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Artista Jewels 2019 - Milan Fashion Week

La Dolce Vita

...yes indeed, life is sweet in so many ways!

Whenever I'm in Italy, I feel like I'm at home.

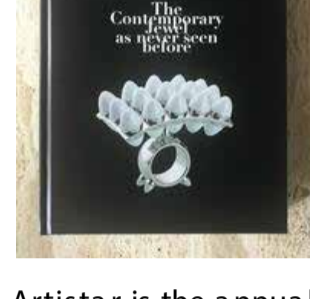
To me, Italy is synonymous with family, food and fashion, architecture, design and cinema. All of these have influenced my life, so not surprisingly, Italy and I have a long history.



I first came to know about, and love, Italy through my father's many Italian friends during my childhood in Holland. It was through them, and delicious Italian meals in their welcoming homes, that I was first introduced to these open, friendly and warm hearted people and learned to love their style, food and charm. Over the years I have been lucky to make many more Italian friends and I recently had the joy of living in Rome for two years!

Today I'm excitedly packing to head back to my beloved Italy ..to Milan...

Back to Milan Fashion Week..Back to the Artista Jewels Exhibition ...

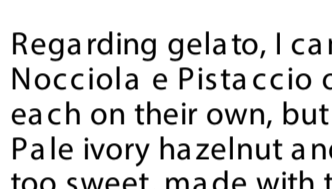


Artista is the annual Contemporary Jewellery Exhibition, at which I have been invited to exhibit my creations for the second year running. So I thought I would dedicate this month's blog to sharing with you some of my Italian secrets, influences, and delights.

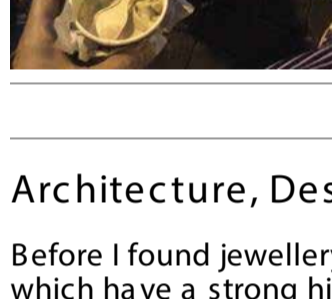
Food

Let's start with food ..I could talk about Italian food for days! How do I pick my favourite when there are so many? Suffice to say that during my time in La Bella Roma, my waistband expanded and I had to buy a whole size bigger in clothes!!! In the end, I had to finally move across the border to the Swiss Alps to deliver myself from all that temptation! However, if I had to be pushed on my favourite Italian food, I would definitely choose pasta ..and gelato. There always has to be time for dessert!

My favourite pasta by far is a delicious and little known unfussy vegetarian delicacy called 'Cacio e Pepe' - simply translated, Cheese and Pepper. It was in Roma that I was first introduced to this delightful concoction of the finest fresh egg noodles, bathed in butter, loads of freshly cracked black pepper, and finely grated salty and piquant fresh Parmesan and Pecorino Romano. If you'd like to try it for yourself, here's a link to a recipe (https:// www.bonappetit.com/ recipe/ cacio-e-pepe (https:// www.bonappetit.com/ recipe/ cacio-e-pepe)



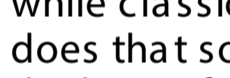
Regarding gelato, I cannot decide on just one flavour, so I'll pick two ... Nocciola e Pistaccio or Hazelnut and Pistachio. I love to eat them each on their own, but the best thing is to have them both together! Pale ivory hazelnut and bright green pistachio, both creamy and not too sweet, made with the finest natural, local ingredients that Italy has to offer. My favourite spot in Rome is Gelateria del Teatro, just around the corner from where I used to live; and when I'm in Milan this week, I'll pop into Ciacco's for a quick cup too ..even though Artista coincides with February Fashion Week, when many would think it's a tad too chilly for gelato, in my world, Every Day is Gela to Day!



Architecture, Design & Fashion

Before I found jewellery, I studied art history and architecture, both of which have a strong historical link with Italy. To me, Italy is the undeniable cradle of architecture - from Agrippa in Ancient Rome to Palladio and Bernini in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and Scarpa and Cucinella in modern times.

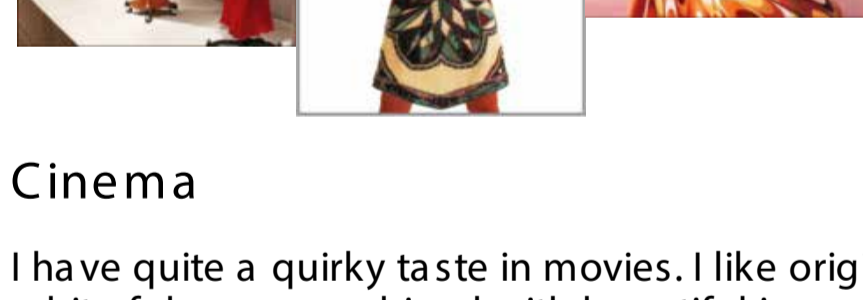
I would choose the Italian, and Modernist and Futurist movements as my biggest design influences, and I definitely would choose a Baldessari Lamp of the 1930s as one of my favourite design inspirations - EVER! Don't get me started on Italian lamps! All I can say is ..Wow! I just don't have enough rooms for everything I want to collect!



To me, Italian fashion and style are synonymous with quality, and while classic, there is often a quirkiness and humour in the design - does that sound like anyone we both know?!? I have always admired the beautiful colours and prints of Italian fabrics and their innovation in weaving, and we all know I am partial to a little weaving in my own designs! I'm a traditionalist where Italian Fashion is concerned, so my greatest respect goes to a trio of eminent designers of the past - Fortuny, Capucci and Pucci.



Yes, I know Mariano Fortuny was really a Spaniard, but his greatest design inspirations were realised in Venice, where you can still visit his stunning home, Palazzo Pesaro Orfei - also known as the Palazzo Fortuny, now a museum housing the most important pieces of his work. They include his reinventing of the humble pleat into an unsurpassed art form, and his 'freeing of the female form' with his shift dresses, more than a decade before Chanel started to design. The Italian fashion designer I most identify with, regarding my own style of design and creativity, is Roberto Capucci, whose unique sculpted designs were lauded by Dior in the 50s. Capucci was never influenced by his contemporaries, instead, he drew inspiration from nature, geometry, architecture and art. Lastly, I will always love Emilio Pucci's 1960s free form swirly geometric prints and kaleidoscopic colours, both of which have captured my imagination for years.



Cinema

I have quite a quirky taste in movies. I like originality, eccentricity and a bit of drama, combined with beautiful imagery. So not surprisingly, I love the emotional rawness of Italian cinema from the 50s and early 60s. The drama and beauty of the classic La Dolce Vita is what sparked me to move to Rome in 2016. Then there's Federico Fellini's 1976 film Casanova, which definitely may not be to everybody's taste and was labelled strange by the critics on its release ..'strange' is not a word which I use often. As I am unsure who can decide what is normal and what is strange anymore? It's definitely worth a watch if you want to see something different. Lastly, I would recommend the 2013 film La Grande Bellezza or The Great Beauty. It is one of those cinematic beautiful, eccentric and sumptuous films which most would enjoy. I personally have watched it many times for its spectacular cinematography.



So now that we have meandered through a veritable antipasto of my favoured Italian picks, I would like to invite you to visit me at Artista Jewels 2019 if you too are in Milan this week. It's only an exhibition, you can't buy anything, but it has me, and 140 of my contemporary, in jewellery design, exhibiting works from our latest collections. I spent much of the past autumn designing and creating the beautiful ring and collier which I am exhibiting, and fingers crossed for me, that I win a prize in the annual awards! Both pieces are created around Raw Labradorite stones, with my signature free flow 14 karat Gold Wire weaving. I have named the bold Cocktail Ring 'Private Conversations' and the Collier, which features two iridescent Labradorite gems is named 'Milestone'



Artista Jewels 2019 takes place at the gorgeous Palazzo Bovara, in Milan. It is open to the public from February 19th to the 24th, 10 am to 6 pm daily. If you'd like to discuss any of my pieces at the exhibition or on my website, please contact me through:

General Enquiries: info@sheilawestera.com

Marketing & PR Enquiries: press@sheilawestera.com

Phone: +44 (0) 2070 961 326

You can also Direct Message me through Instagram and I'll get in touch with you straight away

Do let me know if you try any of my Italian recommendations, or if you have any you can think of for me to try, in the comments below

Ciao and abbracci e baci

Sheila XoX