



THE PROTAGONIST

Lorenzo Bertelli directs the Prada Group's green transformation. "Big names are finally talking about sustainability."

by FIAMMETTA CUPELLARO

"How do you make environmental and social sustainability the cultural value of a company? You need to act on multiple fronts. Our levers are both the Re-Nylon collection and the Sea Beyond educational program, created with UNESCO, which aims to teach children and young people what it means to protect the oceans." Lorenzo Bertelli, the 34-year-old eldest son of Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli, is the face of the Prada Group's green transformation.

He joined the company in 2017, after receiving a degree in philosophy and setting aside the helmet and racing suit that marked his passion for rally driving. He's now a member of the board of directors and holds the dual office of head of marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Everything started with a collection created with Prada Re-Nylon regenerated nylon (the material also comes from fishing lines gathered from the sea), which financed both the projects on protecting the ocean presented by 300 young people from around the world, and l'Asilo della Laguna (Kindergarten of the Lagoon) in Venice, carried out with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the universities of Padua and Venice. Starting in the next school year, children aged 3 to 6 will be able to leave the classroom and get to know their local area, the lagoon.

They'll be able to go out on a boat with their teachers to meet the people who live and work on the islands. A committee of teachers and experts from UNESCO are working on the program. Bertelli explains: "We're focusing on educating children, including very young ones, because good habits have to start with the future generations."

What drove Prada to propose an educational program for children?

"Sea Beyond was created after the launch of the first Prada ReNylon capsule collection in 2019, when we decided to dedicate a portion of our revenues from the collection to a global educational initiative. Even though there were unfortunately various difficulties and delays due to covid, I must say that it was compelling to see projects by young people coming in from 13 different countries. For this reason, we decided to continue our journey with UNESCO, and we chose Venice, a city that symbolizes the dangers of climate change."

To what extent are your green choices perceived as a commitment by consumers?

"Younger generations are always more sensitive to these issues, but in every case, there are no alternatives: it's right that we seek to integrate any project with



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sustainability. And this regards more than just fashion.”

So it's no longer a utopian idea to talk about sustainability in the fashion system?

“This is the direction, and it's the same for everyone. It's no coincidence that a conversation has begun between all members of the National Chamber of Italian Fashion. The teams of the various brands meet here to find solutions, and the Fashion Chamber is doing good work. This is also happening between members of the Fashion Pact, which includes the Prada Group and other brands, where we've committed to reaching zero greenhouse gas emissions, reducing single use plastic, and minimizing pollution from microfibers. But change is also happening abroad. Since 2019, when Prada and UNESCO launched the educational program for young people, a dialogue has opened with international brands, and we hope that other entrepreneurs decide to join us: we're not trying to keep our project to ourselves. It would be nice to be able to duplicate the Asilo della Laguna model in other cities. To help children get to know the environment outside the school with their teachers.”

Does this new green mindset also involve the Group's employees?

“Before getting to the consumer, I think we need to talk to our own employees. So we've planned to educate over 13,000 Prada Group employees all over the world.”

A new Prada

“It's still the same. I only pressed for communication, but the brand's values are the same, like the people. For example, Re-Nylon is a project I

really wanted, but the company had been working on it for years, it just needed to be made concrete. What's important is having set out in a certain direction. There's still a lot to do, but it's fundamental for these things to be taught to younger generations. It won't pay off in the short term, but in the long run it will, so we have to start with education. We need to work today for tomorrow. And that's not just words.”

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Where and when

The head of Corporate Social Responsibility for the Prada Group will take part in the *Green&Blue* Festival on June 6 at 12 pm in the Sala Grande, on the subject of "New Fashion"