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Courtesy: the artist

KALEIDOSCOPE
Galleria Buenos Aires, 10
20124, Milano - Italia
tel +39 (0)2 365 355 63
fax +39 (0)2 365 361 17
info@thekaleidoscope.eu
www.thekaleidoscope.eu

FOUNDER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Alessio Ascari
a.ascari@thekaleidoscope.eu

MANAGING EDITOR
Cristina Travaglini
c.travaglini@thekaleidoscope.eu

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Michele D'Aurizio
m.daurizio@thekaleidoscope.eu
Chiara Costa
c.costa@thekaleidoscope.eu

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Joanna Fiduccia
j.fiduccia@thekaleidoscope.eu

ADVERTISING
Lara Pollero
l.pollero@thekaleidoscope.eu
Marcello Bellan
m.bellan@thekaleidoscope.eu

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
Matteo Tascone
distribution@thekaleidoscope.eu

ART DIRECTION
Asso Republic
layout@thekaleidoscope.eu

DESIGN
Tommaso Garner

BERLIN EDITOR
Luca Cerizza
berlin@thekaleidoscope.eu

LONDON EDITORS
Francesco Pedraglio, Caterina Riva
london@thekaleidoscope.eu

PARIS EDITOR
Chris Sharp
paris@thekaleidoscope.eu

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Luca Cerizza, Zak Kyes, Simone Menegoi,
Paola Nicolini, Hans Ulrich Obrist

TIPS EDITOR
Leah Whitman-Salkin
tips@thekaleidoscope.eu

COPY EDITING
Federica Cimatti, Joanna Fiduccia

TRANSLATIONS
Francesca Cannino, Shanti Evans, Simone Menegoi

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PANORAMA: IS DETROIT THE NEW BERLIN? The Future of a Shrinking City

In every issue, we introduce you to special places. Buildings, apartments, streets, shops, cities, locations of every sort. Through text and photographs, we attempt to describe their past, understand their present and foretell their future.

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In every issue, Simone Menegoi tunnels into the past like an archaeologist in search of artists who were forgotten and rediscovered as well as artists who were simply forgotten. Trailblazers, mavericks and outsiders who finally get their moment to shine.

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ON EXHIBITIONS: URS FISCHER New Museum, New York, 2009

In every issue, Paola Nicolini "x-rays" exhibitions—curatorial projects, exhibition displays, printed matter, and more. A thorough analysis of the "art of exhibiting," or a serial history of exhibitions.

by PAOLA NICOLINI 134



“The modern evening dress is simple in line and enveloping.” This was the caption to one of the illustrations by Mailo (Mario Vigolo) in the magazine *Moda*, whose February 1934 issue devoted space to several dress designs made in Italian silk, complete with clingy silhouettes, bare shoulders, very long legs and fingernails. The luminosity of the silk is interpreted through the glinting skin of a seductive and aggressive dominatrix’s outfit that looks like it’s made of latex. The women presented in this magazine, which played a central role in the Italian fashion of the 1930s, are haughty Cruella de Vils ahead of their time, taking the place of the languid, nerveless and melodramatic sirens of the 1920s: pronounced makeup, a thin and cutting mouth, the body wrapped in sheath dresses with long trains and voluminous fur trimmings that accentuate the trim figure and almost masculine shoulders. When the black of the regime became glossy and fashionable, it anticipated the atmospheres and scenarios of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Salò*, and in the 1930s brought into question the presumed preeminence of the exemplary wife and mother, officially represented by Rachele Mussolini but contradicted, in the Duce’s own family, by his daughter Edda, icon of the modern woman—a fact that was even recognized by the American magazine *Time* in 1939. Edda’s unconventional beauty, as revealed in the photos of Ghitta Carell, became the emblem of glamour for the regime. A model for fashion houses like Montorsi and Ventura, Edda relaunched an Italian image of modernity with multiple feminine types, constructed and recounted by the fashion of the period.

When Italian elegance became military, taking its inspiration directly from uniforms, it disclosed the uniforms’ restrained eroticism. The picture that appeared in one of the most prestigious magazines of the day, *Lidell*, in which a Young Woman and a Little Italian Girl meet for a moment in the “symbolic ritual kiss,” revived the allure of lesbianism and alluded to the sexual ambiguity that pervaded the military organizations of fascism. The mantles of young Italian women, worn over walking outfits or long evening dresses, became elegant designs in angora wool or fur. Capes recalled the atmosphere of the regime, but also served as an elegant means of complementing the figures of the models of the fashion houses, as with Fercioni’s blonde, enigmatic and long-limbed model who wore a woolen cloak in a photograph from 1937. In the photograph, the model plays with the pose of the military salute while, at the same time, seeming to prefigure the smiling air hostesses, who in the 1960s were to turn into fashion icons. So Italian women were not just rural housewives, as fascist rhetoric wanted people to believe. Fashion became a system and space for the creation of new female professions: in 1941, the magazine *Bellezza* reported on the fashion show at the Mirafiori race course, at which students from the Model School, one of the departments in ENFALC, the Fascist National Board of Training for Commercial Work, walked the runway for the first time. It was in this period that Italian fashion took shape, torn between the effort of nationalization, the rhetoric of autarky and the need to define a specific Italian style based not just on aesthetics but also on production, capable of turning into what would come to be known as “Made in Italy”—a question of both politics and style.

For further information, see *Fashion at the Time of Fascism: Italian Modernist Lifestyle between 1922 and 1943*, edited by Mario Lupano and Alessandra Vaccari. Bologna Damiani Editore, 2009.

FASHION



DONNA
FASCISTA
BY
MARIA LUISA
FRISA

Il simbolico bacio rituale: una Giovane italiana e una Piccola italiana, L'Espresso, XVI, Issue 6, June 1934

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