

Q&A: CRISTINA MANFREDI: FASHION, JOURNALISM AND TAKING CHANCES

AN INTERVIEW WITH CRISTINA MANFREDI
BY MURSSAL AKRAMY

If you had told Cristina Manfredi at age 15, that one day she would be trekking across the globe, hobnobbing with fashion's elite and working with some of the world's most successful publications, you'd likely have been met with disbelief. Having studied language and literature in university, it wasn't until later, that she thought about pursuing a career in fashion. After working in showrooms, Manfredi fell into fashion journalism and hasn't looked back since. Currently working as a freelance fashion journalist, Manfredi is a frequent contributor to Vanity Fair, Marie Claire and L'Officiel, reporting on relevant topics in the industry and interviewing high profile personalities. With over 15 years of experience under her belt, Manfredi has a wealth of knowledge. She generously imparted some of what she's learned along the way, with me.

Murssal Akramy: What made you decide to go freelance after working exclusively at Vanity Fair for so long?

Cristina Manfredi: I always said to my friends that resigning from Vanity Fair was the best decision of my life. Not because it was a bad situation; actually - back then especially - it was the most important magazine in Italy. Working there, I was given opportunities to do the best stuff in fashion writing.

Leaving was the best decision because I felt like I needed more freedom. Working with Vanity Fair, you usually work with bigger names (which is super exciting, don't get me wrong), I've always felt blessed, but I was feeling like I was losing contact with what was going on in the gut of fashion. I also wanted to challenge myself and I believed I could do it.

You've mentioned you didn't know exactly what you wanted to do in the beginning. What advice would you give to people who want to start a new career path in fashion, but don't know where to start?

Try different things. If you don't know what you want to do but you know that you have a passion for fashion, try starting at a showroom as a sales assistant – which I did for a while – or as an assistant to a stylist. The only way to find out what you like, is to try. Learn how to go with the flow, embrace new opportunities outside your comfort zone and give yourself a chance. The path to fashion journalism isn't linear. You don't do 'this and this' and then become 'that and that'. Dare yourself to do new things.

When was the moment you felt you truly achieved your goal as a fashion journalist?

Oh (expletive). Ah, okay, you never really feel like you've achieved your goal, otherwise you'd probably stop and start something different. But if I could pinpoint a highlight of my career, it would probably be an interview with Raf Simons when he was at Dior, which was a very difficult thing to get. Or, when I resigned from Vanity Fair, I knew I was going to lose a lot of privileges, like tickets to fashion shows. But when I received invitations that year, I said to myself, maybe this means that people are acknowledging that I'm working hard and that I'm serious about what I'm doing. That was a pretty good moment.
