



Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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Tutto Italiano

Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano*

Of all the cities in all the world, Milan and Rome are two of the top five fashion cities; and last year, Milan became the [top city for fashion](#), beating out New York City that has held the title for the previous five years. Leading Italian fashion houses Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Prada, Valentino, and Versace are either headquartered or have a flagship store in Milan. Fashion Week is held twice a year in each city.

[Milan Fashion Week 2010 Spring](#)

More About Milan

Milan is also home to the magnificent [Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II](#)—an enclosed mall created by a glass and iron domed roof that was designed in 1861 and named after the first king of Italy. The roof covers the intersecting street, now mosaic floors, that connects the piazza in front of the [Duomo di Milano](#) with the piazza in front of the Teatro alla Scala. Take a [virtual tour](#) of this famous opera house. (The piazza in front of the Milan Cathedral was where Prime Minister Berlusconi was attacked in December.)

[Images of Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II](#) (See page two for mosaic floors, and check out the picture on page one that shows a famous fast food chain!)

[Galleria Vittorio Emanuele – Milano Architecture](#)

The term “millinery” has its roots in Milan, dating to the sixteenth century and referring to the hats and other accessories that were produced in Milan and surrounding areas. Milliner was first used in England to describe the craftspeople from Milan who traveled to England to make and sell their products.

Men of the Cloth

While on assignment in Italy as fashion editor for a men’s magazine, Vicki Vasilopoulos toured the Brioni Tailoring School (*Scuola di Sartoria di Brioni*) in Penne, Abruzzo. Brioni was established in Rome in 1945, and has distinguished itself not only as a leader in high-end men’s tailoring, but also as an historical and cultural icon of men’s fashion.

At the school, Vicki became interested in producing a documentary about the Italian culture and traditions of hand tailoring. Her film, [Men of the Cloth](#), tells the stories of three Italian master tailors, their devotion to their craft, and the challenges they—and the industry—face in the twenty-first century. (The February issue of *La Gazzetta Italiana* includes my interview with Vicki.)

Filming has been completed and *Men of the Cloth* is now in the post-production stage where 130 hours of film is reduced to a reasonable viewing length; the soundtrack is developed; and graphics, dialogue subtitles and screen credits are added. Vicki plans to release the film this year, and she is “doing fundraising events in New York and the Philadelphia area and seeking both grassroots support

(through tax-deductible contributions) and corporate partnerships.”

Vicki has plans to use the film for educational purposes and hopes “that others in the community who see the objectionable representation of Italian Americans in the media will decide to support a film that offers an authentic and nuanced portrait of real Italian Americans who honor their heritage and extol traditional values.”

Visit her website to learn more about the film and to view selected trailers of the film. You can either click on the picture of the button (next to the thimble) or the link at the bottom of each page to contribute to the film premiere of *Men of the Cloth*. You can also join Vicki on [Facebook](#).

Back to Brioni. In 2007, The Royal College of Art in London entered into a [partnership agreement](#) with Brioni for students of RCA to attend a one-week Master Class at the Brioni Tailoring School. For a first hand account of one student’s experiences, read *Project Brioni* ([Part One](#)) ([Part Two](#)).

The Tunnels in Trento

Two abandoned tunnels in Trento, in the northeast region of [Trentino-Alto Adige](#), have been turned into an art gallery/museum. The tunnels, that had been bored through rock, were closed when traffic was diverted to another route. The project—a collaboration between two Italian firms, a professor at Stanford University, and an Italian architect—has produced two exhibits. The first in 2008, [Gallerie della memoria](#), commemorates World War I. The second exhibit, [Le Gallerie](#), has been selected as a [finalist for its innovate design](#).

MTV’s Italian American Contribution to Society

Speaking of the “objectionable representation of Italian Americans,” there has been a lot of controversy about MTV’s *Jersey Shore*. For those who aren’t aware, the reality show was originally casting and promoting “guidos and guidettes,” but the uproar over the terminology ended that marketing campaign.

All cultures have good and bad, but it seems that the media constantly capitalizes on negative sub-cultures of Italian Americans. What’s worse is that it seems the people on this show actually enjoy the roles they have created for themselves. Or is it just the roles that they are capitalizing on? In researching for this write-up, I read [What’s Next for the Cast of Jersey Shore?](#) According to the article—with the exception of one—all the others have plans for their future, most as entrepreneurs. One cast member is even trademarking his nickname. What’s most interesting, though, is that two of the girls want to be designers. Maybe they should be sent to the Brioni Tailoring School, where they would learn about Italian culture along with tailoring.

As for MTV’s contribution, I found [this ad on craigslist](#) when searching for “guidos and guidettes.” An advertisement for 10 females and one male “ages 18-22 “ for a “new reality dating show called Love Me, Guido” that will be shown on “CTV, Youtube, and facebook” and that “can be very big and there is always a possibility of someone picking it up.”

If this generation of “ages 18-22” had learned about history and the wonderful contributions of Italians and Italians Americans to this country, either in school or through their families, would they be looking for notoriety by acting like fools?

[Unflattering Stereotypes](#)

5,000 Miles From Home

Last October, *5,000 Miles From Home*, a documentary about Italian Americans from the Chicago area who fought during World War II, premiered on Chicago’s local television station. The film blends actual footage of the war with interviews of the

