

Q&A: CATCHING UP WITH SCIASCIA GAMBACCINI

AN INTERVIEW WITH SCIASCIA GAMBACCINI
BY MURSSAL AKRAMY

Sciascia Gambaccini is a household name for those immersed in the fashion industry. International Editor at Large at Vanity Fair Italia, Gambaccini has formerly held the role of Fashion Director at Vogue Italia, Interview Magazine, Marie Claire and Jane. She has pioneered revolutionary editorial content for global publications, consulted and styled iconic fashion campaigns for the world's most renowned designers, and worked with fashion's biggest names, including Franca Sozzani, former Editor in Chief of Vogue Italia.

Most recently, Gambaccini has added Fashion Advisor for the Amazon series 'Made in Italy' to her expansive portfolio of work. The series follows the professional career of a young woman working her way up in the fashion world in the 70's, a time of fashion revolution in Milan.

I had the chance to sit with Gambaccini, to discuss the project and the process of curating all the iconic looks.

How did you apply your previous work experiences to this project?

Sciascia Gambaccini: For 25 years I was a magazine stylist and then suddenly, I wasn't. Magazines are slowly dwindling, so I had to reinvent myself and find opportunities that I could apply my experience and knowledge toward. I had never done TV, but I was approached by the production company and they asked me to oversee the editorial content of a new TV show, 'Made In Italy'.

It's a fictional show, so not everything is true, but it's definitely very faithful to the years in Milan during the fashion revolution, the beginning of Fashion Week and the big Italian designers that came out in the 70's. My job was basically to oversee the script writers and make sure that it was accurate. For example, they would not have been called stylists – but rather journalists, during that time. I also had to make sure it was adaptable for the general public. We couldn't approach it like a magazine because we would lose a lot of the audience.

After that, I contacted all the Italian designers and their archives to recuperate as many archival clothes as possible from the 70's, so we could recreate the fashion shoots and the fashion shows of that period. It was a learning curve for my legendary impatience.

What does your creative process look like?

My process has always been one of spontaneity. When I worked for Franca Sozzani at Vogue Italia, and even at (Harper's) Bazaar, I didn't really have time to think. Everything kind of needed to be done yesterday. But that has been to my advantage because I think spontaneity can be very beautiful, and a lot of people work very well under pressure. I'm definitely one of them.

But my process basically starts with a concept, then I visualize what that concept would look like, so sometimes I would sketch it, or sometimes I might do mood boards. With those visual references, you start looking for the clothes, the accessories, the models – that fit that concept - and I can assure you that 99% of the time, you're going to end up with a product that looks completely different from the concept because ideas evolve, ideas grow and unknown things come up. I cannot stress this enough; unexpected accidents usually turn out to be for the best.

What about your process for the work you did for 'Made in Italy'? How much did your process need to change?

(Laughs) Listen, once we got all the clothes and received blessing from the designers, which took a year – everyone said no at first and then one by one, they started saying yes – we were able to get them made, or copied.

We were lucky in that we were able to stick to the script. But there were instances where we had to pivot, for example, we were shooting ten girls in Rome, wearing red Valentino dresses from the 70's, when one disintegrated because it was so old. What do you do? I had to run to the Valentino boutique and find a dress that sort of looked like the original. In TV, it's different because there's a schedule you have to meet and it's a little less creative than a magazine.

How excited were you to have the opportunity to work with some of the iconic pieces from the designer archives?

This has really been one of the most unexpected results of this TV show. You know, I've seen a lot of beautiful clothes in my career, but each time I crossed the door to one of these archives – whether it was Fendi, Missoni or Krizia – we were shaking like little girls because it was so amazing. The pieces and garments we saw were so full of thought and care. Each item was really made to convey a message, not just for sales.

And lastly - a very serious question to end this off - now that you've immersed yourself in it, if you could go back in time, what trend would you change or get rid of.

I would definitely skip the big shoulder thing in the 80s, it just didn't work for me. A great test is to go into a vintage store and see what you can wear, without making any alterations. As soon as you start hitting the 80's and 90's - the big shoulder's, and the bright, ugly colours - you definitely start thinking about making alterations. Even the masters like Saint Laurent - god bless them - they're amazing, but you put them on and you have to lose a kilometer of shoulder if you want to wear them. So yeah, big shoulders and hot pants, I can live without.
