

BAZAAR^{Harper's}

Success which is "Made in Italy"

Interview with Franco Ferraro

"My secret? The search for harmony"

The clothes I create are the ones I myself love to wear. I always use natural fabrics, often of great value, and structured and finished with great attention to detail".

In the brightly lit living-room of his home, nestling in the green silence of the hills in Valsesia, Franco Ferraro explains the international success of his griffe.

From his secluded studio and business premises in Northern Italy the designer exports over 90% of his collections to Japan, Europe, Australia and U.S.A. There is a great deal of creativity here but there is more to it than appears on the surface.

"Creativity and talent are not enough on their own", our guest confirms while we sip on a superb "Gattinara" wine he himself bottles. "My interest in fashion led me, as a very young man, to work with Grace Coddington, the editor of Vogue England, and with the great photographer David Bailey. But it was only after gaining valuable creative and managerial experience at Lanerie Agnona, one of the most important companies in the world producing fabrics in the most precious of fibres, that more than twenty years ago I decided to set up my own business, "Child". "Child is an acronym" he adds with a smile "made up of the names of my children, Chiara, Ilaria and Davide.

During the early years, Child not only produced my own collections, but also the great couturiers, such as Dior and Givenchy". International success arrived some years later with the "Franco Ferraro" griffe.

First came ladies' prêt-à-porter followed by "Franco Ferraro Uomo". Launched in 1985 the men's line won acclaim above all in the United States and Japan. Among their most influential customers are Toyobo, a colossus in the Land of the Rising Sun.

"My first trip to Japan goes back to 1966", the Piedmontese designer recalls, "and since then I have returned three or

four times a year, witnessing the country's extraordinary technical and economic evolution. I have often been asked how you adapt to their world which is as fascinating as it is remote", he continues as he strokes the cat, a magnificent Persian called Geraldine, who has leapt on to the sofa to join him.

"I would say that this empathy is born of our mutual desire to make things well, right down to the last detail, and of the synergy which exists between Italian creativity on the one hand, and Japanese organisation and technical know-how on the other".

In respect of his own philosophy Franco Ferraro limits his output to 35-40,000 garments per year. He principally creates coordinating sets (coats, jackets, shirts, skirts and trousers) so as to allow for impeccable combinations. He uses linen and cotton; silks and wools (often cashmere, alpaca and tasmânia) in gorgeous fabrics which are all rigorously natural and selected with the utmost care, or which have been especially developed. Both East and West are in complete agreement: the "Franco Ferraro" collections are most distinctive, and this is not due only to the materials used, but also to the perfect balance created between the casual and classic, the sporty and elegant. "An interpretation which I find pleasing", he remarks, "because I always set my sights high. I seek harmony".



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