

## A STRING OF PEARLS



pp. 2-3 Villa Bellaria before renovation in San Lazzaro di Savena (BO), image from 1927  
*Photo from Furla internal archives*

## Introduction

The history of Furla is the story of a dream – my father's dream.

Three of his children - Carlo, Paolo and I - carried this dream where my father wanted the most: into the future. We pushed his ideas, his hopes and sensibility forward. When I am asked if

I have a motto, I reply with just a word: "forward". He had the sensibility of an extraordinary man, as extraordinary as his ability to conceive a company that was different. A company that cherishes specific values, such as beauty, rigor and graciousness. Simplicity.

Simplicity is not banality, far from it: excellence is simple. What is hard is making something difficult not appear as such. Making it seem effortless. Being able to make a bag feel yours just by seeing it in the store, touching it, holding it. Your own bag. Ready to accompany you throughout your day, throughout your life, with simplicity.

When I decided to write this book – actually, when they convinced me to, - I've experienced a strong feeling of pride for what my father was able to create; for the values he instilled in us, his children and, by extension, in his company. However, another emotion emerged, just as intense but different: modesty. Because I do not want to, or seem to want to, appropriate this wonderful story. I belong to the second generation of this family business, which has considerably grown in recent years under my management, yet I never forget that I am, literally, a survivor. And the pressure of the responsibility towards those who are still here is ever-present. My brothers, Carlo and Paolo, have passed away long ago and I am now responsible for the history and the values of Furla, which have been bestowed upon me by fate and, above all, I am responsible for over 2,500 people employed by Furla all over the world.

My goal is, and will be, to carry the dream of two generations into the future – forward – to the best of my abilities, giving my all, always. For my generation and especially for the one that came before me. My parents entrusted my brothers and I with the fulfillment of their dream and, one day, it will be handed off to someone else. As our story will show, there has been a moment - one of the many turning points in the history of Furla – in which I have come to the realization that the company will survive the test of time. In the future. Perhaps in someone else's hands. No one knows what the future holds, yet, at this point, the brand, the identity of the company and its perception are so clear, transparent and strong that I am firmly convinced that Furla – the brand as well as the company – are destined to stay. As they say in fashion, at times inappropriately, we are a brand.

I intended to dedicate this year's financial statement, certifying record growth and dividends, to my brothers and father. Eventually, the innate reticence my brothers and I inherited from our father, got the best of me and there has been no dedication.

This book is dedicated to my father Aldo; to Carlo and Paolo, and titled after my mother Margherita, who graces the cover and, most importantly, lends her philosophy. My mother's string of pearls has always represented to



p. 7 Aldo and Margherita Furlanetto in Alexandria, Egypt (cruise on the Vulcania in 1943)

me a symbol of her grace, her delicate beauty and profound elegance. And just as she would have loved, like a string of pearls, Furla has grown: step after step; pearl after pearl; we've become manufacturers and designers; adding store after store; reaching more cities, countries and continents. Yet always maintaining the greatest attention to the overall harmony. After all, adding different precious stones to a string of pearls would not make much sense. Hence, a natural jewel originating from the sea, which has inspired poets, painters and composers and, to this day, amazes for its elusive grace, represents a continuous source of inspiration that is so difficult to explain. It gifts us with precious moments of beauty that are priceless, just like the memory of my mother and her smile.



p. 13 Giovanna Furlanetto at three years old

## Dad

Margherita, my mother, is just over 20 years old in the picture. She is beautiful. Noble and very sweet, showing special grace: her smile; her string of pearls; her discreet elegance. The light in her eyes shines even through old 1930's black & white photographs. A young woman



p. 15 Margherita Furlanetto holding his son Paolo

with gracious manners and a strong personality. Very Friulian. My father, Aldo, looks like a Kennedy: assertive look, slightly rebellious tuft that shines in the morning sunshine, beautiful jackets. The charisma of a strong and decisive man with a profound sensitivity.

Margherita and Aldo's was an accidental encounter in the mountains, during an excursion organized by Milan's CAI - the Italian Alpin Club – in Sassolungo in Val Gardena. They shared Friulian origins. It was love at first sight: it was 1938. They exchanged letters – he had a minuscule and extreme neat handwriting: he was the type of person that could write a letter on a business card. Finally, they met. He asked her to see him; she didn't remember him well, so he held a newspaper under his arm to be recognized. They got engaged. On the eve of the wedding they received a letter from the President of CAI, responding to their invitation: "the letter suggests that you have met at Sassolungo: if this is the case, then I am extremely pleased". And he praises the young couple for their "kind-hearted soul of mountain lovers."

A kind-hearted soul. The most wonderful legacy our parents left to their seven children. The idea that there are things words cannot describe, too delicate and complex to be told through language or numbers.

My mother was a very special woman, sweet and strong. Sometimes I read that she founded Furla alongside with her husband but, with seven children, she really never had the time to work. She was able to manage such a large family – nine of us plus two housekeepers – effortlessly and joyfully. She was very happy when my father took her on holiday.

Our childhood memories – of us seven siblings – revolve

around the large house outside of Bologna on the slopes of S. Michele in Bosco during the post-war period. That Biedermeier furniture; very traditional, bourgeois, 19th century and romantic. The briarroot's lacquered shiny black; an idea of simplicity and harmony originated as a reaction to the frills of the empire style.

Our memories are also linked to my mother's family country house, about 20 km from Udine, featuring a rigorous architecture that I rediscover in my taste with the clean lines and simplicity that doesn't draw attention to itself, yet reveals its secrets to those whose taste is ready to understand them.

I remember that my father had a habit he maintained over time. He used to polish handbags, or better, Bologna's quintessential accessory, with the sleeve of his grey flannel pinstripe suit until they got perfectly flawless, as he liked them. My father taught us this sense of aesthetic harmony and simplicity every day - without talking, just by example. My father was an unusual entrepreneur for the 1920's and 1930's. No one who has ever knocked on his door with an idea and has been turned away. He gave his attention and, if worthy, his trust. As well as his help, compatibly with his finances. When a project convinced him, he became an informal investor. He believed in the virtuousness of ideas and in their content. I remember that a box was delivered to the house when I got married. Inside there were white ivory rosary beads on a gold string, which unfortunately got lost during a move. The beautiful rosary arrived accompanied by a card, sent by a person I did not know. Someone my father had helped establishing a small company, a startup.

Dad a simple man, but he used to collect art, mainly sculptures. So, when I got married, I told him: "please dad, I don't need anything." He had already financed our house... and I was the first of seven children to get married so, since he insisted I asked for one of his sculptures as a gift that I keep in my office. A crucifixion by Luciano Minguzzi. A tremendously moving Christ of which Minguzzi created three pieces, one of which is still at the Vatican. My father was among the first admirers of the artist; he had a great "eye". He also asked the artist to sculpt the two thieves to accompany the Christ. It's an extraordinary beautiful and intense artwork; one of the things I am most fond of.

My father always encouraged us to read and didn't always have conventional tastes - he loved Papini, among others - and we all inherited a great respect for the written word, since he always had a book in his hands during his moments of relaxation. He was genuinely passionate about it. I was incredibly lucky to end up going with him to art exhibitions all the time; my siblings always found a way out since they preferred going out with their friends. So I used to go with him.

He was an entrepreneur



p. 17 Margherita Furlanetto camping on the foothills of Sassolungo



p. 17 Margherita Furlanetto at Sassolungo

"ahead" of its time, like Olivetti, a true visionary, yet a very strict parent.

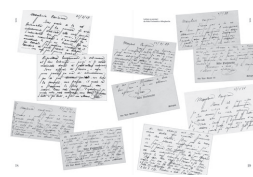
Especially strict with himself. He ended up being a little more lenient towards the youngest two or three children, but he was a special man, who was able to show his emotions at the opera or in front of the edelweiss.

A level of sensitivity that is honestly quite rare for a man. An incredibly strict yet intelligent man. He understood the importance of foreign languages and travelling. He was always travelling around the country for work and was often in Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia to buy pearls, sequins, crystals and rhinestones.

I was always accompanied by one of my brothers. Going to the movies or a concert alone would have been unthinkable yet, at 16, he sent me to London by myself. I was staying at some friend's house, my first "pen friend's" parents (at the time we still exchanged letters, not messages or whatsapp). The host family of that wonderful holiday was Russian. They have resettled in London.

A bourgeois family who lived by Marble Arch. My father trusted them completely and improving my English was very important to him. Once again, he proved to be ahead of its time. Speaking fluent English has been strategic for my professional journey. When I was young, no one spoke English fluently (even now, in 2018, anything beyond a generic knowledge isn't very common...) and this skill has represented for me an essential *passe-partout*. I was already quite shy, so just imagine adding an awkward English... that London trip was actually the very first time I was allowed to be out by myself, in London with that delightful family who really made me feel at home. One of the two daughters had died of leukemia very young and I was welcomed in their home as a daughter, as a sister, with great care and warmth. We played tennis that summer; we used to be young and care-free surrounded by great serenity.

There was time to play, time for museums, for theater. I went to the Covent Garden for the first time and to this day is still one of my favorite places, so many memorable nights... especially that one: my host family knew Nureyev quite well and after the show they took me to meet him! We knocked and he opened the door; the greatest dancer of all time. He was wearing a wonderful white high neck Irish sweater and had a defiant look and a glowing charisma I have never encountered again in my life. A regal and feline walk; he really move like a tiger. From that moment on, I became his #1 fan. I saw him at the Metropolitan in New York, in Paris... the last time I saw him was sadly also his last public appearance. It was in Paris, on October 8th, 1992: he curated the choreography of the "Bayadere" for the opéra, and I remember him wearing a big colourful scarf that wrapped around him like a shawl. No one knew the exact nature of his disease but it was evident that he was very very sick. At the end he had to be almost car-



pp. 18-19 Letters and thoughts written by Aldo Furlanetto to Margherita



p. 20 Crucifixion by Luciano Minguzzi

ried out and seeing the body of that superb dancer and outstanding athlete deprived of his strength was terrible. Yet nothing managed to strip Nurayev of his extraordinary regal dignity.

The following January 6th, I read the news of his death; it was painful but not surprising, having witnessed that night that his sickness wasn't leaving much room for hope. To me, Nureyev will always represent the embodiment of grace, strength and poetry in motion that make ballet so special.

When I listen to the opera or watch ballet, it is impossible for the memory of my father not to cross my mind, and the same happens at art exhibitions. All about my sensitivity towards art originated from my childhood visits to museums and expositions with my father. As a man of his time, he appreciated ancient masters and I loved modern art first and contemporary art later on. Different perspectives, different generations but the same sensitivity, I inherited from him.

The values my father instilled in us by example are respect and loyalty. But also the importance of force. He had some aversions: he didn't drive, he let his wife do it. And she used to fall asleep in the car while waiting for him outside his appointments at the company. His rigor was somewhat touching. When he wanted to gift my mother a bag, he used to go to the register and pay for it. "This is show it's supposed to be done," he used say. As if putting money in the register of your own shop was the most natural thing in the world.

When he decided to retire from the direct management of the company, it wasn't to enjoy a well-deserved rest, but to dedicate his time to charitable and philanthropic initiatives. He founded the Fortitudo in a collaborative effort to keep kids away from the street, a sports center for soccer, roller hockey, basketball, ping-pong and gymnastics. The ping-pong players were invited to China and they invited the Chelsea to Bologna – my father liked to think big, even when it came to sports and leisure.

He established an association to support the reintegration into society of those released from prison. He also founded with others, "Pastor Angelicus", which offered 50 mini apartments to people with handicapped children turned down from hotels.

When my father passed away, Furla was much smaller than it is now. What would he say if he could see us today? I hope he would be proud of the way we grew – respecting his values –, rather than how much we

grew. Adding pearl after pearl; store after store; one thing well done after the other; putting them all together with care and love, as he used to do.

He was a humble man, but I think he would be pleased.

I remember that talking about the future he used to say: "how great it will be if we got to have a store in every big city of the country." Today we have over 460 around the world.

We started from Italy, always keeping it in our hearts, even when it ceased to be our main market.



p. 25 Photo of Aldo and Margherita's wedding

SIMPLICITY IS SUBTRACTING WHAT'S OBVIOUS  
AND ADDING WHAT'S MEANINGFUL

### Creativity

Creativity has nothing to do with the final price.

Nothing.

It would be like saying that to be well dressed you must spend a lot of money. It is simply not true. You must be elegant; which is very different.

We were born as "accessible luxury", a definition that has been stolen by too many and that I have decided to change into "premium", from the *automotive* world and then to "inclusive". Creating an accessible product that features what we call "value for price" is a complex task resulting from a skilled alchemy that takes into consideration all these aspects. So far, we managed to accomplish our goal, but hopefully people won't suddenly take it lightly, because it is a very difficult balance to achieve.

The market changes because nowadays everything changes at unforeseeable speed. It is impossible to effectively describe the scale of the transformation the market has undergone since I have started managing the family business. Everything changes constantly, in an endless evolution year in and year out. For all those working in fashion, what happens around us represents a continuous source of change; fashion sometimes interprets and at times even anticipates it. Always – at least when it is interesting – presenting a clear vision, which in this field should always be examined, interpreted and possibly understood.

Those who manage a company cannot hang on to yesterday's formulas, even though they have bolstered its success. They would run the risk of being dramatically left behind, because others continue to go forward, relentlessly. The global audience is now very aware – they have been "schooled" by thousands sources of information of the digital world and they won't forgive who does not keep up. The only worst thing than a brand that does not work



p. 29 Sissi, artist winner of the 2002 Furla Art Award, wearing her artwork "Oltre lo sguardo la corda lega". Image from the fall winter 2010 adv campaign



p. 23 Margherita's family country house in Marsure di Sotto in Povoletto in the Udine province



p. 23 Photo portrait of Giovanna Fulanetto with the first four siblings. From the left, Paolo, Pietro Antonio, Carlo, Giovanna and Daniele



p. 24 Margherita and Aldo Furlanetto in Egypt



p. 31 "Furla and I" Spring Summer 2012 adv campaign curated by artist Sissi

is a dusty brand that gives the idea of having been left a bit behind.

That's why I like to surround myself with young people. My taste is inevitably influenced by my age, my education and the world I have lived in.

Hence, now we wish to make way for what's new. In any shape or form.

When something original is presented on the market, fashion insiders often tend to focus on its weaknesses or on less original references. I believe it is a big mistake. It would be deeper and certainly more logic to reflect on another question. Why what works is working for the successful brands of that specific time?

Yves Saint Laurent, alive, or at least during his early years, polarized opinions for decades. Likewise did Hedi Slimane, when he took the helm of the Parisian maison, taking an interesting direction that I personally love, as a customer as well as an entrepreneur. Gucci according to Tom Ford; Gucci according to Alessandro Michele: it is wrong to define one through a sexy perspectives and the other as expressing a slightly vintage maximalism. What would be more interesting is understanding why the audience was seeking for that specifically. That exact aesthetics, that strikingly neat vision so. As Steve Jobs used to say, the key is figuring out what the public wants before they do. It is tremendously different.

I believe that some examples such as Saint Laurent or Gucci clearly explain one essential thing. Even the strongest of brands can work when someone interprets it personally, filtering their own sensitivity. Otherwise, around the corner lingers the most dreadful risk: that idea of dusty that leads to an extremely rapid customer (and revenue) outflow.

I've always decided to give room to the creative minds that join the company and give their personal interpretation, taking the history of Furla into consideration. Of course, perhaps they suggest things I wouldn't personally do and I candidly admit that is still difficult to maintain a good balance. There is no censorship or vetoes it would take away from them being creative, but I have the right- and duty- to express my point of view. Without being intrusive. It is a delicate balance; I definitely give my input but it's muffled. I have a huge responsibility.

Being able to delegate is hard but it means assuring the survival of a company. Those who follow the 'do it all' philosophy will soon realize that they are managing a dated company.

There is evident example of this situation in our industry and outside of it. Such a natural and somewhat human mistake many end up doing in family businesses.

Maintaining the level of balance I am describing is challenging. My everyday work includes great respect for the work of others and their perspective, without ever forgetting the company's dna, which led us here. All of us.

Furla is a brand, but is also the embodiment of a certain taste that the company managed to articulate over the years with the contributions of many. Artist Maurizio Cattelan, an extremely witty, intelligent and self-ironic man (a quality that is very important to me), said something that really resonated with



pp. 32-33 Image from the ad campaign by Saks, 1993

me. He affirmed that luxury means relinquishing something that we could easily afford.

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PRODUCT DESIGN IS KING PRICING IS QUEEN

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### Method

Furla is not business method is sensitivity.

Not a method yet the story of the company itself. Businesses created by one single person - without the influence of other people's voices - are characterized by a special identity and independence runs in their blood.

Listening to your sensations and considerations was one of the many lessons learned from my father. He always believed in me. I got married young - the first of seven siblings - and after leaving the company, he asked me to return, at least during the afternoons. Back then, it was a limited partnership divided between my father and my brothers, Paolo and Carlo. My father left me his share. I was married with two children. I started working only in the afternoon and then Furla completely sucked me in. It's an all-encompassing company; it gives a lot but it requires just as much. Something we, brothers and sisters, all experienced as well as my husband as long as he was beside me.

Is being able to be self-financing at all time a method?

I believe so. Furla has made important and bold retail yet never imprudent. The more I travel and the more I am convinced of something I felt since I was a young girl. Namely, Italy's biggest problem, and also my city's: the lack of a medium/long-term vision. Everyone seeks immediate results and short-term satisfaction. I've made an effort to be coherent, trying to set the basis of the company consistently with my values. I always try to take a step back and look at the bigger picture, rather than just focusing on the details, as Guicciardini once said.

Honestly, writing a book on management would be challenging for me, even though it is and was the profession I've chosen and what destiny had in store for me. Sensitivity cannot be reduced to a formula. Just as taste; it is impossible to be transformed into an equation.

I like to think that if there is a Furla method it entails the adoption of sensitivity when it comes to strategic decisions that are necessary in the business



p. 37 Michele Costato with his son Giuseppe



p. 39 Florence store Photo from Furla internal archives



p. 40 Shanghai's Citic store Photo from Furla internal archives



p. 41 Shanghai's Citic store Photo from Furla internal archives

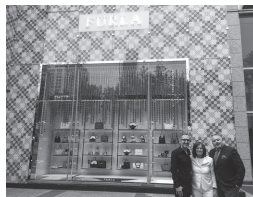
world. A thoughtfulness that was born many years ago, in a shop in Bologna, in via Ugo Bassi on the ground floor of a historic building. And then, in another more modern building, in via Marconi. My father asked architect Leone Pancaldi to decorate the space with pastel colors - aquamarine, pale light blue, lilac - and through tasteful choices he was able to bestow the dignity of one of the first Italian showrooms to what was essentially a fashion accessory wholesale. Something was unprecedented at the time and became the norm during the following years.

A narrow and long space featuring delicate shades, accurately outlined by type of product. It was something unique in a city like Bologna. I have always respected ideas. Products, as beautiful as they are, must be well made and carry authenticity, as we say in the affected language of marketing. But fashion is not only a product; it cannot be. And it is much more interesting this way.

All companies that have grown to become fashion benchmarks are different from one another, yet they all share a common trait: precise aesthetics that translates into brand identity. I am not fond of the term brand equity, it seems to reduce everything to a matter of data yet, it is also true that the credibility of a brand is grounded in its values and it is all it has. A collection gone wrong can be rectified with the following one. A credibility issue is a much more delicate matter. 40 Years ago we were essentially specialized in ready-made products but our ideas on our work method were clear. So, in 1977 arrived Centergross: a shopping center occupying approximately 2,000 sqm; a regular industrial building strategically positioned by the A13 highway and the train station. Products were purchased, ready to be for sale the following day in the stores that were stocking up weekly or monthly. Then, many collaborations with suppliers that produced the Furla designs and logo. The first foreign customers soon followed: Americans, Japanese, Russians, Austrians, Greeks, all drawn to



p. 42 Giovanna Furlanetto participates to the first Italian Fashion Summit in Beijing as speaker in 2011 organized by Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana & China Fashion Week Association



p. 43 Shanghai store opening, 2016 *Photo from Furla internal archives*



p. 43 Furla Hong Kong party organized for the presentation of the collection

the neat aesthetics of a very marketable product. Clients wailed with their carts, filling them with accessories and when handbags came out, they fought over them. 1,500 pieces used to disappear in the blink of an eye.

The opening of our stores was another essential element for the growth of the company and the definition of our work method. When my brothers, Carlo and Paolo, and I agreed on the brand's foreign expansion – without knowing that it would have become global. Our father died dreaming of 'a Furla shop in every major Italian city'; pearl after pearl in the string of our company's growth- the stores location immediately appeared to be the crucial topic. It was about selecting the right location on the right street, without focusing on payments that were too high or prohibitive costs, because in order to achieve certain figures – which we rightfully believed we could – you need to be in specific positions in the major global fashion cities. They are undoubtedly extremely high costs. Especially for a self-financing business.

We were often offered the highest possible prices, and it still happens today, because small-medium shops as the ones we occupy, are the most expensive. Megastores extending over three floors are much cheaper. It's a real estate rule that applies all over the world, even outside shopping areas (a three-room apartment does not cost as much as three one-room apartments).

Thus, the history of Furla is also the history of a tangible expansion through the stores my siblings and I have dreamt about. Our Rome store in Piazza di Spagna, for example, was a symbolic achievement rather than a strategic one; situated in the heart of the world, from every perspective. This is why last year's photo taken in Piazza di Spagna in the snow means so much to me.

China: Shanghai. The flagship store that fills all of us with pride symbolizing the hard work and our results in China, after striving for our place in the sun in such a complex market for over a decade (also with the support we've received along the way by Fung Group, our joint venture partner). I was invited to the first sino-Italian fashion summit with the National Chamber for Italian Fashion: 7/8 days in China, guest of the Government to join that remarkable conference to discuss the strength of simplicity of design; on simplicity as ultimate goal. I had been invited, but before leaving I exchanged some dollars for daily expenses but they did not let me touch my wallet. Never. A matter of Chinese hospitality. I wasn't able to spend a single dollar out of my own pocket. I still remember that huge parterre of Chinese, all eager to understand with accurate and specific questions on how to create a fashion brand. There was also great curiosity, under all points of view. I went to China to hold a conference but the most important lessons are the ones I've learned.

The other images of Furla's long journey – as postcards and precious pearls that life generously gifted me – are memories that will never fade. Our Hong Kong staff wearing traditional



p. 45 Dinner hosted at the Serpentine Gallery in London for the opening of the Brompton road store. Among the guests, selected members of the art world (curators, gallerists, artists) and fashion industry (directors and journalists) *Photo from Furla internal archives*

Chinese clothes at a gala dinner reminded me of Wong Kar-Wai's movie "in the mood for love". The #1 event at Moscow's Red Square for just 100 invitees, a wonderful dinner with a perfect setting and 50 waiters all equally tall and ready to serve of all the guests at the same time with an almost military precision. An extraordinary event, impressive to the point of making me want to assist to the rehearsals, in which waiters practiced synchronized serving. Something I have never seen anywhere before. Not even at extremely high profile dinners. To this day, we refer to that Moscow night as an example of excellence.

The beauty of precision, without frills but with tremendous attention to details. Because true simplicity is never ordinary.



pp. 46-47 Event hosted by the Moscow Historical State Museum in Red Square in the presence of press, curators, celebrities, the Italian ambassador in Moscow and the Italian Consul in Moscow  
*Photo from Furla internal archives*

### Franchising

Franchising has undeniably been one of the fundamental components of the growth of Furla. Looking back to the 1970s, I smile thinking that at the time I was so inexperienced that I had to look up the meaning of the word in the English dictionary. Even the accountants had no idea what it was... the way it worked and how this type of contract was regulated wasn't clear. Only Benetton, in Italy adopted it.

Eventually we easily drafted a one-page-contract in which we provided the exclusivity for the city, and I have to say with a sense of pride that some retailers even cried when for various reason they decided to cease their activity. They truly loved us. This is something that always impressed me, and it was beyond our work relationship. During those years, franchising allowed us to expand the visibility of our brand and gave the retailers the chance to be able to count on a solid investment. Some of them were buying 1 million lire of goods and were back to stocking up after having sold 5 or 600,000. We were the first to do it in the leather industry and in Italy. In the leather sector, we obviously worked within different time frames than Benetton, that had the advantage of being able to garment-dye their products, while we could not dye finished handbags. Leather has to be drum-dyed.

Despite adverse timing, the obstacle of not having any agent, representative or trade fair, customers still came. How? Simply by having seen our product. Seeing our products in other department stores generated a chain reaction that brought the brand to the major countries of the world. A small (back then) factory in Tuscany exclusively manufactured our goods, which were delivered every morning after their production. This is how, in a few years, it was able to count 500,000 pieces manufactured every year. Half a million.



p. 49 Verona store  
*Photo from Furla internal archives*

We slowly added new products – going back to the idea of the string of pearls – more products as new pearls to enrich our necklace. A bit more lifestyle, as we would say nowadays. And all the production was "just in time". Back then, there was less competition and the market wasn't saturated as it is today. We did not have the internet and communication was much slower. Everything was different.

Yet clients were almost fighting to have our bags in their stores after a few hours, ready to be sold.

Initially there was great emphasis on franchising in Italy. There was city exclusivities and no royalties and the final price was subject to a further step.

That was the beginning of Furla's retail expansion, with all the benefits and risks it involves. Because there is a point when you come to the realization that the company has 2,500 employees to take care of and it's like surfing completely unpredictable waves and this market evolution has caught many off-guard. We were initially mostly operating in Italy and now our country represents approximately 15% of our sales.

Another U-turn became necessary; from franchise stores to shops that elevated the product. Defining a common price all over the world was crucial, especially when with the internet we were provided with an infallible search engines.

The history of Furla is (also) a history of intuitions. A major market position cannot be achieved without this ability. Just an example: Yoox Net-a-porter. Federico Marchetti is a great entrepreneur who has always been daring, and has extremely work extremely hard being enormously commitment to that business model. The business of unsold merchandise before (unsold goods are so complicated and very difficult to handle), and then wagering on a business model big houses did not rely on. Purchasing expensive products without seeing or trying them on first. From a startup to a capitalization of \$5,3 million. All based on the strength of an intuition, on going where others won't risk to.



p. 51 Request for affiliation sent by the Princess of Oman to open a Furla store in Muscat

### LOVE IS THE ANSWER

#### Paolo and Carlo

My brother Paolo was in charge of the administration, Carlo and I oversaw the management, while Giovanna was the head of the creative department. Three siblings (out of seven), in a family business founded by our father. A simple recipe. Italian. Very Italian.

It might seem strange today, but if there's a secret of the success Paolo, Carlo and I had was indeed simplicity. Carlo was a talented organizer, extraordinarily clearheaded - confused ideas don't lead anywhere in life and work. Paolo was an aesthete with great intuitions. 40 years ago, he understood how important Japan was going to be for our company and he encouraged our journey into the United States, which he courageously



p. 55  
Paolo Furlanetto

deemed another fundamental market for our foreign expansion.

Paolo showed how to handle nice things you must love and understand nice things, nice places. He used to go to St. Barth when no one still knew what it was; he used to go to exhibitions in Paris when there weren't many flights and Europe wasn't as small as it is today (we still had borders, different currencies). But, most of all he had a special gift, the ability of identifying beauty before anyone else.

A very handsome man; just like a movie star; a remarkable personality and extraordinary character.

He was in charge of the relations with New York big department stores, like Saks Fifth Avenue. He wasn't a man you could easily forget. When he passed away, Americans dedicated a mass for him at St. Patrick's. His sense of humor, his innate and spoken elegance were unforgettable. He was able to keep the family together with just a look. It was Paolo, who decided to acquire an important building to serve as headquarters of the company. Because Furla could not have ordinary offices if it aspired to be an extraordinary company. He understood that feeling special was what it took to actually be special.

He never got to see that building. Carlo and I bought it in 1990 just outside Bologna, a year after his death.

Carlo was a handsome, strong and sporty man. He was in the alpini during his military service. Great skier in winter and great hiker during summer; he absolutely loved the mountains. He also used to cycle and play tennis. He was surrounded by friends. Committed to his job and beloved by clients and suppliers, he always had a serene approach and a good word for everyone. In 1998, we also lost Carlo, our President and CEO, in his 50s. So the amount of responsibility on my shoulders tripled. I do not feel its weight, but I certainly feel the presence of my father and my brothers. The feeling that I have been entrusted with the work they have done by destiny.



p. 57  
Carlo Furlanetto



pp. 58-61 Villa Bellaria, Furla headquarters in San Lazzaro di Savena (BO)

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TRUE LUXURY IS DOING WITHOUT WHAT  
YOU COULD EASILY AFFORD

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## No Fur

In the spring of 2018 we announced that Furla would be completely *fur free* starting from our Cruise 2019 collection presented in November. All men and women's products will be made using only faux fur. Over the recent years the company has experienced an exponential

growth. Eliminating any type of animal-derived fur from our collection proves our always-increasing interest towards the environment; a special attention we all have in the company as a responsibility, a form of courtesy.

As the demand for ethical products increases in the market, it is only right that we focus and listen to these requests. Also considering that recent technology advancements have allowed us to have valid alternatives to traditional fur, eliminating the need to still rely on animal fur in 2019.

It's a matter of sensitivity. I have been wearing vegetable tanned leather bags for a long time, which is dramatically more qualified among other hides as its production does not entail polluting discharges.

It is important to consider that there are also completely "plant based" vegetable tannins used to dye bags' leather and they work perfectly well. The Mantra collection was launched in 2017 and is regularly sold out.

We must listen to the demands of the market. When you are on social media networks, a dialogue with your clients comes natural. I believe that having a tool that allows to directly communicating with those who buy and use the products has only benefitted the world of fashion. I do go to our stores, but I surely cannot spend there all the time I wish I could... I think that every manager, especially in the fashion industry, would love to have the time and the actual chance to spend more time in their boutiques to really have a firsthand understanding – that goes beyond of the data and the conversations with store managers – of who are the people that was so interested in our product to the point of visiting our stores, buying or not, even just to browse. What do they look for in a brand, even before the product itself? The relevance of the identity of a maison it's that it offers a quality product and the values that comprises are now very evident.

I am not personally on social media but I am very fascinated by it, because they offer us a sort of shortcut that I believe to be enormously precious. I think we can talk about a real movement when it comes to fur-free in fashion, we are talking about the major brands; even London's Selfridges has adopted a no-fur policy.

LEED certification (leadership in energy and environmental design) is a voluntary certification program dedicated to the building and design sustainability of a commercial or residential building. It involves energy and water saving; reduction of CO2 emissions and quality of materials. It has been a joy and an accomplishment to receive the LEED Gold Certification for our Milan's Headquarters of Palazzo Ricordi, just a few steps from the Duomo.

2017 has been our best year so far, and it was very rewarding. But we still have to keep going forward, showing everyone that we are open to change. Even – and mostly – when things are going well.

With time, habits and perspectives change. Today I am glad and proud to have led Furla to be fur-free, but it's not like I never owned fur before.

It was a different time; different points of view that today



p. 65 Faux fur handbag  
Photo by Massimo Bianchi



would be dated, yet it is a very sweet story that I like to tell. It is about my brother Paolo and I and a weekend we spent in Rome, where he had a house.

Paolo, who was single, adored my children and he always treated me like a princess. He used to spend his weekends in Rome where he invited me often (my husband was a bit jealous of this). It was the early 1980s, fur was still in, even though I used to wear my little coat with confidence.

But once, Paolo took me to Fendi. I thought he needed to buy something for himself and needed my advice. Instead, he took me upstairs, where they sold their fur coats. I was wearing jeans. White jeans, Timberland shoes and a blue jacket. I remember it as if it was yesterday. I've never been to the upper floor of the Fendi boutique because I did not have fur coats. When Paolo specifically asked to see their fur, they started showing us amazing things, as Lagerfeld's marvelous and inimitable design can only be. Bold pieces that were nonetheless extremely feminine. I tried on two of them. Wonderful, a light leopard one and a dark, almost black, saga mink coat. The choice was impossible. They were two masterpieces. Paolo said: "we're taking both".

This was who my brother Paolo was.

Then, when we got back to Bologna, he said to my husband: "let's do this: one is a gift from me and the other one is from you". They are still very current, but I haven't worn them in a long time. I wouldn't wear them even in incognito. They are new. I have never worn them at work, just on holiday on the slopes and only back when it was in style. Different times. Different ways of thinking. Everything flows. It's fashion, but also and most importantly, life.

## Japan

Vincent van Gogh, in 1888, wrote words on his brother Theo words that profoundly touch me every time I read them and they could have easily been written today. The great painter used to envy the distinctive clarity and attention of their work, which he described with what, I believe to be a beautiful comparison to the simplicity of breathing. Painting like breathing: a profoundly poetic idea that encapsulates the effortless of Japanese art, which I find very moving. The art that marked my life, after so many years of habit and although having received a classical education, is contemporary art. Yet, great Japanese artists represent a continuous inspiration. Van Gogh admired the Japanese ability of analyzing the tiniest details, a single blade of grass that leads to the painting of nature, of a landscape and then of the human figure. Human figure as a part of a whole: an idea exquisitely Japanese that will never cease



p. 67 Bags from the Mantra collection in vegetable tanned calfskin

to touch me.

To me this is what Japan is: beauty of simplicity. Harmony. Kindness.

For Furla the 1980's were the years of the United States, to which the most important memories of our achievements – over 30 years ago now – are linked. The 1990's were the years of our Asian expansion, where my brother Paolo had sent me. "He always used to say, we need to go to Japan. To Japan..." he passed away in 1989 and on June 1990 I went to Tokyo for the first time, by myself. Yes, all alone, flying economy, with two or three addresses of department stores in my pocket. That's it. Without speaking a word of Japanese in a country where not everyone speaks English.

However, Isetan and Daimaru immediately understood what we were doing. Furla aesthetics is very close to their sensitivity. It is a sort of elective affinity.

I don't think there are people that love Italy more than the Japanese. They know our country because they have visited it, often more than once. They love our culture and it is so touching how much they appreciate when a westerner makes the effort of studying their language and their culture, which I found endlessly beautiful and rich.

I remember the visits of our Japanese customers in Bologna; delighted by our food that they always used to ask us to prepare little mortadella cubes for them which, by the way, I couldn't stand, but it's fine. The Japanese clientele has a unique competence in terms of quality. No one better than a Japanese is able to identify an accessory that is not well made and no one better than them can see quality when it is present.

Made in Italy is so esteemed that I remember the press conference we held for our first Tokyo opening: 30-40 journalists of all publications. This is today a crucial market for us. Japan has been for many years the most important market for Furla: with 24% of total revenues it even surpassed Italy (15% of turnover). Japanese costumers appreciate Italian essence of Furla's design; our post-sale assistance and - I like to think - a certain courtesy that characterizes our way of dealing with others, as a company. We have 80 shops in Japan and we have just inaugurated new offices and showrooms at Aoyama. Furla has over 469 employees in Japan, I almost feel like saying that we are an Italo-Japanese firm!

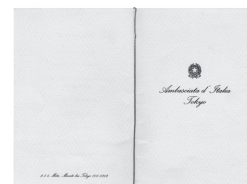
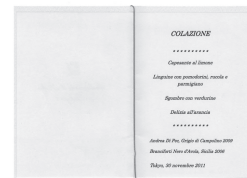
Being a company that seeks quality without settling for shortcuts, working with Japanese people has been useful and instructional: both the sales representatives for stores or retail chains and final consumers are obsessed with precision and details. They can be extremely loyal, when treated with loyalty. Instead, if they get disappoint-



p. 71 Mrs Giovanna Furlanetto with the Japanese team on the occasion of the Ginza store opening, in Tokyo



p. 69 Press conference for the launch of the Itochu license acquisition in Tokyo



p. 71 Menu of the dinner hosted by the Italian Embassy in Tokyo

ed, it is very difficult, exceptionally difficult to win back their trust. A great learning experience.

We've presented our collection at the Italian embassy twice. I remember the very collected yet evident cheerfulness of the Japanese in Tokyo's Ginza, celebrating the opening of the store at the central 4 chome crossing- the one crossed by 850,000 people everyday in the most orderly and disciplined way. I dread the thought of having the same crossing in an Italian city with our kind of traffic and our straightforward ways. That was a very important investment: made over the phone. It was a € 9 million deposit, plus € 200,000 of monthly rent, 14 years ago! A big luxury fashion house has asked us for the space but we are not going to leave. It's one of the locations we are more proud of. I received a spectacular bunch of 100 white roses from our Hong Kong partner at the time: Masaki Ogino. I will never forget it.

Ten years ago, we celebrated the 80th anniversary of our foundation with an event at the Tokyo's museums of contemporary art. Japan shares Furla's aesthetics as well as our ethos: it's a country where, fortunately, manners are still fundamental. They respect others and admire elders instead of marginalizing them. I believe women are amongst the most elegant in the world and I really love to see and in Japan, I love to see men buy women's handbags for themselves. They have fewer barriers than others. This is another reason why Japanese are so special.



pp. 72-73 Ginza store, Tokyo

## EXPLORE THE UNEXPECTED

### Identity

I don't like to look back, it is not something that I do often, actually, almost ever. But when I do, I realize that we have created something that was virtually impossible, especially for the volume of investments that require certain results. How did we do it? With a serious approach. Our family never indulged in extravagant things; a boat or a Ferrari. I have just bought my umpteenth Mini and even my children reprimanded me, but it's our way of doing things. We re-invest everything in the company.

This is another trait I inherited from my father, 100%. I find many people's overindulgences baffling. I connect them to an idea of fun that does not correspond with mine; I prefer spending time with Jerome, my Jack Russell. It's a blazoned dog, very independent and strong. It's an incredible breed, exceptionally intelligent. My dog, not much social life, a lot of friends and holidays, always at the same place. I never considered work – professional success – as a mean to purchase more things, more toys. That's not who I am. My personality is quite reserved – another family trait,



p. 77 Jerome,  
Giovanna's Jack  
Russel

I believe. I always need to leave a place and during events I always walk away before everyone else.

A large budget never impressed me, in my personal as well as in my professional life. I am firmly convinced that a shortness of funds could largely be compensated with talent. And, on the contrary, I believe that often pharaonic budgets conceal the lack of or transparency.

Clear ideas. It's Furla's DNA. We make bags for women that expect quality, reliability, style. At prices that differ from those of some classic luxury brands. Very honestly, at Furla every customer is treated with the utmost respect and we pay great attention to detail. My belief in this principle is unwavering: beauty and quality are available even to those who cannot afford a Hermès.

I personally don't go shopping very often and I am very – perhaps too much – selective. And I want our customers to be as selective and never feel like they are taken for granted. I live surrounded by products and I am extremely loyal to the brands I wear, which are basically just two. In the future? We'll see. "Customers' loyalty is fundamental", my father used to tirelessly repeat it. Those who feel respected by a company – or person – return the same respect.

The journey of Furla also constitutes its identity. Production: we initially relied on external establishments and subsequently handled it directly, with our logo. A crucial transition, because my father was a tradesman. He used to deal with different brands and particularly with leather goods. I personally decided to focus on handbags. I felt it was time to sell products that carried our logo. 1,000 Bags manufactured at a Friulian facility by Udine. That was our first major batch.

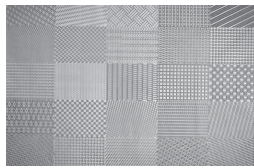
Young bags, made of needlecord rubber and leather finishes. The handle was a rubber and leather piece, while the rubber flap featured leather piping. It was the first time that an industrial material was used. Very simple yet unusual crossbody bags transformed into youthful, functional and innovative accessories by that combination of materials. I ordered 1,000 pieces. With our label. I really enjoyed this idea. In the 1980s it was a successful experiment, 1,000 pieces seemed many but we sold them quite easily and that was the starting point for others product launches always carrying the Furla logo and the style was already selected and directed by us. We sought to make a product that represented accessible luxury – a formula imitated by many – until a few years ago I've decided to end this route and to embark on the journey of "premium", a definition borrowed from the automotive world, medium-sized and classy. This description was justified and legitimized by the creation – besides the product – of a top retail network. Today we like to describe ourselves as "inclusive luxury", because we wish to attract a wide range of walks of life, ages and genders.

We are currently studying a new concept store to test a new layout, because you always need to start over, add a new piece to the necklace, with infinite attention. A fresh start is necessary every 5 or 6 years and this is another side of an identity. You can either aim to stay unchangeable, like some brands – since everything comes back style – or you can choose to be current, understanding what's disruptive, and you must always rethink and experiment; the evolution today has to be taken into the actual shops, and not necessarily just luxury, even for premium categories as our own. Creating advertising campaign, always

considering the ecommerce; the issues of parallel trade, counterfeiting, global price uniformity to avoid brand devaluation. You must have the cold blood to block certain large orders that will clearly be triangulated who knows where. Monitoring it's difficult. We are expanding and we have become very big, but it has now become a very controlled expansion: we are more focused on consolidation; selling more per sqm, maybe with larger space dedicated to certain accessory categories and through synergies with other labels, yet always with the careful introduction of consistent products.

We want to be consciously aggressive: surviving the test of time requires extremely careful choices. There's the luxury shopping streets hot spots where you can find the best brands and other places that are not so useful for a company. Shopping streets are not all the same. It must be attentive and selective.

Our identity is embodied by a very understandable product that is reasonably priced and characterized by a strong yet simple design. Simplicity is an achievement, it is not ordinariness. It is precious and is a source of inspiration. I used to travel to Japan and get inspired from the great masters of Japanese design and fashion, which at the



pp. S0-S1 Artwork by an Italian contemporary artist comprising 25 double A4 sheets hand-colored using a marker. And it represents as many 'patterns' from which fabric weaves originated.

When we reworked our stores' packaging, we decided to use a different design for each shopper size, still maintaining a cohesive look.

I remember asking the artist's release to be able to use the designs and how much we owed her.

She replied saying that for an artist having her works walking around the cities of the world was already an amazing accomplishment and recognition so she did not need anything more than that.



p. S1 Starting from 2019, our shopping bags produced with sustainable paper, will be available in all our stores (direct and franchise) and in our e-commerce channel

time were uncompromisingly minimal. We were making less brainy products, yet, both strong and simple at the same time. There. The strength of simplicity.

And there was our luck- it was indeed luck- of having a relationship with an exceptionally skilled tuscan manufacturer. He made the first bag. I still remember it perfectly. It was basically a crossbody bag, that today we could define as unisex, featuring a luggage-inspired side closure. "Our" production started with him.

Luck and ability to always look ahead and never back.

I have been told that in the evening Karl Lagerfeld throws away all his sketches and that fendi has put a person in charge of retrieving all he threw in the bin. There's a sort of transparency in all this, which I truly love and admire. Looking ahead instead of looking back. He is a unique and incomparable man. Just watch the documentary on his life. I've watched it two or three times, always with great admiration. It's an inspiration for everyone in this field, no matter what type of product they work with.

Furla is my life, not just because it's the family busi-

ness, but because it is also the only job I have ever had. I was the older daughter of 7 siblings, my father, who has always been forward-looking, believed that a woman in the company could be a precious asset, adding a different sensibility. He used to say that we are the result of those who believed in us. I was studying languages at university/in high school and I was already helping the business. My father believed in me right from the beginning, we had great affinity. I accompanied him to the exhibitions. The girl after three boys: my brothers used to say that I was his favorite, but the truth is that no one wanted to go with him, so we went together. Just him and me. And he used to teach me so much. He also loved sculpture and ceramics; a truly enlightened man. At 23 I got married, I had two children, but my father asked me to go back to the office, at least part time. That was what pulled me back in: my father created a regular limited partnership with 3 people - my brothers and him- then, when he turned 65, he decided to split his assets among his seven children, as equally as he could, since it was mostly real estate. He left me his share in the company: at the time it didn't have the value it has today. We perhaps had a turnover of 8 million liras. When my brother Paolo passed away at just 50 years old without direct heirs, I inherited his share as well. That's how I became the majority shareholder.

My brother Carlo -two years my senior- was the president. I've always felt this responsibly I could never get away from. I spent most of my life pursuing my brothers' and father's dream to carry this company into the future. A company I have always been devoted to with commitment and passion. I have traveled for this company and met many interesting people. However, I have always kept a low profile in my personal life, consistently with our company ethics.

Milan is far from Bologna, where we are. But is also my temperament that has led me to dedicate myself to art projects, rather than to social life and events as other company managers do ...



p. S3 Berlin store  
Photo by Philipp Langenheim

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## REAL BEAUTY ALWAYS STARTS INSIDE

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### Women

I sometimes read that Furla was founded by my father and my mother. That is not correct. My father was the only founder, my mother had her hands full trying to take care of all of us children. I remember how happy she was on holiday. We have two housekeepers but, with seven children, she enjoyed finding some relief from domestic matters. Today, however, Furla counts over 2,500 employees and 78% are women of different nationalities. Something I am extremely proud of, especially in times like these.

My father was a traditional man, undoubtedly a man of his time. My mother had no role in the company,



p. S7 Portrait of Giovanna Furlanetto as part of the ad campaign "Le donne di Furla - un'azienda al femminile" Photo by Aldo Fallai

but since my father didn't drive, she used to be his driver (sometimes, when meeting took too long, she fell asleep on the car seat: poor mom, how sweet...).

However, there is something very important that should be mentioned when talking about my father being 'a traditional man'. He was the same man who called me to ask me to come back to work and who I never heard saying something questionable, not even once. He judged the character of a person, not the gender. And he had courage. To be given so many responsibilities in the company, wasn't something expected or predictable, as it was unpredictable that tragically, I had to lose my beloved brothers, when they were just 50, finding myself alone at the helm of the company. Among the many things he taught us, my father reserved a special lesson to myself. Trusting people would return the favor ten, a hundred, a thousand fold. Paying back who believed in them and also because others' trust gives us confidence.

When my father passed away the company was much smaller, we did not have as many women, and they were only Italian. This global company made of 78% of women selected only for their skills would make him so proud. If I could only tell him one thing, I would tell him that the reason why the company is what it is today is that his children followed his example and learned his lesson.

I am sure he would love one of our fundamental business guidelines: providing women with a nice product they can be proud of and that makes them look beautiful at the right price. My father didn't think beauty should be exclusive or for those who can afford it. He was an enlightened entrepreneur who insisted on the right price as much as on the quality and the customer service, even after the sale, which is the only real way to have a clientele that follows the brand season after season (even in this case, the most prestigious brands can teach everyone: who buys their products is assisted over decades. The brand itself is the warranty).

There are some categories of products that are impossible to keep at an average price because of the intricate manufacturing or the precious material used: but that is couture. I have always believed that for a working woman, that has her friends, her family, finding beauty at a reasonable price is liberating. *Couture* will always exist, but it's like a Ferrari for men: you can be a fan, admire it on the street without feeling uncomfortable because you cannot afford it. Precisely how it happens in the *automotive* world, in fashion there is a premium category, which is ours.

"Cheap" is not a nice term but "inexpensive" is completely different. "Inexpensive" is perfect, as long as it's well made not with cynicism.

Every time I look back at an old Furla campaign shot by Aldo Fallai, it still feels very fresh, far from ordinary. By the same token, when I think of Furla and women, I think of freshness, which is our goal. Freshness, and levity are liberating.

A company of women is, for better or worse, peculiar, and numbers show that



pp. 88-89 Furla employees in the park of Villa Bellaria

there's an extremely high percentage of women in this company.

A decade ago, almost 80% of our employees were women, women under 34. Approximately 50 maternity leaves only in the first decade of this millennium helped to develop guidelines that I would summarize with one word: care. Care for a contemporary woman who has to juggle her private, family and professional life.

Women have always been part of the company, from top management roles to organizational structure. A choice that, initially unplanned, proved itself to be successful. Over the years, we have developed, ad hoc solutions, as the post-maternity part-time offered to some new moms with the introduction of flexible working hours and favorable contracts. I am very proud of our corporate welfare for both men and women.

And I believe my father would have been too.

### Structure

The company's 80th anniversary, ten years has marked a historic move: the ownership decided to take a step back from management. For the very first time, the role of CEO has been assigned to someone outside the family. I have maintained my role as President but I was assisted by a manager in the role of CEO, who boasted an enviable resume, counting collaborations with Armani and Ferragamo. We ended that year with a turnover of € 150 million and the goal of doubling the result within four years. We always have to keep in mind that I had taken on the role of CEO when my brother Carlo passed away and the company was registering a turnover of € 39 million and – for a creative like myself- taking the company where it is today, represents a great result. However, we wanted to achieve a good level of governance; something that could support the third generation making a distinction between managers and shareholders. It was important to do it back then, at that specific time, at the 80th anniversary of the house, when everything was going well. The whole team was doing an amazing job and I believed a signal was necessary.

That's how my father worked with us, three children in the company: introducing the figure of a CEO was my important signal.

So, during the first decade of this millennium, we introduced the first external CEO, who stayed only 3 years and was replaced by another one, who maintained his role for 7 years and was followed by our current CEO, who has held the position for two years.

I used to organize seminars with a person from Mckinsey who lectured us on the complexity of moving from family business to a management company, step happened when the company grew further.

So, besides the responsibility inherited from my father, I also had the responsibility to reorganize the structure of the company. I now enjoy the pleasure of distributing the highest dividends ever



p. 91 Claudia and Giuseppe Costato



p. 92 View of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele from Palazzo Furla  
Photo by Davide Loratti

recorded by the company, which has extraordinarily grown. And I believe the brand will live on, with or without us. When we moved our headquarters to Milan – one of the most precious and important pearls of our string – we thought that it was going to determine the immortality of the company, and I am firmly convinced that if things would ever go wrong, we will be acquired by someone bigger than us. I have always thought of how to protect and safeguard this family jewel I was entrusted with by my father and my brother Paolo. Until my brothers were still alive, we never distributed our profits, so we indulged in the Bologna headquarters, Palazzo Ricordi in Milan and our new factory, currently under construction. The attention for budgets and costs is our Friulian DNA. It is far from stinginess, it's parsimony, respect and sense of responsibility. It's grace.



p. 93 Palazzo Furla – Milan corporate headquarters *Photo by Davide Lovatti*

OWNING LESS, EXPERIMENTING MORE

Stores

A special spotlight must be pointed on our stores, Furla's most important asset in the offer to our final consumer, which I like to consider as a dialogue, a conversation with our customers.

As in a string of pearls, for our openings we have selected the most strategic Italian and international cities, which count today more than 460 stores in the most important streets and remarkable investments.

There are incomparable locations, such as Piazza di Spagna in Rome or the Duomo in Milan, 5th Avenue in New York, Ginza in Tokyo, Hong Kong flagships, Beijing, Shanghai, Paris, London, Vienna... just to name a few. Then there are locations that require constant maintenance; street that go up in the customers' valuation list and other that go down for the most various reasons.

What forces companies to constantly perform complicated yet necessary maintenance is that stores may become smaller, requiring a larger surface. Without considering that the image and decoration should be refreshed every 5/6 years to keep up with architectural trends or because of deterioration caused by customer traffic. All this work happens 'behind the scenes' with sub-



p. 97 New York store on the Fifth Avenue *Photo from Furla internal archives*



pp. 98-99 Milan's Piazza del Duomo store *Photo from Furla internal archives*



p.100 New York store on the Fifth Avenue *Photo from Furla internal archives*



tly and graciously: it is yet fundamental to accompany a brand into the future, without falling behind and appear dusty (a risk that unfortunately is always present in this field: fashion is beautiful and very interesting but it doesn't forgive those who make mistakes).

Travel retail deserves special attention. The store located inside airports represent a very important part of our turnover and allow the brand to have great visibility, being exposed to millions of people flying all over the world, who have the chance of discovering Furla and often shopping during their layovers. That's why international airport terminals have been defined "the new streets of luxury".

The staff led by a store manager is constantly trained on the importance of establishing a loyalty relationship with the customer, on welcoming costumers and after-sales service. Customer relationship management receives instructions on how to set up store windows and twice a year, they are invited to our Milan Headquarters to attend training and refresher courses. Our packaging derives from an artwork by a contemporary artist: it's 5 drawings, each of which is used on a different size of shopping bag.

We have visual managers that travel around the world to train our staff on how to set up window displays and interiors in a continuous research of expository excellence. All to help our customers navigating through our product selection and understanding the history of our brand and the values it stands for. Since its inception, Furla has considered its retail structure as a string of pearls, adding pearl after pearl, the most precious, beautiful and strategic stores for the growth of the brand. Furla's boutiques represent our most valuable asset.



p. 101 Rome Piazza di Spagna store and view in the snow *Photo by Davide Lovatti*



p. 102 Hong Kong store, Miramall *Photo from Furla internal archives*



p. 103 Gold Coast Pacific Fair Furla store in Australia *Photo from Furla internal archives*



pp. 103-104 Marina Bay Sands store, Singapore *Photo from Furla internal archives*



p. 104 New York Fifth Avenue store *Photo from Furla internal archives*



p. 105 Brompton Road store, London *Photo by Paolo Veclani, BHM studio*

## Factory

We would have never become what we are without relying on the importance of manufacturing. Without excellent partners and without the decision of transitioning to a 100% in-house production.

We had two manufacturing partners for many years. We acquired one of the companies on 12-31-2017, after a 25-year collaboration. The original owner was replaced by two partners. They stayed with us for 18 years: financed by us with a company lease that they gradually paid back, 30% us and 70% them. Today we control 100% of our production, and this is how it should be.

When we acquired 100% of the production, our two partners wrote me a letter. "We hope we'll keep in touch, even just to exchange greetings". This sentence struck me. It has been a very long professional collaboration that allowed us to completely focus on the market, on distribution and advertisement, free from any kind of manufacturing complication. It transformed into mutual esteem, then respect and friendship. "Even just to exchange greetings" is a wonderful medal for our company, because there are human values that shall be preserved.

We have always invested in Italy and we will continue to do so in the future.

Everything has always been reinvested here, in Italy, and in the retail network built through a thorough work, which represents another great investment.

This is the formula we adopted to take Furla into the future, but there is not fixed corporate road map. It must be customized for the company and for its people. Extraordinary valuable people sometimes return at the helm. Total protection is impossible; supervision on management operations is necessary, as well as its support, encouragement and guidance. And interruption, when necessary. It's the role of a proactive shareholder.

It is my ambition to see the growth of the company as umbrella opening over everyone's head. Shareholders and employees. Furla is still a family business. I am human and as such I am flattered when I am told that the company reflects some of my personal characteristics such as clarity. I am always very cautious when I identify myself with the work done, but I am proud to have led to a Ginza, on the Fifth Avenue, in the world, relying only on the strength of a democratic product, affordable by all women.

I like the idea of beauty, quality and good design available to all women, even to those who cannot afford to spend certain amounts. I received a wonderful compliment from a Saks buyer of leather goods in New York. She said: when I want to look elegant I wear a Chanel, but when I go out during the day I wear a Furla". In the states, they used to call them bags for career women, but I have always called bags for working women: the A4 size is our best seller, regardless of our costumers' profession, fashion-



p. 107 Letters of thanks to Giovanna Furlanetto written by the owners of Effeuno (company later acquired by Furla)

able shapes are not the ones that sell more. Every woman wishes to be elegant and feminine, of course, but always considering work, family and thousands of daily commitments.

LOGIC WILL TAKE YOU FROM A TO B.  
IMAGINATION WILL TAKE YOU EVERYWHERE

## The decisive moment

I had much more than what I have ever expected in terms of people met, experiences and countries visited. However my motto – my playful battle cry at the company – remains: "forward!" I have never taken the time to stop and think. There was too much to do at the same time; too many places to visit; too many stores to open. My dream is also the dream of Paolo and Carlo, who were in love with their company but didn't have the time to see it come true. I really felt the responsibility through the years: towards them and my father. The future? I think that sooner or later this company will go public. But it will be a decision left to the 3rd generation, and rightly so.

I think that a model for a family business model -as far as accessories are concerned, even at a different price point- there is Hermès: something to look up to and the family has been in the company for centuries. They are publicly listed and they remain the world's most prestigious brand of leather goods.

The most fulfilling moments I can remember are connected with the acquisition of Effeuno; making our way into the Australian market with 16 stores; Singapore with 6 stores and today also 100% of the Chinese market. These are also very delicate moments that revolve around a market that must be monitored, assisted, modified, implemented, improved in a constantly evolving global scenario.



p. 113 Giovanna Furlanetto awarded the "Order of Merit for Labour" by President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano (October 30, 2008)



pp. 114-115 Gold Coast Pacific Fair Furla store in Australia Photo from Furla internal archives

WE MUST ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE TO LEAVE

## Furla Foundation

I am often asked: what would my father be most proud of about the company he once founded, if he could see it today. It's clear that a man like him, who dreamt about a store in every major Italian city, would be more than proud - extremely happy- about seeing us present almost everywhere around the globe. My brothers and I have all been raised with the sheer awareness of being citizens of the world. It was tremendously important to him. He found provincialism boring and he could very clearly see it limitations under every point of view, cultural as well as



p. 109 Image from the Spring Summer 2007 ad campaign Photo by Paolo Roversi

commercial. In the 1930's and 1940's, he used travel around Europe: the current map of our stores would make him so proud. My father was also a habitual visitor to art exhibitions, a very keen reader, and the kind of father that rejoiced at the sight of his children reading a book.

That's why I believe that the Fondazione Furla – a project born in 2008 – would hold a very special place in his heart. It is the embodiment of his vision of a company, which must not just be a factory of things but also of ideas and emotions rooted in specific values.

Eight years before the foundation of Fondazione Furla in 2008, the company embarked on a journey dedicated to fostering the arts introducing the Furla Award, curated by Chiara Bertola, who oversaw all its editions (the last one in 2015).

I have never considered myself an art connoisseur or an art critic, but art has always been very present in my life, I've always felt it as a necessity. Furthermore, creating beauty without a genuine love for arts and a precise aesthetic sensibility is very difficult.

Although I wouldn't exactly call myself an art collector, over the years, I have bought artworks that inspired me and all of them are at the company, where everyone can see them. Art inspires us, and it also awakes our emotions and moves us. I think it makes us more human.

The Fondazione – which can rely on a real budget; it is not a generic initiative, or a front, as it often happens – it has an ambitious purpose: the commitment to encourage and promote Italian contemporary culture in its diverse expressions, supporting young creativity while building a platform dedicated to the dialogue on contemporary issues.

The Fondazione is founded on a new and, I believe, very modern and completely sustainable approach to culture: it proves how the sharing between different subjects in the cultural field is not only possible, but necessary. Building on this spirit, several significant initiatives were born – such as the film-documentary “The Abramović Method” (directed by Giada Colagrande in 2012), depicting the exhibition adventure and the performance of artist Marina Abramović at Milan's PAC or the concert “Diario dell'Anima. Arvo Pärt & Bill Viola” (Bologna, 2010 in collaboration with Arte Fiera and Centro della Voce dell'Università di Bologna) and the exhibition “Mona Hatoum. Interior Landscape” (Venice, 2009 in partnership with Fondazione Querini Stampalia, during the 53rd International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia).

Accademie Eventuali was the result of the synergy between Fondazione Carisbo, Bologna's MAMbo and Xing. An educational project dedicated to students of the academies of the entire country, who were invited to Bologna to attend to a series of workshops conducted by in renowned artists.

The international promotion of contemporary Italian creativity represents another fundamental aspect that has always been at the heart of Furla's commitment through the support of many young artists' new productions (among which Alice Cattaneo, Danilo Correale, Ra Di Martino, Deb-



p. 119 Haegue yang, installation view of “Furla series #02 – Haegue Yang: Tightrope Walking and Its Wordless Shadow”, La Triennale Milan, 2018  
*Photo Masiar Pasquali*

orah Ligorio and Ottonella Mocellin). The history of the foundation is the history of a passion between the worlds of art and fashion, manifesting itself in an unceasing mutual inspiration. So artists of the likes of Mario Airò (2012) and Sissi (2011) were invited to give their personal interpretation of the world of fashion through the creation of performances or installations.

I was the person who most benefited most from all this work in terms of personal enrichment. My ‘classical background’ on figurative arts has been deeply influenced by the work of the Foundation and my personal interest leans now towards contemporary art in its more unconventional forms. I certainly evolved towards less immediately comprehensible forms that are able –with a little more attention – to awaken deep emotions.

After many years of activity dedicated to the growth and enhancement of young Italian art, Fondazione Furla has embarked on a new journey – that I consider very ambitious and therefore more exciting – into the institutional system. Since 2016 under the new artistic direction of Bruna Roccasalva and Vincenzo de Bellis, founders of Peep-Hole, the Foundation confirms its commitment to the support and promotion of contemporary art in Italy through Furla Series, a multiannual exhibition series by some of the most prominent international contemporary artists brought to life in partnership with an Italian public institution.

By choosing to develop projects able to support assist institutions in their role of cultural producers, Fondazione Furla takes on an active role in the cultural development policies of the country. I gladly embrace this approach that fosters a operating model rooted in synergy and collaboration.

The years of the Art Award, and then those of the fondazione went by so fast for me: unlike classical art, contemporary art has now a central role in my life. When my granddaughter was born, my gift for her was an artwork by Michelangelo Pistoletto.

#### Art award

In 2000 I met Chiara Bertola, contemporary art curator at Venice Fondazione Querini Stampalia and together we decided to sponsor a project dedicated to young artists. I wanted to give something to Italy, or better, I felt the desire of giving back. Bertola introduced me to the Fondazione, and we conceived the Furla Art Award roughly following the model of the Turner Prize. It has been also and mostly a personal learning process.

The Furla Art Award was launched in 2000 in partnership with Venice Fondazione Querini Stampalia to give visibility



p. 121 “Simone Forti, To Play the Flute”.  
Performance at the Museo del Novecento, Sala Fontana, Milan 21-23 September 2017. First installment of “Furla Series #01. Time after Time, Space after Space” (September 2017-April 2018)  
*Photo by Masiar Pasquali*



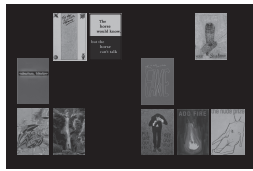
p. 122 Chiara Fumai (winner of 9. 2013 Furla Art Award), Chiara Fumai reads Valerie Solanas, 2012-2013  
Video still frame, Fondazione Furla Collection

and shine a light on valuable Italian up-and-coming artists. Ending with its 10th edition in 2015, the project has been a rather trailblazing experiment for our country and I am glad that it has been internationally recognized as one of the most prestigious Italian contests for the promotion of young talents.

From 2000 to 2015, under the direction of Chiara Bertola, the Furla Art Award gradually evolved gathering some of the most influential figures in the art world and important institutions with the aim of conducting a research and mapping throughout the Italian territory. A collective effort to give visibility to those deemed the most deserving artists. Joseph Kosuth, Ilya Kabakov, Lothar Baumgarten, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Kiki Smith, Mona Hatoum, Marina Abramović, Christian Boltanski, Jimmie Durham and Vanessa Beecroft are the artists that over 15 years participated with the role of patron of the event. They are the ones who decided the title and direction of each edition, also taking on the role of president of the jury. The Furla Art Award has represented an enormous contribution to the growth of young Italian art and the journey of the participating artists. It is one of the decisions I am most proud of.

During a famous speech, Robert Kennedy – who has been recently remembered on the 50th anniversary of his passing – explained how the gdp could and should not be the sole determining measure of the wellbeing of a nation. I think this also applies to companies: they cannot exist without their turnover but they cannot only live on it. Especially if they are dealing with beauty. The 10th edition of the award, was moved to Milan and marked a crucial change; different synergies, the partnership with the Municipality of Milan, Miart and the National Chamber for Italian Fashion.

It was an honor to present the award at Palazzo Reale, together with the host and president of the jury Vanessa Beecroft; the director of Palazzo Reale Domenico Piraina and the Councilor for Culture of Milan Filippo del Corno. The way the city of Milan welcomed us greatly expressed the relevance of



pp. 124-125 Furla Art Award guiding images:

Ilya Kabakov, The art is a fifth element (2. 2001 Furla Art Award)

Lothar Baumgarten, The horse would know, but the horse can't talk (3. 2002 Furla Art Award)

Joseph Kosuth, talent/um, tollerare (1. 2000 Furla Art Award)

Mona Hatoum, ON MOBILITY (6. 2007 Furla Art Award)

Marina Abramović, The Spirit in any condition does not burn (7. 2009 Furla Art Award)

Michelangelo Pistoletto, FAME, read in English, read in Italian (4. 2003 Furla Art Award)

Kiki Smith, Follow your Shadow (5. 2005 Furla Art Award)

Christian Boltanski, PLEURE QUI PEUT, RIT QUI VEUT (8. 2011 Art Award)

Jimmie Durham, ADD FIRE (9. 2013 Art Award)

Vanessa Beecroft, The Nude Prize (10. 2015 Art Award)



p. 127 Paulina Ołowska, "Slavic Goddess and the Ushers", Performance, Museo del Novecento, Sala Fontana, Milan, 6 March 2015.

4th installment of the "Furla Series #01. Time after Time, Space after Space" (September 2017 - April 2018)  
Photo by Masiar Pasquali

the Furla Art Award in the Italian cultural scene.

Following the Art Award experience, in June 2016 the Foundation entrusted the Milanese center for contemporary art Peep-Hole with the artistic direction of its activities, which preceded the partnership with the Museo del Novecento. The first installment of the Furla Series, "Time after Time, Space after Space" has allowed the interpretation of the space of the Museo del Novecento by five artists of different generations and origins, every two months through new productions of performances, which represent crucial steps in their career. A multiplicity of approaches to performing language. Another art form that has always fascinated me.

As I mentioned before, classical art does not represent my idea of art anymore. To me, now, this is art.

### Diary

I own a notebook I use to write famous quotes, ideas, reflections in. I never know what I am going to write that day, but going back to read it, even after a while, helps me gather my thoughts – it's sort of a zen approach to the consideration of one's work, method and of the activities that guide and inform its process. I think of it as my diary. Here are some pages.

*Simplicity is subtracting what's obvious and adding what's meaningful* (John Maeda)

*Product design is king, pricing is queen.*

*Compensate budget restrictions with talent*

*Owning less, experimenting more*

*From the era of quantity to the time of quality*

*Enough with growth obsession*

*We must always have a place to leave* (Arthur Rimbaud)

*Logic will take you from a to b. Imagination will take you everywhere*

*Explore the unexpected* (Albert Einstein)

*Be unconventional*

*Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication* (Leonardo da Vinci)

*Real beauty always starts inside*

*Beauty is a promise of happiness* (Stendhal)

*Inheritance it's not inactive assets you receive, it's a capital you must grow*

*Shake the habit*

*True luxury is doing without what you could easily afford*

*Don't expect others to wear what you would not wear yourself*



No great man lacks deep spirituality

“Fat and lazy”

Simplicity and cost awareness

Simplicity is daring

Suit your values.

Beauty starts from the inside out

Truth hurts

Positive degrowth

Long seller

Guest designers

Make “ugly” “cool”

The truth is as hard to tell as it is hard to hear

Empty your bag and reveal your soul

“Love is the answer”

The ultimate form of refinement is simplicity

Who knows no respect, deserves no power

Moi je reste ici

Death is very likely the single best invention of life.

It clears out the old to make way for the new (Steve Jobs)

Sacrifice

Duty

Rigor

Respect

Commitment

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NOTHING HAPPENS UNLESS FIRST WE DREAM

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## 90 Years

Organizing the 90th anniversary of the Foundation of Furla has been very important for me. –Original release below - a joyful occasion, but also a moment of reflection. An inner dialogue with those who are no longer here and who entrusted me with the direction of the company for all these years that seem to have flown by. The feeling of time flying by so fast, makes everything appear closer; and telling my father and my brothers' stories is bittersweet because their memory will always warm my heart, but I will never stop missing them. What follows is the story that we have presented to buyers and press on Furla's 90th birthday. It's our history, of which we are humbly yet joyously proud.



p. 133 A handbag as a time machine to travel through nine decades of the history of Furla, from the early 20th century to the dawn of the new millennium. 90 years of history encapsulated in a bag and its exchangeable flaps.

Ninety years of Italian beauty and culture. Eternally evolving as women's taste.

A family business that transformed into a global fashion and lifestyle brand over the decades. Ambassador of Italian elegance, sense of color and freedom expressed through modern design, exquisite leathers and highest standards of quality control.

The original store opened by the founder Aldo Furlanetto, in via Ugo Bassi in Bologna, is still operating, at the same address, bearing testimony to the journey of a company that grew from one single boutique (in 1955), to the present 460+ mono-brand (half of which are directly controlled by the company).

Furla's history is marked by intuitions, family values and a look to the future: Aldo Furlanetto was a firm believer in the possibility for success of a company genuinely committed to offering excellence – in accessories and in fashion – to its customers. A company whose name was synonymous with quality and reliability. For this reason, he used to travel all over Italy and Europe in the search of the most exquisite leather objects of his time.

In the 1970s, his daughter Giovanna (and her brothers Paolo and Carlo) introduced the second, decisive, phase of the company's development; a revolution that turned Furla into today's global enterprise, looking forward to the future.

The first collection of bags yielded immediate success for the precision of its design and the idea of a contemporary woman seeking cutting-edge materials. The world – and fashion – had evolved: therefore Furla introduced since the 1970s, nylon and rubber to accompany the traditionally crafted Italian leather, undertaking the commitment to research and develop new technologies.

The choice of Giovanna Furlanetto and her brothers veered towards the ownership of an Italian retail network supported by franchisees; a revolutionary move at the time that ensured the maximum control of the family over the company's distribution network.

The 1980s were the years of the creation of an international identity for the house – which began with Paris and New York: Tokyo's store will open in 1990 – marked by the launch of a distribution network that covered 64 countries from Japan to the USA, and that reached counts 100 countries in 2016. This strategy led Furla into the major global department stores and into the elite shopping districts around the world – from New York's Fifth Avenue to Ginza, Tokyo (Japan represents 24% of the company turnover).

The new millennium marked the next phase of the brand. Furla embraced lifestyle with men's collections, shoes and licensing partnerships with industry's leaders for the production of eyewear, watches and textile collections.

The implementation of a new management structure, an innovative corporate concept, featuring a distinctive family identity assisted by a strong external management team, as the winning formula to lead Furla into a bright future.

*Product quality has always been Giovanna Furlanetto's main focus. A vision of fashion as freedom expressed through the meticulous attention to detail that characterizes traditional Italian craftsmanship.*

*The result? 2 million bags sold in 2015 (by the time you will be done reading this paragraph, another one will be sold somewhere around the world). One every 16 seconds. More than 386,000 pieces of the Metropolis style sold since 2014: the numbers are unquestionable, but not enough to explain the success of Furla. A success achieved through the production of fine leather bags and accessory collections as well as cutting-edge materials, emphasis on Italian style, innovation, research and technology, an immediately recognizable logo and the close and distinctively Italian relation between fashion and culture.*

*The creation of Fondazione Furla to foster artistic projects has represented a further step towards the development and clearer definition of the values of Furla and Giovanna Furlanetto's international outlook. From 2000 al 2015 the company supported the Furla art award, dedicated to up-and-coming artists and hosted by Joseph Kosuth, Ilya Kabakov, Lothar Baumgarten, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Kiki Smith, Mona Hatoum, Marina Abramović, Christian Boltanski, Jimmie Durham and Vanessa Beecroft).*

*The numbers illustrate an exponential growth (the turnover more than double since 2010) during a time of general slackening of the fashion industry, yet they are not enough to describe the culture and the dual soul of a company founded on a typically Italian family business model and strong global expansion aspirations.*

*The heart of the company beats in a 18th century villa in Bologna – Palazzo Furla – and operates in the headquarters located just a few steps from Milan's Duomo and the fashion district, boasting a front row position in world's the fashion capital and fully operating regional offices in New York, Hong Kong, and Tokyo.*

*A genuine story – in its numbers and its spirit - told through images of the great photographers of the global advertising campaigns to illustrate all the colors of the world of Furla, celebrating its past and envision its future.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*I feel it is my duty to thank all the people who have worked and currently work at Furla for their vital contribution to the evolution of this wonderful company, suppliers and media for sharing with us such critical years in our development. I am very grateful to our partners, who accompanied us, believing in our brand in the different markets; to our customers and to those who encouraged and supported us. Thanks to all our heads of foreign offices around the world and to the creative director and his team.*

*My deepest thanks to our CEO Alberto Camerlengo who warmly encouraged me to put the beautiful story of our brand in this book and I trust, along everyone else, that "the best has yet to come".*

*To my brothers and sister, Daniele, Pietro Antonio, Cecilia and Claudio my gratitude for always being beside me during the difficult times in my life.*

*A special dedication goes to my children, Giuseppe and Claudia. My commitment to work has meant that I took time away from the family, but I want them to know that my thoughts and my attention have always been directed to them.*



*p. 136 King Vittorio Emanuele III visiting Villa Bellaria, 1927*

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Furla S.p.A. apologizes and is available for clarifications with regards to any photographic or textual references that may have involuntarily been omitted.



pp.138-139 Furla Villa Bellaria headquarters in San Lazzaro di Savena