

MAPPING CAMPANIA'S FASHION HERITAGE: ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS

ORNELLA CIRILLO

Università degli Studi della Campania, Italy

ornella.cirillo@unicampania.it

Orcid 0000-0001-8470-1127

ANDREA CHIARA BONANNO

Università degli Studi della Campania, Italy

andreachiarabonanno@unicampania.it

Orcid 0000-0003-4652-7951

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.
Competing Interests: The Author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest

DOI: 10.36253/fh-3916

Abstract

The objective of mapping fashion heritage, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses in relation to ongoing transformations, as envisaged by RHITA for the Historical Research Unit of the University of Campania, requires a broad analytical perspective and the adoption of a specific critical framework of investigation. In this regard, on the one hand, the choice of a regional scale is considered appropriate in order to bring out differences in relation to the national context, in connection with the broader aim of enhancing local cultural heritage and strengthening the regional productive and manufacturing system. On the other hand, the need to observe regional museum and archival institutions through the lens of reshaping calls for a targeted approach which, beyond the analytical census itself, is able to identify exemplary cases that respond to contemporary change through heritage marketing and fashion heritage policies and projects. On these premises, the contribution presents the results of the comparative investigations conducted and proposes a revision of the criteria traditionally adopted for the census of fashion archives and museums, emphasising the value of those historical institutions active in Campania which, while preserving their identity and values, have updated themselves in accordance with the cultural demands of the present.

Keywords: *Fashion Heritage, Fashion History, Fashion Archives and Museums, Campania region, Made in Italy*

INTRODUCTION

Among those who closely follow current debates on fashion, it is now widely acknowledged that fashion archives and museums play a crucial role in the everyday life of the sector. From the most familiar perspective, the past documented in these “repositories” of memory acquires a strategic significance, since, in the face of the pressures exerted by globalization, ‘the value of a brand’s roots and identity has become a key factor for success [...]; the strategic role of brand heritage, the historical soul of a label, strengthens its prestige and fuels its desirability’ (Gnoli, 2025, p.1). In short, heritage enables companies to differentiate themselves within the market and to relaunch their brands.

On the creative and productive front of a company, where the proactive vision of the creative director prevails, the accumulation of projects and documents becomes a working archive from which to draw stimuli, forms and compositional solutions coherent with the brand’s DNA. The connection sought with the company’s own past ensures that brands remain at the forefront while remaining, at least formally, anchored to their historical image. This is how, as is well known, Daniel Roseberry has worked for Schiaparelli, Tom Ford for Gucci, Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, Pier Paolo Piccioli for Valentino, and many others (Morini, 2010; Gnoli, 2012; Fabbri, 2021). As a device capable of triggering new creative processes, the archive provides concrete references for re-

editions, collections imbued with quotations and reinterpretations of historical lines, and even the straightforward re-presentation of “iconic” garments, according to a strategic and highly functional use of archival heritage. The material retrieval of garments from the past has likewise become a common practice among luxury brands, supporting policies conceptually close to the principles of the circular economy, favoured by the high quality and uniqueness of these “historical artefacts” reintroduced onto the international stage. Similarly, the reuse of second-hand garments has spread as a practice of upcycling or simple reuse of pieces sourced not so much from corporate archives as from markets or private collectors’ holdings (Fornaciari, 2022).

Opposed to the pressing demands of production, the fast rhythms of runways and social media, however, are the slower and quieter tempos of historical research, which see archives and museums as indispensable repositories of sources and documents for the advancement of knowledge—sources awaiting the generation of new stories and narratives by different authors. In this sense, the archives and collections preserved in museums open up to monographic or polyphonic narratives in response to specific critical questions or to the need to gain a deeper understanding of events that appear already well known. The historiographical contribution of archives to fashion history remains considerable, and the stimuli emerging from the current state of research on Italian fashion are manifold.

At the core of this epistemic need lies, in our view, the awareness that the Italian fashion system is nourished by multiple relationships and involves diverse sectors and economic activities; that the expression Made in Italy should not be understood merely as an indication of origin but, above all, as a cultural construction encompassing both the design process, from conception to communication, and the production process [Fig.01]. A historical approach to the study of Made in Italy regards it as a “synthetic concept” in which personal and collective histories, as well as creative, cultural, material and immaterial skills of the actors operating in a given territory, converge (Colaiacomo, 2006; Belfanti, 2019; Dellapiana, 2022). Along this line, a broad critical lens is required one that, through written, iconographic, oral and material sources preserved in archives,



Fig. 01

museums or within local communities, is able to frame fashion within a new value chain aimed at recognising differences, identifying the heritage of local cultures and, consequently, strengthening the segments that compose today’s productive and manufacturing system. Such a comprehensive perspective is indeed essential when the objective is to return to scholars, institutions, companies and the wider community the complex stratification of skills that have flowed over time into the production of garments and accessories, and to demonstrate the ways in which the fashion system has been shaped by the territorial milieu in which it is rooted.

WHICH MUSEUM AND WHICH ARCHIVE FOR FASHION?

In light of the considerations outlined above, we feel it necessary first to raise a fundamental question: which archive and which museum for fashion? If fashion is understood as a complex and extraordinary phenomenon in which garments represent only the most visible aspect, a circular system deeply intertwined with time in both its past and future dimensions, then its interpretation

cannot be confined to clothes alone. Fashion is generally regarded as a 'social phenomenon consisting in the emergence, at a given historical moment and within a specific geographical and cultural area, of aesthetic and behavioural models (in taste, style and expressive forms) and in their gradual dissemination as increasingly broader groups conform to them, for whom such models function both as elements of internal cohesion and as markers of recognisability in relation to other groups' (Frisa, 2015, p.8). It may also be defined as 'the ensemble of everything related to clothing, from industry to the garments produced' (Sabatini, 2018). It thus becomes evident that its scope necessarily includes figures, objects and cultural domains far broader than those traditionally associated with garments and accessories, extending at least to fashion communication and encompassing photographic archives, libraries, private collections, film and television productions, and more. When material evidence no longer exists—as is often the case for consumer goods such as garments, subject to progressive disposal and only recently to a conservative attitude—indirect sources such as photography and print media become crucial in documenting significant aspects of fashion history. Similarly, when families preserve in private deposits garments or accessories linked to specific historical moments, events, ateliers or production techniques, how can their memory be recovered in the absence of publicly accessible documentation? What, then, is the real perimeter within which an investigation of the material and immaterial heritage of fashion can and should be conducted?

This raises further questions: to what extent is it legitimate to believe that fashion history has been written solely by legendary protagonists who were able to transform their initial success into corporate realities and sometimes to preserve its traces in the form of company archives? And to what extent have other, less visible figures—operating outside the dominant media spotlight—contributed through quieter and more isolated trajectories to sustaining manufacturing traditions, know-how and small-scale production, nonetheless integral to the creative strength of a place in terms of coherence, quality and cultural significance?

In practical terms, this implies the need to broaden the field of investigation to such an extent that it becomes difficult to delimit precisely, leaving to the responsibility of the scholar the choice of possible

deviations from the traditional field of fashion studies, in the conviction that ignoring these connections would be reductive, if not misleading. Ultimately, which parameters should be defined at the outset of a study aimed at mapping Italian fashion archives and museums?

Once the preliminary functional distinction between creative-project-oriented operations, brand heritage or strategic vision, on the one hand, and cultural heritage actions, on the other, has been overcome, we believe that two main forms of delimitation are required: a geographical one, linked to the specific focus of the investigation, and a thematic one which, however, risks becoming almost unattainable if one wishes to avoid arbitrary exclusions. Within the articulated Italian geography—where a mosaic of cultural and creative resources is unevenly distributed between major cities and minor centres, corresponding to internationally relevant production districts as well as to secondary networks of production and consumption that have become sedimented within the national tourist imagination—the exploration of the country's creative fabric can be pursued at different scales and through different methodological approaches.

With regard to the area surrounding Naples, the regional dimension appears particularly appropriate for recovering the full knowledge of the sector's cultural DNA, making it immediately recognisable on the market and restoring its credibility and attractiveness. Such a broad perspective is essential when the aim is to return to scholars, institutions, companies and the wider community the complex stratification of competences that have accumulated in the territory over time, and to demonstrate how the fashion system has been nourished by the local *milieu* in which it is rooted. The Campanian archipelago has absorbed models from other contexts and reinterpreted them; it has exported designers and skilled labour across Italy and abroad; but it has also hosted figures capable of contributing autonomously to the composite chorus of Italian fashion through a syncretic fusion of craftsmanship, the reinvention of tradition, market dynamics, industry and tourism [Fig. 02]. Since the 1950s, when fashion emerged as a new driver of national growth and developed especially where strong productive traditions already existed, the city and its "mythical" surroundings—enriched by the extraordinary landscape heritage



Fig. 02

of the islands and coastal areas—have established themselves as the “capital of fashion in southern Italy” (Cirillo, 2017). Despite the difficulties inherent in the context, this role has persisted to the present day, providing, through the work of its masters, a non-marginal contribution to shaping the kaleidoscopic face of Italian fashion—one that must be retrieved by moving it away from an improper subordinate framing.

This is evident in places such as Capri, Ischia, Positano and Torre del Greco, where initiatives undertaken by external personalities together with local artisans, aimed at establishing manufacturing activities for commerce and tourism, have drawn on the history of these locations, becoming emblematic of a culture of making that ensures continuity with the past while demanding constant updating to contemporary conditions.

THE PREREQUISITES FOR MAPPING ARCHIVES

Following this introductory framework, it is useful to clarify that the survey proposed in the present research—while necessarily remaining within a

conventional understanding of what constitutes a fashion archive or fashion museum, since extending the thematic scope to photographic, bibliographic, and film archives would have broadened the field of investigation beyond the possibilities of this research unit—both inherits and updates previous work, integrating it with the outcomes of the most recent scholarship in the field.

In this respect, we consider it appropriate to adopt as a foundational reference the body of knowledge conveyed through the Portale degli Archivi della Moda (Fashion Archives Portal) developed within the SAN - Sistema Archivistico Nazionale (Italian National Archival System) and promoted by the General Directorate for Archives of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, in collaboration with other institutional partners, with the aim of making the results of the project *Archivi della moda del '900 (20th-Century Fashion Archives)* accessible to a wide and heterogeneous audience, including non-specialists. Presented in 2009 and developed by ANAI - Associazione Nazionale Archivistica Italiana (Italian National Archival Association), the project enabled access to, knowledge of, and valorisation of a broad repertory of sources—previously largely unexplored—relating

to Italian fashion, including archival, bibliographic, iconographic, and audiovisual materials. It represents one of the most solid and enduring outcomes of the processes triggered by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and by the new Italian Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape issued in 2004 (Legislative Decree no. 42), aimed at activating forms of knowledge and safeguarding of these heritages not merely for promotional purposes, but also in defence of the inimitable identity of the national production system.

As explicitly stated on the portal's homepage, "the project is structured around the census of sources, the cataloguing and digitisation of materials contained in the archives of some of the most important Italian fashion houses, and the organisation of seminars and scholarly conferences." It is therefore a repertory comprising roughly ninety "protagonists" overall which, although specifically centred on the history and production of names and figures considered 'legendary', includes not only authoritative designers, tailors, and haute couture couturiers, but also a number of renowned journalists, collectors, costume designers, and industrialists active in the fashion world. Clearly, this survey is not exhaustive. Within it, approximately twenty "protagonists" are associated with Campania, particularly the province of Naples. This is a substantial number in relation to the total national sample—about ninety names overall—yet it still cannot be considered fully representative of the vast constellation of figures that shaped Italian fashion in the twentieth century. It nonetheless constitutes an excellent starting point for those who, like us, intend to map the heritage of Campanian fashion, highlighting strengths and weaknesses in relation to ongoing transformations by building on existing research tools. With specific regard to the producers of archival complexes, the platform's records include around twenty entities—tailors active in menswear (Tagliatela, 2010), fashion houses, boutiques, and department stores¹, also encompassing Capri, which

is widely recognised as one of the most significant centres in the definition and development of Italian fashion during the twentieth century.

Research is always a work in progress, and its outcomes should never be regarded as definitive or complete. For this reason, beginning with the work carried out by this research group for the Campania Region in 2018–2019—aimed at producing a census of companies, archives, and "cultural landscapes" operating in the fashion sector and later integrated into the MODEC platform—we identified the need to broaden the survey to include additional names excluded from the ANAI project. This expansion involves not only other protagonists or producing entities we have addressed over time, but also the wider constellation of masters who have handled and constructed garments and accessories. Their testimonies, moreover, constitute an exceptional oral source for defining Campania's creative identity. This process led to the construction of an "archive of making" (*archivio del fare*), complementary to the archive defined by products and by iconographic and textual sources—together capable of outlining an articulated history that is still "legible" and, above all, more closely aligned with the complexity that fashion deserves.

In the polyphonic chorus of fashion, the contributions of artists and artisans, entrepreneurs and masters, photographers and graphic designers are intertwined. Each, with specific competences, and against the backdrop of economic, cultural, political factors and the evolution of taste and communication tools, has contributed to shaping Campania's creative identity². In this sense, by integrating what was already present in the SAN census, the repertory has progressively expanded to include around twenty archives and a broader range of actors which, in addition to brands, also historic shops, production landscapes, foundations and manufacturing hubs. Among brands, to cite only a few significant examples, the survey highlights Amina Rubinacci, a leader in knitwear production; Giovanni Ascione & Figlio and Antonino De

¹ Abila Fashion for Man, boutique Elena Wassermann, boutique Filippo Ferrandino, boutique La Parisienne, E. Marinella, Livio De Simone, M. Cilento & f.ilo, Magazzini Italiani E & A Mele, sartoria Angelo Blasi, sartoria Antonio Panico, sartoria Caggiula, sartoria De Curtis, sartoria Fortunato Salviati, sartoria Francesco Ordine, sartoria Gaetano Caruso, sartoria Mario Formosa, sartoria Pasquale Sabino, sartoria Renato Ciardi, sartoria Roberto Combattente, sartoria Tullio Ciardulli, sartoria Visone).

² The results of the work carried out by the research group of the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" (lead institution) for the project Critical Analysis and Strategic Guidelines for the Strengthening of the Fashion System in Campania (POR Campania 2014–2020), funded by the Campania Region and scientifically coordinated by Patrizia Ranzo, were published in Laboratorio Campania. Paesaggi produttivi e culturali della moda (ISBN 979-12-80178-44-2, Altralin-*ea* Editore, Florence, 2021).

Simone for the making of precious objects and coral; Campanile, Canfora, Deimille, Francesco Benigno, and Paolo Scafora for footwear; Omega, Tramontano, Mario Talarico, and Studio ROG for accessories; and Gianni Carità and Giannotti for jewellery. Each of these actors almost always possesses a body of documentation relating to company history, varying in richness and degree of organisation—often due to the historically limited value attributed to preserving traces of the past and, even more so, to the apparent ordinariness of the documents themselves.

Among these, an exception is represented by the Giovanni Ascione & Figlio archive, owing to the role of this Torre del Greco manufacture in the production and working of coral jewellery, which has been the subject of a recent inventorying initiative. A particularly prominent case is that of Mario Valentino, whose archive stands out for its integrity and variety of documentary media (administrative papers, sample books, patterns, drawings, tools and machinery, press clippings, publications, periodicals, communication materials, videos, haberdashery, as well as a very large number of products, including shoes and garments), yet lacks the systematic inventorying that would allow its formal inclusion among the archives of Naples' historic enterprises. The analytical study of the materials preserved within this archive enabled the author to reconstruct the intense creative and entrepreneurial trajectory of this Made in Italy excellence; however, today it struggles to become a tool with strong projective force capable of enhancing the brand's desirability due to the absence of such an approach in the company's current management (Cirillo, 2018). The economic investment required for proper archival preservation—through conditioning, inventorying, and ordering—has been replaced by basic rearrangement and by a formal closure to public consultation, as occurs in the majority of company archives, whether considered "virtuous" or not. As a consequence, this valuable heritage has become largely sterile with respect to its multiple potential vocations. The company activated the archive primarily for private purposes, underestimating the impact that an investment of resources aimed at sharing its rich preserved heritage could have had on strengthening its own identity, as was experienced on an isolated occasion of collaboration with a university research team (Cirillo & Liberti, 2015). This is a form of

"private memory" that limits the possibility of updating the brand's creative and productive trajectory in accordance with the demands of reshaping. Consequently, Mario Valentino's cultural legacy remains partial, entrusted more to the monographic account than to the plurality of interpretations potentially contained within the archive.

A similarly singular situation can be observed in other historic Campanian companies such as E. Marinella, Isaia, or Kiton. Their long and fruitful histories do not correspond to the existence of equally consistent archives, since in several cases documentation relating to design choices, production techniques, and the individuals who worked within these companies has not been systematically preserved. Some state that they never gathered materials in a single location; others preserved them in a fragmented and episodic manner, to the point of renouncing the construction of a corporate historical archive, despite the recent "discovery" of its strategic value. As a result, the historical memory of certain Neapolitan companies that contributed to shaping Italian sartorial culture is often entrusted to indirect information—available in public institutional archives, in sectoral publications, or in valuable oral testimonies—which may be functional to a critical history of the sector but far less effective for brand heritage projects. A relevant example is the recent E. Marinella exhibition *Questa di Marinella è la Storia vera (The True Story of Marinella)*, held in Sorrento in 2024 at Villa Fiorentino.

Comparing the Campanian situation with the national landscape, we necessarily recognise a significant gap with respect to the most advanced centres of northern Italy, where consolidated experiences of fashion heritage management, digital valorisation policies, and structured synergies between museums, companies, universities, and territories are more evident. One may think of Sistema Moda Milano, the Salvatore Ferragamo Historical Archive and the research centres in Tuscany, the textile districts of Brianza and Prato, or company archives such as Missoni, Max Mara, and Armani, which have developed consolidated practices of openness, digital cataloguing, educational programming, and sustainability. In relation to these realities, Campania occupies an intermediate position: it holds a central place within the commercial history of Italian fashion—

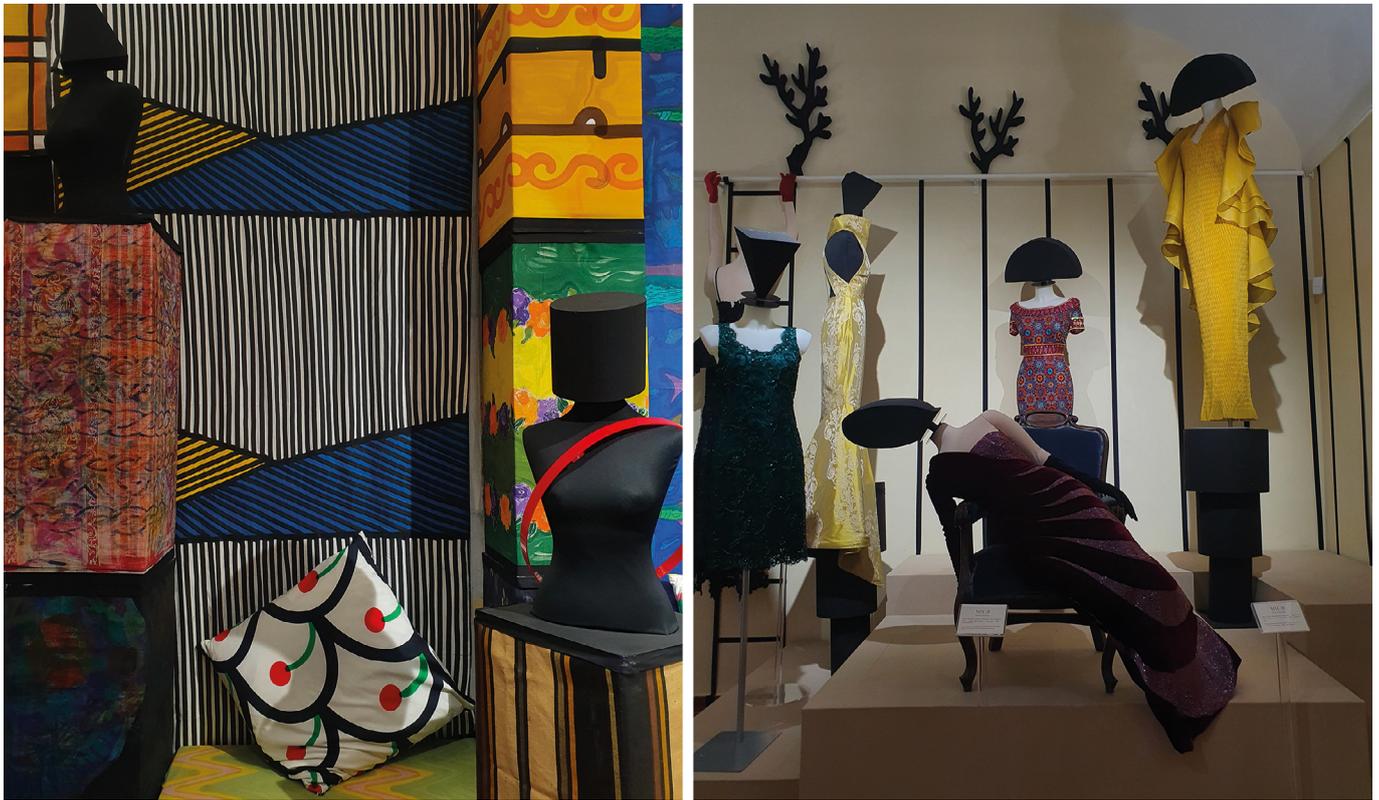


Fig. 03

often linked to entrepreneurial and creative trajectories of international relevance—yet it still suffers delays in the establishment of a fully developed heritage specifically dedicated to fashion heritage.

MUSEUMS

With regard to museums, the basic informational framework is provided by the census available on the platform of the Ministry of Culture, whose selection criteria took into account seven museums in Campania. These include not only institutions clearly and explicitly devoted to the theme—such as the Museo della Moda di Napoli (Naples Fashion Museum), the only museum in the region explicitly and permanently focused on fashion in the strict sense [Fig. 03]—but also those that more broadly preserve and document forms of production falling within this wide field of interests, such as costume, craftsmanship, and folklore, understood as documentary hubs of practices active until the mid-twentieth century from which distinctive regional productions and manufactures later developed. In this perspective, the survey extends to: the Museo civico *La gente senza storia* di Altavilla Irpina (Civic Museum “People Without

History” of Altavilla Irpina, AV), which preserves nineteenth-century folk costumes and fine textiles from the first half of the nineteenth century, including printed cottons; the Museo etnografico *Beniamino Tartaglia* in Aquilonia (Beniamino Tartaglia Ethnographic Museum of Aquilonia, AV), with a section dedicated to clothing, dowries, and domestic furnishings; the Museo civico tessile e dell’arte contadina in Pontelandolfo (Civic Museum of Textiles and Peasant Art of Pontelandolfo, BN), devoted to textile production, especially wool, which supported a widespread domestic-loom system intensely used until the 1970s; the Museo civico del territorio in Cusano Mutri (Civic Museum of the Territory of Cusano Mutri, BN), which collects male and female folk costumes, original dowry pieces, linens and accessories, as well as tools for wool processing; and the Museo etnografico di Morigerati (Morigerati Ethnographic Museum of Norigerati, SA), documenting garments and artefacts characteristic of women’s dowries in the local area. Finally, the Museo della seta (Silk Museum) at the Real Belvedere of San Leucio (CE) testifies to the articulated historical trajectory that, since 1789, has left in the Leucian territory a “silent” network of still-active silk mills.

Alongside this regional framework, a survey was carried out of nineteen museums at the national level that preserve or enhance collections of fashion and accessories. These institutions were taken as a comparative reference in order to assess similarities, differences, and levels of alignment with the most advanced practices in Fashion Heritage management.

Overall, the census describes a national picture that aligns closely with the well-known dynamics of fashion in Italy: regions such as Lombardy, Tuscany, Piedmont, and Emilia-Romagna can rely on a significant number of corporate museums, formally defined archives, and highly developed museum realities, reflecting their centrality in national industrial history or their role in generating Italian fashion's successes. Campania, by contrast, displays a more fragmented and fragile situation, despite the value and longevity of its sartorial and manufacturing traditions. The strength of "capital" cities such as Milan, Rome, Florence, and Naples has been defined within a widespread constellation of minor centres collectively involved in shaping the polyphonic chorus of *Made in Italy*. The evidence confirms the urgency of a critical and project-oriented intervention capable of identifying operational strategies for an integrated valorisation of regional fashion heritage in line with national and international standards. In Campania, therefore, the history of regional fashion—though extremely rich and of high quality—risks remaining incomplete if its critical reading and interpretation are not addressed through an articulated and complex process of source retrieval.

STRUCTURE OF THE FORM: ITEMS AND CONTENTS

The outcome of the previous reflections and of the targeted investigation conducted on Italian museum and archival institutions is the definition of an ideal record sheet for the census of fashion museums and archives, conceived as an operational tool sensitive to the themes of *reshaping* and applicable to any case across the national territory. To this end, the standard structure of the record has been developed on the basis of the guidelines issued by the General Directorate for Museums of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, pursuing a necessary simplification consistent with the objectives of the present research. Institutional databases that analytically census museums and archives—such as the *Archivi del '900* platform

and the Ministry of Culture website—indeed provide predominantly descriptive and highly synthetic information, without focusing on the tools and actions aimed at enhancing Italian fashion heritage, its ability to engage with contemporaneity, and the ways in which each institution documented in archival fonds or museum collections positions itself within the broader framework of *Made in Italy*. For these reasons, it was necessary to develop a survey form applicable to both museums and archives, allowing for minor differences, and to significantly expand the set of fields traditionally used in official censuses, which usually limit themselves to providing basic identification data, information on the size of collections or holdings, and elementary indications of accessibility. Conversely, for the purposes of this research, particular importance is attributed to fields relating to the "Cultural relevance with respect to the territorial context of reference", in which, with regard to the specific collections of the museum/archive, the artefacts and sources capable of providing elements of knowledge about the fashion and dress culture of the territory and its communities are described. This is by no means a marginal annotation, as it explicitly allows significant aspects and values of collections, documents or artefacts to emerge in the interpretation of their relationship with the *genius loci*. In the search for the variety and complexity of the features that characterise the *Made in Italy*, the identification of local specificities represents one of the necessary prerequisites for the updating of fully sustainable forms of production.

Another area of analysis concerns "Research, cataloguing and digitisation policies", which are essential for understanding both the level of accessibility and the capacity to build a shared heritage, given that many of these actions can only be implemented when specific funding and dedicated personnel are available for each type of activity. Similarly, research, cataloguing and digitisation require appropriate tools and equipment, without which the results of any potential actions risk becoming ineffective or outdated. Closely connected to these objectives is the "Relationship with cultural institutions in the territory": dialogue with public and private bodies, with key actors in the sector and, above all, with the communities to which the heritage belongs, represents one of the main directions promoted by UNESCO for national cultural institutions. The

impact of these relationships can be measured in terms of the capacity to engage audiences in cultural heritage enhancement programmes. “Heritage marketing and fashion heritage activities” today represent key indicators of how companies and museums update their practices in order to align with contemporary needs: recording their implementation and characteristics, also within the fashion sector, is useful for assessing the capacity of a museum/archive to act as a forward-looking or responsive interpreter of highly topical issues.

Dedicated attention must also be given to “Sustainability, inclusion and innovation”. These themes, which are central to the RHITA project, are now an integral part of international guidelines for the management of cultural heritage and are considered essential parameters in the evaluation of the quality of institutions overseen by the Ministry of Culture. It was therefore deemed necessary to include a specific field capable of describing the methods and actions undertaken in this regard by the institutions under examination.

Finally, to complete the collection of data and information, a key point is devoted to the “Quality of cultural experience”. This field does not assess cultural accessibility from a merely logistical point of view; rather, it refers to the ability of a museum/archive to offer up-to-date content, contextualised interpretations, accessible narratives and digital tools—that is, to demonstrate continuous improvement in its museological storytelling, both in terms of communication and of the transdisciplinary nature of its content. In this sense, the multidisciplinary and transversal nature of fashion lends itself particularly well to these approaches, enabling the institutions that hold such heritage to act as potential implementers of these practices. The implementation of these fields thus proved necessary in order to transform the record from a simple descriptive tool into an interpretative device, capable of critically assessing not only “what” is preserved in a museum or archive, but above all “how” it is managed, communicated and enhanced in accordance with the most current cultural frameworks.

TWO CASE STUDIES

By way of example, the research records were developed for two emblematic Italian case studies: the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo (Salvatore Ferragamo Museum) in Florence and the Museo

della Moda di Napoli (Naples Fashion Museum). The selection of the Florentine museum is motivated by the exceptional nature of the institution, which represents one of the most advanced models of corporate museum practice at both national and international levels. It was recognised in November 2015 as the first green museum in Italy and officially joined ICOM (International Council of Museums) in November 2016. The second case was selected on the basis of its location within the geographical area of reference of the research unit.

The comparison thus sets, on the one hand, the strengths of a private institution linked to a highly prestigious historic company—both in the past and in the present—against, on the other, the sometimes virtuous yet at times fragile efforts of a recently established public museum. The availability of both economic and professional resources at the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo guarantees very high qualitative standards and continuity in initiatives dedicated to fashion heritage and sustainability, as well as the constant updating of cultural content within an intensive programme of activities. Conversely, the lesser financial stability and the more limited staff of the Museo della Moda di Napoli result in outcomes that are less exemplary, albeit appreciable in terms of the willingness to align with the best practices advocated by ministerial bodies and already implemented by pioneering institutions.

The structure of the form, as demonstrated by its exemplary completion [Fig. 04], allows not only the institutional history to emerge, but also crucial aspects such as the presence or absence of qualified professionals in the fashion sector, the degree of technological updating, the status of cataloguing, relations with local communities, the capacity to curate events, conferences and temporary exhibitions, and the ability to contribute to a contemporary narrative of fashion as cultural heritage.

The application of the record to the two emblematic case studies—the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo in Florence and the Museo della Moda di Napoli—made it possible to verify concretely the effectiveness of the tool and, above all, to reveal the conditions under which the main actors of Italian fashion heritage currently operate. The comparison between the two institutions, profoundly different in terms of institutional history, economic

Venue name and location	Museo Mondragone e chiesa di S. Maria delle Grazie Piazzetta Mondragone, 18 - 80132 Napoli Coordinates: 40.837845° N - 14.242202° E	governing bodies include a Board of Trustees with institutional appointments from the Municipality of Naples, the Archdiocese of Naples and the Campania Regional Authority; contacts are available through the Foundation's official channels. Overall, the organisational structure privileges administrative and management functions, with limited formalisation of scientific and curatorial roles.
Reference body and legal status	The Museo della Moda di Napoli is owned by the Fondazione Mondragone, a private foundation established for cultural purposes. The collection is partly owned by the Foundation and partly by private individuals. The institution operates on a non-profit basis, pursuing cultural and educational objectives of public interest.	Scientific dissemination The scientific dissemination activity of the Museo della Moda di Napoli is mainly articulated through an editorial production connected to exhibitions and events, including exhibition catalogues and monographic publications issued by the Fondazione Mondragone and, in some cases, in collaboration with specialised national publishers such as Bolis and Silvana Editore. The thematic addresses concern Italian fashion, textiles, tailoring and accessories, as well as key figures in the history of twentieth-century fashion, with particular attention to the creative and productive realities of the Campania region. Among the most significant titles are: <i>Sari, il taglio e la forma (ed. by Sara Di Silvio and M. Napoli, 2020) (Giulio Einaudi editore)</i> ; <i>Storie di cappello (Fondazione Mondragone, Edizioni Fondazione Mondragone, Naples, 2017); Il Maderlano di Stoffa. Lino De Simone (Fondazione Mondragone, Edizioni Fondazione Mondragone, Naples, 2005); Forme di cappello (Fondazione Mondragone, Edizioni Fondazione Mondragone, Naples, 2009). Overall, the museum's scientific production is significant in thematic and documentary terms, but lacks a structured editorial series and the programmatic continuity typical of the major fashion corporate museums.</i>
Preserving typology of collections	The collection, comprising approximately 900 artefacts, includes historical women's and men's garments from different periods, fashion accessories such as hats, gloves, fans, stoles and walking sticks, haberdashery and textile items including embroidery and readymade, furnishing textiles and small silk panels, editorial materials such as fashion magazines and fashion sketches, as well as regional dolls dressed in traditional costumes. Overall, the collection is heterogeneous and articulated into nuclei of different nature and format.	Relations with the territory The museum collaborates with universities and higher education institutions, including the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", Suor Orsola Benincasa University, the MA - Higher Technical Institute (ITI), and IRE Business School, as well as with associations such as Rotary Club Napoli and AIGA - Italian Association of Young Lawyers (Naples section). Forms of collaboration mainly include sponsorship agreements, support for research projects, the organisation of cultural events and the activation of post-diploma technical specialisation courses. The involvement of local institutions and stakeholders is occasional, while some collaborations with national companies and associations are also in place.
Specific collections	The collection of the Museo della Moda di Napoli derives from the holdings of the Fondazione Mondragone and from numerous private donations, including those of the Caracciolo, Biliato, Buccafurra, Falciani, Manzo Galli, Matarazzo, Montella, Pigriatelo, Torrepadula and Vivaldi families. The collections include nuclei related to Lino De Simone, Nino Lettieri, Fausto Sarli, Alessio Vassone and other designers. Overall, the collection was formed mainly through accumulation and donations, without an original unifying criterion.	Fashion heritage projects In recent years, the Museo della Moda di Napoli has promoted several significant fashion heritage projects, including the exhibition "Sari, il taglio e la forma" sponsored by the Italian National Chamber of Fashion (Instituto Nazionale della Moda Italiana), the exhibition "La casa del garzone", organised in collaboration with the Experimental Station for the Leather and Tanning Materials Industry and the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", and the exhibition project "Magazine Nuova. Filà Mea, Chiara e altre storie", dedicated to the memory of historic book enterprises. Overall, fashion heritage activities are symbolically and institutionally significant, but are organised on an episodic basis and are not yet embedded within a structured, long-term programme.
Cataloguing	The cataloguing of the artefacts is carried out through photographic documentation and the entry of data into an internal digital system. The standards adopted are not formalised; however, the level of completeness is high, while accessibility is limited by internal use.	Heritage marketing activities Heritage marketing strategies are not structured; activities mainly consist of exhibitions and events, participation in sector-related initiatives and institutional patronage, without integrated digital communication or defined audience development policies.
Conservation	Artefacts are preserved in a dedicated storage room. Environmental conditions include the absence of direct lighting and controlled exposure to light; conservation procedures are not formalised and no structural preventive conservation policy is in place. Restoration interventions are not systematic and are carried out only when specific funding becomes available.	Public accessibility The museum is open on weekdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, while weekend access is available by appointment only. Visits take place exclusively in person and are based on scheduled access, with limited availability at weekends, which reduces the museum's ability to reach a broader non-specialist audience.
Exhibited assets and display	The exhibited assets consist of a variable selection of garments, accessories and textiles, arranged in a chronological and thematic itinerary spanning from the seventeenth century to the present through a series of monographic nuclei, including the collections of Lino De Simone, Fausto Sarli, Neapolitan glove-making and the textile productions of San Leucio. Interpretative texts are limited to brief labels and essential captions for specific artefacts; no multimedia tools or QR codes are available, resulting in an essential level of cultural mediation. Temporary exhibitions feature nuclei of restored garments brought out of storage. The permanent display was curated by the artist Michelio Biliato.	Accessibility of cultural contents Cultural contents are characterised by an essential level of mediation, based on brief introductory panels and minimal captions for most artefacts. Historical-critical contextualisation is partial and accessibility for non-specialist audiences is limited: no digital support tools are provided. Contents are available on site only and are mainly oriented towards specialist audiences.
Authors and brands	Among the authors and brands present in the collections are Lino De Simone, Nino Lettieri, Fausto Sarli, Roberto di Camerino, Alessio Vassone, Carretta, Caggula, La Ville de Lyon, Mario Valentino and the San Leucio silk manufacturers, together with other designers and production realities. The collection is characterised by a plurality of brands and protagonists, articulated into nuclei differentiated by provenance and typology.	Sustainability - inclusion - innovation Policies on sustainability, inclusion and innovation are not structured. While attention to heritage protection and the educational role of the museum has historically been present, it is not supported by long-term strategies, and the adoption of digital tools and innovative museographic practices is absent. Overall, these issues emerge only implicitly and are not formalised in dedicated policies or projects.
Cultural relevance in relation to the territorial context	The collection of the Museo della Moda di Napoli has a significant cultural relevance for the Campanian territory, as it documents, through garments, accessories, textile artefacts and editorial materials, the history of local fashion and manufacturing traditions. The collections related to Lino De Simone, Nino Lettieri and Fausto Sarli, together with the room dedicated to Neapolitan tailoring featuring historic artefacts such as Caggula and Rubiacchi, the art of glove-making and the production related to San Leucio, attest to the role played by Naples and Campania in the construction of Made in Italy, connecting the museum's offering with the material culture and artisanal skills of local communities.	Social media - website - contacts The museum uses Instagram, Facebook and YouTube mainly for informative and promotional communication. The recent relaunch of the Instagram profile (March 2023) marks the beginning of a digital relational process, which is not yet embedded within a structured editorial strategy nor integrated with audience development projects.
Description / history and identity	The Museo della Moda di Napoli is housed in the former "Birrificio per Matrone Virginia e Ottavia" founded in 1855 by Duchess Elena Adelaide and later transferred into educational institutions. In 2003, following an agreement with the Campania Region, it was designated as the Regional Centre for Women's Fashion and opened to the public as the Museo del Tessile e dell'Abbigliamento "Stina Aloisiodoranda". The museum also operates as a professional training centre dedicated to safeguarding craftsmanship and developing new skills in the fashion sector.	Additional information Venue use The building, originally conceived for charitable and educational purposes as the former "Birrificio per Matrone Virginia e Ottavia", is a historic structure now housing the museum and a training centre. The pre-existing architectural spaces have been adapted for exhibition use through specifically designed furnishings and display solutions. Date of foundation / year of foundation: 2003 Date of possible closure December 2025 Date of completion Ongoing Curator Andrea Chiara Bonarino Official sources and databases https://www.museodellamodanapoli.com
Research activities	The museum's research activities consist of participation in funded projects in collaboration with universities, academic institutions and external experts, with a focus mainly on fashion and textiles. These activities are not, however, structured within a continuous programme.	
Events	The museum promotes monographic exhibitions, thematic events, gala evenings, participation in national initiatives—such as the <i>Diomede del Made in Italy</i> —as well as book presentations and conferences, focusing on fashion and tailoring, Made in Italy, craftsmanship, anti-counterfeiting, vintage and fashion history. Among the figures involved are Nino Lettieri, Renato Balestra, Raffaella Curri and Anna Fanfani. Activities take place mainly at regional and national level but are not systematic and are linked to individual initiatives rather than to a continuous curatorial programme.	
Management and contacts	The museum is managed by the Fondazione Mondragone under a governance framework based on the former administrative structure and an organisational structure including administrative offices.	

Fig. 04

to invest in areas such as conservation, research, communication and heritage enhancement. The most recent financial statements clearly show that the Neapolitan institution is supported almost exclusively by regional funding, which amounts to approximately €300,000 per year and is necessary to cover most operating costs, including staff-related expenses, together with revenues from ticket sales, which average about €8,000 per year³.

The Museo Salvatore Ferragamo stands out as one of the most advanced examples of corporate museums in Italy. The data emerging from the record show a structure that is strongly integrated within the brand's identity strategy: the scale of the collection—over 10,000 artefacts from the corporate historical archive—is supported by an analytical cataloguing system, based on dedicated databases and internal archival standards that allow the rapid identification of materials for the development of exhibitions. Since 2006 this has enabled the museum to implement a system of annual thematic displays, each grounded in a specific research project and designed to valorise, year after year, different segments of the historical archive, also thanks to the presence of dedicated storage facilities, formalised preventive conservation policies and scheduled restoration programmes that ensure a systematic and continuous management of the heritage.

resources and organisational structure, highlights not only an operational gap but also two distinct cultural models of heritage management.

On the one hand stands the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, a museum not only of a private nature but also belonging to a company included within the perimeter of the Ferragamo Group, which, given its economic relevance, is even listed on the stock exchange. The museum is endowed with a stable organisational structure and with continuous economic and professional resources, although no autonomous financial statements of the museum itself are available among publicly accessible sources.

On the other hand, the comparison involves the Museo della Moda di Napoli, a public institution whose activities depend to a large extent on funding periodically allocated by territorial public bodies, in particular by the Campania Region. This structural difference has a direct impact on programming, on the continuity of activities, and on the capacity

From the perspective of cultural experience, the Florentine museum offers a high level of mediation: articulated interpretative texts, multimedia tools, QR codes and digital supports contribute to constructing a structured museum narrative accessible even to non-specialist audiences, in line with a mission pursued since the mid-1990s. Inaugurated in 1995 at the initiative of the Ferragamo family, the museum was conceived not merely as a celebratory tribute to the founder, but as a cultural instrument aimed in particular at younger generations, promoting awareness of the artistic qualities, inventiveness and experimentation that transformed the role of footwear in international fashion and established Salvatore Ferragamo as a leading figure in twentieth-century design and fashion. This approach is embedded in a broader audience development strategy integrating social media, multimedia content production,

³ <https://museodellamodanapoli.com/amministrazione-trasparente/bilanci/bilancio-2024/>

publishing and educational activities. In this sense, its recognition as the first green museum in Italy and the adoption of innovative technologies—such as Dolby Atmos audioguides for the inclusion of visitors with visual impairments—testify to its full adherence to the principles of sustainability, inclusion and innovation pursued by RHITA. The picture emerging from the record of the Museo della Moda di Napoli is markedly different. The museum displays a less exemplary structure, characterised by lower financial stability and a limited staff. Its collection, comprising approximately 300 artefacts largely derived from private donations and heterogeneous holdings, does not follow a unifying criterion and reflects a logic of accumulation rather than an organic cultural project.

The critical issues are concentrated primarily in the areas of cataloguing and conservation policies: data accessibility is partial, as are preventive conservation policies. Restoration interventions are sporadic and dependent on the availability of external funding. Cultural accessibility is likewise limited, with the absence of digital support tools and a minimal level of interpretative mediation, making the exhibition path intelligible mainly to specialist audiences.

A particularly significant concern relates to communication and heritage marketing. While the Museo Ferragamo integrates events, publications, social media and digital channels within a coordinated strategy, the Museo della Moda di Napoli displays fragmented valorisation actions. Exhibitions and events—although numerous and often of high scholarly value, such as the recent exhibition on Fausto Sarli entitled *Sarli*, curated by Paola Maddaluno and sponsored by the Italian National Chamber of Fashion—are not embedded within a continuous curatorial programme.

With regard to relations with the territory, the Neapolitan museum demonstrates a commitment to training and research through internship agreements and collaborations with universities and higher education institutes. However, these relationships tend to be episodic and are not consistently translated into audience development programmes or participatory projects involving local communities. By contrast, the Museo Ferragamo, thanks to its structured involvement with universities, cultural institutions and

foundations, succeeds in anchoring its heritage within the local context, transforming it into a shared cultural resource.

The comparison between the two cases makes particularly evident the decisive role played by professional competences in shaping the cultural quality of a fashion museum. At the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, the presence of a clearly identifiable scientific direction and a staff composed of specialised professionals—fashion historians, archivists, curators and communication managers—enables the archive to function as a genuine research laboratory, capable of generating multi-thematic narratives, structured exhibition projects and a continuous programme of activities. Heritage is not merely preserved but becomes a living substance of interpretation and cultural production.

At the Museo della Moda di Napoli, by contrast, the lack of professional profiles specifically trained in fashion studies and contemporary museology significantly affects the institution's ability to define a coherent curatorial vision. The predominance of administrative functions over scientific and project-oriented roles makes it more difficult to develop medium- and long-term strategies and to construct critical narratives capable of conveying the value of the collections. In this context, the museum appears more oriented towards preservation and routine management than towards cultural production, with evident repercussions on the quality and continuity of its offer.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this component of the Research Unit of the University of Campania, in relation to the amount of person-hours allocated to this specific focus of the project, was not able to carry out a complete mapping of archives and museums holding fashion-related heritage. As stated in the title, however, the aim was to identify methodological and cultural orientations through which to frame this subsequent phase of research. First of all, we believe that this activity should be addressed through the use of a census record renewed in its fields. The exemplification carried out by us demonstrates that such a tool does not merely list what exists, but makes it possible to critically assess the “how” of fashion heritage: how it is preserved, communicated, made accessible, and integrated into processes of innovation,

sustainability and inclusion. The Museo Salvatore Ferragamo emerges as a model of excellence, fully aligned with contemporary approaches to Fashion Heritage, whereas the Museo della Moda di Napoli, despite possessing a heritage rich in potential, reveals a set of structural weaknesses that call for targeted interventions in terms of expertise, resources and project planning.

The overall result highlights that only through an expanded, multidimensional record, consistent with the principles of reshaping, is it possible to assess the true potential of museums or archives in the field of Fashion Heritage, going beyond the partial framework provided by institutional repertoires.

In this sense, the mapping carried out within RHITA assumes an operational role: it does not merely describe what exists, but proposes criteria for evaluating the quality of cultural provision, identifies models of good practice, and defines useful indicators to guide future policies for the enhancement of national fashion heritage. The extension of the record fields devoted to sustainability, innovation, digitalisation, training, relations with the territory and heritage marketing strategies responds precisely to this need: to transform the survey into a critical tool capable of influencing cultural programming and the ability of institutions to engage with an increasingly active and technologically literate public.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors have shared the contents of the essay, but specifically authored by First Author (Ornella Cirillo) are paragraphs 1 “Introduction”, 2 “Which museum and which archive for fashion?” and 3 “The prerequisites for mapping”, and by Second Author (Andrea Chiara Bonanno) are paragraphs 4 “Structure of the form: items and contents”, 5 “Two case studies” and 6 “Conclusions”.

CAPTIONS

[Fig. 01] Madama Thérèse Tailors, dress fitting, 1932, Naples (Archivio Parisio)

[Fig. 02] Modeling department of Manifatture Falco, 1959, Naples (Archivio Parisio); Spaces for the sale of clothing and accessories at Piper Market near Largo Amendola, 1967, Naples (Archivio Riccardo Carbone)

[Fig. 03] Partial view of the permanent exhibitions dedicated to Livio De Simone and Fausto Sarli, Museo della Moda di Napoli.

[Fig. 04] Completed form template based on the case study of the Museo della Moda di Napoli

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