

MONOCLE

A BRIEFING ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS, BUSINESS, CULTURE & DESIGN

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SEVENTH
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE

Speciale
Italia

All aboard the ITALIAN SPECIAL: high-speed, well-styled...and even world-leading

From Bologna to Bolzano, Turin to Treviso – Monocle's editors meet
the Italians doing it better – a **MONOCLE NATIONAL AUDIT**

- A AFFAIRS** Five fixers: the people who are reshaping Italia
 - B BUSINESS** Last orders: the master and his shoemakers
 - C CULTURE** The top 20 media players and producers
 - D DESIGN** Now boarding: a new niche carrier for South Tyrol
 - E EDITS** Gaining access to Hirata, bunking at the Briol and securing a terrace in Trieste
- EXPO** Palazzo power: inside Rome's grand embassies

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Design maven
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Orlandi's 'Last
Meal' in Milan



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Meet the Med
city's master
makers



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On *monocle.com* you can watch our short documentary films and slideshows for free. Some of the films expand upon the printed story, while others provide completely fresh coverage brought to you by our editors and correspondents around the world. Browse our films covering the A to E sections and, if you are a subscriber, access our magazine back catalogue online.



1

Albini FILM

From cotton fields in Egypt to state of the art laboratories in Bergamo our search for quality "Made in Italy" textiles focuses on the fifth-generation heritage firm Albini.



3

Italian media SLIDESHOW

A focus on 20 companies, brands and publications that exemplify the unique and vigorous Italian media scene, from collect-the-set sticker albums to one of the world's most handsome newspapers.

2

Roman embassies FILM

The Italian capital is home to some of the most beautiful embassies in the world. Monocle Films takes a tour of some of these palatial residences in Rome.



4

Naples SLIDESHOW

While the city's problems remain (unemployment, high crime rates, stifling bureaucracy), Naples' famous artisanal spirit is undimmed. We meet some of the craftsmen flying the flag.

THE MONOCLE SHOP

At *monocle.com*'s online store you can buy all of our product collaborations as well as back issues and subscriptions.



Monocle Voyage NEW RANGE: MONOCLE's first fashion collection is tailored for travellers. Whether it's a basic T-shirt or more refined travel jacket, MONOCLE's team chose the finest materials from Japan and Italy to create these beautiful and functional pieces.



Postalco pocket organiser NEW PRODUCT

Japanese stationery specialist Postalco has produced this leather pocket organiser, with two canvas pockets to store your receipts and credit cards.



CaBas tote NEW PRODUCT: Perfect for your cruise trip or your yoga class, this cotton tote bag has been handmade in Japan. The sashiko cotton from Mikawa has a bumpy surface but still feels smooth against your skin.



TALKING ITALIA —Global

Preface

What next for Italy? In this special survey of the nation we look at its fault lines but also the strengths that endure and amaze.

WRITER

Andrew Tuck

In January, MONOCLE headed to Milan for the menswear shows. Milan is small enough that when it hosts a big event – fashion shows, the annual furniture fair – it takes over the city: restaurants buzz, bars are at jostling room only, taxis are hard to find, hotels bump up their prices and their lobbies are all a-chatter with deals being struck. And then there are the shows. But it was actually away from the fashion hum that we had one of those meetings that make you realise the enduring strengths of Italy.

Silvio Albini is the fifth generation in a family business, Cottonificio Albini, that makes arguably the best cotton shirting in the world. Over lunch he told us how he works with farmers in Egypt to continually improve the raw material; how he employs 850 people in and around the town of Albino where the company is based; how he has stuck with quality and had never done battle with the Chinese megafactories. His story is one of investment, family, craft, commitment to place and a love of what he does. By the time he'd finished talking, a round of applause

would have been fitting (instead we commissioned a film for *monocle.com*).

This is the side of Italy that has been absent from the media coverage of that nation for far too long. You can soon forget that Italy is still very good at a lot of things. It's one of the reasons that we decided that now is the right time to do a special Italian-focused issue of MONOCLE (following on from our 2013 Germany issue and 2012 Lusophone-world one). Another trigger is the departure of Silvio Berlusconi from the premiership and the realignment that's slowly taking place in everything from politics to media. Where, we wondered, is Italy heading? Is this a fresh start or more of the same?

The survey of Italy that you will find across the following pages is robust and hopefully surprising: we'll take you on board the *Cavour*, Italy's new aircraft carrier (something the British certainly don't have at their disposal), get you to meet the students at the best-in-class Bocconi business school and drop in on Schweitzer, probably the ultimate shop fitter in the world.

MAESTROS OF THE UNIVERSE —Italy

Preface

Its cuisine is known the world over and everyone aspires to drive Italian-designed cars. Here are 10 areas in which, economic woes notwithstanding, Italy leads the way.

WRITER

Aisha Speirs

ILLUSTRATOR

Tomi Um

Assailed by political scandals and economic crisis over the past few years, Italy's standing in the business world has taken a bit of a beating. But while Italy may be slipping from being Europe's second-biggest manufacturer to being its third (thanks to growth in the UK), it remains a country employing millions of workers – many highly skilled – in the manufacture of specialist or luxury items. And unlike some countries where businesses are built to be sold, Italian families tend to pass their enterprises onto the next generation.

From specialist farming equipment to fine fabrics, Italy still holds a top spot in the world of commerce and, as home to some of history's most important art and architecture as well as many of today's most powerful design houses, its position as a global cultural leader is also looking secure. — (M)



01 Diaspora and soft power

Spreading it around

Few countries have produced emigrants who so faithfully spread their culture as Italy. Travel around Sydney, São Paulo or New York and you won't have to go far to find Italians and their descendants proud to promote their heritage in films, restaurants and design studios. Whether it's a jar of pesto in our kitchen or an object we use daily, Italy has produced, exported and promoted its people and products better than arguably any other nation.



02 Family business

Winning the generation game

In an era when many family firms are seeing their younger generations quit or sell out, Italy is leading the way by keeping it in the family. The most recent report published by the Associazione Italiana della Aziende Familiari, a network of Italian family businesses, shows that these companies employed just under one in three employees of Italian firms and accounted for 82 per cent of the country's businesses.



03 Textiles

Material benefits

Despite the threat from cheap production in more recently industrialized countries, Italy's textile industry still has a reputation for high quality. Italy has spent centuries perfecting textile and yarn production. Last year, LVMH paid €2bn for an 80 per cent stake in Loro Piana, a family owned company that has been trading wools and textiles for three centuries. Then there's Cotonificio Albini, the leader in cotton shirting (watch out for a forthcoming Monocle film on the company).



04 Engineering products – agricultural equipment

Farming it out

From rotary hoes and power harrows to specialist hazelnut harvesters and machines designed to cultivate biomass for renewable energy, Italy engineers some of the most diverse agricultural equipment in the world. With last year's sales of Italian farm machinery valued at more than €7bn, manufacturers have their eyes on the US.



05 Automobile design

Driving the economy

Italy has produced some of the most celebrated car designers of the modern era. Designers such as Giorgetto Giugiaro, who started the Studi Italiani Realizzazione in Turin, were responsible for everything from the Fiat Punto to the Lotus Esprit.

Having fought its way back to making profit last year, Turin design giant Pininfarina has diversified its operation to cope with changing times. It started out as a coachbuilder in 1930 and the company

closed its car manufacturing plants a few years ago to focus all its energy on design. With iconic Italian designs such as the 1960s Alfa Romeo Spider and the 1980s Ferrari Testarossa under the belt, the family-owned company has now turned to the buoyant Chinese market. It opened an office in Shanghai's automotive district in 2010 and China is now an important market for Pininfarina.

TAILORED TO PERFECTION

Albini Group, Italy

Family lies at the core of the Albini Group, which was founded in 1876 near Bergamo, Italy. It is now run by fifth-generation owners (and brothers) Andrea, Stefano Silvio and Fabio (below, left to right), who safeguard a longstanding tradition of weaving the finest shirting textiles in Italy alone.

Albini's specialists scour the world from Barbados to Egypt to source the very best materials, including the rare Giza 45 cotton seed known as the Queen of Egypt. Its long and resistant fibre makes it possible to spin the finest threads, in turn allowing for the most exquisite clothing. No wonder Albini is the preferred choice for the most discerning of bespoke tailors worldwide. Its clientele includes royal shirt-makers Turnbull & Asser in the UK, Hong Kong's Ascot Chang and Italian menswear brand Zegna.

In 2012, Albini teamed up with the Niggeler & Küpfer group to produce the highest quality yarn in the nearby village of Ceto. With roots firmly planted in a rich heritage, this is a firm that relentlessly strives to raise the bar.

1876

Zaffiro Borgomanero founds Z Borgomanero & C with 40 looms and 44 workers

1890

Borgomanero leaves company to nephew Giovanni Albini, who becomes the president of the Bergamo Chamber of Commerce

1930

Semi-automatic looms are introduced to the company, allowing it to weather the Great Depression

1992

Acquires UK brands Thomas Mason, David & John Anderson and Ashton Shirtings

2009-2010

Starts cultivating cotton at its source: in Egypt

2012

Sets up new facility near Brescia to spin Albini cotton into yarn



Francesco Moreschi, Italian entrepreneur, wearing an Oxford shirt by Cotonificio Albini



Italian chef Davide Oldani in a linen and Egyptian cotton Cotonificio Albini shirt



01



03



02



04



05



06



07



09



08



10



11

MADE TO MEASURE

Egyptian cotton

Precision is integral to every stage of production for Albini, right down to the choice of seed. It's the only firm with its own cotton production in Egypt, where Giza 45 and 87 are farmed. Only 350 bales of Giza 45 are produced annually in the world – and the vast majority of those are courtesy of Albini.

The materials are processed with sophisticated technologies to become the firm's exquisite extra-long staple cotton fabrics. They are held in high esteem for their silky feel that defies the conventions of laundering by actually improving with each wash cycle. Each shirt made with Albini cloth is a tribute to perfection.

COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

The brands

In addition to its flagship Cotonificio Albini brand, the Albini Group acquired UK textile labels Thomas Mason, David & John Anderson and Ashton Shirtings in 1992; eight years later, Albiate 1830 from Milan also joined the fold.

These brands share more than 1,000 years of fabric-manufacturing history. It's a wealth of knowledge that Albini builds on with constant research and innovation in its bid to create ever-better products.

01 The very beginning of the process: cotton seeds

02 Picking cotton in Egypt

03 Close up of the cotton flower

04 Inside Albini Group's Bergamo factory

05 Technological innovation plays a major part

06 Albini Group's fabrics are rigorously tested

07 Denim shirt from Albiate 1830

08 Millennium Star fabric from David & John Anderson

09 Cullinan fabric from David & John Anderson

10 Spadari boutique shop front in Milan

11 Thomas Mason book from the archive

Albini
GROUP

WWW.ALBINIGROUP.COM

Oxford shirt

£145

The cotton is made by Italian fabric maker Cottonificio Albini, which even developed a bespoke colour for this classic shirt.

Colour: Classic white and Oxford blue

Sizes: XS to XL

Made in: Italy



**MONOCLE
VOYAGE**

Monocle's first fashion collection is tailored for travellers. Whether it's a basic T-shirt or more refined travel jacket, Monocle's team chose the finest materials from Japan and Italy to create beautiful and functional pieces. They're comfortable for on-the-go wear, in-flight or on foot and the classic colours mean you can wear the whole collection or mix and match. For more information, visit monocle.com/shop

