

Reimagining fashion: a journey into sustainable style in Rome

In today's world, the fashion industry does not often pay attention to environmental sustainability due to its fast-paced production system intended to create a craving for always new clothes.

In my city, Rome, Italy, we all seem to buy clothes that we don't really need and then throw them away almost new. But this trend can also be seen in all the so called "industrialized" countries all over the world, which encourages the clothing industry to produce more and more low-quality garments at low prices using polluting substances.



Figure 1: The collection bins for used clothes in Rome, Italy, have the characteristic yellow color and are always full

This massive and quick kind of clothes production employed by large commercial companies is called "fast fashion".

Working on a Civics school project this year I wondered: is there a way to combat this phenomenon?

The answer I have learned to formulate is: sustainable fashion.

Sustainable fashion is based on an ethical and environmentally aware kind of production which includes recycling certified organic fabrics, valorization of artisans, fair trade. The companies which produce sustainable fashion items employ production processes that limit waste, they use natural raw materials, they recycle, i.e. process used materials into new products, they regenerate, i.e. revitalize for instance scraps to create new garments.

Sustainable fashion is also somehow connected to emotional fashion because it makes us buy clothes that represent ourselves, our emotions and our personality.

In my attempt to better understand the vision of sustainable fashion, I sought out someone working in the field who was willing to be interviewed. Through a teacher of mine, I got in touch with Barbara Annunziata, an architect living in Rome who runs social tailor shops and has also created several environmentally sensitive clothing lines.

To write this article, I decided to contact her asking for a phone interview, which she kindly accepted to arrange.

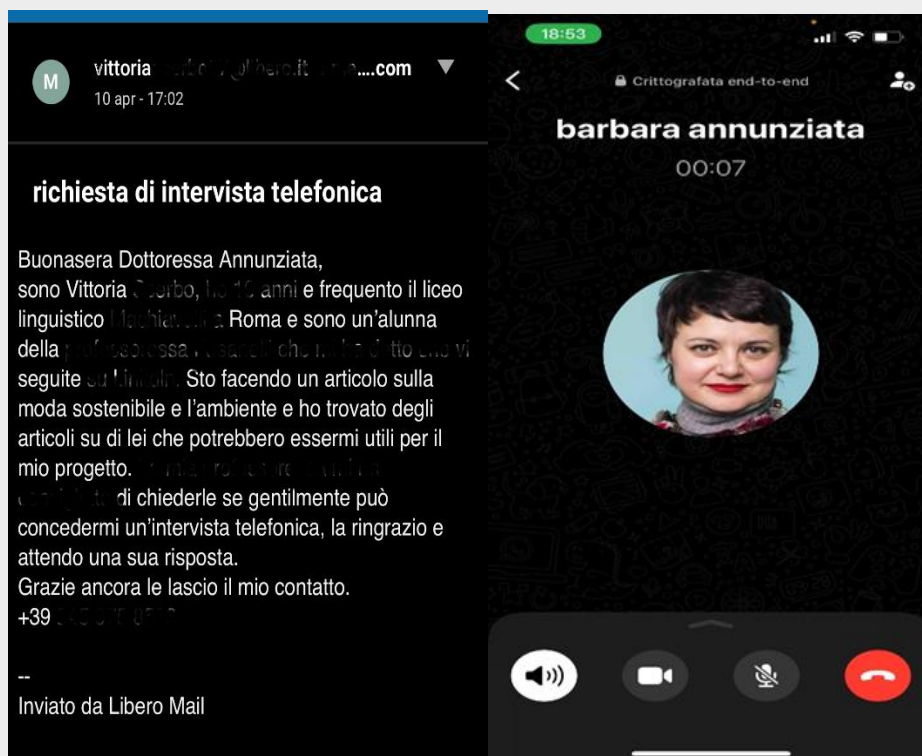


Figure 2: Getting in touch with an expert

To my first question: "What exactly is your job?" B. Annunziata replied "I'm an archigiana" which is a play on 2 words: architetto, architect, and artigiana, artisan. Through architecture and manipulation with her hands she has managed to combine the two domains. As a matter of fact, when starting her career as a fashion designer, she began to touch and create with her hands learning how to cut a fabric, manipulate it, sew it and assemble it. Thus Ms Annunziata has merged the figure of the architect, who may be regarded as a technician and a theorist, with the figure of the craftsman.



Figure 3: Courtesy Ms Annunziata

Her research is aimed at industrial craftsmanship, that is to say at the creation of artifacts endowed with industrial replicability associated with the care an artisan puts into producing an object. Actually her collections are somehow all unique and iconic pieces made with different end-of-series fabrics, strictly made in Italy.

She also likes the term 'working slowly' meaning the process that counteracts the concept of exploitation of fashion workers – mainly minors and women - brought about by fast fashion (as we saw in class in the investigative documentary “The True Cost” by A. Morgan). Actually Ms Annunziata works on the empowerment and training of disadvantaged individuals, particularly Nigerian migrant women, becoming responsible for the establishment process of the Social Tailoring Workshop 'Action Women' in Castel Volturno, taking on the role of creative director.



The True Cost: Who Pays the Real Price for YOUR Clothes | Investigative Documentary

Figure 4: This is documentary on fast fashion we watched in class

For Barbara Annunziata, fashion and sustainability are absolutely linked because we do not have the possibility of having a second planet, thus fashion has to reformulate its way of being, its timing, its rhythms, since all the unsold goods end up in mountains of clothes that submerge the sand dunes of Ghana and form plastic islands in the oceans.

“What can we young people really do?” this is another question I asked my expert.

These are only some of the tips collected throughout my interview I would like to share. We should 'buy less, use better', we should consume less, ask ourselves questions such as: do we really need it? Can't we do without it?

Instead of throwing away, we have to learn to recycle, share, upcycle, swap clothes making them our own according to our personality.

We should buy second-hand garments, try not to be bewitched by low prices behind which labour exploitation and low quality are hidden.

Let's rather choose a garment produced by artisans. It will be more durable, regenerable, recyclable, versatile and at the same time unique and original.

Let's remember that it's not clothes we wear which matter but by the way we wear them, so show your personality by mixing together different new and used garments, recycling them and giving them a new life. An environmentally sustainable garment is a garment that grows and changes with you, that can be used in more ways than one, a garment that evolves.

In embracing sustainable fashion, we not only redefine our relationship with clothing but also enact a more conscious and harmonious coexistence with our planet.

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V.S.

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