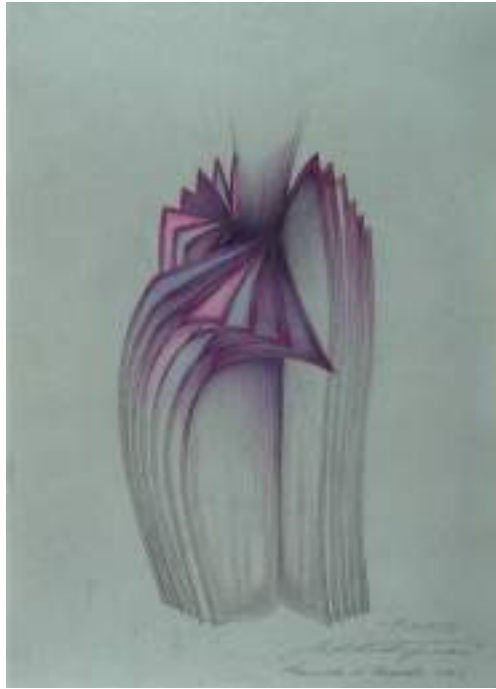
Ill. 111 - Roberto Capucci, Diaspro, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci

Ill. 112 - Roberto Capucci, Diaspro, 1995, sculpture in viscose velvet and iridescent silk taffeta, 160x134x80 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 113 - Roberto Capucci, Ematite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 114 - Roberto Capucci, Ematite, 1995, silk taffeta sculpture, 150x120x100 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 115 - Roberto Capucci, Fluorite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 116 - Roberto Capucci, Fluorite, 1995, viscose velvet and silk taffeta sculpture, 160x125x80 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 117 - Roberto Capucci, Lapislazzulo, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 118 - Roberto Capucci, Lapislazzulo, 1995, silk taffeta sculpture, 150x70x55 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 119 - Roberto Capucci, Ossidiana, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 120 - Roberto Capucci, Ossidiana, 1995, viscose velvet and silk taffeta sculpture, 160x180x180 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 121 - Roberto Capucci, Pirite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 122 - Roberto Capucci, Pirite, 1995, silk taffeta sculpture, 160x66x72 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.18



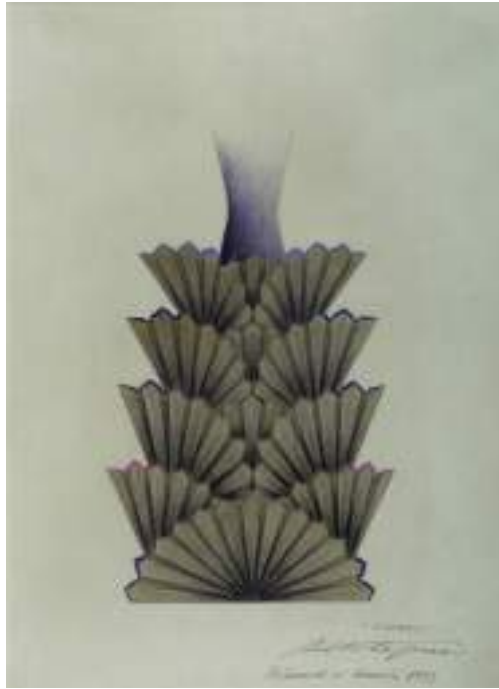
Ill. 123 - Roberto Capucci, Sagenite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 124 - Roberto Capucci, Sagenite, 1995, silk sauvage sculpture with cord applications on the bodice, 175x72x66 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 125 - Roberto Capucci, Siderite, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 126 - Roberto Capucci, Siderite, 1995, silk taffeta sculpture, 180x100x100 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli



Ill. 127 - Roberto Capucci, Violano, 1995, preparatory drawing of the sculpture, graphite and coloured pencils, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 128 - Roberto Capucci, Violano, 1995, silk taffeta sculpture, 160x100x80 cm, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.²⁴

Appendix G

Cucchi&Capucci: some sketches



Ill. 129 - Roberto Capucci, long evening dress in silk georgette, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, credits Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 130 - Roberto Capucci, Piumaggio, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci



Ill. 131 - Roberto Capucci, Fuochi d'artificio, 1992, iridescent silk taffeta dress with firework-like applications, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 132 - Roberto Capucci, Arcobaleni, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 133 - Roberto Capucci, lame silk taffeta dress with leaf applications, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Cluadia Primangeli.



Ill. 134 - Roberto Capucci, Bambola d'ottone, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci



Ill. 135 - Roberto Capucci, pleated iridescent silk taffeta dress with a squared-sleeves bolero, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 136 - Roberto Capucci, Il gioco delle scatole, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci



Ill. 137 - Roberto Capucci, silk satin dress with fans on front and back of the skirt, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 138 - Roberto Capucci, Il sole, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 139 - Roberto Capucci, Allanite, 1995, sculpture in silk taffeta with geometrical applications on the hips, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Gianluca Baronchelli.



Ill. 140 - Roberto Capucci, Malachite, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 141 - Roberto Capucci, Ventagli, sculptural long dress in silk sauvage taffeta with lateral fans, 1980, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo courtesy Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 142- Roberto Capucci, Mondrain, silk satin organza dress with coloured segments, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 143 - Roberto Capucci, Fuoco, 1985, silk sauvage bodice and silk taffeta pleated skirt, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 144 - Roberto Capucci, Ventaglio Geometria Fuoco, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 145- Roberto Capucci, Divieto di sosta, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 146 - Roberto Capucci, Tic tac, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



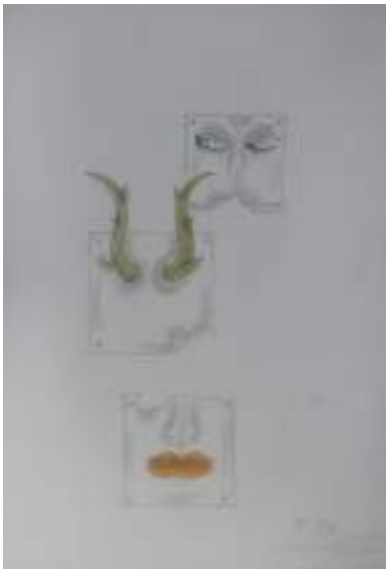
Ill. 147 - Roberto Capucci, Calle e oche, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 148 - Roberto Capucci, La prigioniera, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 149 - Roberto Capucci, La primavera, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 150 - Roberto Capucci, Il volto, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 151 - Roberto Capucci, Esplosione, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 152 - Roberto Capucci, I gemelli, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 153 - Roberto Capucci, 6 colli bianchi, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 154 -Roberto Capucci, Pettorale, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 155 - Roberto Capucci, Arcobaleno quadrato, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



*Top: Ill. 156 - Roberto Capucci, *Gioco d'amaca*, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.*

*Bottom: Ill. 157 - Roberto Capucci, *Bilancia*, 2008, graphite and coloured pencils, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.*

Appendix H

Plisse in Capucci



Ill. 158- Roberto Capucci, boule pleated silk taffeta jacket, 1985, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.

Ill. 159 - Roberto Capucci, pleated silk taffeta suit, 1987, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 160 - Roberto Capucci, Marsina, 1992, pleated silk taffeta in different red tones, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 161 - Roberto Capucci, Marsina, 1992, detail of the pleated sleeve with ruffled edges, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 162 - Roberto Capucci, pleated silk taffeta cloak in different shades of grey, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Ill. 163 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the pleated collar of the cloak, 1992, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.

Appendix I

Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma, Triennale di Milano (2021)



Ill. 164 - Roberto Capucci, one of the exposed sketches from the 1985's collection representing Farfallone, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 165 - Roberto Capucci, collection sketch Bouganvillea, 1989, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 166 - Roberto Capucci, one of the exposed sketches from the 1989's collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 167 - Roberto Capucci, sketch from the 1987's collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 168 - Roberto Capucci, sketch from the 1987's collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 169 - Roberto Capucci, one of the exposed sketches from the 1987's collection, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci.



Ill. 170 - Giancarlo Piretti, *Plia*, 1967, Cellidor plastic, produced by Aninima Castelli, Triennale di Milano, <https://www.anonimacastelli.com/en/products/plia> [last access 17 January 2022].



Ill. 171 - Roberto Capucci, cocktail dress, in semi-rigid transparent plastic dress on a silk organza base embroidered with plastic elements, 1966, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 172 - Gio Ponti, *Superleggera* or mod. 699, 1957, wood structure and rope seat, produced by Cassina, Triennale di Milano, <https://store.gioponti.org/en/home/390-leggera-646-chair-with-rope-seat.html> [last access 17 January 2022].



Ill. 173 - Roberto Capucci, detail of the rope embroideries in a long evening dress in silk georgette, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudia Primangeli.



Ill. 174 - Pietro Gilardi, *I Sassi*, 1968, polymeric materials, produced by Gufram <https://www.gufram.it/en/prodotto-11-sassi> [last access 19 January 2022].



Ill. 175 - Roberto Capucci, *Sassi*, 1972, detail of the pebbles applications on the belt of a silk shantung taffeta, Codroipo Fondazione Roberto Capucci, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Claudio Zamponi.



Ill. 176 - Three white dress with applications of fiber glass masks at the exhibition Metafore. Roberto Capucci: meraviglie della forma held at Triennale Milano, 2021, courtesy of Fondazione Roberto Capucci, photo credits Emanuele Zamponi.

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