

Corriere della Sera, 23 June 2021 - Planet edition, pages 28-29.

What needs to change is not only the clothes we wear, but also awareness. To do this, we need to “study” the new parameters. From Lorenzo Bertelli’s challenge with Prada and Unesco’s *Sea Beyond* project and those of the Kering Group, to Renzo Rosso’s commitment as boss of OtB and his involvement in Confindustria

Fashion designers, managers and employees: all back to the classroom to change the rules

by **Gianluca Bauzano**

Awareness, continuous sharing and close dialogue. Fashion as “reflected” in the field of eco-sustainability is becoming increasingly structured. Training and education represent its further and current evolution. The enforced pauses imposed by the pandemic lockdowns have also had **the positive aspect in the sector’s companies and groups of facilitating the acceleration of that educational training process** – at every level – already hypothesised/programmed before the pandemic.

Sustainable fashion must mean products and awareness geared to the environment and social issues, but also a commitment to training people capable of managing a rapidly changing system. “Indifference has always been and remains the worst enemy. **It has never been emphasised enough how much the fashion system represents the second-largest export item in the country.** The turnover it produces is fundamental to our GDP. However, fashion is often accused of being a principal source of pollution. But this is not the case. A more in-depth analysis of the food and beverage sector would show the opposite. For this reason, it is essential to make a commitment to raising awareness and educating as many people as possible.” So with **extreme determination declares Lorenzo Bertelli**, Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli’s son, who will be a member of the family group’s board of directors from May 2021, where he is also the head of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).

Lorenzo Bertelli and the Prada Group’s focus on “green” training, but also on transparency in the production of its collections, has always been present. On the occasion of World Ocean Day on 8 June, he announced the plans for the second edition of *Sea Beyond*, the educational programme designed with Unesco and dedicated to the protection of the oceans and sustainability, born in 2019 during the launch of the first Prada Re-Nylon capsule: part of the proceeds from this support it. “Starting from the principle of outdoor education, we will build the Lagoon Kindergarten in Venice and set up an educational programme for secondary schools involving a number of new countries compared to the first edition,” Bertelli explains. “But ***Sea Beyond* also places great emphasis on in-house training. Starting with all our 13,000 employees. Both our managers and we ourselves are involved**”: last April, Lorenzo and Patrizio Bertelli with Miuccia Prada took part in seminars on Sustainability & Inclusivity in order to learn more first-hand about each topic.

“Constant commitment is beginning to pay dividends. A recent discussion I had with students at the Bocconi University in Milan confirmed that constantly communicating these issues and making them an integral part of education changes sensitivities and perceptions”. A project like Re-Nylon has been

experienced by the students as a virtuous path: garments made from recycled materials are appreciated. “By the end of 2021 Prada Group’s production will be almost entirely made of Re-Nylon”. Attention is also being paid to creativity linked to upcycling: recent events include the women’s denim Upcycled line by Miu Miu, launched in London and Shanghai and created with Levi’s using vintage garments, original pieces from the 1980s and 1990s.

A network of companies

Denim & upcycling: a pivotal pairing in the world of Renzo Rosso, founder of Diesel and creator of Otb, the Only The Brave fashion holding company. “I will never tire of repeating it: the direct relationship with nature and the environment is inseparable in my DNA as a man, and this has been passed down into my work as a businessman,” says Renzo Rosso. “As soon as I could, I bought a farm that is now 100% organic. And it’s been years since Diesel and our entire Group have been constantly working towards environmental and social sustainability. At my side is my son Andrea, who works as a Sustainability Ambassador to look after Diesel and upcycling projects”. In 2014 Andrea Rosso created the MYAR line, vintage military garments that have been regenerated and recreated.

The Otb chairman continues: “We have also set up a team including a legal department, in order to monitor our every move and project fully. **And in collaboration with the SDA Bocconi University we have created a series of training courses for Diesel management so that they can then pass on the key messages to all employees”.** In June 2021, as part of its multi-year sustainability project called For Responsible Living established last year with Eco Age, Diesel is launching the denim Diesel Library line with low environmental impact fabrics and treatments. “All the Group’s brands, from Marni to Maison Margiela, are constantly committed to the development of sustainable projects”. Equally strong is Rosso’s personal commitment in Confindustria, resulting from his nomination as delegate for Excellence, Beauty and Taste of Italian Brands by the association’s president, Carlo Bonomi. “I am working to include eco-sustainability. Team commitment is fundamental. We’re developing this area together in the National Chamber for Italian Fashion: for instance, we’ve already had a meeting in which each brand or group has created a dialogue between their respective sustainability managers. The foundations have been laid.

The chair in Paris

[There is thus a] dialogue between such symbols of ‘Made in Italy’ such as Prada, Diesel and also the Camera Nazionale Moda Italiana. They are all partners in the Fashion Pact, launched in 2019 on the initiative of François-Henry Pinault, president and CEO of the Kering Group. A few weeks ago Gucci, one of the French group’s flagship brands, published its first Gucci Equilibrium Impact Report: **“We have exceeded our goal of reducing our total environmental footprint four years ahead of schedule (set for 2025, ed.). This highlights our commitment to generating transformative change,” explains Marco Bizzarri, Gucci’s president and CEO.** The figures include a 44% reduction in total environmental impact and a 47% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, as well as arriving at 57.4% of global management being female. **And it is a woman, Marie-Claire Daveu, chief sustainability officer of Kering and head of international institutional affairs, who highlights the change under way. “Luxury sets the trends. We have a responsibility to set an example and take concrete action. Ours must be an aware journey towards sustainability”.**

One of the actions undertaken is the Circularity Ambition document presented in May 2021 by Kering: “To look at strategies relating to climate and biodiversity, moving away from the model of ‘take-produce-discard’”. Daveu talks about a journey that must “be established over a long period of time” in order to be able to assess the changes. For Kering too, this is linked to a process of education and awareness. **“We have set up many partnerships with schools all over the world and even**

created a chair of Sustainability with the Institut Français de la Mode,” says Daveu. “For us, the training of our resources is also crucial. Awareness and sensitivity to a sustainable strategy is present at all levels. From our chairman, François-Henri Pinault, to our employees: we have developed online training courses, able to adapt the content to each professional profile.” Sustainability is no longer just an expression or a way of being but an essential, inescapable reality. Revealing its complexity has given rise to a virtuous circle of equally virtuous change.

From the large photo below, clockwise: model Lila Moss in an Upcycled by Miu Miu look; a Prada Re-Nylon garment; “an upcycled Maison Margiela Recida model by John Galliano; a campaign shot for the Gucci Off The Grid capsule made with organic recycled materials.