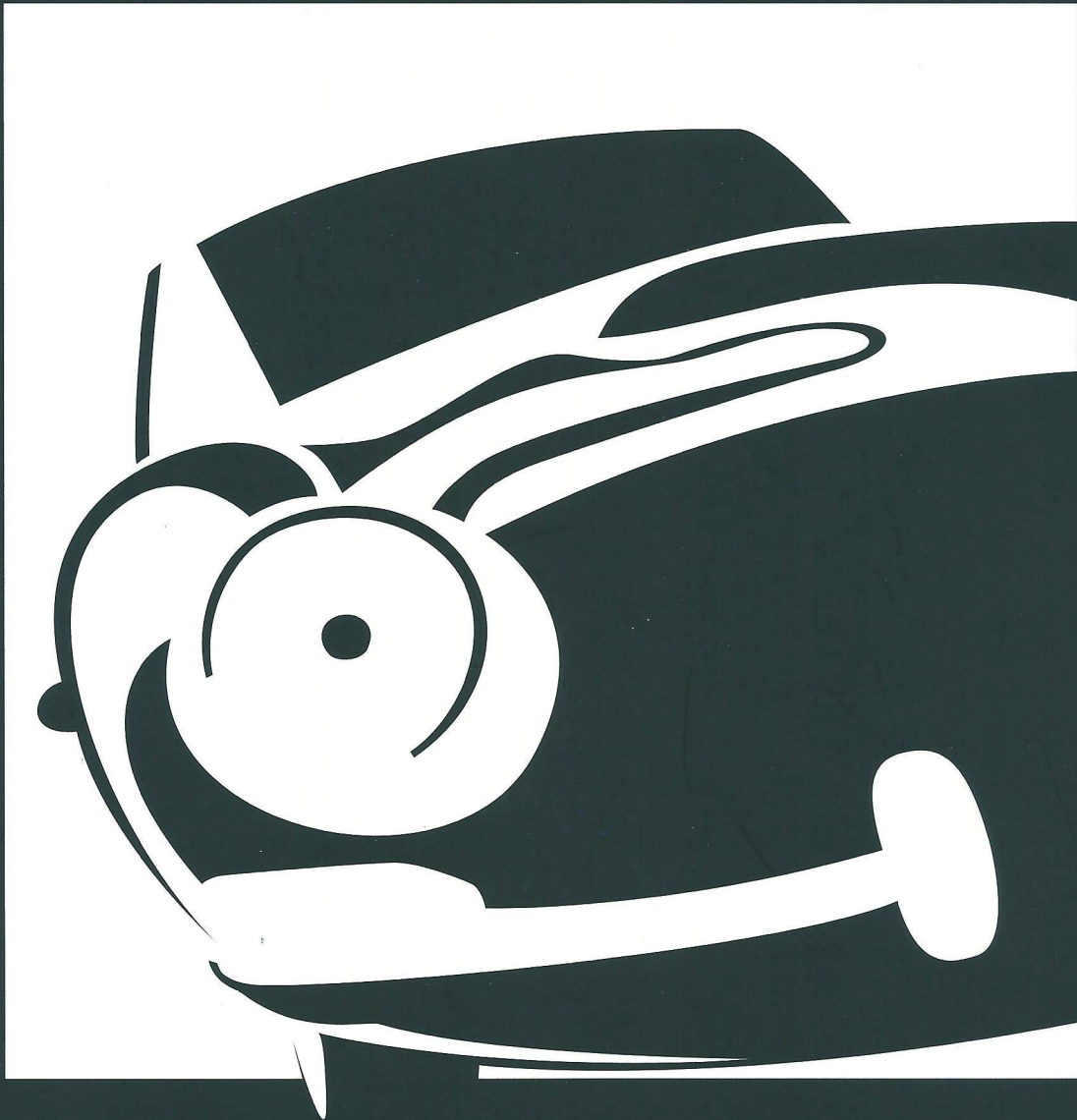


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Lino Ieluzzi: Elegance as a Feeling

By
FRANCESCO CHERT

“Luxury is a matter of money. Elegance is a question of education.” Lino Ieluzzi’s motto, owner of Al Bazar boutique in Milan and international authority in the field of elegance, brooks no arguments. Elegance becomes an universal and attitudinal idea and any formality gives way to an acquainted and amused glibness which is nothing but the apotheosis of a timeless finesse. This is Lino Ieluzzi, who, with the smile of the person who is in love with what he is doing and has always been living in his own way and with his enjoyable Milanese way of speaking made hoarse by too many cigarettes, welcomes you in his own world made of attention to details and sartorial quality. This is the Bazar, reference point of any self-respecting gentleman all over the world.

Lino, where does your passion for elegance come from?

I have this passion since I was a boy, because things of that kind are passed down by parents. My father was the kind of person who wore a double-breasted jacket to go to the barbershop. My mother was a seamstress from south Italy, who inherited that job from her mother, while my grandfather, as any southern man, valued being well-dressed. My willingness comes from here. You are taught to always look good, neat. It's an established rule from old times. It's not like that anymore.

You had some own suggestions during boyhood, I guess.

When I was a boy I loved to dress in a certain way, since there were wonderful moments, parties and other circumstances which are much less nowadays, and which gave you the opportunity to learn something both in delightfulness and amusement. Moreover, at that times, there weren't clothes shops: you had to go at the tailor's shop who sewed the jacket, the suit, and it was a pleasure to get dressed. We began to work

pretty young and, with the first money we earned, our idea was the clothing, because there was nothing else at that time.

What are the pillars of the philosophy underpinning your boutique, Al Bazar?

One of the most important things is doing what you like. I only do what I like, what I feel like I'm able to do and spread, that intrigues me, therefore from textiles to cutting, to garments' presentation. I have always followed the feeling more than other things that can only lead to pure business. If you make me feel an emotion, I work on a full scope and running hundred miles an hour. Otherwise, I just can't make it. This behavior leads you to do things that people oddly like a lot. I have my color basis, colors are my passion, variations of beige, cream-white, light blue, pastel hazelnut brown. I'm not in love with black, everybody knows it since it is a non-color. That comes from the past. Radiant colors confer brightness and that's fundamental.



The interior of Al Bazar Boutique in Milan.

One of the main features of elegance, that has been a little lost, is the detail, the accessory. Which ones are the unavoidable and should be reconsidered?

Accessories can be few or many, depends on how you wear and carry them. If you are a very charming person, you can feel free to avoid them; viceversa, you need them. One of the few things a man has to wear is his own tie and handkerchief, or some other personal accessories if you care about having your own watch, pen, lighter, the shoes always on point and neat - which is fundamental for some kinds of suits. The polish on shoes, moreover, has to be an effect, the shoe doesn't have to be new, just polished. There are some accessories loved by each of us individually, there's people loving braces for instance, but there also are those ones loved by everybody. I personally love the old chain my father used to wear, therefore I keep it even wearing jeans. I always wear in a proper way the items I love most, from the watch to the wallet. Each of us creates his own accessories, personal and customized.

Some accessories have been unlucky; thinking for example of the hat: once everybody used to wear it and today nobody does.

The hat, just as many other items, are subjected to fashion's charming spans. There is a moment in which thanks to communication a product is pushed more than another, and it's more successful. Today, the hat has been rediscovered, is back. This summer everybody was wearing one, not because they appreciate the hat itself, but because it passed the test and it is back. I wear my old British felt hat when it is rainy and that's it. Otherwise I have a more casual one, but it's not an everyday item. The hat, as everything,



experiences the charm of communication. If a product is not involved by communication, is left to a little niche market.

One of the main cardinal points of your job is made in Italy. In addition to products we have also spread our lifestyle. We have worn

out this concept, both relocating and lowering the quality of the product and deteriorating our image abroad or we still are the masters of style we used to be?

Let's say we are very good, the best ones indeed, no doubt about it. World is envious of us. Whatever we do is appreciated. Then, many times

you adjust for the markets, which unfortunately make the difference, and the difference is made on the product, on the fact of relocating production to countries where labor costs are lower. Those are market requirements. Many concepts are lost, but fortunately we are so good we have always stayed in the saddle, although we are a weird country. We don't practice what we preach. We are the first judging and the first making the worst damages. We don't realize that, but we have a huge potential. Our country is a money machine and we can't see that. We could do a hundred times more, if each of us would give a little more to his or her country: nobody could beat us nor stop us. I am for made in Italy in full. From shoes to textiles to manufacturing, all made in Italy, which is what foreigners love most. Italians don't maybe pay attention to it, they look at the price tag, while foreigners are very careful about it, much more than us at times.

Who are the characters inspiring your style?

As a teenager I loved the Lawyer's (Giovanni Agnelli) style, a genius of elegance, style and charme.

We tailed him when appearing on the magazines, on television. I read many of his books. He was a enchanting man. We had to look for someone to imitate in every way. Whom to resemble or understand the reason why being so charming. Each of us in his job tried to do things believing in the past and bringing it to the present and future.

Does the concept of icon still exist? If so, who can be considered an icon?

There isn't an icon nowadays. Many people are considered icons. Many believe that I am an icon myself, go figure! Icons don't exist in my opinion. There exist people aware of having a particular charm and magnetism and can afford to wear some clothing garments without any problems and are considered fashion icons. But this is not synonymous with style. A charming person is not a classy person; an elegant person, looking at him or her walking, gives you a feeling.

How did your customer change over the years?

There have been lots of changes. There also are political and economic transformations leading to changes. It unfortunately is a matter of fact:

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When everything goes right, economically and politically, you can afford some things. We are living in a very particular time frame which deflects on any area. Some things are forgotten, some others aren't taken into consideration anymore and there's the tendency making huge mistakes. We need to understand that we should love our country much more than we do.

Did social networks produce any changes on your way of working?

World has surely changed. Who didn't know you, from the ends of the Earth, can come to know you meet you and you can share in real time what you're doing, through pictures and videos. Technologies that didn't exist. Social networks have been a great exploit, to us, but I guess to any work existing on the market today.

Elegance can be learned or is inborn?

You have it or you don't. You can still improve yourself. Thought something that each of us has. Many times you have it and you

not able to express yourself. Because nobody gives you the opportunity and sometimes you go after it, sometimes you don't, and you can't find your mother lode anymore. Some others just don't have it. You can wear anything you want to, golden jackets or whatever, but if you don't have it, that's it.

Are there taboos in elegance?

There aren't rules, but fundamentals, just as in life. I always say politeness is essential. If you are rude, you have no consideration of people surrounding you. The taboo is that of continuously covering yourself as if you were someone special. Instead you only covered yourself. By the means of anything, the suit, the car, you think you are something special, but you're just not, elegance is something different. Elegant is for instance a person on time at meetings.

How would you describe the concept of style?

If you feel like having some own charisma, creating something yours, become your own model,



your own way of being and your own precise style. A person having an own clear style has to bring it on, from the early years. Today style changes endlessly: one day like this, one day like that. You may think style can change, but it doesn't. Style is only one, there aren't thousands. It is part of our lives, if you were made one way you cannot change your mind each day. Nowadays everything has a short term. Style doesn't necessarily mean double breasted jackets. I'm even talking about wearing jeans or flip-flops. If you've got style, you just have it.

You are concerned with formal/classic apparel. How do you keep classic updated and attractive for the new generations?

Today is much easier, thanks to social networks, to follow different kinds of trends and ways of dressing or covering. Everybody follows some characters. Going after a man you consider has taste and style can give you some advices, which from you can learn and improve your manner of dress, you can discover what you have inside and you are afraid to show because you think you may make a mistake. A great nightmare nowadays is the fear of making a mistake. Liking yourself is already a step forward. Appreciating yourself is the hardest part.

Classic needs to receive external inputs?

Yes, if you are the kind of person able to coordinate things

Lino Ieluzzi's ties
and the inevitable number 7.

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spontaneously and with ease. I'm a kind of person wearing jeans and double breasted jackets, but I wear it differently. I wear clothes I feel like wearing. Many aren't comfortable in their outfits, many of them thinking they actually are comfortable, but it's not their style. Many times, lack of self confidence, the fear of making a mistake, of being ridiculous or criticized leads to huge disorientation. Maybe in order not to make a mistake you do everything that is considered normal, but you'll never feel the emotion. No emotions. You'll feel it creating something that is yours, tickling you and that you like.

Is there something in traditional clothing you would be ready to give up because in your opinion has become obsolete? Or is there something new, come up in the latest years, that pleasantly surprised you? Would you make a change: leave the old for the new?

Honestly I own some old items I like more than new ones, but there are some old ones I transform into new ones, I remodify them, renew them since we are in a different time span. Many items come back on the scene, have downtimes. So let me suggest you: leave them there

and wait for them to be back on the runways. Everything comes around in our world. The hat comes around, braces, the cache-col. Everything comes always back around. Nothing is buried and forgotten. There always comes the right time to wear an old garment and suddenly communication is able to turn over any kind of market.

What is the meaning of the number seven embroidered on your ties?

It started as a game: I was born on the seventh and the ties, I did them for myself almost ten years ago. It tickled me. Ten years after, from the north to the south of the world, you find people wearing my ties and they say: “Oh, you buy from Lino too?”. It has become distinctive symbol, there's people coming to me for my ties precisely. I've created the double one, that you can wear matching two colors, therefore in two ways. And nevertheless are always made of the jacket's textiles, not only silk. I employ only wool because any item made of wool, remains just the same from morning to night. Silk has to be rearranged because it loosens, releases, falls, you never have that perfection...

(11' 30")