ABITO

MAECI

ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

ITALIAN CREATIVITY, WITHOUT BORDERS

Italy's strength has always been its ability to bring worlds together.

Art and industry. Craftsmanship and technology. Heritage and experimentation. Beauty and function. It is in the space between these apparent opposites that much of what we recognize today as Made in Italy has taken shape.

At the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), we believe that promoting Italian excellence abroad means telling this story in all its complexity — presenting Italy not only through what it has inherited from the past, but through what it continues to imagine, design and create for the future.

This is the spirit of our Growth Diplomacy: bringing culture and enterprise into the same narrative and using the extraordinary reach of Italy's diplomatic, consular and cultural network to create connections, opportunities and new spaces for dialogue around Italian talent and know-how.

ABITO was born from this vision.

Fashion and design are two of the most immediate expressions of Italian creativity, but their relationship goes far beyond aesthetics. Both interpret society. Both respond to changing ways of living. Both combine imagination with manufacturing expertise, research with craftsmanship, individual talent with an industrial ecosystem.

They are also two strategic sectors for Italy's economy and international projection: industries with a strong global presence, extensive supply chains and an extraordinary capacity to carry Italian products, skills and ideas into markets around the world. Bringing fashion and design together therefore means connecting two powerful expressions of Made in Italy — not only as cultural assets, but as drivers of exports, competitiveness and economic growth.

By placing them in dialogue, ABITO offers a different way of looking at Italy. Through garments, objects and the stories they embody, the exhibition explores the evolution of taste, lifestyles and, above all, the role of women — revealing how social change is reflected in the things we wear and the spaces we inhabit.

After its debut in Milan, ABITO travels worldwide in an international journey through Italy's diplomatic network, bringing this dialogue to some of the world's most dynamic markets and creating new opportunities for encounters between Italian creativity and international audiences, institutions and businesses.

Because promoting Made in Italy does not simply mean taking Italian products around the world. It means taking an idea of Italy to the world: creative, dynamic, innovative and constantly evolving.

Mauro Battocchi

Director General for Growth and Export Promotion
Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

ABITO

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

palomba
serafini
associati

AN EXHIBITION PROMOTED AND ORGANIZED BY

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ABITO

WORLD TOUR

Produced and Promoted by
The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Curated by
Palomba Serafini Associati

Through ABITO, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation brings together two of the most distinctive expressions of Italian creativity — fashion and design — to tell a broader story about Italy, its society and its capacity to evolve while remaining rooted in a unique cultural and productive heritage.

Conceived and curated with Palomba Serafini, one of the leading voices of contemporary Italian design and architecture, ABITO translates this vision into an exhibition in which objects, garments, images and space become part of a single narrative. Developed within the Ministry's strategy for the international promotion of Italian excellence, the project explores creativity not simply as an aesthetic expression, but as a language through which social change, innovation and new ways of living can be understood and shared.

The exhibition ABITO encapsulates the project's conceptual core in its very title. In Italian, the word abito belongs to two semantic realms: it refers to the garment worn by the body while, at the same time, evoking the verb abitare "to inhabit" and therefore the way in which human beings occupy and experience space.

At the heart of the exhibition is the evolution of women's role in society. Changes in women's clothing, from the constraints of the corset to a progressive freedom of movement and, ultimately, women's increasing presence in the public sphere, reflect a broader process of cultural transformation. In parallel, design and everyday objects have also evolved, responding to new behaviours and changing ways of living and inhabiting space over time.

The exhibition unfolds chronologically, creating a dialogue between historical garments and iconic objects of Italian design. The selected garments come from the historical fashion archive of the Quinto-Tinarelli Collection, which spans more than a century of fashion history, from 1900 to the present day. Alongside them, a selection of Made in Italy furniture and objects highlights the timeless quality of Italian design: pieces that remain in production today and represent key milestones in the evolution of Italian design culture.

This dialogue is further articulated through ten photographs by Roberto Palomba, which form the backdrop to the exhibition and establish a visual dialogue between garments and furnishings from the same historical periods.

Through initiatives such as ABITO, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reinforces the role of creativity as a universal language through which Italy can tell its story to the world, promoting the talent, research and excellence in production that have made Made in Italy an international benchmark.

ABITO

WORLD TOUR

The core of the exhibition is represented by the social evolution of the role of women. The changes in women's clothing, from constraint to progressive freedom of movement, from posture to access to public roles, narrate a broader process of cultural transformation. At the same time, design and everyday objects also evolve, reflecting new behaviors and new ways of living that change over time.

Ludovica Serafini + Roberto Palomba

The debut of ABITO at the Salone del Mobile.Milano expresses a conviction shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation: the culture of design is a strategic resource for the country's future. The strength of Italian design arises from a wealth of knowledge that our companies renew day by day, transforming it into research and innovation. In the year when Minister Antonio Tajani awarded the Salone recognition as "Ambassador of Italian Design to the World", ABITO represents a new opportunity to enhance the culture of Italian design and its ability to create connections on the international level. Through collaboration with the diplomatic network, with ABITO we bring to the world the culture that makes our production recognizable, building relationships capable of fueling exchanges of ideas between designers, institutions and companies and creating new prospects for Italian design.

Maria Porro
President of the Salone del Mobile.Milano



ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano

ROBERTO PALOMBA'S
PHOTOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

Each defining moment in the evolution of society explored by the exhibition is captured in ten photographs by Roberto Palomba, which punctuate the exhibition journey and evoke the atmosphere and cultural transformations of each era. The images become an integral part of the installation, providing a backdrop for garments and furnishings from the same historical period and creating a visual continuity between fashion, design and society. Through this dialogue, the exhibition reveals how shifts in social customs, women's roles and ways of living have found expression in the forms, objects and spaces of everyday life.



Roberto Palomba
Sketch for the 1970/80 Exhibition Section

Roberto Palomba
Sketch for the 1990/2000 Exhibition Section

Roberto Palomba
Sketch for the 1890/1910 Exhibition Section



Roberto Palomba
Sketch for the 1960/70 Exhibition Section





ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano

ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano

ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano



ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano

ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano

ABITO at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Fiera Milano

1890



1910

1890/1910

THE END OF THE RIGID FORM CENTURY

At the beginning of the 20th century, a rigid aesthetic prevails: the corset constrains the female body, while ornament becomes a marker of social status. Furniture reflects this formality through structured and restrictive ergonomics. Both fashion and design express a concept of beauty where form dominates function, setting the stage for the modernist shift to come.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Bodice and romper

ON DISPLAY

Dress
Sartoria M. Bargigli, Florence

Degas chandelier
Barovier & Toso

Veronese vase
Venini, Vittorio Zecchin

Chester armchair
Poltrona Frau, Renzo Frau, 1912

1920



1930

1920/1930

THE BIRTH OF MODERN COMFORT

In the 1920s, modern comfort emerges: beauty becomes functional and reflects a new social model. The corset disappears, the body is freed, and clothing and furniture adapt to natural postures. Objects no longer dominate everyday life but support it, emphasizing quality, craftsmanship, and durability.

MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

La Merveilleuse Coat
c. 1922

ON DISPLAY

Labirinto Bowl
Ginori 1735 Gio Ponti

Catene Bowl
Ginori 1735, Gio Ponti

Alato Vase
Ginori 1735, Gio Ponti

Celesio Vase
Ginori 1735, Gio Ponti

1919 Armchair
Poltrona Frau, Renzo Frau, 1919

1930

1940

1930/40

ELEGANCE AS IDENTITY

In the early 20th century, bourgeois elegance becomes more restrained, moving away from classical opulence. Beauty is redefined as a balance between form and function, reflecting a refined urban culture. In furniture, structure becomes visible, while in fashion the body is freed and integrated into the garment. Quality is expressed through materials and subtle details rather than decoration.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Dress
Sartoria Zecca, c. 1932

ON DISPLAY

Dress and bolero
De Finizio, c. 1932

LC4 Chaise Longue
Cassina, Charlotte Perriand,
Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret
1928–1929

Deco Vase
Venini, Napoleone Martinuzzi, 1930

Bilia Lamp
FontanaArte, Gio Ponti, c. 1932

Labuan Vase
Venini, c. 1933

Luminator Lamp
FontanaArte, Pietro Chiesa, c.1936

Tavolino Curvo Fontana
Coffee Table, FontanaArte,
Pietro Chiesa, c. 1938

1940



1950

1940/50

REBIRTH AND OPTIMISM

The concepts of reconstruction and dream define 1950s Italy: a country that, after the war, rises again with energy and a new sense of lightness. Alongside material rebuilding comes a moral and aesthetic renewal: it is not only about repairing, but about reinventing itself, imagining a better future between tradition and innovation. In this climate, fashion and design become expressions of the Italian dream: Roman fashion spreads a balanced, Mediterranean elegance, while design embodies an intelligent lightness, combining functionality, poetry, and civic value.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Suit
Simonetta, c. 1954

ON DISPLAY

Dress
Bonanno, c. 1954

Battuto “A nido d’ape” Vase
Venini, Carlo Scarpa, 1940

Piccy Folding Armchair
Campeggi, Vico Magistretti, 1946

T8 Candlestick
De Vecchi Milano 1935,
Piero De Vecchi, c. 1947

Gala Armchair
Bonacina, Franco Albini, 1951

699 Superleggera Chair
Cassina, Gio Ponti, 1957

1960



1970

1960/70

MODERNITY AND FREEDOM

The 1960s were marked by collective enthusiasm and the rise of a pop, democratic culture: modernity became a shared experience. Industrialization and new forms of communication made aesthetics accessible, vibrant, and part of everyday life, while color, graphic elements, and lightness expressed personal freedom. Fashion and design became tools of self-expression: prêt-à-porter made fashion more dynamic and inclusive, breaking the barriers of haute couture; design redefined the relationship between body, object, and space. It was a moment when Italian creativity opened to the world, expressing a freedom that was not only formal, but deeply cultural.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Jeans and shirt
Fiorucci, 1968

ON DISPLAY

Catalina Armchair
Azucena, Luigi Caccia Dominioni
1958

Rocchetto Vase
Rimini Blu collection, Aldo Londi
1959

Opachi Vase
Venini, Tobia Scarpa, 1960

Arco Lamp
Flos, Achille &
Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, 1962

Eclisse Lamp
Artemide, Vico Magistretti, 1967

Sacco Armchair
Zanotta, Piero Gatti, Cesare Paolini,
Franco Teodoro, 1968

Radiofonografo,
Brionvega, Achille &
Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, 1965

Componibili 4966/4967
Kartell, Anna Castelli Ferrieri, 1969

1970



1980

1970/80

COUNTERCULTURE AND INTROSPECTION

It is an era of revolution in which form and style no longer represent status, but become tools of freedom for body and mind. Fashion and design turn into artistic expressions, shaped by a new generation of intellectual designers. Design becomes soft and informal — as in the works of Gaetano Pesce — moving away from bourgeois rigidity; likewise, fashion celebrates individuality through natural fabrics, bold colors, and irregular textures. Dressing and living become political acts, expressing a rejection of hierarchies and a search for equality.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Matching set
Laura Aponte, 1967

ON DISPLAY

Jumpsuit
Ken Scott, 1968

Up Armchair
B&B Italia, Gaetano Pesce, 1969

Boalum Lamp
Artemide, Livio Castiglioni & Gianfranco Frattini, 1970

Due Più Armchair
Acerbis, Nanda Vigo, 1971

Cactus Coat Stand
Gufram, Guido Drocco & Franco Mello, 1972

Borocca H2O Pitcher
De Vecchi Milano 1935
Gabriele De Vecchi, 1975

Cab Chair
Cassina, Mario Bellini, 1977

1980



1990

1980/90

POWER AND IMAGE

In the 1980s, form becomes the language of success: an aesthetic code that conveys power, confidence, and ambition. Image emerges as a social value, and form becomes an act of representation, not just function. Fashion creates new symbols — from Armani's structured shoulders to the visions of Versace and Moschino — while design, with pieces like Sottsass's Carlton, celebrates postmodernism through expressive and provocative forms. Made in Italy thus becomes a global brand, defined by its ability to combine rigor, spectacle, and identity.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Jacket
Giorgio Armani, 1980

ON DISPLAY

Jumpsuit
Krizia, 1981

Carlton Bookcase
Memphis, Ettore Sottsass, 1981

Treetops Lamp
Memphis, Ettore Sottsass, 1981

9093 Kettle
Alessi, Michael Graves, 1985

Tolomeo Mega Lamp
Artemide, Michele De Lucchi, 1987

Ghost Armchair
Fiam, Cini Boeri, 1987

1990

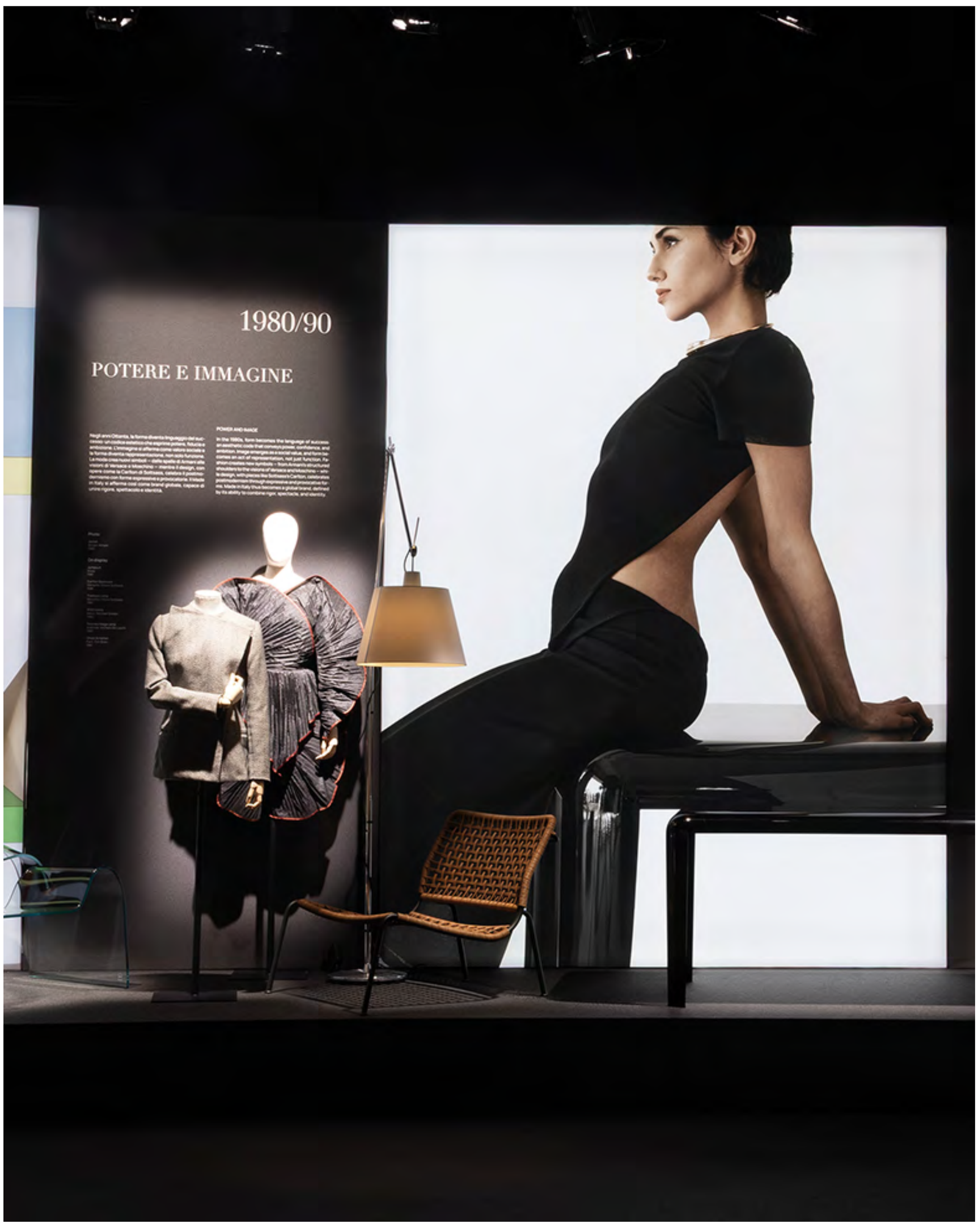


2000

1990/2000

SILENCE AND MEASURE

It is a moment when value shifts from surface to essence: less decoration, more focus on quality, materials, and design thinking. Luxury becomes quiet and intellectual, revealed in details — in tactility, proportion, and durability. It is an elegance that does not seek to impress, but to harmonize with space, body, and time. In this maturity, Italian fashion and design express a refined, thoughtful beauty that transforms restraint into a new form of desire.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Dress
Gucci by Tom Ford, 1997

ON DISPLAY

Merdolino Toilet Brush
Alessi, Stefano Giovannoni, c. 1993

Ferro Table
Porro, Piero Lissoni, 1994

Vermelha Armchair
Edra, Campana Brothers, 1998

Anna G Corkscrew
Alessi, Alessandro Mendini, 2003

Frog Armchair
Living Divani, Piero Lissoni, 1995

Mayday Lamp
Flos, Konstantin Grcic, 2000

2000



2010

2000/10

EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIMENTATION

The idea of imposed style definitively fades: everything becomes possible, from rigorous minimalism to ironic reinterpretations of the past. The home turns inward, yet remains open to play and hybrid influences. Design and fashion reinterpret history in iconic ways: from Philippe Starck's Louis Ghost to Versace's draped forms. Experimentation marks a deeper shift: in the 2000s, both home and body become inner territories rather than tools of social representation.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

Dress
Versace, Donatella Versace, 2004

ON DISPLAY

Attila Table
Kartell, Philippe Starck, 2000

Trousers
Giorgio Armani, 2001

Louis Ghost Chair
Kartell, Philippe Starck, 2002

Still Table
Minotti, Rodolfo Dordoni, 2002

Alessandro M Corkscrew
Alessi, Alessandro Mendini, 2003

Lumiere XXL Table Lamp
Foscarini, Rodolfo Dordoni, 2009

Santapouf Pouf
Campeggi, Denis Santachiara, 2010

Catifa Carta Chair
Arper, Lievore Altherr Molina, 2025

2010



2020

2010/20

SUSTAINABILITY AND LIQUID IDENTITY

The idea of the post-identity and sustainable approach reflects our time: identities become fluid, moving beyond fixed categories of gender, status, and style. Fashion and design adopt a new, more personal and open language. Sustainability becomes an ethical necessity: regenerated materials, circular processes, and responsibility toward the environment and community. Beauty takes on a new meaning, shifting from a symbol of distinction to an act of care.



MILAN EXHIBITION

PHOTO

101801 Coat
Max Mara, Anne-Marie Beretta
1984 (ongoing)

ON DISPLAY

Piuma Chair
Kartell, Piero Lissoni, 2016

Arrival Floor Lamp
Artemide, Ludovica Serafini + Roberto Palomba, 2019

Lokum Table
Acerbis, Sabine Marcelis, 2024

Mini Geen-A Lamp
Kartell, Ferruccio Laviani, 2022

Grace Armchair
Talenti, Ludovica Serafini + Roberto Palomba, 2025

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