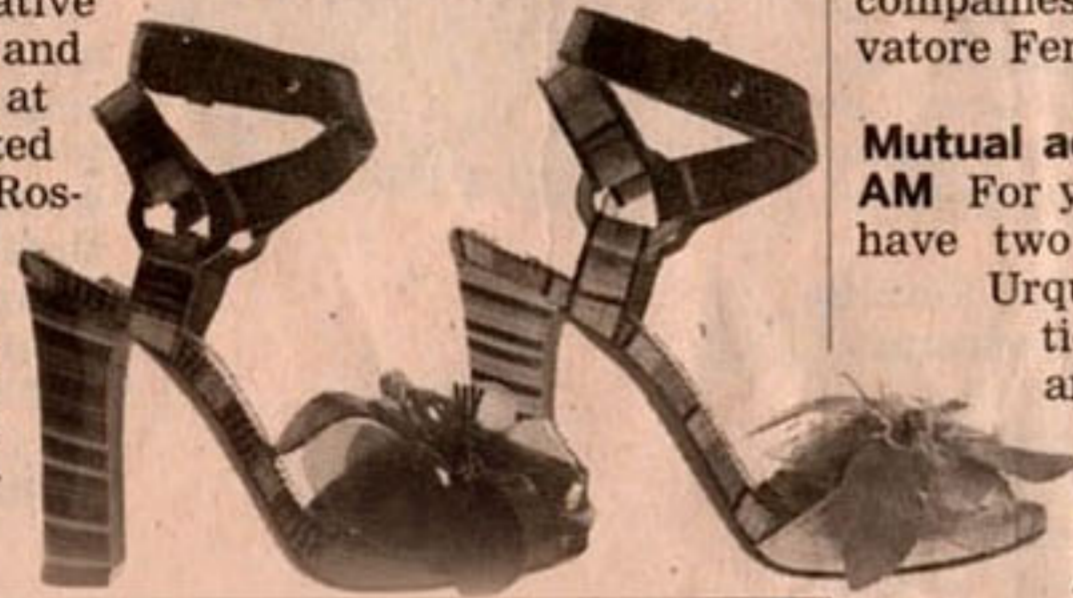


# 'One must not be afraid to dare'

*Fashion conversations: Angela Missoni and Patricia Urquiola discuss creative passions, family life and the pursuit of quality*

**A**ngela Missoni is the creative director of the men's and women's collections at Missoni, the brand started by her parents Tai and Rosita Missoni in 1953, known for its colourful knitwear.

Patricia Urquiola has her own studio in Milan working on product design, architecture, installations and concept creation and designs for



companies such as Alessi, B&B Italia, Salvatore Ferragamo, Molteni and BMW.

#### **Mutual admiration**

**AM** For years, I had admired your work. I have two Tropicalia sofas (designed by Urquiola for Moroso) made with plastic threads, one turquoise and red, and the other red and fuchsia.

**PU** My first Missoni piece was a purple Lurex scarf with long suede fringes.

**AM** Oh my gosh, that was from my very first collection, the first time I took a bow at the end of the show. Sometimes you make me nervy because I see something you designed and I wish I had done it. Amidst their simplicity and effortlessness, there's always a surprise element in your designs. We have very similar tastes, even in art – nine times out of 10 we like the same artists.

**PU** Art for sure, and we both like designing products that have energy, and exude comfort and a mental easiness. And wait, don't forget Pedro Almodóvar. We discovered that in his home, which is decorated to look like lots of small stages and sets, he has my pieces of furniture and objects and he wears Missoni.

**AM** Yes, he's a real character.

**PU** Once, in the early stages of my career, he called and I was convinced it was a friend playing a joke on me so I hung up. Later, when I went onto YouTube and heard his voice, I realised it was really him.

**AM** I phoned him to ask him if he wanted to shoot our spring/summer 2012 ad campaign because it has a very Spanish vibe but he declined, saying he was tired. He phoned back after five minutes, proposing to pose for the campaign rather than shooting it. The result is amazing.

#### **Family focus**

**PU** You and I also clicked over attachment

to our families – no matter how important a business meeting is, our family always comes first.

**AM** I try my best to always be available for my children but it's not that easy. When I think I'm ready to support them and give advice, I realise I didn't understand anything.

**PU** Yes, but still, it's important to listen. Every sentence has its value. I have a great relationship with both my parents, we always talked a lot... I learned that in life one must not be afraid to dare.

**AM** You know, my father was one of the first designers who wanted to show in Milan in the 1960s when the fashion shows were held in Florence. He would say, "Why Florence, when the airport is in Milan?" Our industry requires fast decision making, the ability to look ahead, to reinvent

Italian politicians do very little to support the fashion industry so we've always fought, reacted on our own

oneself because you can't stop. Sometimes I feel a bit like a fishing rod yanked up and down but I have broad shoulders.

**PU** For me manual labour is fundamental. I'm a true handywoman, since I was a kid I enjoyed building and crafting by hand. On Saturday morning, I play with my six-year-old daughter who wants to make paper and cardboard constructions. I feel the urge to create prototypes, to see the evolution of things.

**AM** I agree. I don't actually sketch but as soon as I can I love to cut, pin, alter. I get a real kick in transforming fabrics or materials. During our summer vacations in Sardinia, [the family] would fill buckets with water and experiment with the tie-dye

technique. Sometimes I envy your creative freedom in terms of expression and design and the fact that you can change the material you work with. I'm more pigeon-holed in that sense, more tied to the company's heritage.

**PU** I don't know how I would react if I were linked to a certain heritage.

**AM** When I took over [the creative director role], the most recurring question was whether I felt overwhelmed. Actually, I didn't, I eased into my new role naturally, I wasn't too concerned. Maybe I was a bit naive. On the other hand, if I hadn't had this legacy, I probably wouldn't be where I am today. Over time, one's perception of things change and now I see what I once would have considered mistakes differently. My divorce, among other things.

#### **Italian drive**

**PU** Italian design is defined by the high quality across the board, the know-how and the positive attitude towards new challenges. When I speak to the artisans about a new project they never start off saying that something is impossible as they do in other countries. Here they are happy to embrace change; they will say "Sure, let's try."

**AM** There's a global crisis, but Italian politicians do very little to support the fashion industry so we've always fought and reacted on our own. Furniture is another prolific area for the country.

**PU** We are lucky to have the Salone Internazionale de Mobile [the Milan furniture fair], which is the most prized international event for design. It's a meeting point, an attraction and we must work hard to protect its reputation.

**AM** It's a bit like food. The quality level is always quite high – it's hard to find bad food in Italy.

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