

GIANNI AGNELLI

It is difficult to name a man with a more impeccable style than that of Gianni Agnelli. Though his place in popular culture may be cemented by his image, Agnelli offers more than this. He was once the richest man in modern Italian history as an industrialist of measureless success, and was also a war veteran. Agnelli's style serves to draw attention to the complete package of a man whose influence spans multiple spheres, and whose legacy cannot be understated.

Born on 12 March 1921, Agnelli studied at Pinerolo Cavalry Academy and read law at the University of Turin, though he never practised this vocation. Italy's involvement in the Second World War saw Agnelli join a tank regiment in 1940, and he served on the Russian front, sustaining two injuries in the process. His most serious injury, however, came while he was serving in an armoured car division in North Africa. He received a shot to the arm as a result of a drunken brawl in a bar in which Agnelli and a German officer had been arguing about a woman.

Agnelli's passion for the opposite sex did not end with the war, and he remained a famous playboy throughout his life. In 1953 he married to Donna Marella Caracciolo dei principi di Castagneto, a noblewoman and fabric designer and they had a son, Edoardo. Nonetheless, Agnelli sustained concurrent relationships with multiple mistresses throughout the marriage. Among the myriad of women with whom he liked to spend his time were the socialite Pamela Harriman, actress Anita Ekberg, and fashion designer Jackie Rogers. But despite the evident prolificacy of Agnelli's charm, the marriage lasted until his death in 2003.

Agnelli inherited control of his family's company, Fiat, and their assets in 1966, placing him among the world's industrial elite. At one time Agnelli controlled 4.4% of Italy's GDP, 3.1% of its industrial workforce, and 16.5% of its industrial investment in research, easily making him the most important individual in Italian economics, and he was considered by much of the population to be the 'True King of Italy'. He was made an Italian senator for life in 1991. Throughout his career, Agnelli became increasingly involved with the Italian football club Juventus, of which he was ultimately the owner. During his time at the helm, Agnelli would telephone the club's president, Giampiero Boniperti, at six in the morning every day regardless of where he was or what he was doing.

