

The Art of Making & the Made in Italy

I. I. (October 13, 2017)



Last Thursday, a large crowd flocked to the Art Center at Queens College of The City University of New York for the inauguration of the exhibition *The Fabric of Cultures: Systems in the Making. The Made in Italy--Designers Link Their Collections to their Local Roots, Emphasizing Tradition and Local Culture*

The exhibition and the project that lies behind it are occasions to reflect on the art of making and the Made in Italy.

The exhibition explores how artisanship can be married to technology and how Italian excellences in the arts, textiles and fashion find a common language and ground for collaboration. Together, they contribute to the art of living, wellbeing and respect for people and the environment.



This is the face of the new Made in Italy.

According to the curator of the exhibit, Eugenia Paulicelli, the new Made in Italy is transnational and in conversation with other cultures and technologies.

With their remarks at the opening reception Maurizio Forte, Director of the [Italian Trade Commission \(ICE/ITA New York\)](#) [2] and Enrico Libani, CEO America, [Cesare Attolin](#) [3] galvanized the public with rousing speech. Maurizio Forte shared a splendid anecdote that underlined the two important elements at the core of the Fabric of Cultures project: artisanship and technology, and how they work together, and how the one cannot exist without the other.

It is the marriage of technology and artisanship, Forte went on to say, that is the DNA of the new Made in Italy. Forte added that Italy is in the avant-garde in the production and export of high technology to the world.

Enrico Libani described how the Neapolitan style of jacket was born. In the 1930s, he master tailor Vincenzo Attolini, father of Cesare and grandfather of Massimiliano and Giuseppe, the present owners of the brand, revolutionized the Saville Row, London style of jacket worn by well-to-do Italians. Vincenzo created a lightweight version of a jacket more in line with the climate of southern Italy. Being lighter, it required a higher level of sartorial skill than heavier, more structured jackets. Vincenzo's jacket was designed to be a second skin that gave the effect of massaging the wearer.

The Neapolitan sartorial revolution took place locally and created a new image of male elegance that stretched beyond the confines of Naples and Italy. Libani has described the dozens of master tailors who work at the Attolini atelier just outside Naples. They sit at round tables each one of them works on a single detail of the jacket: sleeves, lapels, collars, and pockets.

The new Made in Italy of the twenty-first century blends the local with the global, the handmade and the machine, the made in Italy and its transnational markets and influence. It draws on tradition and history to create the new.

Eugenia Paulicelli, who directs the Advanced Certificate of Italian Culture for the 21st Century at Queens College and Fashion Studies at Graduate Center (CUNY), underscored how the Made in Italy demands to be understood in the wider context of the multiplicity of language and cultures that compose Italy's pluralistic identity. To reflect on the new Made in Italy as this exhibition does is to spotlight Italian excellence and reveal an Italy that defies simplistic slogans.

The Fabric of Cultures: Systems in the Making brings together artists, designers, CUNY students and local communities to reflect on the art of making, craftsmanship and technology in today's globalized world. It calls attention to larger systems at play that influence the state of fashion, craft and aesthetics constantly under development and in flux.

For non-Italians especially, the Made in Italy signifies the acquisition of an intangible set of experiences. The objects consumed become part of an emotional map that gives access to a lived or imaginary experience made possible by the narrative of the new media. This is why the experience of authenticity is so important. Many of today's Italian designers dedicate special attention to linking their collections to the place in which they are made, emphasizing local traditions and culture.

The designers and companies included in the exhibition—Cesare Attolini, Antonio Marras, Orange Fiber and Salvatore Ferragamo, "Arte e Ricamo," a women-run company that works for prestigious Italian and international brands from Emilio Pucci (shown in the exhibit) to Dolce & Gabbana, Tom Ford, Versace, Vivienne Westwood, and Fendi, to name but a few—are exemplars of this dialogue and dynamic.

Made in Italy today demands to be examined in the context of both a multilayered identity and a plurality of centers of excellence that preserve a relationship with local origins often beyond the confines of large cities. The exhibition features, in fact, a mix of regional experiences, accents and know-how from the north: Arte e Ricamo, Emilio Pucci, Ferragamo, Silvia Giovanardi; from the south:



Calabria—FrancyG, Emanuela Errico, Maria Francesca Nigro, Cangiarì/Goel; Sicily—Giulietta Salmeri, Marzia Donzelli (Arca Textile Lab), Orange Fiber; Sardinia—Antonio Marras; or from a city, Naples in the case of Attolini.

The research behind these different companies and independent designers shares common ground: care and attention to detail and aesthetic, ethics, know-how, links to local identity and history, together with an eye to innovative techniques and designs.

The Fabric of Cultures offers a special opportunity to view the new Made in Italy from New York, a global fashion city and a design hub, through the Tek-Tiles project by the Pratt/Brooklyn Fashion + Design Accelerator. The exhibition also debuts the work of CUNY student Christina Trupiano, who has re-created the Tanagra Dress originally made by activist and dress designer Rosa Genoni in 1908. A film by Massimo Mascolo and Claudio Napoli shows this dynamic dress worn by Queens College students and provide additional background and contribute to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Rosa Genoni's birth.

The exhibition catalog, *The Fabric of Cultures: Systems in the Making*, is now available on [Amazon](#) [4].

The Fabric of Cultures is part of a larger, partly digital, pedagogic and research project directed by Eugenia Paulicelli, professor of Italian at [Queens College](#) [5]; and director of [Fashion Studies at the Graduate Center](#) [6].

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[2] <http://www.italtrade.com/>

[3] <http://cesareattolini.com/>

[4] https://www.amazon.com/Fabric-Cultures-Systems-Making-ebook/dp/B0761WFMKX/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1507763715&sr=8-1&keywords=The+Fabric+of+Cultures%3A+System+s+in+the+Making

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