

Angela Missoni

Creative director, Missoni

A symbol of the progressive years following Italy's postwar economic boom, Missoni transformed the country's fashion by riffing on what was dynamic and new in the era. The industrial technology that radically updated artisan weaving traditions, the abstract and kinetic revolutions of modern art and a growing international outlook for this family business all bolstered Missoni's groundbreaking collections in a dizzying rainbow of zigzags and stripes.

Founders Ottavio and Rosita Missoni kept control of the company even as the success of its ready-to-wear grew wildly in the decades following its birth in 1953. Today, with daughter Angela Missoni as the brand's creative director and president, the family's vision of a global fashion house remains intact – and is helping Missoni through another transformative time in Italy's history.



“We’re fortunate to have inherited a brand from my parents that was founded on the principle of living well, rather than on making as much money as possible,” says Angela. Of course, that doesn’t mean that Missoni has completely shied away from big market moves: the company sold just over 40 per cent to the FSI equity fund in 2018 to augment the brand’s worldwide presence. But FSI remains a minority stakeholder and, most

importantly, it’s a partner that “shares our vision of moderate growth over time,” says Angela.

Despite its considered approach, Missoni has also had the guts to experiment: during Italy’s lockdown, with a need to prepare for an uncertain future, the company took the bold step of appointing a CEO, Livio Proli, a first for the brand after a brief experiment in 2015. Proli is the first executive to have power over all aspects of the brand and to be able to execute changes quickly. Angela says, “We decided that we were going to start back up after the quarantine with a positive leap forward.”

That leap includes Proli’s overhaul of the company’s structure to ready it for growth in new markets, an expansion of menswear for 2021 and an international sales network for the brand’s sister line, M Missoni, headed since last year by Angela’s daughter Margherita Maccapani Missoni. The brand has hired its first executive in China to spur sales and shop openings in what remains a reliable market as American sales continue to struggle. Despite the challenging climate, Angela maintains that there are positive lessons to be drawn. “At least during lockdown we saw that the possibility to change – for us, for society – exists,” she says.

Missoni is also eyeing up a rethink of the runway format; Angela believes that collections should be shown when they hit the shops. “This period of change will help rewire fashion,” she says. This is a time of intense strain on the fashion system in Italy, but members of one of the country’s most emblematic industries are collaborating to thrive. “We’re very united in fashion in Italy,” says Angela. “And it’s interesting to live through a revolution.” — LR

Monocle comment: In its path forward, Italy needs to find the balance between retaining a commitment to the traditions that built its international reputation – but also have the courage to leap into a future that’s digital and globally oriented.