

**CORRIERE DELLA SERA  
BEAUTY**

*THE DESIGNER*

*Brunello Cucinelli describes how the fragrance line produced together with EuroItalia came into being: “It took three years to perfect the first ones.” And he reveals the pleasure he feels when his grandchildren say to him: “You smell like grandad.”*

**“Fragrance conveys energy and even fosters creativity”**

by Paola Pollo

To ask Brunello Cucinelli to speak about the fragrances of his life is rather like giving the cue for a concert of emotions and sensations, memories and impressions. And it begins with some thoughts that came into being, quite by chance, only a few days before this interview:

“I was in the car in Milan, at a junction, when I saw an elderly lady with her walking stick lean over a laurel hedge and smell its leaves. Laurel, as we know, has no scent — but perhaps for her it did. Or King Charles, who on the cover of his book chooses a picture of himself smelling a rose. Two images that say a great deal about what the sense of smell conveys.”

**And what does fragrance represent for you?**

“For centuries, fragrance has been linked to spirituality and religion. It is no coincidence that it was priests who prepared it. Yet fragrance is also pleasure, well-being, memory. And then there is something deeper still: fragrance is quality of life. As Horace wrote, beauty should always be accompanied by utility: I believe fragrance shares this nature, because beyond giving pleasure it makes us feel well.”

**Fragrance, then, as an emotional experience?**

“Yes. I have always been fascinated, for instance, by the oriental fragrances described in the *Arabian Nights*: roses, spices, essences... A whole universe constructed upon the seduction of the senses and of the imagination. Fragrance accompanies our way of inhabiting the world.”

**And it accompanies memories as well.**

“Absolutely. Fragrance conveys energy; it even fosters creativity. It is an invisible yet extraordinarily powerful presence.”

**If you were to close your eyes and think of the fragrances of your childhood, which come to mind immediately?**

“The smell of the stable when I was a child: a simple yet well-kept place, warm, protective on winter evenings. Then freshly cut grass, before it becomes hay. Or the morning after rain,

especially in spring: nature releases marvellous scents. And again, barley coffee with warm milk. These are memories that remain within you forever. The faintest trace of them in the air will carry you straight back to where you once were. As when I enter a church and smell incense, and I see myself again as a child, an altar boy: now as then, something almost hypnotic. I love being surrounded by fragrances, in the environments where I live and work. I believe that an orderly, harmonious place that smells fresh changes the way one feels. The moment when you open the windows is always magical: out with the stale air, in with the new.”

### **Places, objects, and people.**

“I could go on forever: the smell of burning wood in villages when it is cold, or that of freshly baked bread. These are scents that speak of home, of warmth, of life. This applies to a place, but also to a person. I believe no one ever forgets the scent of their mother or father. The sense of smell is pure memory, and it has such universal value: it can evoke emotions, images, states of mind without the need for words. For instance, I am the happiest man in the world when my grandchildren embrace me and say, ‘you smell like grandad’. And when they are asleep, I lean in and smell them, because they have that unmistakable scent of children which every parent recognises and carries within themselves for a lifetime.”

### **The names of your fragrances produced by EuroItalia are highly evocative: *Silenzio, Segreto, Ricordo*.**

“Because we would like each name to convey an idea of harmony, of humanity, of well-being. Think of the ‘fragrance of silence’: merely pronouncing it already stirs something. One need not go to a distant forest to find silence; sometimes it is enough to grant oneself a moment of listening.”

### **The choice of a fragrance says a great deal about a person, like a garment.**

“Finding an authentic fragrance is extraordinarily difficult: it took three years to perfect our first ones. Because a fragrance must become part of one’s identity. Perhaps for this reason, when one finds the right one, it ends up becoming almost a personal signature.”

### **Fragrance, then, as an expression of identity?**

“In the end, everything we do ought to represent our identity. It’s not about pleasing everyone, but about being recognizable. Identity is a form of coherence, and also of respect towards oneself. To speak of fragrance is to speak of life, of memories, of the people we have loved. And perhaps, ultimately, of our soul.”

*Images, from left: Brunello Cucinelli and Giovanni Sgariboldi, CEO of EuroItalia, which produces Brunello Cucinelli fragrances. Segreto, Silenzio, and Ricordo, the three new fragrances in the Incanti Poetici collection.*

**“I am fascinated by oriental notes: roses, spices, essences... a universe constructed upon the seduction of the senses and of the imagination”.**