

INTERVIEW

SOCIAL VALUE, PHILOSOPHY, RALLY

FOR LORENZO BERTELLI

GREEN FASHION IS NOT A UTOPIA

"WITH PRADA WE ARE DOING IT"

BY GIAN LUCA BAUZANO

Only once a year. When Lorenzo Bertelli gets back behind the wheel of his amazing rally cars for an adrenaline-fuelled race. "A concession I grant myself," he reveals. And the question often recurs as to whether he has any regrets about racing cars. The answer is rounded off with: "Regrets? None. What I'm doing absorbs me completely. As well as giving me great satisfaction. Because what I am doing is not only an activity concerning the development of our group, but also has a social value". Bertelli officially abandoned racing at the end of 2016 to join the Prada group, the family business, the following year, becoming the link in a generational transition. He is now involved in a transformation of which sustainability is an integral part. After training alongside his parents, Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli ("it was not easy but very constructive"), he took on the role of Head of Corporate Social Responsibility in 2020, giving an accelerated pace to the group's sustainable metamorphosis.

A close dialogue between different realities. "We go beyond the relationship with the end consumer, we want to carry a social message. An awareness in people of a culture of change, thanks to education and knowledge, allows them to acquire social and environmental responsibility. Elements that favour transition."

This transformation process will reach a milestone in 2023: the tenth anniversary of the publication of the Prada Group's first sustainability report in 2013. The latest one, instead, with data from 2022, was made public in March 2023 and presented last week with an international event held in Valdarno, where some of the group's main production areas are located: those of Valvigna and Levanella. True garden-factories where architectural structures are integrated in osmosis with the environment and nature. "Ours is a broad vision. We feel a responsibility to be drivers of change. We do this by investing in people. in particular in young people and their education. Our ESG (environmental, social and governance) strategy is deliberately based on three pillars and one of them is what we call *people*. Sustainability means valuing our people, preserving our skills, the craftsmanship know-how of our industry". Training within the group has been entrusted to the Prada Group Academy since 2000, and in particular to the School di Mestiere (Trade School), where 200 of the 400 new hires that will take place by the end of 2023 will be trained, professional figures chosen to enrich the in-house manufacturing skills.

Human resources and training are indispensable. The impact on the planet and environment equally so.

"In 2022, we created a sustainability committee. Its place has been fundamental in the development of our strategies. Our commitment to environmental issues is just as strong. As also are the initiatives to reduce our emissions: last year we focused on Scope 1 and 2 reductions, now we will continue by focusing on Scope 3 reductions."

A hot topic today.

"Our results in this respect are excellent: with regard to Scope 1 and 2 emissions, we have already achieved and surpassed the target three years ahead of schedule we as a group had set ourselves for 2026: the goal was to reduce our emissions by 29.4 per cent compared to 2019, today we are already at least 34 per cent. In the coming years we would like to keep this trend constant."

Practical applications?

"We have moved on several fronts: we have converted seven heating systems, now powered by electricity, and 54 per cent of the company car fleet is now green; the provisioning of 66 per cent of the global electricity used comes from certified renewable sources; we have also made progress with LEED certification (which classifies and certifies the eco-sustainability of buildings) and today our certified shops total 181, twice as many as in 2019."

Let's move on to theory, to business strategy. A philosophical approach in your case: studies with Massimo Cacciari and a degree in philosophy.

"Actually I have always taken a pragmatic approach to solving problems. My studies? I see them as valuable training for learning to read the same situation from several perspectives and trying to choose the best solution. If you make a mistake, never give yourself an alibi. You start over, you improve. A cruel law I learned from sport."

Let's be pragmatic then: sustainable fashion equals utopia.

"Sustainable fashion is a utopia? So is sustainable capitalism, then. The fashion system contributes strongly to our country's economy. If we consider capitalism a tool and concepts such as sustainability, social and environmental balance as values of a positive economic nature, capitalism becomes a fuel that sets change in motion. We need new balances, though. Consider our commitment to sport and art. My mother often says that if we could operate the foundation without selling bags, that would be great. But you can't. A game has to be played on the field. Only then can fashion make the wearer feel good but also make people feel good about themselves and their environment."

Now a cruel touch: remainders and rejects?

"The fundamental key for looking to tomorrow is the durability of a product, in addition to recycling that can give excellent results as has been the case with the Prada Re-Nylon collections (nylon that has been re-generated through the recycling of plastic materials recovered in part from the oceans), and now we are also looking at the need for end-of-life management of products in the textile sector: the common purpose of the Re.Crea consortium born of the synergies between Camera moda and major Italian fashion groups."

Yours is a culture of change.

"Sustainability is not only important here and now. Addressing future generations is fundamental. Culture and education are a priority for us. Our educational programmes are part of this: Sea Beyond, born in 2019 with UNESCO, raises awareness among young people on how to preserve the oceans, and Asilo sulla Laguna in Venice. The human element remains indispensable. Constant dialogue with our employees, training, but also working on important topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion. Spreading a culture of sustainability is the way to assure real change."

The headquarters in Valvigna (AR), where the production and development of the Prada and Miu Miu leather goods lines takes place

Lorenzo Bertelli, born in 1988, eldest son of Miuccia and Patrizio Bertelli, since 2020 Head of Corporate Social Responsibility of the Prada Group

10 YEARS AFTER THE FIRST SUSTAINABILITY REPORT: “WE FEEL THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING AGENTS OF CHANGE, 400 NEW JOBS IN 2023”

“MY MOTHER SAYS: IT WOULD BE GREAT IF WE COULD WORK WITH THE FOUNDATION WITHOUT SELLING BAGS. BUT YOU CAN'T: IT'S A GAME YOU PLAY ON THE FIELD”