

LIKE A BOY...

By Luca Beatrice, from the book *From Fashion to Art: the Vogue Lesson*

Like a boy... this is how the critic Luca Beatrice entitles his speech on Flavio Lucchini, who rediscovered to be a young artist looking to the future thirty years ago.

The issue whether fashion can be considered an art form has been argued for a long time. It is indeed a complex and difficult-to-solve question. First of all, a distinction has to be made by placing on one side the great fashion designers who actually changed the history of fashion and on the other those gifted creative minds who probably would have left a mark in culture even if they had followed other artistic expressions. The first category is quite extensive, the second is much shorter. Vivienne Westwood is without any doubt associated tout court to the history of the punk movement and to a historic moment of radical changes, the late 1970s. On the other hand, Tom Ford switched from fashion to cinema making his debut as a director with the movie *A Single Man*, based upon Christopher Isherwood's novel: a perfect example of a sophisticated, refined, arty movie, even though not so closely related to our time. In fact, the movie is deliberately out of time, even metaphysical. Thus, the Museum of Art has opened up to receive the expression of a wide plurality. For almost twenty years, the art of photography has gained its definitive right of citizenship, architects are invited to biennial exhibitions, couturiers and fashion designers, from Capucci to Mila Schön, become object of studies and extensive museum retrospectives.

Whereas here a different story is told. The adventure of a personality, of an intellectual, who has played a major role in "making" the history of fashion and fashion print media, someone who, at his not-so-young age, if anagraphic data still have a value, has jumped on the other side of the fence and reinvented himself as an artist. Therefore, this book bears witness to his latest works, though connecting them to his previous experiences and to his first life, with the ambition they will rightly stand on their own merits.

To Flavio Lucchini, any approach towards art is necessarily connected to the body, which represents the model, the contact with reality and its consequent outgrowing. All his sculptures, from the smallest ones to the gigantic ones, respect the proportions of the human silhouette wearing a garment, a dress, a shell. Thus, before being totems, idols, symbolic representations, they are bodies. His sculptures, defined as such because they are tridimensional objects, are extremely sexed, their benchmark is the woman, following curves, shapes, angles. There are illustrious precedents in history which have inspired him: Brancusi's *Endless Column* and Max Ernst's imaginary characters, Picasso's *Africanism* and totems, the African idols.

When he thinks of a colour, Lucchini chooses white, the colour of "his" Milan, the city of Fontana, Manzoni and Azimut. Therefore, on one side we sense his visual fancy, his symbolic game, his (female) anthropomorphism and on the other his need for clarity, for synthesis, for the essential, for a formal neatness which explain to us that, in any case, in order to exist, the artwork has to follow the path of conceptual art. A figure like Lucchini could "artistically" be born only in Milan. That boy, coming from the Mantua province, would discover the exceptional flurry of art which starts in the 1950s and goes on to the mid- 1960s. This is the first real "Milano da bere" (the famous claim of the Amaro Ramazzotti commercial) which invents Italian design, architecture, fashion, publishing.

Architecture is the other reflection of an all-Milanese culture of which Lucchini is both the son and the father. Born as an architect, Lucchini then discovered design, graphics, fashion and finally art. The aesthetic measure is always her, always the woman, true leitmotiv of a design process that has combined the disciplines in the restitution of an image calibrated on the female figure, always. The austerity of a tall and slender body (the Totems) or the sinuous curves that dictate the soft lines of the *Dress Memory*.

As a fashion editor before and as an artist now. The woman, glimpsed below lead and bronze breastplates, the woman-child who winks in the irony of the Dolls, the woman caressed under the whiteness of white and virginal memories. And still in those impossible gazes that see while not being seen. The woman is always seduction. Aesthetic principle. Fetish to admire and to be fascinated by.

Dress Memory. Bas-relief in white catalyzed fiberglass. 2004.



BEYOND ART, THERE IS MAN

By Deepa Rajan, interview for *Signature*

Lucchini's solo exhibition held at Oblong gallery in Dubai immediately before the outbreak of the pandemic, sparked the interest of the public and of the media of the area interested in this Italian artist with a cosmopolitan life who found in the Emirates such an open and stimulating "square" that he chose to live there a few months a year and showcase his art. The magazine *Signature*, published in Oman, dedicated a long article to him, accompanied by this in-depth interview.

Your career has traversed the universes of publishing, art, graphic design and architecture. How does fashion fit into all this?

Fashion has been and is, in different ways, the main road of my existence. It has been a key to understanding that, since the days of *Vogue*, has allowed me to get closer to beauty, creativity, talent, the evolution of society. Fashion, understood as research, change, progress, aesthetics in step with the times, is in all this, from architecture to art to graphics to every artistic or visual expression. Fashion is not something that only concerns women or clothes, but every daily choice, even food, travel, cinema, music and everything is influenced or influenced by it. Whether consciously or not, we all follow fashion.

The transition from the printed page to art came naturally to me.

As one of the most influential icons in fashion publishing, you have been privy to a lot of trends. Which trends would you say have defined fashion over the years?

I was among the first to support jeans, when they were still only the work uniform of the American cowboys. It was 1967. I proposed to Fiorucci to dedicate all the windows of his revolutionary Milan store to blue jeans, putting real horses next to it. He didn't do it, but he started making women's jeans of all types. Many famous designers followed him.

And jeans have become a universal fashion that still lasts.

*One of the defining moments of *L'Uomo Vogue* was the YSL and Andy Warhol photoshoot! How did you make that happen? Why them?*

There are people who, from their specific sector, are capable of changing the world by bringing personal revolutions that will then influence many. I felt compelled to testify to their contribution on *L'Uomo Vogue*, which was a visionary magazine. I searched and photographed Yves Saint Laurent, Andy Warhol, but also Picasso, Man Ray, Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, Alberto Moravia, Ettore Sottsass and other extraordinary and unreachable masters. Nobody said no. Everyone agreed to appear on the pages of a fashion magazine because they knew that our point of view was not frivolous but social.

Your exhibition and your book 'From Fashion to Art: the Vogue Lesson' examines the world of fashion through art. How would you define the nexus between art and fashion? At what point do they become interchangeable?

Art is the expression of the time in which we live. Fashion is the mirror of contextual reality, therefore also of art. The great stylists for me are artists who use clothes to express their creativity and their vision. They have always been fascinated by art, even inspired by masters such as the Impressionists, Mondrian, Picasso, Fontana but also Andy Warhol or Keith Haring...

Today the word art has expanded so much that it can also include artistic craftsmanship, as is high fashion.

As a creative person what fuels your passion?

My interests are wide, the ancient and contemporary art industry, but also communication, advertising, architecture, cinema, music, photography, architecture, reading, cooking, all cultures of the world. I follow all this because it enriches my creativity

YSL once said that fashion fades but style is eternal. According to you what is the difference between fashion and style?

Fashion changes continuously, following the seasons and the volatility of the markets. Style is the expression of your personality, it responds only to yourself, it tells you intimately. Bringing fashion and style together is a difficult task even for great fashion creators. It has succeeded in very few, such as Saint Laurent and Armani

According to you what is the one item of clothing that defines eternal style?

Difficult to answer this question. It depends on the countries and various cultures. For western culture it could be the jacket.

Your fashion muse and why

I admire Giorgio Armani for his balanced and harmonic fashion that move with the times, for his style always recognizable. And this is for both men and women. I met him in 1966, at the beginning, when he was still Cerruti's assistant, I helped him make his debut with his line in 1974, of which I drew the logo he still uses today, I enhanced him on the pages of my magazines, I followed him over the years cementing an esteem and a friendship that needs no words.

Your favourite fashion city

The swinging London of the 60s, New York of the pop-art in the 70s and, after those promising years, Paris and now Milan

Your personal style is...

Essential and severe. I want my personality to communicate before the dress. I always wear black, sometimes with Yoshi Yamamoto garments mixed with more basic pieces.

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I carefully reflected upon the dress, relating my emotions.

My interpretations also bear witness to the creative experience of some artists / fashion designers. ”

Flavio Lucchini



70's: the friends Yves Saint Laurent and Flavio Lucchini.

NOW I WILL EXPLAIN WHY

Self-interview by Flavio Lucchini

Artworks do not speak. But everyone hears their message in their own way. Imagining the many questions that a visitor might want to ask the author, Flavio Lucchini anticipates them here.

Why does your art speak of clothes?

For more than thirty years I have lived at the top of fashion. When I see an exceptional dress I get excited. For me, fashion creators are artists. The beauty of a creation designed to enhance the beauty of a woman is a true testimony of art. With my imagination I do not see a beautiful dress on a beautiful woman but the vision of an idealized image that I want to communicate and fix forever.

Why are your works, despite having the same source of inspiration, so different?

It's true, I could have done like the famous Italian painter Morandi who has painted all his life still lifes, always the same and always different. But my passion for design, graphics, architecture and all forms of art led me to "see" in all possible ways. In my works you can see references of land-art, minimal-art, pop-art, children's art, pop influences, visions of architecture, customs, digital games, all that surrounds us and that has to do with the fashion and change.

Why the Dolls?

Dolls move me for two reasons. The first is that in every woman the intimate and romantic doll ad she was a child continues to exist. The second are the teens: child-women still like little girls but you can guess what they will look like when they grow up. With their short dresses and their long hair they suggest tenderness. They are already people of tomorrow, and they make us think that life runs fast and their image will change. Like? It depends on them. I stare at the moment of today.

Why skyscrapers?

As an architect I am in love with skyscrapers even though as a man they scare me. I see skyscrapers as clothes for contemporary living. Architecture has defined the image of the centuries, from Egyptian architecture, if not before, onwards, characterizing our culture and our life. In Dubai, where I often live, there are many. I have tried to fix images of skyscrapers as presences that I admire, even if they distress me. When I see the photos of the Dubai sheikh I think he was a visionary genius, passing in so few years from the desert to a great futuristic metropolis was a great work. I consider Burj Kalifa one of the most important works of art in the world.

Ok the idealized dress but with the abaya how do we put it?

Dubai is the living demonstration that all cultures can coexist. The world is beautiful in its diversity. Even the dress that hides the body or face, if it is not a constraint, can be idealized. It is not just a protection from foreign eyes. Indeed, our fantasy sails in mystery. Idealizing and dreaming of beauty does not only happen with the eyes but with the mind. I, as a western artist, have grasped the external aspect that led me to reflect on the culture and traditions of the Muslim world.

Why did you attach great importance to digital?

Internet and all that derives from it is the discovery of the century. Limiting ourselves to the influence it has had on art, we can say that it has eliminated brushes and chisels. And we are only at the beginning. 3D is spreading, immaterial reality and many other discoveries will come. If Michelangelo had had digital as he would have interpreted it for the Sistine Chapel?

Visiting the Louvre in Paris I had fun seeing and imagining ironic and demystifying interventions of many works by photographing and processing them with the brushes and infinite colors that digital allows you to use. Digital will not completely destroy real colors and brushes as it will not eliminate printed paper. But on the internet an artist finds everything he wants and dreams without buying them.



Abayas. Digital painting on canvas, 2009.

BURQA AND SKYSCRAPERS

The trips to the Middle East hit Lucchini. In addition to endless skyscrapers led him to try to decipher those female lives and faces hidden under the veils for tradition or for constraint. Digital works were born in these occasions as testimony of distant worlds and of an (im)possible dialogue between cultures. The critic and historian of pop-art wrote Alan Jones in 2011 on the occasion of the exhibition of paintings that reflected on burqa and abaya at the Arsenale space in Venice for the Biennale of Art of that year: "Flavio Lucchini is carrying out his job of provocation by forcing us to face the contradiction between ways of life which not long ago appeared irreconcilable.



Dubai Skyscraper. Canvas, 2009.

The months ahead shall reveal what is behind the covered gaze. It is worth recalling that, in Japan, it is not the face that is covered with a veil, but the mirror." Ten years later those works and those words, in front of the images that come to us from Afghanistan, are still of disturbing relevance.

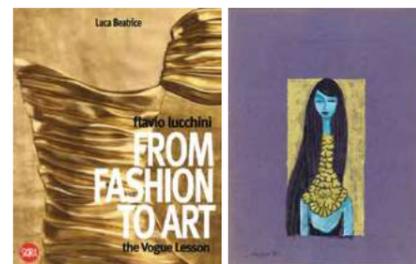


Burqa. Digital painting, 2009.

LUCCHINI'S ART AT CASA ITALIA FOR EXPODUBAI

Fondazione Policlinico of Milan and Regione Lombardia work together for an initiative that stimulates contacts and business between Italian and Middle Eastern entrepreneurs in Dubai in the six months of the great ExpoDubai 2020 event "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future". The penthouse of honor of the Intercontinental Hotel in Dubai Marina (16 minutes by Metro from Expo) is transformed into meeting halls with some brands of the best Made in Italy. Worth mentioning, the choice of paintings and sculptures by Flavio Lucchini, artist who interprets different cultures also thanks to his long stay in Dubai. All the exhibited works will then be on sale by Oblong Contemporary Art Gallery, R29 Bluewaters Boulevard BlueWaters Island, Dubai. oblongcontemporary.com

Books and films to find out more - With the movie LA MODA IN ALTRO MODO, a project by Gisella Borioli directed by Giovanni Gastel, it is told about Lucchini extraordinary journey from the fashion of the 60s to the art of the 2000s with notes of prominent testimonials and journalists (YouTube). With the autobiography IL DESTINO Lucchini himself tells from childhood to the still vibrant old age of interests and dating. With the book published by Skira FROM FASHION TO ART: THE VOGUE LESSON scrolls the panorama of his most significant works, accompanied by many critical texts. With the precious CAHIER limited edition signed and numbered artist book



we return to the passage between the years 80/90 with its beautiful drawings that pay homage to Giorgio Armani, Romeo Gigli, Gianni Versace, real fashion-star. For information info@flaviolucchiniart.com

The volume dedicated to the Lucchini's works. Internal page of the artist's book Cahier.

PALACES AND MUSEUMS

Countless personal exhibitions or collective participation in galleries or international events, from Milan, Florence, Verona, Bari, Venice... to Paris, Mumbai, Calcutta, New heli, Shangai, Mentecarlo, Moscow, Dubai. In addition to the exhibitions often in dialogue with other artists in the gallery MyOwnGallery. Some prizes were not sought. Exciting presences in museums or institutional buildings, such as the anthological exhibition curated by Anna Vergine and Gabriele Fallini in the entire Palazzo Ducale of

Sabbioneta, Castello Sforzesco of Milan, Triennale of Milan, Orto Botanico of Brera, the 54^a Biennale d'Arte in Venice and recently the Parco of Portofino Museum. And now the goal of a small personal museum, of which he saw the birth and to which he contributed, right in via Tortona, at Superstudio, where his activity as an artist has developed. FLAVIOLUCCHINIART MUSEUM is the fourth pole of art in a few meters of road, just a few steps from Armani/Silos, MyOwnGallery, Mudec Museo delle Culture in Milan.

1. Ghost. Avenirismo, curated by Alm Frascchetti. Brera Academy, Orto Botanico. Milano.
2. The Dream of the Body that Lives. Curated by Anna Vergine and Gabriele Fallini. Palazzo Ducale. Sabbioneta.
3. The Vogue Lesson. With the collaboration of Luca Beatrice. Art-Point. (con)temporary art, Milano.
4. Starting again from 90. Palazzo della Triennale. Milano
5. FlavioLucchiniArt Museum. Opening. The visitor is Stefano Boeri, President of Triennale, Milano.



A 30 YEAR LONG ARCHIVE

Hundreds of works by Flavio Lucchini from the beginning until today: path's evolution and archive of an artist's life. A somewhat chaotic personal museum as working notes.



What is the connection between the huge pop dolls of the first years as an artist, when rebellion against fashion was represented as a Luna-Park phenomenon, and the refined resin bas-relief that represents dresses with a neo-classicism "between Canova and Jeff Koons"? What is the subtle link between the Toys, multicolor metal cubes similar to children's games, and the disturbing digital Burqa? What is the vision of the woman behind the austere Totem and the cheeky Dolls? How paintings can be related with the digital artworks made twenty years later, or, moreover, the sequences of wiry silhouettes and the obsessive skyscrapers?

The language of an artist also lives on apparent inconsistencies that are the transposition of his inner thoughts in a particular moment.

Flavio Lucchini doesn't avoid the evolution path, that is part of stylistic transformations of many artists went down in history, such as Picasso just to mention one.

The exhibition in the basement transformed in museum shows the synthesis of a thirty years archive, and breaches the rules of museum exhibitions.

Here hundreds artworks are stacked in a deliberated randomness, as they pile up in the moment they are finished or come back in the artist studio. Many works have taken part in different exhibitions, or are just finished; others are sketches, mocks up, unpublished works, constantly updated, because every day a work goes out the atelier and others come in, in a constantly turn-over, as in everyday life.

THE WHITE EMOTION

"All you need is love". The line of the famous song by the Beatles, who had great influence on the career, first as art-director and then as an artist, of Flavio Lucchini,

creator of visionary innovations both when designing magazines that are regarded as milestones in fashion publishing (such as Amica, Vogue Italia, L'uomo Vogue, Donna, Moda and many more), and when pioneering the interactions between art and fashion in his wide and multi-faceted artistic research aiming at removing transience and frivolity from women's dress. A recurring feature in his works, be they paintings, drawings, sculptures, high-reliefs, digital painting ranging from high-couture to burqas, is the use of white in the most varied materials. Catalyzed resins, plaster, acrylic colours, textiles, painted steel, pictorialelaborated photographs, are "tools" to be folded into drapes, frills, textures, coils, geometric shapes or women traces to be discovered

in unfinished faces or among the crowds of veiled figures where colour is just a negligible detail. White like a page to be filled with emotions, like a lesson of purity, like a base for any shade suggested by the mind, like a synthesis of life choices, always creative, calvinist, ahead of time.

PAINTING & MORE

Often the great sculptures of Flavio Lucchini are born from an idea, they are fixed with a drawing, become framework, solidify into challenging works in 3 dimensions. Many are the works of a pictorial thought born as such. As many those paintings that prelude or suggest a development in sculpture, as in the case of colorful Toys, symbolic totems, provocative naïve Dolls.



TOTEMS AND TOYS IN THE CITY



Lucchini himself tells the reason for his Totems: Totems are sculptures narrating the emotion of the dress. I have created big white sculptures made of plaster or resin, some of them with wiggly shapes and others geometric. They are significant and predominant Totems thought to be places in open spaces or big public rooms in order to impress and excite with their large dimension and the absence of colours. Toys are the naïve version: "As a child I enjoyed combining irregular colored or cor-ten steel cubes. I made small and very large sculptures. Even simple cubes can transfer irony, joy and much more".



White Doll. Fiberglass with weatherproof and salt-resistant protective paint (Boero). Museo del Parco in Portofino. 2021.

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I necessarily had to use a gold foil to emphasize even more the idea of the divine, so the artworks become magic and mysterious simulacra, as the primitive statuettes. ”

Flavio Lucchini

GOLD AS A PAGAN IDOL

Golden bronze, gold leaf, painting with textured colors that embellish the work. Flavio Lucchini's sculptures, bas-reliefs and paintings always use the feminine dress as an abstract symbol of creativity, as a metaphor for society. But they add the tension of the symbolic, almost religious, value that fashion has assumed in the contemporary world. In the cathedrals of fashion the new pagan rites are consumed. Lucchini knows the secrets, which he has long time contributed to. His works are at the same time a reference to the beauty of the dress and an invitation to reflect on its deeper meaning that goes far beyond desire.



Biography Flavio Lucchini

Flavio Lucchini, art-director, publisher, artist and entrepreneur, activities undertaken with the same passion and dedication in different moments of his life. Creator of the most important Italian fashion magazines, over the long years at the artistic direction of Vogue Italia he launched Italian fashion by supporting the greatest stylists and deeply innovating in the sector. Among the first to experience the combination of art and fashion, he has exhibited in various solo and group exhibitions, in Italy and abroad, including the 54th Venice Biennale of Art and the great anthology dedicated to him in 2012 throughout the entire Palazzo Ducale di Sabbioneta, a cultural destination under the sign of Unesco. Flavio Lucchini, from Mantua, studied architecture at the Polytechnic of Venice and art at the Brera Academy. For thirty years he devoted himself to fashion publishing and for the next thirty years exclusively to contemporary art. He is also the founder and president of Superstudio Group, a hub dedicated to fashion photography art design creativity. In September 2021 he opened his "personal museum", the first fashion / art museum in Milan, located a short distance from the Armani / Silos and Mudec museums. Lucchini lives between Milan, Paris and Dubai.



FLAVIOLUCCHINIART - atelier / museum / no profit association

FlavioLucchiniArt Museum will be an active place using the language of beauty to spread and stimulate the knowledge of art and the expressive languages involved.

The atelier will be the place where to meet, tell, experiment, project, show creatives and creativity. It will involve an audience of young people, adults and the elderly, but also new collectors, curios and passionate with the objective of bringing them closer to art in a modern and alternative way.

The non-profit association will do an in-training and aptitude activity reserved to particular categories: autistic kids, children, lonely women, sensitive categories, teachers, also in collaboration with other associations.

All income from the activity (via donations, auctions, events, various initiatives) will be used to finance the associations and its non-profit projects.

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