

The World of Alberta Ferretti



Alberta Ferretti

PROFILE

ALBERTA FERRETTI

AN ITALIAN FASHION DESIGNER'S WORLD AND PERCEPTION

The Ferretti phenomenon began in Cattolica (a small resort near Rimini, on the Adriatic Coast) with an Adolescent Alberta watching her mother, a couturier with a staff of 20 seamstresses, making clothes for local beauties. In 1968, when she was 17, Ferretti had her own outlet selling among others, Armani and Versace.

Armed, like Ralph Lauren, with the invaluable experience of daily customer contact, in 1974, she started her own 'griffe' and she eliminated the mistakes made by almost every fashion designer, knowing that creativity means nothing without the expert manufacturing, technological know-how and systematic deliveries.

AEFFE was set up as a safety net years ago from the sound of Alberta Ferretti's initials in Italian. She said she realized she needed her own factory, but that was expensive, so it seemed sensible to produce for another designer to share the costs. To be credible, her partner (her brother Massimo) and her understood they had to offer high-quality production and an efficient structure. The same principle of a high-tech computerised complex governs AEFfe ever since, both in its original factory and in the 100 small factories scattered around the country, with which AEFfe has contracts. Only specialised embroidered is done in India.

Her first client was Enrico Coveri (1980), at that time also a beginner. In 1983, AEFfe signed up with Franco Moschino, and then

Rifat Ozbek (1988), Jean Paul Gaultier womenswear (1994), Narciso Rodriguez (1997), as well as producing her own twice-yearly collections "Alberta Ferretti" mainline, and younger label, "Philosophy di Alberta Ferretti", born in 1984. There is no jealousy between the designers they work for because they choose them carefully so their styles are very different and Alberta does not intrude on them creatively. All this brought Alberta to be among Italy's most successful businesswomen.

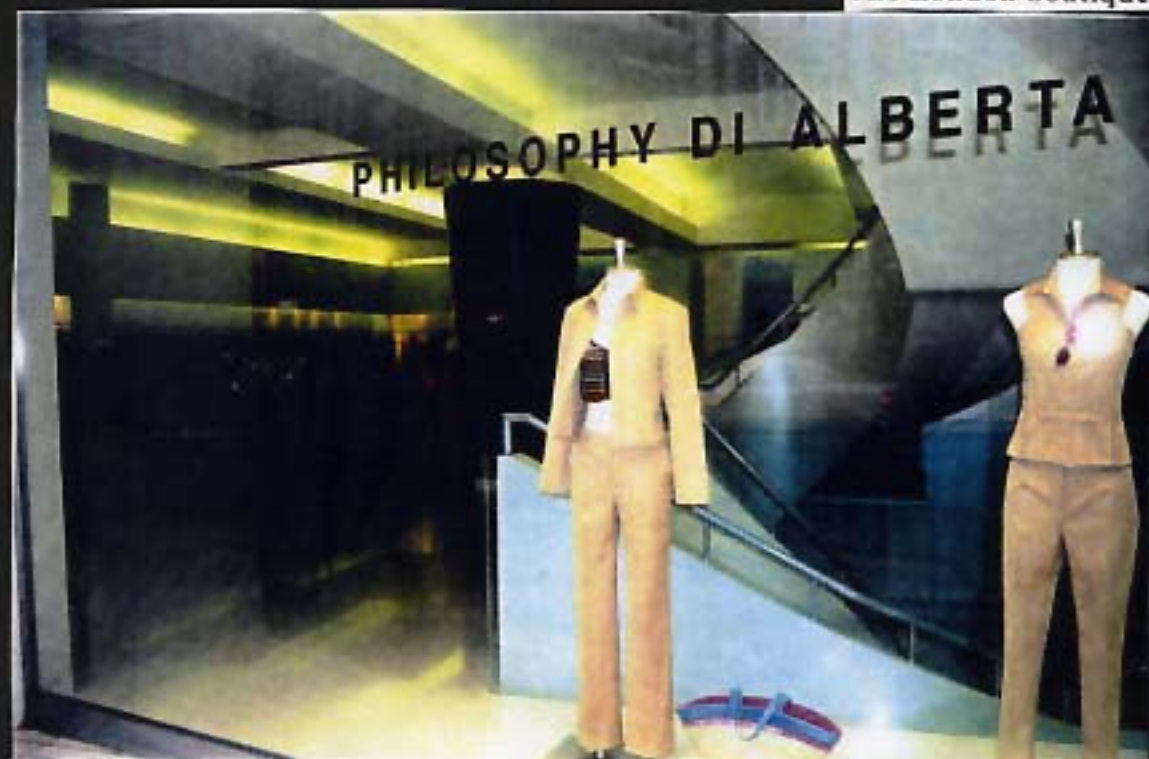
In 1989, her biography states with pride, she was the first ever woman to be appointed a member of the "Foundation of the Cassa di Risparmio di Rimini", a local banking corporation. Then, in 1991, she was named the best female entrepreneur in Emilia-Romagna, the province where she was lived and worked through her life, and in 1998 she was nominated "Cavaliere del Lavoro" by the president of the Italian Republic Oscar Kuigi Scalfaro.

In 1994 she opened the showroom in Palazzo Donizetti in Milan that reflects her interest in Interior Design, when she realised there was no need to show her clothes, forcing her to think about where and how they could best be presented, thinking that is something a designer feels more than an architect, although she did get some technical advice as well. This Milanese showroom is a building of the 1920s in an eclectic style that blends the Baroque with Art Nouveau, furnished

The Milan boutique



The London boutique



PROFILE

with modern pieces designed by Kris Ruhs out of gilded metal and glass to accentuate the sense of lightness. The showroom has an oval hall like the Manhattan show room in New York, opened in 1996 on the 56th street, which displays all the lines, produced by AEFEE. Her flag boutique, in Milan, seems to have been decorated with light and air with the warm glint of gold and silver. These 'spaces' express the same personality as her clothes with a touch of the unexpected, preferring to go beyond the perfection of a single style to add a touch of the unexpected.

There are now several Alberta Ferretti boutiques in Milan, Rome and Caori, London, New York, Tokyo, Osaka, Seul, Hong Kong, Djakarta, and she is present in major department stores throughout Italy, France, America, the Far East and the UK. In London, Alberta Ferretti is in Sloane Street, alongside the likes of Gucci, Parda, Valentino and Armani.

For the love of the Italian region, where she lives and creates, Alberta restored a medieval town close to Cattolica, Montegridolfo. She rescued the town's council, local shop and post office from ruins and turned Montegridolfo's central monument, Palazzo Viviani, into a four-star hotel. People travel from miles around to eat at the three restaurants in the town, to buy the homemade products into very quaint shops, or to take in some classical music at one of the regular recitals performed by the Academy of Music, she helped to found.

She said she restored Montegridolfo in the same way she started work as a fashion designer not for its business potential, but for passion.

Her target customer are young, but not only because her product is wearable. Alberta Ferretti is in ready-to-wear price range, while Philosophy is for a younger market with prices in a second-line range that are, generally 30% cheaper than the main line. The real expensive things, particularly the clothes

embroidered with a lot of beading cost about £2000. The 1999-2000 winter collection has sold a lot of embroidered clothing knitwear and is loved by customers. The Philosophy label has attracted 22 stockists in the UK, expected to eventually grow to 60, representing 50% of the designer's total sales in the UK. Stockists consider Philosophy excellent value for money particularly with the price so low and especially for its high design content.

She is an ambitious woman and does not want to dress victims so people don't ever see bare breasts or ridiculous short skirts in her collections and she is always playing with ideas. She is able to picture things from the wearer's viewpoint. She says, for her, it is very important to lose perspective since becoming famous. She works all day, she is a real woman, and caters for different needs. She is not tall and a bit rounded and she understands such problems and always designs clothes that she, herself, would like to wear, she is very much concerned with the needs of her customers and loves dressing women. A woman depends, she thinks, a great deal on how she dresses and feels lovely and just fashionable and is able to make women feel it. The Ferretti line often uses elegant, chiffon eveningwear with gauzy romantic creations, the height of femininity and romanticism, always with a modern edge. She's not interested in costume and she always tries to create clothes for today's woman, for real women, achieved by tailoring.

The Philosophy line started out as Jeans Philosophy, casual clothes for young people, and then it changed. It's actually much more than that now. It's about clothes in general, accessories and perfume. She executes Philosophy with young designers to keep it fresh, in the Studio, the Studio is close to the factory, so she can go from sketch to sample in a day if something is exciting.

show room fall winter 24/95



S.Meisel Fall-Winter 94-95

show room spring summer 99



F.Ferri Spring- Summer 1990

P.Roversi Fall- Winter 97-98

show room fall winter 21/98



M.Borthwick Fall-Winter 96-97





VIII
Cognasca

ALBERTA FERRETTI

Alberta Ferretti Spring-Summer 2000



PHILOSOPHY
DI
ALBERTA FERRETTI

Philosophy di Alberta Ferretti Spring-Summer 2000



Spring-Summer 2000

PROFILE

Bridget Cosgrave, buyer of International Designer collections says her collections are absolutely beautifully made, and that she has a contemporary approach to eveningwear, without that bouffant ball gown feeling. Generally speaking, her clothes are practical, comfortable and do not overpower the wearer, but for the night she likes something special with a subtle message of seduction. In her collections she is able to conjugate and often to anticipate the update trends as the finished unfinished suits (Spring- Summer 1998) or the new hippy ethnic of this Summer 2000.

Fashion influences, she says, are now global, whether films, music or art and there is no magic source of trends. The place where she lives with her husband and two sons inspires her too as do the flowers she likes picking from her garden. Most of Ferretti's fabric is Italian. Italy has beautiful materials designed exclusively for her because they have to follow the trend of the collection and they have to come out of her ideas. In recent times of simplicity and cleanliness it was important not to reduce things to banality, so material becomes really fundamental. There has to be continuous innovation. She likes pure fabrics, materials that are rich and precious: silk and cashmere that caresses a woman's skin. She works on contrast, combining the simplicity of certain materials with the gracious richness of others that is what represents true modernity. She achieves this by uniting for the daytime and those usually dedicated to the evening.

Like a mild obsession, a slip is used in all Alberta Ferretti's collections. A slip of chiffon, georgette, organza, one on top of the other, even of wool and masculine melange cloth to underline the contrast between the softness of forms and the terseness of the fabric. The first of these slips was made at the beginning of the 1980s of pearly grey stain, bias cut and as liquid on the body as water. With wide or very thin straps in the Empire

style or straight, the combination is the strongest mark of a delicate style in infinite variations hand-stitched hems or chiffon borders on stain or with edgings. Several different photographers have established the Alberta Ferretti image during the years portraying the models depending on the feelings given by the clothes, for example, looking innocent, like characters of "A Midsummer night's dream" of Autumn/Winter 94-95, Steven Meisel, resembling Pre-Raphaelite figures, women lost in the desert, Fabrizio Ferri, Spring/Summer 1990, in the studio, Steven Meisel, or even in New York traffic, Ellen Von Unwerth, Autumn-Winter 95-96.

Philosophy advertising campaigns shows an aristocratic little girl resembling an overgrown Alice Wonderland or young women with languid gestures look like they stepped out of a Pre-Raphaelite painting. From the tender metropolitan warriors of the early campaigns who played with symbols and signs on t-shirts, Philosophy has come to the sophisticated image of Winter 97-98 where youth has become a synonym for subtle intelligence, restrained passion and education. The models are portrayed by Paolo Roversi as girls from an English college shot in a rarefied atmosphere, treating the outdoor setting (garden) as if they were suspended in unreality because Alberta said that Philosophy customer lives in today's world without being overwhelmed by it.

It is Paolo Roversi who, after a first trial in 1986, since 1997 creates the publicity campaigns of Alberta Ferretti and the Philosophy ones too, successfully transmitting the essence of the language of Alberta. This year the Spring-Summer 2000 publicity campaign portrays a woman with a certain personality and a sexy attitude accompanied by a sophisticated mix where clothes reign.

The photographer is Paolo Roversi and the model is Stella Tennant. The images are shot on a duvet of a private house.



The slips



The finished and unfinished suits

PROFILE

The woman is more real in her world and in a moment of relax, and the countryside is in colour. In Spring-Summer 2000 there's not such a difference between Alberta Ferretti image and the Philosophy one, except the models' age, like two sisters a teenager and a more mature one because they are created for the same kind of person and Philosophy's client will tomorrow buy the Alberta Ferretti line (S/S 2000). The common idea is that Philosophy di Alberta Ferretti manages successfully combining trended fashion with a sense of wear ability and individuality. In addition, her vision for Spring 2000 combines itsy-bitsy girlie glamour with a hint of peasant chic. All the collection is characterised by empire line dresses, fringed suede skirts and frilled hem-shorts. These elements will be a 'must' and this look is destined to turn up on a high street near you next summer. On the other side, the common idea showed at Alberta Ferretti catwalk is a mature image. Teenager t-shirts and baby slip dresses are thrown away and replaced by big girl's blouse, preferably with a pussycat bow.

Colourful chiffons, pleating, twisting as well as vertical ruffling are so delicate that they can be considered as the core element for this designer. The decorative straight skirt in chiffon or silk is presented in the Ferretti's slightly off-bright colours palette; browns mixed with reds and sky blue, limes, raspberry or putty pink.

From all this, to express her own creativity, it is evident that the principal character of Alberta Ferretti's style lies in the pureness of essence, perhaps this is why her clothes, however eye-catching, do not impose themselves on a personality of the wearer. This is a characteristic that can also be discerned in Philosophy, the line that Ferretti has conceived for women with a preference for a contemporary style lying somewhere between the dynamism of the big city and personal appeal.

Dream and professionalism are the key of Alberta Ferretti's success.