

New collection for slow fashion label Leopardessa

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ROME — American designer Jessica Harris presented on March 13 the latest chapter in a two-decade practice built on archival fabric, couture technique, and a quiet refusal to follow fashion's calendar.

Leopardessa, the independent Roman label Harris founded in 2005, launched its new capsule collection *O fontana di perla, O incantamento* (O fountain of pearl, O enchantment) to a hand-picked gathering of collectors and collaborators. The collection is inspired by the Roman fashion houses of the mid-century, specifically the legendary Sorelle Fontana, and takes its name from a poem by Umberto Bottone published in the 1906 anthology *Lumi d'argento* (Silver lights). The venue, Spazio Giallo Interiors, is tucked into Piazza de' Ricci, a small square in Rome's historic centre better known as the discreet address favoured by the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Cruise, Matt Damon, and Sting when in town.

The pieces are built from archival textiles, including silks faded by sun exposure and then re-dyed in layered tones. A signature inlaid suit constructed in a mosaic of rhombuses took months to complete.

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Model in one of latest creations by Jessica Harris *(Credits: Leopardessa)*

The fountain as metaphor

The collection reaches back to an era Harris describes with quiet reverence. “I like to imagine those fittings, with many hands stitching fine fabrics into glorious creations spun around the most beautiful women of that era,” she said. The Roman fountain becomes in her framing a mirror for memory and reflection, while the *atelier* (fashion house) is a world where dresses were built around the client, not the calendar.

Harris also shot the campaign herself on analogue film, giving the images a grain and intimacy that mirrors the collection’s sensibility. She styled the models as “divine apparitions,” interpreting rather than merely wearing the clothes. Harris came to Rome while studying art history, trained at Koefia, the city’s alta moda academy, and never left. Her practice has always centred on the slower rhythms of couture construction: pattern-making, hand-sewing, and the kind of deliberate attention to fabric that fast fashion has largely abandoned. “Part of my design process is finding precious fabrics that add a historical value to the collection,” she said.

For Harris, Leopardessa is not just a label. “Leopardessa is euphoria,” she said. “It is the moment when you allow yourself to escape through dressing and become the character that clothing allows you to interpret.”

Leopardessa operates from Via dei Cartari 41 in Rome and has built its following over 20 years through private presentations rather than conventional runways. Some fashion labels chase the next season. Leopardessa is still listening to 1906.

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