Il caso
Brunello Cucinelli realizzerà tre parchi vicino alborgo umbro diSolomeo

“Il mio progetto per la bellezza”
L’ultima sfida del re del cachemire

NATALA ASPESI

L’oracolo chiamato ‘un progetto per la bellezza’ esibisce le parole di Papa Francesco, alludendo al compito creatore. Bruno Cucinelli parla della seconda parte di questo progetto, già avviato e affiancato alla Fondazione Bruno e Federica Cucinelli. «È una iniziativa della famiglia, non ha nulla a che fare con l’azienda» ci dice a dirlo, e la restituzione alla natura e al marmoreo paesaggio colline umbri, dipinti di Betterrì di terreno, nella valle che contiene gli alberi ponti del borgo rurale di Solomeo: «Dalla piana in prossimità dei siti, usato come deposito per le esercitazioni, frutto della cultura del tempo, quando si veniva fuori dalla povertà e certo si pensava alla natura. Ho comprato ad uno ad uno, e li ho sistemati in una colletta nei terreni della famiglia, tanti tanti, e come risultato si ha oggi questo paesaggio.»

ra come un museo del vino, un luogo dove venivano a realizzare il vino, ma quello di renderlo più unico e vivace». Ad accogliere la fuga di una parete piena di spigole di Betterrì, il terreno, nella valle che contiene gli alberi ponti del borgo rurale di Solomeo: «Dalla piana in prossimità dei siti, usato come deposito per le esercitazioni, frutto della cultura del tempo, quando si veniva fuori dalla povertà e certo si pensava alla natura. Ho comprato ad uno ad uno, e li ho sistemati in una colletta nei terreni della famiglia, tanti tanti, e come risultato si ha oggi questo paesaggio.»

le stesse parol e che viene chiamato dal Wall Street Jour-

cal “Il re del cachemire”, dal Times “Il principe del cachemire”, dal Daily Telegraph “Cittadino cachemire”. Per pochi minuti le occupano l’architetto Massimo De Vice Fallani e Cucinelli che lo presen-

ta come il mio ispiratore, un architetto, un filosofo, che mi svegliava alla luce del matto per leggermi una poesia, che leggeva a trent’anni lavorando con lui. Alcuni anni più tardi, il focus è su una noveltà, una volta di lezione più umana di lei».

La sfida è di farle domande, una platea piena di spigole di Betterrì, il terreno, nella valle che contiene gli alberi ponti del borgo rurale di Solomeo: «Dalla piana in prossimità dei siti, usato come deposito per le esercitazioni, frutto della cultura del tempo, quando si veniva fuori dalla povertà e certo si pensava alla natura. Ho comprato ad uno ad uno, e li ho sistemati in una colletta nei terreni della famiglia, tanti tanti, e come risultato si ha oggi questo paesaggio.»

LE STROVE AERE

In alto, lo stadio finale della Sera di Solomeo. Al centro, Brunello Cucinelli e al borgo restaurato dal re del cachemire
The case

Brunello Cucinelli to create three parks near the Umbrian village of Solomeo

“My project for beauty”: the latest challenge of the king of cashmere

He calls it a “project for beauty” and immediately quotes pope Francesco, “be custodians of creation”. Brunello Cucinelli talks about the second part of this project, already launched and assigned to Fondazione Brunello e Federica Cucinelli (“it’s a family initiative, it has nothing to do with the company!” he points out). It’s the restitution to nature and the marvellous landscape of the Umbrian hills of over 80 hectares of land in the valley stretching from the foot of the mediaeval village of Solomeo: “there was a small cluster of six industrial sheds, used for storage and services, fruit of the culture of those days, when people were just emerging from poverty and certainly weren’t thinking about the landscape. I bought them one by one and they rebuilt them in the industrial zone not far from here. They were demolished and the land was divided into three zones, three parks: the Industry Park, around our factory, which will become a country garden full of colours and fragrances as it was in our grandparents’ days. It was one of my teachers, the Emperor Hadrian, who persuaded me I too should become “responsible for the beauties of the world””. Next to that will be the Lay Oratory Park and the Agricultural Park. “The first will be for kids from 6 to 12, and amidst the fields and woods there will be a football pitch and gym. I’ve dedicated it to don Alberto, a Salesian who was for years the parish priest at Solomeo, a football fan and a good guide for me too.” Then there will be 70 hectares for market gardens, olive groves, orchards, and fields of wheat, maize and sunflower. “The produce will serve our company canteens and families.”

On the stage of the Strehler Theatre, two rustic seats in old country church style (instead of the usual theatre seats) on the instructions of the man dubbed the “king of cashmere” by the Wall Street Journal, the “prince of cashmere” by The New York Times and “Citizen Cashmere” by the Daily Telegraph. For a few moments they’re occupied by the architect Massimo De Vico Fallani and Cucinelli, who introduces him as “my inspirer, my Aristotle, landscape designer, philosopher, who wakes me at 5 in the morning to read me a poem and who has been working with me for 30 years to help me realize my dream, that of making work more noble”.

Listening to them and asking questions are an audience of journalists, industrialists, financial analysts (Cucinelli listed in 2012, has 1,300 employees and posted sales of 322 million in 2013, up 15.5% on the previous year), Umbrian friends, and mayors Andrea Romizi (Perugia), Christian Belli (Corciano) and Giacomo Chiodini (Maggio), “all in their 30s,” says Cucinelli.

Then, treading the stage like a seasoned actor, he shows us some blow-ups of his Solomeo, which he has restored over the last 30 years, and where he met his beautiful wife Federica when she was 16 and he was 17, and of the “For Beauty” project, how the valley is and will be in a year’s time. They immediately pester him with questions about politics but he brushes them aside: “I love politics but I’m not a politician, I’m an industrialist and I believe in a decent capitalism. But I don’t think people should be jealous of what they possess or of their profits: my idea is “profit and gift”, I love the word gift. Our products aren’t expensive but costly, because they cost in terms of material
and craftsmanship. So we can pay our employees more than others and not produce anything outside Italy”.

Cucinelli doesn’t see himself as an edifier but as a restorer-gardener. In the village of Solomeo, where he lives with his family, his wife (they’ve been together 43 years) and two daughters Camilla and Carolina, who work in the style office, there’s only one new building, and it’s a theatre. And even the new and indispensable factory in the valley, where all the production is concentrated, wasn’t built but is a rebuilding of an abandoned one.

Born of country stock, Brunello led a horse drawn plough as a boy, discovered electricity in 1960, gained a diploma in surveying but failed to finish his engineering studies: his encounter, at 17, with a book by Kant proved fatal, making him study classics, antique texts that are still his guides. In 2010 he was granted an honorary degree in “philosophy and ethics of relations” by Università degli Studi in Perugia.

With the company, not the Fondazione, he restored the magnificent Benedictine convent in Norcia and is about to give back to Perugia its Etruscan Arch, now restored.

The entrepreneur’s idea is to restore the genuine landscape in place of the industrial sheds.

“We must take a step backwards, return to the simplicity of life, to ethics. I am certain we are at the start of a new age of wellbeing.” Just when everything’s looking so black? “But the past was worse; I think of my father, who’s now over 90, who used to come home and cry after being humiliated. Work is entitled to the utmost dignity, economic and moral, to repay all the fatigue and monotony. At Solomeo we drew inspiration from William Morris and John Ruskin and founded a school of arts and crafts: tailoring, knitting, cutting and repairing, agriculture, gardening and stonework. The students have a small monthly subsidy of 700 euros. At the end of the course they immediately find work.”

The audience look moved but also rather uneasy. The idea of following Cucinelli’s example is too daunting it seems, given his enthusiasm for Marcus Aurelius, Heraclitus, Saint Paul and all the other Cucinellian inspirers.

NATALIA ASPESI

THE NEW AREAS
Top: the final state of the Parchi della Custodia area around the village of Solomeo in Umbria.
Middle: Brunello Cucinelli.
Above and below: the village restored by the king of cashmere.