

PULP FASHION

by Emanuele Bellano

in collaboration with Michela Mancini and Greta Orsi

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

LVMH, the French group that owns Louis Vuitton, Fendi and Bulgari, has revenues of more than 40 billion dollars. The group's owner, Bernard Arnault, is listed by Forbes as the fourth richest man in the world. Two places down is Amancio Ortega, owner of Inditex, the company that owns the brand Zara; in 2017, the group's revenue hit 25 billion euros. In the other top spots, among the giants of the *fashion system*, we also have H&M, which is based in Sweden and has stores all over the world, with revenues of 20 billion euros. Then there are the Italian luxury brands: Max Mara group, with a billion and a half euros, is in good company with Milanese fashion house Giorgio Armani, with 2.6 billion in revenues, and with the OTB group which owns the Diesel brand, also boasting a billion and a half. In September, the biggest brands in the world came together in Milan, for fashion week. Here too, the watchword is sustainability.

ANNA GEDDA - HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY, H&M GROUP

My name is Anna Gedda, I'm head of Sustainability for H&M. We are dedicated to ensuring adequate conditions for workers. If we want to ensure that fashion continues to thrive and improve, we must place people and the environment at the centre of everything we do.

FELIX POZA - HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY, INDITEX GROUP

The Inditex Code of Conduct is the commitment we make to our customers, suppliers, employees and shareholders with regard to social responsibility.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Sustainability, respect for the environment, and workers' rights - these are the magic words that are used by all of the biggest fashion houses. In Milan, the biggest names from this world organise the Green Carpet Fashion Awards, an event designed to celebrate sustainability in luxury fashion held at the magnificent Teatro della Scala.

CARLO CAPASA - PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CHAMBER FOR ITALIAN FASHION

We are all here to send a strong message to the world, through the positive effects generated by our *fashion system*, which makes us all proud to be Italian.

TIZIANO GUARDINI - FASHION DESIGNER

I've been working on this research for years. This collection is perhaps the first, the biggest, and it is important that this theme of sustainability is conveyed, from a fresh, light-hearted perspective.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Where were the fabrics made?

TIZIANO GUARDINI - FASHION DESIGNER

The clothes were made here in Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO

What types of fabrics are used? Where are they made?

DANIELE CALCATERRA - FASHION DESIGNER

It's all made in Italy, it all essentially starts with the fabric.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

We also wanted to talk fabric with Max Mara, Giorgio Armani and the other fashion houses showing their collections over the next few days in Milan. But no-one let us onto the catwalk.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

All that remains for us to do is to take a trip to China - the goal is to get into the factories where the fabrics used to manufacture the clothes we find in stores in Milan, London or Paris are made. The authorities are very suspicious. We need to create a false profile, and present ourselves as buyers.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Who knows what our Emanuele Bellano bought - some fabric to make himself a monk's habit? We'll see. So here we have it - globally, the luxury fashion market is worth one trillion dollars, but in order to promote it, they need to be able to present an image that is clean and unsullied, so as not to trouble the conscience of those who buy these clothes at stratospheric prices, so what they do is to repeat a single word like a mantra: sustainability. What a lovely, reassuring word, sustainability. But is it really all it seems? Those who slip into a designer piece don't know that the hands that made it aren't those of an artisan tailor, one of the luxuries associated with our country, but those of a slave. Yes, that's right, a slave. And we should really have realised this immediately; there's one telling detail. When a journalist is looking to report on fashion shows, he or she is usually given a place on the front row, because articles in the press are one of the vehicles used to advertise new designs, and to feed the market. However, in our case, it appears a tacit order had been given: stay away from Report, stay away from Emanuele Bellano... Indeed, our reporter was unable to get onto the *red carpet*, but in the end it was for the best, because instead, he managed to get into the back of the shop, so to speak, into the places where they make the clothes - thousands of kilometres away from the catwalks, and for a very good reason - they have something unspeakable to hide. Let's see if watching this investigative report will change your views on designer clothes, once you've seen it. We set off on a journey in reverse, to where the fabrics are displayed - because this is where the whole hypocritical game really begins, with the material. Let's go to Emanuele Bellano.

LOUIS GÉRIN – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, TEXWORLD PARIS

Around 90 percent of the textile producers who are present here at the Tex World trade fair in Paris come from Asia. Once upon a time, Italy was a major producer of textiles, but in the last 10 years, fabrics come from abroad, and are just finished in Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Of the 1700 exhibitors here at Tex World in Paris, more than two thirds are Asian. There are only two Italian companies here, but more than 1000 exhibitors come from China, and almost all of them produce fabrics used by the leading brands in fashion.

TEXTILE MANUFACTURER

We are making this for Zara. It's used to make this dress. H&M, meanwhile, buys this fabric from us.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Zara, H&M, Benetton, Trussardi. All you need to do is think of a fashion brand, and if you dig deep enough, you can find it here.

GARMENT MANUFACTURER REPRESENTATIVE

Miroglio, Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And what do you do for them?

GARMENT MANUFACTURER REPRESENTATIVE

We mainly make jackets, padded coats. This is for the brand Elena Mirò, for example.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And what's your price for this?

GARMENT MANUFACTURER REPRESENTATIVE

We sell them to the company at about 40 dollars

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In the Elena Mirò boutique in the centre of Rome, the price is multiplied by ten, to more than 400 euros.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Is this product made in Italy?

ELENA MIRO' STORE ASSISTANT

We can check. Made in China, by Miroglio Fashion.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Who are your customers?

MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH ZABER – DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NOMAN GROUP

Levis, Gap, and then H&M, our main customer at the moment, as well as Mango, Zara.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Do you create the design, or do they provide it and you make it?

MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH ZABER – DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NOMAN GROUP

Both: even though often we're the ones who design the fabrics for them.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Do you use Chinese or European designers?

GARMENT MANUFACTURER REPRESENTATIVE

We have Italian designers who act as consultants on our collections.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Like him, for example.

HENGTEX GARMENT CONSULTANT

I work for this Chinese factory that produces knitwear, but not just knitwear.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And your main customers are well-known brands, such as Trussardi, Guess, Patrizia Pepe.

HENGTEX GARMENT CONSULTANT

Yes, every season we present a collection that is sketched in Italy, and then made in China by our designers.

EMANUELE BELLANO

So they commission you on the basis of your...

HENGTEX GARMENT CONSULTANT

They see this piece and they say, oh that's nice, this piece here that you've made for...I don't know, Patrizia Pepe or whatever, OK, I like the yarn, let's change the colour, let's change the type of embellishment...but they use the same idea, they just change something. Because in this industry, everyone copies everyone else.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

It makes you wonder what really distinguishes one brand from another. What remains is the logo, the advertising and the sales network. But how can they keep their costs this low? Looking at the photos, everything seems just wonderful and perfect. Warehouses all neat and tidy, the latest machinery, happy employees.

BEGÜM TUTE – HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR INDITEX TURKEY

All new factories must pass through a pre-assessment, and if they meet the requirements of our Code of Conduct, they can then become part of our supply chain.

ALFONSO SCARANO – INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ANALYST

They talk about respect for human rights, respect for the environment, respect for women's rights, but with a group like Zara, which has 120 thousand employees and which provides work for a further 1.5 million people in spin-off activities, with thousands of suppliers, who is carrying out surprise inspections?

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

All that remains for us to do is to take a trip to China - the goal is to get into the factories where the fabrics used to manufacture the clothes we find in stores in Milan, London or Paris are made. The authorities are very suspicious. We need to create a false profile, and present ourselves as buyers. Our guide is a specialist who spent years in the industry in Italy, and who now works in China.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

The big issue in China is the total, utter inadequacy of the production managers. Everything is done in a totally haphazard manner, and absolute trust is placed in what the local suppliers say, often not even in writing, but verbally.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Suppliers of what?

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Suppliers of chemical products and dyes.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The first factory I visit is near Shanghai. They take me on the tour that they reserve for all Western visitors. First things first, the showroom. Here, there are hundreds of fabric samples to choose from.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

This is for H&M, for example.

EMANUELE BELLANO

With regard to worker safety, what's the situation?

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

We provide all the necessary safety equipment - gloves, glasses and even masks - for workers handling dyes and chemicals, and there's also the department manager who ensures that workers abide by the rules.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

As soon as you set foot in any of the warehouses used for production, it's clear that the reality is a long way away from the stories we're being told.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

In Italy, if a manager was running a factory like this and the boss arrived, he'd give him a sharp kick up the arse, even if he was sitting down.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The noise is deafening, and there's a very strong chemical smell.

EMANUELE BELLANO

This is the most critical area, where they use caustic soda.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Yes, that's caustic soda, and they haven't got...they haven't even got gloves, there's nothing. This is the *colour kitchen*, as it's called.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Open vats of dye and chemical substances just sit here until they're empty, giving off a powerful smell of solvents. The workers aren't wearing safety shoes, masks or glasses to protect their eyes from splashes of dye.

ELIN ROBLING – HEAD OF QUALITY, H&M

My name is Elin Robling and I work for H&M as head of quality in the Shanghai office. I am also the person responsible within H&M for the use of chemicals in factories, and a key part of my role is to limit the use of chemical substances that could have a negative impact on the environment or on the health of consumers. Another fundamental element of my job is to guarantee worker safety.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

She clearly forgot about checking this factory. Here, the workers mix the dyes with their bare hands, without any form of protection.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

This person here is quite likely to get bladder cancer in a few years.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Because the skin absorbs a lot of the dye...

COMPANY CONSULTANT

...and it stays in the bladder.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

It's a very different story from the one that H&M tells in its promotional videos.

ELIN ROBLING – GLOBAL PRODUCT QUALITY MANAGER, H&M

To ensure that our suppliers comply with our requirements, first and foremost, we ask them to sign our regulations on chemical substances, as part of which they must accept the limitations we set out and must undergo checks and audits, which we use to certify whether the chemical products that they use meet our conditions.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

H&M's Chinese suppliers must sign this document:through this, they agree to provide a safe and healthy workplace for their employees,and to protect the ecosystem, including animal species and their habitat.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

This is our waste water treatment plant.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And behind the plant is the river, is that right?

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

Yes.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

One day, all manufacturing activities were suddenly halted, and then I saw lots of workers going to the river behind the plant where the water is dumped, with fishing nets and waders.Basically, the river water near the waste water drain had reached a pH of 12, and there were lots of dead fish floating about in that bit of the river, so they sent the workers out with nets to remove them to prevent the local citizens, the residents, from informing the authorities.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

An incident like so many others in China, where according to official estimates from Beijing, around 80 percent of the aquifers are polluted.The textile industry, and by extension fashion brands, are contributing to this disaster.

EMANUELE BELLANO

You also work for Zara-Inditex.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

Yes, they're one of our customers. We make 100 thousand metres of fabric for them every year. In addition to the fabric we produce for them and for H&M, we also produce for the VF Corporation and for GAP, and we are about to start working with Mango.

EMANUELE BELLANO

VF is the American group which owns The North Face, Timberland, Lee, Vans and Wrangler, among other brands. Mango, meanwhile, is the Spanish manufacturer with single-brand stores throughout Europe.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Other fabrics are produced by companies like this in Jiangsu, eastern China.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

It smells rotten here.

EMANUELE BELLANO

So the drain for waste products is here, you think?

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Yes, all of the waste material is discharged by the machines under here.

EMANUELE BELLANO

The smell is nauseating.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Yeah. This is the maintenance area, look.

EMANUELE BELLANO

It's a storage area.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Yes.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

More like a dumping ground. Old barrels of toxic and flammable materials, housed under a tin roof. Other bins are stacked up along the corridors, alongside the machinery.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Is it normal to leave all the vats containing chemical substances like this?

COMPANY CONSULTANT

No. Smell that, it smells of solvents

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

A few steps further on is another storage area, where dyes and chemicals are stored at random in a room where the electrical system looks like this. And yet, the use of chemical substances is regulated by strict standards. Lots of fashion brands ban the use of substances marked with this symbol. However...

EMANUELE BELLANO

This is toxic, it's got the X symbol which means it's toxic and dangerous to fish.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The European Chemicals Agency states that products marked with this symbol are extremely toxic for aquatic life. This symbol, meanwhile, means it is toxic for people, both when inhaled and when touched.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

They shouldn't be touching those products, but here they are putting the product on.

EMANUELE BELLANO

They are putting the chemical product on top.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Yes. Smell the odour it's giving off.

EMANUELE BELLANO

You see? What a stink!

EMANUELE BELLANO

What precautions do you take to ensure the safety of workers?

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 2

You saw: there are signs with instructions, the workers have protective glasses, gloves, aprons...

EMANUELE BELLANO

But the workers don't wear them.

TEXTILE COMPANY SALES MANAGER

Maybe they took them off because they're getting ready for lunch.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Who are your customers?

TEXTILE COMPANY SALES MANAGER

Tommy Hilfiger, Old Navy from the US-based GAP group, and then we also produce for Zara and for H&M's Cos brand via intermediaries.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

This company has also worked for the Italian ready-to-wear group Max Mara, providing fabrics for the Spring-Summer 2012 collection.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The store assistant is trying to convince the customers that Max Mara fabrics are made in Italy.

SALES ASSISTANT

The clothes are made in Italy. Thank goodness, Max Mara still makes its clothes in Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Where are the fabrics made?

SALES ASSISTANT

The fabrics are always Italian, because Italian brands buy Italian fabric.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In reality, the group has set up Eastmax in Hong Kong, a company whose purpose is to select Chinese textile manufacturers and import the fabrics used to make the collections.

FORMER TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

When I worked in Italy, Max Mara brought its clothes to me to be dyed and finished, they paid me around three euros per metre

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

He is the former manager of an Italian textiles company, which has now shut down, and which years ago moved its business operations to China.

FORMER TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

In the following years, Max Mara asked me for some advice, to find a good supplier in China. They were amazed by the price, the owner asked them for 90 cents on the dollar.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Less than a third of what they were paying in Italy.

FORMER TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

And I said, but guys, over the course of the last six years, I've seen your clothes in the shop windows, and the prices haven't dropped. On the contrary, they've risen. There you go - the biggest aberration in the world of textiles.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

The biggest aberration was to kill off an entire entrepreneurial class, in order to produce garments at a lower costs. With these orders, we gave up the skills that had once propelled us to a position of prestige throughout the world. Anyway, who's looking at quality these days, brands are no longer even obliged to put a label in their clothes indicating where the fabrics came from. They say that it's a trade secret, but at the end of the day, it serves to cover up contempt for workers and contempt for the environment. And it's not the small-scale textile industry that's responsible for this degradation, but rather the big luxury companies, those with far less need to save a handful of coins, because they have kept their prices high, their value on the stock markets remains unchanged, the spin-off activities are doing well, the fashion shows, which mean photographers, studios, models, which in turn mean articles, "double-faced" journalists, who earn from the articles they write as well as from their work as consultants to great designers...and meanwhile, thousands of kilometres away, are the warehouses of Shanghai; behind the reassuring showrooms hide the poison workshops where men and women handle corrosive substances, chemicals, without gloves, without masks, barefoot. Who knows where they filmed these cosy, comforting scenes, where a world that doesn't exist is eulogised - a world of happy workers, of respect for human rights and the environment. Here is a video shot by Ikea, where they present their collection of fabrics, tablecloths, curtains, napkins, cushions, which have been given the names of Swedish women, flowers and plants.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Where are the fabrics made?

IKEA SALES ASSISTANT

Let's see. Made in China.

EMANUELE BELLANO

This is made in China?

IKEA SALES ASSISTANT

OK, yes.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

This is a video where the working conditions of their Chinese employees are highlighted.

CHINESE SUPPLIER TO IKEA

We must view our employees like members of the family. The more you give people, the more they give you back.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Ikea fabrics are made in India, and some in Bangladesh, but most are "made in China". A large proportion arrive from this company in the north of China.

EMANUELE BELLANO

This display is really very similar to Ikea's. What kind of relationship do you have with them?

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 3

We produce large amounts of fabric for them, we are one of their key suppliers.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The factory is enormous, and the showroom is appealing, like an Ikea display, but those who work on the upper floors and who show us around try to spend as little time as possible in the production areas.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

Let's go, let's go, come on!

EMANUELE BELLANO

Why?

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

The smell!

EMANUELE BELLANO

Yes, there's a very strong smell!

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

I don't like this smell!

EMANUELE BELLANO

The smell really gets to you...it's penetrating.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The smell of solvents and ammonia is unbearable. Throughout the entire warehouse, there are open vats of dyes and chemicals.

EMANUELE BELLANO

What's that smell? That strong odour that you can smell?

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 3

It's the dyes.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The workers don't wear respirator safety masks, even when handling the chemicals in this room. Almost everyone is wearing sandals and they are standing with their feet immersed in the residues of dyes and chemical products.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Let's see if anyone is wearing gloves...nobody!

COMPANY CONSULTANT

There are brands that claim to be alert and aware when it comes to these issues, but then everything is just forgotten. In around twenty years, I have never once found so much as a simple up-to-date list of the products being used, in any company.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Have you got safety cards for each of the chemicals and dyes you use?

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

International legislation stipulates that anyone using chemicals must have copies of the safety data sheets. This is the only way to know how these chemicals should be stored, what precautions workers should take when handling them and what risks there may be for end users if the residues are not removed from the finished fabrics.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Have you got the safety cards for every dye you use?

EMPLOYEE, CHINESE COMPANY

Here's the list.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

Are these the chemical compounds or the dyes?

EMPLOYEE, CHINESE COMPANY

The dyes.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

But I don't believe that you only use 24 dyes, across all your production processes.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 3

No, indeed, we use many more.

COMPANY CONSULTANT

But you should have the full list, and the safety cards for each of the dyes.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 3

We are suppliers for Ikea, the Ikea managers come here, they check the safety conditions and the use of the dyes and chemical compounds and we have never had an issue with them.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The main headquarters of Ikea is located in this small town in the south of Sweden, where the company's founder opened his first shop in the fifties. From that point, he grew an empire which today has a turnover of 25 billion euros, with stores that sell Ikea furniture across the world, and suppliers like the one that we visited ourselves in China.

EMANUELE BELLANO

We went into the warehouses of one of your suppliers in China. Have you ever inspected this factory?

HENRIK GUNNERLINGS - IKEA PURCHASING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Yes, we carry out audits there quite often. The last one was in September.

EMANUELE BELLANO

What did you find?

HENRIK GUNNERLINGS - IKEA PURCHASING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The supplier passed the audit, because they met our requirements.

EMANUELE BELLANO

I'd like to show you a short video of what we found there.

HENRIK GUNNERLINGS - IKEA PURCHASING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

OK.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Is there anything you want to say about what we've just seen?

HENRIK GUNNERLINGS - IKEA PURCHASING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

In this video, there are lots of things that are not in line with our manufacturing regulations. And this means that if this is really happening at an Ikea supplier, we must investigate urgently, and implement all of the necessary remedial actions.

EMANUELE BELLANO

How is it possible that you weren't aware of this until now?

HENRIK GUNNERLINGS - IKEA PURCHASING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

In order to respond to that question, we first need to investigate further, so we can understand more.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Ikea is in good company. This factory also works or has worked for a number of big international fashion brands.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Tommy Hilfiger.

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 3

Yes.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Donna Karan New York. Ah, for Giorgio Armani too!

TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER 3

Yes.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Giorgio Armani bought fabrics for its collections from this company up until 2014.

FORMER TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

In China, within these companies, they don't know anything about the composition of the products. Why would we imagine they know about the associated risks? Partly because these checks happen very rarely.

EMANUELE BELLANO

By the fashion and clothing brands?

FORMER TEXTILE COMPANY MANAGER

By the end customer, by the companies that manufacture the final garment.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Every year, the Buzzi Laboratories in Prato analyse tens of thousands of fabrics and finished garments produced by the biggest names in fashion. Of the 33 thousand samples analysed in 2016, they found carcinogenic aromatic amines in 7.5 percent of them. Of these, 1.5 percent had levels of more than 30 milligrams per kilo.

GIUSEPPE BARTOLINI – MANAGER OF BUZZI LAB - PRATO

This means that the level of concentration of these dyes is above those stipulated by the regulations, so ...

EMANUELE BELLANO

So, they are illegal from this perspective.

GIUSEPPE BARTOLINI – MANAGER OF BUZZI LAB - PRATO

That's right.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

They also found phthalate residues in 31.5 percent of the garments and fabrics analysed, and in 4.3 percent of these, the substance was present in high doses.

GIUSEPPE BARTOLINI – MANAGER OF BUZZI LAB - PRATO

They can often be found, for example, in prints, particularly in relief prints.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And what kind of issues do these substances cause?

GIUSEPPE BARTOLINI – MANAGER OF BUZZI LAB - PRATO

They alter the hormone cycles. These chemicals are also very dangerous above all to children.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In addition, they also found nonylphenol in almost all of the fabrics analysed; this is a substance that is legal in China, but which has been banned in Europe for years, because it is extremely harmful to the environment. It leads to the feminisation of fish, or in other words, it transforms male fish into females. The damage isn't limited to the countries of production, such as China and India - it also extends to those where the

garments are sold, because the nonylphenol is released every time the garment is washed in the machine, and flows into rivers and the sea. The presence of nonylphenol or of carcinogenic amines and phthalates in fabrics and clothing can only mean one thing: that in reality, the much-vaunted checks and inspections on suppliers by fashion brands are not actually carried out, or are totally inadequate.

LAURA CALOSSO – AUTHOR OF “LA STOFFA DELLE DONNE” (THE FABRIC OF WOMEN)

When fabrics arrive in Europe from Asia or from other countries, into the ports where the customs authorities are based, there are no facilities to inspect them, and indeed, there isn't even a mandate to carry out checks for certain substances.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Ultimately, who is responsible for certifying that this imported product, this fabric, this dress, does not contain substances that should not be present?

LAURA CALOSSO – AUTHOR OF “LA STOFFA DELLE DONNE” (THE FABRIC OF WOMEN)

In these cases, it's essentially a sort of self-certification process, where I declare that this particular product is OK.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Thank you Ikea for taking responsibility. The manager was true to his word - he checked that what we showed him was true, and then they wrote to us and thanked us, immediately asking the Chinese company to meet the required standards within a maximum of 90 days, or they would be removed from the list of suppliers. Hats off to Ikea. And this is a good thing, because we have seen that these poisons come back to haunt us in the form of the clothing we wear, or at least a percentage of them. H&M also wrote to us: they acknowledge that they have indirect links to the Chinese factories, supposedly via partner suppliers, and have committed to checking the situation and taking the appropriate steps. Mango too has confirmed that they have links with the Chinese factory in question, and they too have promised to launch their own series of checks on the working conditions of the factory employees and on how chemical products are handled. Gap confirms that they work with the first Chinese company, but not the second. Inditex/Zara, meanwhile, denies having worked with these Chinese companies, but in actual fact, the first company that we visited in China appeared on the list of suppliers on their website until at least the first half of 2018. Armani informed us that they check their supply chain regularly, and that as of 2014, they no longer buy products from the third Chinese company we visited, and that in any case, since 2014, they have created a web platform where suppliers can declare the sustainability of their companies themselves, so essentially sustainability self-certification. Maybe it would be an idea to increase the number of inspections carried out - everyone we spoke to told us that they check their supply chain, but in reality, we have demonstrated that this is not the case. Human health is at stake. Our reporter Emanuele Bellano has also discovered that many fabrics stop off in Tunisia before arriving in Italy, where products for Gas, Missoni, Armani, Dolce and Gabbana, Replay and Diesel are manufactured. How much do these jeans that we pay 200 euros for actually cost, or the Missoni jackets that sell for 600 euros? We will take a look at this. We also discovered how the official kits for Milan, Genoa and Lecce football clubs are made, as well as the jackets for the Juventus stewards. Most of the companies involved are Tunisian, but sometimes and in some cases these companies are run by Italians, and I can assure you it's nothing to be proud of.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Before arriving in Italy, the fabrics set off from the Asian suppliers, bound for the garment manufacturing companies that serve as third-party suppliers for the biggest fashion brands, and are based in Bangladesh, Turkey and Eastern Europe, as well as on the other side of the Mediterranean, in Tunisia. Zara, H&M, Missoni, Armani and almost all other major fashion brands use these companies, because they can offer more competitive prices than their Italian, French or Spanish counterparts.

When we arrive at this company in Tunisia, they are working on some jeans for the Italian brand Replay.

BUSINESS OWNER

These jeans here that we are preparing, that's the key style

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

Who taught you how to do this job?

BUSINESS OWNER

The Italians, but the machines are Italian too - everything is Italian here.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Everything but them, the Tunisian workers who are treating the jeans.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

What's that...

BUSINESS OWNER

This is permanganate.

BUSINESS OWNER

Don't touch it.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

It's best not to touch it.

BUSINESS OWNER

Don't touch it because it's a product that...It smells a bit.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

That's a real euphemism: in reality, potassium permanganate is actually corrosive to the eyes, skin and respiratory system. The World Health Organization warns about the risks of long-term exposure to this substance: it can cause bronchitis and pneumonia, and can be damaging to the human reproductive system and to development. That's why it recommends using gloves, protective visors and respirator masks.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

It's aggressive.

BUSINESS OWNER

Aggressive.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

It's not a natural product.

BUSINESS OWNER

It's not a product that we should be touching with our hands.

EMANUELE BELLANO

It shouldn't be touched.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Right in front of us, workers are spraying this permanganate without masks or goggles, and they pick up jeans that have just been treated with their bare hands, hundreds of times a day.

All to create this effect, which ends up on display in a Replay shop in Rome.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Made in Tunisia. How much are these?

SALES ASSISTANT

At full price, they are 239 euros.

EMANUELE BELLANO

How much do these trousers cost Replay?

BUSINESS OWNER

Around 19 euros.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

This costs nineteen euros for the finished product, finished like you see it here, with the fabric and everything, and it goes for 200 euros in the shop.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In this other company, they are working for another prestigious Italian brand: Diesel.

EMANUELE BELLANO

How much are these?

LAUNDRY MANAGER

I think these are around 200 euros, you really pay for them

EMANUELE BELLANO

How much does this treatment cost you?

LAUNDRY MANAGER

Around eight euros all in.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

So, in my view, for a finished garment like this, they should charge for manufacturing it, plus eight euros, it should be about 10-12 euros

LAUNDRY MANAGER

Yes.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

Lucky them, selling something that costs 10-12 euros for 200.

LAUNDRY MANAGER

But that's why they come here to Tunisia, because a worker will cost you 400-500 dinars.

EMANUELE BELLANO

150 euros, more or less 160 euros is the monthly wage of a worker.

LAUNDRY MANAGER

Yes, yes.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Labour costs less, but there are also other costs that the fashion brands have their eye on here in Tunisia to maximise their profit.

BUSINESS OWNER 2

Water purification takes much longer in Italy, here we purify much faster. Here, there are rules that perhaps don't exist in Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO

So a bit more relaxed, less strict.

BUSINESS OWNER 2

Less ball busting ... let's be frank here ... I'm going to level with you - it takes 200 thousand euros to build a purifier - once I've done that, I'm not going to charge you three euros for a pair of trousers, I'm going to raise it to five euros...it's no longer convenient, we'll end up like Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Do you work for Italian brands?

BUSINESS OWNER 2

Dolce and Gabbana.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In this factory, meanwhile, they make garments for Benetton, Trussardi, the Persona line by Marina Rinaldi, Max Mara group and the new jeans collection for Emporio Armani.

BUSINESS OWNER 3

The wash that you saw there with Armani costs 11 euros.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Once the cost of the fabric, the cutting and the manufacturing is taken into account, Armani pays 20 euros for these trousers.

EMANUELE BELLANO

How much are they in the shop, more or less?

BUSINESS OWNER 3

180, 200 euros.

EMANUELE BELLANO

For the Persona garment for Marina Rinaldi, there's a label, 99 euros in store, I saw.

BUSINESS OWNER 3

Looking at the size, of the dimensions of that pair of trousers, I'd say around five euros to five fifty.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Five euros fifty for the finished pair of trousers.

BUSINESS OWNER 3

Including everything.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The brand may change but the ratio stays the same - the price that the fashion brand charges in its stores is between ten and twenty times what they pay to produce the garment, which is often made with no supervision by the fashion house.

BUSINESS OWNER 3

With Armani, they've got their own specialist who - well, from what we've understood, if he wants to come he comes, and if he doesn't want to he doesn't, and in reality, he doesn't come. For Persona nobody ever comes, and the same for Trussardi. We used to work for 45 different customers, and the sales rep sold the same model to two different customers. I went back to Novara, I went down the main high street and I saw two shops: that swimming costume cost 15 euros in one shop, and I walked 200 metres further on, and the same costume cost 80 euros, exactly the same fabric and everything, only the brand was different.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In factories like this one, workers cut, sew, finish and pack clothing both for high-end brands and mid-range names.

Outside the Tunisian factories are dirt roads and dilapidated houses. An upside down world, compared to the neighbourhoods illuminated by the colourful signs and the glamorous windows of the big name brands, where the garments manufactured here are sold.

Two years ago, Diesel signed a deal with Milan's football team, and since then, the brand has been making jackets and clothes for the players. Renzo Rosso is the founder and president of the brand

RENZO ROSSO – FOUNDER OF DIESEL

Today, working with them is like a dream come true for me. Needle and thread, it reminds me of when I started out at 15, I made my first pair of jeans with my mother's sewing machine, and they were a roaring success with all my friends. It's part of our history, part of our tradition.

BUSINESS OWNER 4

Do you recognise this Milan jacket? This is for the Milan players.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

Does Milan football team get its jackets made here?

EMANUELE BELLANO

AC Milan is partnered with Diesel.

BUSINESS OWNER 4

This is for the Milan players.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

Diesel.

BUSINESS OWNER 4

For the Milan staff, it's Diesel now, not Dolce and Gabbana.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

Sorry, I'm not against manufacturing products abroad, but an Italian football team could have had their garments made in Italy.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

But instead, Renzo Rosso gets the Milan kits made in Tunisia, in this company near Sousse.

BUSINESS OWNER 5

We dress the Milan, Genoa and Lecce teams, and we also make the outfits for the Juventus stewards.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

I don't really see where the whole Made in Italy concept comes into it.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

He is the person who has enabled us to get into these companies, and who helped Report four years ago to get behind the scenes of Moncler's manufacturing practices. For twenty years, he worked for major fashion brands, helping them to move a large proportion of their manufacturing abroad.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

They were always asking me to outsource, outsource, outsource, killing off companies that cannot get back on their feet.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Today, he's a writer, and has denounced the dark side of the *fashion system*, naming names.

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

We're talking about people with a net worth of four, five, six, ten billion euros; they always say that their success is founded upon the skills of Italian workers; so just imagine, you've done this for decades, you've swiped the trade secrets, you've worked, you've collaborated with hundreds of thousands of people who work on machines, who have the manual skills to handle a product, to make it unique - and now you abandon them.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

For every textile company that closes in Italy, another opens in Romania, Bosnia, Armenia or Tunisia. In the industrial area of Sousse, the companies that aren't Tunisian are founded by Italian entrepreneurs.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Do you make these?

BUSINESS OWNER 6

Yes, yes. It's all stuff we make.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Here they are working on Gas, an Italian brand, and the English brand Pepe Jeans. And they also manufacture various pieces for the luxury brand Missoni.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

We're talking six hundred plus in stores

EMANUELE BELLANO

Six hundred plus in stores, how much are you charging them?

BUSINESS OWNER 6

38, 42 euros or something like that.

EMANUELE BELLANO

All in, from start to finish, including the fabric?

BUSINESS OWNER 6

No, they give me the fabric.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And the T-shirt?

BUSINESS OWNER 6

4 euros 20, or something like that. Fabric all in, the finished product.

EMANUELE BELLANO

So they make a good mark-up.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

Oh yeah, they sell it for a hundred.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

I'll give you an idea of what we do afterwards.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

This is sandblasting.

EMANUELE BELLANO

This is sandblasting.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

You do end up doing lots sandblasting anyway, but no-one realises it.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Who does it now?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

Ah, we still do it for a few clients, although in theory we shouldn't tell them about it.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Why shouldn't you tell them?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

Because sandblasting isn't allowed.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Ah, here in Tunisia?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

No, here and everywhere, all over the world - these days, sandblasting is forbidden.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

The sandblasting effect is achieved by firing a jet of crystalline silica onto jeans with a compressor, and as our business owner says, it was banned worldwide in 2011. The microscopic silica particles end up in the lungs of workers, and cause silicosis and lung cancer.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

The sandblaster is this long, to there, and it fires out sand.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

They banned it because it's harmful to the operator.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

To the operator, not to the buyer, understand?

BUSINESS OWNER 6

Sandblasting is harmful to the operator.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Although many brands officially declare that they no longer use sandblasting, there are still those looking for companies that offer this treatment, in countries where there are no checks, such as Tunisia.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

The customer wants it, and you've got to do what the customer wants. But if you're Armani or Diesel or Levis, for example, and I show you that I've got a machine in here, you're not going to use my company, because the machine is forbidden.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And so what do you do?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

Eh, well, you do it anyway.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

We moved the machine elsewhere, and so there are two different companies.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

It's ours.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

But it's not here inside the company, because the company has to be certified.

EMANUELE BELLANO

So the customer comes to you, bold as brass, and says, I want that effect, but I don't want to know where you do it

BUSINESS OWNER 7

Of course! He wants that kind of effect and he knows it too, that if a specialist comes it's not as if...like you, I want that because I know it's sandblasted, and I'll do it for you - where's the issue?

Obviously, they pay a lot for these washes.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Who do you do it for?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

We do it for Pepe. We do it for Tommy.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

Pepe is the English jeans brand, while Tommy is the American designer Tommy Hilfiger, who created the brand Andrew Charles with his brother; their jeans are treated in this company; the brand's poster boy is Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler. At the end of the day, the highly desirable effect that puts workers' health at risk looks like this: a faded area on the area of the trousers that have been treated.

BUSINESS OWNER 6

This is Gas.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Ah, this is sandblasting.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

In addition to Gas, this factory also produced Giorgio Armani clothes until 2015, even though the company claims never to have done sandblasting here.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

We are the only ones without a trade union

EMANUELE BELLANO

Why don't you have a trade union?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

Because we sacked those four or five people who tried to set one up, but that's in the past.

EMANUELE BELLANO

They tried?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

They tried to set up a trade union. So one of them wanted to kill himself and he went onto the thing, the pole, underneath it, but he was there behind it, and I said, go on, throw yourself off.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And he didn't throw himself off?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

No, the problem is that I said to two guys we have, we have a very normal system, and it's very simple. Is that true, or not?

BUSINESS OWNER 6

Yes.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

So I've got two great lads who threw a plank at him, under orders, and the poor guy broke a leg; I haven't had a problem since, who does it remind you of?

MAN

Is Predappio [the birthplace of Fascist leader Benito Mussolini], a clue?

BUSINESS OWNER 7

My daughter even gave me a half-bust sculpture of him.

EMANUELE BELLANO

Mussolini.

BUSINESS OWNER 7

Anyone who takes the piss out of me, Italian or foreign or whatever, doesn't last long. Here, you can do that, in Italy, you can't any more.

EMANUELE BELLANO OFF SCREEN

This business owner is proud of the Fascism-inspired methods he uses to keep the workers in line, when all they are asking is for their basic human rights to be respected. Are Giorgio Armani, Gas, Pepe Jeans and all the other fashion brands that abandon Italian companies in favour of Italian entrepreneurs in Tunisia aspiring to be the next Mussolini aware of the violence and contempt with which they treat workers, or do they turn a blind eye in order to save a handful of euros?

EMANUELE BELLANO

So what difference does it make if these jeans are made in a country like Tunisia or if they're made in Italy?

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

So in Tunisia, they cost 1 euro 50 less, in Italy they cost one euro 50 more on a product sold for 150 euros. A luxury customer, I don't know, a Russian who spends three, four, five thousand euros in Via Montenapoleone in Milan as opposed to anywhere else, and who would buy a garment at 980 euros instead of 970, or instead of a thousand and ten: in these cases, it doesn't change a thing. The only thing that would change - and it's something not to be underestimated - is that we could help thousands of small Italian businesses to thrive; these businesses still exist and still work according to artisan techniques and traditions, with a skilled workforce which has not yet died out.

EMANUELE BELLANO

And so why do these brands continue to focus on increasing production abroad, instead of bringing their manufacturing operations back to Italy?

GIUSEPPE IORIO – AUTHOR OF “MADE IN ITALY? IL LATO OSCURO DELLA MODA” (MADE IN ITALY? THE DARK SIDE OF FASHION)

This is something I ask myself too, beyond the numbers, beyond everything, whether we don't have a sort of...if you'll allow me to say, a sort of ancestral greed.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Gas wrote to us, saying that they visit supplier companies constantly. And that the company run by the new Duce respects all of the relevant standards. And that the specialists that visit have guaranteed that there isn't a sandblasting machine there. We believe them, because the very same mini Mussolini told us that the sandblasting machine has been moved to another one of his facilities, on the other side of the road. Pepe Jeans also wrote to us, and said that they have asked the aspiring dictator not to use the sandblasting machine. They also wrote that the group does its utmost to ensure that all the suppliers that it uses respect its sustainability and ethical standards. Armani, too, have written to us, saying that they haven't used sandblasting since 2012, and that mini Mussolini was one of its subcontracted suppliers until 2015, so there we go.

Next, we have Diesel, who wrote that they work with the Tunisian company that pays 160 euros a month to its workers, and that the audit that it carried out did not uncover any violations. But they didn't explain to us why they decided to make the Milan kit in Tunisia, instead of here in Italy. Dolce & Gabbana used suppliers, subcontracted suppliers, Tunisian companies to make its children's jeans collection. The one that didn't have a purifier. But that's where the willingness to work with us ends. Replay, too, for example - who make their jeans in the Tunisian factory where they spray the corrosive chemical permanganate without masks, a really corrosive agent - chose not to respond to us. However, if all we have seen here is due to that ancestral greed, as Iorio - someone who is well acquainted with the situation - defines it, as an ex-entrepreneur who helped Italian companies outsource their business and now regrets it... he regrets it, what a horrible model. So basically, it's an oxymoron. On the one hand, we have luxury fashion, the red carpet, the shows, the world looking on with envy and also admiration at the perfect bodies of the models, who wear clothes that conceal ugliness and injustice. Contempt for human rights, workers who breathe corrosive agents, or carcinogenic silica. But the colour washes away, like the rights of workers. And if anyone dares to refer to them, they are beaten with a plank, they have their legs broken. To make an example of them. Who knows how many legs mini Mussolini has broken to get that 30 thousand euro gold watch that adorns his wrist. And yet how much is a luxury fashion brand saving, with all of this?

1 euro 50 for each garment! And the same garment is sold for 150 euros. So there we have it - if we want sustainability, we must also fight for a world that is more just, without mistreatment and inequality, and Europe must contribute to this. On one side, it introduces strict rules and regulations, while on the other it leaves these vast, unchecked metaphorical wildernesses, and the poisons that are used in these lawless places come back to us, not just in the form of clothes, but also in the form of rage, because maybe some people manage to escape the violence, including the type that sees legs broken with wooden planks. So there we are; now let's move on to the ways you're ripped off when you embrace a dream.