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Touching the fabric of Italian life

One family embodies true old Milanese style so much that Hollywood immortalized it on film

By HELEN KIRMAN-TAYLOR

ade In Italy" has come to mean ade In Italy" has come to mean many things over the centuries. In modern times, it more often than not is linked to objects that defy grav ity and are incomprehensibly complica bottom and orolant silky taytiles you don't dare touch for fear of spoiling, like those seen in countless Milan showrooms this

The zeitpeist of Italian manufacturin oday is perhaps best captured in the 2009 film "I Am Love," directed by Luca Guadag nino and starring Tilda Swinton. The film, which tells the story of a wealthy Milanese textile family trying to cope with finding a successor in a time of rapid globalization. a ravishing and authentic glimpse into Milan's private inner world of old entrepreneurial wealth, sumptuous palazzos and re-

fined understated luxury. The story plot (repressed, Russian-born wife of Lombardian textile magnate goes mad and runs off with son's chef friend) is somewhat implausible. Who would want to run away from all that elegance? But the the men folk; the understated décor of their

sociate producer of the film and herself an

heiress to a design dynasty; the dinner ta-

bles set with hand-sewn linens, antique china and colored crystal, and surrounded by the entire extended family-could not

shout "Made In Italy" any louder. (In fact, they refer to "Made In Italy" almost as a kind of catch phrase throughout the film.) While based on fictional characters, the film nonetheless has a very real-life counluxury textile firm C&C Milano. In fact, the film could easily have been called "I am C&C Milano* for all the inner connection not to mention coincidences, that link the

plot of the film to the family Which is how I come to find myself in a 15th-century Milanese palazzo, overlooking was painting the Sistine Chapel, feeling like I just walked onto the set of "I Am Love," which, to a certain extent, is true. was once owned by the powerful Sforza family and now contains a private mu seum, with 17th-century frescoed Zodiac house, which also contains an apartment

and a book store, now belongs to Piero

After a lengthy search for a primary film

Castellini, who, along with his cousin

The parallel universes of the Castellinis and the fictitious Recchis of "I Am Love"

location. Mr. Guadagnino, the director chose Milan's Villa Necchi Campiglio to be the home for the Recchi family The director, who vaguely knew Piero (an

rehitect, known for his careful restoration owned modernist villa was designed by Piero's grandfather, the architect Piero Por-Paluroni in the 1920s. Nor did he know that the villa had been recently restored by Piero

The parallel universes of the Castellinis and the fictitious Recchis of 'I Am Love' intertwine and overlap like the weave of an ikat fabric.

And when the director hired a scout to help find two more Milan locations for the shoot, they ended up selecting Piero's apartment ("I didn't know anything about it." says Piero) and the textile warehouse/factory where the Castellinis produce many of their woven cloths ("We didn't know any-thing about that either," adds Emanuele). At that point, Mr. Guadagnino called Piero and said "You might as well help me design this set"-and I assume he followed this by an

while you're at it," since Piero does,

got harder to distinguish the longer I spoke with Piero and Emanuele Castellini. The director, I am told, arrived with a finished script: the fact that there is an old Milanese rily so, the fictitious description is sheet enstance, according to the two men. erful Lombardian textile families, with roots dating back to the 1850s, when an ambitious Clateo Castellini started buying out his cousins to create the beginnings of a company. Theirs is an old entrepreneurial family whose portfolio spans banking, fash ion, retail and, of course, property, which seems to come out of their pores. The Cas

Whose fiction ands and reality begins

tellinis are, in Emanuele's words, members ichts, ancient Tuscan Palazzos and beautifully dressed women go without saying.
The film's Recchis are just as powerful and grand as the Castellinis, which is likely why Mr. Guadagnino chose Piero's apart ment as the second location in the film. This is where the patriarch of the Recch mily lives with his wife, played by

In the film as in life, the apartment is true old Milanese style, with an eclectic reasure trove of contemporary photographs by Tazio Secchiaroli and Carlo Gavazzeni, antiques, animal throws, new and vintage textiles (all C&C Milano, of course) and decorative objects handed

down through the generations, all pain-lessly tossed together as some might put together the ingredients of a pasta. The director clearly didn't need a set designer; he shot it exactly as it appears now-including the cables that are sticking out of corners and the cushions with torn edges. Old Mi lanese is also very un-bling

This certain understated, worn-around the-edges opulence finds its way into the Castellinis' exquisite and effortlessly chic different fabrics are all woven and varndved to make them look much older and faded, before being hand-finished in their factory in Oleggio. "China can't do this. In dia can't do this" says Piero, who takes in-

want to. It's so time consuming."

Typically Italian, the collection isn't fussy: The 100% linens, such as the ikatbased "Pienza," are meant to flow natu rally from 12-meter windows and grace Portofino poolside deck chairs-which is tune: they created the cloth coverings for the original Venice Lido chairs. This is "I Am Love" territory and one fully expects Prada-clad ladies with Hermes handhars dangling from their arms to be perusing

That's not far off, C&C Milano fabrics and the Ferragamo family's Castoglione del Rosen hotal as well as the Johlus of lumin hotel Principe di Savoia in Milan, not to mention many Agnelli interiors, Piero also did one of Giorgio Armani's offices.

Many might dream of living in the Atel-lani House, Personally, I prefer the large. airy showroom in a palazzo next door, ove ered in delicate white linen sheets, or tak ing a bath in the antique lobster tub, covered, of course, with C&C Milano's Valbonne Aragosta fabric, C&C Milano als makes sheets, table linens and the kind of cashmere you might have to mortgage you

house for (prices start at around €200).

The Castellinis may be an established name in textiles, but expect to hear more about them. The Lisson Gallery is moving have plans to open showrooms in Moscow and London. This is where the universes of "I Am Love" and C&C Milano align again. Both Emmanuelle, 61 years old, and Pierc 72, are moving on in age, and as of now. business. There are no dead bodies in world, but like the Recchis, who in the film ins are open to offers-but unlike the film there is no rush. The business has been

around since 1850, why hurry now?

Made in Italy

Local design talent shines at Milan Furniture Fair

By HELEN KIRMAN-TAYLOR

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. **COVER STORY**

> isitors to this year's Milan Forniture Fair, which ends this weekend, could be left in no doubt that Italy is in the throes of celebrating the 150th anniversary
> of its unification. The country's flar was omnipresent. Edra covered its iconic "Flan" sofa in red. white and green leather, while Gaetano Pesce created 61 (for 1861) tables in those same colors for Cassina. The taales, which form a giant man of Italy will telli Guzzini, makers of plastic travs and kitchen items, made the colors of the Ital. ion flow the thoma of their antire Milan store and had an accidental hit on their hands with their limited-edition green-and red plastic magazine (680) and umbrella stands (£120). Guzzini Managing Director Gianluca Pazzaglini said the collection was upposed to be limited, but, judging from the amount of people lining up at the cash

ster, he will need to reconsider.
'Made it Italy" is the big theme this year and no one can make that claim louder or more cheerfully than B&E Italia. "What is Made In Italy?" asks president Giorgio Busnelli, pausing over an espresso in the Via Durini showroom, "I think it means outstanding. It means excellence " The comnany's technological know-how allows it the any's technological anow-now allows it the reedom to look "techno-craft." as R&R calls

movable cushion (from \$1,926) Mr. Busnelli, who runs the company with tistic director of Hermès, two years ago to manufacture their latest line of furniture, awarhad this work, that he really had to nut that to test "Hermes is a company that It's so high, it's supersonic," he says. It took the "Metiers" five-piece office collection by Italian architect Enzo Mari and the "Matieres" seven-piece living collection by Antonio Citterio, composed of a sofa, meridienne, coffee table, console, side table chaise lounge and a chair, cleverly called "Armchair for Reading and Resting," that design have long been bedfellows, but this

clusive world launch, "I think we did." Mr. snelli said, fingering the leather stitching. Mr. Busnelli took on the challenge for adding that "the joy is that costs were no limit," as Mr. Thomas nodded in agreement As Hermès and B&B were basking in mu tions firm of Sawaya & Moroni were liter ally pushing people away from Zaha Hadid's nolished aluminium Z-Chair, Mr. Moroni has lone collaborated with Ms. Hadid, and now the hard work seems to have paid off, "We already sold five Z-Chairs [in a series of 24], and the fair has been on for two days, Mr. Moroni says enthusiastically. That's five times \$350,000. The had news is the price of the chair goes up in \$20,000 increment collector passing around photos of the Z-

leather naneling on this 'Storage Coffer' or

fact that Poltrona Frau, the über-luxurious orang owned by the Charme Group at previously dull design label, is finally (£1.930) and Fred table (£5.450) by Ro berto Lazzeroni in new, loose, softer Cassina was also strong, choosing to reoduce the "Veliero" bookshelf by France Albino. It's made up made up of a series of steel ties, class and brass details and ash wood, which look like they could topple over (the bookshelf probably did then) Now they're good to go (€15,000-€20,000) reise me for saying that much of what mad, but it's always fun. This year their theme was "Edra in Wonderland," which in cluded a wrinkly fake-fur-covered chair called "Grinza" (it looks like a fat pug) and several hairy cabinets by Massimo Morozzi many Italians buy such amusing items, "Oh the rest of the world loves them " "Made Ir Italy" doesn't require that it stay in Italy.

Chair on her iPhone. I suspect she may

say (meaning other news), includes the

"Altre Novita." as the Italians like to

have been one of those five.



Z-Chair designed by Zaha Hadid for Sawaya Moroni.