

UNA SHAMEDLY BEAUTI FUL

Interview
ALEX BOHN

GROWING UP, HE WAS BULLIED BECAUSE OF HIS LOOKS, BUT FRANCESCO RISSO DIDN'T CARE. TODAY HIS FASHION FOR THE ITALIAN BRAND MARNI IS, ABOVE ALL, MEANT TO BE HUMAN. OR AS HE SAYS: FULL OF EROTIC-SHALLA-MALLA-WALL-ABA-DAM-DOM-DUM.



It seems to me that sometimes there is a lack of will to look at the naked body in an unbiased way. Neither sexualized nor as a symbol of freedom.“

Francesco Riso

The 39-year-old Sardinian was born on a boat in the Mediterranean and spent the first years of his life there. Before he took over the design of the Italian brand Marni in 2016 - with his husband Lawrence Steele - he studied in Italy, New York and London and worked, among other brands, as part of the design team of Prada for ten years. Catch a glimpse of his current work and hairstyles on his Instagram account @asliceofbambi.

When the pandemic hit Italy, Francesco Riso dyed his black locks white-blond. Since then, the designer has looked both proper and disheveled, like perhaps Mozart after a night spent composing. The hairstyle could fit his state of mind, because for the native Sardinian, who spent his childhood first on a boat and then in Genoa, the last two years have been a rollercoaster. The Covid 19 pandemic brought overproduction to light at Marni; since then, the tradition-rich brand, which Renzo Rosso took over from founders Consuelo and Gianni Castiglioni in 2012, has slimmed down to a healthy level. The DNA of the Italian house has also changed in the process; instead of the intellectual female power that Consuelo Castiglioni stood for with her design, one now sees the signature of Francesco Riso: with his fashion he celebrates bodies as they are.

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE QUARTERLY: Does the term “sexy” mean anything to you?

FRANCESCO RISSO: When I started to work at Marni, it was like becoming part of a new family. I myself use the term “sexy” quite often. At Marni, however, I

got a strange reaction. It wasn't as if they were afraid of the term, it was more that “sexy” didn't play a role in the Marni universe until then. Consuelo Castiglioni's design was made by strong women for strong and proud women. I found this quite astonishing, as I had just finished my time at Prada after more than ten years. After all Miuccia Prada puts strong women and intellectuality at the center of her work as well. “It's got to be sexy” was something we heard from her all day long.

FAQ: And how is the Marni's sex appeal today, six years after you arrived at the brand?

RISSO: We have approached the subject in small steps. By coining new terms, for example. We have very different understandings of sex appeal and eroticism, and in order to create a common associative space, we right now call eroticism (he intones rhythmically): “Eroticism-Schalla-Malla-Wall-Aba-Dam- Dom-Dum. With this, we have created a common denominator for the topic.

FAQ: Using such an open term fits in perfectly with the times: we are breaking away from outdated ideals of beauty. And we are saying goodbye to stereotypical ideas of what is sexy and how this is

PHOTOGRAPH: I STEFAN GIFTHALER

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Head and heart: Francesco Riso appreciates deep conversations and intuitive design