

Guglielmo Miani: style meets speed

14/07/2023 Guglielmo Miani, CEO of the luxury brand Larusmiani based in Milan, is crazy about craftsmanship, exquisite materials, the dynamism of his hometown – and his turbos.

A single letter, "G," appears on the doorbell panel. And the doormen on the ground floor are slow to respond if you ask to see "Signore Miani." It's better to mention his first name. "Guglielmo, of course!" They give him a call, and only then are you allowed to enter the mahogany elevator, which goes directly to his penthouse.

8:30 a.m. on Friday morning in Milan

It's 8:30 a.m. on Friday morning in Milan, not far from Quadrilatero d'Oro, the famous, upscale fashion district. Guglielmo Miani greets us in a dark-blue velvet bathrobe with stitched satin lapel. For the photo shoot, the owner of the elegant Larusmiani brand is wearing the Clark Gable model from his own collection. "Buon giorno, I'm Guglielmo," he says warmly. "Would you like some coffee?" Shortly afterwards, a cup of the finest espresso is placed on the living room table.

Miani turns his attention back to the photographer, leans against the terrace door, and takes a seat on

the spotless Honda Four parked in the living room. A glance around his penthouse on the seventh floor reveals a view of Milan in its entirety. If you step onto the terrace outside, you see the cathedral spires to the right and the towers of the financial district to the left.

The red-and-white body of an old Alfa Romeo racing car is suspended in front of a mirrored wall in the living room, with a black-and-white photo of a nude model next to it. The steering wheel displayed on a table in front once belonged to Ayrton Senna. Miani makes no secret of his fondness for horsepower and a certain dandiness, whether in his apartment or on his brand's Instagram channel, which he maintains himself. He takes a seat on his dark-green velvet sofa, reaches for his leather tobacco case with company logo, and rolls a cigarette.

"I'm not interested in trends"

"I don't do fashion," clarifies the 46-year-old right away. "I'm not interested in trends." For Larusmiani, it's all about providing discerning clientele with "beautiful, well-thought-out products." He goes on to say that both the men's clothing and the accessories are "fatto a mano," which means "handmade," and represent style rather than extravagance. And the only extreme thing about him, he says, is his "craziness for quality."

He inherited that from his grandfather, with whom he shares his name. It was Guglielmo Miani senior who developed the Larusmiani brand some 100 years ago. At the age of 17, he packed his cardboard suitcase in Apulia in southern Italy and moved up north to try his luck. With just a few lire in his pocket, he was determined to make something of himself.

In 1922, he opened a tailor shop in a courtyard on Via Manzoni in Milan and called it "Larus," which is Latin for "seagull," because it sounded like freedom to him. According to his grandson, who has two grown children of his own, the pursuit of freedom and their extrovert personalities are what the two of them have in common.

And luck was with his grandfather. Before long, he was tailoring fine suits for illustrious customers and would eventually meet his future wife on Via Manzoni. He also had a good sense for business. Because the finest fabrics came from England at that time, he began doing business with the English and became Italy's largest importer of British fabrics.

A Milanese institution and salon

"My grandfather worked until 7 p.m. every day," says Miani. "Then he'd go to the Camparino bar." At that time, politicians, writers, and journalists would gather at this Milanese institution and salon, right at the entrance to the world-famous Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, the glass-domed, premiere shopping center. And what did Miani senior do when he had the opportunity? He purchased it from the Campari family – and from there did "what is now referred to as PR work," says Miani junior.

He wants to take us to the headquarters later on, so he can show us what has become of his grandfather's ideas. Miani gets changed, choosing a nougat-brown polo shirt with white slacks, a dark-blue sporty jacket, and black velvet slippers.

Porsche enthusiast from birth

In this outfit, he'd be right at home on any yacht. There aren't any labels visible, but what you can see is exquisite fabrics. He tells us that the clothing of his brand has "a typical Milanese touch of understatement."

And of course, it perfectly matches the marine-blue 911 (993) Turbo from 1995 parked in his garage. Miani says he's been a Porsche enthusiast virtually from birth. He even had a shelf with models of the sports car brand in his childhood bedroom. While studying at Babson College near Boston Entrepreneurship, he saw another student's father driving the 993, his new dream car. When the two of them visited the father together in Miami, they secretly took his 911 out for joyrides in the city.

Miani's 911 comes from the Porsche Exclusive Manufaktur, originally custom-made for a customer in Japan. The leather equipment in the interior and even the dials are Can Can Red, like the skirts of the dancers at Moulin Rouge in Paris. The dashboard, too, has the same red tone. All five of the Porsche vehicles that Miani owns come from the Exclusive Manufaktur in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. In the garage of the Larusmiani headquarters, the CEO points to his silver-colored 911 (996) with Boxster Red interior. Even the ventilation slits are covered in leather. "That's some crazy work," he acknowledges.

Then one of his employees stops him to ask him some questions about his boat. In addition, he needs to discuss fabric samples with Miani. And the grand opening of the Larusmiani shop near Milan's Via Monte Napoleone boulevard is just around the corner. The CEO is under a great deal of pressure, but you'd never know it looking at him. Later on, he needs to clarify something else for his FuoriConcorso event series – an exclusive gathering of car enthusiasts at Lake Como in May, in the garden of Villa del Grumello, which Miani has organized every year since 2019. Fittingly, in 2022, the motto was "turbo engine." Exclusive exhibition piece: a street version of the 911 GT1 from the Porsche Museum. At the Fuori Concorso event this year, there will be a big celebration to mark "75 Years of Porsche Sports Cars."

Miani tailors for a variety of celebrities

The showroom at the headquarters houses everything related to the brand. In addition to fine clothing, including accessories of all kinds for the gentleman of the world, you will also find humidors, watch cases, shaving sets with mother-of-pearl handles, umbrellas, ashtrays featuring hand-painted tigers, backgammon sets, and leather tool kits for cars. Miani is also in the process of developing Champagne buckets made from carbon. In the office space, there are some old photo albums on a table showing the company founder laughing cheerfully next to different celebrities. Miani senior not only tailored for the

legendary Italian actor Totò, but also counted Buster Keaton and Italy's last king, Umberto II, among his customers. And even Prince Philip of England once paid him a visit.

To raise awareness of his fabrics, Miani senior came up with new advertising promotions on a regular basis. In 1968, he had an English phone booth shipped to Milan's Piazza del Duomo for Christmas to promote his British fabrics. Children could use the phone to talk to Santa Claus. Another time, he had two living vicuñas brought into one of his shops to show how fine their wool is. The newspapers had a heyday with the story. Apparently, he knew even then what the shop windows of Milan still are to this day: spectacles, dreams, and temptations. "He was a true marketing man!" says his grandson, laughing.

He went with the times

He always kept his finger on the pulse. "Anyone who wanted a suit before the 1950s had to go to a tailor," says Miani. "Then ready-to-wear suits took off." His grandfather, too, began producing ready-to-wear collections – by hand, of course. Larusmiani continues to do the same to this day. All of the clothing is manufactured at the in-house workshop in Tuscany, which employs 40 tailors.

It takes around 60 hours to sew a single suit. "Producing an article of clothing by hand is much like creating a work of art," says Miani. He points out that every tailor has their own trademark.

When Guglielmo Miani senior retired, his son took over the brand. But because Riccardo Miani was much more of an introvert, he preferred to leave the designer stage to his wife and expanded the fabric business himself. Riccardo established a manufactory for the production of Italian fabrics, which had not only improved in quality, but were now also lighter, more supple, and more modern than British textiles. For the production, he purchased the finest raw materials in the world, such as cotton, silk, cashmere, and linen.

Upon his return from his studies in the US, Guglielmo Miani junior got involved in the company too, overseeing the fabric business for more than 15 years before taking over management of the company as a whole. What direction has he developed the brand in since then? Miani says he has increased the share of summer fabrics in the collection, for example.

"Men's clothing requires fine-tuning"

He has also more clearly developed the clothing brand and the associated lifestyle, which in some ways is his own. He only produces items he would wear or use himself, he says. He'd never permit sandals in his home, for example, and wouldn't even wear them "under threat of torture." He much prefers the colorful, handsewn "furlane" shoes in the collection, the velvet slippers that go with everything, from swimming trunks to tuxedos.

"Men's clothing requires fine-tuning," says Miani. And that brings us back to the language of motor

vehicles. Besides, it's time for a joyride through his hometown, whose creativity and dynamism he so loves. We drive past the Giardini Indro Montanelli, one of the parks downtown, along Via Manzoni, where it all began, and on to Bulgari Hotel, where Miani likes to go for lunch.

He turns on the stereo, and disco pop pours out of the speakers. "Tutto va bene quando facciamo l'amore" (Everything's good when we make love), sings Alex Rossi.

At some point, Miani puts the pedal to the metal, and it almost feels like the car lifts off for just a moment. That's why all five of his Porsche vehicles are turbos, he says. "I like it when the turbo kicks in and you get a rush of adrenaline."

Like an article of clothing

Asked how many cars he has, he shakes his hand to signify "approximately" and says, "25." He has an interchangeable license plate. Does he think about which car to drive that day every morning? "Si," he says and smiles. For him, a car is "come un vestito" (like an article of clothing).

Info

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Image Sublines

Path: Guglielmo Miani: style meets speed/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Guglielmo Miani, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: A question of elegance: While Larusmiani clothing doesn't feature any labels on the outside, customers still recognize it by the style.

Path: Guglielmo Miani: style meets speed/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Larusmiani, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Craftsmanship: The new boutique on Via Verri is located in the famous Milan fashion district close to Via Monte Napoleone. Miani presents his modern vision of the brand here. The art lies in blending fabric and technology to the highest quality.

Path: Guglielmo Miani: style meets speed/Images/img_6.jpg
Title: Porsche 911 Turbo (993), 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Joyride through Milan: Miani loves the dynamism of his hometown – and its creativity.

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