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FASHION & STYLE

My Rome: Frida Giannini's Home Town

By SUZY MENKES NOV. 15, 2012

How to choose between two great loves?

Frida Giannini, the creative director of Gucci since 2006, was brought up in Rome and is passionate about the Eternal City. Yet her heart also belongs to Florence, home of the leather goods company, which has recently opened a museum in its ancestral home there. The designer now moves between the two great Italian cities but lives in Rome.

An enthusiast of modern art, as well as of horseback riding and collecting vinyl discs, Ms. Giannini produced a line of feminine “Flora” bags when she first came into the limelight after the Tom Ford Gucci years.

But the designer has delivered so much more, as she took Gucci fast forward from its sexy, 1970s look to a sharper, graphic style, influenced by modern art and architecture — even if that means the Chrysler Building and its Art Deco style.

Having studied at the Accademia Italiana in Rome and then cut her design teeth at Fendi, she has an intrinsic feeling for her city. And true to her own artistic leanings and personal enthusiasms, Ms. Giannini’s Rome is not focused on the tourist route.

You believe in healthy living, like all of us. I am told it is easier to find good fresh food in Rome than in almost any other capital city. Where would you go for your daily fruit and vegetables, or even pasta?

Yes, you are right! There are a lot of produce markets in Rome, more than one in every district, where you can find really fresh fruit and vegetables. I buy everything in shops and markets in my neighborhood, but when I have time, I still love to go to the produce market at Campo dei Fiori. It is very Roman!

Q. Where do you eat in Rome? Is it right that you love the Trastevere district and especially the Antica Pesa restaurant, which has now opened a U.S. branch in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, in New York City — and has just survived the Sandy storm?

A. Yes, I like the Antica Pesa restaurant in Rome (Via Garibaldi 18) and the owner, Francesco. He is a great friend of mine, and I am looking forward to visiting and eating at his new restaurant in Brooklyn. I also love to have lunch, especially in summer because you can eat outside on the beautiful Piazza dei Ricci, at Pierluigi. If I am around, I also like to stop at Ciampini in Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina or at Bar Gianicolo on the Gianicolo hill.

Q. Your jewelry designs at Gucci are modern and streamlined, with a geometric angle. Do you have a favorite place for fine modern jewelry in this ancient city?

A. Yes, there is a store called Molayen on Via Bocca di Leone. The owners are two sisters, and I love their jewelry because they design classic jewels with a perfect touch of modernity.

Q. I know you have just relaunched the famous Gucci loafers. But when it comes to your own footwear for horseback riding, where would you go in Rome?

A. I suggest Parlanti, one of the best creators of riding boots in Rome and Italy (Strada Galli 13, in Tivoli, outside Rome).

Q. Art is all around us in Rome — but what about modern work? Are you a fan of the Larry Gagosian gallery since it opened in the city six years ago? Where do you go?

A. Yes, I like the Gagosian Gallery (Via Francesco Crispi 16, near the Spanish Steps). In fact, my first fashion show was at one of the Gagosian galleries in New York. I also like the Galleria Lorcan O’Neill (Via degli Orti d’Alibert 1).

If a dream turned into reality and you could forget all your fashion travels and just sit under an olive tree and read your Kindle — where would you go in the city?

A. I love going to Villa Sciarra, an amazing garden from the beginning of the 19th century on the Gianicolo hill. Villa Sciarra is the least known of all the beautiful Roman gardens and villas, but it is definitively worth a visit.

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