

A CONVERSATION WITH MASSIMO GIORGETTI

ID: he's *romagnolo* and was born in 1977, he was a finalist designer at "Who is on Next?" in 2010 and he's an eternal and tireless curious. A clue? The name of his brand – created in 2009 – hides his initials. But it is too easy to guess when the answer is Massimo Giorgetti, the creative director and founder of MSGM, the revelation label of Italian fashion in the last few years. He has been able to introduce and spread a new and unique style in Italy: the “contemporary” style. MSGM collections - presented in the fashion week calendar since September 2013 - play with an extreme mastery, mixing and matching web and archives, art and social media, music and memory: convergences and connections that become the most explicit sign of time accuracy. At Zone Moda, last 10 March, Giorgetti met the students on the occasion of the third appointment with Vogue Talents and Future Concept Lab, giving precious - or maybe we'd say "cool" - suggestions to them:

Q: *Your training has directly occurred in the field: first as a salesman, then as a creative consultant. Would you change something in your past? And which suggestion would you give to a young designer who wants to enter in this world?*

A: I wouldn't absolutely change any step I made: starting from the retail, first in a shop, then in a showroom, has really been a school that built my competences. That's exactly what I'd suggest: don't kill yourself looking for an internship in London or in Paris, but work as a sales assistant for at least one season, and learn what clients really want and what they don't want, why they buy a garment rather than another. Then, being a sales assistant in the middle of the 90s was exciting! Fashion – as we know it today – was literally exploding: Tom Ford was working for Gucci, Prada was becoming Prada and lots of new designers were slowly emerging. Crisis and fast-fashion were unknown words: there were no *Zara*, *H&M* or *Topshop*. If you were looking for something nice, coloured and cheap you could only go to Benetton's.

Q: *What are the characteristics someone must have in order to join your team?*

A: Are you asking me what you need to work for me? (Laugh). Besides zodiac sign, which is crucial for me (mine is Libra, ascendant Sagittarius), someone must be well informed; unfortunately, I meet lots of young designers – favoured by connections or not – who don't even know what a pre-fall is. Or they don't know the new brands anyone on the web is talking about. To join my team you must have an alert and inquiring mind, keen not only on fashion, but even on music, cinema, art, in life. I actually prefer a *probing bitch* than anyone apathetic and ignorant.

Q: *On September 25th Milano Finanza published an article entitled “Milano, Prada e Msgm conquistano i buyer”. What does being put next to Prada mean for you?*

A: It's been a pleasure and a big satisfaction. Even if, frankly, I think I've been very lucky: those buyers said my name and the journalist decided to put it in the title but, if you read the article carefully, you'll see that there could be another brand instead of mine, and the sense wouldn't change.

Anyway, it's a big satisfaction that became bigger when, two weeks after the article had been published, Prada invited me to an event. Then you really understand your work is observed and, most of all, you understand that the game is getting serious. A new challenge where courage, determination and sacrifice are more and more necessary.

Q: *As you said, MSGM is positioned between a first and a second line? Have you ever thought about haute couture?*

A: In these last four years, I've learned the importance of *never say never*, but I think MSGM is pretty far from *haute couture*. Of course it's growing up, getting a higher target, almost a luxury one: some of our products are the result of very important artistic collaborations and for others there are hours and hours of work and, of course, higher costs, but we're talking about very few pieces. My collections will always be contemporary, in an intermediate price category.

Q: *Is there, in any of your collections, an iconic piece? One that represents the MSGM essence?*

A: Yes, in the last collections it could be the Chanel style tweed jacket; now, I would say the rose printed sweatshirt.

Q: *Everyone paid you many compliments. Is there anyone who has criticized your work?*

A: Lots! I still remember Anna Dello Russo's words about the A/W 2011-12 collection: 'Massimo, I don't wanna see any more black, you can do it in the future'. Just now, after three years, I'm daring with very few black pieces. Another one I won't forget came from a journalist from a very famous magazine who wrote: 'Massimo Giorgetti is a very good graphic designer, but he should prove to be a good fashion designer too'. But these critiques are always very useful, more than compliments.

Q: *What about destructive criticism?*

A: That shouldn't even be considered. Being a fashion designer means being exposed to the world's judgement six times a year and it's very tough for your self-confidence and esteem till you get used. But what is important is to follow your path and your dream, cause if you waste your time listening to all the compliments and all the critiques you get mad, in fashion as in life.

Q: *Where does your inspiration come from?*

A: My inspiration could come from anything anytime, even during the night, while I'm dreaming.

What I really love is, for example, looking at a painting and imagine someone wearing it, or listening to a song and figuring out a why to transform it in a dress.

Q: *In the last issue of Italian Elle, young designers were photographed in places they loved but you chose Carlo Cracco's restaurant. Why?*

A: I wanted something different and not expected, to show who I am and what MSGM means: a mix of contaminations and energies. The idea came from an editorial shooting of the 70's, where Kens Scott posed in a restaurant in Milan – now closed – while models were coming out from the flaps of the kitchen. That's why I've chosen Cracco's restaurant, but instead of models I wanted my staff and my friends by my side, cause they represent MSGM.

Q: *How close do you feel to your origins?*

A: From my very first collection I keep stating again and again, that I'm very close to my origins. I still treasure a dear pic I took on Rimini beach, with all the coloured striped beach chairs, there you get how I am and always be close to Rimini and Riccione. Romagna is radiance and *joie de vivre* and "romagnoli" know it and take it with them anywhere they go.

Q: *Last June you launched a capsule collection in collaboration with Toilet Paper, Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari's independent magazine. A limited edition that has been hugely successful thanks to the connection between art & fashion. How close are you to art?*

A: Art is very important, is crucial 'cause it teaches you to recognise what is beautiful and think about it. Obviously, sometimes it could appear ugly, even trashy, but it always make you reflect and that's what I love. For my job then, art is a constant inspiration of colours and combinations. And in the last collections it's getting more and more essential: beyond Cattelan and Ferrari's project, I keep working with different artists, illustrators and photographers.

Q: *One year ago T magazine published Suzy Menkes's article 'The Circus of Fashion', which many bloggers took as a critique of their profession. As far as you're concerned, what's your position: fashion bloggers yes or no?*

R: I think fashion bloggers don't deserve a yes or a no, 'cause they are just an integral part of today's fashion world; they can be good or bad, right or wrong role models, but the truth is that now the end user is more influenced by fashion blogs than traditional magazines. I think that trying to let these things slide is absurd. As far as I'm concerned, when I started to give first clothes to Chiara Ferragni (*The Blonde Salad*) lots of posh friends, my press office too, didn't

support my idea. But every time Chiara was wearing an MSGM piece automatically that one would end in all the stores of the world. Of course, you can't stop to that, you always have to look forward, but you have to be able to arrive at the right time or rather understand the importance of fashion bloggers four/five years ago, not now, in 2014.

Q: *Is there something you can't stand about fashion?*

A: When I first arrived to Milan it wasn't easy because of the envy of those who didn't get the same fast success of MSGM. Someone tagged me as '*that one from nowhere who does a pair of sweatshirt and mini dresses*' and someone else suggested me (not in a kind way) to join pronunciation lessons. But when I went to NYC, where everyone got crazy for my strong accent, I took my revenge. Then the success arrived and those same people who used to make fun of me started to ask me invitations at my fashion shows etc. That's what I call a satisfacton! But snobbery is something I still can't stand and Milan is very snob. Don't they know is not cool anymore?

Q: *You frequently use social networks, especially Instagram. Social networks are the new digital generation language but also the new medium of fashion communication. What do you think about it?*

A: Social networks have a great power, that's why you have to be careful to choose what to show to the world. You need mild and good manners, tact and aesthetic sense. I suggest not to exceed with them because, if you upload dozens of pics every day, people could think you work more on social media than in the office.

Q: *What's the future of Italian Fashion and MSGM?*

A: If I knew that, it would be great and I could retire! I think it's a good time for Milan and Italian Fashion, with a new strong group of emergent young designers. As far as MSGM is concerned, I hope it will grow up and evolve, keeping the same essence. I don't care about branding strategies, I just want to keep that freshness that makes my products very cool!

Q: *Last advice?*

A: Believe in your goals and read Steve Jobs's biography till the last page: his courage and humility must be a model for all of us.