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PROFILES — Global

# FASHION

## STAYING POWER

Timeless silhouettes and clever updates of classic pieces feature in our round-up of the most eye-catching designers of the moment. Meet the women (mostly) defining your look for this season and beyond.

Photographer — Jack Johnstone



Camisole, jacket and trousers by **Gauchère**,  
earrings by **Completedworks**

The designer



## VERONICA LEONI

### Quira

# 1

White paint is still drying on the walls of designer Veronica Leoni's showroom in Milan when she strides in and declares herself ready. "These past years have meant a lot of lost time for everyone, but this is a moment when small designers like me have the chance to do more experimental things," she says. "We've won a bit of freedom."

Having already designed for Phoebe Philo's Celine and Jil Sander-era Jil Sander, in 2020 Leoni became women's creative director for Moncler's Genius 1952, a recent experimental project. But there was part of her that yearned for even more self-expression; that's why she founded her brand Quira in March 2020, coaxed along by Olmar and Mirta, a workshop in Mantua specialising in avant garde fashion.

She happily admits to the influence of her fashion pedigree in her collection, but its combination of rigorous lines and playful details

is uniquely her own. A voluminous shirt is designed like "a cloud of poplin" in gathered puffs; leather trousers look like a judo uniform with a comfortable stretch waist; a fringed nappa leather bib borders on the decorative. Leoni lays it flat to reveal its ingenious shape: laser-cut from a single skin, it creates its layered effect without any waste. "It's a geometric idea – an essentialist approach," she says. "Every design is about balance. There's no space for superfluity in Quira."

Instead, there is space for contemplation and tactility. "Touch is superior to the digital experience," says Leoni. "It's what most renders this project specific to me." She runs her fingers along the smooth crepe wool of the blazer she's wearing. With its subtly pronounced shoulders and boyish fit, this garment became the icon of her debut collection, embodying an ambition to create "tailoring for women

The look



Jacket and trousers by **Quira**, earring by **Aeyde**, sunglasses by **Jacques Marie Mage**

that's neither excessively structured nor excessively fluid". A new version revisits the blazer in a crinkly technical silk with matte wool lapels: it's a contemporary tuxedo jacket for women. Gentlemanly references also appear in a masculine tango shoe, with its raised block heel and angular stitched sole.

A one-time literature student, Leoni fell in love with her discipline thanks to a course on the semiotics of fashion. The 36-year-old spent most of her creative career outside Italy but her own project called for a return to Rome, where she grew up watching her grandmother (and brand namesake) Quira create dresses as a seamstress. She describes the Olmar and Mirta workshop where her collection is produced as typical of the label Made in Italy. "It's in the middle of nowhere," she says, laughing. "You're working with small-town people who have the

entire world of luxury goods in their hands. As an Italian-speaking designer, the exchange we get to have is incredibly sweet."

Having her own brand has helped her eliminate the superfluous from the structure of the company. "We're only five people working at Quira but with a very concentrated amount of experience between us, so we're able to be more effective," she says. "When you have too many people involved, it just contaminates things along the path from creation to client. No one tells me how many pairs of trousers I'm supposed to design here. I can do whatever I want." She smiles broadly as she moves among the iron racks hung with her designs. "I am happily ambitious," she says with impish delight. "Before I leave this body of mine, I have a lot more to do and create." — **??**  
*quiraitalia.com*

PHOTOGRAPHER: Andrea Pugotio