

Hi, I'm Mauro Porcini. PepsiCo's chief design officer. Join me for our new series, where we dive into the minds of the greatest innovators or time with the goal of finding what drives them in their professional journey and in their personal life, trying to uncover the universal truths that unite anyone attempting to have a meaningful impact in the world. This is In Your Shoes.

I always say do less, but do it better. I'm quoting our guests for today who is one of the most versatile, expressive and influential leaders in the design world.

After training as an architect in Polytechnical Milan, he founded his own studio that has achieved international acclaim and produced groundbreaking work work for decades.

He worked as art director for the iconic tile brand Bisazza.

He's been working and collaborating with high end brands, such as Cappelinni, Driade, Casamania just to name a few. Throughout his career he's also designed for name brands, such Adidas, Reebok, BMW.

Lavazza, A.C. Milan, the soccer team.

Recently, he became the artistic director of Driade, the scientific director of Domus Academy, and the member of the scientific committee of the Triennale design museum of Milan.

His visionary work has been recognized and celebrated worldwide for its bold forms and ideas. From products to furniture, to interior design all the way to architecture and art direction, there is nothing that this man can't do.

Fabio Novembre, welcome to In Your Shoes.

Fabio, it's such a pleasure to have you with us today. And for the people that don't know a Fabio and I, we are really, really close friends. So the.

Conversation we're going to have today is a conversation that often, often we have, uh, in our privacy or calls when we have the opportunity to meet. How are you Fabio?

Very good. Mauro thank you. Finally, we meet even if on the screen,

Finally, we made it happen. So you, you are an Italian designer and not just Italian, you were born in the South of Italy, in Pula, and then you move to Milan. You studied design, actually you study architecture there, and then you became who you are today, over the course of many years, one of the most renowned designer worldwide. Can you tell us a little bit of this journey from the Italian provincial, from a town in the South of Italy, all the way to the top of the design world, Maura let's put it this way. First of all, I'm I'm I was a kid that never dreamed about being an astronaut or, I don't

know, President of the United States, whatever. I was the kid that was just living his life. You know, I was playing football with my friends. I was chasing girls it was really, like ordinary life. So that let's put it this way. I, I, I, I'm not that kind of child that, you know, knows where he will go, where he wants to go from the very beginning. Plus I was coming from a small town, you know, it's a hundred thousand people literally in the South of Italy. And, uh, but, but it's quite interesting to grow up there because basically, you know, everybody, it's really a system that looks like a bigger family. Everybody knows who you are relative to. Your father is Marty or your mother, is Amira.

It's, you know, this kind of close. But then of course growing up, you need to go to college. And, uh, and so you, you need to move out. And so I moved to Milano. Milano was, is the big city. You know, even if for American standards, 1.3 millions, it's nothing, but in Italy, he's a big city because you know it's all made of small cities. And, um, and so I felt this need of enlarging, the game of going on a bigger game, you know? And so my interests had grown up together with my age and I started being interested to a lot of things. And I discovered a lot of things. I mean, I think that the cultural offer that you can get in, uh, in bigger cities is amazing. And that's why I consider Milano my home now. I mean, cause it really gave me so much, was such a mutual exchange of everything, you know? And that's what happens with everybody probably. I mean, you really, you really need to cut your roots in order to try to grow in different situations, you know?

And, and in Milan you study architecture and then, uh, a lot of your production, even though there is also the architectural dimension, a lot of your production, the one that made you famous is between product design and interior design. Today you do a little bit of everything. Your production is very, very broad, but you started mostly as an interior designer and the, in a product designer.

But, but if you think about it, if you think about it, Mario, it's very,, it's very much the Italian tradition, uh, because basically in a, in a country like ours, that is very limited. It's very small and this very densely populated, we can not grow up. We cannot build that much anymore. So that the small scale, basically the whole phenomenon of Italian design, according to me, was born basically from that. I mean, we, eh, we couldn't build that much so that we, we had to change scale in order to reimagine and a future to reimagine, you know, and new idea of society. So starting from the small scale, actually, you know, really Italian design was like thinking

about the seeds instead of thinking about the trees, you know, that was the bigger, uh, uh, change of perspectives if you, if you want to think about it and even interiors. I mean, think about interiors Mauro, many times, I think that our approach to space comes from our ancestors and they used to live in caves so that all we feel as space is something that we live from inside. So even my idea of architecture is like from inside outside, it's like, you should first think to how you want to live inside a space and then eventually model the outside, which is exactly the contrary or what happens today. You know, basically big architects, sculpt volumes in the air and say, yeah, that's the new skyscraper I would like to build. You know, that's totally the opposite of our Italian tradition. We, we really think about, I mean, our first idea of space comes from our mother's belly. You know, we, we grow up in, in these warm liquids, amniotic liquids. So that really our idea is always like being surrounded by a space that is warm and comfy and rounded.

We should think about the space really from inside to outside to outside from our real needs, not simply sculpting volumes. I mean, that's, that's very much art in some ways, you know, I mean the approach to architecture nowadays very much artistic. It's like, you, you give a shape to a building and you put it there. It's like an art piece on the outside, you know, but, but really then you call eventually saw the architect to say, okay, now you can think about the inside you can think about the interiors and, and try to give a sense to this beautiful sculpture or volume. I think it's kind of crazy, isn't it?

Yeah. I mean, you, you're talking about the typical, typical perspective of the designer. They're the one that put the human being at the center of everything. And so you design for the needs, the wants, the dreams and the desires of these human beings. No matter if it is a space is a little objects or, or is there an entire planet, right? This is literally the perspective of the design is more than many other professions out there.

Mauro, it definitely is. And the as far, as it concerns me, I only saw things, objects, but even furniture's like shells for our body. I mean, I see the, I think the design is much more related. It's like a different scale of a dress. I mean, I, I wear a sofa. I, I wear an object in the kitchen. I wear a room, actually, that's the right way of putting it. I wear the space, I need to wear.

It's interesting. Actually. It's interesting because then if I think about your style is a style also of profound self

expression. I mean, he's very expressive for you as a designer, but also anybody buy your stuff, your products, these are people that are trying to send a message. Their own message is like poetry. Their own message through your product. So this idea of self expression that is, so close then to the world of fashion, you wear a jacket, you wear a pair of shoes to express yourself and to have a point of view from a style standpoint in the world. And when you buy your furniture, when you buy name of for instance, I mean, that's a statement, you're making a statement. So the, this idea of wearing, that, especially that kind of furniture I think is very powerful. It's so true.

It's absolutely true. Mauro also, because basically it's like, okay, you, you made the ready to this comparison and I want to, um, make it bigger. Okay. You, um, you said the design is like poetry. Okay. You mentioned that design is like inventing new words so that basically people can choose these words and make their own sentences, make their own statements. You know, you allow them with new words because eventually the old words didn't fit them were not enough to express and this strange concept they had in their mind. You know what I mean? So that you can give them the opportunity of make their own statements through eventual, new words that you come out with.

Oh, I love the analogy of the language. And by the way, you were talking a lot earlier about Italian design. You think there is an Italian design language today. And therefore then there is also an American design language or Danish design language. There are today, so many different styles, so many different designers. You are the one actually that organize a beautiful debates with a fellow designer. Antonio Citterio has a language is very, very different than yours, but it's still is Italian. So is there a language that is Italian and the language of these American, Indian, Danish, French of design or, not anymore?

Okay, very important question and topic. Uh, so first of all, Mauro, you are aware as, as myself, that we live in a country, we come from a country that is so full of beauty that everybody wanted it in the past. I mean, basically everybody conquered Italy in order to have a slice of that beauty so that we were born surrounded by layers of beauty coming from different centuries, from different pasts. So put these as the base of Italian design. So the iconicism, that is always related to Italian design, comes from the fact that we are surrounded by incredibly beautiful architectures and paintings and sculptures and landscape because we are a

bridge on the Mediterranean sea. I mean, it's like really, it's a very peculiar geographic place in the world, Italy. So starting from this, I would say that we can add that Italian design. Nowadays, it's like an, an approach to things it's like French fries. I always make these comparisons, French fries, not necessarily. You think about France when you eat them, but people just call them French fries because probably, you know, the, they were invented. I don't know, whatever, you know, let's not think about French fries now, but they belong to the word. I will, I hope that Italian design becomes like French fries. It belongs to everybody, but it's a peculiar approach. For example, Filipe stock. Let's put it this way for you is a French designer or is an Italian designer. For me he's an Italian designer. So we should give the passport of Italian design to anyone that chooses a very, um let's say iconic, emphatic, enthusiastic approach to creativity. Okay, Antonio Citterio is not Italian. Haha., What would be this style of somebody like Antonio, what country? Antonio, he's more German designer. He's really form and follows function in some ways. You know what I mean? That kind of approach Italians don't have that kind of approach. Actually not Italians, Italian design. Let's put it this way. Really. cause Karim Rashid is an Italian designer, it was born in Egypt, uh, grew up in Canada. Uh, is that very, that we're friends and it is in New York. I mean, he's like, he's an Italian designer. So this is an Italian designer. He's very odd. is an Italian designer. You know what I mean? It's like these kinds of approach to things, very free approach. It's really a freedom that Italian spread out. And it goes back probably to the, to the famous show in the museum of modern art in 1972, right? It was called Italy, the new Domestic Landscape. Basically, eh, Emilio Ambasz, which was the, uh, the producer, the organizer of the show, the curator of the show.

And so Italy is a new lab in the world in order to come out with it with a new approach to things really. And, um, I don't know if today is still like that, but that approach to things is spread out all over the world now, so that this spirit, that we call Italian design that is similar to French fries, is a spirit that now belongs to everybody. Everybody can call himself an Italian designer, I definitely think so, but the results in another peculiarity. I would say about Italians. The only thing you can never say about Italians is that they are professional.

Haha.

That the whole world loves, you know, being professional, you must be professional.

Try to be professional. But what's The opposite of professional, the opposite of professional is amateur. Amateur, it's a beautiful word. Amateur it comes from France, from French. And it means lover. You know, when, when English people say, Oh, you're an amateur they'r making a compliment to people because you are a lover. Do you want to compare a professional to a lover? I prefer a lover. This Amateur approach, which is basically not being so into the detail. You know what I mean? It's like in American design, I mean the very industrial American design is very much into details. You are the super expert about something, you know, Italian design, it's never been like that. It's always, always tried to have a bigger picture, always try to have like it in ideal direction, which is the utopian, utopian is an ideal direction. So utopia, to achieve. That's what we call the. And your approach to Pepsi is very much Italian design. You know, I mean, that's what you're doing in such a big company. And that's the fantastic thing that a big company like PepsiCo gave you, in all this approach.

I think one of the challenges, uh, or at least what I'm trying to do, and I want to hear your opinion on this is to combine the very, amateurial approach as you called it, uh, this very passionate, Italian approach to design, with the frameworks, the strategies, the processes of these bigger corporations, so that you can essentially scale up that approach. You can reach as many people as possible. Uh, you think is important today to do something like this? And I'm asking you this because of a reason. Italian design became big after World War 2, uh, driven by the Italian boom economic, but also driven by technology, local manufacturing in Italy. Uh, think about the invention of plastic or some form of plastic through Napa and then many companies that were working on producing through plastic. So technology, visionary entrepreneurs. So the business side, and then the creativity of the grindy, my S3, the Italian designer created you know, the economic boom of Italy from World War two, until the end of the century. Today, the country is a, is in a formal crisis.

And it's been now for, for few years, and it's not just Italy, but many other European countries seeming are to Italy with a world that is becoming more and more global. We live in a world where you need to play as a global player often to be relevant and to have a future, because if you don't, they will be the global player that will come in and compete with you. So how can we combine that? Amatuer kind of approach, but this approach, you know, full of passion, intuition, and vision, with the processes and strategies of these global

players, even if you are not a big corporation, even if you're small and you know, it drives me crazy how much people in Italy today, they're talking about the media in Italy, the importance of the media in Italy in a world where eventually, maybe to reignite the economy in the country, maybe you need to produce in China and sell in Africa or sell in India, but still with the Italian design approach, as Ikea did producing all around the world, but it's been, been while still be in a Sweden company, Swedish company, or Zara, for instance, or the company owning Zara, being a Spanish company, producing all around the world.

What do you think is the future of this Italian design approach in this new global world?

Mauro, I totally agree with you and the, we spoke often about it and the that's why I was not defending Italian design the other day. I was saying that he's like a spirit and design approach. It's a spirit. And the, and I think that the best minds in the world are basically amateurs because they do what they do having a global approach. But still with that, um, researcher spirit, you know, that was like belonging to the first Steve, uh Steve jobs or, or, I mean, the researchers, if that kind of approach, I mean, actually it, Steve Jobs, just to name one was passionate about that in design so that I'm not defending it, that I don't feel like, eh, Italy is defendable or I don't want to defend anyone. I mean, it's like, it's, this is not the point to defend anyone. I I'm, that's why I was defending an approach.

I was defending a way of being that doesn't belong necessarily to someone born in this country. I was saying that these countries full of beauty, but of course we can see it's full of problems as well. And the, and facing a global world is very, is a very hot topic, you know? And the, I think you're doing a great job on these points of view. I mean, that's, that's what you're doing, taking the, the, um, the Italian design spirit and bringing it all over the world and the, and that's something beautiful. And that's what I tried to do as well. But definitely I'm not defending Italy made in Italy doesn't make sense in some ways, unless you have some craftsmanship that needs to be saved or, or kept an eye on, I mean, in some little niches, it happens, but, but for sure, you can not produce anything in Italy.

Because, it's not worth it. You know, there are some things that must be delocalized. I mean, we are completely aware that this is a global world. I mean, nowadays, Mauro thinking about Italy or United States or China. I mean, the more we grow up, the more we think that the borders that divide these countries,

they don't make any sense anymore. I mean, for us, these are global. Are all our friends. We don't feel like then they belong to other places or races, we went all over it completely. But actually we live in the land of design, which is not Italy, it's not United States. The language of design is the whole word. I mean, basically. Let's not forget what design means. Okay. Otherwise we get a little bit confused. Design is not the, the cool cultured people approach to things. No, that's a human attitude, the human attitude that makes us different from all the rest of the other animals on the planet. And this attitude brings us to modify the conditions that surround us. That is design basically, you know, we modify the conditions in order to make it more comfortable for us in order to make it more, you know, even more beautiful. Let's use it, this word, this word, this word is very important. You know, in the, um, we come from a very classic culture and the, our ancestors, the Latins used to put always ethics and aesthetics together. So when we say beautiful, we always means honest. You know, cause beauty must go together with the ethics so that if it's not honest, can not be beautiful. And vice-versa, and that's the, the lens of design that we try to achieve. That's the, the, the goal we would like to, to reach with all our work. I mean, you, from New York, me from Milano, our friends from all over the world, but really we belong to, to another generation.

I don't consider myself Italian Mauro. I have a world passport. I mean, it's like even, yeah, I was born in Italy, but really, yeah, I was surrounded by beauty. True. But then look at it. We were naming a friend of ours, Mark Newsome. It comes from Australia in the middle of nowhere. You know what I mean? No reference at all. But the only thing that makes us different Mauro from the other animals is when, is our huge curiosity. And we were able with the centuries to, to transform curiosity into concentration, and then to the third phase that we call culture. Cause basically you need to be curious, then you need to concentrate on things because being only curious is not enough. You have to go deeper into things. You have to really try to understand how things work. And that's what basically we call culture. You know, people doesn't doesn't need to be afraid of books or of, uh, knowing things. Fuck it's, it's a natural process of, uh, of sedimentation of, of things that you're curious about and that you, you go deep into in order to know them better.

I, I completely agree. This curiosity for me is the keyword. I actually have two stories. I mean, I have tons of stories about you, um, in relation to the world of curiosity, but



there are two moments. We never talk about this, but I will always remember. I often talk about this to others, but I never told you one was one day that they took you to the Hamptons. We took the Jeep and we went on the beach and you were outside, you know, with your hands outside of the car, you know, on top of the open, the rooftop and you, you are looking at the beach, like a kid, like a child, like that enthusiasm, with that curiosity, with that passion. And I was looking at you and is, I was like, wow, this is really unique. Is it common trait of the real innovators that I see in other innovators, but it's not that common in the, in, in the people that surround us and why it's not that common because you saw everything in the world you've been traveling all around the world, you have been meeting the most inspiring people. You have been doing super exciting projects. And still, you are excited on a beach driving with a car. And so it was a mix of your inner curiosity, it was a mix of your confidence because many people feel embarrassed almost sometimes to get excited in front of something. They need.

To show that they already know everything. They already saw everything that they don't need to learn anything anymore. And it was really, really beautiful. And then I'm sure that you came back from the beach trip, as well as from many, many other journeys and trips and experiences you had in your life, thinking about interiorize in these and learning and inspiring yourself, yourself out of it. There is another moment that I remember we went once to a Ferrari dealer in, uh, in New York city. And so every time you enter a Ferrari dealer, you are in front of this beautiful, beautiful cars. And everybody's like, Oh, you remember that? Everybody's like, Oh my God, they're beautiful. And so we are there. And I think there was this, your Ferrari America or somebody or hosting us. And he was very proudly showing us their Ferrari cars. And you, instead of celebrating the Ferrari, like 99.9% of the people will do, you are like, I think you should change the design of this detail.

But again, curiosity, open eye, different perspective, looking at things, you know, we with, with a unique point of view. And then with your critical mind, trying to understand how you can make it better. How can you improve on something that everybody think, okay, it's pretty perfect already as it is.

So I think these two examples, really, you know, the, first of all, I think the example of the innovator mindset, and then therefor, also the example of your way of thinking and what you were sharing with us, just the curiosity, I often say that the more technological and, uh, and the,

you know, digital and the whatever becomes our inputs, the, my output is kind of primordial. You know, like I I'm becoming a big gorilla, you know what I mean? It's like, I I'm becoming simple in my outputs. Cause, cause I want to simplify, for example, you know why I use guitar? I mean, I'm basically living with the guitar on my side because I love music, but music is like overwhelming now. I mean, there is so much music around. I filter everything I like through my guitar. So if I like a song, I have to sing it, you know what I mean? It's like make it my own.

And I saw, I noticed that in the past few years, this is happening even more. I saw you with your guitar so many different times in the past few years. Did something change in the past few years? I didn't see that guitar that often in the parks, there was some thing that happen in your life?.

Totally true. I used to play guitar when I was a kid. I mean, until 16, I was in a rock band or whatever, like all teenagers, but then I didn't use it for 35 years, but two years ago I accidentally, I took it and they started and now I really it's like feeling the need of filtering everything through your sensitivity. I mean, really I'm becoming an evolved gorilla really. It's like, no, really the more everything becomes digital around me. I mean the more everything becomes technological in the high tech, the more I, I give a low-tech approach to, to the, to the things I'm doing, you know what I mean? It's like, it's kind of strange. Um, it's like, I want to be more direct Mauro. Right? I don't know. I don't know. I'm really actually Mauro, the more I know. I don't know if it's the same for you. The more I know the more I have seen, the less, I think I know. You know what I mean? It's like, I swear. I feel like I'm still a student at first grade.

Totally, that totally. Well, uh, I think it was Socrates yes that used to say No. I know that I know nothing. Right? Yes, exactly. So I think at a certain point you realize that there is so much to learn and that, that, that the, you just, if you are a curious person, if you are an innovator even more hungry and thirsty and you just want to learn and learn and learn and experience and you feel like, Oh my God, I have just one life and it's not enough. And that's, I really feel it. And you're right. Over the years, I became more aware of what I didn't know and therefore even more hungry for knowing more.

And more, uh, amble cause really I feel first grade student really. I mean, when people says, ah, you are an experienced man, I'm not at all. I'm not at all. Seriously. I'm not talking just to impress or whatever. Seriously Mauro. Personal experience. I,

As you know, my journey as a designer has been pretty weird for the Italian tradition, right? That I remember also in an interview, you were talking about me that, you know, as going in a giant goal and opening my own path in the jungle years ago. So very weird. Then for many years I would come back, you know, in the U S I was doing, you know, I was having, my journey was becoming successful. And then things were working very well, but Italy wouldn't understand yet what I was doing in the U S and other regions of the world. I met you in that, in that, in that moment, in the middle of the journey, and you are one of the people, you know, super successful Italian designer that instead of having that arrogance, if you want, you know, attitude to go towards something that is different than what you are doing, you have this curious attitude. I mean, exactly what you just described right now. And you wanted to understand, and you wanted to learn what was happening. I was, I was doing things differently. You're one of the first people in Italy that understood what I was trying to do with that Italian design approach, but in a completely different kind of context. So what you just described about yourself, that, that curiosity, but also that humility if you want, I think is something that I, that I find in you,

But Mauro, You just named one very important word, which is diversity. Yeah. Diversity is a very peculiar feeling because, um, diversity can make you feel curious or afraid. And I belong to the people that become super curious when something is different. It's diverse. I say, wow, that's super interesting. You know, cause I don't want the same. You know what I mean? It's like diversity for me is, is uh, a potential and reaching situation. You know what I mean? And that if for you, diversity becomes just fear of, of diverse of difference. That's terrible. You know? I mean, it's like, that's probably still, we go back to the curiosity, still, we go back to the same thing, but Mauro, we cannot be wrong. I must tell you. And it's not a matter of being right or wrong of course. But I would suggest to all the people that is scared of diversity or, or they think that curious is not a good approach to life, I would say that children are all curious.

Sometime we forget that we were curious. We, I mean, when we say usually creative people say that we should keep being children, all our lives, you, and that that's basically what we work at. We, we try to be children all our life, but that's what everybody should try to. You know what I mean? Really? You, we forget how strong are the feelings when you are a child and we should keep it that way. I mean, really not people, is

basically kind of shy to talk about, love, to talk about happiness. You know what I mean? It's like, they it's, it looks, they're going to be cheap, but little cheesy. There's a beautiful word in English. Cheesy. It looks cheesy, but love is such a fantastic word. You know, for me, love has always been the key to everything. You know, when you want to convince people about doing something, it's basically impossible, really make them fall in love with that idea. I know that to follow it. And the, and I would say that love is something that we can say all the worst things about our country. And we were born in Italy. We know what are the bad things about our country, but love is all around this country. I mean, I don't know why, but probably because it's, it's really, we have beautiful lifestyle. Let's put it this way. This is something that we cannot, uh, deny. In Italy people is a beautiful lifestyle whatsoever, you know, because food is incredible, beauties all around. And the, we, we give importance to the, to the good things. I mean, family for us is so important. So that love is something that is always been in our DNA. So sometimes if I say that Italian design should be like teaching people to put love as the first of their priorities.

Cause that's the point, you know? Cause if you put love, it's the first of your priorities, then all the rest disappears, all the fears, or the hate, all the, all the, the bad feelings. You know what I mean? It's like if you open your heart and basically Mauro, I always say that there are two strong forces in a, in nature, two strong forces that are able to put humans together. One is trust. And the other is fear. If you spread fear, people would be afraid and they will isolate and they will hate each other. Trust is about putting all the community together. Trying to have bigger goals, try to think altogether about a better world, you know? And th you know, fear is exactly the key for love. No excuse me, trust, exactly the key for love, because if you want to fall in love with someone, you have to trust someone so that everything is related Mauro. Everything is so simple. That's the gorilla is talking now. Seriously, everything is so simple.

You, you talked a lot about this Italian culture and how that that approach to life and to design and to innovation can inspire other cultures. I I'm, I'm talking to you from New York city, from America. What do you think is something of the American culture that can instead inspire other cultures around the world? And is there any other culture, you know, you're being in so many different places, you know, people from around the world, is there any other culture that

somehow, uh, should inspire us in some aspect of life as well? I have a very clear anchor to this question. I love United States because of their diversity. And I love places in the world where diversity is the key, like Brazil is full of diversity. Um, England actually, London, you know, it was an empire so that wherever Paris as well, wherever there is a lot of diversity and they all can live together. And that's why I consider New York, the capital of the world, because it's the capital of diversity. I mean, lots of different people. They talk to each other and touch each other and live with each other. I mean, that's beautiful. The only limit of Italy for example, is that it's not diverse. I'm there, it's not colorful enough for my eyes. You know what I mean? And that's beautiful about New York. That's why I really consider new York the Capitol of the world. And New York are very lucky because of that.

There is, you know, black Americans, Hispanic, Asian, Americans it's like everything is there and they all live together. I mean, that's really United States is a blessed country. Cause it's, it's a country that was born from, uh, from hopes, you know, hope for, for a better future. I mean, think about the, the people that went there, crossing the ocean, they couldn't even know if they were able to cross the ocean. Cause that time it was difficult. You know?

I'm going to jump to a completely different kind of topic. Uh, I, you mentioned earlier 1972, I think it was the year, a New Domestic Landscape, you know, very iconic exhibition of Italian design at the MoMA of New York city. In that exhibition. Uh, it was a triumph, a celebration of a new language that Italy was, has been created since the sixties and the fifties, even in some way, it was also the celebration of a material, plastic that then just a few years later started to, uh, change positioning with a petrol crisis. And then fast forward to today, we know many of the problems that this material has. And we live in a world where nobody can ignore anymore that the sustainability problem and the challenge that we all face. Plastic is one of the, uh, the, the material that are under scrutiny that are under scrutiny. But there are all the other materials as well, because it's not just driven by materials, but the entire life cycle from the manufacturing, the creation, the production of the way to the, this mission. What's the role of sustainability in your thinking today in your design today, how things are changing. And where do you see the future of sustainability in the world? And in the world of design.

Mauro. There is a big misunderstanding about

sustainability to me. I mean, think about one symbol of sustainability, the plastic bag. Okay. The plastic bag, I mean, oceans are full of plastic bags. Why? Because they are used basically 10 minutes, let's say from the grocery store to our house where we make it empty and put in their refrigerator. And then it's over, the life of a plastic bag is over. So 10 minutes, but the material would allow the, the object that the, the piece of design to last for 200 years. So there is a big problem in the interpretation of things. I always say that since I was a student for me to, for me, it was very clear from the very beginning. We should think about life and death of products. If we don't think about death, does this plastic bag that we use it for 10 minutes, will last 200 years. And that's the mistake! Because beautifully thought piece of design because plastic is a fantastic material, but it must be used for things that wanna last for a long time, for a long performance, not for a 10 minute performance. So that things are never wrong by themselves. The interpretation that we give to things can be wrong. I mean, the plastic bag is a very wrong use of a super performing material.

So that's,

This is where we talk about sustainability and the, I mean, recycled can be the solution. Recycle can be a solution, but first of all, we should choose the materials like a casting for a movie. I mean, the actors must be perfectly chosen. Otherwise the movie is a shit, you know what I mean? Like you have to do a perfect casting of things. Don't go break all mountains just to have a marble floor in some rich person villa, you know what I mean? It's like, what, for what for, I mean, there are synthetic materials that can solve the problem perfectly, you know, with the, it can be a perfect solution, even aesthetically and on the performance point of view. So that really we should rethink our approach to materials. And then of course, we all should do less. I mean, this is something I've been saying since.

I mean, probably if you analyze my work as a designer, I started my studio in 94. So it's already 20, 26 years. The things I've been doing, are not that much. I mean, we all should do less and concentrate more on what we do, make it, make less and make it better. You know, that's always been my motto in some ways, because we cannot overdo you know some times where we really think that the power of making things, you know, cause you are a successful designer and very good, like to have a piece from you, but don't do it for things that you really think are worth making. You know what I mean? We don't shoot under, um, under use and they're, you know, really make less things, make less

things. That's, that's a very important point to me. I mean, these are already realistic solutions for an approach to, to, uh, to sustainability this word, sustainability people doesn't even understand what sustainability means.

Really. We should think about how made things die when we don't use them anymore. That's much easier to, to understand, you know, cause really our life expiring date. Mauro, is all about the expiring date. We basically know that our expiring date is 80, 90 years. Okay. But for plastic objects, centuries, are we going to use it for centuries? Don't think so. So how can I use it? What for, you know, that's the topic. I mean, we always think that things will last forever, but we don't last forever. And probably the people after us don't want those things. Haha.

Ha ha. I really love the idea of life and death because it forced you to think in term of life cycle and life cycle management.

That is a key word in this, in this universal sustainability.

Jumping again, because with you there are so many topics I want to touch. Um, the, you talked about, uh, the importance of inspiration and passion and you are an inspiration for many designers and not just designers. So there, and I'm sure you have been inspired by many people and you had mentors or friends that somehow gave you a lot. I remember our conversations for instance, uh, when Mendini passed, uh, about his role in his life in your life, uh, what is the importance of a mentor, who have been the mentors in your life that are the most important to you and what role they have? And when anybody that is listening to us needs to look for a mentor, what do they need to look for? What is the role of a mentor?

Mauro, Let's give an image. In our life, we all go through very difficult moments and we think that everything around us is dark and the completely dark there is, there is no reference, but then you just.

Raise your eyes and watch the, the sky full of stars. And those stars can make a clear way for you. And those stars are your reference. I mean, for example, I selected the stars of my darkest nights and those are people that I felt were like relatives to me. I would have chosen then like my uncle and my grandpa, my father, my brother and my cousin. You know what I mean? It's like people that I have been adoring for what they did in their life. So not necessarily a mentor must be someone you met or someone you personally knew. A mentor can be also someone that wrote a beautiful book or painted a beautiful painting or recorded the beautiful song. But that song, that painting, that book helped you to come out from difficult situations. So those are the stars of your darkest

nights. Those are the mentors. Everybody should choose his own mentors. It's like choosing your DNA. It's like choosing your it's really a natural selection of, of what is similar to you. That's really, it's, it's something that, that you select in order to, how you are. You know, I really, we are all different and we all are different, uh, reference and the, um, and this well, what else you asked me? Uh, Well you met, you met many interesting people, is there anybody?

Of, course.

And then there's, well, you said you become your self for reference for the, for the other people, unavoidably aging, you become a reference for other people. Cause basically, I dunno, they sold something you made or they read something you wrote or whatever. And so what is your task, getting older and realizing that someone is eventually looking at you, that you have a responsibility Mauro. I mean, uh, We always think that Liberty and responsibility are two separate things and this is not true at all. I believe that, uh, to the maximum of Liberty should correspond the maximum of responsibility and that we should feel responsible for the kids that eventually look at us. And that's why we should, we should harder and harder try to live as more correctly as we can. You know, thinking that, you know, it's not that I can not do whatever I want. You know what I mean? It's like some kids are looking at me and, and, and it's very important. You seriously Mauro, okay, let's put it this way. I became a father. You still don't. I hope you, you very soon will cause it's, it's a very big change in, in a, in a personal life, in a human it's a human experience. That is, is incredible.

You pass from being a child. Cause otherwise we be child all our life to a father or a mother, a parent. And it's, it's incredibly different cause, you realize that your behavior is exactly what your children see and will the children imitate. I mean, I can say whatever I want to my daughters, but then they will look at my behavior. It's how I act, it's how I respond to things. So that basically we all should become fathers and mothers eventually, you know, we all should take responsibility of understanding that someone else is coming after us. And they all will look at our reaction and that we have to leave them a world that at least is similar to what we took, eventually should be better. You know what I mean? And really, it's um, it's so important. It's so important Mauro because in this chain that we call evolution.

That's why I told you, I, I select my grandpa, my father, my cousin, my brother, but then I cannot select my children and my



children will connect to the chain that I will give them in this chain of evolution. And so really being a good designer is basically being a good person. You know, that's why I, I don't necessarily believe in, uh, in creative people that do beautiful things and then when you meet them, they are horrible human beings. You know what I mean? Sometimes there is a very, uh, um, there is not a connection between what they do and who they are and they start hating that in some ways, you know, cause, cause I say, but excuse me, you, you preach one way and you act another and it shouldn't be like that. Cause you're all one thing, you know, and really our behavior is so important. We really, we should work on our self, the best piece of design that we do should be our way of, uh, giving our self to the people of, of, uh, of considering really our self as a design object in order to, to give it as a gift to humanity, you know, I mean we should donate our self to people. So that food for me, it's a great metaphor. It's a great metaphor. That's why I probably, you know, Mauro that Italian design nowadays is better represented through food, through cuisine. That's why I bought to the number one in the world, or, you know, these kind of things probably still one root puts all Italians together, apart from political parties and stuff, food. And food goes back to the tradition of your mother feeding you cause still you, our mothers cook in delicious things for us, you know, it's like cooking and food is the best way to express love. This one for me is a, is a central metaphor of letting other people eat you because you're giving them good food, food for mind, food for dreaming food for, for their soul.

And there is the ritual of sharing. That's the beauty of this as well. Like you feed somebody and then that somebody is also sharing with others. Usually you have a meal with somebody else,

Think about the situation of the Last Supper. I mean, Jesus Christ surrounded by the apostles. I mean, he offers them bread and wine as if it was, you know, la me sangria, my, my meat and my blood. And he's like, it's very metaphorical for us.

And we all share the same place to eat together. I mean, lots of cultures in the world are considering eating like only a necessity, but it's not. It's a, it's a ritual and rituals are very important for humans. Everything's great why we get married? He said, ritual, why we, we, I mean, lots of, of traditions have different rituals, but three chores are so important. We are losing very much this approach to things as a ritual, and ritual is so important.

I totally agree. Yeah. Sometimes, unfortunately is

inefficient. And we live in this world of total performance and the efficiency and the effectiveness. And so you try to cut short some rituals that instead have been defining cultures for thousands of years, and I think we should protect them.

Mauro, we've been to a few, uh, uh, Super Bowls together. Super Bowl is a ritual. For example, I mean, we see have rituals that could be used in order to make people understand that it's not only about two teams fighting with each other, but it's a ritual to be all together, to enjoy something unique or together. So rituality can also be applied to things that we already, we already do. But without thinking about the, the powerful moment of putting people together.

Yeah. By the way, this is a beautiful thing of American sports. The fact that people get together, the two teams fight with each other, but then the fans, the people are not divided. They are, they're celebrating the event. I mean, you have been there. You, you saw it so different from soccer or... Now. We talk about restaurants. We talk about the Super Bowl and famous sport games, moments where people get together. We live in a moment though where people are not getting together because of a virus that is all around the world, unfortunately, and you think, how, not do you think, I think you do, how the world is going to change after COVID-19, uh, how people will think would be able to connect after this virus,

Mauro, after the first lock down in Italy, in the Gulf of Naples, there were the dolphins, in the canals of Venice, there were crystal clear water and fishes so that we should think that not necessarily, it was a bad thing. What we went through. Actually it allows us to think that crashing is not necessarily the solution actually, you know, from Italy, let's go back a little bit to food. There was a movement in Italy called slow food, and it was completely the opposite of fast food that came from America. So the food was really the idea of knowing where things that you're eating come from, you know, the knowing how they were cultivated or eventually fished or hunted or whatever, you know, basically being aware of what becomes yourself through the food. And this idea of slowness is something that goes back. It goes very much back in the Italian tradition, think about the proverb in Latin in that was *Festina Lente*, which means hurry up slowly, which looks like a contradiction in terms, but it's not.

And this could be actually, um, used for this time. *Festina Lente*, hurry up slowly. Our lives cannot be too slowed down because there is, there is a beat, there is a rhythm of the

planet that we have to stick to in some ways, but how are we sure that all our movements that all our actions make sense? Are we sure you know that, for example, in, um, in language Mauro, there is a theory from, um, a guy called Shannon that basically says that 70% of our words in, in, uh, in usual language are unnecessary. Only 30% are enough to tell exactly what we want to tell. I believe that you can, you could apply this theory to our life. Basically 70% of our movements could be eliminated and we could keep exactly the same efficiency or the same density of our actions, you know, and that's what we should apply.

Having taught this lesson of COVID that we should reduce drastically, what is not necessary to our life. You know, I mean the, this smart working and things, that's fantastic. Fantastic. Don't necessarily, you need to take a couple of flights in order to go for a meeting with some people. I mean, getting used to, to video conference, like these is fantastic. You are in your house. I in my house, then of course we need to see each other Mauro. I need to hug you as soon as possible, but that's another thing. We can not meet just because we have a discussion about work. You know what I mean? So that definitely, that can be an improvement. You know, Mauro yesterday, our common friend, Carlo Capasa was talking to me about fashion. Can you tell the people, at least tell us who is Carlo Capasa. He's the President of the Chamber of fashion in Italy.

But anyway, he was telling me, Fabio, you know, it's, uh, it's interesting because people in the world is waiting for the COVID to end for revenge shopping. Mauro, I got so scared from this definition. Basically the marketers started this definition for what will happen after. People are so, um, um, would you say captive, hungry for, for consuming that they call it revenge shopping, excuse me, that's not the right direction for me. Not at all, not at all. We should try to teach this lesson slowing down and enjoying the landscape is also a beautiful metaphor for the trip. Sometime we go so fast that we don't even enjoy the landscape. You know, even if you try, if you're traveling on a train, whatever, you are on your laptop, listening to music, reading, whatever, enjoy the landscape, you know what I mean? Slow it down. I mean, this is a crucial point Mauro, crucial point because I started talking about the dolphins in the Gulf of Naples and the silver, uh, crystal clear water in the, in the canals of Venice, my God, we're not used to that. And nature needs it. I mean, this is a great chance for us to completely rethink about our system. So really let's apply the theory of shame on the,

usually apply to language and the things we understand that is some language we don't apply it, but let's apply it to our life. Let's apply.

You mentioned, uh, language and the use of words in our vocabulary. Um, many years ago I was talking with a French friend that has a degree in English literature, and I was like, well, yes, Italians and French. We have so many more words. And we talk with so many, you know, it's more romantic our way of articulating an idea or a thought. And, and she was like, you know, that actually the English dictionary has the double of the words of the Italian or the French dictionary, but is the, the way they talk, the Anglo-Saxon way of talking, is a reflection of their way of thinking they're more straight to the point, you know, Europeans are more articulate if you want, or they go around the point over and over and over again and in the end finally you get there as I'm doing right now, by the way, and you Americans is 10 boom, you know?

And so it's interesting. Our actually you have the tools to, you know, there are tools is a toolbox the language, but then your culture is really what drives you to use the toolbox in a way or the other. So when you, when you talk about the use of the language immediately, I started to think about this, but Fabio, we could go on hours and hours and hours talking about so many different topics. We talk about passion, curiosity. Um, we talk about inspiration. We talk about Italy a lot in connection also with other cultures, we talk about music. You show me the guitar. Few minutes ago, you have a guitar there by you. We should close with you singing us something. You know, music interpreted by you. Reconnect with everything you've been talking about so far. Can you give us this gift?

Absolutely I will. But can I say something more because otherwise this is a point that stays unclear.

I think we all have a, a task as designers, but not only as designers as human beings, there is a beautiful sentence. That is all art is being contemporary. I definitely think that we as human beings should testify our own time. No, I don't believe in the fact of looking at the past and getting inspired from the past or, or looking at the future and trying to think as if it was already there, the 3000, you know what I mean? It's like we should live our moment. Did the, Latins used to say *hic et nunc*, here and now, I mean, and try to give a shape to the world as we, as we see it, you know, that's a very important thing for me, really. I, I would use this stage to suggest to all our colleagues that it's so important to testify our own time, who came before us.

They were so good at testifying for their time. We should give the interpretation of our time. That's a task that we have. It's something we, we all, to who came before and who will come after. It's very important. I believe very important. I really, I really wanted to touch on these points because me is, this is I consider myself a designer of the present. I'm not the designer of the past or of the future. I'm a designer of the present. You know, this is our time. Our expiring date is like this. And also give a shape to this moment. And the, and the song I think we should sing together. Eventually Mauro is, is these Nel blu, dipinto di blu (Volare) from Domenico Modugno. You know, And the, basically the, the lyrics say fly or seeing in the blue painted or blue, happy to be here, you know? So that it's really, it's really an Italian spirit that we try to, to evoke. Volale, ho ho, Cantare, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa. Nel blu, dipinto di blu. felice di stare lassu. Oh, this is, this is one of those Italian song. renowned all around the world, I think is a beautiful way. Very unique by the way, as you are to close this podcast. Thank you so much for everything you've been sharing with us. You are my brother Mauro . You are too. Thank you. thank you very much.