

Presentation of the Fondazione Mondragone of Naples

The “Retreat for Matrons and Oblate Virgins” — the original name of the Fondazione Mondragone — was founded in 1655 by Elena Aldobrandini. The noblewoman offered refuge in one of her residences to aristocratic women who had fallen into hardship, enabling them to support themselves through traditionally feminine arts such as sewing and embroidery.

Its story is interwoven with the evolution of Naples, a city that once stood as a capital of European culture. Over the centuries, the Fondazione Mondragone, originally an institution focused on education and training in women’s crafts, has adapted to a process of democratization that extended its mission to include women from the working class, widows, and women of civil status. While the institution remains rooted in its original purpose — preserving and promoting heritage — it has evolved into a Fashion Museum, embracing innovation to secure its place in the contemporary cultural landscape. The museum is unique in its category and boasts an extraordinary variety of valuable collections. These include not only haute couture and prêt-à-porter textile works, but also finished garments intended for specific uses, such as cocktail or bridal dresses, along with accessories like hats, handbags, gloves, and fans.

The Fondazione Mondragone enthusiastically hosted the photography exhibition "Occhi sulla Città", in line with its ongoing commitment to renewing and expanding its mission, making it increasingly innovative and multidisciplinary. This openness to the “new” provides keys to fresh interpretations and the ability to discover new perspectives and horizons.

Thus, the museum welcomes exhibitions of photographic works that may not directly align with its primary themes but enrich its cultural offerings in their pursuit of beauty in all its forms. Beauty is certainly found in the refinement of women’s clothing and even more so in Neapolitan men’s tailoring, but the narrative of dress culture expands and deepens only through constant engagement with other cultures.

In this mosaic of ethnicities and diverse histories — all converging on the concept of universality — there is space to celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. Everyone can feel part of a greater whole while still fully preserving their identity. This sense of belonging is often shared by many visitors to the city who explore its cultural sites. Naples becomes a space for thought and transformation — open, flexible, inclusive, and deeply evocative — a place that, once known, feels intimate, familiar, and emotionally resonant.

In this spirit, the photographic works portraying the city offer — more than many other forms — an immediate, and at times disconcerting, beauty. Yet they are always capable of revealing countless angles and layers of meaning.

Fondazione Mondragone – Fashion Museum

the Administrator

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