

# The World of...

## Brunello Cucinelli



**B**runello Cucinelli is the youngest son of an Umbrian sharecropper who left the land to work in a factory when Brunello was 15. The humiliation his father endured left a deep impression on the boy. An indifferent student, Brunello found his calling in his early 20s, visiting boutiques in Northern Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Germany with his small collection of colourful cashmere sweaters. Today, Brunello Cucinelli's elegant, soft-textured, layered sportswear is world-renowned and his company is listed on the Italian stock exchange. His masterpiece is Solomeo, a medieval hilltop town in Umbria that he has been restoring for decades, stone by stone, building by building. His home, corporate HQ and workshops are there and he has added schools, a theatre, a garden of contemplation – and a shared way of life for his workforce, predicated on dignity.

*“When I was a young man, I spent 10 years hanging out in bars and cafés. What did we do? Lengthy discussions about philosophy, theology, economics, politics, women, soccer, religion... Discussions, jokes and dreams... My dream was to be a guardian who works for the dignity of man – both moral and economic. If I give you dignity, that sparks responsibility, responsibility generates creativity and positivity. Human beings are kinder and more creative when they feel valued. This is certain.”*

**“My greatest teachers are philosophers, emperors and saints. The emperor Marcus Aurelius was my first great teacher. He said, ‘Seek to live in harmony with nature. Seek serenity even when your soul is troubled.’ Our era is one of troubled souls.”**

“What are my hopes for Solomeo? I know it's a very small part of the world, but the Greek sages said, ‘It's our duty to leave you a city more beautiful than the one we found when we became its guardians.’ I don't know Greek, but I think like a Greek.”

**“There are three things in life you can't buy: exercise, diet and culture. You must do these things on your own. I get up every morning at 6 a.m. and do my workout. I start work at 8 a.m. I like to work hard but only for a few hours – eight hours a day. You must also nourish the soul and the mind. You have to take care of your family, of yourself, and you have to raise your eyes to the heavens, as St. Augustine says, every now and then.”**

“My main idea – sporty-chic luxury clothing. You can wear a tailored jacket with cargo pants but the materials must be splendid and the craftsmanship fantastic.”

*“What does cashmere mean to me? It's the warmest, the most beautiful raw material in the world and it comes from one of the most inhospitable places on Earth. Ponder how Mother Nature works! It's a special material. You can't throw away cashmere. I don't know anyone who has ever discarded a cashmere pullover.”*

“My dad – he's 92 – always says, ‘If you live a decent life, maybe you'll receive something extra.’ He also says, ‘Do you want to be the richest person in the graveyard?’”