

Dennita Sewell in Los Angeles: The Italian Impact on Contemporary Fashion



As part of the Week of the Italian Language, the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in LA, Valeria Rumori, welcomed fashion curator, Dennita Sewell, to host a special presentation on the role of Italian designers in establishing today's trends.

LOS ANGELES — The 16th annual Italian Language Week in the World has officially come to a close. Thanks to the network of Consulates and Italian Cultural Institutes that exist throughout the US, the occasion has been celebrated nationwide.

Promoted by Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, each year they choose a different theme to highlight areas of excellence of Italian culture that are recognized on a global level. Last year, it was music. In fact, our readers may recall [the video](#) [2] that the Ministry commissioned i-Italy to produce in order to promote the initiative. This year's theme was "Italian and Creativity: Brands and Customs; Fashion and Design," and we trust that all of you saw the new [video promo](#) [3] we produced in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of New York.

The celebrations in Los Angeles were particularly rich and varied. One notably successful event was



held on October 18 at the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [4], a hidden gem amongst the many buildings in Westwood on Hilgard Avenue, just outside the UCLA campus.

[Dennita Sewell](#) [5], Fashion Curator at the [Phoenix Art Museum](#) [6], hosted a special presentation on the Italian impact in contemporary fashion. Her illustrated slide lecture looked at the international fashion scene and Italians in prominent positions across the industry.

Italian designers lead some of the top fashion houses that all play a significant role in establishing today's trends. Sewell surveyed some of those houses and looked at the possible outcomes.

"It's never been a more exciting time in Italian fashion than now," Sewell told i-Italy. "There is a new wave of avant-garde energy and young designers taking the helm of Italian fashion. They are reaching back into Italy's rich cultural heritage as well as looking forward, experimenting with new technologies and forging new passageways to creativity," she continued. "All of this is coming together in a fashion renaissance centered in Milan and it will be really exciting to watch it grow in the coming years."

Valeria Rumori, Director of the Institute, had the idea of asking Sewell for this lecture. As she told us, "It's the mission of the Institute to represent all of the states in its jurisdiction, including Arizona. Last February, the Phoenix Art Museum presented a stunning exhibition dedicated to the iconic white shirts designed by Gianfranco Ferré. Sewell curated the exhibition, and is one of only three fashion curators affiliated with museums throughout the US. She is very passionate about Italian fashion and graciously came to the Institute to hold a presentation on the exhibit in LA. The presentation was so well received that we decided to invite Sewell to open the 16th annual Italian Language Week in the World with an insightful presentation on the Italian impact in contemporary fashion."

This event was the third in a series of events devoted to fashion. The first was the US premiere of the [dance performances Hell23](#) [7] by Samantha Stella and Nero Kane. This event also featured a fashion show called Abyss with designs by LA-based Mike Vensel, who was inspired by Stella and Kane. The second event, [Fashion and Traditions of Central Italy](#) [8], featured wedding gowns and elegant formal wear in a runway show. "Together all three of these fashion events have captured the best of Italian creativity," Rumori concludes.

Sewell studied costume design at Yale University and then worked at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art before joining the Phoenix Art Museum in 2000. Fifteen years later, she gained national attention when she brought a critically acclaimed exhibit to Phoenix, called "[The White Shirt. According to Me. Gianfranco Ferré](#) [9]." Created by the Gianfranco Ferré Foundation in Milan and the Prato Textile Museum in Prato, Florence, the exhibit celebrated the work of one of the best-known Italian fashion designers. Until Sewell, the exhibit had never been brought outside of Italy.

The IIC in LA was founded in 1984 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to promote Italian culture in Southern California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. The IIC organizes Italian language courses and events in collaboration with numerous local institutions with the goal of presenting Italy in all of its cultural richness: architecture, cinema, design, literature, music, science, theater, and the visual arts. Rumori has headed the Institute since 2015.

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[1] <http://test.iitaly.org/files/sewelltwojpg>

[2] <https://www.youtube.com/embed/AhxDuSGutw>

[3] <https://www.youtube.com/embed/jW9UrjXhEc8>

[4] http://www.iiclosangeles.esteri.it/iic_losangeles/en/istituto/la_sede



[5] <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/arts/phoenix-art-museum-curator-dennita-sewell-to-head-asu-fashion-program-8088857>

[6] <http://www.phxart.org>

[7] http://www.iiclosangeles.esteri.it/iic_losangeles/en/gli_eventi/calendario/2016/09/samantha-stella-nero-kane-hell.html

[8] http://www.iiclosangeles.esteri.it/iic_losangeles/en/gli_eventi/calendario/2016/09/moda-e-tradizioni-della-ciociaria.html

[9] <http://www.latimes.com/fashion/alltherage/la-ar-gianfranco-ferre-phoenix-art-museum-20150604-story.html>