

# HUNGER



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# Ilaria Nistri

words LILY SILVERTON

Although Ilaria Nistri comes from a fashion background — her parents run a textiles company — it wasn't her first calling in life. Bucking the family trend, she initially trained as a lawyer, thinking that it would be a more suitable career than fashion. When she set up her eponymous label in 2006 it wasn't easy, but she did have a head start in one department: textiles. "I've known all the fabric producers in Italy since I was a child, so I'm able to tell exactly where is best to buy silk or cotton, or where to have special hems made, or different treatments done. I've had the chance to work with a lot of people who really know their [trade]," she says.

Working with others is important to Ilaria; she's a strong believer in the power of collaboration. "The stylists, pattern-makers, sewers and models are all really integral; the way you all work together gives the right 'sense' to the [pieces]. To get the best results you have to open your mind to others. Otherwise you just remain in here," she says, tapping her head. "Really, you are not able to realise anything on your own."

Ilaria describes her own work as simple yet poetic and emotional. "The [Ilaria Nistri] woman is a sort of Amazonian. She's quite ethereal and very strong, but at the same time fragile, and she uses that as an inner source of strength," she says. This duality is vital to the designer's work and her collections tend to have an air of androgyny about them. "For me, the secret to a woman's beauty is that she has several elements to her — strength

and structure, but at the same time kindness and fragility. I think the masculine and feminine elements in one person allow a much greater capacity for seduction," she says. And clearly ahead of the curve, Ilaria, who only wears black or white herself, has been championing this blurred version of gender since her label began.

Nature is also a "rich source of inspiration" for Ilaria's designs: "I adore the strength and the power that nature has — much more than us as human beings." This preoccupation with the environment often seeps into the colour palette of her collections. "I like the contrast between the strong colours of leather and dark colours of stones," she says. And looking forward to SS16, Ilaria has referred to the landscape imagery of photographer David Maisel.

Like most young designers of her ilk, Ilaria says that being an emerging brand in Milan is not that easy right now. However, she believes this to be the case across Italy, and the world. So what's her advice to young emerging designers? "You really have to want it. It's not a joke. You have a lot of challenges and a lot to prove. You really have to believe in your project." And while she sells predominantly outside of Italy, focusing currently on expansion in the States, she knows without a doubt where home is. "I've travelled all over the world since I was a child," she says, "but I will always come back." ■

[ilarianistri.com](http://ilarianistri.com)

