

Sicily is in our DNA

EXCLUSIVE

MARIELLA RADAELLI TALKS DESIGN AND INSPIRATION WHEN SHE MEETS DOMENICO DOLCE AND STEFANO GABBANA AT THEIR OFFICE IN MILAN

To enter into the sensuous curves of a Dolce & Gabbana design is to experience a complicated kind of beauty, like exploring the majestic landscape of Sicily with its Baroque towns, monasteries, quiet roads, rich soil flourishing with orange and lemon plantations, its white sand beaches.

The iconic couture house literally portrays Sicilian Baroque through expressive, sexy clothes that have the energy and imagination of the south of Italy, where the architecture takes the most complex forms – a style that even ‘baroqued’ the Baroque, adding extra elaborate ornamentation to the facades of buildings.

Co-founders Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana enter their office in Milan in the company of their two Labradors, one black and one chocolate.

I reached the office of the famed Italian design duo – a dense, voluptuously furnished living room the pair uses for meetings. Deep burgundy and gold decorate the walls, with assorted large paintings all over. One in particular catches my eye, as it resembles the composition of the *Madonna del Cardellino* by Raphael. But this bizarre version is by pop artist Giuseppe Veneziano who has depicted a peculiar Madonna with the head of the entertainment star Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone. At her feet, two babies are frolicking, but not a little Jesus as expected, with a little St. John the Baptist, as portrayed in Raphael’s masterpiece. Instead, the children here have the heads of Stefano and Domenico.

The iconic duo met in 1980 in the city of Milan when both were working as assistants for designer Giorgio Correggiari. Domenico Dolce, 58, the son of a tailor, is Sicilian, while Stefano Gabbana, the son of a factory worker, was born in Milan 54 years ago. They became Dolce & Gabbana in 1982.

The Milanese fashion house had brought back the bustier, corsetry and black lace, revelling in carefully calibrated erotic innuendo. But Messrs. Dolce and Gabbana define their strong and sexy style as ‘classic’.

“We try to be an evolving tradition. We work always starting from a classical aesthetic,” they say.

Q: Could you describe your relationship with the UAE? With Dubai?

SG: “We have always felt at home in the UAE. There is great warmth among the people. We’re impressed by the speed of development in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. There are new amazing buildings in Dubai every time. It is an extremely dynamic city that is a magnet of great energy.”

DD: “Each time, I leave a piece of my heart there, especially for the colours and scents of spices. The UAE is a young country yet rich in traditions.”

Q: Dolce & Gabbana counts almost 250 boutiques around the world. In a few days a new boutique will open at the Mall of the Emirates. How is that impor-

tant for the fashion market in the UAE?

SG: “We are really happy that this new boutique will implement our presence in Dubai. Our clients in the region love to shop in their usual malls, so it was important for us to have a presence at the Mall of the Emirates.”

DD: “The local market is a differentiated and certainly a dynamic market of great importance both for us and the entire fashion industry.”

Q: Your Fall 2016 collection is a compendium of princess fairy tale fantasies. You asserted that women are princesses. What do you mean?

DD: Today’s woman is a princess who yearns for love but also wants more independence and autonomy. Our new collection is a blast of contrast. There is constant affirmation and negation and opposites do in fact, attract. For this Fall, we made oversized jackets, deconstructed coats, slim as well as big volumes. Imagination, absolute creativity and new handcrafted working processes are dominant. Every collection involves a lot of research. Our designs are experimental but also a return to the origins of tailoring.”

SG: Today’s girls are the new princesses. They know exactly what they want: certainly prince charming, but they are also independent. Constantly changing their look, they creatively experiment with

fashion during the day and also the evening. Fashion makes women dream – this is the service that fashion provides. It is something wishful that communicates beauty.”

Q: Your high couture credo is summed up in the 3S motto that you espouse: “Sicilian, Sartorial, Sensual.” Is that the secret of your success?

DD: “The three ‘S’ motto is a summary of what we are and what we feel. Sicily is in our DNA and represents all the heart and passion we put in everything we do, especially in terms of work. Sicily was our very first dream and love that we translated into a modern all-embracing aesthetic. Sartorial is the art that nurtures our clothes and the meticulousness regarding our way of working. Sensuality is also part of our maison’s genetic code and our vision of life. The secret of our success is in the investigation and celebration of our roots, our passion for the Italian culture: the warmth, hospitality, importance of family, food and ritual, which lend integrity to our aesthetic. It is a fact that we are inspired by Italian women. They remain our muses, with their passionate sensuality: strong working women and maternal figures. Sophia Loren from the past and Monica Bellucci today, represent Italian femininity.”

SG: “Sicily is a land of ancient cultures and certainly a source of constant inspiration. Greeks, Arabs and Normans have all con-

tributed to the charm of this magnificent island that maintains its DNA despite the passing of time. We consider our collections as a continuous evolution, a laboratory of ideas without forgetting our roots.”

Q: Lots of celebrities, from Beyoncé to Monica Bellucci to Madonna love your brand. But how do you manage to fascinate the average shopper?

DD: “We always liked the idea of dressing women from all over the world but maintain our ideal woman and man when we design our collections. We have our creative imprint but also like to be enriched by the special characteristics of the various parts of the world. In the past we have created special collections for Russia, China, Mexico and Brazil. It’s always interesting to create lines for a specific market.”

Q: Last January, you launched your debut line of abayas and hijabs – your first collection in the Arab world – in charmeuse fabrics that evoked the spirit of la dolce vita.

SG: “Yes, we did and the first collection was so successful that we’ve created a new line which is now available in stores.”

Q: Are you planning a further expansion in the Gulf?

SG: “For the moment we focus on this opening. One step at a time.”

Q: And future projects?

DD: At the moment we are concentrating on the high-couture catwalk in Naples, in July, in its fifth consecutive year. It’s a project we hold dear and that surely involves a lot of work. Then comes August, vacation time...” ✨

A happy blast of contrasts: from the Fall Winter 2016-17 Collection.



L: Stefano Gabbana, R: Domenico Dolce. The secret of their success is in the investigation and celebration of their roots, and their passion for the Italian culture.