



Nouveau Modèle Interview: Anne Fontaine

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Transcribed and translated by Shannon Sullivan for the Anne Fontaine Foundation

CC: Hello Anne, thank you so much for having me-- at your home, no less—to record this podcast. When I was preparing for our discussion, I had a lot of questions in my head because you've had an incredible journey that we'll touch on throughout our discussion. But I'd like to begin with a little about you and your journey before talking about your brand and the Anne Fontaine Foundation. So unless I'm mistaken, you were born to a Brazilian mother and a French-German father, and I was wondering how these different cultures influenced the person that you are today.

AF: Yes, yes, hello, I'm thrilled to have you here. Obviously, you have a lot of cultural blends—I can say that actually, my French heritage is more linked to the art of living in the French way, an appreciation of elegance in a natural sense, and more than that, also the pleasure of French taste, as they say, and my more Germanic heritage, it's more so... my more disciplined side—

CC: That's more practical—

AF: Exactly, it helps from time to time, and I especially think that, sometimes a little more than my origins, it concerns particularly the defense of the environment—

CC: That's great.

AF: I have very precise views. Actually, my Brazilian heritage is sprinkled in with all of that... with a lot of joy, happiness, and always the *joie de vivre* and never lacking.

CC: That's awesome, it's a good mix. And so you yourself, you were born in Brazil. What was it like to grow up in Brazil?

AF: It was... For me, it was wonderful. I really enjoy nature, and my garden was actually the Mata Atlântica, all of its smells, all its colors, its magnificent trees, its sublime birds, I only have good memories.

CC: Okay. And at 17, 18 years old, around there, you decided to live, to spend six months in the Amazonian forest with the tribes. Why did you make this decision? Because from the outside, it can seem a little radical, to say, "Okay, I'm going to spend six months in the Amazonian forest." How did you make this decision?

AF: To start off, I was always passionate about nature. I was an activist for Amazonian natives, and Mom took me out, I was about to celebrate my 18th birthday at the time, and Mom said, "Now you have to go to France." And I said, "Mom, first, I want to take a sabbatical, I would like to get to know my birth country a little more, Brazil, I love this country." And she told me, "Listen, sweetie, you can't do everything in life, you have to..." So I actually decided to run away. My kids better not hear this—I left

with a friend, I threw my backpack out the window and I called mom from the road, I said, “Mom, sorry, I absolutely have to go on this trip, it’s something really important for me, I love you, I love the whole family, but I have to go.” There you go. I left for a year-long trip, and my goal was really to be able to live with the natives of the Amazon.

CC: Wow, that’s so brave, at least told like that-- I don’t know if that’s how you felt at the time, but...

AF: I think that, when you’re a teenager, sometimes you don’t realize the danger of things. I wouldn’t love for my daughter to do that, but, at the time, I was ready, and I left. And especially... Mom talked about my grandfather, her mother—her mother was from native Amazonian origins. So I wanted to find my roots, because the majority of Brazilians are from Europe, there are Spanish people, French or Portuguese people, and I had this origin that was really from the Native Americans of the Amazon. I absolutely wanted to find those roots, too. So in addition to loving nature, wanting to discover it even more, I wanted to find my origins.

CC: Okay. What did you take from this experience, if you had to describe a little bit what happened during this year?

AF: Well... can I tell some stories from my time there, or do I have to keep it short?

CC: No, no, you can tell some stories, of course!

AF: In detail or not at all?

CC: In detail, yes! I’m certainly interested in knowing.

AF: Okay, you have to know that, in Brazil, at this time, the Native Americans were already—when I discovered them, they were on reservations. The government demarcated their land, and there was always a house of white people who were there to survey them, to help them, and so on. I found a region, the Rio Tapajós, a magnificent river—it’s green, you can’t imagine... it’s sublime. And I knew that there was a large concentration of Native Americans who lived on the Rio Tapajós and I went in their direction, I went across Brazil in every way you can imagine: on foot, by bus, everything. And I arrived in this place where I had sought so long to be, and when I arrived, I was sought out by the government house that normally welcomes the Native Americans who sometimes came to trade. And so I come to this house, and I only see Native Americans wearing t-shirts with the Brazilian soccer teams on them, and I say, “What is happening?” They had bottles of Cachaça in their hands, I said, “There it is, it’s over, I can’t find Native Americans in the way that I imagined anymore.” And suddenly, I hear a birdsong in this sordid place. And then a small native shows up, running, and who was looking for me, who takes me by the hand and brings me behind in another room of the house. There are, when I enter, I see “real” Native Americans like I had always... I imagined how they could be—they didn’t speak Portuguese, they spoke their dialect—

CC: Their language, yes.

AF: And this small native, he was the translator, and the *cacique*, the chief of the tribe, he said, “I want you to join my tribe.” So that... I was so happy, thrilled, and he said, “It doesn’t happen immediately, we’ll tell you when it’s going to happen.” And first, there was a government car, where you traveled all day and came to the edge of the forest, and from there you had three days and three nights of walking. And while we were going on foot, in the forest, we sometimes stopped a little at night because we were

still tired. I didn't have any experience with walking like they had, and we had set up a camp and they had to—we made a sort of... clearing, we put the hammocks on the trees, and we made a fire in the center to protect ourselves from the animals and everything, and I was sitting on the ground. It wasn't too late at night, and one of the tribesmen said, "You have to get up in your hammock." And I said, "No, I'm okay on the ground," and he said, "No, you have to come up, look around you." And there were—like in a horror film—there were tons of scorpions that were coming out because they had just cleared the trees, and all of the insects, actually, were coming out from everywhere, finding a new—

CC: A refuge, or something.

AF: A refuge. We had just invaded it, and I see all that, I quickly got up in my hammock—

CC: I'm sure!

AF: These little stories, just to say that nature is always present.

CC: Of course.

AF: I'll keep it condensed, because six days, it was really interesting, and we were supposed to come to the tribe, we got there in the evening, it was already—night had already fallen, and when we get there, we saw all of the tribespeople who were coming to welcome us, and I see a tribesman who seems to me to be the oldest, with white hair, very long, and who looks and me and says, "We've been waiting for you." So I said, "Waiting for me, how is this possible? There's no radio here, no telephone, there's nothing." I didn't get into it, we left, we were so tired, and the next morning, he told me that the shaman had announced my arrival. He explained to me, this man who later became my Native American father, he said, "Here, you join a family, you cannot stay with us if you aren't a part of this family. Me, I want to adopt you. And after, when you go out after, we'll have a baptism so that you can be part of our family." So every morning, I had Apanikra classes—that was their language, to be able to communicate with my family. They were very organized, actually; I lived at the home of this tribesman who was the wisest, as they said, of the tribal elders, and he spoke Portuguese. He had learned to speak Portuguese. And every morning, the whole tribe was organized—everyone had what they had to do, everything that needed to be done that day: "You, you're going to—today, you're going gathering, we're going fishing"... fishing, it was—I love to talk about fishing, because fishing, it was really meant for women, because water is a sacred element in this tribe, and we would go to the highest point of the river, there was a long walk, so it took all day, and when you got there, you foraged for roots that made the fish "go to sleep," as my tribal father said. You would put these roots in the water, and they would asphyxiate the fish, which would rise to the surface. On the other hand, he told me, "You have to run faster than the water." Because, in fact, the fish that you get—there were cascades, and sometimes you had to leave the water, run, and dive back in to be able to continue catching the fish that jumped out of the water. So that was only for the women to do, and the men, they had a basket on the side, and the women, we wove these sort of materials made from tree bark, and you would knot it around your neck to catch the fish. He said that you shouldn't drink the water; everything you fished would come to the surface because [we were actually using] a poison. So there was that. So no matter the situation, whenever the Native Americans spoke, everything they said was important. Me, I wasn't afraid because the only danger when you're running in the forest is to be bitten by a snake, and our shaman was known in all of the other tribes for being able to care for snakebites. He himself had been bitten seventeen times. I was completely unaware, I was a teenager, and I would run completely... I thought, in any case, if I get bitten,

he'll take care of me. There you have it. On the other hand, the only thing that I really suffered from was... as a young person—how shall I say, I had fresh skin, I didn't have calluses like they did, I caught tons of little animals that would get in my skin and I had to pull them out every night.

CC: Okay.

AF: Then there was the little local obligation—actually, I'll summarize all of the details a little... we were going to swim in the river, and I left with the kids, because I was considered a *coromi*—that's a little kid, and I'll just tell this story: the kids would climb into the trees, really high, and then they jumped into the river, and it was in this magnificent tree that was on the edge of the river, and they told me, "Go ahead, you have to come up." So I said, "Oh, me, going up in that tree, all alone." They helped me climb it, but after, you had to—there was a giant trunk, and you had to run and jump into the water. And I had a fear of heights, it was rather high, and I actually still remember, I didn't want to say I couldn't do it. I was a fighter, and I hugged this really strong tree, and I said, "Give me the courage to do it like they did, without any fear." I breathed deeply, and suddenly I felt this enormous courage, I ran from the trunk and I flung myself into the water, and it was wonderful. It was like I was liberated from myself. So then, for a little story after, we started preparing for my baptism, and for the tribes, the Caneles, you actually lose your child's name and you become a bird. You're covered in feathers, you have feathers everywhere on your body—the front of your legs are red, like a bird's beak, and the ceremony is performed by the men for the women, and by the women for the men. It's because, normally, it's during puberty that it happens, this baptism, and there's a strong resin that they use from the trees, it's a type of—it's a vibrant emerald, it smells so good, and I—it happened at 4 o'clock in the morning, my baptism, the beginning of the baptism, and the men started putting this glue on the women's bodies, and the women started putting it on the men's bodies. Then, you started putting on the feathers, and at the end, you're completely—you feel like a bird. [laughs]

CC: That's so funny!

AF: And this resin, it's actually really, really, really strong, I put it right in my hands and—how do you say, I—

CC: Breathed it in, inhaled it, yeah.

AF: Breathed it in, there you go, and I was in a whole other world.

CC: Okay. [laughs]

AF: So it was totally hallucinogenic, and I just remember my father, because I began to panic a little, he said, "Be careful, she could die, it's dangerous, she's not used to it, don't leave her..." And he brought me outside, and after, I—unfortunately, I didn't see my baptism, I was in another world—

CC: Bummer! [laughs]

AF: I—just after, they told me how it went, and I had a fantastic trip in the trees... anyway, that's another story, I could write a book, it's too long to tell you everything—

CC: No, it's so interesting, there's a real, incredible relationship with nature.

AF: Exactly.

CC: Or, rather, the earth, which is—it's pretty incredible, I think, the relationship that there is with nature, the earth, and everything that is around us.

AF: Exactly. And actually, tradition says that when you receive your name [at the baptism], it's someone else's name that they give you, someone who was important in the tribe, according to your personality, and I was given the name "Cocoi." Cocoi was actually a Native American who was a warrior, someone who always fought for the tribe.

CC: Okay. Yeah, that's so interesting. Do you still use this name, or is it more of a spiritual name?

AF: It's more of a spiritual name for me.

CC: So all in all, there's a real... like, you are passionate by everything that is nature, the planet, the environment, does that still carry over in your daily life today, this engagement and then this amazing experience that you had in the Amazonian Forest?

AF: Yes, of course. In my daily life, I am... I was thinking of my Germanic side... recycling, for me, is very important, the education of my children... For me, you have to use the least possible single-use products, my children grew up on that, and we go to Brazil on vacation in the summer and we always have our garbage bag to collect trash.... In my daily life, I eat sushi, Japanese food, and I always have my [reusable] chopsticks because I can't—it makes me sick to throw out chopsticks each time that I eat Japanese, so it's impossible for me. There you go, some little details about my daily—

CC: Yes, it's great, that's how you—

AF: And of course, with—I wanted, too, to create my foundation.

CC: Of course, in any case we'll come back to that in detail later, and to come back a little bit on the Amazonian Forest today, between the election, the recent political election—well, the political context in Brazil, what are the challenges today, everything that threatens this amazing forest that you lived in?

AF: Myself, I dedicated myself to the Mata Atlântica, because it's one of the most threatened forests today, it's the coastal forest [that runs along] all of Brazil—

CC: Atlantic Forest, you could say, okay.

AF: There you go, Mata Atlântica. We call it the Mata Atlântica. So the tribespeople where I lived, they explained to me that they came from the Mata Atlântica, from the edge of the sea, and slowly, as the white people arrived, that's why they had come to the Amazonian rainforest—[it was] actually to escape the whites.

CC: Okay. So it's the forest of their origin, really.

AF: Exactly. And this forest, today there remains only 7% and we-- well, today, we won't talk about politics, I think it's complicated enough. The new Brazilian government, I think you all know, it is not at all for ecology-- there isn't a Minister of the Environment anymore; now, the Minister of the Environment is the Minister of Agriculture. So, here's hoping that a seed plants in his heart, and that he won't do all that he said. There you go, we'll be positive. In any case, we, as a foundation, my role is to continue to fight to prevent catastrophe. If everyone planted a seed, we would all be happy because there would be forests everywhere. So our goal is to continue, to believe, and to keep on—

CC: And to protect this forest. So now we'll talk a little bit about your brand, because everything is linked, of course, but... So you—aside from your strong dedication, in 1993, I believe, you launched your clothing line. What motivated this choice? And maybe you could explain to us a little how that happened, why you decided to enter into the fashion world, talk a little about that.

AF: Sure. To start, I have to talk about where I began. People often ask me, "Did you study fashion?" Questions like that. I always created my own clothes. I'll tell just a quick story because Mom had bought me a dress for a wedding and I thought it was so ugly, horrible, I was 10 years old, and it [became] my first creation. I cut it, I transformed it, and the day of the wedding I brought out the dress, and my mother said, "Where is this magnificent dress from?" "Mom, I'm the one who made it. It's actually your dress that you bought, I totally transformed it." So there you have it...

CC: That's incredible!

AF: I always had this desire for fashion, I always made clothing for my friends and all that, but I never thought of making it a career because—there are already so many people working in fashion, how could I make my big break? How could I make it happen? Actually, one of my first passions was nature, and I wanted to do biology essentially to protect our nature. So I started out thinking I'd become a biologist, and it was actually a meeting—I always say that Anne Fontaine is above all a love story, because I met my husband, I was coming—I was on a research boat in Monaco because I was studying marine biology, [the boat] was an institute paid for by Prince Rainier of Monaco, because his grandfather was a lover of the sea, and he financed a research boat, and I was doing my studies on this research boat at the same time that I was protecting whales. So I spent six months on land and six at sea, and I—through friends, I met Ari, who is my husband, it was love at first sight, and it was him, actually—in his family, his mother had a production unit that made things for couture, especially men's couture, shirts, things like that. So the story really starts from there. I won't tell any love stories, but in any case, at age 22, we decided to create our own brand. My husband had just taken over the little business, and I said, "Listen, why not, to save this business"—because everyone was starting to outsource fabrication, and the little production unit was starting to struggle, and while we were visiting my mother-in-law, in her attic—I love attics, the atmosphere of attics, finding old things and all that—I found a trunk that she had kept with all of the white shirts that she had made for haute couture, for men, and I said to myself, "There's the idea! We have to bring back the white shirt, we have to do a whole concept with the white shirt." And I said to my husband, "Why not do it, and do a whole collection of white shirts for women?" So then, the white shirt had to become—at the time when I started, there weren't really white shirts on the runway, there was only one group at Yves Saint Laurent that was making a few blouses, Yohji Yamamoto, but otherwise it was the period of mesh, everyone only wanted to make mesh, and I said, "We're going to bring back the white shirt and we're going to have a store with only white shirts."

CC: Okay, so it really started with this product that's still sort of the signature of Anne Fontaine, the white shirt for women.

AF: Exactly.

CC: And so how did that transform—you were talking about the little production unit that was where?

AF: In Brittany.

CC: In Brittany. So today, have you kept this heritage at all, or how have you transformed the business?

AF: Well, first things first, we didn't have a lot of money, we couldn't open a shop at the time. We had friends who said—from his mother's family, who were our ambassadors—and they said, "We can take your collection and we can try to sell it." And that was really popular, that allowed us to have a little bit of cash flow to be able to try and open a store, we opened our first shop on the Rue des Saint-Pères on the Rive Gauche, it was 24m², a world of white shirts. [laughs] There you have it. So that was the first step, it wasn't very easy [but] we had some Japanese [clients] who found the concept amazing and who we—we opened the first year, the second year, we had a shop in Tokyo, in the luxury district, and there you go. Everything started off from there. All of the buildings—this partnership with the Japanese, that allowed us again to have enough cash flow to start a store and actually, from the beginning of that time to today, our second step was to try and open abroad, in the United States, and actually, we said, "Why not try to open in the United States?" I remember, my first shop in the United States was in Boston, and today we have 25 stores in the US and 65 all over the world.

CC: Okay. And so how-- we talked about a small family business—how did a brand that today knows an amazing success-- the story is, I think, amazing, this type of history, we talked about a small business and out of it you made a successful empire. How do you explain this success?

AF: Right off the bat, I think that when you're [looking at it from] the inside, you don't realize, you're in it, you're working at full speed, and I... in one moment, a light bulb went off—since I'd had the luck to live with the Native Americans in the Amazonian Forest, I was a little tired of living in Paris, and I said, "Listen, I want to live outside of Paris." And we found an old press in Normandy, I fell in love with it, and it was also the system of recycling, I said, "I want to recycle an old building, I want to put it back in circulation," and all that, we moved this press to a new area, we rebuilt, and after, I say this reconstructed building, I said, "What the hell am I doing in Paris?" And actually, my—my ideas are always, you have to get out of cities, you have to live in the country and all, and I wanted to create my own tribe and we left, we were—at the beginning, we had about 10 people, and we chose to move, and I—we established our studio in Normandy, it's still there, in Honfleur, and we moved this ten families with us, and after, while arriving in this building, I remember when the work was finished, and we expanded, and when I saw the expansion, we were—we had, I don't know, we had, I didn't realize—after the second expansion, we had 1000 m² surface space, and suddenly, I felt an enormous weight on my shoulders, and I said, "Okay, I can't be bad at this, not one minute, because now, I have how many families to feed?" It was an awareness that suddenly hit me, and when I opened the second part of our—of our warehouses, I said, "Oh, my gosh, it's getting serious, I can't screw this up." So then, I was struck by the gravity, I said, "Okay, now, it's serious, I can't screw up, I can't let myself... there are too many of us." And today, we're about 500 across the world, and there you go, it's this awareness that hit me.

CC: So that boosted you and explains a little—okay. And for—this wasn't in my questions, but it happens sometimes, on the production level—so the products, where are they made, exactly?

AF: We have a production unit in Brittany, and after, we obviously had to expand, and so we have another factory that creates for us in Rouen.

CC: Okay.

AF: And now, I no longer make only white shirts. For a few years, I've started... my customers asked me, since they loved my shirts so much, they said to me, "Make us other things, too, because you do shirts

so well!” So I threw myself in, keeping my white shirts, because it’s... really, I love to make them. I began to make pants, jackets, and so on, and today the whole industry—there aren’t factories in France anymore, there are very few that have survived, as they say, there are a lot of factories that have closed, unfortunately, and everything—jackets, shirts, is made in Eastern Europe.

CC: Okay. Is it you who designs everything?

AF: Yes, today, I still design everything! I have an excellent team in Honfleur, my studio, with my staff who works with me, and I also have a team in Paris that works for me for accessories, because today, I design accessories, and I also work in New York, with a small team in New York as well, that works with me.

CC: Okay. So you have many irons in the fire, because we quickly mentioned it earlier, but you also created a foundation in addition to your brand, which has the same name, the Anne Fontaine Foundation, it was in 2011 and it’s part of the UN’s reforestation program, unless I’m mistaken.

AF: Absolutely.

CC: Why did you choose to start a foundation in addition to your line?

AF: As I was saying before, my time in the Amazonian forest is something that is still very close to my heart, and when I began to have a certain authority with regards to my line and ready-to-wear, I said, “I have to do some sort of give back.” I wanted, with my foundation, to plant trees. I am part of the UN program to replant our planet, and another thing that is close to my heart is that it is principally through art, I think that it is always better to talk about environmental protection through art projects to sort of open everyone’s eyes, to try and plant a little seed in people’s hearts.

CC: That’s great.

AF: And there you have it, every year I still do—I actually created a “Forest Day” in my shops; we celebrate the forest and I invite all of my clients to come during Forest Day and I give 50% of all of my sales across the world for the Foundation, to continue its project of tree plantation, so that’s a really great event that is close to my heart, I always do it. We also hold art auctions from artists—I have a lot of artist friends who have made magnificent works for us around trees, and I have another project that I love, “One Two Tree.” It’s a project around children, from schools in New York and Brazil, and we always invite researchers who—nature is their career—who come to speak about nature with these children to try and raise their awareness [of the importance of nature], because tomorrow’s world is theirs too, and they need to realize it.

CC: And I believe that you also work locally with farmers, you were saying, with NGOs...

AF: Yes, so we have several associations that we try to support in their projects. We work locally with farmers because the farmers, it’s a—you know, if you don’t change the local population, the protection of nature will never happen. And [something else that is] important: save water sources, water sources everywhere. If you don’t have any forest around water sources, trees, the water sources will disappear. You have fountains, all these things, small lakes and so on, it’s very important to keep the forests around that. So we work with a project in order to allow the reforestation of water sources near farmers.

CC: And so that is in the Mata Atlântica.

AF: Yes, in the Mata Atlântica.

CC: Okay. And you were saying, there is only 7% of the initial surface area, and so—well, I find that... when I see this number, that drives me crazy, I say to myself, “It’s crazy to see our nature disappear like that.” But what are the dangers of the disappearance of the forest, concretely? I imagine on the local populations, but even for climate change in a general sense...

AF: Completely. Today, you have to know that these forests—especially the Mata Atlântica, it’s a reservoir of fantastic species that are often endemic. And whether it be flora or fauna, we will lose all of this vast nature that—the Native Americans, they always say that in nature, you find everything, everything that you need. So that is already a loss, simply with regards to the species, biodiversity is completely in danger, but there is also the problem of—we are always talking about our problem with the consumption of... not the consumption of, how shall I say, our CO₂ emissions. In any case, we are losing our forests; our planet is in danger. We are putting our forests in danger. Today, I think that we still aren’t fully aware of that. We need a lot of information, a lot, a lot, a lot of information.

CC: And this deforestation, what is it due to?

AF: Today, for the wood industry, just to plant... to make pastureland for cows... Today, we have to diminish our [CO₂ emissions]. Even as a family here, we tell our kids, “We aren’t going to eat animals, we are going to try to decrease our meat consumption,” we are not big meat consumers anymore, but if everyone participated a little, that would help lower all of this consumption.

CC: Yes, I totally agree.

AF: So today, at the [fashion] house, too, we said, “Three times per week, we will make a vegetarian meal.”

CC: Yes, that’s great. It’s also good to educate children from the beginning; to instill all of these values in them is great. And in total, do you know how many trees you have planted, or...?

AF: If I’m not mistaken, we are at 45,000. We are trying to... this year, we are going to celebrate a cool event, called the “Green Attitude [Gala].” The Green Attitude will—it’s an initiative of the artist Pascal Blondeau, a friend, that will be under the patronage of our dear Ambassador Gérard Araud, it will take place in Washington, DC at the French Embassy on March 21. We are going to really launch it, “the Voice of Women,” the Green Attitude too, and we hope, with this event, to plant even more trees.

CC: I hope so! You said, “the voice of women,” that’s the title of the event, so is this also a subject that especially interests you, women and pushing them to the forefront, this type of thing, is this something that is close to your heart?

AF: I think that—you know, even in the Native American tribes, you always [refer to] “Mother Nature.” Women—I think of the fact that women can conceive children, carry them, women have a very important role to play in every culture. It’s she who goes to find water, in wells, in water sources, it’s she who always has this initiative to maintain family life, so it’s something fundamental. For me, women... I am—I create for women and I think that women really have a role to play in the protection of our planet.

CC: Okay. And then, I wanted to also know how we can contribute to the foundation, for the listeners who are tuning in.

AF: Of course! You can always go to see our website, come to the gala on March 21, participate in our events that we hold throughout the year, come volunteer with us and give a little of your time, donations, voilà, everything is open. Come see us, the work we do around children, I am counting on you to come help us if you have some time and you love trees and nature.

CC: Awesome. I'm sure that you can find all of the information on the website, and I will put the address in the episode notes, in "Details," and I also wanted to ask you, what link—because, clearly, there is the foundation, but between your engagement for ecology, for nature, the environment, and your fashion design, is there something that you are inspired by, what are the links between the two, between your love for the environment and the creation of your clothing?

AF: Today, we really have in mind some projects that are coming out with regards to new fabrics that pollute less, things like that, and you know that we are an industry that pollutes a lot, unfortunately, but my creations are always an homage to nature, I use a lot of elements... small animals, little insects, on my cufflinks, and of course we try to be, as much as possible, ecological, I have in my line and certain lines, but—it's still anecdotal because today, you know that in the industry, new solutions have to be provided. We have certain lines with organic cotton, things like that, but we intend [to do] a lot more to be able to make ourselves a little more green in our industry.

CC: So what are the paths—you want to explore to become more green, is that in the way of new materials, is it reducing waste, is it...

AF: You know, we sometimes use plastics too, we try to recycle locally, to avoid plastic everywhere, to use the least amount possible, even on the level of our shops... You know too, I think that—you live in the United States, you see the waste that we can have—

CC: Yes, it's insane.

AF: You know, when I visited one of my shops, they were using, each time that they went to drink some water, a plastic bottle. So I said, "This [cannot be] possible." So we bought glass cups for all of the shops, I said "We cannot use [plastic]"—sometimes, they still bring out plastic when I get there and I say, "What is all of this plastic?!" You know, you just need—you need information, sometimes it's basic things, everyday [stuff], that are fundamental for us to be able to make change. If each one of us, in our daily actions, we change, that would already make a huge difference for our planet. And obviously, with my foundation, I give a lot to plant trees, for the education of young children, so that we can make... I try to have a "green attitude," be it in my daily life or around my business, through my foundation.

CC: To make things move, yes, it's great. And to talk a little bit about your creative process, you live—you have lived in a lot of cities, so—New York, we talked about Honfleur too, in Brazil, of course—do all of these cities influence your creation today? And when you design your clothes, do you find a little of these influences in your clothes?

AF: For sure. I think that, since I've lived in New York, my creation has changed slightly. I am inspired by other things, of course, the city, the colors, I love to look at people when they pass on the street, but I still have a nostalgia for the period between the 1920s and 1950s that is still deep within me, the

sublime woman, femme fatale, of the time. You know, the history of the white shirt interests me a lot because, at the beginning, they were night shirts in the 17th century, but after that, this white shirt, it allowed the recognition of social class, it was on every man, according to the collar that he wore, it appeared just on the collar and the wrist, and after, the period of Hollywood actresses, it became more so... how can I say it... it was trying to put women on the same level as men. Women wanted to begin wearing white shirts in an androgynous way to be able to—I can't say the war of the sexes—to be between the feminine and the masculine, to be able to put themselves at the same eminence as men, and that was at the time of Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo. And after, there was the more glamorous period, with Marilyn Monroe who wore a more feminine shirt...

CC: Tied at the waist, this type of—

AF: ... A little more glamorous. This is also the time of Audrey Hepburn. So my inspiration, it's these women who played their role, too, that take on a greater meaning with the white shirt.

CC: Okay. And that is perfect for my last question, the one I always ask my guests: Do you have role models? Are these women your role models, or do you have others?

AF: I have these women for fashion role models, and then I have women who were more... you know, in France, for those who are familiar, it's Mother Teresa, she was someone whom I always respected enormously, she was a woman who had a giant heart, and this woman always inspired.

CC: Okay. So that, she's a little your—our model in addition to all of these women who inspire you for creation.

AF: Not for creation, for my life.

CC: In addition, of course, for your personal life.

AF: Exactly.

CC: Well, thank you so much for your time!

AF: Thank you!