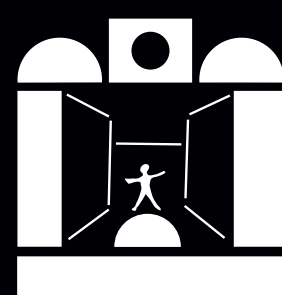


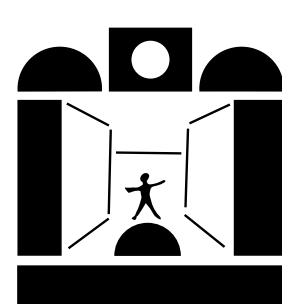
GIANFRANCO
FERRÉ
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Rita Airaghi | Paola Bertola | Federica Vacca



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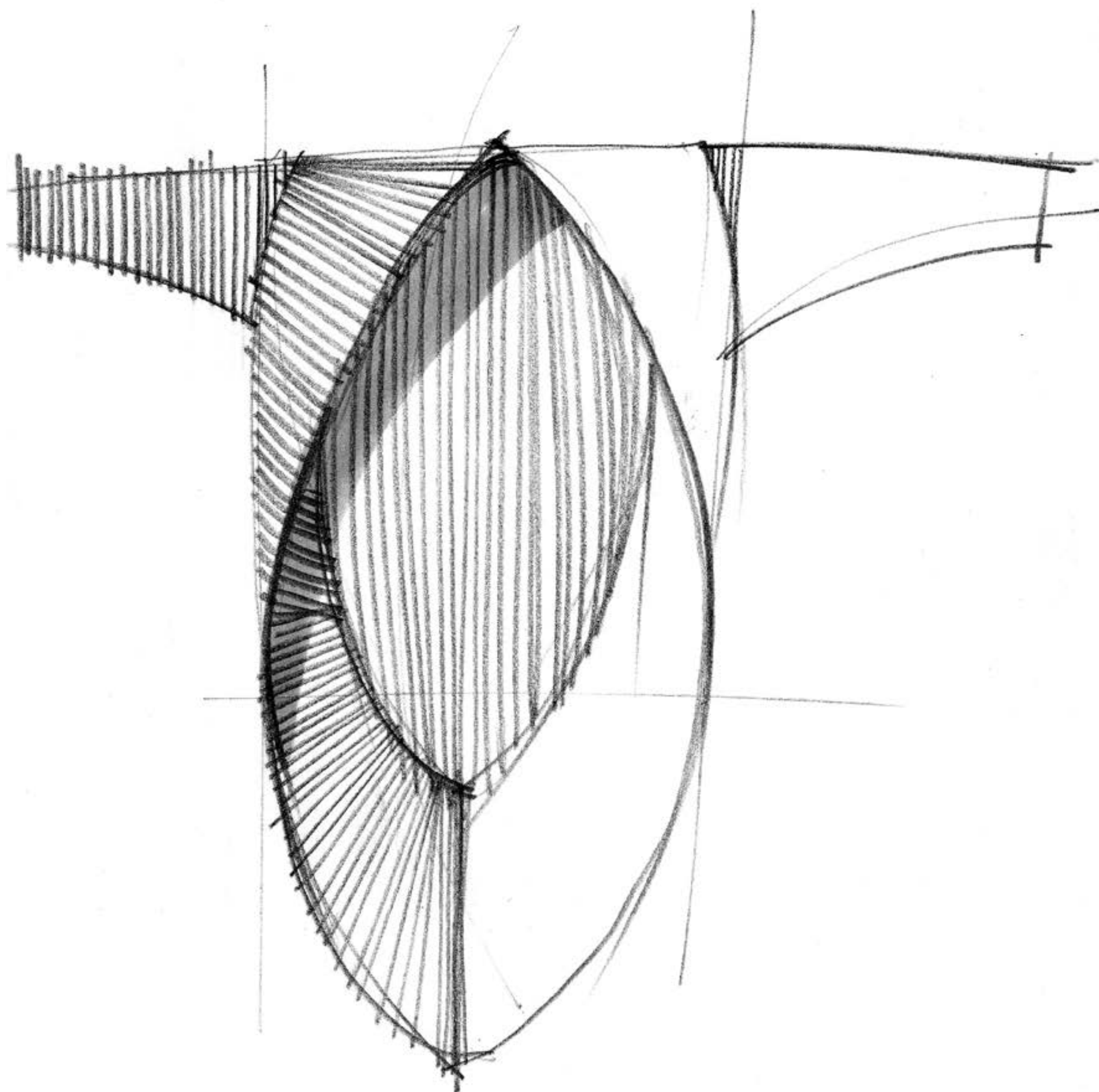


The Gianfranco Ferré Research Center, Politecnico di Milano, has curated the exhibition “Gianfranco Ferré. Design Principles” with the Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The exhibition explores Gianfranco Ferré’s unique approach to fashion design, offering visitors an augmented experience enriched by a digital connection with the Ferré archive through images and videos that provide a closer look at the creation of the exhibition.

The exhibition depicts Ferré’s vision through a selection of both drawings and garments. The drawings, clustered into thematic sections, display some fundamental design principles that inspired the designer’s creative process, introducing Ferré’s own “methodology” – quite an uncommon dimension to be codified in fashion. The garments themselves offer an experiential pathway along the designer’s stylistic research, wherein those principles materialize into infinite variations of the “white shirt” archetype, a true icon in his creative work.

The DRAWING WALL represents six fundamental principles underpinned by Gianfranco Ferré’s design approach. They narrate his creative dimensions, through which he managed to codify his way of filtering and channel his culture, creative endeavor, and emotional and poetic tension through methodological rigor. The wall takes us on a journey into his design vision, seen as a dynamic process and embodying the continuous research of the synthesis between art and science, inspiration and compositional precision, cultural content and technical innovation. It starts from the body and continues with the matter, the color, the detail, the volume and, finally, the movement.

The WHITE SHIRTS exhibition focuses on Ferré's iconic white blouses. With its role and faction, the white shirt represents the ideal archetype of the designer's conception of fashion. A familiar object partakes in our daily lifestyle, responding to the needs of contemporary living. At the same time, it acts as a white page to manipulate and transform through his infinite afflatus. In the exhibited blouses, we can find all the principles at the root of Ferré's design approach. They can emphasize body shapes by enveloping and unveiling them. They explore the full range of materiality, from lighter and transparent to dense and solid fabrics. They catch the eye through unedited details, from a soft textile rose to a punk buckle. They may create volumes that resemble a flower corolla or represent a simple geometry. They move and flow, showing layered or impalpable components. They are all white, the simplest but the richest color, given by the additive synthesis of all the colors of the visible spectrum; they are also the symbol of light in our shared imaginary. The background wall behind the blouses resonates with this imaginary by representing the shirts crossed by light through X-ray portraits which try to catch their inner substance.

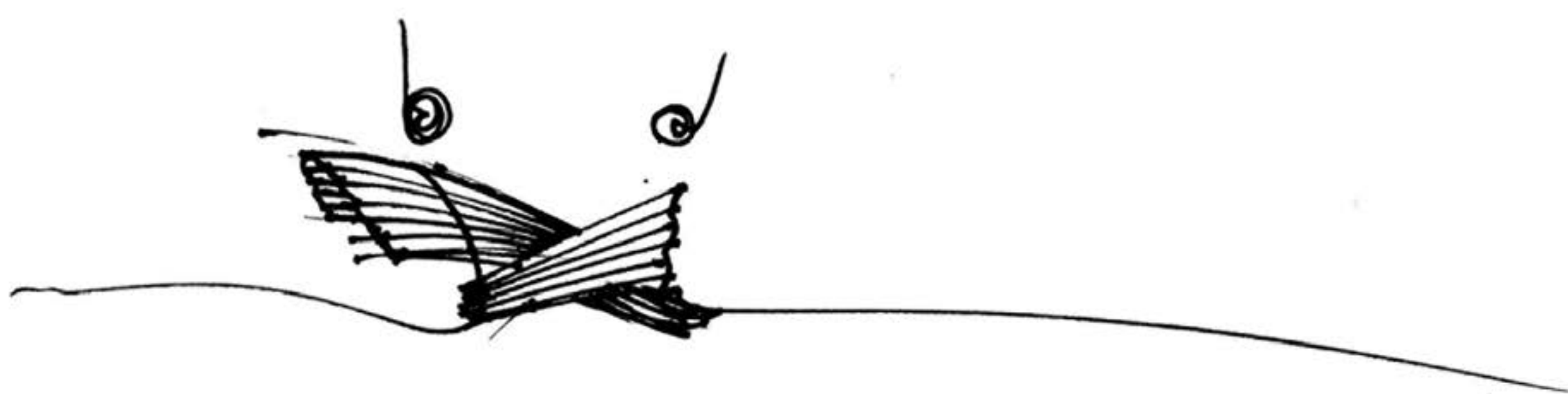


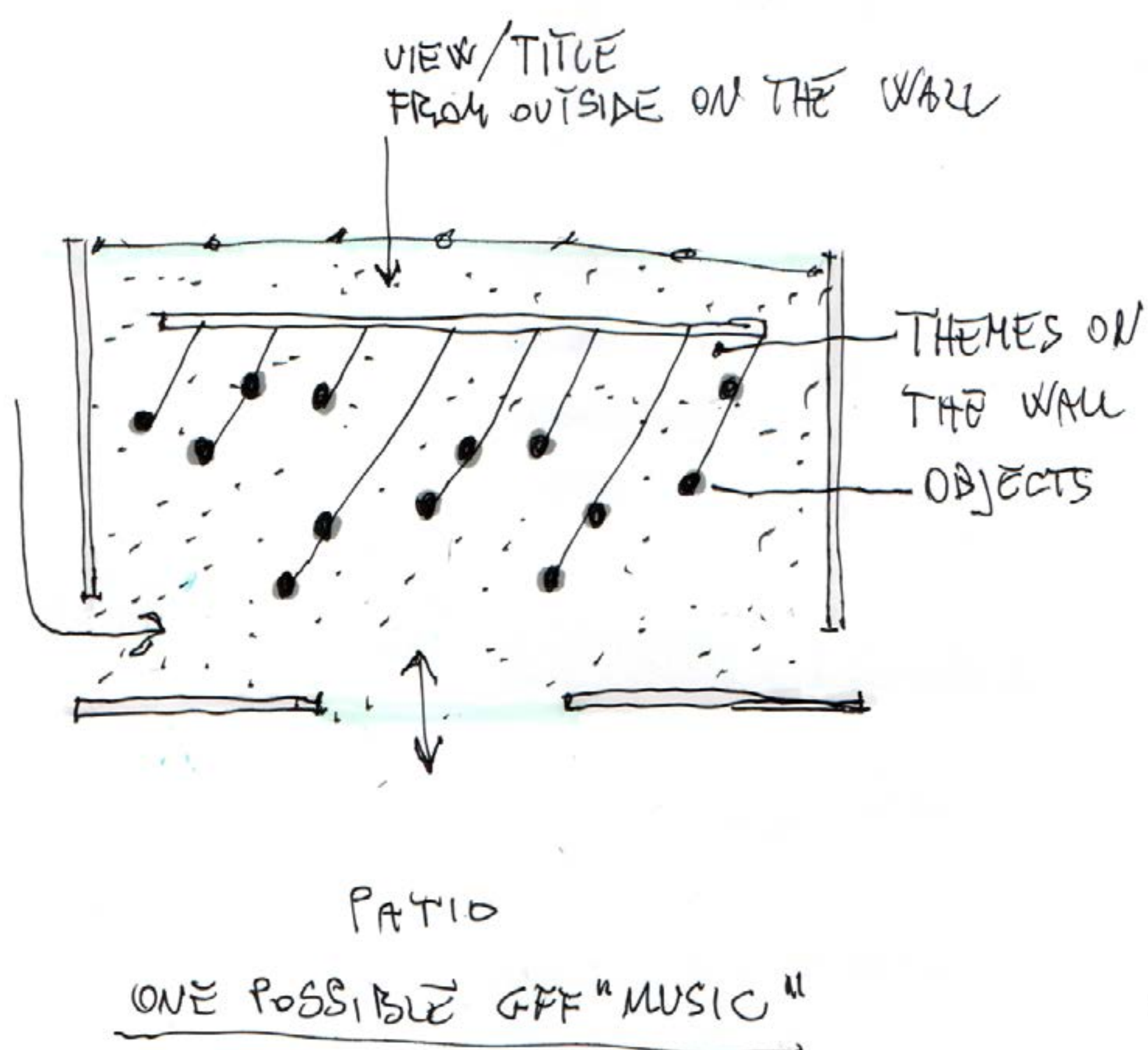
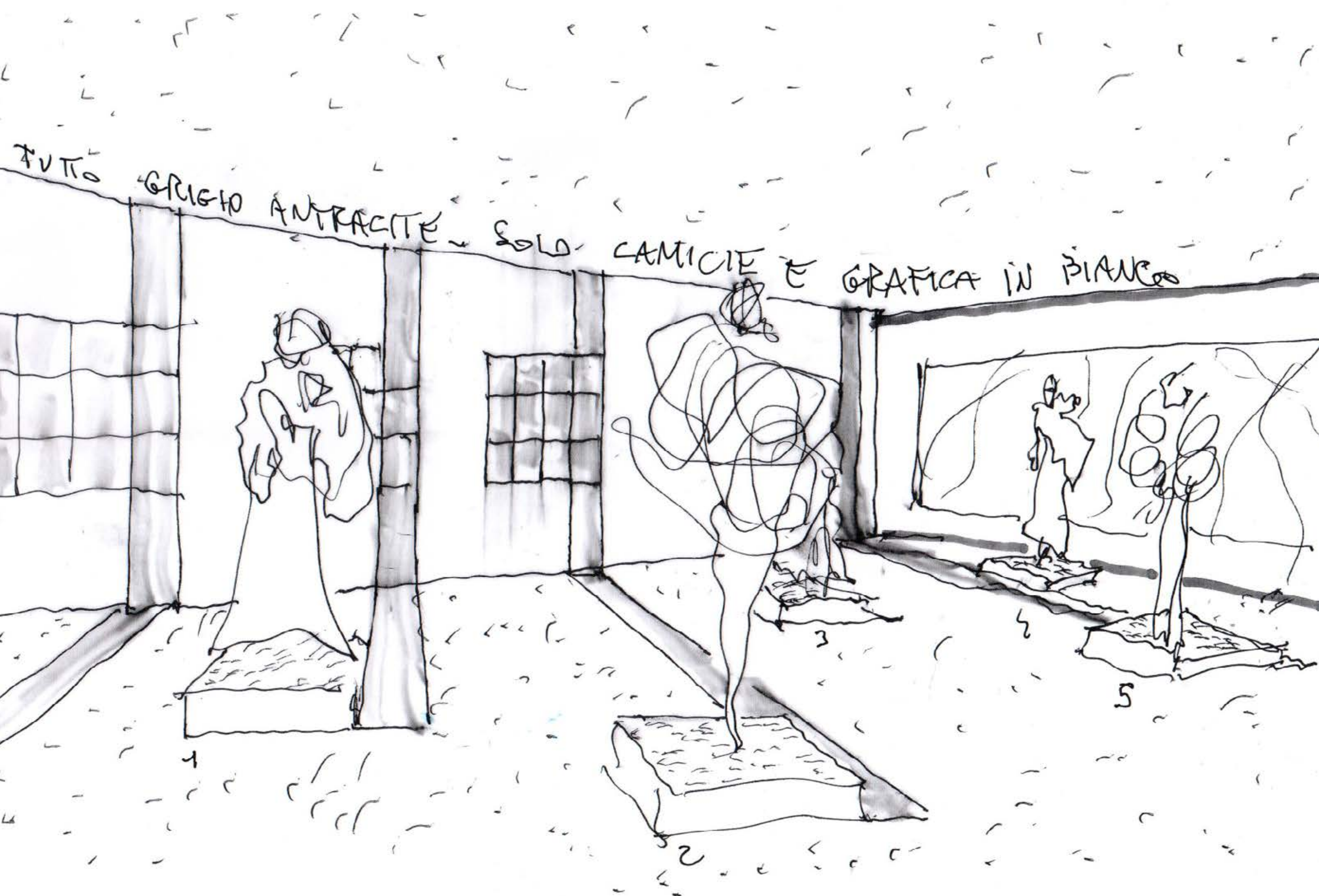
“ For me drawing also entails awareness of the body, complete with its natural need to move, therefore I feel strongly that in today’s world it demands forms of clothing all the more immediate and essential. Pretty much in total – almost amazing – sync with the lines and marks defining my sketches...

As rooted in my professional background and training, drawing is a standard everyday exercise. That’s why people call me the ‘Architect of Fashion’. A moniker, I confess, I sometimes find a bit limiting because it’s been with me since the early days of my career, yet most of all because it stresses more on the technical aspect behind my work, overshadowing the element of passion and enchantment that’s intrinsic to fulfilling the design project.

What sparks me to design is an impression or influence that, for some inexplicable reasons, stays in my mind more than others and that sets in motion an idea, a dream. It’s the emotion of an instant that turns into sign on paper... a particular shade of color, tactile contact with a material, the rustle of a fabric, the way a person I happen to see moves while walking...

Marks on paper as instances of poetry: for me drawing succeeds in being, not least of all, individual expression of the expectations, aspirations and desires linked to my vision of beauty, harmony and style (more so than fashion). It’s a type of poetry that uses this final quality as a means for telling a story, for translating into images, giving a real-life dimension to and sharing my inner world.” **Gianfranco Ferré**





Preliminary sketches of the exhibition design. Architect Martino Berghinz

The exhibition concept—designed by Studio Berghinz—has its roots in the architectural repertoire of the so-called Milanese school and in the key codes of Gianfranco Ferré's unique language. It is based on black-and-white geometric elements that deconstruct and reassemble spaces through false perspectives and unexpected effects, where the purity of Modernism plays with asymmetrical accents and classical references.



Exhibition work in progress



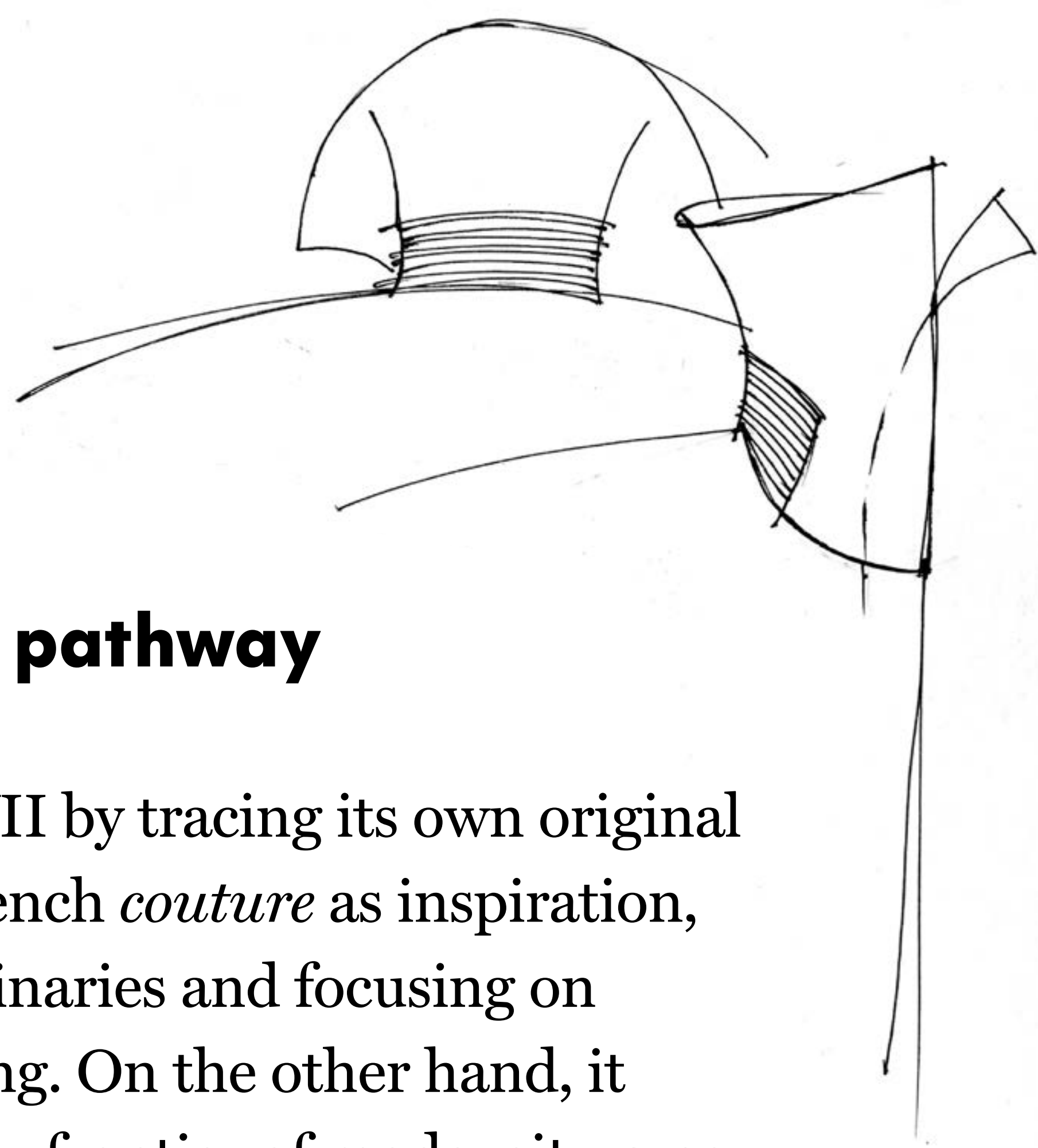
Exhibition work in progress



Exhibition work in progress

Memory for the Future

1.



Designing fashion: The Italian pathway

Italian fashion took off after the WWII by tracing its own original path. On the one hand, it grasped French *couture* as inspiration, capable of building spectacular imaginaries and focusing on unique garments and creative tailoring. On the other hand, it looked at the United States as the new frontier of modernity, a new market. It saw a context in which to imagine (and sell) fashion with a nod to the eccentric styles beyond the Alps yet adapted to more contemporary lifestyles: from informal special occasions to workwear and sportswear. In other words, Italian fashion began to lean toward more practical garments suited to a “modern lifestyle,” infused with an industrial aesthetic and showing great attention to the quality of fabrics and details. This was the beginning of the recognition of “Italian design” by an international audience, witnessed already by *Vogue USA* in 1952 with a special “notebook” celebrating the “exiting things about Italian fashion” (Malossi, 1992: 174). This acknowledgment process reached its peak in the ’70s and ’80s, having as a milestone the famous cover story devoted to Giorgio Armani by *TIME* magazine in 1982 (Morini, 2010), and among its greatest protagonists was Gianfranco Ferré. Ferré himself was called as the first non-French creative director of the Dior Maison in 1989, a fact that symbolically expresses the end of French creative leadership in the field of fashion and the conquered autonomous identity of Italian fashion design.

There is more than solely an Italian way to design in this successful evolution; it belongs to the inner link between creativity and industry that has been a unique asset for the development of several other sectors deeply connected to the socio-economic growth of the country. Not by chance, Italian fashion is more often referred to as “Made in Italy” fashion, highlighting a conception where the “making” dimension is as important as the “design” content. Notably, the relationship between craft and industrial manufacturing with the creative

system initially spilled over from the textile industry, whose roots date back to the First Century in the Peninsula. After WWII, the simple creations of Italian boutiques' tailors, crafted by using beautiful fabrics embodying this unique heritage, caught the attention of foreign buyers, and French *couturiers* quickly began using Italian fabrics for their creations (Merlo, 2003; Paris, 2006). The definitive bonding between the creative and industrial systems followed in the '60s and '70s, generating what we may consider to all intents and purposes a practice of "industrial design." Indeed, the role of creatives such as Gianfranco Ferré was often to drive the manufacturing system toward new frontiers of technical innovation, responding with their design goals and requirements (Volonté, 2008; Bertola, 2008). The beginning of this designers' age, marked by their alliance with industry, was a crucial component of the leadership gained by Made in Italy. Their role in driving technological innovation was based on collaborative practices and mutual trust established with entrepreneurs and manufacturers, creating quite a unique model where industrial innovation and craft techniques melded with a hybrid system, which still exists today to some extent. Thus, this system, covering nearly all phases of the supply chain and progressively organized into the so-called "industrial districts," co-evolved with a creatives' generation, being able to offer industrially tailored products marked by notable technical know-how, which swiftly distinguished Italian fashion from its French counterpart (Becattini, 2001; Paris, op. cit.).

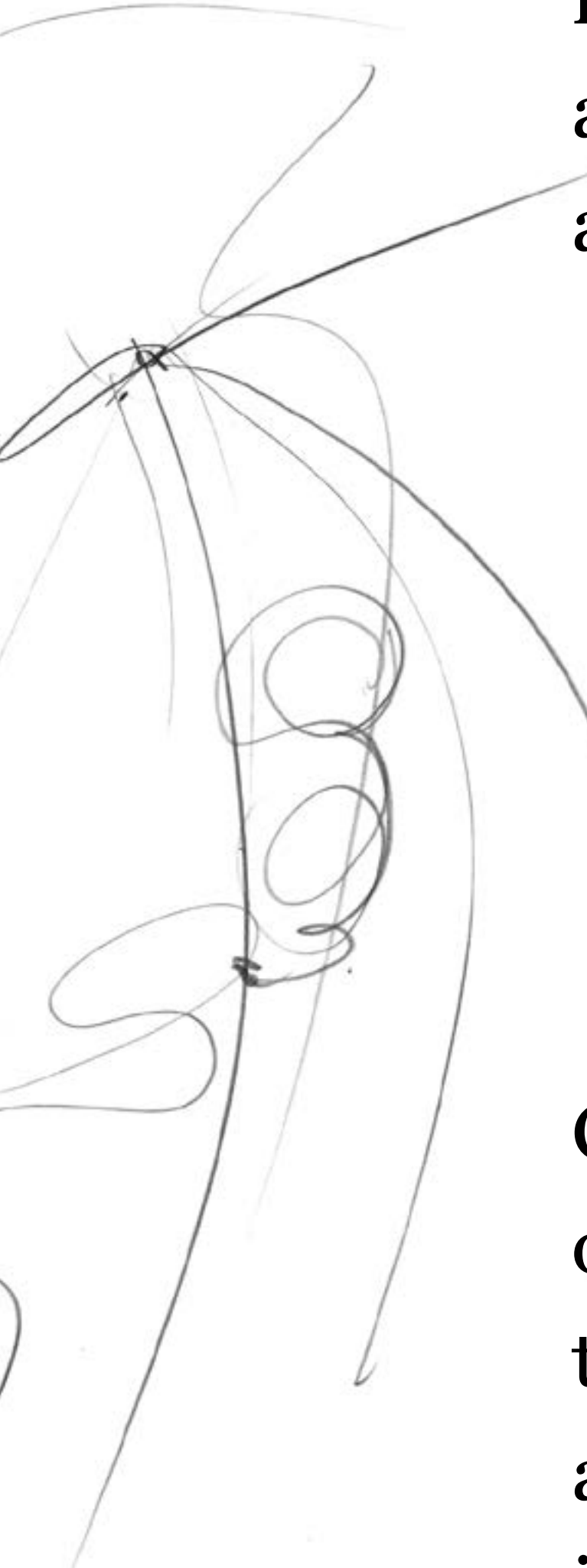
A very important location within this evolution had been Milano, a symbol at the time of the transition into modernity, the theatre of a cultural and inventive ferment that has now become a salient feature of this capital of design (Bertola et al. 2002; Vitta, 2001). Its cultural milieu acted as a catalyst for a large community of professionals that has been feeding the phenomenon of designing for the industry, not just in fashion but in all design-oriented sectors. This phenomenon occurred in furniture, lighting appliances, home accessories, and finishing components; that is to say in that entire universe of products and systems acknowledged as "Made in Italy," translating a specific conception of "quality of life" into the "Italian way of life." The designer

protagonists of this new age were not simply “creatives,” as the common imaginary typically saw them; they were the talented “inventors” of forms. They were the interpreters of a system of “collective creativity,” of a socialized culture of design and making, maturing a multifaceted professionalism melding artistic and technical components and deeply linked to the production know-how embedded into the country’s industrial fabric. Among them, Gianfranco Ferré stands out for being able to explicitly codify his unique approach to design. Sourcing a methodological standpoint from the heritage of architectural composition and inspired by an endless artistic and cultural research, he ultimately merged a rigorous technical process with a rich poetics, building an original language along the liminal border between rational understanding and emotional perception.

Poētīca and téchne: The multifaceted nature of Gianfranco Ferré’s approach

Gianfranco Ferré (1944-2007) graduated from Politecnico di Milano University in 1969 with a thesis focused on the methodology of composition in architecture, under the supervision of professor and architect Franco Albini. These details of his biography already contain two key elements to understand his work and original approach: methodology and composition. It is important to note that Politecnico di Milano University is one of the schools that makes up the cradle of Italian design culture and offers an intellectual environment that played an important role in Ferré’s formation.

Starting with methodology, a word not often applied in fashion practice, which is more commonly interpreted through the filter of pure talent and creativity. The conception of methodology as characterizing several technical and scientific universities since the mid-twentieth century has changed progressively from belonging to the Positivist vision that simplistically pretends to unveil the original program of the Enlightenment and was based on the total trust in the “scientific method.” Indeed, the “method” was intended by Positivists as a linear succession of logically hierarchized phases, linked by the cause-effect principle that would guarantee the certainty of results, assigning to humanities



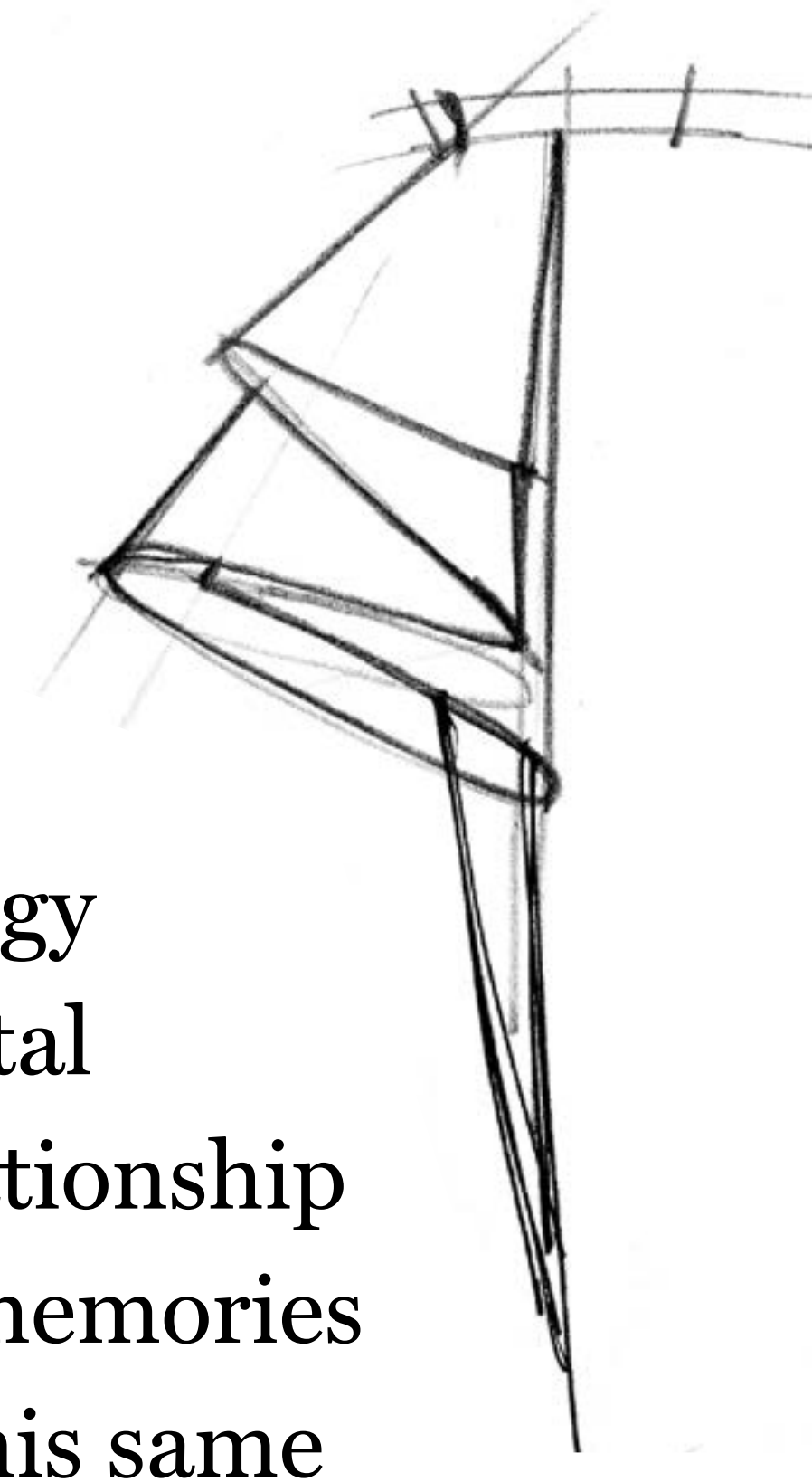
and philosophy a merely ancillary role. Since the middle of the last century, a whole new school of thought has been embraced by a large majority of scientists, grounded within the theories of complexity and cybernetics (Bateson, 1972). This school of thought theorized a new conception of methodology – beautifully synthesized by the philosopher Edgar Morin in *La Méthode* – as a nonlinear but circular process, giving organization to chaotic elements characterizing the inner complexity of the universe (Morin, 1986). The way Gianfranco Ferré speaks about his own methodology reflects consistently this new approach, which also infused the principles of the School of Architecture in Politecnico and was able to embrace the coexistence of order and chaos against the reductionism of complexity.

“*The methodological approach is an indispensable aspect of creative activity. The emotional and sensory input has to be rationalized, analyzed, codified and brought within a perspective of design.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**, lecture “The Forms of Emotions.” Politecnico di Milano, June 14, 2007

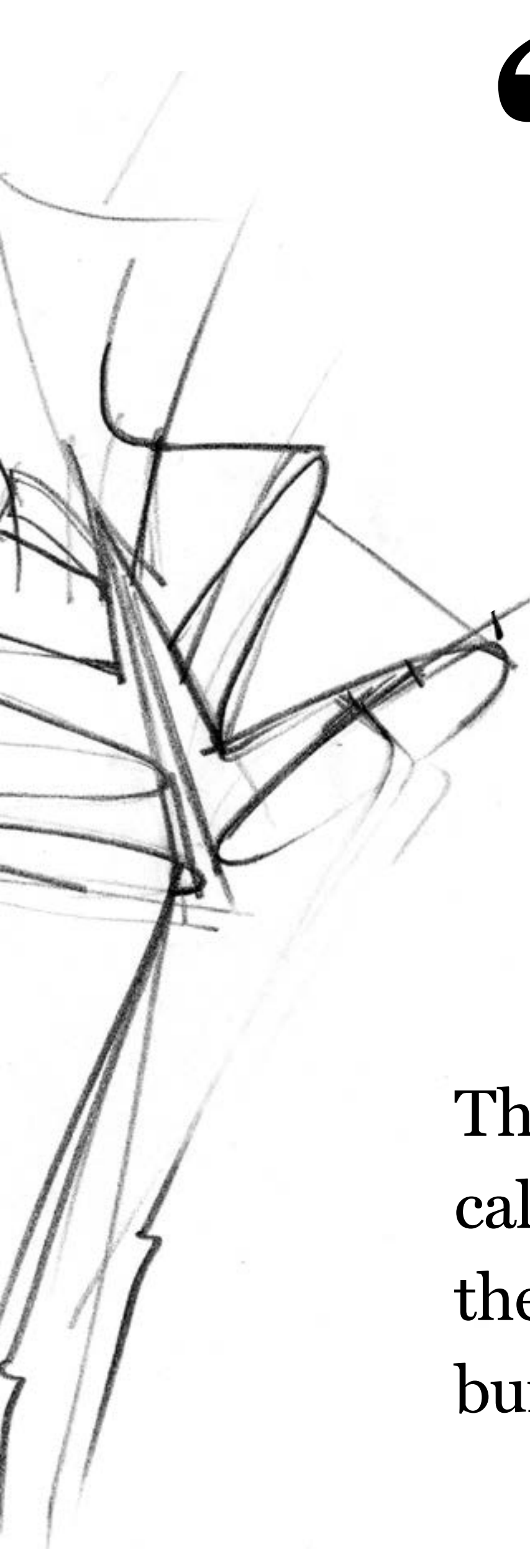
Gianfranco Ferré describes his methodology as a way of organizing heterogeneous and chaotic elements, some belonging to the technical nature of a garment as an object of daily use, and some belonging to his creative afflatus and emotional intuitions. He refers to his methodology in several writings as a “compositional” approach learned and applied in his architectural studies, where it is more important to define the kinds of relationships established among compositional ingredients of the garments, than the entire garment. Therefore, “composition” is another crucial keyword for the understanding of Gianfranco Ferré’s designs, and this is particularly true in his endless interpretation of the archetype of the white shirt. Starting from the same typology of garment and by applying his compositional vein in reworking its basic components, the designer created an entire taxonomy of the white shirt, as pointed out by architect Franco Raggi, a friend and university mate of Gianfranco Ferré (Raggi, 2014: 36). Thus, the work of Gianfranco Ferré often has been credited to his architectural studies. In fact, this perspective explains his approach as a process of generating tridimensional shapes by translating basic geometric components into

tridimensional volumes, enriched by other typical fundamentals of architecture, such as the characterization of matters and surfaces and the layering of constructive and embellishment details. And Ferré, along his entire production, always tried to explicitly codify his poetic and the system of principles and expressive norms by using categories and concepts belonging to architectural composition. But beyond this simplistic reading, there is more in the culture of design that Ferré breathed at Politecnico and that deeply informed his vision. A central focus in his notes always directs to that delicate balance between the rational and emotional dimensions of design, between garment “*as product and utilitarian object*” and “*clothing as expression of culture*” or further “*as a quest of effect, as a vehicle of feelings and means of expression*” (Ferré, 1997). This tension deeply resonates with the debate crossing architecture and design along the passage between Modernism and Post-Modernism, and it is also present in Franco Albini’s work, Gianfranco Ferré’s mentor during his studies, where the rationality, liveness and purity of Modernism is infused by a lyricism linked to a quest for a new connection with nature, culture, and history. Gianfranco Ferré, too, tries to build his poetic through the continuous harmonization between rational thinking and the emotional dimension, reflecting in this sense the true original paradigm of the Enlightenment, where science and art, scientific method and philosophical thinking, were complementary. Each garment and each collection mirrors the counterpoint between those different filters to interpret reality, which Blaise Pascal defined as the “spirit of geometry” (*esprit géométrique*), and the “spirit of finesse” (*esprit de finesse*) (Force, 1982). That is, between the scientific and analytical knowledge obtained with perfectly geometric and rational procedures, and the other form of knowledge that is synthetical and intuitive and is given by human motion and principles driving the spiritual sphere. Following this interpretation, Gianfranco Ferré perfectly embodies the “poly-technic” culture, meaning a multifaceted system of knowledge referred to in the technical sphere, intended in the broader sense expressed by the Greek word *téchne*, considered both the root of technology and the arts.

Shaping the future: The role of memory



Gianfranco Ferré's search for harmonizing his emotional intuition with both the rational conception of methodology and the technical dimension of making found fundamental sources for inspiration in history and memories. The relationship between new design principles and goals and historical memories and archetypes was continuously questioned by Ferré. This same critical and fruitful approach to history was at the very center of the debate that took place in architecture in the passage between the Modern Movement and the following phases. Albin's architectures especially reflect that "Milanese" school that was well represented by the architect and Politecnico's professor Ernesto Nathan Rogers, a cultural leading figure that Walter Gropius would have wanted to call his successor at the Harvard School of Architecture. The Milanese school aimed to reconnect the threads of the interrupted dialogue between the recent lesson of the Modern Movement and that of history, understood not as a resumption of stylistic motifs but as a dialogue with pre-existing environments with the historic fabric of Italian cities and territories. As the rationalist and modernist Rogers found a way of linking with his historical and humanistic roots, Gianfranco Ferré also found his own pathway through history and memory.



“Nostalgia couldn't be more far from my way of being and creating. History, rather, plays multiple roles, serves as education, example, ground for analysis and comparison with past experiences and achievements from which to then embark on new creative paths. Thus the archive is a never ending story directed toward the future. A mosaic taking shape day by day, consisting of pieces in each case essential. [...] (It) holds a number of experiences that serve in moving forward, in continuing to invent and to improve all the more. It is the memory for the future.” **Gianfranco Ferré**, Personal notes, 2000

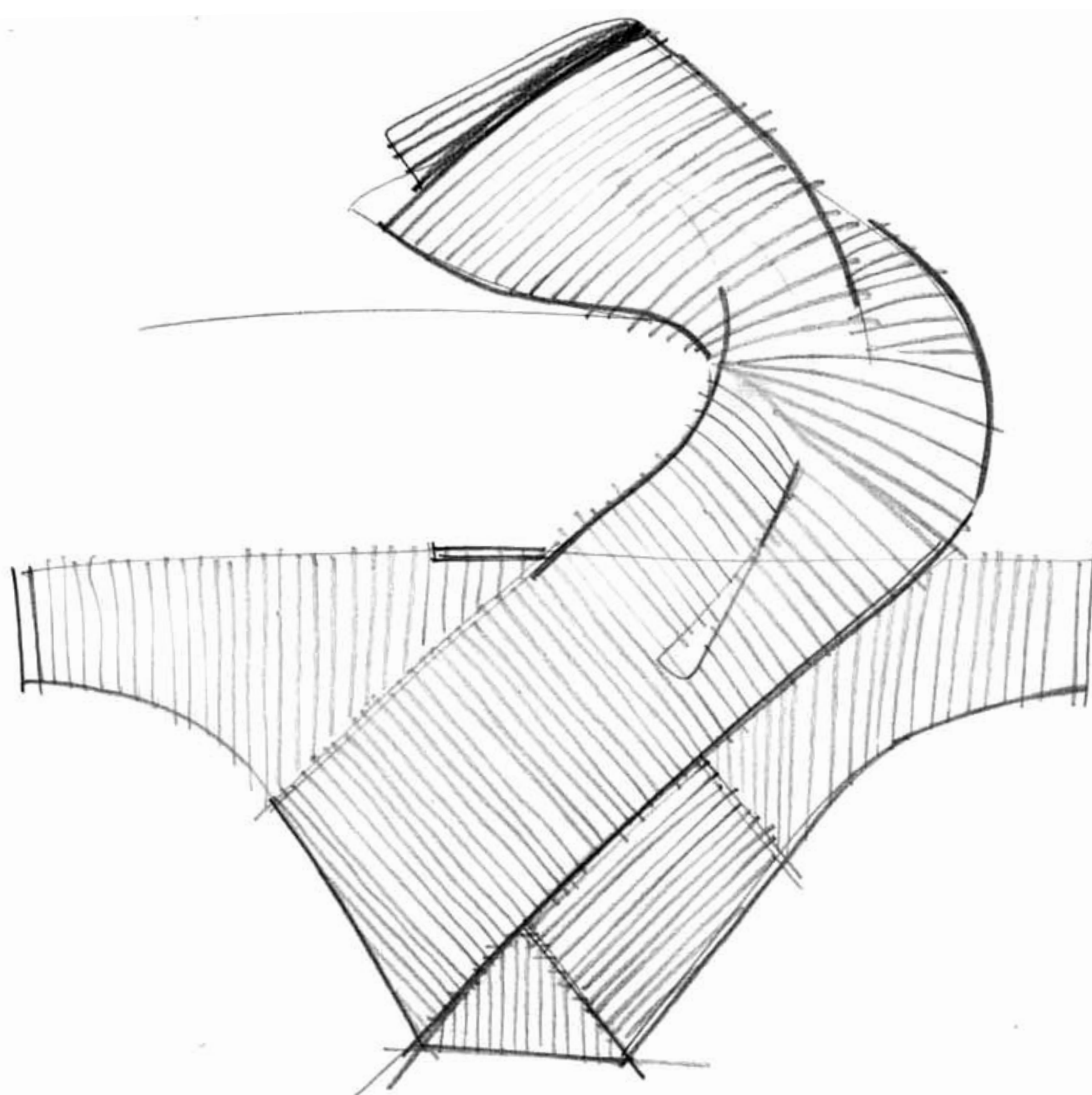
These words of Gianfranco Ferré's peculiarly resonate with that call to “inventing memory” Rogers himself launched by discussing the Torre Velasca (1955-1957), a paradigmatic and controversial building designed with his partners of the BBPR studio (Rogers, 1997).

Ferré moves from this cultural imprinting along an endless and very personal deepening of this controversial relationship between modernity and the layered dimensions of materiality and history. In his first designs, it is the “construction of modernity” that especially stands out, in garments which explore the dimensions of geometries becoming spaces for dynamic bodies, sometimes enveloping their silhouette thorough inedited constructions and sometimes generating new architectural volumes, staging the body into new spaces.

As a further development of this early phase, Gianfranco Ferré starts to experiment with techniques that could underline his constructive approach, and since the mid '80s he incorporates in his creations touches and elements that accentuate and sometimes exasperate his slick silhouettes and volumetric structures, as pointed out by fashion historian Fabrizio Fabbri (Fabbri, 2021). During this transition, his interest in the dimension of “materiality” grows with an increasing attention to tridimensional surfaces and the hybridization of textures, which creates a layering of detail. By constantly looking to new “effects,” as he defines this approach of disrupting the cleanness of his patterns, Ferré’s interest in cultural and historical research develops into never seen directions. The dialogue between “modernity” and “history” becomes a central pillar of his personal pathway, where his rigorous design methodology translates into a continuous collection and categorization of design references. He progressively shapes a “library of ingredients,” his personal archive, which is the materialization of these two dimensions: on the one hand of memories, collectables, and historical archetypes, used or to be used for further development; on the other hand his own “design experiments” into materiality and construction, as well as the key pieces of his collections, resulting from this endless research. By looking at the structure of Ferré’s archive, some design principles clearly emerge: the inquiry into the inner nature of the human “body” and its relationship with the space, mediated by the translation of the garment into “volume” and “movement,” and his search into the artificial world, where the “matter,” the “color,” and the “detail” define the historical nature of the object, the link between past and future.

Gianfranco Ferré's work represents a truly original contribution to the development of that Italian way of design that takes off after WWII, innovating in the conceptualization of forms and caring about their translation into the “making” process. This was possible thanks to his approach, aimed at establishing a dynamic balance between the creative and technical dimensions, being able to flow his emotional and artistic research into a rigorous rationality. His work represents at the same time a unique symbol of the Italian pathway into design, fed from the cultural milieu characterizing the country since WWII. Add to this a very personal reflection, through design, onto that tension between history and modernity, which particularly informed Italian architecture and design during the very phase across the '70s and '80s. This engendered a recurrent dialectic within the “Age of Extremes” as defined by Eric Hosbawm, which is now brought again to the stage, vibrating with the disruptive potential of the digital age (Hosbawm, 1994).

Today Gianfranco Ferré's design principles can be rediscovered in light of the actual digital transformation, which is breaking in new ways the relationship between the tangible and the intangible, giving birth to a cyber-physical reality transforming materiality and memories into data, as well as enabling the translation of data into a new “matter.”



Design Principles

2.



Gianfranco Ferré's design approach is codified through six principles rooted in the fundamentals that have characterized Italian fashion and the polytechnic culture that – as shown in the previous chapter – strongly characterized the designer's methodology. These design principles: the body, the matter, the color, the detail, the volume, and the movement describe a creative approach and a unique and original vision that reinterpreted the forms, languages, practices, and meanings of fashion. At the same time, this material and immaterial knowledge preserved in the Ferré archive has become a driver of innovation, challenging conceptual categories and suggesting multiple languages and interpretations. With this premise, Ferré's methodological approach is becoming increasingly relevant and contemporary, offering new perspectives on fashion design that have learned from the great masters and look at the future through encoding new meanings and exploiting cutting-edge technologies.

The body

The body, for Gianfranco Ferré, is the foundation around which the design of a collection revolves (Frisa, 2009:12). Denoted as the “first value” in his lecture “Composition and Fashion” to the students of the Politecnico di Milano (Ferré, 1997), the body is considered an essential element in the creation of a garment, because it responds to its main needs: moving, interacting, and being in the surrounding space. Ferré conducted formal research on the silhouette, combining sartorial talent with a passion for essential lines that adapt and follow the body, emphasizing multiple formal and aesthetic declinations that move between rigor and indulgence, masculine and feminine, ornament and linearity. In this perspective, the intended *culturalized body* (Fiorani, 2006:17) mediates the experimentation of new languages,

new materials, and new architectures. Thus, the body becomes capable of communicating with multiple and constantly evolving identities (Alfano Miglietti, 2008) and today – through the employment of digital technologies always more pervasive and familiar – it opens to new scenarios, becoming an *extended and hyperconnected body* (Calefato, 2021), where physical limits are overcome. The body acts as a prosthetic tool for the memory to expand multifaceted identities, that as Braidotti states in “Posthuman, All Too Human” (2016: 197): “...the very notion of ‘the human’ is not only de-stabilized by technologically mediated social relations in a globally connected world, but it is also thrown open to contradictory redefinitions of what exactly counts as human.”

The matter

The materialization of the creative intention into a fashion product is the meta-design research path aimed at conceptualizing and defining the tangible “matter” used to create a garment. For Ferré, the research on the matter is a pure experimentation that opens expressive horizons balanced between innovation and experience, technology, and craftsmanship (Ferré, 1998). The choice of materials, treatments, and techniques that shape interlaces, grafts, and new surfaces are not the result of virtuosity but convey the desire to explore new forms of materiality.

Therefore, designing the matter is a research process informed by the wealth of knowledge, know-how, and experimentation that resides in the artisan laboratories of Made in Italy (Vacca, 2013), with which Ferré has loved to confront, work synergistically, and push beyond the limit throughout his career. A working model codified between designers and artisans that, once applied in contemporary times, leads fashion to rethink technological skills, production potentials, and operating modes in favor of a continuous evolution of aesthetics and contents. These can be characterized by a sophisticated manipulation of raw materials and their structures, the juxtaposition of experimental and unusual techniques and processes, and the unhinging of design codes according to compositional rules that use materials distinctively and creatively. An innate attitude toward design is inherent in artisanal skills and know-how (Cavalli et al., 2009)

that is experimentation-driven using cutting-edge technologies, reinforcing the cultural content of fashion and its social and collective value.

The color

The Ferré chromatic research follows a specific design vocabulary where color is not just a formal act but a tool capable of building a dialogical relationship between the material and the cultural dimension of the fashion object (Barthes et al., 2010). Color has an exact semantic connotation because it contributes to the overall narrative, finding its language codes in the garment's identity and the socio-cultural context from which it is inspired (Simmel, 2015). Color is also one of the main protagonists in Ferré's design approach, starting from the design of the garment and its details, accompanying the material's experimental choices, and characterizing the preview of the garment in the outgoing runway show, creating a strongly connoted visual and material continuity (Maddaluno, 2014). Therefore, the designed color has a well-defined function and meaning (Falcinelli, 2017). As an 'intentional' act, color is part of the design process to create and emphasize silhouettes, volumes, and details that can transmit emotions and enhance the body. As a language, color refers to a deeper meaning that is a testimony of a culture, a journey, a feeling, or an experience, such as the constant references to red and brocades of imperial China, the so-called Prussian blue that made Hokusai and Utamaro's style of Japan revolutionary, or the color-turned-material declination of Indian spices (Ferré, 2006). The systematic combination of connotations and meanings outlined through material and chromatic experimentation creates various applications that arise from a rational and emotional process capable of proportioning rigor, harmony, and balance.

The detail

Passion, continuous experimentation on the matter, deep knowledge of tailoring rules, and artisanal techniques are the elements that wisely used in each creation define the identity of Gianfranco Ferré collections through the study of details



(Ferré, 1998). Constructive or decorative details characterize each item and enrich it with intrinsic cultural meanings. The design research explores the dimension of detail defining contamination of techniques, processes, and materials that guarantee the uniqueness of each project. Each element, in the simplicity of a cut or construction, or the opulence of embroidery or application, is designed to enrich the narrative, generating a “*sense of growth and extension*” (Fiorani, 2016:18). Cultural inspirations or sartorial insights suggest unprecedented material contaminations, jewelry sculptures, precious applications. They are generated with the intention of surprise, confirming the extraordinary ability to experiment of Italian fashion manufacturing. Today, this archive of experimental and innovative creativity becomes a cultural heritage to draw from, where the manufacturing tradition can hybridize with the latest technologies and expand the repertoire of possible techniques to characterize a garment or accessory (Martin & Vacca, 2018). Thus, a detail suggests an approach to finding formal solutions that define a new creative identity that subverts the system’s rules through a contamination between craftsmanship and new technologies.

The volume

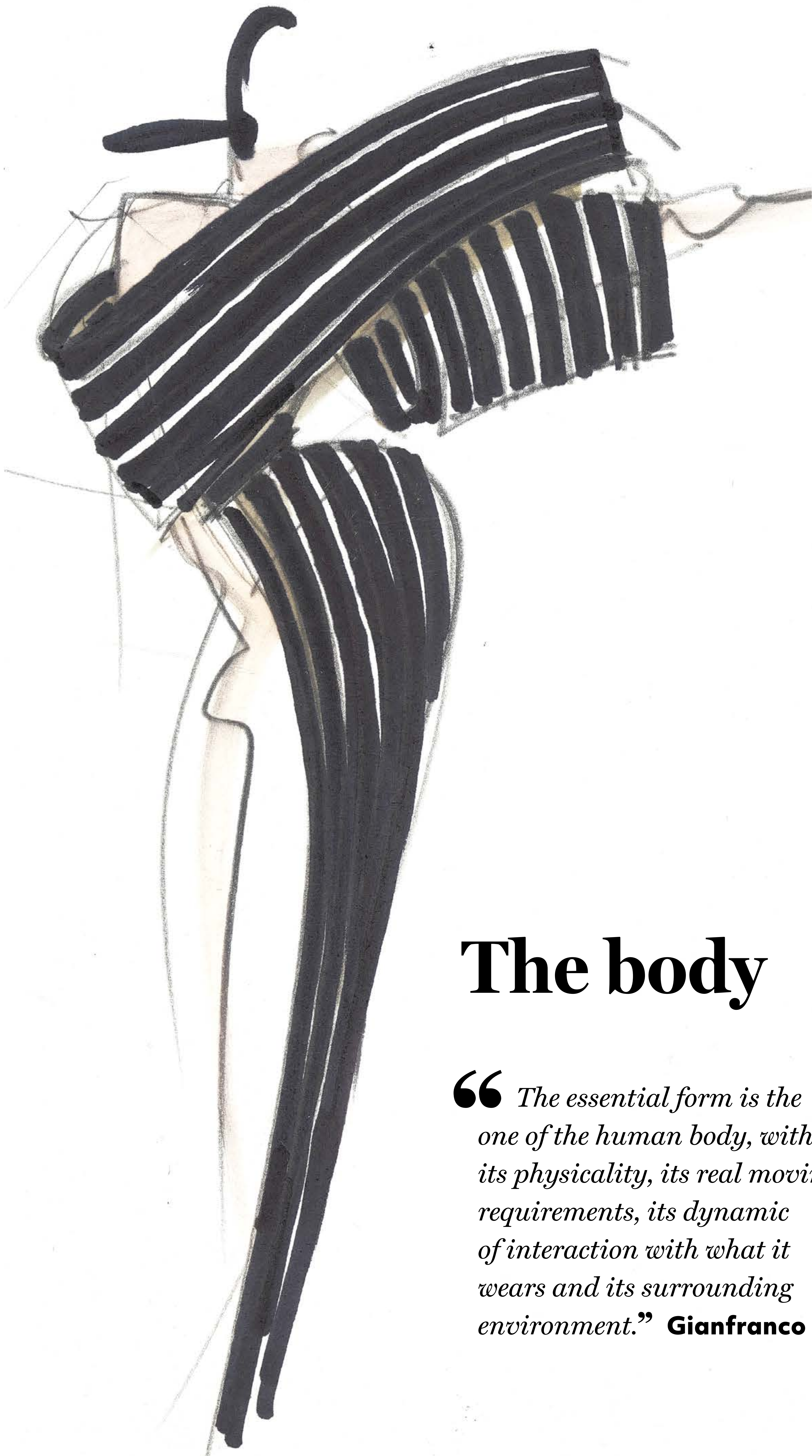
For Ferré, the design action is “*a programmed and conscious intervention on forms*” (Ferré, 2007: 153) based on a compositional approach to the architectural matrix learned during his university studies at the Politecnico di Milano and deepened in his thesis “Methodology of the Approach to Composition” obtained in 1969 under the guidance of the master Franco Albini. The development of the architectural project starts from the need to put in order elements of different natures by applying formal choices in the composition of volumes and spaces, integrating its specific function into the form (Frampton, 1993). Thus, in a fashion project, Ferré approaches the structure of the garment through geometric compositions that follow precise formal rules and return “habitable” three-dimensional forms from the body. In fact, as Sartorio (2005: 226) states, “the search for balance (for Ferré) takes inspiration from the incentives offered by tradition and goes hand in hand with the desire to dare and take risks in choices:

the present is already the future.” The silhouettes are born from a two-dimensional design: the pattern or flat design, and through processes of decomposition, simplification, reduction, elimination, or emphasis, they return to three-dimensional architectures that accompany the body in its movement in space. Therefore, the technical drawing is for Ferré a tool of study to translate his vision into forms inspired by the principles of geometry and to create coexistences between heterogeneous elements such as material, decor, and color in a rigorous balance between measures and proportions (Maddaluno, 2014).

The movement

While in architecture principles such as immanence, stability, and durability persist, in the fashion field, movement is the dimension that best characterizes the relationships between the body and the garment. According to Ferré’s vision, “kinetics” is the subject of study and deep reflection, not only to understand how the body wears an item but also how the garment reacts to the body’s movement by enhancing each expression. The so-called *fashion show drawings* are a crucial example. Conceived for the study of runway exits, these extraordinary Ferré drawings are made with decisive and synthetic strokes often enriched with flashes, material applications, and color accents to epitomize a visual representation of the garment in motion. Today, much of the research in the fashion industry focuses on restoring the kinetic dimension to design fashion items beyond the constraints of their physical form (Larsen, 2016). Indeed, although the actual and dynamic measurements are primary forms of knowledge in fashion, these are still little explored from the representation point of view (Hansen & Morrison, 2014). New digital technologies offer new potentialities in this field. Implementing haptic or kinetic technologies can bring a new dimension to the engagement and digital exploration of those fashion resources by providing users with an extraordinary experience in perceiving materiality, motion, interaction, and insights that often remain invisible (Loke & Robertson, 2013).





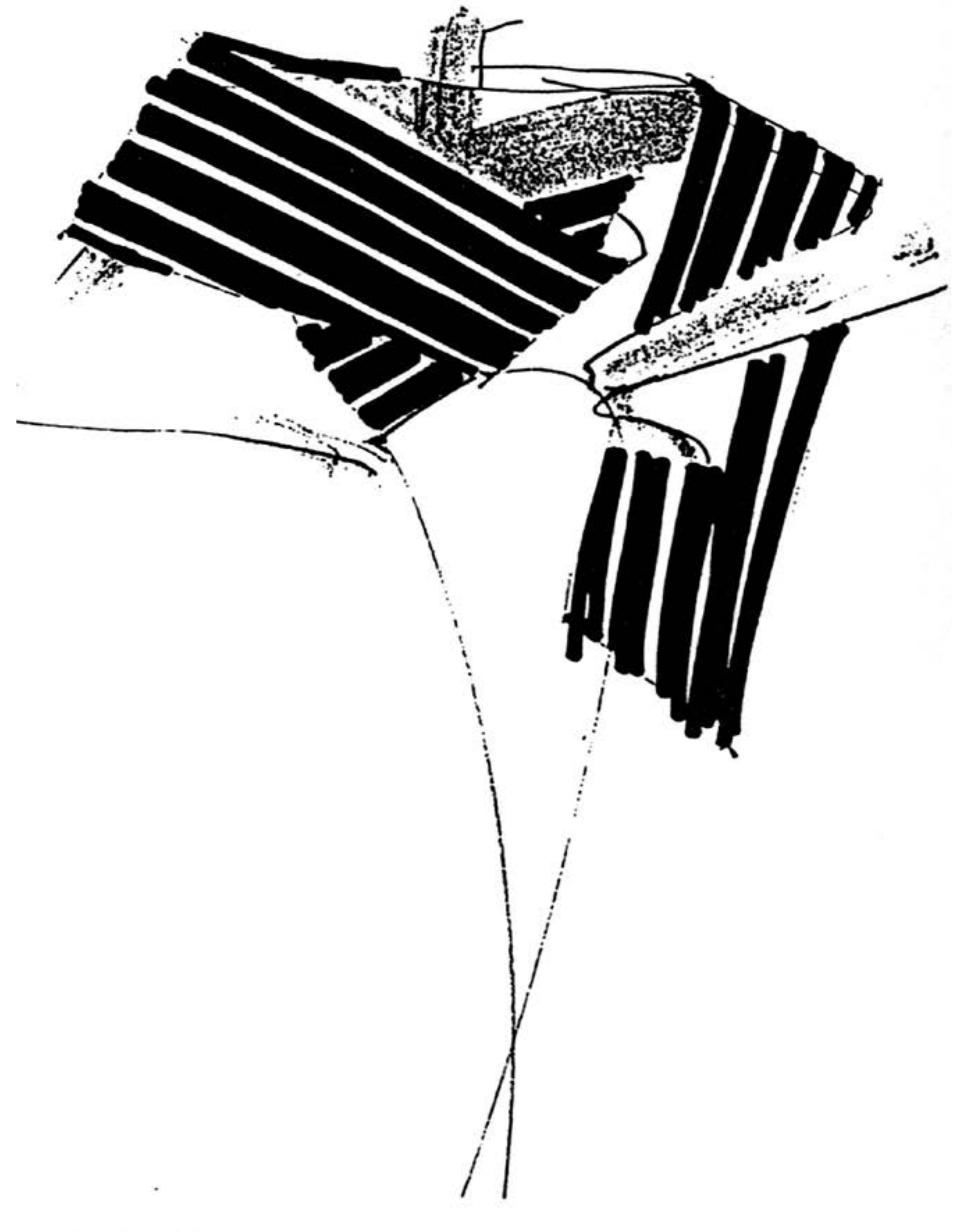
The body

“ *The essential form is the one of the human body, with its physicality, its real moving requirements, its dynamic of interaction with what it wears and its surrounding environment.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



Haute Couture F/W 1986

The drawings explore the endless fascination of the designer for the human body silhouette. They focus on representing its living nature and dynamics, catching the instant of an attitude, a move, a gesture and the way the dress responds to them, once with a sinuous curve or freeing flying bows, sometimes unveiling.

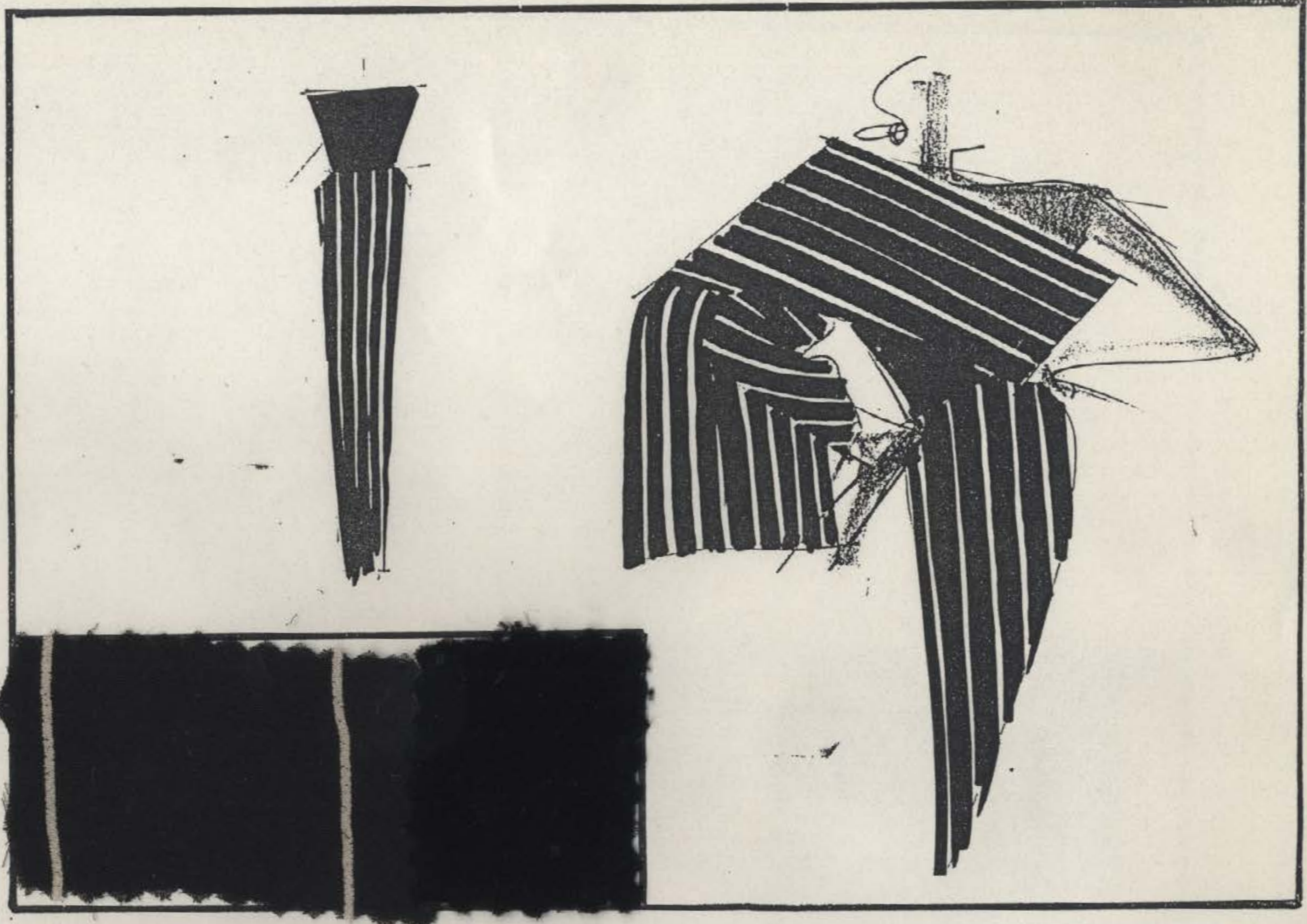


Haute Couture F/W 1986



L'Officiel France, September 1986, ph. François Lamy

GIANFRANCO FERRE A-I 86/87



Modello 40A

TARONI ART. 6482 DIS. 25 COL. 1 H 120
100% SETA

REDAE/11 PRESTIGE SUPER NERO H 90
81% COTONE 19% SETA

* FAVRE: (MOD. 40A) CONFEZIONE ABITO
FRACCI: CONFEZIONE SCIARPA



The matter

“ *From the matter, fashion derives its substance, its physical and tangible dimension. A fundamental part of my creative process has always embraced an innovative and curiosity-driven approach to the matter.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



Advertising, Ready-to-wear F/W 1989, ph. Albert Watson

Rather than speaking of material, Gianfranco Ferré always preferred the word “matter,” to better explain his alchemic approach to pure elements – i.e. strings, tapes, straw – to rework them into new materials and fabrics. In the sketches, the layering of different drawing techniques, lines thickness, collage of materials do incorporate the same meticulous research on materiality embedded in his final garments.



Ready-to-wear F/W 1989





Ready-to-wear F/W 1991





The color

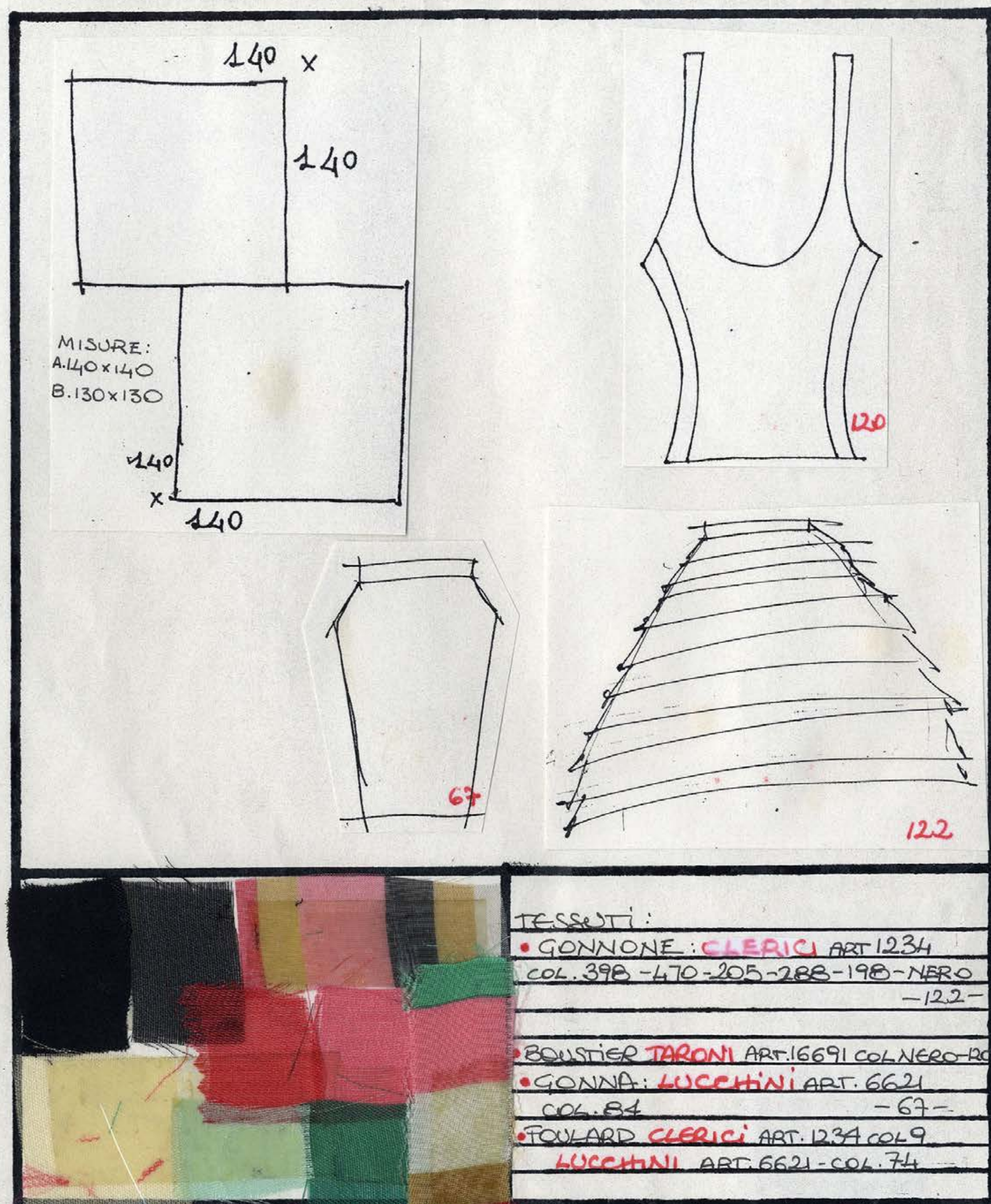
“ *The color represents an essential category within the whole idea of a new garment, of its shape and nature, embedded in it since the very first concept and sketch on paper.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



Haute Couture S/S 1989

The chromatic research run by Gianfranco Ferré is clearly expressed by this cluster of drawings. Color is not only a superficial dimension characterizing the appearance of a garment: it shapes the dress itself. At times it fills volumes, or shines as colored glow, sometimes transforming into a touch of shimmering or materializing into encrusted gems.

GIANFRANCO FERRE couture PE89



38 Modello 67 · 120 · 122



Advertising, Haute Couture S/S 1989, ph. Stefano Batic



Haute Couture S/S 1989





Haute Couture S/S 1989





The detail

“ *The inner harmony of a garment can be broken on purpose: it is enough to put the attention on a detail, such as exasperating the dimensions and proportions of a part of the garment, creating intentional excesses.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



Ready-to-wear F/W 1991

Details and decorations have a rather unique function, expressing Ferré's tension to transform his creations in theatrical plots, searching for what he defines "effects". A watercolor floral carpet gently lied down the shoulders, glittering tridimensional polka-dots, fluffy exaggerated bows, are intentionally applied on his volumetric or slick silhouettes, in search for that "wonder," as important to him as the rational composition of the garment.

610

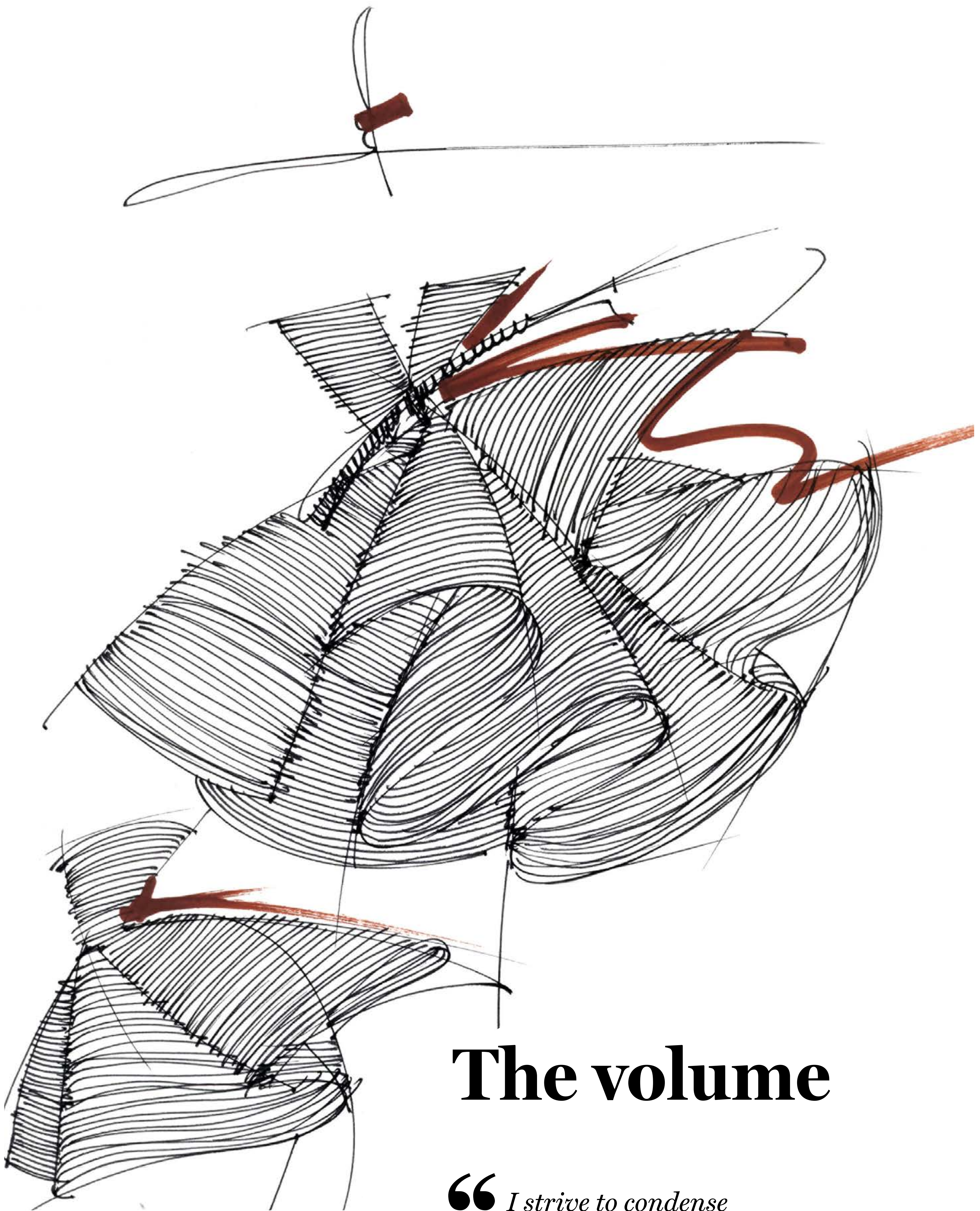
PERIOD
DUE





Ready-to-wear F/W 1991





The volume

“ *I strive to condense dreams and emotions into my clothing, and at the same time I inevitably think in terms of volumes, of structures and geometries that give the clothing an identity, a substance and a logic.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**

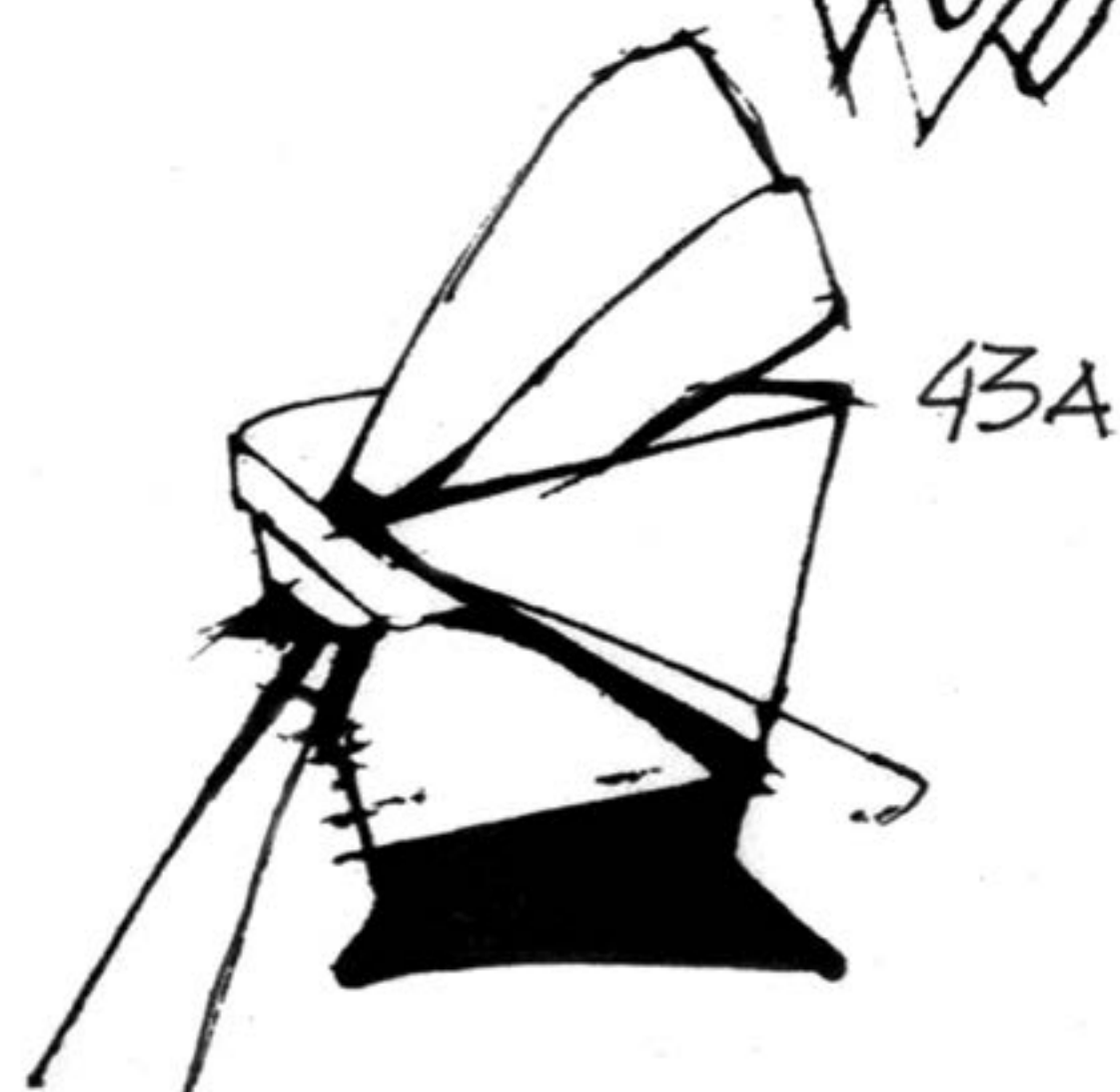
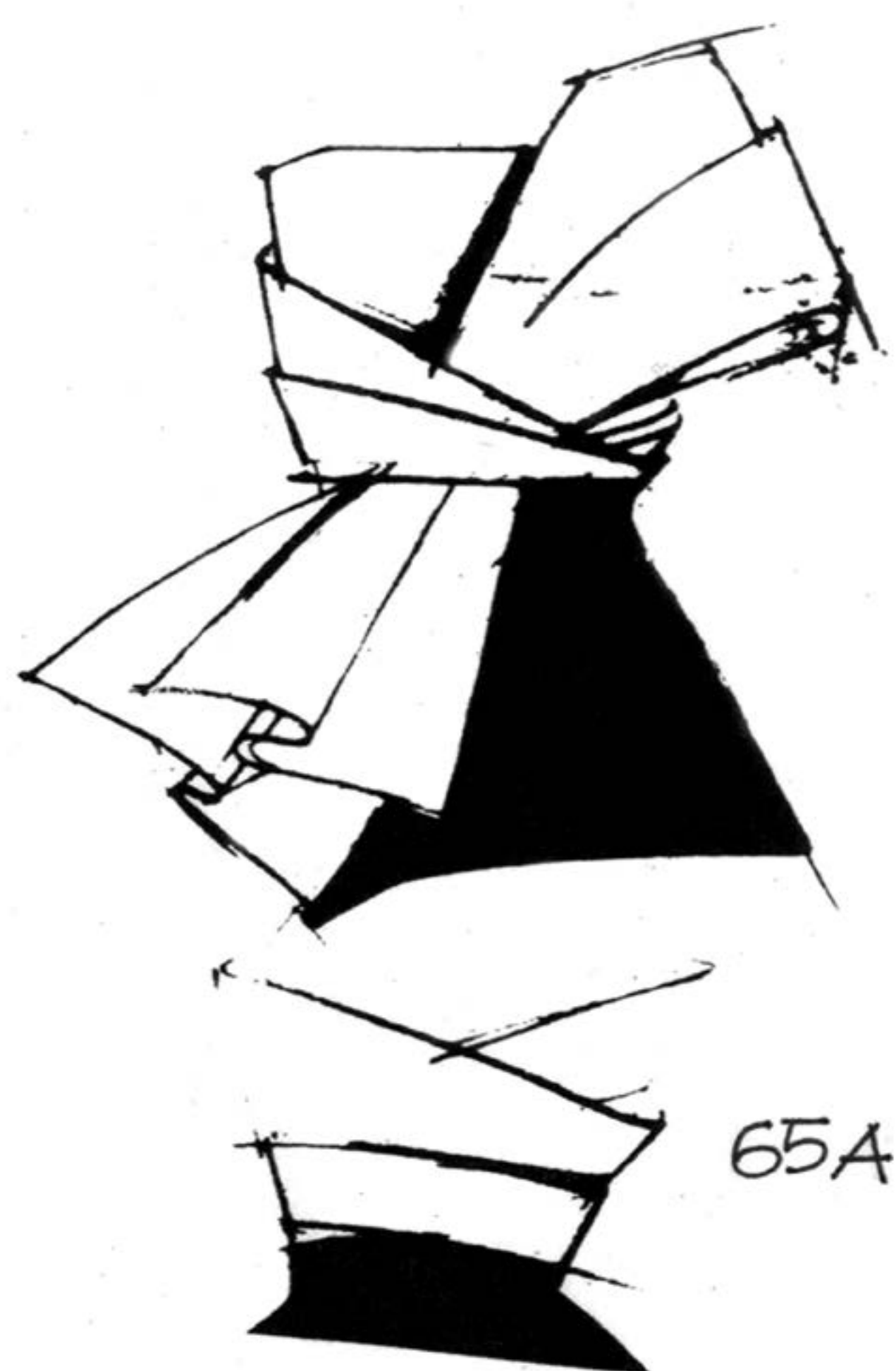
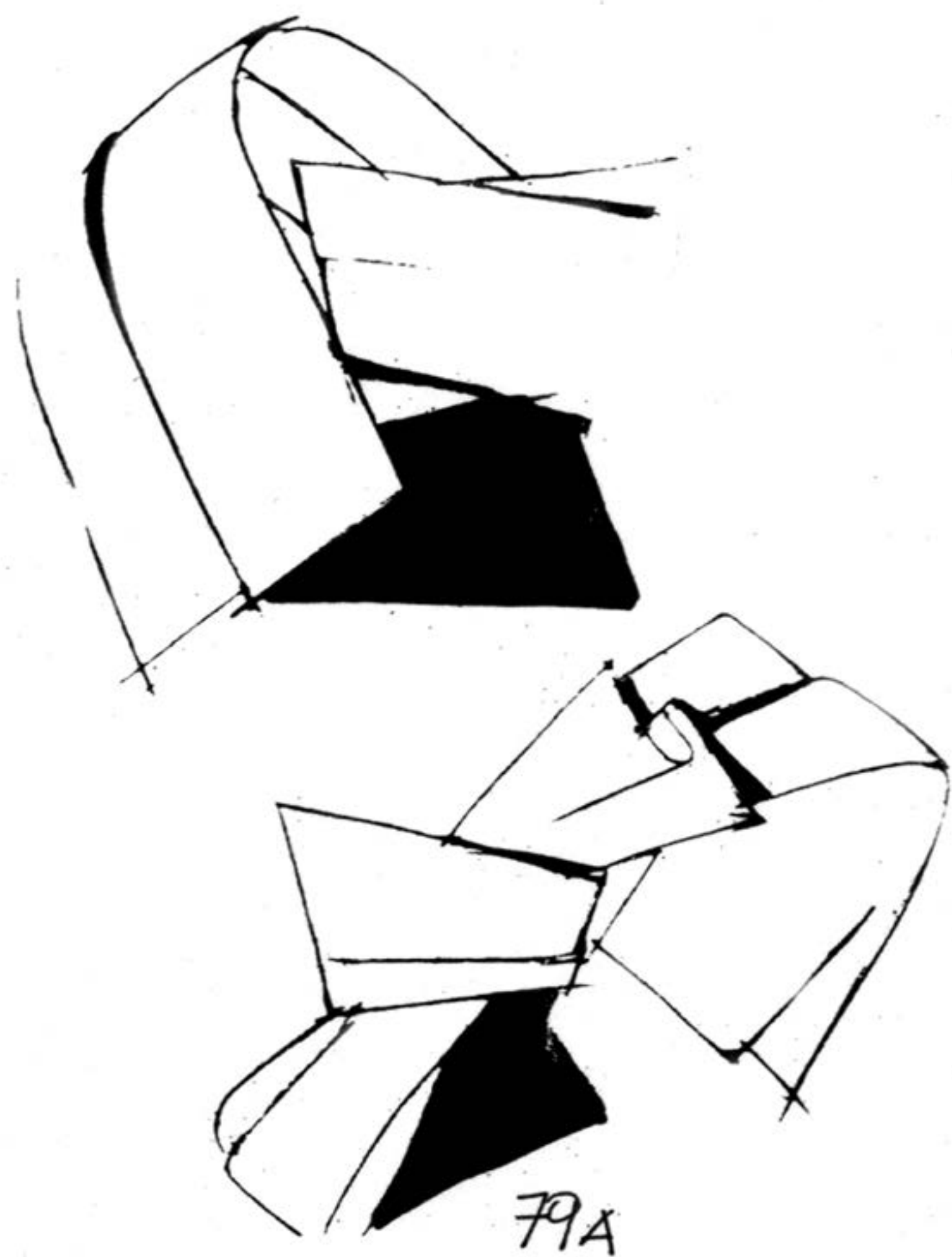


Haute Couture F/W 1987

Ferré's conception of the construction of dresses belongs to his architectural approach. He often creates a dialogue between the natural silhouette of the body and the geometry of the garment. Through an interplay between harmonizing and contrasting, and mixing and overlaying circles, triangles, cones, he creates a new "living space" for the human figure.



Haute Couture F/W 1987





Haute Couture F/W 1987





Advertising, Haute Couture F/W 1987, ph. Herb Ritts



The movement

“ *My garments are born to dress living and moving figures, that respond to precise requirements of freedom and comfort.”* **Gianfranco Ferré**

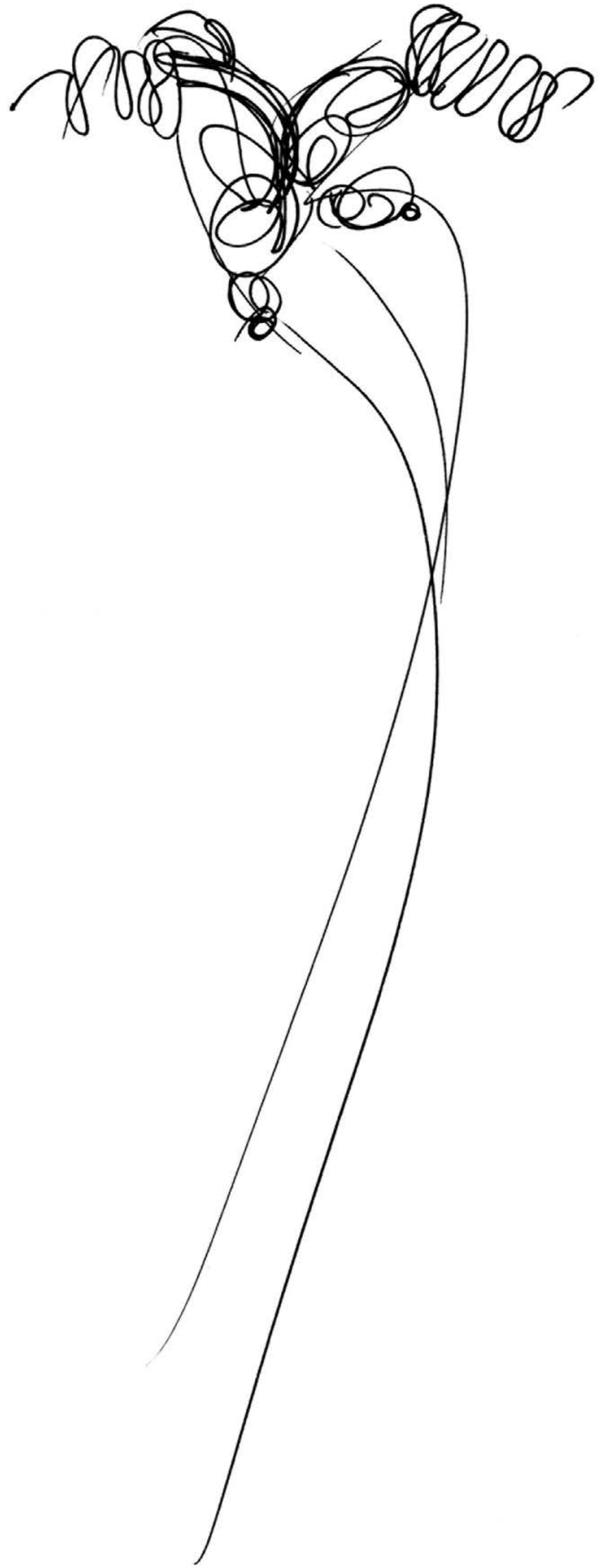


Ready-to-wear F/W 1990

Unlike architecture, fashion design needs to incorporate the kinetic dimension: garments require to be conceived as moving objects. Ferré's endless research to encode this category in his creations is well expressed by this series of drawings with their net borders, quick signs, rapid lines, where the nib seems to have worked through a single gesture, without detaching from the paper sheet.

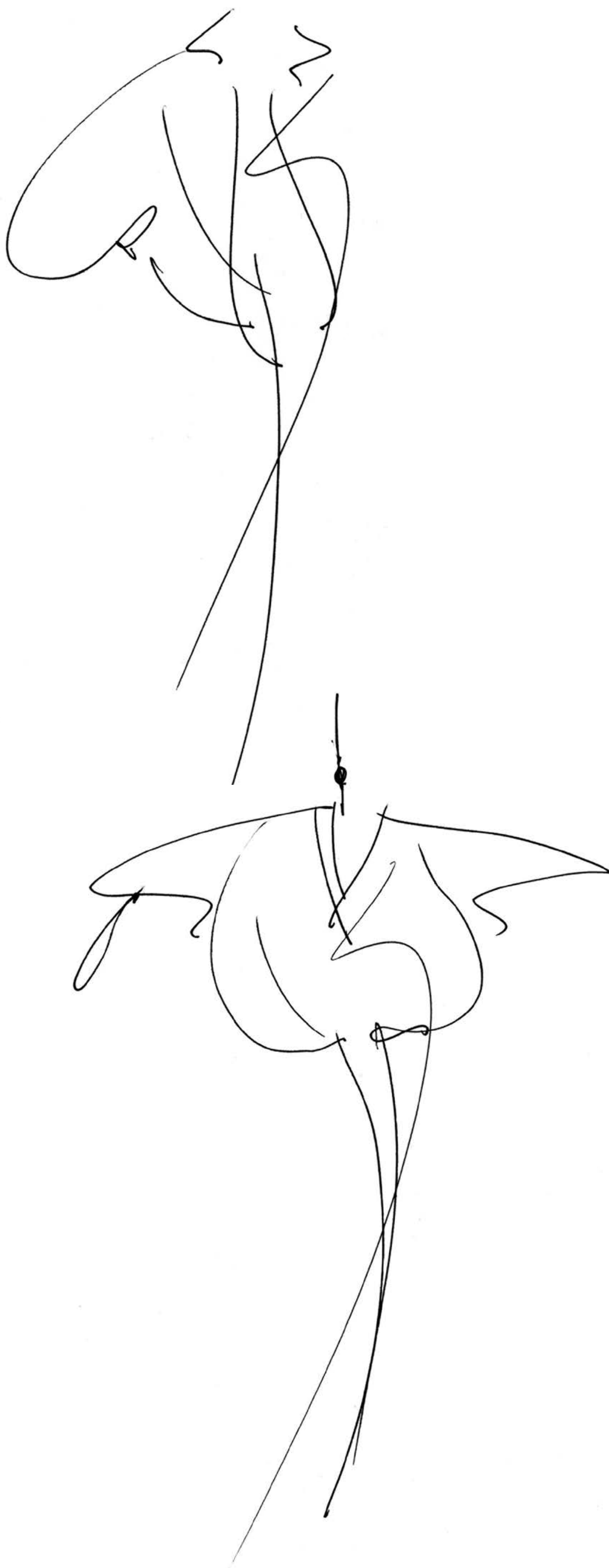


Ready-to-wear F/W 1990





Ready-to-wear F/W 1990



Design Archetype

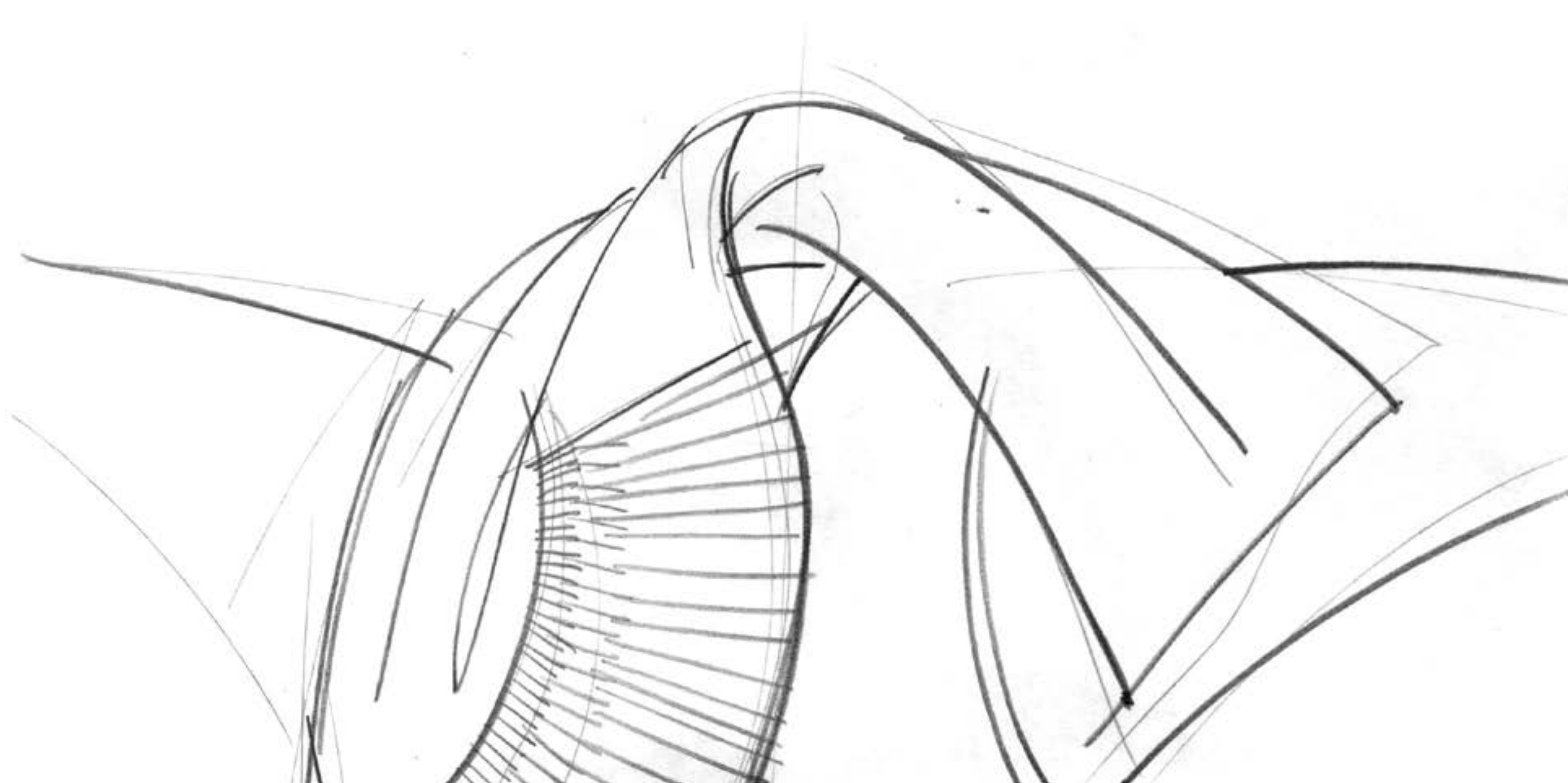
3.

“ Talking about my white blouse is all too easy. It’s all too easy to declare a love that covers the span of my creative path. A hallmark perhaps the ultimate signature of my style, which enfolds a constant pursuit of innovation and a no less unfailing love of tradition.

A combination of tradition and innovation is what originally triggered the Ferré white shirt, set the story in motion. Tradition in the form of the men’s shirt, ever-present and encoded element of the wardrobe. Which tickled my fancy for invention, incited my propensity for rethinking the tenets of elegance and style in an interplay of pure fantasy and contemporary design. Read with sense of glamour and poetry, freedom and energy, the formal and quasi-immutable white shirt took on an infinity of identities, a multiplicity of inflections. To the point of becoming, I believe, a must of modern-day femininity...

In the lexicon of contemporary elegance, I like to think that the white blouse is a universal term every woman can ‘pronounce’ the way she prefers...

This process always entails a keen rethinking of shapes. The white blouse is never the same yet always unmistakable. It may be light and floaty, flawlessly severe (if the mannish cut remains), as sumptuously enveloping as a cloud, as skinny and snug as a bodysuit. Some parts, primarily collar and cuffs, can become emphatic; others expressly lose ‘force’ and may even disappear (back, shoulders, sleeves). It billows delicately with every motion, almost free of gravity. It frames the face like a fabulous corolla. It sculpts the body in a slick second-skin mode. It is the eclectic interpreter of all types of materials: sheer organza, crisp taffeta, glossy satin, duchesse, poplin, chiffon, georgette...” **Gianfranco Ferré**



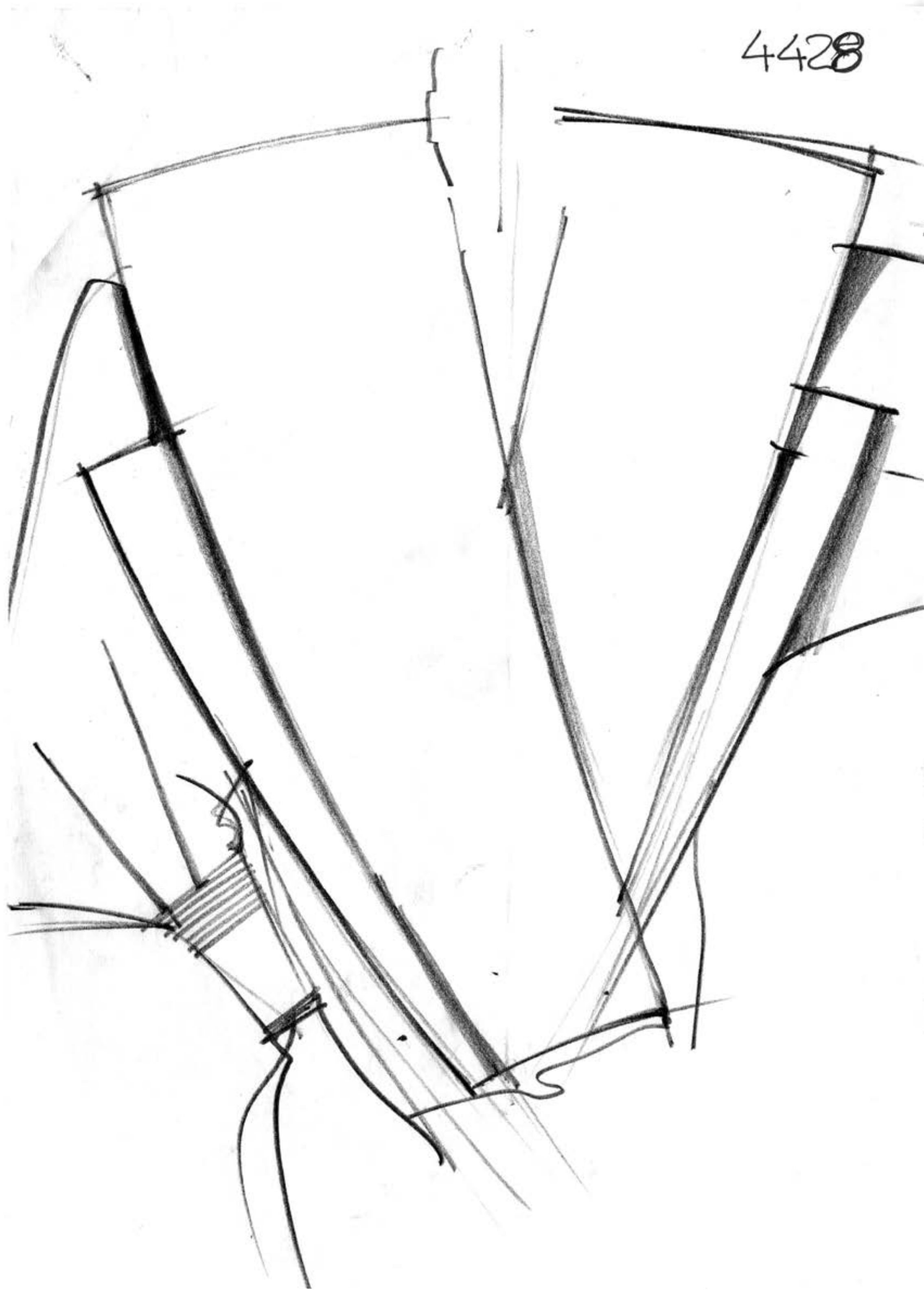


ph. Leonardo Salvini

Sailor glam

S/S 1982 Ready-to-wear

Silk organza, honeycomb patterned
cotton piquépaper



White silk organza open-front blouse. Wide kimono sleeves tapering toward bottom thanks to four pleats, two-button cuffs. One central inverted pleat and four diagonal pleats make for a slimmer line in back, while two rectangular panels go from front opening all the way to the boxy white cotton piqué plastron collar. On the runway a broad silk stripe sash knotted lavishly at one side of waist gave the blouse an extra special touch.

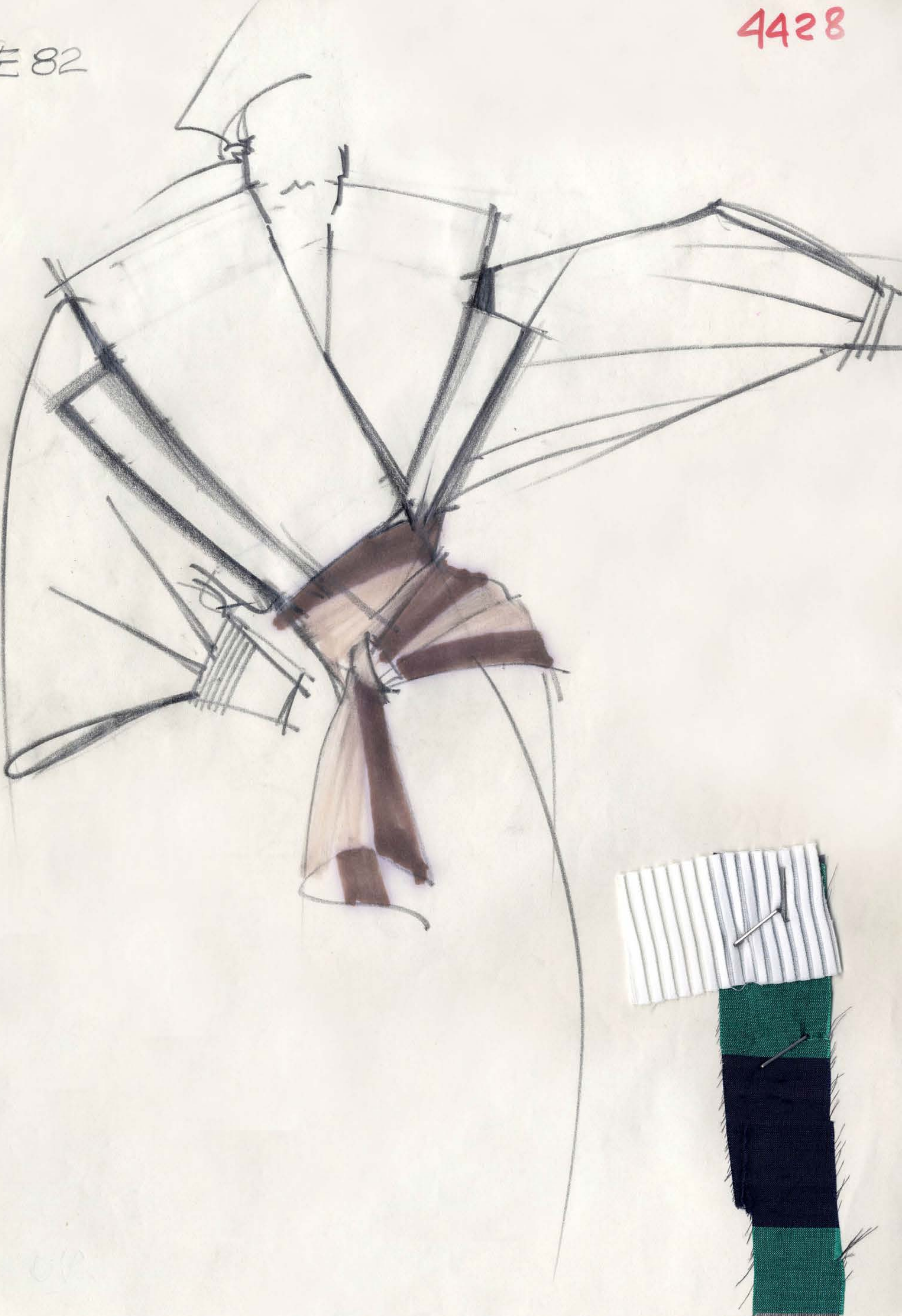
This design captures a perfect balance between the lusciously soft shape of a kimono sleeve and the severe elegance of the ample neck. In both cases, the pleats in back and on sleeves ensure moderate proportions and volumes.

The blouse belongs to a Ferré collection with a Navy uniform inspiration. Here there are also references to traditional sailor suits. In the early '80s revisitations of military clothing marked a big trend: namely, the flawless style of an officer on parade meets the pure refinement of modern Italian fashion.



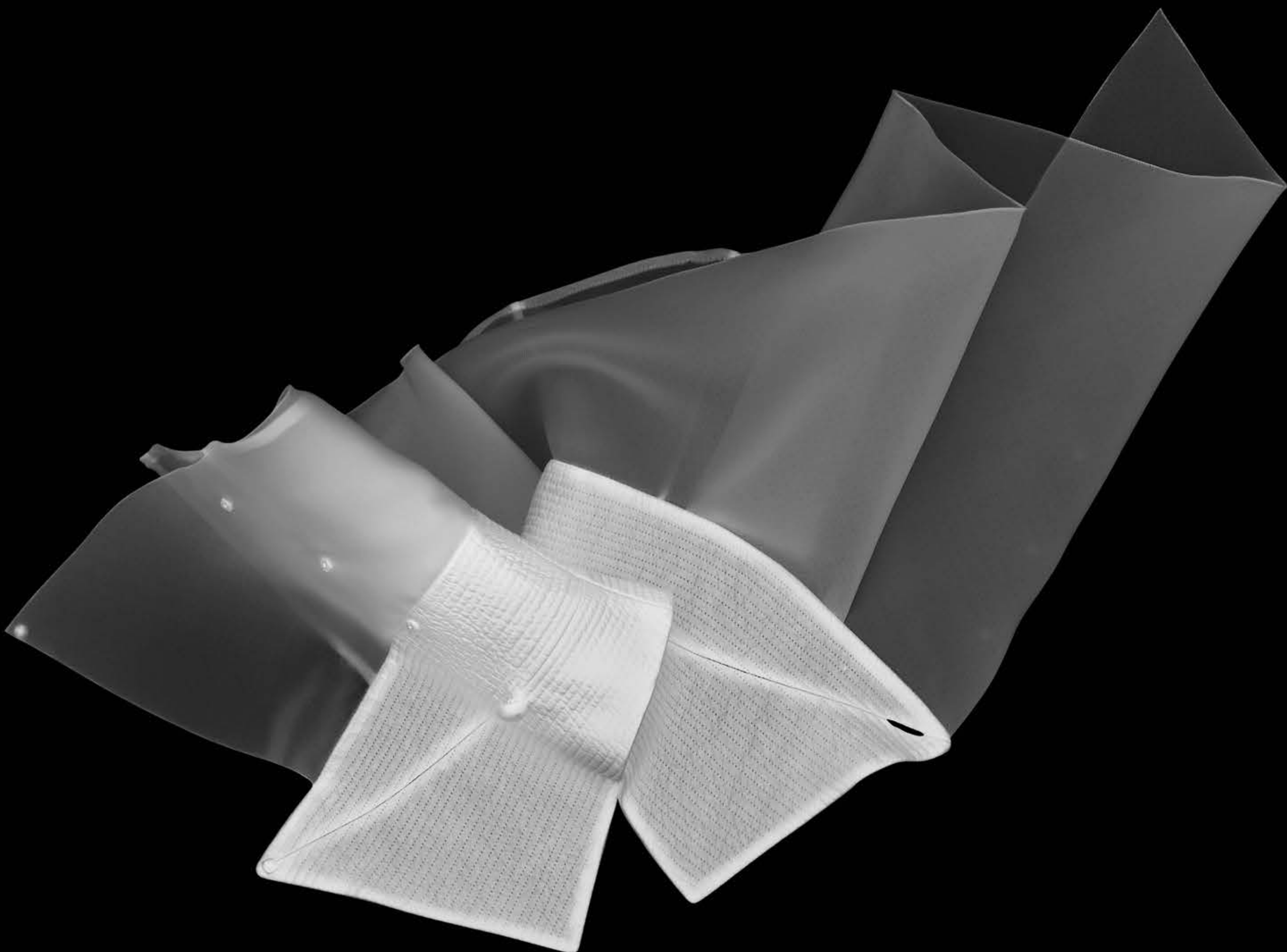
4428

P/E 82





Advertising, Ready-to-wear S/S 1982, ph. Guy Bourdin



ph. Leonardo Salvini

Calice

F/W 1982 Ready-to-wear
Silk gazar, silk satin, silk taffeta

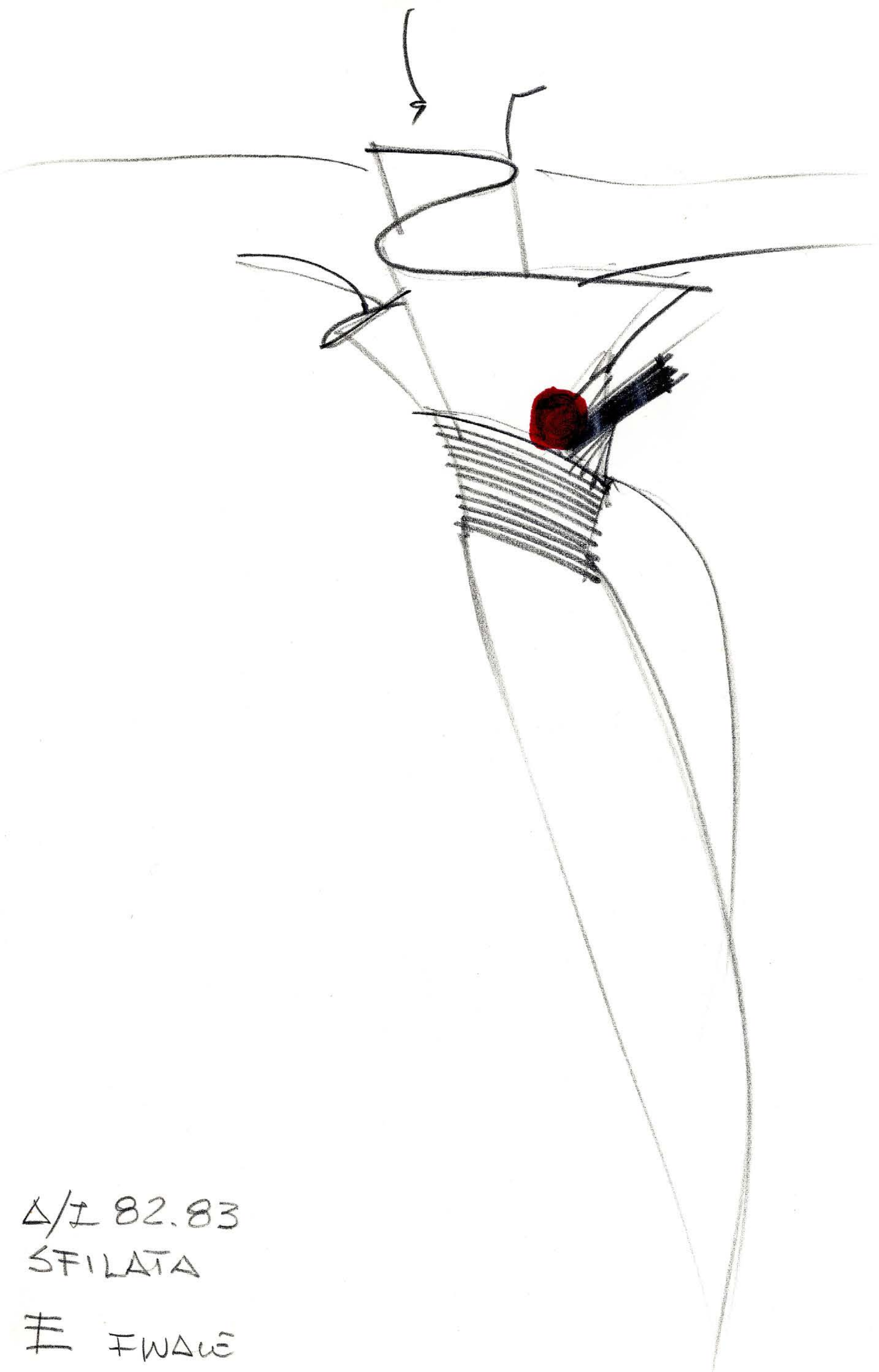


Low-cut bustier opens in front, with satin band defining waist and gazar, calla lily decorating upper border.

The wide body-hugging band complete with topstitching is made from two symmetrical horizontal strips, each cut in three pieces. The left-hand side buttoning favors the creation of a point basque at center front by using one end of the band. The top part of the bustier, sewn from two pieces of gazar, presents an asymmetric cut. The inner piece of fabric, cut in three parts, fastens snugly in front with a snap, while the outer one (in two parts overlapping in back) accentuates the bustline on left and features two deep oblique pleats on right. The gazar has a thick whip-stitch hem. This blouse belongs to a collection with a historical sword duel inspiration. Here the imaginary spirals traced in the air by Old World swordmen are referenced in the graceful movement of the pieces of silk gazar. The fabric's airy fluidity strikes a perfect contrast with the topstitched satin band.



Ready-to-wear F/W 1982



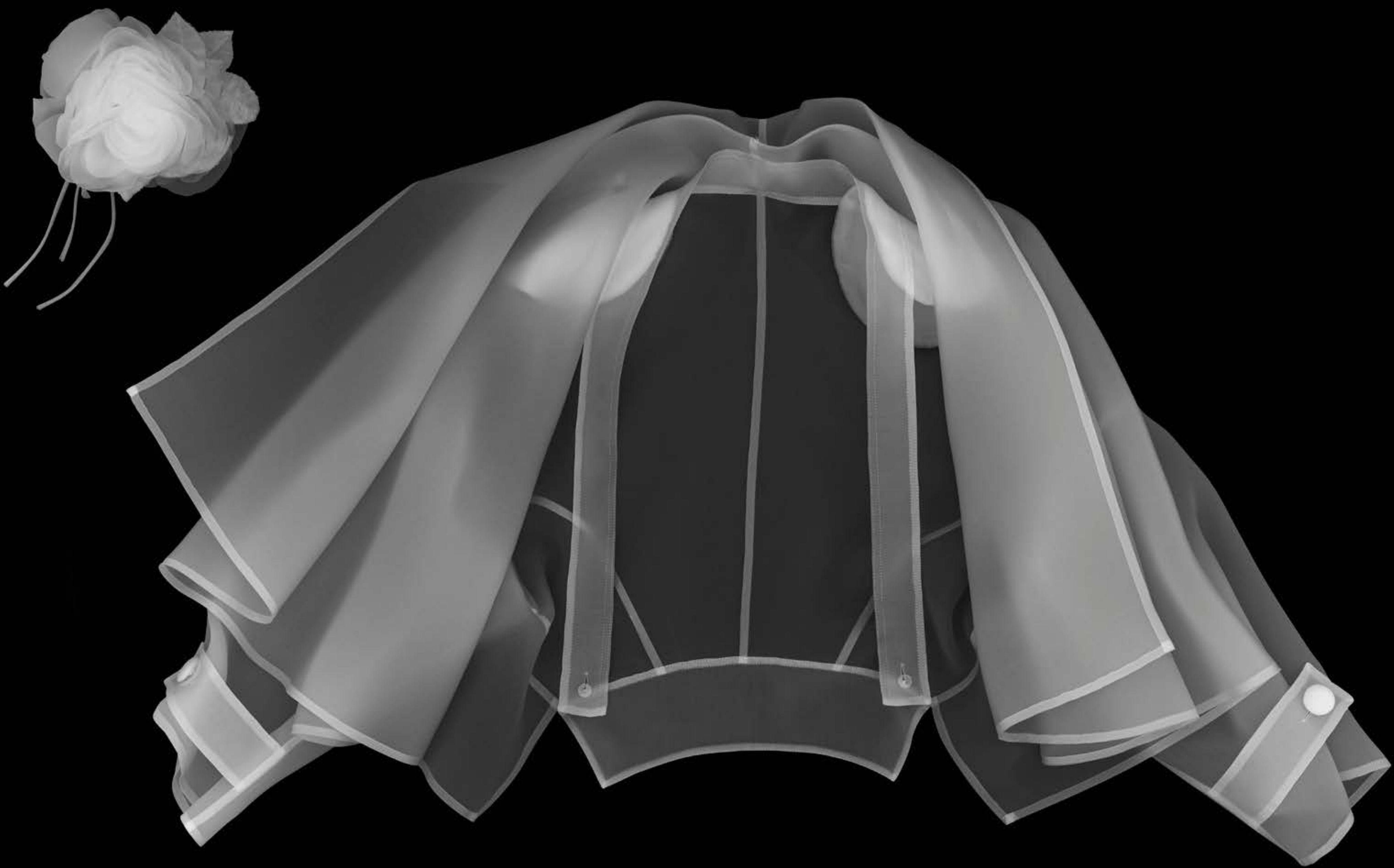
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ΣΦΙΛΑΤΑ

≡ ΓΩΔΩ



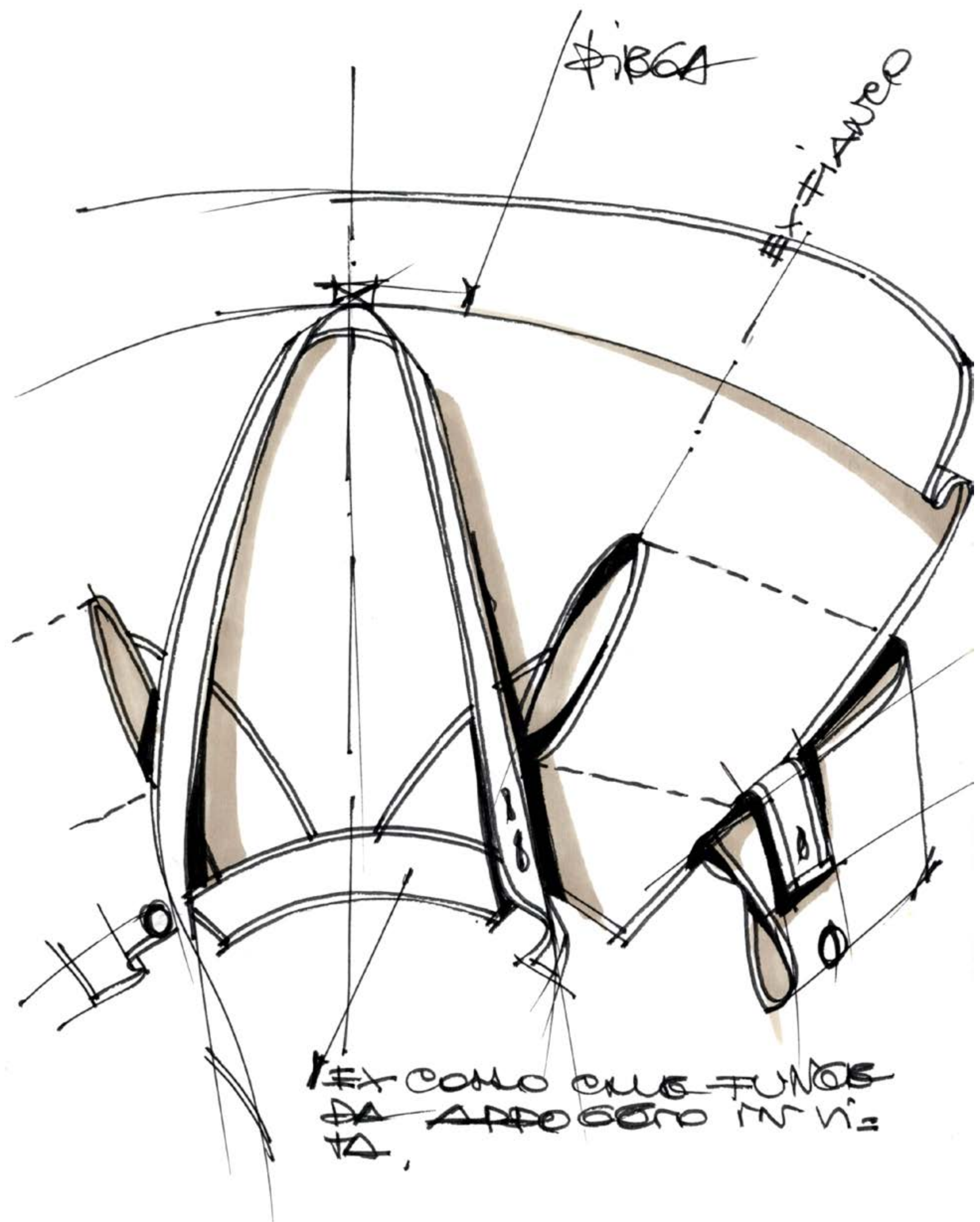
Advertising, Ready-to-wear F/W 1982, ph. Herb Ritts



ph. Leonardo Salvini

Canone inverso

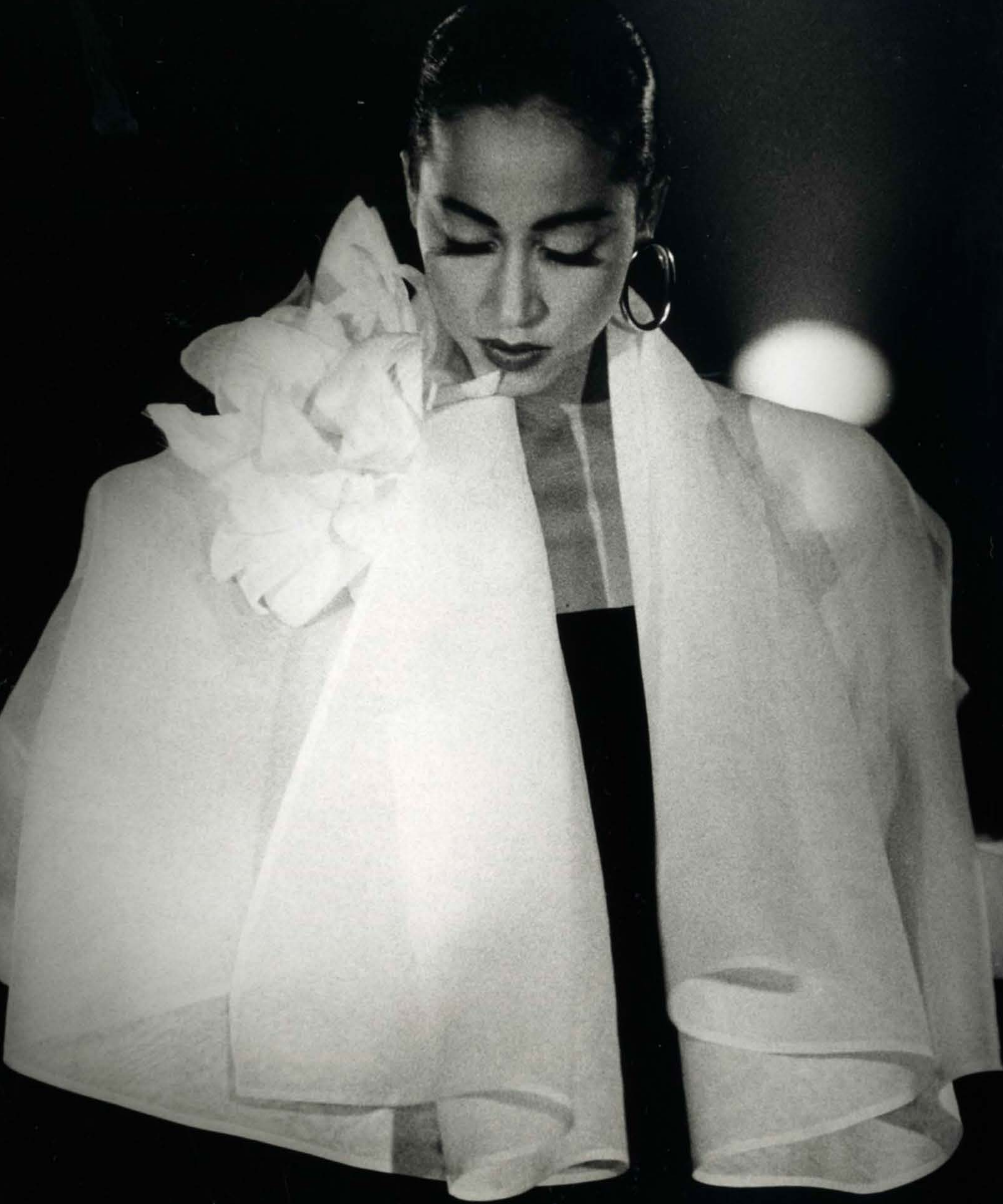
F/W 1986 Ready-to-wear
Triple layer silk organza



Long wide cut open-front shirt made from four sections of fabric, two (semi curvy) in back and two (overlapping bombé) in front. Bias-cut neckband style collar. Straight dropped shoulders with triangular appliqués in back, ample cuffless sleeves with button tab. Conceptually, the shirt features an inversion of upper and lower parts thanks to the use of a ribbon strap (attached in the preliminary drawing to the mid back waist, in the final version to the nape area) buttoned at the collar end (later the back hem). The strap connects symmetrically to two shoulder pads. When worn, the shirt resembles a small shapely jacket where bottom hem becomes a reverse collar complete with big organza flower decor.

Here the designer operates exclusively on an experimental level, free of all preconceptions, with the sole aim – step by step from initial sketch to final product – of subverting the standard rules of shirt construction while investing a wearable garment.

This is Ferré at the height of his creative and intellectual powers.



Ready-to-wear F/W 1986



GIANFRANCO
FERRE



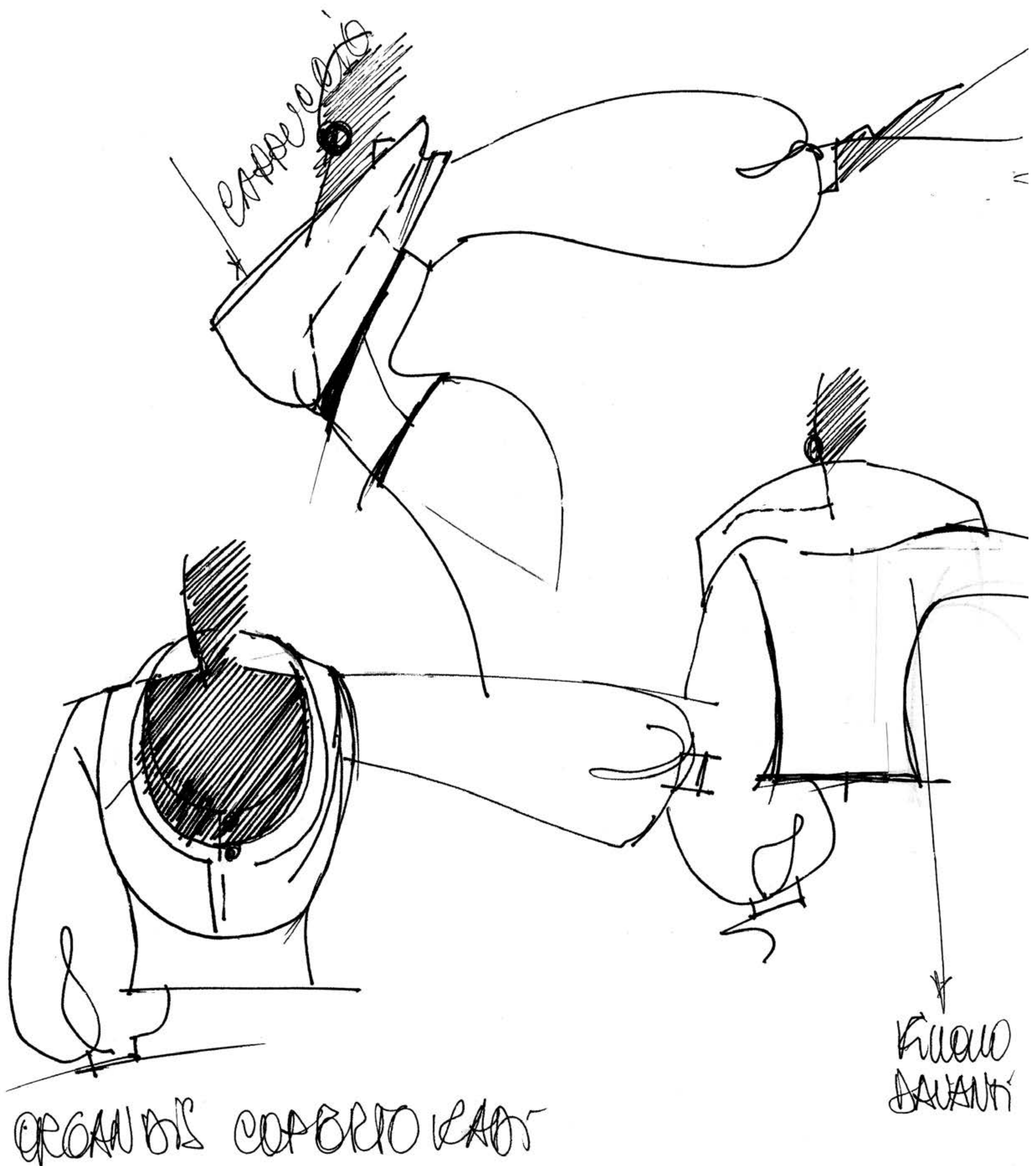
Advertising, Ready-to-wear F/W 1986, ph. Herb Ritts



ph. Leonardo Salvini

Classic glamour

F/W 1990 Ready-to-wear
Silk organza



Blouse in semi-kimono cut with back opening, some tapering at waist, conjunction of two halves (front and back) for definition of sleeves with blousy effect near regular pearl-button cuff. Truncated cone cowl neck high in front, low in back. Hidden zip closure in back.

This creation belongs to a collection finding expression in a fashion version of rhythmic counterpoint. The simplicity of the sartorial cut merges harmoniously with the lush fluidity of collar and sleeves. The former drapes softly in back, sparking fond memories of the classic regal elegance of 1950s haute couture.



Ready-to-wear F/W 1990



GIANFRANCO
FERRE



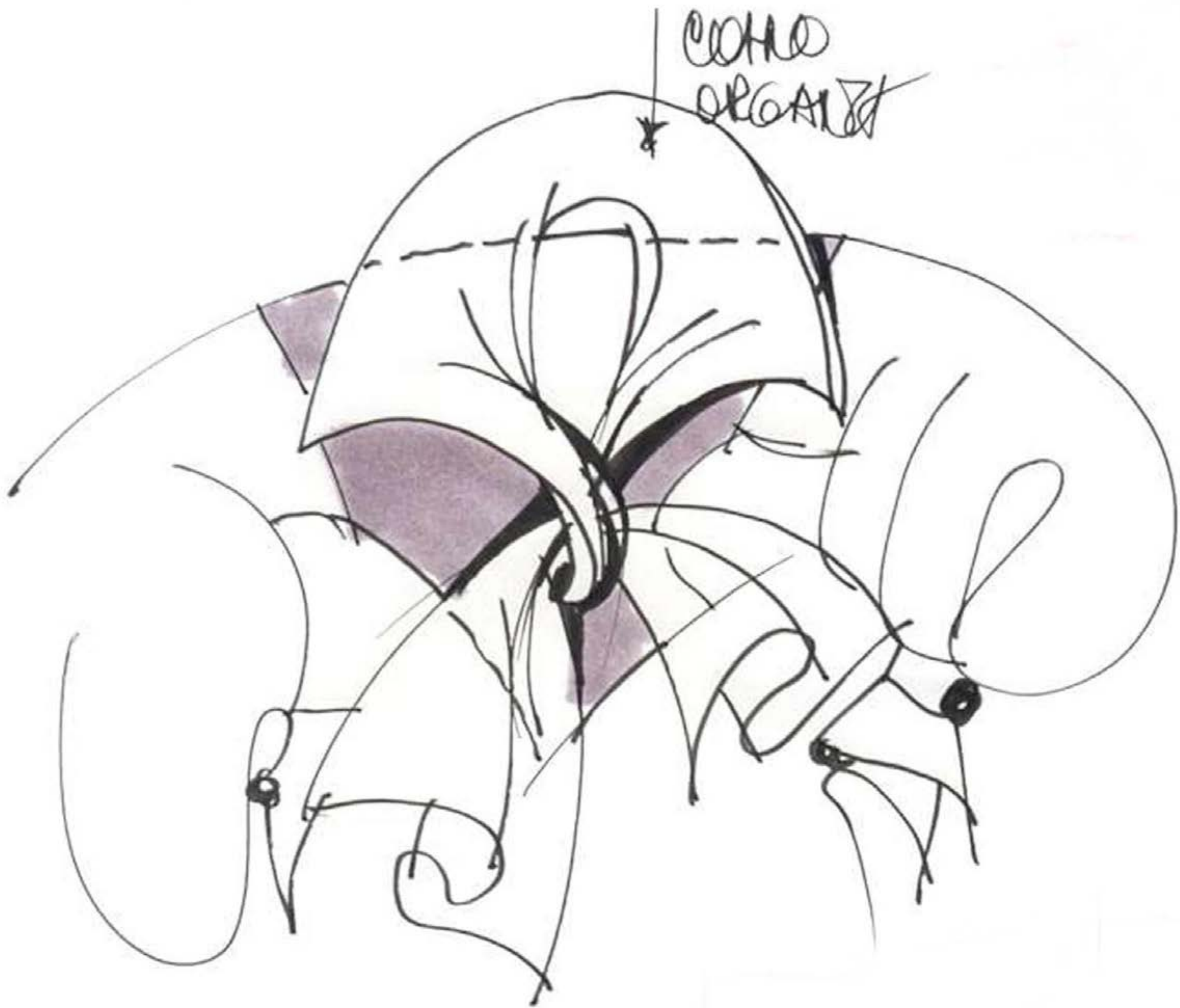
Advertising, Ready-to-wear F/W 1990, ph. Gian Paolo Barbieri



ph. Leonardo Salvini

Cravat

F/W 1991 Ready-to-wear
Silk organza, silk crêpe de chine



V-neck blouse with back zip opening. Body of blouse in double crêpe de chine, with specific cut from below armhole to waist. Billowy radial-construction organza sleeves with wide cufflink tab and most unusual cuff. Wonderfully ample rectangular cut lapel collar at once accenting the V neck and knotting lavishly at midpoint.

This design is full of references to late-18th-century items of men's and women's clothing. The open shoulder collar evokes the use of a fichu to compensate for the robe à la polonaise's typically low-cut neckline, while the bow knot is reminiscent of the distinctly mannish cravat dating to the same period. Masculine and feminine intersect in the definition of a unique and harmonious whole where, true to form, details make all the difference.



Ready-to-wear F/W 1991



GIANFRANCO
FERRE

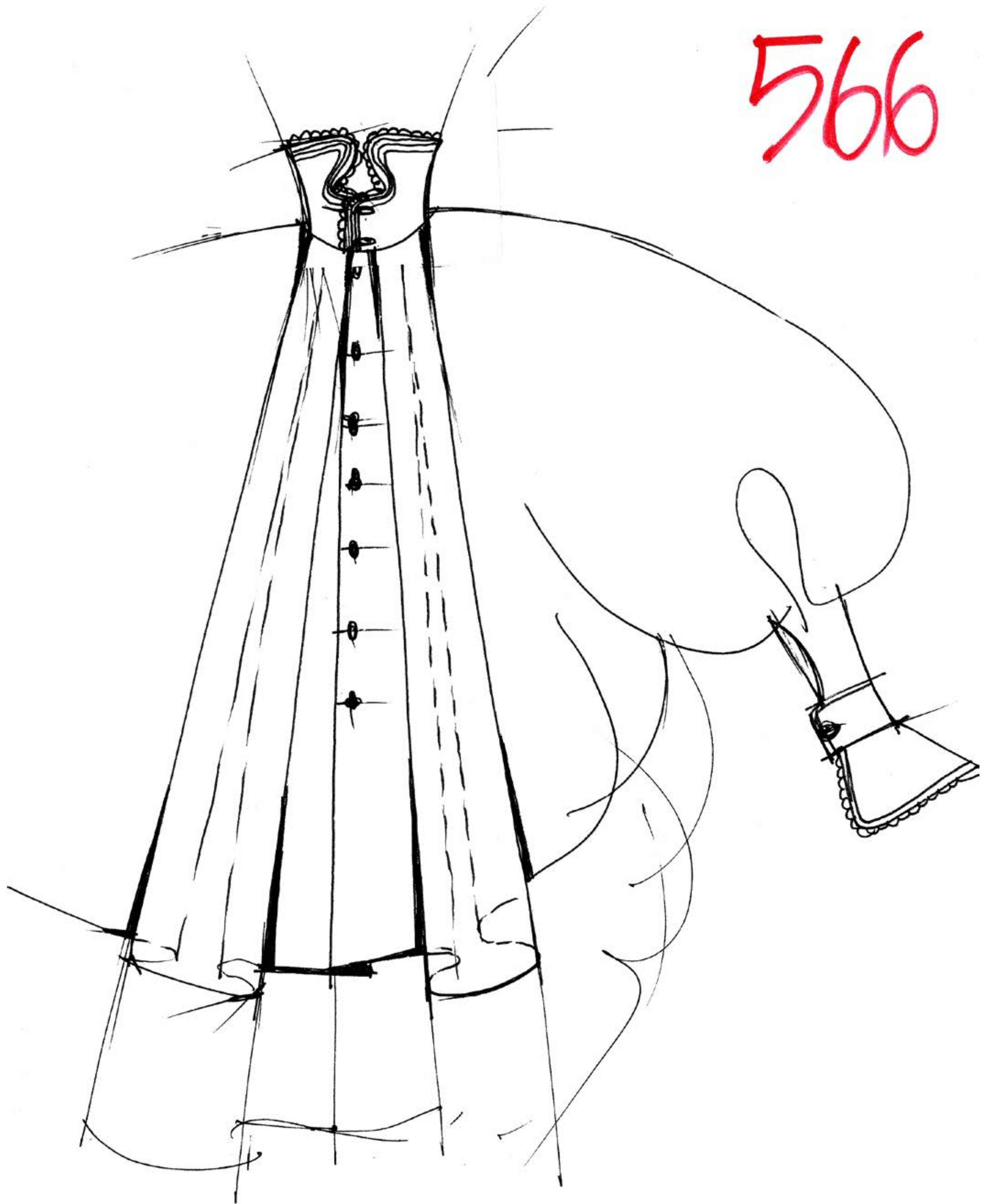




ph. Leonardo Salvini

d'Artista

F/W 1993 Ready-to-wear
Silk taffeta, silk organza,
cotton lace



Two-layer taffeta shirt with front opening, organza lining. Three-piece circular cut, two box pleats front and back. Gathered sleeves with six shape-defining pleats at armfolds, exquisitely long and narrow twin-button cuffs with mechanical embroidery edging. Intermediate straight cut taffeta layer for major structural support. Lace trim on collar, cuffs and organza lining. This design enfoldes specific features of late-19th-century fashion. In particular, the close-fitting collar and cuffs and the lovely decorative elements call forth women's dresses from that period, while the rich volumes of sleeves spark images of jackets dating to the 1890s.



Ready-to-wear F/W 1993



GIANFRANCO
FERRE



Vogue UK, August 1993, ph. Albert Watson

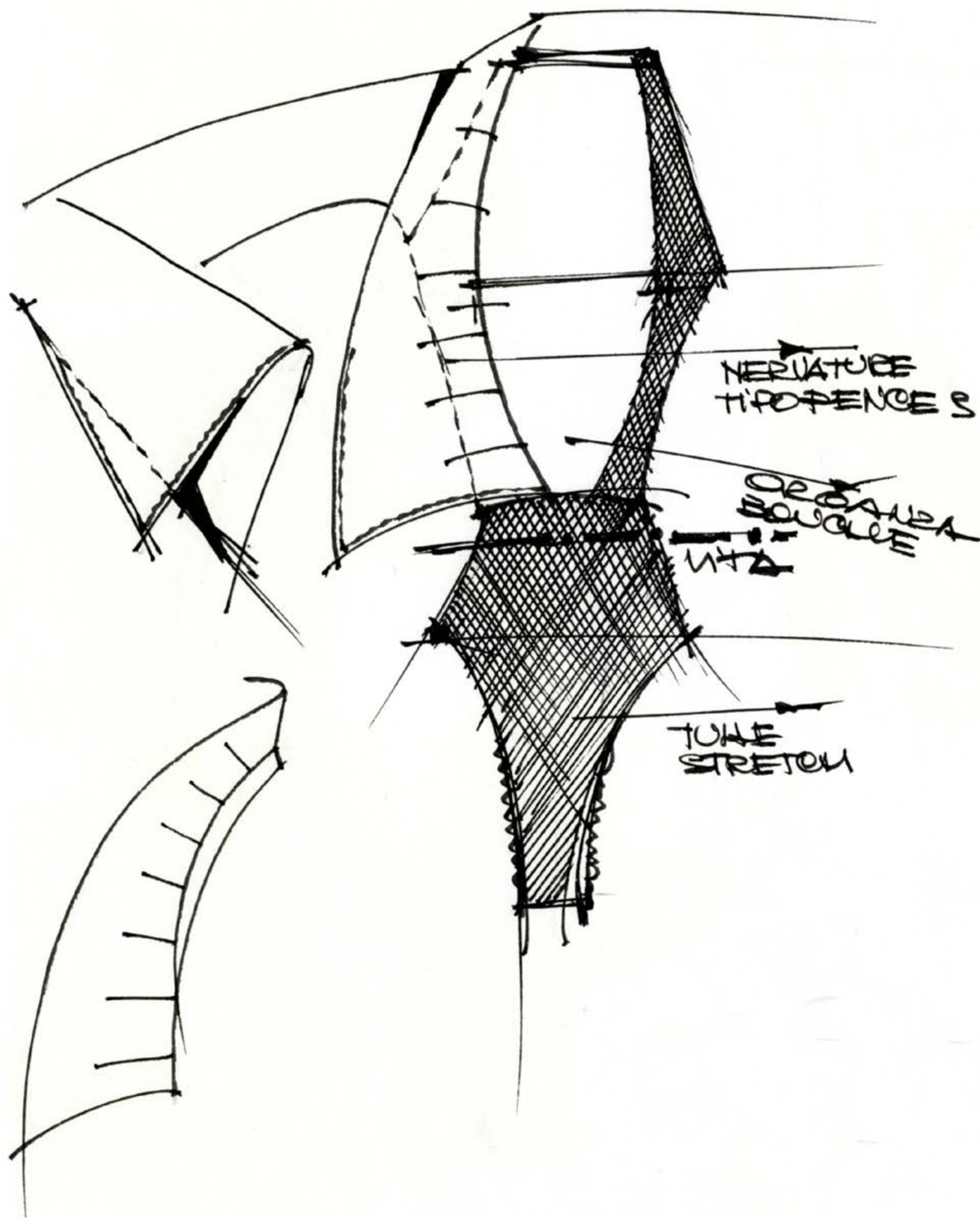


ph. Leonardo Salvini

Libellula

F/W 1995 Ready-to-wear
Silk organza, stretch tulle

GF 241



Bodysuit shirt, with left side zip opening, in sheer white stretch tulle with low flat band neckline, cuffless radical-construction funnel sleeves with inside opening from armfolds all the way to end. Shawl collar down to waist with twenty-one handsewn darts at one creating horizontal rib effect and making lifting/turning the collar wonderfully easy.

Lightness, simplicity and transparency are the key concepts behind this design. Nevertheless, in the details the sense of lightness comes very much alive: the fluid sleeves with slits for arms have the beauty and delicacy of fluttering dragonfly wings, while the richly ribbed collar stands up in back 16th-century Florentine Medici style.

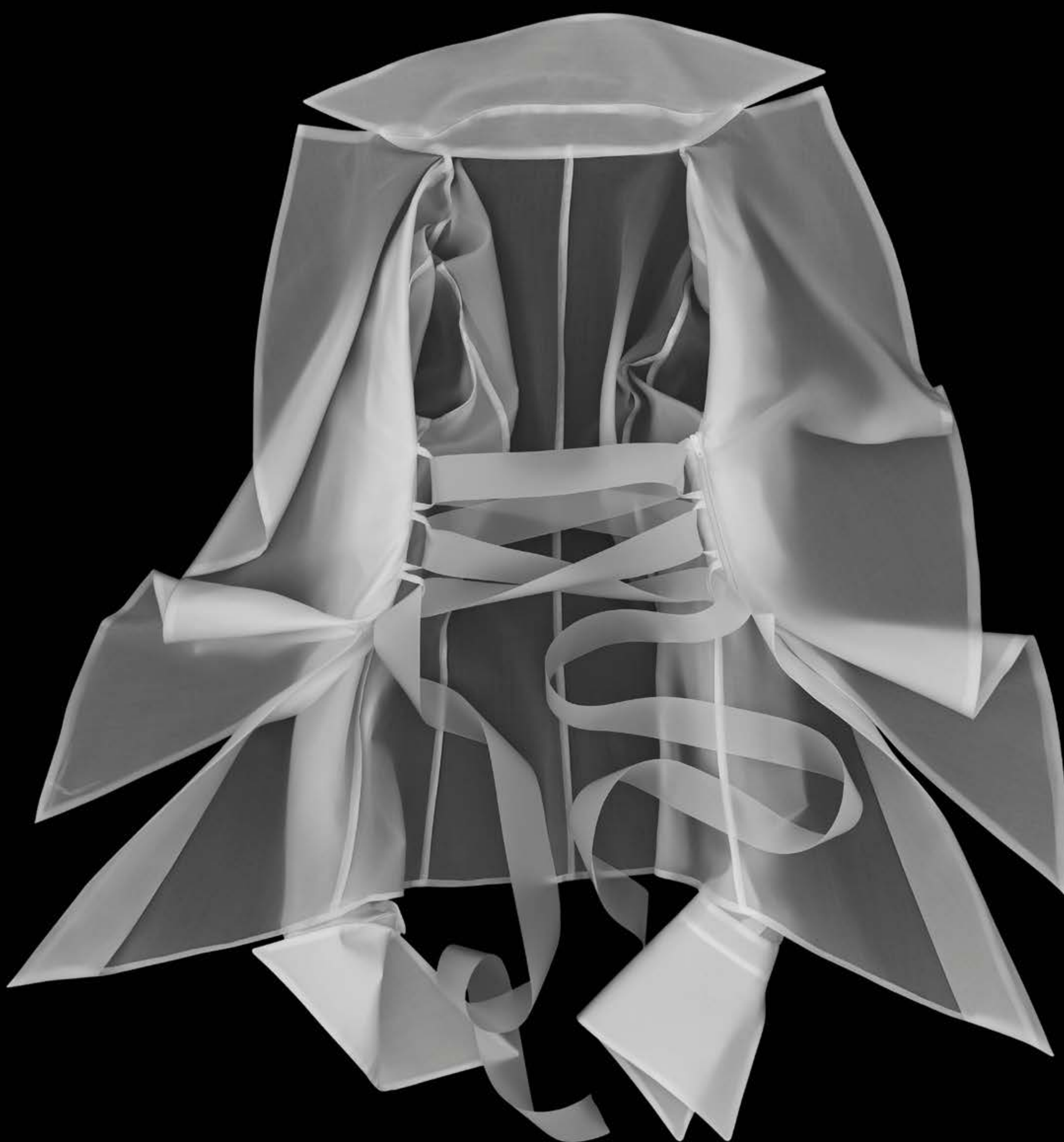




GIANFRANCO
FERRE



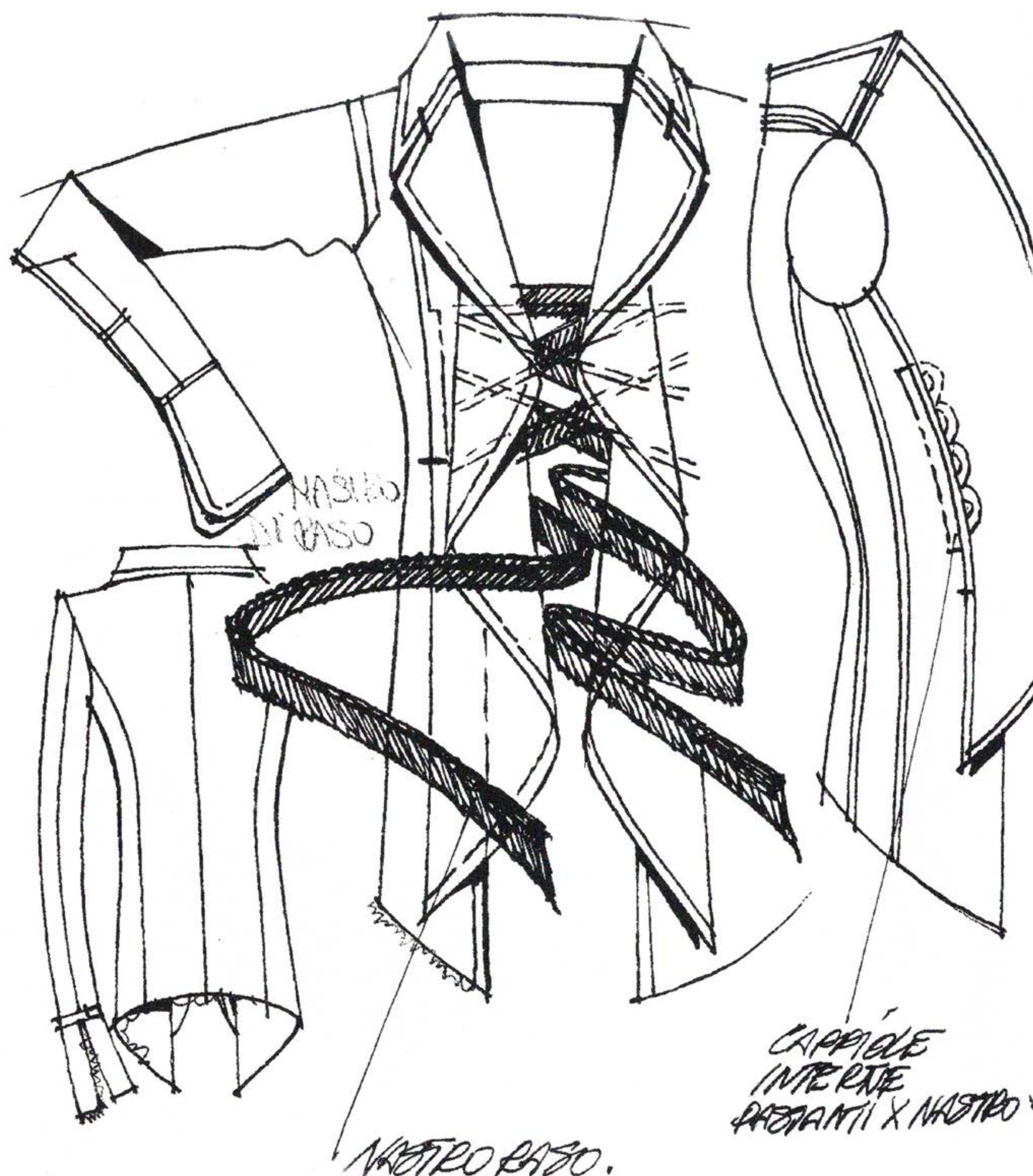
Advertising, Ready-to-wear F/W 1995, ph. Michel Comte



ph. Leonardo Salvini

Rivelazione romantica

F/W 2000 Ready-to-wear
Silk poplin

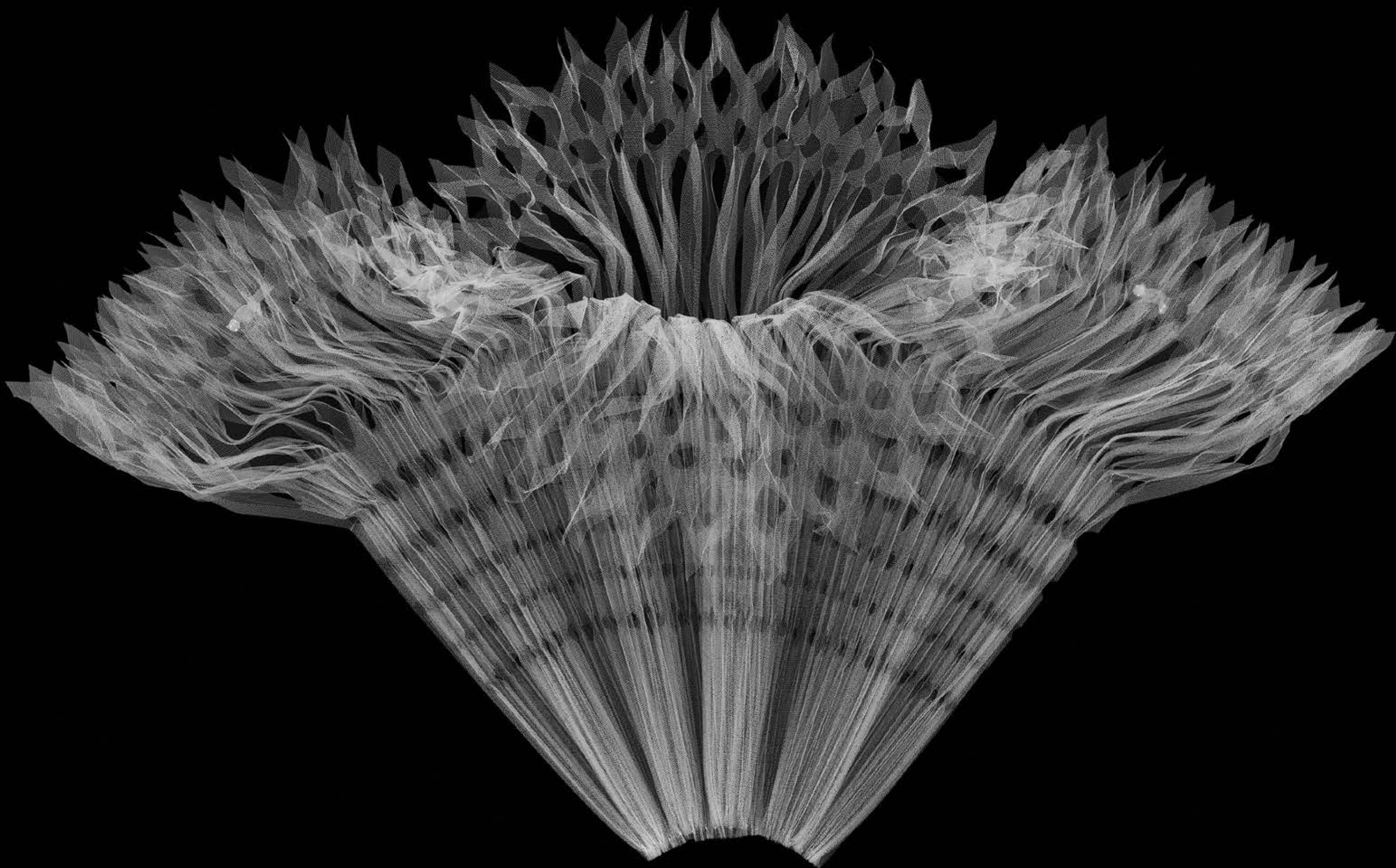


Open-front blouse with bustier. Body of blouse made from eight pieces of silk in different sizes, back from four waist-defining panels starting at sides, then hanging downward with a long point. Onto these are sewn, as far as the waist, two other pieces of silk cut straight on one side and semicircularly on the other. The upper part of the two panels folds back, so generating lapels that join at the collar, while the lower sections drape freely creating a ripple effect. Attached to the inner seam of the two pieces, from underbust to waist, are the anterior bottom edges of a faux bustier with big ribbon-interlaced buttonholes (four on each side). Sleeves present a large mannish cut armhole, then taper towards the forearm with long narrow cuffs. The blouse involves a complex sartorial construction fulfilling various design needs: the quietly close-fitting back part reflects by intent the severity of a jacket, whereas the fluid and open front part plays with instances of nudity expertly hidden under a faux corset. The result is at once romantic and bold, with the peekaboo game afforded by lapels adding to the sensual allure.



Ready-to-wear F/W 2000





ph. Leonardo Salvini

Origami

S/S 2004 Ready-to-wear

Nylon tulle, silk chiffon



Ready-to-wear S/S 2004

Blouse in two-layer tubular nylon tulle, open on top and bottom ends. Pleating and laser cutting for extra volume. Fancy upper edge, simple lower one. Specific nylon stitching, equally functional and exquisite at waist, perfectly succinct along top. When worn, a bellows effect marks the sleeve area. Two small inside loop (front and back) linking thanks to clear press buttons enable the insertion of arms. Fine laser work creates a stunning downward dégradé diamond and circle motif on the tulle, while the upper edging features a series of long points. The secret behind the sculptural volumes lies in the choice of fabrics and relative working processes. The sheer tulle and à-jour type edging award a lovely eternal quality, whereas the rigid plisse tulle adds distinct structural value. Minus all standards, the blouse finds a classic expression exclusively in the macro ruff collar. Ultimately, the design pivots on technical experimentation and artistic research.





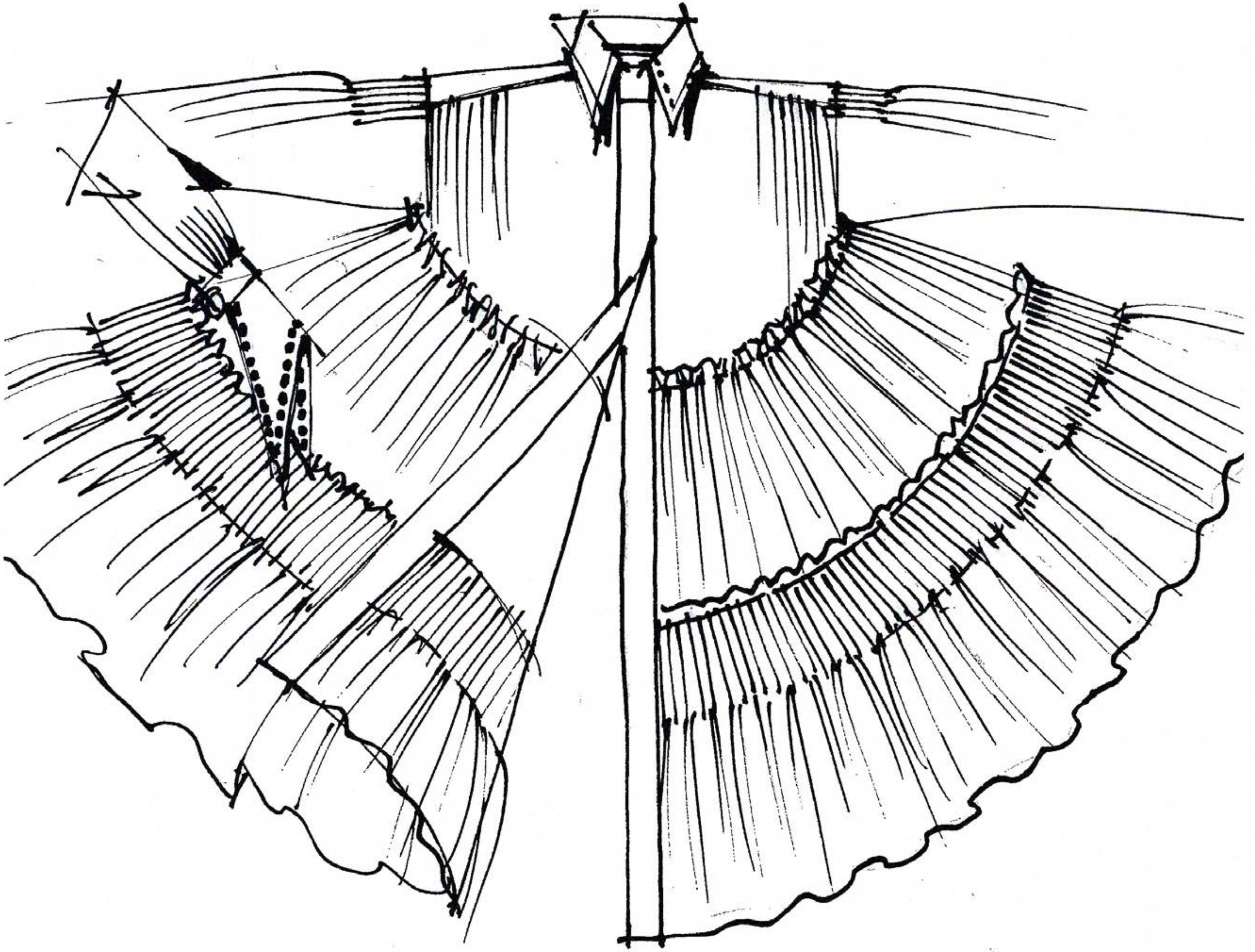
ph. Luca Stoppini



ph. Leonardo Salvini

Milonga

F/W 2005 Ready-to-wear
Silk taffeta, nylon tulle, cotton
passementerie



Long ample blouse open in front. Upper part (to underbust) in mannish cut with hidden closure. Radial-construction sleeves with cufflink tab cuffs, sharp edges, cotton frills. Volume-defining rib embroidery at shoulders and cuffs, along yoke and in back. Lower part in semicircular cut, from underarm on down in front, to mid yoke in back, complete with three flounces of varying type and width: a first one both gathered and partially sunburst pleated, a second 5-cm longer one in plisse nylon tulle, a final one in plisse taffeta an extra 5 cm longer.

For F/W 2005 Ferré evokes South American folk atmospheres while finding the proper balance between severe mannish cut and lavish feminine shape. The rich use of fabric in the lower part, especially the sequence of plisse flounces, sparks images of Latin American dance dresses. The series of ribs rhythmically adds texture to the upper part and creates the perfect counterpoint.



Ready-to-wear F/W 2005



Gianfranco Ferré Biography

4.



1944

Gianfranco Ferré was born on August 15, in Legnano (Milan).

“ *The so-called solid middle-class values – sense of duty, measure, discretion, discipline – have, I feel, been the best starting point, the best ‘springboard’ I could have hoped for. They have let me face all the tests and challenges which my rather special work has posed over the years with great determination and rigor, in the conviction that every achievement and every success had to be attained with utmost sense of commitment and responsibility. Solid middle-class values are part of my makeup and my life.*”

Gianfranco Ferré



Politecnico di Milano Identity Card

1963-1969

After earning his high school diploma specializing in sciences, Ferré enrolls in the School of Architecture at the Politecnico di Milano University, graduating in 1969.

“ I graduated from the Politecnico di Milano in 1969 with a degree in architecture. I wrote my thesis on the ‘Methodology of the Approach to Composition’, with Franco Albini as major professor. The architectural design project that I presented had to do basically with urban sprawl. These were the years of the student protest movement but also a time of great ferment and enthusiasm. The level of teaching at the institute was very high in that period. The deans were initially Carlo De Carli and then in my last year Paolo Portoghesi. A lot of my professors – primarily Franco Albini, Ernesto Rogers and Marco Zanuso – had put their stamp on the post-war reconstruction and rebirth of Milan. And some of today’s greatest Italian architects and artists – such as Aldo Rossi, Gae Aulenti, Renzo Piano and Corrado Levi – were on the faculty as lecturers or teaching assistants.” **Gianfranco Ferré**

Secondo esemplare originale, che non può essere consegnato al titolare del diploma, da conservarsi negli atti della Segreteria.

REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

IN NOME DELLA LEGGE

NOI PROF. DOTT. ING. FRANCESCO CARASSA
RETTORE DEL POLITECNICO DI MILANO
VEDUTI GLI ATTESTATI DEGLI STUDI COMPIUTI

DA FERRE' GIAN FRANCO

NATO A LEGNANO (MILANO) IL 15 AGOSTO 1944

VEDUTO IL RISULTATO DELL'ESAME DI LAUREA DA LUI SUPERATO IN QUESTO POLITECNICO IL 31 LUGLIO 1969
GLI CONFERIAMO LA LAUREA DI

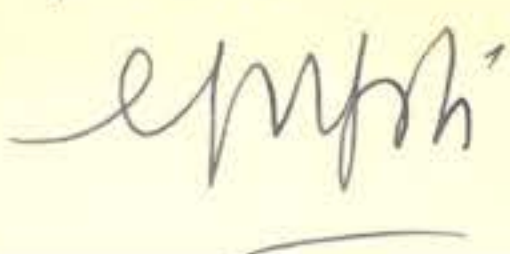
DOTTORE IN ARCHITETTURA

IL PRESENTE DIPLOMA DI LAUREA VIENE RILASCIATO A TUTTI GLI EFFETTI DI LEGGE

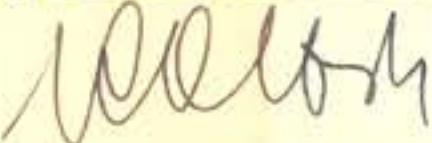
REGISTRATO AL N. 22055 E AL N. 5166

DATO A MILANO IL 1° DICEMBRE 1969

IL DIRETTORE AMMINISTRATIVO
(GIUSEPPE ESPOSITO)



IL RETTORE
(FRANCESCO CARASSA)



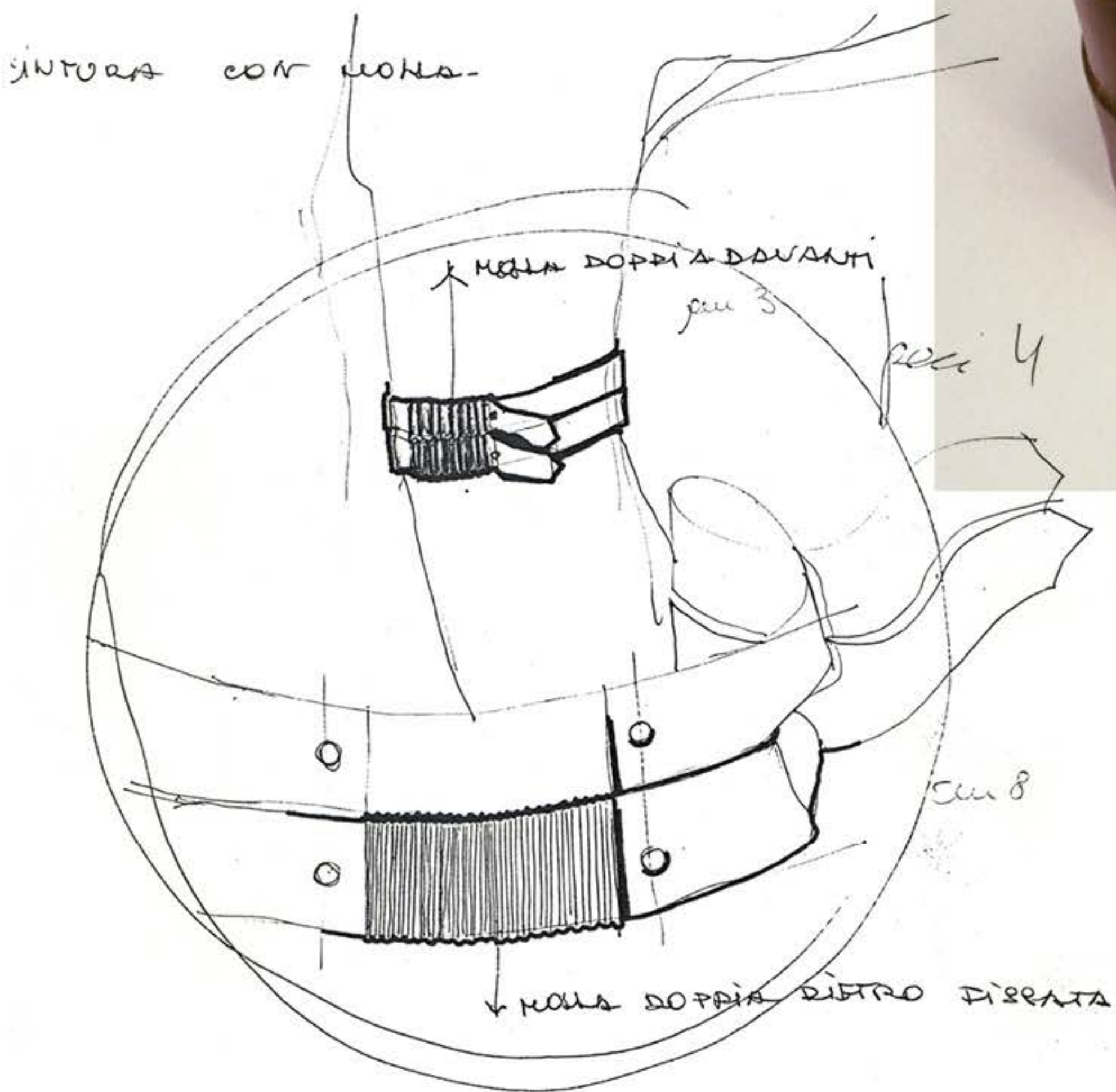
IL PRESIDE DELLA FACOLTÀ
(PAOLO PORTOGHESI)



Politecnico di Milano Degree

“ We met in our first year of university, ended up in the same group due to our surname initial and stayed together until graduation. Gianfranco drew really well and we admired him for that: he even drew the frame!

We did a group thesis, working even ten hours a day, but we were not geeks. Anyway, the girls worked much harder than us. And Gianfranco was much more connected to them because he gave them suggestions on clothes, hair, makeup... he emphasized mismatched details and was not willing to overlook style errors. But then he gave them his jewelry, belts made of curtain rings, bracelets made of braid, hardware pieces, raw leather: brilliant ideas with which he began to make a name for himself, starting his incredible journey.” **Roland Gantes**



1969, belt

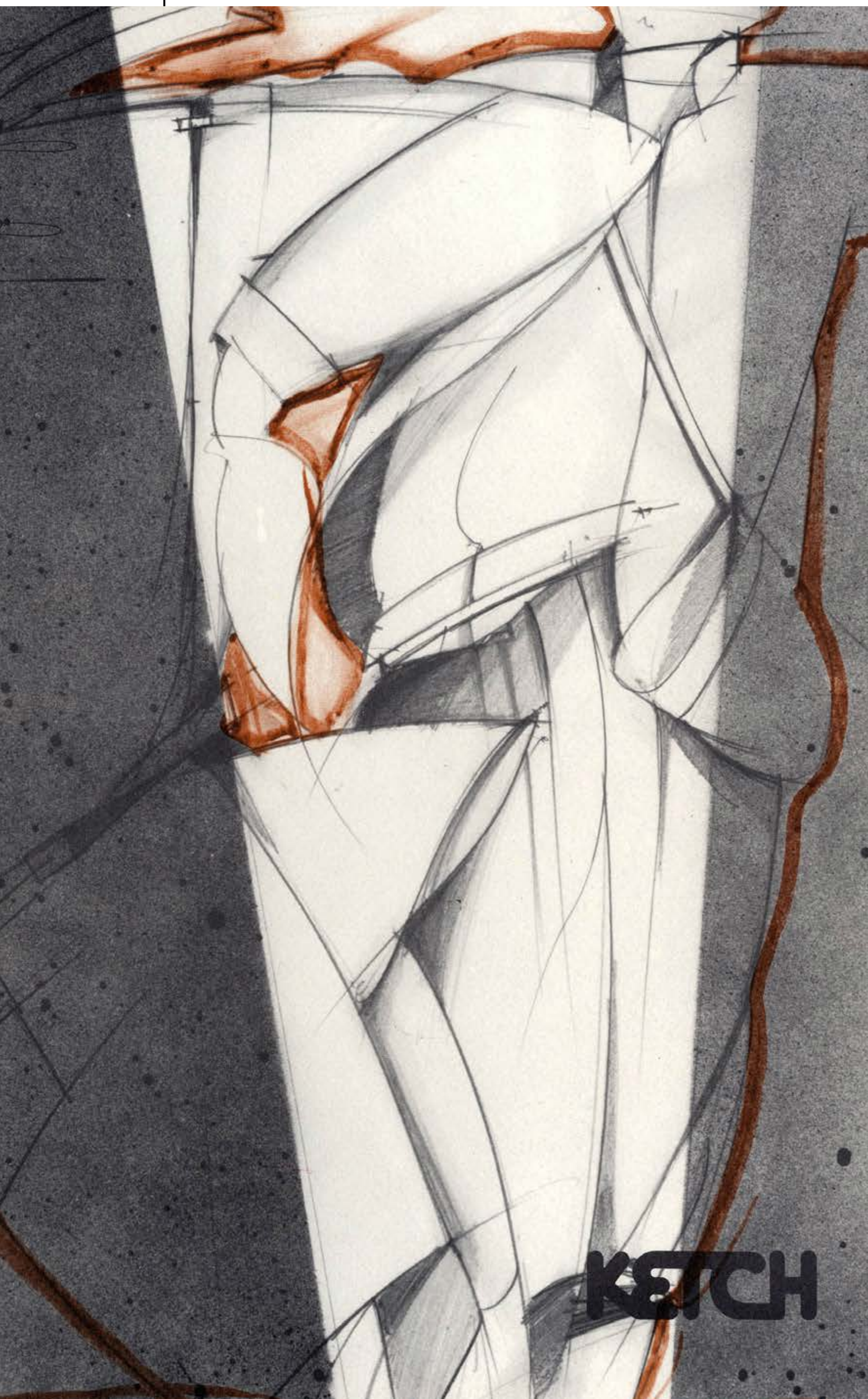
Ferré very first entry into the world of fashion takes place in the university years. He designs jewelry and accessories that he gives to friends and classmates: noticed by several fashion journalists, they are photographed by some specialized magazines.

“ I shared with Gianfranco important moments of my university education and early professional experiences as young architect. From the beginning and ever since, his attention and sensitivity applied to the soft and moldable structures of the textile world. Even when building his first belts as modular concatenations or metallic grids or as bulky sculptural bands around the body, he did not think of the solid tectonic way of architecture. Instead, he thought of enveloping spatial systems, volumes created by flexible and sinuous objects, symbolic and archaically elegant bodily prosthetics. He showed an obsessive attention to detail, which he found in quick and precise drawing as an immediate structural verification. This is the significant trait that always accompanied and distinguished him.”

Franco Raggi



Advertising, 1975, ph. Rocco Mancino



1973-1978

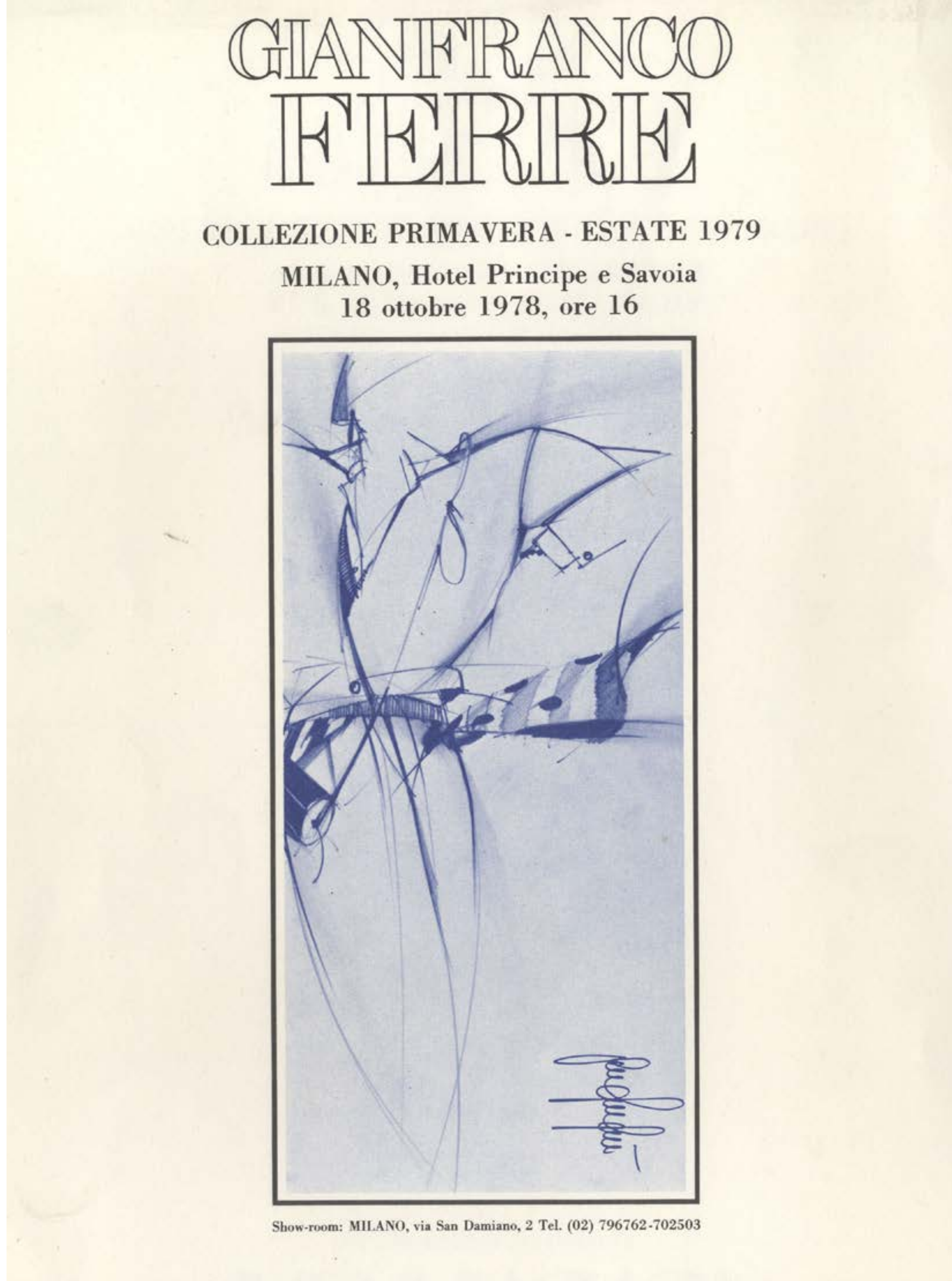
In 1973, Gianfranco Ferré makes the first of his many trips to India for an Italian clothing company. There he creates and takes care of the production of the Ketch fashion collection: a fundamental and unforgettable experience in the evolution of his style. Contemporarily, during his stays in Italy, he designs knitwear and beachwear lines for other companies as consultant.



In 1974, Ferré designs and presents the first collections and fashion shows of “Courlande” and “Baila”.

“ I remember the Baila debut, at the Elefante Bianco restaurant, in Via San Maurilio, Milan. With no catwalk, the guests were seated around tables. The press showed up, even not in great numbers. And obviously my friends were there. I remember the wild applause, lots of enthusiasm, a good degree of astonishment. White shirts, very high boots, jersey jumpsuits, for trimmed shawls. I made a significant impact, also got some negative feedback (‘too many boots, too much in the way of avant-garde...’).”

Gianfranco Ferré



1978

In May 1978, the Gianfranco Ferré company is established. The designer presents his women's ready-to-wear debut signature in October of the same year.

“ *My first runway was held in a hotel, because at that time in Milan, there wasn't the big organization that exists today. It was October 1978, the hotel was the Principe di Savoia, and the collection was the Spring/Summer 1979. In the front row there were journalists that I only knew by name: Pucci Gabrielli, Anna Piaggi, Anna Riva, Adriana Mulassano, and even the legends of transalpine, John Fairchild and Polly Mellen. They wrote: 'A five stars collection' and I wondered 'What does that mean?' Can you imagine? I didn't realize it. It was just Rita and me, two girls and one dressing room that was misery. But the collection was beautiful: all of my designs were there and I would do them all again. Emotion? The greatest joy I felt was when American Vogue published a design of mine and one from Armani with the caption 'Two pieces made in Italy that you won't forget.'*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



Ready-to-wear S/S Collections 1979, Fashion Show finale

“...and ahead with the amazement of finding something to wear seriously upon seeing the Gianfranco Ferré collection... merit number three, the rigor of the lines, the cleanliness of the colors, the total lack of clutter.” **Adriana Mulassano**, Corriere della Sera, October 20, 1978



F/W 1992



F/W 1993

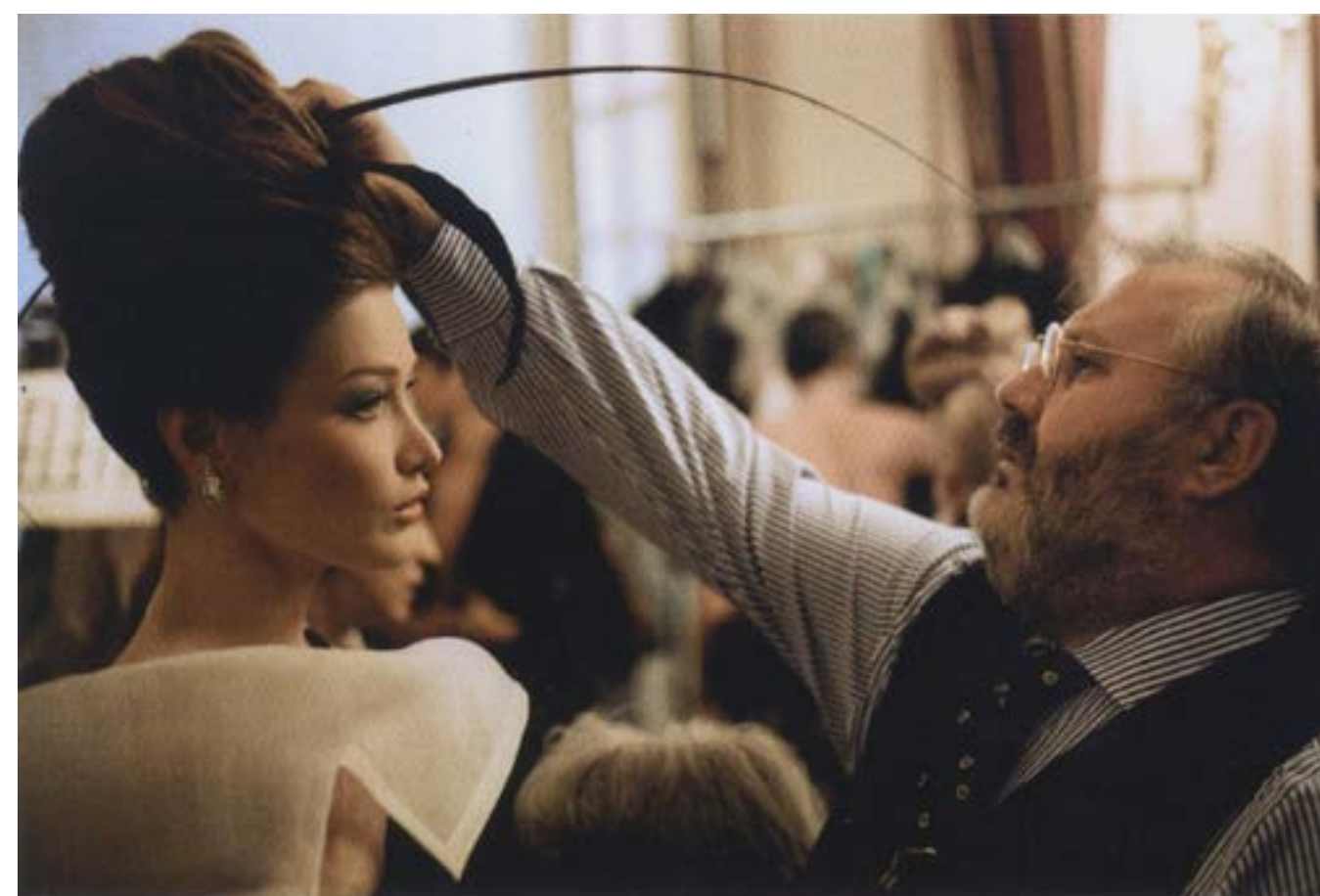


F/W 1988

1979 - 2007

Gianfranco Ferré's ready-to-wear collections show in Milan during fashion weeks.

“*She is tall and slender, agile and energetic. She may not have perfect features, may not be a classic beauty, but she always exerts a distinct feminine charm. The allure is in her eyes, in her smile, in her sense of grace.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



Gianfranco Ferré with Lynne Koester, Nadège, Marpessa, Megan Gale, Esther Cañadas, Elena Kountoura, Pat Cleveland, Helena Christensen, Naomi Campbell, Carla Bruni, Katoucha, Marilisa

“ I met Gianfranco Ferré in 1985, when I was a model, but I never paraded for him... He never chose me, because he said that – as a good Bolognese – I ate too many tortellini... the same ones that, once our friendship was consolidated, my mother would prepare for him, with his great appreciation.

Since I started my business, for which I am called the ‘King of Supermodels,’ I have always worked with him, and I am pleased to point out that the other models loved him because he made them feel like queens. He had a peculiar intuition, he shunned the beautiful-banal, looking for charm and personality. He loved long necks, big noses, expressive faces. And he adored the models who ‘felt’ his clothes, interpreting them on the catwalk, not as aseptic mannequins. He had an infinite tenderness for Marilisa, and a weakness for the ‘follies’ of Marpessa, a particular attention for Carla Bruni, and great affection for Katoucha. I think that because it was him, Naomi agreed to redo another fitting at 7am, after a phone call in the middle of the night, at 2:30am.

That strong was their relationship!” **Piero Piazzzi**



Gianfranco Ferré and Eva Riccobono
Men's ready-to-wear F/W Collections 2006, Fashion Show finale

“ I had a particular relationship with Gianfranco, based on mutual esteem, affection and tenderness. I really began my mannequin career with him and thanks to him: at the beginning he saw me as an undisciplined, cheeky, joyful young girl, but ‘with a good head on her shoulders,’ in his words. I then had the extraordinary fortune of opening a men’s fashion show with him: normally the designer comes out last, but that time Ferré surprised everyone, coming out first, with me! Backstage we were quite nervous, he perhaps more than me, and I was surprised by his nervousness, almost as if it were his first show. But when we went towards the runway, Gianfranco smiled at me and gave me a gentle caress. These were the gestures that impressed me about him: he was a completely genuine person!” **Eva Riccobono**



“ Mr. Ferré, as I always called him, had such charisma that every time I met him for the music of the runway show, I entered a sort of tunnel vision, meaning you see and hear only what you have in front of you, blurring everything else around. That feeling was due to the fact that he had no time to waste, and I already understood from the first time that he didn’t want to deal with extemporizers: so I had to and wanted to be up to the task. But the point was that I was 23 years old and I was making music for Gianfranco Ferré’s fashion show, a truly huge thing! The length of a fashion show at the time was about 40 minutes, not really an easy thing like nowadays eight minutes average. Anytime he was

listening to my proposals for the music, he was focused, serious, visionary, and I felt like he was already envisioning the show. Once he told me to use exclusively the sound of heels, with no music: it was the ’90s, and those effects had never been done in fashion before. So we put microphones on the walkway edge and amplified the girls’ walk. It was incredible to see that his clothes were so full of meanings that music could even not be there, in fact it could become misleading. There I realized that besides artistic and technical issues, the secret to doing a good job relies on the harmony and balance among the elements. Also, often by taking away, you reach the essence. Thank you Mr. Ferré, you were a great mentor.” **Matteo Ceccarini**



In 1982, he designs the first
Gianfranco Ferré Men's Collection.

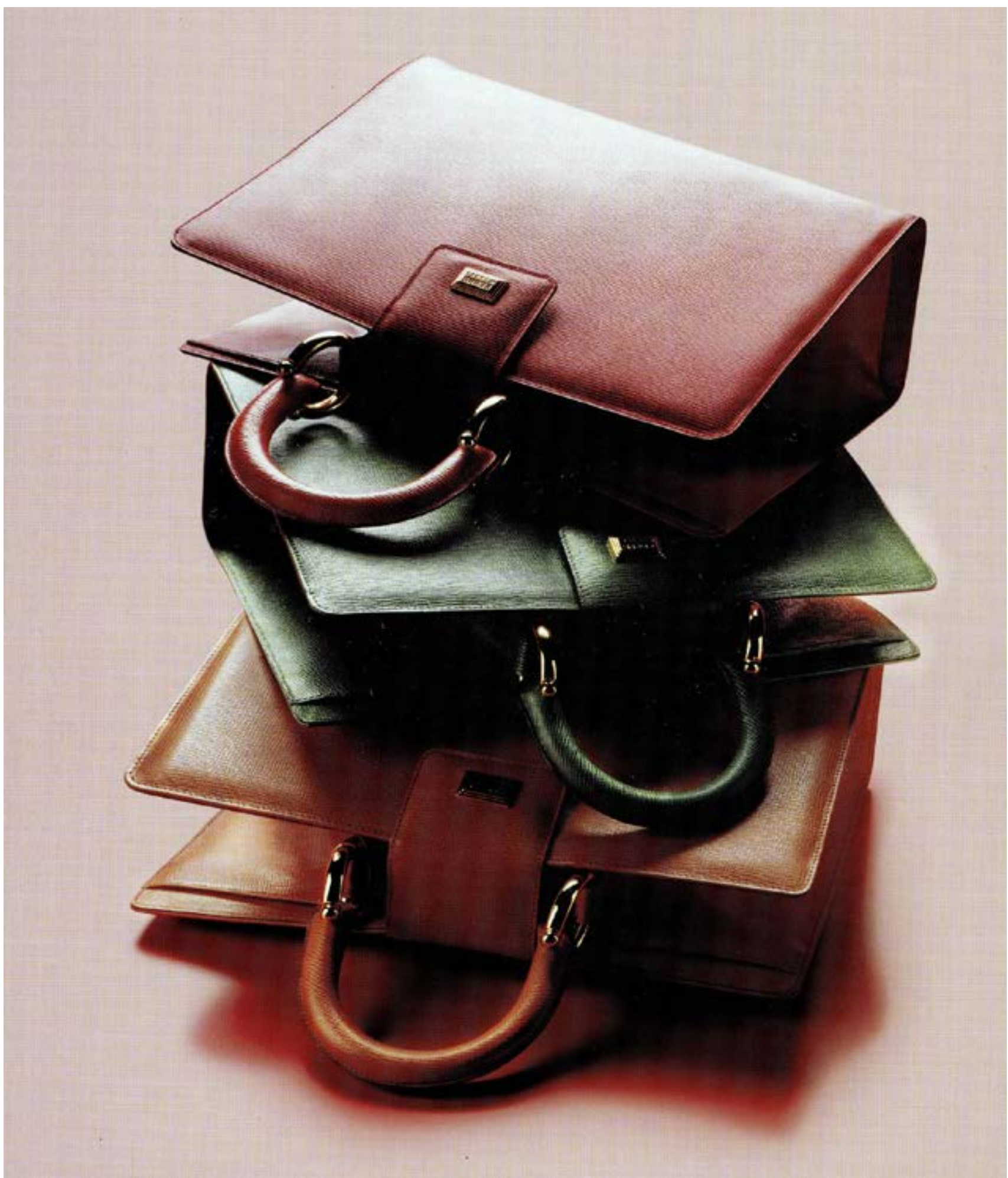
“ I met Ferré when I was just over twenty years old. Once, he briefly told me that he was impressed by my calligraphy. I never really knew what impressed him in my young designer's portfolio, but still today I could draw his studio on the second floor in Via Pontaccio 21. The perfect balance among shapes and colors that coexisted in the space, the dark and shiny parquet, the ivory and black striped curtains, the unusual objects, the baroque frames, the rationalist chairs, the photographs lying on the ground: not an atelier, not an office, but a travel journal that Ferré offered to whoever crossed that door.

There is something that links all the people who have worked with Ferré, a distinctive trait, a common thought, or a smell that you could recognize. That is the ability to approach a project in a very specific way: programmatic and spontaneous, kaleidoscopic and peculiar, sophisticated and accessible, theoretical and practical at the same time. In my professional career, the lecture received from Ferré became awareness, and all the suggestions and teachings received have quietly harmonized. Ferré was the master of a school that, to be called as such, must also have been a ‘school of life.’ ”

Gianni Cinti



Advertising, 1984, ph. Steven Meisel



Advertising, 1997, ph. Michelangelo di Battista

Alongside the men's ready-to-wear collection, he launches the Gianfranco Ferré accessories collections and designs other product licenses.

“*Fundamental complement to the dress, decorative element for the body: as such, the accessory has always sparked in me a keen creative attention, a special and ever stronger passion. For me the connection between accessory and article of clothing is indispensable, indissoluble. They arise from a common inspiration, live in harmony from the very moment I begin envisioning the collection. They reflect the same influences, although in different forms, through different materials. Mostly, they capture the same idea of quality and uniqueness, elegance and beauty. Dress and accessory: one mirrors the other, one serves in understanding the other. Better still, the latter is a tool for interpreting the former, for reading the garment from a subjective viewpoint. Allowing anyone to easily identify with a style while at the same time giving it a personal slant. Not unlike the accessory, fragrance represents a world way to personalize a style, express a manner of being or merely a fleeting mood. In a scent, the woman looks for characters and identity, subtleties and shadings, sensation and allusions. But mostly a great flexibility, natural adaptability to her very self.*” **Gianfranco Ferré**



1983-1989

In 1983 he is involved in the foundation of the Domus Academy: the Design, Design Management and Fashion Design Postgraduate School in Milan where he leads the course in “Dress Design” until 1989.

“ I was Gianfranco’s friend from university years, and I shared different moments with him, from the ‘good old times’ to the birth of the Fashion Design course at Domus Academy in 1983, passing through different work experiences and supporting him in the accessory project, even during the time when he was creative director at Dior.

To his collaborators, model makers, seamstresses, Gianfranco didn’t say ‘I would like.’ He said ‘I want.’ He drew, but he also explained a lot, and his ‘I want’ became a goal to be reached, understood, and shared. He always measured himself with new ideas to understand how they could work, and this was another challenge he made us all participate in.

It’s hard to find someone like him, and I haven’t found any others...” **Daniela Puppa**



1986-1989

In 1986, Gianfranco Ferré signs his first Haute Couture collection at Rome fashion week.

“ *A small memory, filled with gratitude, tied to the trust that Ferré gave me during the years of work, sometimes even excessive trust compared to my experience. When you worked, he would ask for the impossible and, by giving you trust, he would make you do the ‘impossible,’ receiving unforgettable emotions in return!*” **Valeria Campi**



F/W 1988



S/S 1989

“ I was a teenager when I was lucky enough to work for him right after high school: a true and authentic genius! His tireless hand continuously produced magnificent drawings on sheets of white paper that often left people astounded. It was then a delight when he would color, cut out, and stick glittery powder with glue to make a final version. He never gave up, he was a hard worker; until the last rhinestone on a dress that looked like a crystal chandelier was moved 2 millimeters to the right or left, just where he wanted it. But at three in the morning... I can say that everything I have learned and become is mostly due to him and his precious teachings. He was a special man!”

Alessandra Zonghilotti



1989-1996

In May 1989, Gianfranco Ferré begins the extraordinary experience in the most prestigious Maison of the French Couture with an exceptional traditional background: he is appointed creative director of Christian Dior for the Women's Haute Couture, ready-to-wear and fur collection.

“ I have great affection for Gianfranco Ferré. Always and forever. Great affection and respect. Following him in his creations and aesthetic adventures was a fascinating dream. And he was always smart. Between the '80s and '90s, and even after, for me dressing up in the evening meant almost always wearing a Gianfranco Ferré dress. Some of my favorite ones that I wore the most are still in my closets. I look at them, they are still perfect. Thanks Gianfranco!” **Donata Sartorio**



Paris, July 28, 1989

At the end of his first collection for Christian Dior, Gianfranco Ferré is awarded the “Dé D’Or de la Couture”.



ph. Aldo Castaldi

June 17, 2007

“*Ferré is simply Ferré. No adjectives can be given to him: his way of doing fashion is unique, his models are irreproducible. And most importantly, his style refers to no one else but himself. He's truly an 'architect,' in the sense that, through wonderful cuts, he emphasizes the structure of the dress. A photographer is helped in depicting his fashion: lights can be changed, a different setting can be found, but the image is already fully present in the clothes. Precise, defined, carved and painted with the slightest strokes...*” **Gian Paolo Barbieri**

“*If I remember correctly, I met Mr. Ferré for the first time when I walked in the Milan Collections. I was extremely nervous when I went to his atelier... and for a good reason! I met some of the most innovative, complex, simple, architectural and organic models one can imagine. This introduced me to the secrets of cutting, fabric, and details in Mr. Ferré's style. Over the years, I have seen how little he has followed trends... but, my friends, when you're able to design like this, what need is there?*” **Iman**

“*His career alone makes him a unique character, and this is felt in his work. He's the only real architect in this fashion world.*” **Karl Lagerfeld**

“*I like Ferré when at the end of his fashion shows crosses the runway with a slow and swaying solemnity, majestic and round like King Edward VII, beautifully dressed like a modern King Louis XIV, with the imperious and cruel smile of a new King Henry VIII. The models exhausted by his opulent clothes tremble with love, the ladies from the stands applaud him, dazzled and grateful.*” **Natalia Aspesi**

“ *Gianfranco Ferré is not a fashion designer, he is an architect by university degree who knows the meaning of the word ‘project’. In addition to this important education, Ferré possesses a special talent for elegance which means grace and simplicity, which can only come from a deep cultural knowledge. In my opinion, these are the two basic qualities of the precise and authentic signature of each of his productions.*” **Gae Aulenti**

“ *What is Ferré’s ideal woman? She is an icon of herself, a woman who creates her own image, just like Ferré who hides Hermès scarves in the pocket of his clothes, perfectly folded. Hidden luxury.*” **André Leon Talley**

“ *One thing that particularly struck me in Gianfranco Ferré’s creations is the use of red, which makes his material research even more magical. In his clothes, red becomes encrusted color and takes on the value of a tattoo or even a magical sign on the female body.*” **Lucio Del Pezzo**

“ *Gianfranco Ferré managed to perform a miracle, working in a weightless state. When he takes possession of a fabric, the heavyweight of fashion reveals an embroiderer delicate touch: Falstaff becomes Melusine and gives wings to clothes, as well as to the famous shirts that seem cut from the blue of the sky. They are light and airy in the transparency of the organza, in the way that Ferré takes them back half under the waist or inside the skirt, as if a gust of wind grabbed them with its whirlwind. Shirt-air currents, collars and cuffs like albatross wings...*” **Janie Samet**

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RITA AIRAGHI

Always by Gianfranco Ferré's side in her professional journey, Rita Airaghi has served as the brand's Director of Communication, a role that encompasses a wide range of skills and responsibilities and included her in all of the designer's activities, projects and successes.

After Ferré's death, she created the Gianfranco Ferré Foundation, fully committing herself to the implementation of its goals: archive preservation, promotion and dissemination of Ferré's cultural, artistic and aesthetic values, with particular emphasis on the training of young designers.

She served as Director of the Foundation until December 2021, when the Foundation and the Politecnico di Milano unveiled the new Gianfranco Ferré Research Center, following the Ferré family's donation of the archives and the Foundation headquarters to the University.

She is currently a member of the steering committee of the Research Center, which promotes digital innovation in creative and cultural industries, combining the Politecnico di Milano's technical and scientific know-how with the tangible and intangible heritage relating to fashion history, culture and techniques preserved and promoted by the Gianfranco Ferré Foundation since 2008.

PAOLA BERTOLA

PhD in Design and Multimedia Communication, Visiting Scholar at the Illinois Institute of Chicago (2001), she is currently Full Professor at the Politecnico di Milano, co-founder of the Fashion in Process Research Lab, and Deputy Director of the Department of Design. She is part of the “Design and Cultures” research section and Faculty Member of the School of Design, Politecnico di Milano, where she teaches in the Design for the Fashion System Program (MSc), in the Product Service System Design Program (MSc) and in the Management Engineering Program (MSc) (School of Management). She is Scientific Director of the Gianfranco Ferré Research Center that is rooted on an interdisciplinary vision capable of combining heritage with innovation and digital technology.

She was director of the Fashion Design programs (BA and MSc) at the Politecnico di Milano between 2004 and 2012, contributing to their establishment. She currently coordinates the joint program with the Fashion Institute of Technology (NY), established under her supervision in 2007. She is part of the editorial committee of the book series “Fashion in Process”, Mandragora Editrice, Firenze; member of the scientific board of Fashion Practice, Taylor and Francis, London; member of the scientific board of book series “Culture, Mode e Società”, Pearson, Milano; member of the scientific board of “Dune” magazine, Flash Art Publisher, Milano. Her research interests concern creative processes, design management and planning, and design driven innovation within “culture intensive” industries. More recently she has been focusing on the role of design in driving digital transformation processes, with a particular focus on fashion-tech companies and looking at its connection with the green transition.

She was awarded XXII ADI Compasso d’Oro Award in 2011 for leading the research “DRM, Design Research Maps”.

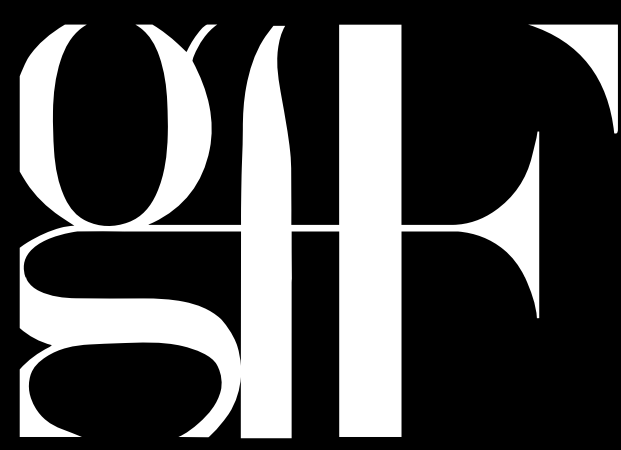
FEDERICA VACCA

PhD in Industrial Design and Multimedia Communication, Associate Professor at the Politecnico di Milano. She is part of the Design and Cultures research section at the Design Dept., co-founder of the Fashion in Process Research Lab, and Deputy Director of the Gianfranco Ferré Research Center.

She is Faculty Member of the School of Design, and Scientific Coordinator of higher education course “Out of Fashion” related to Fashion Design for Sustainability and promoted by PoliDESIGN and Connecting Cultures. She was Visiting Researcher at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), New York, NY (2008) and Visiting Researcher and Professor at Philadelphia University (currently Jefferson International), Philadelphia, PA (2016). She is a member of the editorial committee of the book series “Fashion in Process,” Mandragora Editrice, Firenze. She is author and editor of international publications and consultant on didactic and research activities for Italian and foreign institutions and companies. She took part in international conferences as organizer, keynote speaker, as well as paper presenter, with papers selected through blind review process.

Her research interests concern handicraft-driven creation processes for the enhancement of local culture knowledge and design-driven innovation in “culture intensive” industries, with a specific focus on the fashion sector. She is fashion heritage specialist, corporate archives curator and expert of fashion heritage management. More recently she has been focusing on the role of design in driving processes of conservation, valorization, augmented fruition and communication of archival fashion and cultural heritage through digital technology. Moreover, she has developed in-depth knowledge on Fashion Design for Sustainability, with particular attention to the social and cultural dimension, particularly strategic for the fashion sector.

She was nominated XXII ADI Compasso d’Oro Nomination – Young Design in 2011.



CENTRO DI RICERCA
GIANFRANCO FERRÉ
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The Gianfranco Ferré Research Center, *Digital Innovation for the Creative and Cultural Industries*, was established in December 2021 by Politecnico di Milano following the Ferré family's donation of the Gianfranco Ferré Foundation's archives and headquarters.

Under the coordination of the Fashion in Process Research Laboratory of the Department of Design and as an integral part of the Library and Historical Archives system of the Politecnico di Milano, the Research Center intends to bring together the technical-scientific know-how and design culture that characterize the identity of the Politecnico di Milano with the material and immaterial heritage related to the history, culture, and techniques of fashion preserved and valorized by the Gianfranco Ferré Foundation.

The interdepartmental Research Center involves different disciplinary components of the University: the Department of Design, the Department of Mechanics, the Department of Electronics, Information and Bioengineering, and the Department of Mathematics. It is grounded on an interdisciplinary vision that combines heritage with innovation and technology. It integrates a deep domain knowledge in design and fashion with ICT, User Experience, and User Interaction skills.

Through research in the field of digital innovation, the Research Center aims to investigate, develop, and experiment with advanced techniques for the visualization, representation, and use of material artifacts. So high cultural content that are typical of the creative and cultural industries and represents a distinctive identity element of Italian culture and its recognition and positioning in the international arena. Moreover, the Research Center intends to promote the dissemination of culture linked to the material and non-material heritage of the fashion sector by proposing dissemination, teaching and increased use of the heritage itself through the use of new technologies, which are used both as tools for the sustainable protection of the heritage and as tools for its dissemination and activation.

GIANFRANCO FERRÉ

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The exhibition explores Gianfranco Ferré's design principles, depicted through a selection of both drawings and garments.

Gianfranco Ferré (1944-2007) earned the degree in Architecture from the Politecnico di Milano in 1969. One of the great masters of Italian fashion, he stood out for his unique approach to design. Sourcing from the heritage of architectural composition, he merged a rigorous technical process with a rich poetic, building an original language along those two dimensions that Blaise Pascal had defined "esprit de géométrie" (i.e. geometric knowledge) and "esprit de finesse" (i.e. artistic knowledge).

Within the exhibition design, the drawings are clustered into thematic sections and display the key design principles of his creative process, introducing his own methodology, quite an uncommon aspect to be codified in fashion, more often interpreted as pure creativity.

The selection of garments plays with those principles, transforming the white shirt, Ferré's design archetype, into a variety of constructions and shapes.

Exhibition by

Gianfranco Ferré Research Center
with the Historical Archives of
Politecnico di Milano

Curators

Rita Airaghi and Paola Bertola

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GIANFRANCO FERRÉ

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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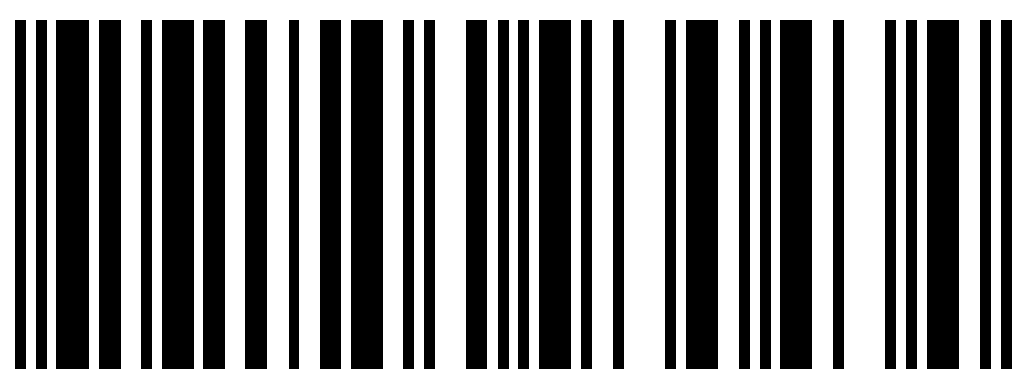
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