



SOLOMEO AND THE FOUNDATION

**Cucinelli has a project for the beauty of three parks**

di Giulia Crivelli

Beside Brunello Cucinelli, at the Teatro Strehler, there was only Massimo De Vico, landscape architect, “friend of 30 years and companion in dreams and philosophical dissertations”. But at the Milan presentation of the Fondazione Brunello e Federica Cucinelli project – the creation of three parks at the foot of the old mediaeval village of Solomeo, covering a total of over 80 hectares – you could glimpse various illustrious guests “of stone”, starting with Hadrian, who is made by Marguerite Yourcenar, his imaginative but nonetheless realistic biographer, to say “I am the custodian of the beauty of the world”. Alongside the Roman emperor there were the Greek philosophers dear to Cucinelli, from Heraclitus to Socrates and Xenophanes, but also Rousseau and pope Francesco: all personalities from whom the entrepreneur told us he drew inspiration for the Project for beauty initiated in 1985 with the decision to restore Solomeo and continuing with the idea of the parks. Cucinelli, founder of a company that’s an emblem of Made in Italy style and luxury in the eyes of the world, pointed out that the project is “entirely funded by my family, through the foundation,” and that “the necessary resources came with the stock market listing and will continue to be available thanks to the dividends”. Cucinelli’s listing in 2012 was the IPO of the year: the road show closed early because demand for the stock was 17 times bigger than the amount tendered and the share price, 7.75 euros, reached the very top the spread. Since then the company has continued to grow. Sales in the first nine months of 2014 reached €277.3 million and net profits reached €25.9 million (both up 10.2%).

The idea that “profit must be associated with gift”, according to Cucinelli, also regards the company, in line with an increasingly widespread idea of social responsibility that analysts are starting to take into account when assessing the intangible assets of listed companies. “As a company we funded the restoration of the Etruscan Arch in Perugia, but the park in Solomeo is a commitment that I didn’t want to burden the company with.”

The investment for the Etruscan Arch is put at over 1 million, whereas for Solomeo Cucinelli didn’t give any figures: it’s a major commitment that might be followed by other similar projects. “We thought of three parks: the first is called the Industry Park, an enormous 11 hectare garden we will build after demolishing the six industrial buildings (totalling 240,000 cubic metres) that we bought together with the land on which they were built. Then there’s the Lay Oratory Park, which will be for children of all ages and where I’d like to organize a tournament for child-footballers, inviting Palestinian and Israeli, Chechen and Russian kids, because sport can help people get to know and respect one another more than any number of words. The third park is the agricultural one: 70 hectares for market gardens, vineyards, olive groves and orchards: it should all be ready in a little over a year and when I see the result, from the village of Solomeo, I’ll feel that I’ve made my small contribution to the world. As everyone can, in proportion to his or her means.” The Greek

philosophers, wherever they were yesterday, were surely nodding assent. As would have another great Adriano, Olivetti, enlightened entrepreneur with whom Cucinelli would certainly have seen eye to eye.