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LINDA EVANGELISTA



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Angela Missoni with daughters Margherita (right) and Teresa in the Spring 2010 ad campaign



MISSONI MEMORIES

In honor of the brand's 60th birthday, Margherita Maccapani Missoni discusses the business of family

THIS YEAR, the iconic Italian label Missoni is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Besides its signature zigzags, what sets the company apart from the rest is its DNA—literally. Missoni has been a family affair since 1953, when it was founded by the late Ottavio Missoni and his wife, Rosita, who is still in charge of the brand's home line. In 1996, the reins were passed to the next generation, and daughter Angela took charge of the ready-to-wear collections. Now her daughter Margherita Maccapani Missoni is in the mix as well, overseeing accessories and acting as brand ambassador. Margherita, who as a child often accompanied her mother to work and played in the family factory, where she'd dress her dolls in brightly colored fabric scraps—complete with zigzags, of course—calls Missoni “sort of revolutionary. It's more than fashion, it's a lifestyle.” Here, she recalls growing up in the Italian countryside and working with members of her close-knit clan.

I SPENT A LOT OF TIME with my grandparents, more than most kids. I used to visit them every day after school. I ended up vacationing a lot with them, and they'd take me to the theater and the opera. Even if I didn't enjoy it so much, I would never dare tell them. I loved playing grown-up, and I didn't want to disappoint them. My grandma loved taking me to the woods and the hills to pick wild salad and mushrooms. She would teach me the names of the flowers and what was edible, and we would make bouquets for my mom. When I was four or five, we went to buy rain boots, and I couldn't understand why you were meant to buy both in the same color. I wanted to get one fuchsia and one green, and in the end my grandma had to buy both pairs. After that, she always bought me the same shoe in two colors.

My grandfather and I would draw together in the evenings—surreal, fantastical drawings of imaginary animals and landscapes. He liked to consider himself a pirate, and he always said that he was a descendant of Pirate Misson, a pirate from France who made freedom his main value. He tried to free people from dictatorship and create democracies. My grandfather also made freedom his main rule in life, and that's something very relevant for Missoni. We never followed anyone else: We made our own fashion and our own rules.

My mother is very caring but she has a temper—she raises her voice a lot. I think it's because she's always had so much on her hands; she tells herself, “I do so much, I can have very little patience.” My grandfather was like that too. But my mother is also very affectionate. We hug each other a lot. My siblings and I slept with her until we were quite old. She's very protective of us—my brother and sister are dyslexic, and she fought for them to get special attention in school. She made it her battle. She would be a great politician. We have a lot of women workers in our company, and I remember her hanging pamphlets around the factory about the importance of a specific referendum. She's also involved in the Italian version of the CFDA. Before, it was the role of my uncle Vittorio, who disappeared [in a plane crash last January], so she took over and is making it her cause.

My mother was very, very liberal with me growing up. She was always trying to make me relax and take it easy. But she was extremely strict at the dinner table. We had a certain number of missteps we could make every night, and after that, we'd have to go eat in the kitchen alone and clean up for everyone. Then, on Thursday nights, we had what was called “pig night,” where we were meant to break all the rules. ►

