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**SPORT
DELLA
VITA**

Autum/Winter 2011

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LA VITA ELLESSE

How do you translate La Dolce Vita? "The sweet life" doesn't come close to describing the celebrated Italian attitude to living. It may be that there is no equivalent in English, and rather than try to translate, you just have to experience it.

Wherever you go in Italy, it's a way of life and a state of mind that you'll recognise straight away. La Dolce Vita is about confidence, vitality and looking great. It means taking life at your own pace and never too seriously – and above all, having fun.

For more than 50 years, Ellesse has epitomised Italian style and glamour, breaking down the boundaries between fashion and sport. In the second of two special supplements, we

present guides to two more Italian classics: Rome in autumn and Cortina d'Ampezzo in winter.

The features are accompanied by specially commissioned artwork from illustrator Robert McGinnis, perfectly capturing the allure of these iconic destinations. Here's how to live the dream, Ellesse style.

AUTUMN IN ROME

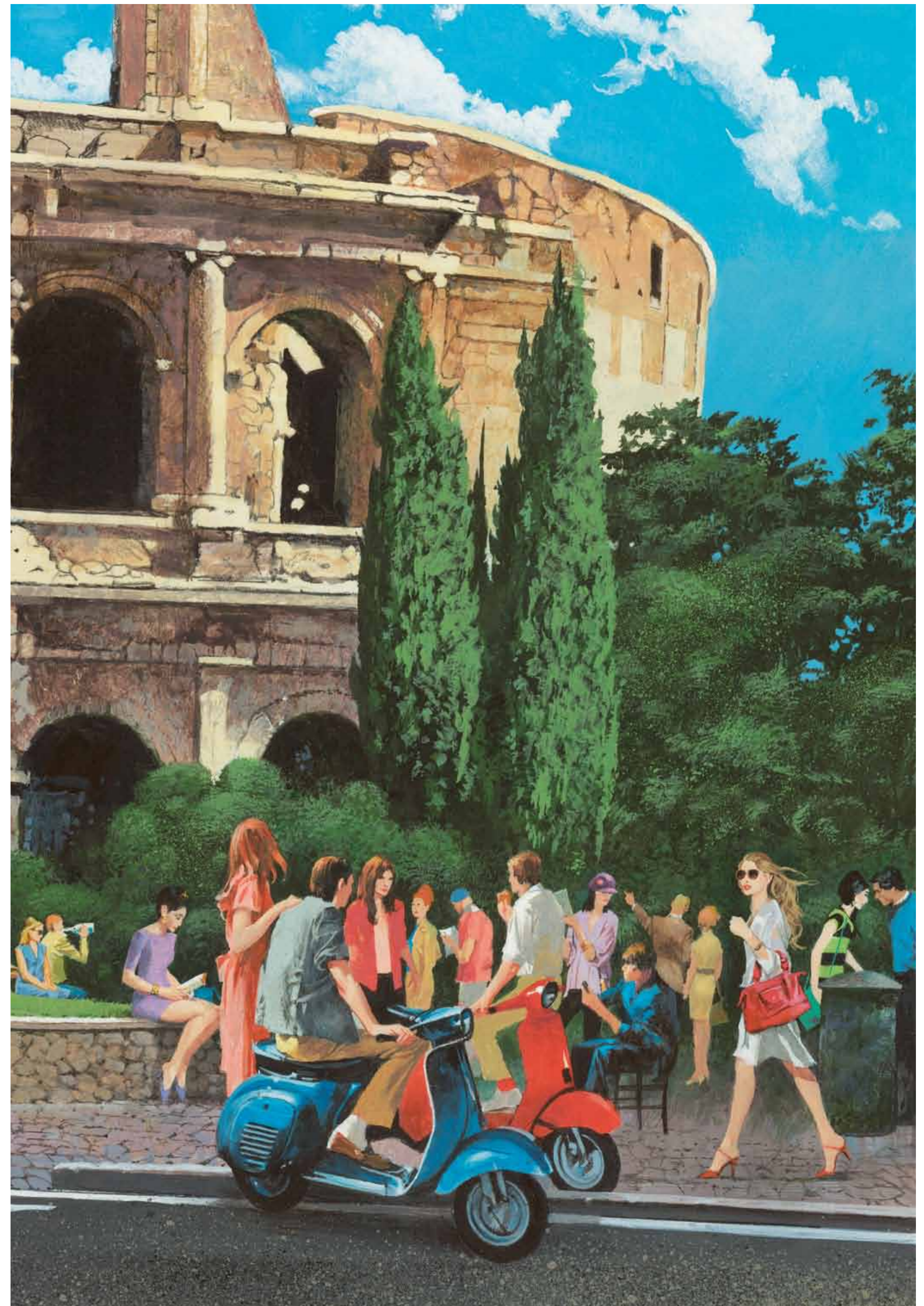
For an insight into the Roman character, it's instructive to wander down to the Circo Massimo at first light – and those who faithfully follow the maxim of "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" might want to bring a pair of Ellesse running shoes along with them.

Two thousand years ago, this was the greatest chariot-racing stadium in the Roman Empire, where the ancient world's equivalent of Formula One would attract crowds of up to 200,000. Today, the quiet ruins are a favourite haunt of early-morning joggers.

On the tracks where chariot wheels once screeched and buckled, you're likely to see toned, tanned cityfolk taking their daily run. And above, on the site of the terraces where spectators would scream encouragement, there may well be a handful of raffishly dressed stragglers from the all-night clubs of Testaccio and Ostiense, blearily sitting down for a breather on their way home to bed.

It's a typically Roman scene. While visitors to the Eternal City are apt to stop and gawp at every relic of antiquity, those lucky enough to live here take it all in their stride – literally.

Autumn is arguably the best time to come. The volume of tourists in high summer can become oppressive – as can the scorching heat, evidenced by the patches of ground around the Vatican where old ring-pulls and lira coins are melted into the pavement. The soft autumnal light shows up Rome's monuments at their very best, and there are few sights to rival the Colosseum just before dusk, when it glows in eerie hues of pastel pink. ►





Unlike Paris – Rome’s only serious rival as Europe’s most romantic capital – the street plan of the historic centre is chaotic. One way to make sense of the labyrinth is to seek out higher ground for a panorama over the city. It would be obtuse not to mention the view from the cupola of St Peter’s Basilica, however many tourists you have to share it with; but an even better vantage point is the Gianicolo, a knoll that sits between the Vatican and Trastevere.

As it’s not one of the fabled Seven Hills of Rome, lying outside the bounds of the ancient city, the Gianicolo is off the tourist trail; but the view from the top, around the Piazzale Garibaldi, is just sublime. Similarly, the thousands who visit the Villa Borghese on the other side of town tend to hurry in and out of the art galleries and miss the amazing vista from Viale del Belvedere.

Food and drink are a particular delight of Rome. And while it’s quite possible to have an indifferent meal in the city, it’s very difficult to find a bad coffee. The most effective kick-start to an autumn morning is to go to a neighbourhood cafe and enjoy an espresso as busy Romans do – short, strong, and taken standing up at the counter. Afternoon coffee is a more leisureed affair, and the 250-year-old Antico Caffè Greco is unmissable. Sit and sip in one of its ornate salons, and you’ll feel as though you’re communing with the many famous patrons who once did likewise – Byron, Keats and Dickens among them.

Then there are the gelaterie. There’s no room for equivocation; the Roman variant of ice cream is the best in the world. Even the most

conscientious of calorie-counters should try one from Il Gelato di San Crispino, near the Trevi Fountain (a few extra laps of the Circo Massimo will burn it off). The varieties that are on offer change with the seasons, and the acknowledged autumn classic is the dried fig and walnut flavour.

Attitudes to dining, drinking and socialising are less regimented in Rome than elsewhere in Italy. Granted, ordering a cappuccino after noon or a Campari soda outside of aperitivo time is likely to result in raised eyebrows. But for the younger generation, there’s no shame in settling at a bar or enoteca and grazing on sharing platters as friends drift in and out, instead of sitting down for the customary three-hour-plus Italian dinner.

Of such bars, a personal favourite is Cul de Sac, just off Piazza Navona. Almost every inch of the walls is taken up by cabinets of bottles, catalogued in a wine list that almost rivals the Domesday Book in length. Home-made pâtés and terrines are a speciality, including one that’s marbled with chocolate; it shouldn’t work, but it does.

The whole area around the axis of Navona and Campo dei Fiori is pocked with hole-in-the-wall bars that attract a casually stylish crowd. Monti, the area between Via Nazionale and Via Cavour, is another hotspot for easy-going bar life, with Ai Tre Scalini on Via Panisperna a wonderful melting pot of locals and expats. Artier types flock to Trastevere – an old working-class neighbourhood that has been much gentrified, but stubbornly retains its unruly edge.



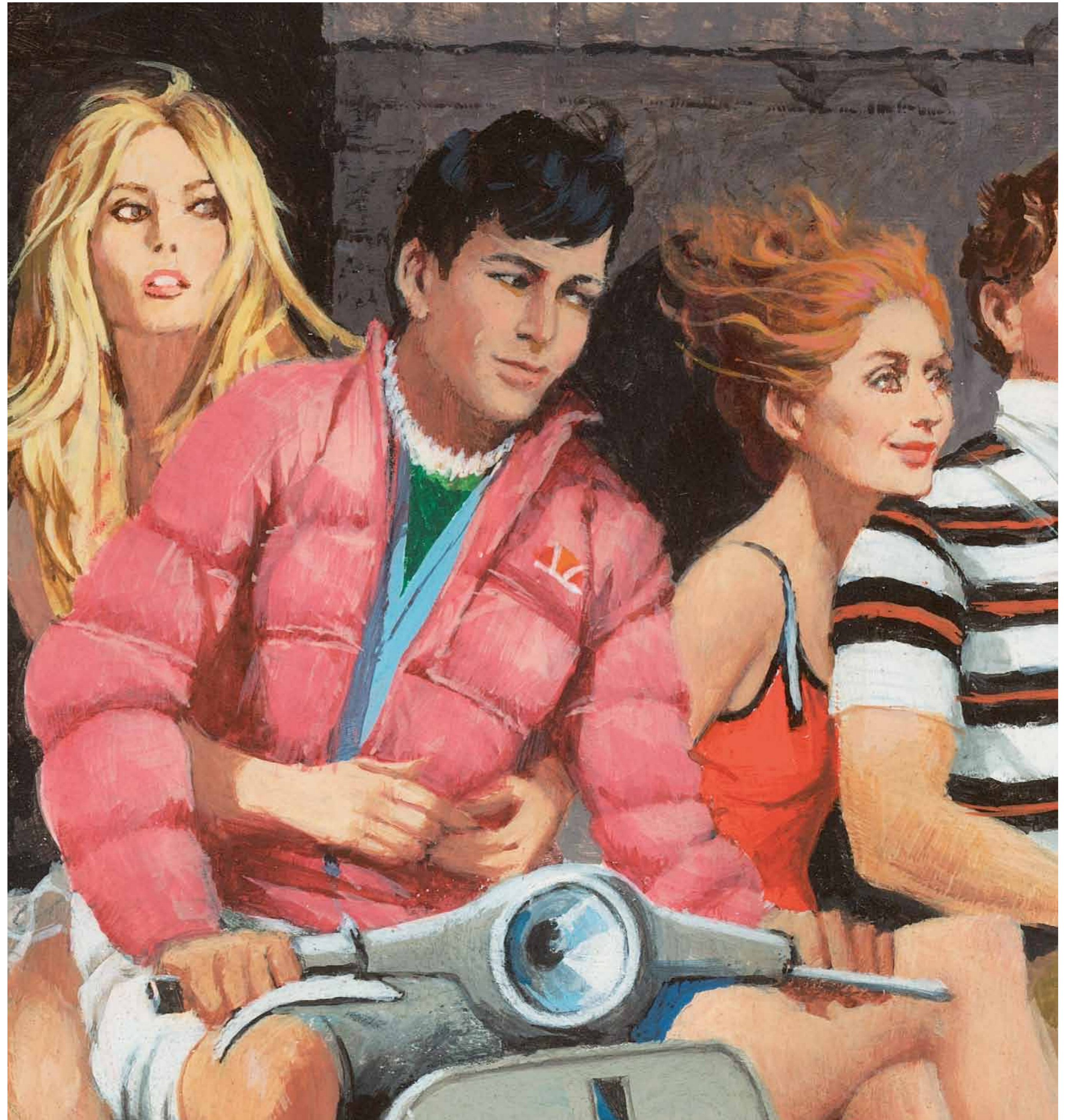
"And that's what's so special about Rome: for all its weight of antiquity, it never stops reinventing itself, and putting the old to new use."

For a taste of traditional Roman cuisine, the best place to go is Testaccio, just south-west of the Aventine. Still a sturdily blue-collar district, this was once the location of the city's butcheries. The staple diet of its workers was based on offal and the cheaper cuts of meat, and these characterise the cucina romana.

In the dense network of streets to the east of Via Marmorata, it's easy to miss some of the longest-established restaurants – they don't go to pains to advertise. One of the best, Agustarello, presents just two discreet windows of frosted glass to the outside world. Venture inside, and it's odds on that the two tiny dining rooms will be packed out with locals tucking in to such earthy delicacies as stewed oxtail and trippa alla romana, or tripe in a piquant tomato and pecorino sauce. Italian food doesn't come any more authentic.

Somewhat incongruously, Testaccio is also where some of Rome's most frenzied nightlife is to be found. The greatest concentration is on Via di Monte Testaccio, a crescent of a street that curves back on itself behind the British war cemetery.

Here, the low-rise villas and former stable buildings are now home to booming basement bars and raucous nightclubs. And that's what's so special about Rome: for all its weight of antiquity, it never stops reinventing itself, and putting the old to new use. Like the signature pieces that are re-imagined in each new Ellesse collection, it's both classical and forward-looking – a true city of dreams. 🍷





CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

If Cortina d'Ampezzo often feels like a film set, it's with good reason. The picture-perfect town has served as the backdrop for countless movies, among them *The Pink Panther*, *Cliffhanger* and *For Your Eyes Only*. And its relationship with the silver screen is not just a professional one. In the Sixties, so many cinematic celebrities spent their holidays here that Cortina became known as the "salotto dei famosi" – the sitting room of the stars.

The celebrities still come, though it may be difficult to recognise them. Walk along Cortina's main shopping street, the elegant Corso Italia, and you'll find that everyone dresses like a star. By night, it's all about cashmere and fur; during the day, the dress code is smart Italian skiwear, with such enduring classics as the Ellesse jet pant much in evidence.

Appearances can be deceptive, though. It's thought that just three in ten visitors to Cortina actually take to the slopes, and many of the immaculately coordinated outfits are just for show. But those who choose not to ski are missing a trick, for this is a resort with a serious calibre. Cortina was the site of the 1956 Winter Olympics, and continues to host yearly World Cup races.

There is not really any such thing as the Cortina d'Ampezzo ski area. Rather, there are four separate lift networks within sight of the town, with numerous others reachable by road. What all of them have in common is astonish-

ing scenery. It's not difficult to see why, in 2009, the Dolomites were listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site, recognising their place in the top tier of natural wonders.

Of all the runs in the town's immediate vicinity, perhaps the most visually striking are the ones down from Bus Tofana. Most of Cortina's ski lifts are modern, efficient people-shifters that whisk you to the top in no time, but Bus Tofana is still served by a creaky old two-person chair lift that maintains a more relaxed pace. You'll be glad it does, as this allows all the more time to savour the incredible views. The summit is so perfect that it seems architect-designed, rather than nature made – a horseshoe-shaped amphitheatre of undulating cliffs, under the 3,243m peak of Tofana.

A bus or taxi ride up the valley brings you to the Falzarego Pass, and access to a cable car up to the 2,800m peak of Lagazuol. This is the departure point for what many snowsport aficionados have ranked as the most beautiful ski run in the world. ▶

But there's no hurry, and it's a good idea to tarry for a while at the top of the cable car. The panoramic terrace of the Rifugio Lagazuoi restaurant makes the ideal spot to enjoy a bombardino, the classic winter warmer of the Italian Alps. It's a potent concoction of whisky and Vov (an egg-yolk liqueur similar to advocaat) frothed up on the espresso machine and topped with whipped cream.

From Lagazuoi, the Armentarola run snakes for seven-and-a-half kilometres down a hidden valley, dropping more than a kilometre in altitude. Officially graded as a red piste, it's not a strenuous descent, but the terrain is magnificently lonely and wild. The route passes two lakes, a frozen waterfall and the Rifugio Scotoni – a restaurant that sits nervously below a near-vertical rock wall.

At the end of the run is a ski lift even slower than the old chair to Bus Tofana – a horse-drawn tow that takes you back to the mountain road. This is the link to the neighbouring resort of Alta Badia and a wealth of skiing, all of which falls under the single Dolomiti Superski lift pass.

Here, serious skiers will want to set out on the Sella Ronda, a day-long route that makes an entire loop of the craggy Sella massif. For foodies, the attraction lies in the fact that Badia is one of northern Italy's most noted gastronomic destinations, with three Michelin-starred restaurants clustered within a valley of just 3,000 inhabitants.

But for all that, none of the other resorts has the cachet or glitz of Cortina. For designer shopping, you would need to go all the way to Milan to rival its selection of chic boutiques. And few other ski resorts have anything to rival the Cooperativa di Cortina, an eccentric department store selling everything from climbing equipment to waistcoats for lap dogs (of which there are many in Cortina, catered for by a canine grooming parlour called Splendy Dog).

Après ski begins early, and can finish very late. First off, an early-evening promenade along Corso Italia leads to one of the approved aperitivo spots, such as Enoteca or Da Sandi, for a glass of sparkling wine or a negroni.

Cortina's most prestigious restaurants are mostly out of town, notably the Michelin-starred Tivoli and the Sardinian-accented Leone e Anna. More down-to-earth dining possibilities in town include Ristorante Cinque Torri, much frequented by local guides and ski instructors. At Pizzeria Porto Rotondo, gluttons can attempt to finish the pizza pazza, stacked high with every one of the toppings mentioned elsewhere on the menu.

Nightlife goes on in several stages, with the savvy tending to migrate from a bar to a pre-club nightspot, and then on to whichever club has the biggest buzz of the night. A good place to start is Birreria Hacker-Pschorr, a lively sports bar serving a range of Bavarian beers from the cask. You'll see the major tennis and ice-hockey games on television here, but seldom football ("We don't do calcio in Cortina," was what the bar staff told me).

LP26 is a popular aperitif and dining spot, as the ranged bottles of Aperol and dangling Parma hams indicate; but it really comes into its own after 11, when the DJ begins his set. As night turns to morning, the crowds move on to make a few exploratory dance moves under the glitterball of Cristallino Disco Bar, and eventually filter through to the VIP Club in Hotel Europa.

The club is aptly named, for Cortina d'Ampezzo has a way of making anyone feel important. With such elegance and natural splendour all around, it's easy to see why such icons as Audrey Hepburn, Sophia Loren and Brigitte Bardot made it their sitting room – and to want to follow in their footsteps again and again. 🌞

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R.M. Givens

ROBERT MCGINNIS

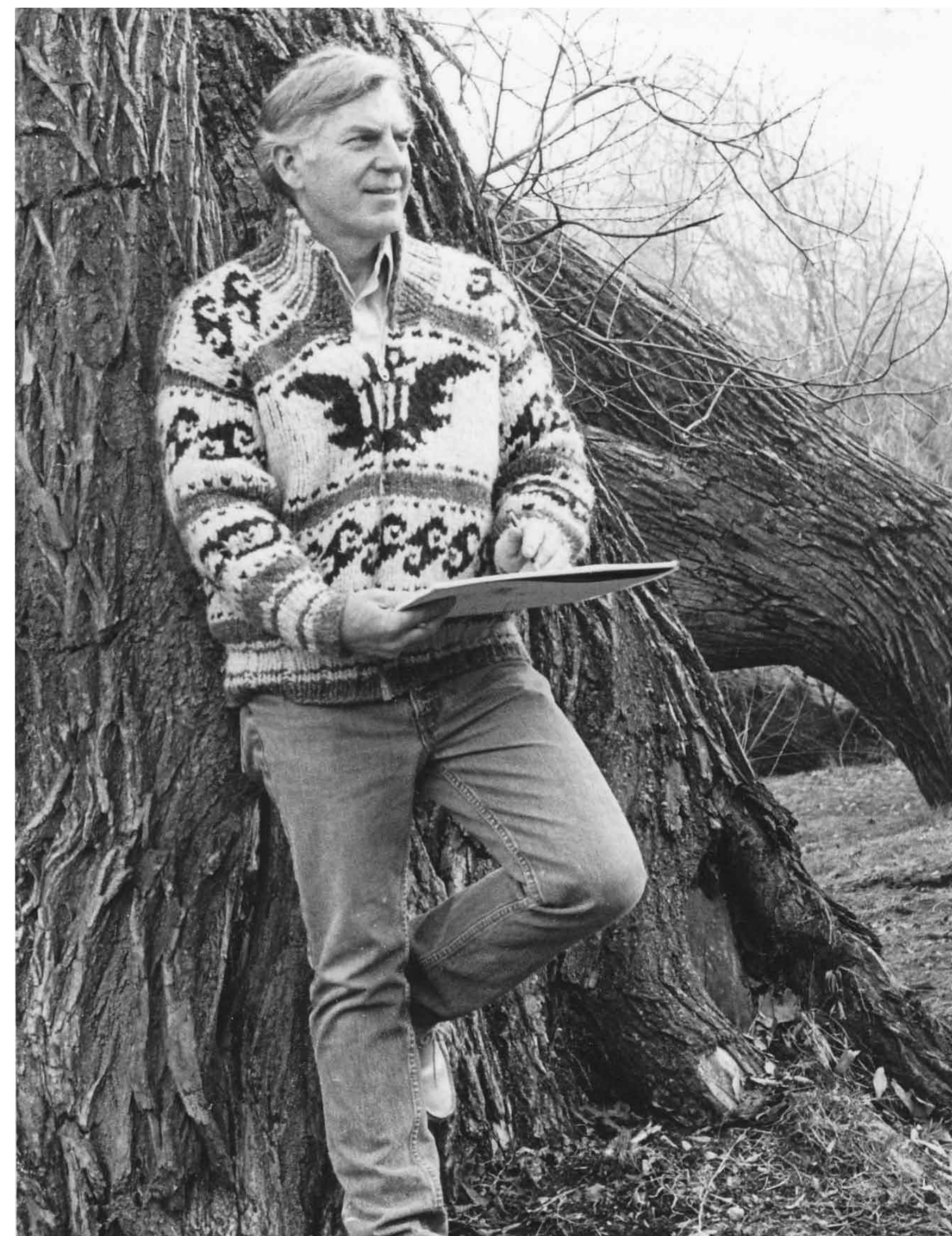
The style of Robert McGinnis is instantly recognisable and much imitated. His film posters are among the most iconic of the Sixties, including *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Barbarella* and several for the James Bond franchise. With Frank McCarthy, he produced designs for *Thunderball* and *You Only Live Twice*, and was sole artist for *Diamonds Are Forever*, *Live and Let Die* and *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

Born in 1926 and raised in Ohio, McGinnis was apprenticed to Walt Disney Studios before studying fine art. After wartime service and a stint in advertising, he began to design book covers, doing more than any other artist to define the look of the Fifties pulp crime novel. He produced editorial work for magazines including *TIME* and *Good Housekeeping*, and designed the titles for the 1965 spoof western *The Hallelujah Trail*.

Recognition has included membership of the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame, the title of Romantic Illustrator of the Year in 1985, and a documentary film entitled *Robert McGinnis: Painting the Last Rose of Summer*. But McGinnis has been reluctant to rest on his laurels, lately coming out of retirement to meet the continuing demand for his work.

The latest phase of his long career has encompassed film posters for Pixar's *The Incredibles*, three Western paintings for the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis, and even a portrait of Paris Hilton.

His four paintings for Ellesse, each representing a different season in Italy, are classic expressions of the McGinnis technique. 'Rome, the City of Dreams' and 'Cortina's Winter Playground', representing autumn and winter, are reproduced here. Their companion pieces, 'The Portofino Tennis Club' and 'The Amalfi Coast', featured in the previous edition.



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