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 Cultural Activist

The Pitti Uomo Diaries A/W 2016-17: Losing a Fashion Icon, but Fighting Fear with Style

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Just as this season's **Pitti Uomo** was about to kick off, we lost the Thin White Duke, that incredible and legendary fashion icon that is David Bowie.

"Ashes to ashes, funk to funky," Bowie has left us and we now hope he'll be watching over us from his star, bestowing upon the world more style inspiration and spectacular fashion mantras. If the first day of Pitti Uomo 89 is any indication, menswear is already paying tribute to a style legend of reinvention, flair and colors.

Kicking it off and finding courage, Pitti Uomo style.

At the opening ceremony for this year's Pitti Uomo, featuring the theme "Pitti Generation(s)" inside the Palazzo Vecchio, Andrea Cavicchi, the new President of the **Centro di Firenze per la Moda Italiana** pointed to the solidarity shown by the city of Florence for the grand af-fair that is Pitti Uomo. Here we were, Cavicchi said, "kicking off the fair in this iconic building that represents Florence." And indeed, there is no other, better way of remembering Florence than with this view, even highlighted by a **Jeff Koons** outstandingly gold statue (and real, blooming flowers).

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Another landmark that also has come to be part of the identity of Pitti Uomo is the **Fortezza da Basso**, the city fort built in 1534, which incredibly took only a year to complete. In the age of Dubai building skyscrapers at dizzying speeds, we often forget that our ancestors, without any mechanical tools or even cars and trucks, were able to build in such a short span of time too. When a colleague called Dubai the "**Florence of the XXI Century**" in one of his pieces, he was right!

Florence Mayor Dario Nardella delivered one of the most soulful speeches, first mentioning the recent attack in Istanbul and reminding us that we all need to "fight the fear, fight the oppression, fight this nagging worry," that groups trying to instill terror on the world are inspiring, deep in our hearts. But he also called fashion part of the "cultural heritage of Italy" which was a great inspiration for looking at fashion as something more than just the way we dress.

Fashion is about how we feel in what we wear.



Nardella also explained the plans to restructure the Fortezza da Basso in 2016, a project that will cost 142 Million euros and involve touching up all 77.000 square meters of the Fort, and in the end will also add new green areas and gardens.

This year's opening ceremony also marked the first time Culture Minister Dario Franceschini has helped to kick off Pitti Uomo and his presence, both on stage and at events like the DoppiaA presentation added extra sparkle but also depth. Fashion is undeniably an art, what we wear represent who we are, and to those who scoff at such statements, well, I say you've never been in the same room with a John Galiano gown, or a pair of embellished shoes by Manolo Blahnik. In the words of Franceschini himself, one can't be in charge of "Italian culture without taking care of fashion," as well. "Italy has had beauty and culture in its DNA for centuries," the Minister added.

DoppiaA, fashion as art -- global, accessible art.

Held inside the historic *Opificio delle Pietre Dure* building, just behind the Fortezza da Basso, the presentation for luxury brand DoppiaA, a collaboration between Alain Fracassi and Albert Carreras, felt like the highlight of the day. With the presence of Albert's famous father, tenor José Carreras, guests were treated to drinks and a light lunch inside a venue that holds sentimental value for this Tuscan daughter. My own father was part of the conservation laboratory that now calls the Opificio ("workshop of semi-precious stones" translated) home.



Alain Fracassi, José Carreras and Albert Carreras, center from left, with twin models from the UK wearing DoppiaA; photo Francesco Guzzoni

But aside from a personal trip down memory lane, the event unveiled a beautiful collaboration between two men who clearly view fashion as art. The textures of the DoppiaA line, the combinations of light wool, with shiny foulard silk and a light-feeling yet couture looking bouclé look so dreamy that I found myself asking for a woman's line. Of course, some of the items can already be worn by us girls, but I'm looking forward to a day when Fracassi's talent bestows us with his gift of womenswear, featuring for example those animal print wool shirts, with colorful foulard silk trousers and a black bouclé peacoat.



When I talked with Albert Carreras, a charming, magnetic man with a lovely hint of Catalan accent, he explained how the line, now in its second season, was born. "This is a family relationship, between the Fracassi family and the Carreras family, since we always had the idea of creating a new brand and in my eyes, Alain is a very huge talent." Adding, about the final product featured for the first time at Pitti Uomo, "we are very proud to it."

When I asked Carreras about fashion helping us to bridge cultures, as a means to unify our hyper-divided world, he simply put it like this, "I think fashion is the complete contrary; fashion is completely wide and open and the demonstration is that Italian fashion sells worldwide and people from everywhere, across nations, even different financial situations are able to buy fashion and to wear fantastic brands." Now that "globalization" has almost become a dirty word, Carreras brought it back to reality, to the origin of the word, when he added, "fashion is a demonstration of global. Globalization is a famous word now... Sometimes they talk about it in a bad way, but we want to talk global in a good way, because it's good that everybody is able to have the same chances."

Pitti Uomo continues through January 16th at the Fortezza da Basso in Florence, Italy.

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