

The Stories

REAL PEOPLE, AMAZING PLACES, TRAVEL TO WRITE HOME ABOUT



Doggy style

IT'S MILAN FASHION WEEK THIS MONTH, BUT HUMANS ARE NO LONGER THE CITY'S CHICEST INHABITANTS, AS HOLLY RUBENSTEIN DISCOVERS

I n one of Milan's cobbled streets in the trendy Brera district, there's a stylish boutique. So far so normal, and from a distance it looks like any other store. That's until I notice a doggy-quin – that's right, a mannequin in the shape of a dog – suited and booted in the window. Ulysses, a suave Afghan hound with floor length, silky cream fur, swooshes to the entrance. I've arrived at Temellini Milano, home of canine couture.

Temellini Milano was founded by Giovanna Temellini, an acclaimed designer who has worked with major fashion houses including Armani, MaxMara and Bottega Veneta. An abundance of Italian exclamation and energy, Giovanna explains how this all began. She received a phone call >



“There are no schools or books to learn how to design for dogs”

from her daughter, who was walking her dog, Willy. “Mummy,” she said, “whenever it rains, Willy spends his walk shaking his head, because the water gets in his ears.” An avid dog lover and animal-welfare activist, Giovanna rectified the situation by designing Willy a custom-made, shiny, black hooded coat (complete with pointy ear protectors). What’s more, Willy’s coat was made to match her daughter’s jacket. It was her first piece of canine couture. “We had so much fun doing it,” she exclaims. “It is a love story.” Temellini Milano was born.

How exactly does one go about making high-fashion clothes for dogs? Ulysses, who stars in the designer’s ad campaigns, is called upon to demonstrate. “Uly, time to get up,” Giovanna says, coaxing him with a treat. “There are no schools or books to learn how to design for dogs,” she says, grabbing a tape measure and running it along Ulysses’ back, then around his middle and collar. “We had to study for ourselves, taking the





measurements of all our friends' dogs. Then we started work on prototypes for the different breeds and their shapes."

She turns to me, completely serious. "We don't want to ridicule the dog. We checked out the competition, but all we found were things like wedding dresses and jeans for dogs." She grimaces as she pictures it. "The clothes were not thoughtful for the dogs, especially for their movement. We want to protect our dogs, in a fashionable way, and realised there was a gap in the market."

Word quickly spread among Milan's chic dog owners, with clients bringing in their canines for made-to-measure pieces. As I look through the collection, I notice the level of detail is truly extraordinary. There's an ultra-luxe, blush-coloured

jacket with chocolate-brown silk trim, complete with engraved tag, silver poppers, elasticated holes for the legs and a toggle for tightening around the tail. The bestseller is The Sherlock, a grey cape in soft cashmere. It's immaculately tailored and stitched, with a structured collar and smooth lining. Other pieces are made from alpaca. "This reflects Milanese style," Giovanna says.

These materials are, of course, reflected in the hefty price tags, with a large dog's coat selling for anything up to about €400. I ask if it's necessary to use such expensive materials for a dog.

"For people who criticise, I'm sorry you cannot afford to buy it," she cackles. "I would like Meghan Markle's diamond ring, but I cannot have it. I still like Meghan Markle." That's a yes, then. >

FUR REAL?

In the Temellini Milano boutique, as well as ready-to-wear, Giovanna makes bespoke, matching dog-and-hers outfits. Her own dog, Ulysses, stars in the promotional shots



“One day we’d like to design clothes for the Queen’s corgis”

DOG DAYS

The attention to detail, both for looks and the animals’ comfort, is paramount and sets Temellini’s designs apart

I find myself pawing at The Sherlock with envy, pondering if my posture is bad enough that I could pull off a design intended for a four-legged animal. Giovanna isn’t surprised. That’s why a collection of matching women’s ready-to-wear and canine fashion came next, along with the opening of the boutique at the start of 2018. The summer season marked the arrival of coordinated accessories, in a palette of sophisticated pastel colours: bags and belts for her, collars and leashes for Fido. As Ulysses dons his trench coat, I do the same. Giovanna pops my collar and ties my belt, and does the same for Ulysses. Standing side by side, we look great.

“After running in the mud, Uly’s coat can require up to five hours of grooming,” she laments. Also, at 12 years old, he gets cold and shivery.

Wearing his smart raincoat saves a lot of hassle.

An explosion of international interest means that less than a year after launching, Temellini Milano will be stocked in boutiques from Los Angeles, California, to Dallas, Texas. What’s next?

“*Gli uomini!*” she cheers. “The men!” AW18/19 will see the arrival of menswear, with plans for matching jumpers, jackets and socks.

Before I go, the team is chattering in Italian and I sense they’d like to ask me something. “Do you think there’s an appetite for canine couture in England?” they enquire. I tell them absolutely – we are a nation of dog lovers. “OK!” they say. “One day we’d like to design clothes for the Queen’s corgis.” If you’re reading this, Your Majesty, these doggy designs are simply paw-some. 🐾



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