



Platinum Preview

Fall 2017

Cashmere, Silk and Leather

10.17/17213



Swisscard AECS GmbH, P.O. Box 227, CH-8810 Horgen, www.americanexpress.ch
American Express Cards, issued in Switzerland by Swisscard AECS GmbH

Platinum Service (www.americanexpress.ch/platinum) is provided by Swisscard AECS GmbH (the "Issuer") which is represented by Ten Lifestyle Management Switzerland GmbH with regard to the Travel & Lifestyle Service. The terms and conditions for the Travel & Lifestyle Service at www.americanexpress.ch/termsandconditions apply.

With the offers and services provided by third parties described in this brochure (e.g. flights, hotels, rental cars), their respective applicable terms and conditions apply. The issuer does not accept any responsibility for these offers and services provided by third parties and disclaims any liability.

All the offers, services and prices listed refer to the time this publication was issued, generally only have limited availability and can be subject to changes at any time.

Platinum
Fall 2017



Crafting sensuality on the skin

Smooth as silk. Soft as cashmere. Supple as leather. These attributes of luxury have a sensuous ring to them, and it's not by chance that the best silks, cashmere, and leather goods are produced in the most sensual of countries – Italy.

Text: **CLAUDIA FLISI**
Pictures: **CLAUDIO BADER**



FRANCO MANTERO,
CEO of the silk company which was founded by his grandfather, inspects roughly 3,000 Mantero products per year.



Room for creativity at Mantero headquarters in Grandate, which was opened in 2016.



It takes more than just magic to transform raw silk into wearable art.

CARESS 150-year-old silk samples in the archives of Mantero at its strikingly modern headquarters on the outskirts of Como. Browse the Zegna archives in Trivero, feel the delicacy and warmth of woolen fabrics slipping through your fingers, fabrics that were woven a century ago. Admire the amazing grace of leather shoes shaped like sculptures and displayed like art at René Caovilla's grand villa at the headquarters in Riviera del Brenta. These companies epitomize Italian craftsmanship like no other; they and other luxury goods manufacturers set Italy apart in their rarefied market worldwide. "Made in Italy" was born from a unique combination of culture, craftsmanship, and commerce. The Italian peninsula has never been rich in natural resources; it has always imported basic commodities and transformed them into objects of desire through creativity. Modern artisans in Italy today continue that creative tradition, aided by unique advantages: the legacy of the Renaissance, a high degree of urbanization,

and a unique economic structure conducive to the growth of small and medium-sized family enterprises, faster and more flexible in adapting to changing tastes and trends. Craft traditions are handed down from generation to generation, ensuring a workforce well-versed in high-level craftsmanship. As Edoardo Caovilla, COO of René Caovilla, explains: "We try to hire locally because it is more logical that someone passes down knowledge and know-how from one generation to another within a family." Over time, dif-

ferent areas of Italy came to specialize in certain crafts; about 35 districts operate in textiles and clothing or leather and shoemaking.

Silk
The silk district of Como developed thanks to its considerable supply of water needed for sericulture and its one-time abundance of mulberry trees. Mantero, one of Como's oldest and largest silk manufacturers, no longer cultivates silkworms but the raw silk it purchases from China is of the highest

quality available on the market. "From a purely technical perspective, the silk manufactured here is superior to the silk sold in China or India," notes CEO Franco Mantero. Como's silk industry was founded in 1510, so Mantero can tap into a long tradition of technical experience and craftsmanship passed from generation to generation among its employees. In fact, one-fifth of them are dedicated exclusively to product development: design, color, research, product quality. Mantero manages the entire production process for its silks, other fabrics,

and accessories – preparation of the silk, the finissage, coloring, quality control, and shipping. Although digital printing has revolutionized the silk industry in recent years, Mantero's experienced employees began when offset printing was still the norm. "Their knowledge is far superior to that of the average worker in the silk industry because of their extensive background in offset. The result is that our quality is a lot higher than the average in the local silk industry as a whole," observes Mantero's CEO with pride.

Shoemaking
The Marche, Veneto's Riviera del Brenta, and Parabiago in Lombardy are among the Italian districts known for shoemaking. The Marche is the largest and carries the most complete range of shoe supplies, from machinery to soles to laces. It developed in the mid-1800s as a result of a fluvial network, an abundance of chestnut and other trees used in tanning, and herds of livestock. Parabiago is very small and chic village, not far from wealthy Milan. Diego Rossetti, CEO of Fratelli Rossetti shoemakers,



EDOARDO CAOVI
is the COO and Design Director of the company that was founded by his grandfather.



The production facilities look more like an artist's studio at Caovilla.



Technology meets textile production at the Zegna factory in Trivero.



ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA
doesn't just carry his grandfather's name but also lets his passion for quality live on.

observes proudly that his corporate headquarters is next to the factory. "Everyone who works here has leather in their blood and shoemaking in their DNA." The Riviera del Brenta developed as a shoe district when 19th century upper-class Venetians brought their artisans with them to their summer homes. One of these, a leather craftsman, had visited the US and returned with a sense of the industrial revolution. This knowledge enabled him to become the largest shoe producer in Italy at the time, and the im-

pact was felt throughout the Riviera del Brenta. "The influence of Venice was also significant. It has always represented refinement and elegance. After all, the Republic of Venice lasted twice as long as the Roman Empire," points out Edoardo Caovilla. His company makes high-end women's fashion shoes with a heavy craft component. Working as a craftsman in this industry means becoming part of the world of popular fashion, claims Mr. Caovilla. He adds: "It is not how many hours it takes to make a pair

of shoes but how many generations of know-how it takes to make a pair of shoes."

Wool and cashmere

When mechanized wool production came to Italy during the industrial revolution, Piedmont's high mountain pastures and abundant water offered ideal conditions for new textile manufacturers, and a textile district was born. Ermenegildo Zegna is one of the leading companies in that area and has become a global powerhouse in the sale of fin-

ished men's clothing, but it still sells textiles to the top names in fashion design for men and women. Its success over more than a century is due to "the extreme quality of our fabrics, our commitment to personalized service wherever we operate, our focus on company-owned stories, and a continuing investment in technology," affirms CEO Ermenegildo Zegna, grandson of the founder. Cashmere Valley emerged from the rolling hills of Umbria in part because its women had been weavers in medieval

times. Much of the credit is due, however, to the entrepreneurial efforts of one native son, Brunello Cucinelli. The company bearing his name has become the largest purveyor of luxury cashmere garments in the world, and the use of technology is evident in its sparkling headquarters in Solomeo, near Perugia. But the skills of 2,000 workers in 500 Umbrian companies form the backbone of Cashmere Valley's success. Today's artisans embrace technology as a way to enhance their skills and elevate their products, but old-fashioned

craftsmanship also remains unequivocally part of every luxury "Made in Italy" shoe, scarf and shirt.

A citizen of both the US and Italy, **CLAUDIA FLISI** lives in Milan. She writes for dozens of publications including The International New York Times and airline magazines.

Santoni: speaking about bespoke

Interview: CLAUDIA FLISI

Giuseppe Santoni is CEO of Santoni, an Italian shoe company founded in the Marche in 1975. It makes high-quality shoes for men and women, but is best known for the hand detailing and rich leather colorations of its men's footwear.

Subtlety à la Santoni:
Hand detailing is one of the trademarks of Santoni shoes.

Please tell us a little about your background and preparation for your role as CEO.

I never thought of doing anything else than inheriting my parents' business. When my father Andrea Santoni founded the company, it was a very small workshop, but he had the ambition to create one-of-a-kind shoes. I grew up in my father's workshop, watching him working together with the artisans in search of beauty and perfection. I know well the process of manufacturing a shoe, which is helpful for me in my job as CEO. I became CEO in 1990, at a young age. I had the absolute support and trust of my father, which let me expand our business by entering new markets to distribute our fine products. My first target was the USA. To meet this goal, I travelled extensively in search of the best partners. Next came other important markets, like Russia, Japan, Europe, and the Middle East. I really love all aspects of my job and am very much involved in everything from design to marketing to sales.

Every upscale manufacturer extols quality and all Italian artisans emphasize tradition. What makes Santoni special?

The ability of combining excellent quality with contemporary design is our main strength and the secret of our success. We are inspired by the classic, but we always propose it in a contemporary way, thanks to continuous esthetic research and the ability to add unique detailing. We combine tradition and innovation, quality and design, craftsmanship and research, classicism and modernism. Our customer is an open-minded person, a globe-trotter, in contact with different cultures but with an individual style. A person who doesn't follow trends but wants to create his own style by choosing unique objects with an intrinsic value. Most of all, our customer is a person looking for true quality who can recognize an excellent product.

GIUSEPPE SANTONI



Giuseppe Santoni's father Andrea founded the company in 1975. Giuseppe took over the business in 1990 when he was barely 22, and transformed the respected Italian brand from the Marche region into an international presence by emphasizing craftsmanship and quality. Giuseppe's experience in all phases of shoemaking – from design to marketing to sales – has helped in this expansion, as has his personal enthusiasm for travel. A focus on excellence, innovation, and tradition has led to collaborations with Mercedes-AMG and Swiss watchmaker IWC Schaffhausen.

What makes Italian leather products and shoemaking different from those of other leather-export countries?

Italians have quality and creativity in their DNA, this is undisputed, and luckily we are 100 percent Italian! What we propose to our client is the true "Made in Italy". The heritage, the craftsmanship and the artisanal skills we embody are perfectly combined with innovative design and rich details expressing sophistication and perfection.

What are the phases of leather production in which you are specialized?

We have many outstanding artisanal techniques, like stitching or cutting by hand, but the most renowned one is the Velatura, our exclusive technique of coloring leather by hand – not a piece of leather but the finished shoe. It's really like art! Our master craftspeople employ original tint rec-

ipes to apply many different layers of color to the leather in a process that may require hours. This slow, exacting process guarantees that every pair of shoes has a unique, irreproducible patina. The training process is long and it may take several years before you can be considered skilled in the Velatura technique. We believe that our identity lies in the essence of this authentic art – the culture of making things, the savoir-faire as a vision, as a philosophy of everyday work. Santoni products come to life through techniques that have been passed down from one hand to another, and our innovation stems from tradition and experience.

Are these traditional manual skills not dying out?

There are still young people who want to learn a craft, and passing on this knowledge is key to offering a product that is regarded as a work of art. Which is why we have established a School of Crafts within our company. The training process has a primary position in our plans, and it is based not only on technique and manual ability, but on passion, devotion and awareness. Our people work not only with their hands, but with their brains and their hearts.