Brunello Cucinelli on backing Prince Charles’ Sustainable Markets Initiative

By Godfrey Deeny - 13 May 2022

The latest fashion majordomo to lend his support to Prince Charles’ Sustainable Markets Initiative is Brunello Cucinelli, the Italian designer and entrepreneurial patron.
This Monday in Buckingham Palace, Prince Charles hosted a dinner for the Sustainable Markets Initiative, conceived and chaired by the Prince of Wales. Its goal: to build a coordinated global effort to enable the private sector to accelerate the transition to a sustainable future.

A key element is a series of Task Forces dedicated to a specific sectors: from banking to energy transition to fashion, the latter chaired by Federico Marchetti, board member of Giorgio Armani and former CEO of YNAP. Other members of the Fashion Task Force include Burberry, Chloé, Eon, Gabriela Hearst, Giorgio Armani, Johnstons of Elgin, Moda Operandi, Mulberry, Selfridges, Stella McCartney, The Dubai Mall, Vestiaire Collective and Zalando.

In the latest development, Cucinelli is joining the Fashion Task Force whose aims are to support regenerative farming, and economically support local textile production in a project known as the Himalayan Regenerative Living Lab. The British royal launched the Sustainable Markets Initiative at the World Economic Forum 2020 in Davos – to guide and accelerate the world’s transition towards a sustainable future by involving and challenging the public, private and sectors to generate economic value in harmony with social and environmental sustainability.

Something of philanthropist entrepreneur, Cucinelli has developed a unique luxury business model in building a brand with a current market capitalization of $3.7 billion. Brunello has headquartered his company in Solomeo, a forgotten medieval village in Umbria he has turned into a thriving fashion community; and issued generous quantities of shares to long-term employees. Solomeo, whose small streets are dotted with quotations by learned philosophers and writers, now also acts as a rural think tank where captains of industry and Silicon Valley billionaires gather to discuss the future.

So, we caught up with Cucinelli in a WhatsApp from Solomeo to hear his thinking on the Sustainable Markets Initiative; Prince Charles; the royal’s appreciation of Italy and why the Himalayas resemble Italy.
FashionNetwork: Why are you supporting the sustainable markets Initiative?
Brunello Cucinelli: I like the concept a lot; and I really admire His Majesty personally. You know, Prince Charles started speaking of ecology and the circular economy about 40 or 50 years ago. He was ahead of his time, a savant and a very wise man. He was the one who created this task force.

FNW: How was it to meet Prince Charles?
BC: We first spoke last year at the G20 summit in Rome. He kindly invited us to the Villa Wolkonsky, the British Embassy in Rome. They prepared a table of assortments and a lot of teas. And I said to him, ‘At this time of day, wouldn’t you prefer to eat some pasta alla pomodoro (tomato pasta)?’ And he did!

I’ll tell you another thing that impressed me. When I was back in Solomeo, we had a video call together. And suddenly in the background the last bells of the day sounded, what we call the Ave Maria, from our campanile. And the prince said, ‘My dear friend, that is the Italy that I love.’ He really is a lover of Italian culture and very knowledgeable about our history.

He has asked to come to Solomeo, because he loves the idea of people coming back to work in little villages. And this is one reason I find this project very great, as it resembles what we have been trying to do in Solomeo, except in little villages in the Himalayas. It really is a great idea and concept, to regenerate and repair the land and to aid the animals.

FNW: How will the Fashion Task Force work?
BC: Well, they have created a Himalayan Regenerative Living Lab project and set up two companies Reforest Action and the Circular Bioeconomy Alliance led by scientist Marc Palahi. It will last two years and finish at the end of 2023. Which we will help finance and support. I also believe strongly in the concept of a passport della moda. We will be working in these petite villages to help better conditions for both farmers and livestock. We will be planting trees and aiding farmers in the Himalayas to produce cotton, silk and cashmere holistically. I am hoping to go in September and suspect I shall find a similar culture to here.

FNW: Has Prince Charles started wearing Cucinelli?
BC: Not yet, but maybe one day. I think that if he ever visits, he can find plenty to wear! He is really very refined and chic and amiable. I love him and his ideas and his princely manner.

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