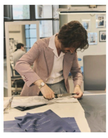


***M & E How can we preserve our humanity?***

M.C. I would like to leave all of us with one thought. Let's rediscover human relationships—*our* relationships with our partners, our families, and our children. Let's not exert too much influence on our children. They need to learn to find their own path. Let them live naturally, let them simply do nothing from time to time. Let them look up at the sky. Emperor Hadrian once said, "Books have shown me the way to life." As I grow older, I, too, came to understand through books the profound role they play in shaping our lives.

***M & E We live in a time when technology is increasingly encroaching on our lives...***

M.C. Technology is undoubtedly a gift of creation. But if we do not use it wisely, them is a danger that it will take away from us precisely that which creation has given us: our soul.

Artificial intelligence will be a part of our future. I see it as an assistant, a tool. We shouldn't be afraid of it. It's much more important to allay our children's fears and give them hope instead. That will remain our greatest responsibility.

***M & E Throughout your company, you are sculptures and portraits of great poets, thinkers, and philosophers. Do you enjoy surrounding yourself with great ideas?***

M.C. I've been shaped by great thinkers, including wonderful German Philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer. They've taught us that human beings must continually rediscover themselves. I often say that poets are the greatest people on Earth. They possess the wonderful gift of helping us understand human beings and their souls. They remind us that what truly matters does not lie in the noise of the world, but rather in humanity's ability to reflect on itself.

I believe we are living in a magical moment in human history, a magical moment for Europe. That is precisely why we need a new world order. But it will not arise solely through technology or economic progress. It begins where people rediscover their relationships, where they once again place culture, thought, and humanity at the center of their lives.

***M & E What a beautiful transition to Solomeo. What role does this place play in your life?***

M.C. I grew up in a small village very close to Solomeo. When I met my wife, with whom I have now shared 57 years of my life, I also fell in love with Solomeo. It became the home of my soul. I believe everyone needs a place like that. Most often, it's the place you'd like to return to one day, the place where you'd like to be buried.

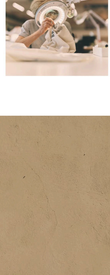
I wanted to restore this village, which was very run down at the time, and leave it to the people who will come after us. I do not see myself as the owner, but rather as a small guardian *pro tempore*. We should not seek to possess things. We're only allowed to preserve them for a certain time and have a responsibility to pass them on to the next generation in an even more beautiful state. Olive oil, wheat, and wine have been produced here for more than 600 years. Today, Solomeo also produces cashmere. So, the history of this place hasn't been interrupted, just continued.

I have always believed in village life. As early as 1765, Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote that life in the cities had become more difficult and that we must return to the villages to rethink and reshape humanity. I love this idea. Because I, too, believe that we must rediscover ourselves. In the village, there is less spiritual poverty, less economic poverty, and above all, less loneliness. There is always someone willing to listen to you. Perhaps you have to be born in the countryside to truly understand this feeling.

We must learn to make good use of our living space and shape it according to our needs. That is exactly what I wanted to achieve in Solomeo. That's why we first restored the village and then built a theater. For me, a theater represents a secular temple of art, a monument to human dignity. We built a wine cellar as a tribute to the Earth. Xenophanes said, "Everything comes from the Earth." That thought has stayed with me to this day.

"Community has always been one of my greatest values. I wanted to find it not only in the company but also in my personal life."

BRUNELLO CUCINELLI



# THE DIGNITY OF BEAUTY

Born into an Italian farming family and rising to international prominence through cashmere, *Brunello Cucinelli is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary figures in the luxury industry.* In Solomeo, the restored medieval village in the heart of Umbria where he settled and where *Maison E* had the privilege of visiting him, cashmere, craftsmanship, and philosophy are woven together into a rare and enduring vision of beauty. Cucinelli's story can be told through fine materials and timeless fashion, but at its core, however, it is about something far greater: the responsibility we have as human beings to leave the world more beautiful than we found it.

"I intoxicate myself with the light of the stars." That is one of those phrases that slips casually from Brunello Cucinelli's lips. For the Italian Philanthropist and Entrepreneur behind the luxury brand that bears his name, such statements are not metaphors, but part of his outlook on life. As I speak with him, I quickly realize that this conversation is unlikely to revolve around cashmere. Mister Cucinelli would much rather talk about the Earth, the stars, and human dignity.

That's perfectly fine—perhaps even better.

Time and again during our conversation, he returns to his roots, to his parents, to the farms of his childhood, and to Solomeo, that medieval village in Umbria where he sees himself as the *piccolo custode pro tempore*, the "temporary guardian." He quotes the Philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as Hadrian, the great emperor of the early Roman Empire; the ancient Greek thinker Xenophanes; and St. Francis. They all seem to have a natural place at the table. Cucinelli's thoughts revolve around beauty and community, craftsmanship, culture, and spirituality as well as economic success and human moral dignity. The cashmere that made him famous is merely the beginning of a much larger story.

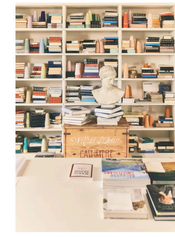


***MAISON E Mr. Cucinelli, when you look back today on the long form Cistel Zignoni, which experiences from your childhood have most strongly shaped your understanding of work, beauty, and humanity?***

BRUNELLO CUCINELLI I come from a farming family, so I witnessed the hardships my father and brothers faced. I saw how they were humiliated and insulted at work. I was 15 or 16 years old at the time, and I told myself that I didn't know what I would end up doing in life. But I wanted to dedicate my life to the moral and economic dignity of human beings.

That thought has never left me. Until I was 15, we lived without electricity or running water. We fetched water from the well and collected rainwater; nothing was wasted. We went to sleep when the sun set and got up when it rose again. It was a beautiful relationship with creation. That is why I love the Earth so much. That life taught me to understand its value. And perhaps it also taught me to look up at the sky again and again. I often say that I am intoxicated by the light of the stars. Some might think I'm crazy. Yet creation gives us this extraordinarily bright light. When we look up at the sky, we can find inspiration.

My family consisted of 13 people, all of whom held strong ideals. My father, in particular, had a profound influence on me. He died two years ago at the age of 100. He always used to tell me, "You must be a good person. God will protect you. But please don't harm anyone." Every night, before I go to sleep, I talk to my father and my mother. I tell them, "Please watch over me and make sure I don't harm humanity." That is probably the most important thought of my life.



BRUNELLO CUCINELLI SURROUNDS HIMSELF WITH THE GREATEST MINDS IN HISTORY.

LEFT
SOLOMEO: THE MEDIEVAL VILLAGE NESTLED IN THE HEART OF UMBRIA, IS THE CORNERSTONE OF BRUNELLO CUCINELLI'S VISION.

***M & E These thoughts beautifully encapsulate the concept of humanistic capitalism, a philosophy that has been deeply shaped by you. Where do the roots of this philosophy lie?***

M.C. In my company, I've always tried to achieve healthy growth. Because everything needs balance. There's environmental sustainability, but there's also economic, moral, and spiritual sustainability. When I work with someone and treat them badly, their soul suffers.

Today, we have the opportunity to reconcile economic success with human dignity once again. That is precisely where I see the meaning of humanistic capitalism.

BRUNELLO CUCINELLI'S PHILOSOPHY IS ROOTED IN THE BALANCE BETWEEN ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND HUMAN DIGNITY.



***M & E Was Solomeo part of your vision from the very beginning, or did the village grow alongside your brand?***

M.C. Fit my the brand came first. But the idea of building a business in a village arose from the desire to live there and provide people with better working conditions.

Our first workshops were located in a 16th century building. Amid the frescoes, stone arches, and old wooden beams, there was a wonderful atmosphere. It wasn't an ordinary workplace. The history of that place was palpable everywhere. We worked there until our company had grown to about 300 people.

IN SOLOMEO, PEOPLE WORK, LIVE, AND CULTIVATE A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

***M & E And today?***

M.C. Today, Solomeo is home to schools and training centers for crafts, tailoring, and other traditional professions. Our factory is located on the outskirts of the village. It, too, tells a story. It is not a newly built facility, but a building from the 1960s and 1970s that once belonged to a well-known German company. We consciously decided against constructing a new building. Instead, we restored what already existed, because land is precious. Why should we consume new land when we can give new life to what is already there?

About 3,500 people work with us. Solomeo has remained a vibrant village with theater, music, dance, the church, and places where people gather. Families spend their evenings together, and children play in the piazza. The village has a rhythm all its own.

Community has always been one of my greatest values. I wanted to find it not only in the company but also in my personal life. That's why my family still lives in Solomeo. In the evening, we get together for coffee; sometimes we play cards, tell stories, and laugh together. I really cherish these moments. They remind me every day that a company shouldn't just be a place of work, but always a place of life as well.

THEATER, MUSIC, DANCE, THE CHURCH, AND SHARED SPACES MAKE SOLOMEO A LIVING VILLAGE FULL OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY.

LEFT
IN A PLACE DEVOTED TO HUMAN DIGNITY, THE PRESENCE OF IMMANUEL KANT'S PHILOSOPHY FEELS ESSENTIAL.

***M & E You describe luxury as a balance of beauty, morality, and humanity. Is true luxury today perhaps less about possession and more about preservation?***

M.C. I believe that luxury is something that has been exceptionally well made—a high-quality product that you can one day pass on and that shouldn't be too widely available, because exclusivity continues to hold value. That's exactly what I wanted to create from the very beginning. I do not wish to judge whether our collections are aesthetically beautiful. But I can say that every day we strive for the highest quality, exceptional craftmanship, and meticulous workmanship.

For me, however, there is something even more important involved. I want to create a product that has been made with as little harm to humanity as possible, a product crafted by people who receive a fair wage, whose dignity is respected, and that is also in harmony with creation.

May I share something very personal with you? I love St. Francis. Eight hundred years ago, this extraordinary man, who spoke with the sun, the Earth, the animals, and all of creation, passed away. For me, St. Francis was perhaps the first person to establish a social contract with creation itself. Today, we face the task of renewing this covenant. That is why I believe we are heading toward a wonderful century, a century in which we can rediscover the balance among morality, the economy, and humanity. For me, that is where the true future of luxury lies. ●

*In Solomeo, Maison E met with Brunello Cucinelli to discuss the values that underpin his work—from craftsmanship and culture to a deep respect for human dignity.*

**WATCH THE FILM**
*maison-e.com*