

“Chiara e Francesca Nonino”
di Matteo Persivale
apparso su
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THE IMPOSSIBLE ONES

The Nonino girls.

The heiresses of grappa and charm. Beautiful and experts of investments

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IMPOSSIBLE

Chiara and Francesca Nonino

BY MATTEO PERSIVALE

PHOTOS BY TONI THORIMBERT

FASHION BY DANIELA STOPPONI

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THE IMPOSSIBLE ONES

FRANCESCA AND CHIARA NONINO

BY MATTEO PERSIVALE

PHOTOS BY TONI THORIMBERT FOR STYLE

FASHION BY DANIELA STOPPONI

Show girls? Of course not. Francesca (the blonde) and Chiara (the brunette) are the heiresses of the grappa empire and of the famous beauty of the family (their mother and aunts). Career women that have a lot to say. About economy: “The true question is whether the West will become more like China or vice-versa”. On the young: “We are lucky, but the others?”. And on the future of their sector: “We need innovation. Grappa Caipirinha: why not?”

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It makes an impression listening to a young woman that one day will inherit a company known all over the world say something like “I’m lucky, but what’s the future for the people of my age that are facing a world of contracts that are renewed every six months?” Or, “The true question is not how powerful China will be, but if we will become more like China, or China will become more like us”. And when she says that “if politics and the civil society part, the crisis is inevitable for both of them” we cannot but think of the immortal scene of Accountant Ugo Fantozzi who, in front of his mega-director speaking of social justice, asks in a very weak voice: But then you ... Are you a Communist?”.

Because Chiara Bardelli Nonino and her sister Francesca, the daughters of Cristina, the Managing Director, and Antonio Maria Bardelli, are the atypical heiresses of an atypical company: the distillery founded by Orazio Nonino in 1897, in the latest forty years, has progressively become an international reality (also thanks to the important homonymous literary prize) even if it has always remained an artisan company. And the firm, in the latest decades, has always been lead by women. Therefore the last generation can afford to talk serenely for an hour about books and geo-politics, before facing the grappa topic: “Because we have always been stimulated to look around us and have interests, also beyond the company and beyond Udine and Italy” says Francesca, 21 years old, student of economy at the Catholic University of Milan (Chiara, 26, in a few days will graduate in Philosophy in the same University). Francesca is now planning a period in the USA: “Moving from Udine to Milan has already been a huge change. But also when we are travelling we talk to each other or to mum and dad through Skype”.

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, aunts: a family company must have pros and cons, mustn’t it?

Francesca: Pros and cons, yes, but you are free to talk without impediments.

Chiara: True. There is the unbelievable strength that comes from the freedom of communicating without barriers, without being afraid of having to move in a strategic or diplomatic way. Italian family companies may even be an anomaly, but if the family is good it is a talent and efficiency multiplier.

The future has already been decided, then?

F: Before joining the company, I would like to try to work somewhere else. Also our brother Davide, who in March will graduate at Bocconi, agrees on this. I’m extremely interested in China, especially for the cultural energy that is there, the new artists, the ideas, even though it is always a dictatorship. I’m always skeptical when I hear the praising of capitalism after the Chinese way: it is easy to grow so much with the work of slaves. From their point of view, certainly, you sacrifice a couple of generations and then you make the definite leap towards the world’s leadership. But what about the sacrificed generations? Also here in Italy, with the never ending temporary employment, we are sacrificing one.

Before going to work, however, for Francesca and Chiara there is University.

C: I studied photography at the Parsons in New York, it is my passion, and I thought I would do that job. But I lack true talent: it will remain a hobby and an interest forever. But I'm writing my graduation thesis on post-mortem photography, the presence of death in images. There is an unbelievable tradition, especially during the Victorian age. This idea of beauty beyond life is the same that today make us love Alexander McQueen's work so much.

Before the two years at the Parsons there was the Central Saint Martins in London, the academy attended by so many great stylists (from McQueen, to John Galliano, from Stella McCartney to Riccardo Tisci), where you studied Product Design.

C: An experience not to be made again, with professors that were seldom present; surely it is a very well structured academy, it is very good for fashion... But at St. Martins if you are skilled you work well, if, on the contrary, you want to learn you have to do everything by yourself.

F: Better New York, then. Also as regards public means, especially for me, as I don't have the driving license.

How is the life of two sisters that grow up surrounded by the great members of the jury of the Nonino Prize (next edition January 2013) and the prize-winners? At the moment the President of the Jury is V.S. Naipaul, among the members there are Peter Brook, Morando Morandini, Claudio Magris, Edgar Morin and Ermanno Olmi. Does it impress?

F: Yes and no (*she smiles*) Many of these giants become members of the family, like Naipaul, my favorite: he's like one of my beloved uncles.

Really Naipaul, who has the reputation of a sarcastic man and a professional of controversy?

F: Are you joking? He's a very sweet person both with his wife, who's wonderful, and with all of us. We love him. If he answers badly to someone probably it is because he or she has asked him a stupid question.

The most beautiful memory connected with the Prize?

C: I'm very proud of the awarding of Thomas Tranströmer in 2004, long before the Nobel: an extremely refined poet, a very sweet man whose disease has compelled him to communicate through his very good wife. That was a true emotion. Going back to the persons... Claudio Abbado had a long time relation with our family, he's a true artist, generous towards young people, full of very good disciples. He teaches us a wonderful thing: true masters can be seen according to their disciples. Renzo Piano thinks about the town in a human way. Ermanno Olmi, who I love, is a master of film-making who taught us the importance of listening. If, on the contrary, I think about emotions, nothing comes before Leonardo Sciascia's dolls.

Sciascia's dolls?

C: Yes, I was a little child and don't have clear memories, unluckily he left us too soon. But he gave me a doll I will always preserve. I don't know what is special in Trieste and in Sicily, Sciascia's land, but our best writers come from there, in my opinion: I think the greatest among the living is Claudio Magris.

And now what are you reading?

C: *The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot (*Adelphi*), where the theme of bioethics is dealt with in a very interesting way.

Entertainments apart from reading?

F: Theater, cinema ... Sometimes at the disco.

C: Not for me. I've already given.

Finally we're talking of alcohol...

F and C: No (*they laugh*). We aren't teetotalers, but we drink the right.

C: For a drink, like grappa, not too known by young people, a chance is given by combinations, and innovation: recently, in the United States, I created together with a mixologists a Caipirinha with muscatel grappa... Imagine that grandpa got angry for any sort of "contamination"! But that's what is nice, it surprises you.

Didascalie foto/ captions

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Left

Francesca: silk dress with appliqués, **Azzaro**

Right

Chiara: cotton cloth dress, **Miu Miu**

Opening page

Francesca (left): dress with elaborate neckline, **Marni**

Chiara (right): cotton top, cotton skirt, all **Prada**

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Right

Francesca and Chiara with their cousins Sofia, Gaia (Antonella's daughters) and Caterina (Elisabetta's daughter). Below, with their brother Davide and Elisabetta's twins, Costanza and Beatrice.

Left

Francesca: dress with the appliqué of sequin and plumes, **Ralph Lauren**; sandals, **Gianvito Rossi**.

Photo Francesca

THEY GREW UP AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE NONINO PRIZE COMMITTEE:
“NAIPAUL AND CLAUDIO ABBADO? LIKE UNCLES FOR US”