



**Claudio Silvestrin Architects**

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## CLAUDIO SILVESTRIN / SELECTED INTERVIEWS



### ITALIAN INTERVIEWS

INTERVISTA DI LORELLA MONCHI PER BMM ITALIA (12.01.2005)

#### **Architetto ... cosa significa per lei 'moda'?**

CS: moda credo significhi cio' che va per la maggiore nella cultura contemporanea, non e' esclusiva dell'abbigliamento o degli stilisti.

La moda e' una specie di religione, superficiale e passeggera, il cui fine e' il consumismo fine a se stesso.

#### **Trova possibile tracciare un parallelo tra moda e architettura, moda e design?**

CS: tempo addietro si; oggi non ci sono linee parallele: e' tutto un intreccio, un vortice, uno "spaghetti junction" per usare un'espressione inglese.

#### **Tendenza prima, moda poi . Siamo su due livelli diversi, credo. Secondo lei c'è un prima in architettura, ossia un periodo in cui uno o pochi grandi protagonisti 'precorrono', 'inventano'?**

CS: spesso la tendenza parte da pochi iniziatori. Un tempo l'inventiva ed il talento creativo erano l'essenza. Oggi mi sembra che la capacita' di fare pubbliche relazioni sia piu' determinate o addirittura l'unica cosa che conta.

#### **Ritiene che il concetto 'moda' intervenga solo al secondo livello (penso al minimalismo come a molte altre correnti) e che possa in qualche modo snaturare**

**l'intimo contenuto dell'invenzione originale? O c'è una Moda con la M maiuscola che quando diventa moda con la m minuscola si esaurisce?**

#### **Quanto va perduto nel**

**passaggio da tendenza a modello consolidato da imitare?**

CS: spesso l'invenzione non ha fini mercantili o consumistici, quindi e' normale che la sua origine venga snaturata. Non penso ci sia una Moda con la M maiuscola ed una con la m minuscola, oppure, se esistono, ambedue muoiono in fretta perche' e' nella natura della moda autodistruggersi per dare spazio alla moda a seguire. E' questo, penso, parte del suo fascino.

**Pochi grandi nomi dicevamo...succede mai che, al pari dei grandi stilisti, voi, maestri dell'architettura e del design, vi incontriate per definire strategie e trend? I movimenti, o una qualche unitarietà di linguaggio rintracciabile per periodi tra i grandi dell'architettura, pur con tutte le differenze del caso, sono frutto di una precisa scelta o nascono spontaneamente?**

CS: vi sono i club per i designer e gli architetti. Nel medioevo, per esempio, esisteva una massoneria, a cui si deve gran parte dell'architettura che oggi ammiriamo.

Oggi vi sono i club o logge che sono piu' di natura politica, di pubbliche relazioni, di marketing. Contemporaneamente c'e' qualche lupo solitario sia nell'architettura che tra gli stilisti.

**Quanto conta l'essere glamorous del committente (Armani, Calvin Klein...) per lei? E' un vincolo o uno stimolo?**

CS: lavorare con i creativi e tra creativi e' soprattutto stimolante.

**Cosa significa essere Claudio Silvestrin l'Architetto con la A maiuscola del Minimalismo (sempre maiuscolo)?**

CS: preferirei essere conosciuto per il mio operare significativo. Non mi identifico con uno stile.

**Diciamolo, come Coco Chanel negli anni venti (e trenta), Giorgio Armani negli ottanta, Tom Ford nei novanta, Claudio Silvestrin, col Minimalismo, ha anticipato ciò che sarebbe divenuto 'di moda' in architettura. Questo le piace, non le piace o la lascia indifferente?**

CS: a queste cose non penso. Faccio e creo indipendentemente dalla moda. La moda comunque rende superficiale un pensiero profondo, rende semplicistico cio' che e' semplice, rende effimero cio' che dura nel tempo.

**Ma soprattutto (visto il trend dell'ultimo periodo che si oppone con decisione al rigore minimalista) cosa dobbiamo aspettarci per il futuro da Claudio Silvestrin?**

CS: neodecorativismo e decostruttivismo moriranno nel giro di una decina d'anni, il riduttivismo e' all'ultimo respiro. L'intento della mia opera non e' minimalista ma al di la' del tempo e come tale, ci riconduce agli archetipi primordiali che accompagnano l'evoluzione della mente, del pensiero, della coscienza.

Il futuro e' roseo.

**Che relazione c'è tra design ed emozione? Design e poesia?**

CS: Una grande architettura deve darti emozioni, deve renderti silenzioso. Credo che negli spazi che ho progettato 'ci si senta bene'. Si percepisce un'energia che forse non si trova in altri spazi. E questo feeling è per tutti ed è aperto a tutti.

**Crede che il design ha dei limiti? È possibile renderlo durevole nel tempo, permettere che resista alle stagioni delle mode e delle tendenze?**

CS: Se si è ispirati dalla semplicità, dalle forme arcaiche, dai materiali naturali...credo di sì, che sia possibile.

**La creazione di un architetto può rispondere, provocare o essere l'immagine speculare del mondo che ci circonda. Lei cosa cerca di trasmettere?**

CS: Cerco di dare emozioni anche spiazzando le aspettative, il conformismo, i preconcetti. Faccio in modo che la sorpresa, strettamente collegata all'originalità, sia una componente del progetto."

**A cosa suole ispirarsi nei suoi lavori?**

CS: La mia fonte d'ispirazione etico-progettuale viene dalle grandi architetture del passato soprattutto di carattere religioso.

Ma non solo: la saggiastica, la filosofia, la poesia e, a volte, la lettura del quotidiano sono altrettanti incentivi per il mio pensiero creativo e per le mie scelte progettuali.

**È difficile esprimere attraverso l'architettura il proprio pensiero, il proprio essere senza doversi adeguare agli standard convenzionali?**

CS: In un progetto conta molto l'integrità del progettista. Le difficoltà ci sono eccome, ma con un animo tenace si superano.

**Il mestiere dell'architetto lo vive come una vocazione?**

CS: E' una vocazione.

**Nel suo lavoro preferisce ogni volta cimentarsi in qualcosa di nuovo o si ispira a progetti che già ha realizzato?**

CS: Preferisco innovazione e creatività all'interno di una disciplina di solidi principi.

**Di cosa ha bisogno un progetto/oggetto per riscuotere successo, per essere considerato "grande"?**

CS: Tempo, fortuna.

**Quale importanza ha per lei adoperare determinati materiali piuttosto che altri?**

CS: Uso sempre materiali naturali cercando di mantenere la loro bellezza e valore.

Materie semplici e puri sono senza tempo.

**Quanto conta un team che collabori nelle sue realizzazioni?**

CS: Moltissimo.

**Qual'è il "suo" concetto di minimalismo? E di bellezza estetica nel mondo del design/architettura?**

CS: Va chiarito che c'è una tendenza che potremmo chiamare "minimale freddo" (anglosassone) e un'altra che potremmo chiamare "minimale caldo" (mediterraneo). Io mi riconosco in quest'ultima.

Le caratteristiche della mia architettura sono:

- lo spazio generoso (inteso come vuoto o massa d'aria);
- l'atmosfera della luce naturale;
- poco arredo per avere equilibrio tra spazio ed oggetti;
- prospettive e viste pulite, costruite con una geometria rigorosa;

- gli arredi elegantissimi con una configurazione architettonica anziché di decoro;
- la mancanza di ornamento;
- materiali naturali, allo stato semigrezzo, senza protettivi plastici.

Per quanto riguarda la bellezza, tendo ad un bello che vada al di là delle opinioni.

**Per concludere, cito una frase di Montale: “Mai l’uomo ha deciso qualcosa devota proprio senza un profondo sgomento. Se qualcosa da pace all’uomo è il sentirse agito, mosso.....”Condivide queste parole? Come si sente quando crea qualcosa che sfugge agli stereotipi del mondo convenzionale?**

CS: La scossa ci vuole, come ci vuole la pioggia per ammirare l’arcobaleno. Interrogare gli stereotipi e le convenzioni è segno di libertà, ti fa sentire che non sei passivo, che non sei una pecora, che il tuo animo è vivo.

**Ho letto il suo testo lo no! e mi piacerebbe partire proprio da lì, dal concetto dell'architettura scelta per vocazione come un ponte tra terra e cielo, tra uomo e natura "come un modo di fare poesia sulla terra e con la terra". Come riesce ad alimentare questo atteggiamento, questa posizione idealista pur operando in un settore che deve dialogare con l'industria, con il pubblico con "il cliente"?**

C.S: Conta l'intenzione del progettista; pubblico o privato, industria o artigiano non cambia nulla. E' l'atteggiamento, l'intenzione, l'integrità, questo è ciò che conta. Tengo a precisare che non è una posizione idealista.

**Secondo me rende di più la versione inglese del suo pezzo, quando dice che le forme dell'architettura contemporanea sono "separated from the stars", perché viviamo in una civiltà materialista dalle forme perverse istituzionalizzate. I suoi volumi essenziali, allora, la sua attitudine al minimalismo – come la definisce Vignelli – è una reazione spontanea, un'esigenza profonda rispetto a questo genere di "intorno"? Nasce con lei o si è perfezionata strada facendo?**

C.S: La forma e la geometria della mia opera (che è stata etichettata minimalista dai media) non è una reazione. Semplicemente, è un modo di essere. E' azione e non reazione.

**Se ho ben inteso Lei vive e lavora a Londra soprattutto: è stata una scelta casuale, una logica conseguenza, oppure ha voluto impostare la sua attività scegliendo un centro di gravità più internazionale e metropolitano, più aperto sicuramente di quanto non sia Milano, per esempio? E Lei come si definisce, come vede se stesso, sente radici italiane nel suo modo di progettare o, come dire, è cittadino del mondo e ragiona in termini allargati rispetto anche alle esigenze del pubblico a cui è rivolta la sua attività?**

C.S: Come ha detto lei giustamente, Londra è un centro di gravità internazionale multiculturale: ti apre la mente! Si possono avere radici italiane ed essere, contemporaneamente, cittadini del mondo. Di nuovo, è l'atteggiamento che conta.

**Saltando dal grande al piccolo, dalle forme dell'architettura d'esterno a quelle per la casa, mi hanno colpito le sue cucine per Minotti che – mi corregga se sbaglio – mi pare costituiscano un debutto nel settore. Mi può raccontare come è nato il progetto, come ha cominciato a pensare all'ambiente cucina dove i materiali che Lei utilizza giocano un ruolo quasi seducente, possiamo dire. Cosa l'ha impegnata maggiormente, quali sono stati gli aspetti più importanti da affrontare per la realizzazione.**

C.S: Il progetto, commissionato da Alberto Minotti, è frutto di un pensiero che esprime alcuni valori.

La terra, le sue acque, le sue foreste, le sue montagne, è straordinariamente bella nel suo essere, nella sua presenza nuda e silenziosa.

Contrariamente agli artefatti quotidiani in cui l'uso e la funzione sono predominanti, la terra è ciò che è, indipendentemente da chi siamo, da cosa facciamo e dalle funzioni che le diamo.

Nel pensare la cucina Terra ho immaginato un oggetto che, per quanto utile e funzionale, si manifesti con la stessa forza della natura: solida, atemporale ed astratta. Ho espresso l'immenso valore della terra con una forma dalla geometria rigorosa e dai materiali naturali - porfido e cedro.

Cucinare su un piano di porfido datato ventotto milioni di anni mi fa sentire contemporaneamente reverente e fortunato.

**Secondo Lei qual è l'ambiente cucina ideale nelle case d'oggi? Come lo intende per se stesso in una dimensione di vita occidentale, con abitudini e modi di essere che devono confrontarsi con gli spazi di cui dispone la maggior parte delle persone.**

C.S:La cucina che preferisco è quella che spiazzava le convenzioni della cucina tradizionale la quale separa gli individui in stanze e che mostra tutti gli oggetti esprimendo oltre che ostentazione anche disordine. La cucina dovrebbe essere parte viva e centrale dello spazio aperto, la vera 'living room'. Allo stesso tempo l'oggettistica dovrebbe essere parzialmente schermata perché ci sia un ordine visivo.

**Per concludere, Lei parla della fortuna della libertà dell'architetto che può scegliere quali valori esprimere assumendosene la responsabilità, naturalmente. Per Lei nel mondo del progetto, oggi, c'è un valore primario, irrinunciabile oppure i must sono diversi?**

C.S:Nel moto continuo del tempo alcuni valori muoiono, altri valori emergono. Non esiste il valore assoluto o, se esiste, io non lo conosco. Oggi per esempio vanno a mille il relativismo, il sensazionalismo ed il virtuale.

Siamo ancora legati al pensiero dualista che giudica gli opposti come contraddizione o opposizione.

C'è chi è rock e chi è lento, come una volta c'erano i Guelfi e i Ghibellini, stessa mentalità guerriera, antagonista, conflittuale. L'individuo (architetto o altro) può scegliere di essere rock, di essere lento, ma può anche scegliere di essere autentico, il che significa essere sia rock che lento intese come differenze che si completano: come la mano destra e la sinistra. Nel mondo del progetto il valore dell'Essere è, per me, un valore essenziale come la terra che, nella sua autenticità, è un elemento primordiale.

**'Terra' sembra rappresentare un ulteriore passo avanti nel tentativo di sottrarre l'ambiente cucina ai codici estetici che ne informano le declinazioni recenti - da un lato la sua interpretazione in chiave freddamente hi-tech, dall'altro la sua spettacolarizzazione policromatica. Si tratta di una scelta volutamente controcorrente o del naturale sviluppo della sua filosofia progettuale?**

C.S. L'intenzione non e' di andare controcorrente. L'intenzione e' di fare un'opera senza tempo, al di là delle mode.

**L'espressività forte di 'Terra' ha quasi il valore di un manifesto che affranca l'opzione minimalista da ogni sospetto di neutralità estetica. E' d'accordo? E, in caso affermativo, può illustrarci la sua idea di minimalismo?**

C.S. Va chiarito che c'è una tendenza che potremmo chiamare "minimale freddo" (anglosassone) e un'altra che potremmo chiamare "minimale caldo" (mediterraneo). Io mi riconosco in quest'ultima.

Non e' un caso che la cucina 'Terra' non sia in acciaio inox ma in materiali naturali nelle diverse versioni.

Le caratteristiche dell'architettura minimale sono:

- lo spazio generoso (inteso come vuoto o massa d'aria);
- l'atmosfera della luce naturale;
- poco arredo per avere equilibrio tra spazio ed oggetti;
- prospettive e viste pulite, costruite con una geometria rigorosa;
- gli arredi elegantissimi con una configurazione architettonica anziché di decoro;
- la mancanza di ornamento;
- materiali naturali, allo stato semigrezzo, senza protettivi plastici.

**Materia primordiale addomesticata dalla volontà geometrica della ragione progettuale: il simbolismo implicito in questo 'gesto' evoca un ritorno agli archetipi della creazione. Un invito, anche, a ripensare il paesaggio domestico a partire dal nucleo, dalla cucina?**

C.S. La materia non e' addomesticata ma esaltata.

Il suggerimento dell'archetipo non e' un ritorno nostalgico ma un punto di riflessione in una cultura materialista che deride l'archetipo e l'anima.

**Nel progettare 'Terra' ha pensato a un destinatario o a una tipologia abitativa particolare?**

C.S. No. (vedi risposta numero 1)

**Giorgio Armani, Rocco Princi.... Due esempi, pur nella loro assoluta diversità, di self made men assurti al successo. Il binomio con Claudio Silvestrin. Affinità elettive, riconoscimento di un intuito eccellente?**

C.S: Decisamente sì.....”

**Democratizzazione del design d'autore: come e perché....**

C.S: Credo che negli spazi che ho progettato 'ci si senta bene'. Si percepisce un'energia che forse altri spazi non hanno. Questo feeling è per tutti ed è aperto a tutti. Al bancone del caffè Princi ho visto affiancati ricchi e non ricchi, giovani e meno giovani, gente trendy e mamme con carrozzine. Si oltrepassa il concetto di 'classe'.

**In hoc signo vinces... Qual'è il 'segno' di Claudio Silvestrin?**

C.S: Deciso, chiaro, rigoroso, elegante, pulito e, allo stesso tempo, contemporaneo e primordiale.

**In che modo “graffia” Claudio Silvestrin?**

C.S: Spiazzando le aspettative, il conformismo, i preconcetti. Facendo in modo che la sorpresa, strettamente collegate all'originalità, sia una componente del progetto.

**Pubblico o privato? Fuori o dentro?**

C.S: Dipende dal brief di progetto. Conta l'intenzione del progettista. Pubblico o privato, non cambia nulla. Atteggiamento, intenzione, 'integrità': questo è ciò che conta.

**Materia, luce, spazio: i tre concetti di Claudio Silvestrin...**

C.S: Concetti semplici, che sono senza tempo e universali. Più di meri concetti: sono gli elementi dell'esistenza.

**Qual'è la sua “utopia”?**

C.S: Non so se l'uomo moderno sia capace di fare o costruire il bello assoluto, il bello che sia al di là delle mode, del tempo e delle opinioni. Che sia questa ambizione, il mio sogno, la mia utopia?

**Quanto contano, per lei, i materiali, in un progetto d'arredo per cucina, e che ruolo rivestono rispetto allo spazio domestico in cui sono inseriti?**

CS: La scelta del materiale è vitale. Un materiale scelto può dare energia allo spazio-ambiente come un altro materiale può non dare energia.

**Quali valori e quale linguaggio formale sottintende e comunica un impiego così inedito, originale ed "estremo" della pietra e del legno, nei suoi progetti?**

CS: Il progetto, commissionato da Alberto Minotti, è frutto

di un pensiero che esprime alcuni valori. La terra, le sue acque, le sue foreste, le sue montagne, è straordinariamente bella nel suo essere, nella sua presenza nuda e silenziosa.

La terra è ciò che è, indipendentemente da chi siamo, da cosa facciamo e dalle funzioni che le diamo. Nel pensare la cucina Terra ho immaginato un oggetto che, per quanto utile e funzionale, si manifesti con la stessa forza della natura: solida, atemporale ed astratta.

**Che significato riveste la pietra nel progetto di Terra?**

CS: Ho espresso l'immenso valore della terra con una forma dalla geometria rigorosa e dai materiali naturali - porfido e cedro.

Cucinare su un piano di porfido datato ventotto milioni di anni mi fa sentire contemporaneamente reverente e fortunato.

**Che significato assume invece, rispetto alla pietra, il legno, nel progetto di Terra?**

CS: Il legno va benissimo ma non ha la stessa forza e solidità della pietra.

**Quali lavorazioni e quali tipi di pietre e per i legni predilige per i suoi progetti d'arredo per cucina?**

CS: L'importante è evitare la lucidatura e i protettivi plastici perché ammazzano l'anima della materia.

**Quali sono le tendenze attuali, secondo lei, rispetto all'uso dei materiali nell'arredo in generale, ed in particolare nel progetto cucina?**

CS: C'è un'esagerazione di design, di materiali, di protezioni plastiche, di cosucce effimere.

**Quali sono i principali fattori da tenere presenti nel progetto di uno spazio per l'arte, in generale?**

C.S: Creare uno spazio neutro (neutrale) dove gli artisti possano operare senza conflitti visivi e distrazioni. La funzionalità dei percorsi sia per il pubblico che per chi vi opera all'interno.

Il dosaggio della luce sia artificiale che naturale, per fare in modo che le opere possano essere valorizzate al meglio...

**E, in particolare, per la Marella Gallery quali erano le richieste, le esigenze del gallerista e quali sono state le risposte progettuali a livello di concetto, materiali luci.**

C.S: Niente in particolare. L'unica richiesta forte è stata di avere il pavimento in cemento: pare che tutti gli artisti lo impongano

**In uno spazio per l'arte, il contenuto (arte contemporanea...) come influisce sul contenitore?**

C.S: In molti progetti per l'arte spesso il contenitore primeggia sul contenuto. Preferisco un'architettura che, pur conservando un suo carattere, una sua forza, sia al servizio dell'arte. Quindi l'arte è protagonista: l'opera si manifesta nella sua potenzialità massima. Nei miei progetti (il Museo d'arte contemporanea – Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo a Torino, le gallerie Victoria Miro 14 a Londra e Marella a Milano) penso si percepisca questa intenzione.

**Anche la città che ospita la Galleria influisce sulle scelte progettuali? Milano, in questo caso...**

C.S: A Milano - e in Italia in generale - l'arte contemporanea è ancora vista come un campo elitario. Questo succede un po' meno in altre capitali come Londra o New York. Ma le cose stanno pian piano cambiando, qualcosa si sta muovendo. Stanno nascendo spazi espositivi per allargare il campo culturale e, parallelamente, quello commerciale. Larry Gagosian ha aperto uno spazio a Roma...

## ENGLISH INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER HUDSON FOR INTERIOR ARCHITECTS TODAY UK  
(08.01.2008)

**I debated calling this book 'Interior Designers Today' rather than 'Interior Architects Today'. Ideally the title should reflect the cross-disciplinary nature of the work featured which illustrates the skills required to investigate interior design within the wider context of architecture. However, today the term 'interior design' has lost much of its connotation with interior decoration and is quite often used to describe both the style as well as the tectonic elements of a designed space. Conversely, the term 'interior architecture' is largely unknown and tends to raise eyebrows. Where do you stand in this debate? How would you refer to the work you undertake in this field?**

C.S. I call what I do architecture, full stop. I don't make a distinction between interior or exterior. Interior architecture transforms an existing building without touching the exterior envelopes. Interior design is mainly about furniture and furnishing. The making of space and structural alterations are not contemplated.

**Where does the architect's role end and that of the interior architect/interior designer take over?**

C.S. As far as I'm concerned architecture is a totality. There are no divisions or separations.

**How did you become involved in the design of interior spaces?**

C.S. I was commissioned to convert an existing building.

**What was the influence of your design/architecture education.**

C.S. Modern masters such as Mies Van der Rohe, the great works from ancient architecture up to the '400. Monastic architecture in particular.

**If the first principal of architecture is 'get the job', what do you consider the qualities which would make a client select your work above the competition?**

C.S. I suppose he/she likes it very much; he/she sees a common sensibility and he/she recognizes in my work the original rather than the copy.

**What distinguishes your design style?**

C.S. It's austere but not extreme, contemporary yet timeless, calming but not ascetic, strong but not intimidating, elegant but not ostentatious.

**What project are you most proud of and why? Is there one scheme that established your reputation as an interior designer/interior architect?**

C.S. I'm proud of most of my projects both residential, commercial, fashion. I'm not a PR man therefore the merit goes mainly on the endurance of my architectural principals, the creativity, originality and elegance present in all the projects.

**What have been your key successes and biggest set-backs?**

C.S. Perseverance/faith/fortune. Rejections from planners of new building proposals.

**What inspires your work? Do you have any heroes or role models?**

C.S. Ancient and pre-baroc religious architecture.

**Talk me through your approach to a job from commission to completion.**

**How does the work get from drawing board to actualization?**

C.S. Nothing different from the average professional approach perhaps there is more trust in the intuitive side of the creative stage and the attention to the details is driven by a pursue for perfection.

**What are your goals as an interior designer/architect?**

C.S. To make a beautiful world.

**Do you like cooking?**

CS: occasionally.

**How did you have the idea to design a kitchen?**

CS: possibly 30 years ago.

**What did you like in designing a kitchen?**

CS: the challenge to build from a creative thought.

**What does a kitchen mean for you?**

CS: a place to be.

**You are writing about minimalism, silence, serenity, spirituality in architecture – how do these factors go together with a kitchen, the centre of social life?**

CS: how can the kitchen be separated? It is impossible for me!

**How would you describe the essence of architecture?**

CS: to reveal the soul of life elements.

**What should be the role of architect today? What responsibilities does an architect have today?**

CS: this is a very complex question.

**Why did you choose to become an architect?**

CS: destiny.

**Your work is very often described as architecture with a religious or spiritual idea – what do you want to express with your architecture?**

CS: the soul of the life elements.

**Which role do religion, tradition and history play in your work?**

CS: my work (and life in general) cannot be separated from them.

**In a Royal academy lecture in 1998 you defined a series of principals or objectives that guide you in your architecture. Amongst these were points such as the creation of a sense of calm, the desire to create a feeling of time standing still and the designing of an architecture that leaves us silent. Are these still definable as guiding principals and what are the influences that led you toward an architecture based on such ideas?**

CS: Yes they are a guiding principle, inspired by ancient spiritual architecture.

**Given that your work is (for want of a better description) “classical and timeless” in it’s aspirations how do you approach working on specific architectural projects that inevitably have specific requirements and objectives. Do you find the gap between aspiration and reality frustrating or just part of what we do as architects?**

CS: The approach is that of integrity to chosen values and principles. There is no frustration, sometimes sadness or suffering which only last a few seconds because it is part of the job to have proposals which fail, mainly by the Authorities.

**Amongst other types of projects, your work has covered private houses, art galleries, exhibitions and shops. Is there a field in which you feel most at home, a field in which your sensibilities as a designer are most easily accommodated?**

CS: Each field is good, however spiritual or religious architecture has the potential to achieve something pure, without compromise.

**When you work in a commercial environment, shop design for example, do you encounter requirements that are prescriptive, client requirements that divert your natural tendencies as an architect who has been described as anti sensationalist?**

CS: If there is such a thing, I quit.

**You have said in the past that Giorgio Armani is a client that has not interfered with your work as an architect. Do you feel that this liberty that Armani has afforded you in your projects is due to the natural affinity that can be found in the work of both of you or are there other factors involved?**

CS: It is a matter of respect for what I do and how I do it. However, this only applies to architecture.

**How were you approached by Armani before you had done any work with him as a client. What had he seen in your work that attracted him?**

CS: Armani saw a project that I had done for Calvin Klein. He said he liked it.

**In an interview I did with a Spanish fashion historian he defined the “style” of Armani as a sort of minimalist foundation onto which are grafted touches of decoration and luxury. Is this double sided characteristic something that you would recognise in your own work – a minimalist but at the same time luxurious work?**

CS: If for luxurious we mean generosity of space – Yes

If for decorative we mean elegant form – Yes

**It is often said that collaborations between architects and clients are largely influenced by the positive association that one means for the other. I suppose this could also be described as the linking the client and the architect on the basis of the mutual cultural values their work represents. To what extent could such a description explain the relationship between Giorgio Armani y Claudio Silvestrin?**

CS: Mutual cultural values is stretching it too far, there are some similarities.

**This question is linked to the previous one in very obvious ways. If we accept that both architecture and fashion communicate certain messages culturally, does the architecture of Claudio Silvestrin communicate the same messages as the clothing of Armani?**

CS: Let's not confuse clothing with architecture please.

**The first shop for Armani was the Paris project in 1997. What was our brief or your intentions in this project and has this changed fundamentally in the subsequent projects?**

CS: See point 7 of your questions. In addition it was essential that the architecture was a neutral background in which the merchandising would stand out in its full potential.

**Since this project I think you have worked on over 20 other stores worldwide. Does this mean that the work of Claudio Silvestrin has become so intrinsically linked with Armani that it has become, in practice, the architectural style of the Armani label?**

CS: To be precise it is the "Giorgio Armani" label, not to be confused with the other Armani activities like Emporio or others. The architecture of Limestone started with Paris and ended with London in 2004 (a great store design by the way).

**Moving on to more general questions, your work has been described as monumental, as an architecture that reminds us of the purity of form. This to me suggests a mind that is operating on a general, or "Platonic", level. To what extent is this true and to what extent do you tackle the finer details of your architecture, the materials and construction details etc. To what extent can we find a sensibility more akin to that of Aristotle?**

CS: Details are very important to me but every architect would say that. I say it and I mean it.

**Returning to some of the points raised in the initial questions I would like to ask**

**What are the common traits you identify in your own work. What are the most important characteristics of your work that come through regardless of the specific nature of the project or the specific requirements of the client?**

(Please see answer n.1)

**Jean Nouvel has said that as an architect it may be necessary to change your image once every 10 years, something that can be seen in his work in quite a clear way. It would seem on the surface a position quite different to your own. Could you comment on that?**

CS: I prefer not to comment on other architects' opinions.

**I ask this question thinking about the underlying characteristics repeated in your work and because of an interest in the relationship between what and how we design: do you have a particular method of design, a particular series of procedures or a particular mind set in which you try to put yourself when you design?**

CS: I don't think about it. It just comes out.

**Do you see any relationship between your own method of design and the work you produce. Does silence produce silence I suppose is what I want to ask.**

CS: I love silence and if I can one day achieve a space or place that make people silent, I would be happy enough to retire.

**Architecture roots in functional needs. But, it signifies more than to simply give shelter against wind and weather. Architecture forms our living space and mirrors the way we are in the world. How do you conceive a building? How do you approach the design process?**

C.S: I think our own philosophical, ethical and cultural values are expressed in the form of the building or the interior that we create. However, the first spark is revealed in a mysterious way. The thought of a new building form often comes from the site in the most inexplicable way – it is the essence that comes forth without any apparent logic or rationale; probably the consequence of creative thinking which is not mechanical.

The subconscious mind does most of the work – reflection and logic comes afterwards.

**Do you rely on a basic repertoire of architectural elements and forms, which you use time and again?**

CS: Geometric elemental configurations which are timeless and universal.

**Which importance have proportions, materials and colours in your architecture?**

CS: As important as the form – it is the balance between all the elements that one should aim for.

**At what stage in the design process do you decide on the material you want to use? Does the choice of material influence your design? Or does the design influence the choice of material?**

CS: Design cannot be separated from materials. Space, light, geometry etc. must be balanced.

**When you use a material, what is of more importance: the constructive aspect of it or the formal aspect?**

CS: Neither the constructive nor the formal. It is the energy that the material gives to our perception and experience that is significant.

**What does it mean to you to utilize a material truthfully? Does the category “truthfulness” really exist in architecture?**

CS: I don't use the term truthfulness of material. It probably means not fake. I don't use fake materials.

**What does “taste” mean to you? (Taste always implies a choice, a decision)**

CS: Today there are thousands of various tastes – the original term taste (from the French) has lost its strength. Today there is an Armani taste, a Versace taste, an ethnic taste etc.

**What importance have tradition and memory for your architecture?**

CS: The value of tradition and memory is fundamental but this does not mean 'to be nostalgic' – one can be contemporary yet preserving archaic forces within the spirit of a futuristic design or architecture.

**By choosing an architect the client chooses a specific architectural attitude. How would you describe your relationship with your clients? How much say does a client have within the design process, does he have a say at all? What happens within this area of potential conflict?**

CS: The essence of the idea comes from my own creative thought but afterwards it is an

exchange of energy and intensive dialogue with the client.

**What does quality in architecture means to you? Can you achieve quality with very simple means?**

CS: Simplicity is an end not a means. In fact only through complexity does form appear simple and elegant. Quality is not quantity, it is not commonplace, it is not mediocrity, nor is it the big number.

**Do we still need a kitchen in our homes or have they become obsolete because of precooked, readymade food and fast food products? What does a contemporary kitchen looks like and which function does it have?**

CS: I do not have precooked, readymade or fast food.

I prefer kitchens not to be separated from the dining or living area, possibly with the island cooking unit facing the space where the family or people gather. I often use, as a means of visual order, a dwarf screen, which conceals the untidiness of the cooking process without it being a visual impediment to the conversation between the chef and the guests or children.

I have recently designed a stone kitchen named 'Terra' which is manufactured by Minotti Cucine (Italy). In this monolithic object, I have put together the material of earth (stone), with fire, water, geometry, elegance, abstraction of form, simplicity and purity.

**What was the highlight of this year's fair for you?**

CS: The enthusiasm of the thousand visitors.

**What did you think of the new fairgrounds?**

CS: Sensational yet fashionable and an invitation to dirt.

**Could you tell us more about the Brazilian project for villas-resort unveiled during Milan Design Week.**

CS: Aquapura villas-resort in Cearà, Brazil (due 2009) is a 40000sqm new construction of hotel, spa and villas resort. The estate development is to be built on a deserted site facing the ocean. The design intends to move away from the cliché image of typical holiday resort by building an assertive contemporary architecture that harmoniously interweaves with nature.

**This is your second time building in Brazil, how do you think minimalist architecture is received in Brazil?**

CS: More and more open to it.

**You also presented the stunning TERRA kitchen collection designed for Minotti Cucine. What was your inspiration for that collection?**

CS: The inspiration was the earth. The earth, its waters, its forests and its mountains. It's extraordinarily beautiful in itself, in its simple and bare presence.

Differently from everyday artefacts, in which their use and function are predominant, earth is what it is, independently from what we are, what we do and what use we give to it.

Conceiving the "Terra" kitchen, I imagined an object that is useful and functional and present itself with the same strength as nature: solid, timeless and abstract.

I expressed the immense value of the earth with a rigorous geometrical shape and natural materials, stone and cedar.

Cooking on a porphyry worktop, which is twenty-eight million years old, makes me feel reverent and fortunate at the same time.

**You use many natural or natural looking materials in your projects be they architectural or furniture. Do you find an affinity with these materials?**

CS: I love natural materials with my heart.

**What are the challenges of working with these sort of materials.**

CS: Man wishes to manipulate it and imprint man made products such as plastic varnish to protect (or so he claims).

**Would you design something plastic?**

CS: I doubt it...never say never.

**Where do you work on your designs and projects?**

CS: In bed, in the bathroom, on a plane...anywhere really.

**Who would you like to design something for?**

CS: Plato, Nietzsche, Gandhi, Buddha, Maria Teresa of Calcutta.

**As an Italian architect working in London, how does your aesthetic translate?**

CS: I can be in New York or Hong Kong. it would make no difference.

**Milan has produced the most amazing designers in the last decade, is it something in the water?**

CS: It's in the genes.

**Can you describe an evolution in your work from your first projects to the present day?**

CS: More refined, more attention to symbolic features.

**What project has given you the most satisfaction?**

CS: The Neuendorf villa in Majorca (1990).

**What is your motto? Philosophy of life? Principle of work?**

My principle of work can be resumed in: creation of a sense of calm, the desire to create a feeling of time standing still, to design an architecture that leaves us silent, being inspired by ancient spiritual architecture.

Motto: simple yet elegant.

**Which qualities has a room you like?**

The qualities are:

- The generosity of the space;
- The atmosphere and the natural light;
- With few furniture in order to keep the balance between space and objects;
- A rigorous geometry;
- No decorative items;
- Natural materials.

**What role play furniture in a room?**

It has to be elegant with an architectonic configuration rather than just decorative. However, as little furniture as possible.

**Which piece of furniture is fascinating for you?**

Furniture in monasteries/convents.

**Where do you think design is heading?**

More and more superficial.

**What role do you think design has in society today?**

Design today, at large, it's far from awakening our sensibility. I have been educated to believe that architecture is the most complete form of art, bridging man and nature, earth and sky, god and mortals. I have believed, and still do, that architecture is composing poetry on earth in partnership with the earth; that architecture has the role of transmitting the emotion of matter, space, light and water.

**Is the cult of personality taking over the design and architecture world?**

I think the most popular contemporary construction nowadays is the exaltation of perverse and simplistic forms, reflecting a union that is neurotic and narcissistic, ignoring five thousand years or more of history. Modern man feels that he is the centre of the universe; his arrogance and vanity demand constructions that are in fact mirrors. The powerful man and the neurotic man subconsciously recognize themselves in the high-tech style, in the sensationalist and the deconstructive style.

**How do you describe your project for Minotti?**

CS. The earth, its waters, its forests and its mountains is extraordinarily beautiful in itself, in its simple and bare presence.

Differently from everyday artefacts, in which their use and function are predominant, earth is what it is, independently from what we are, what we do and what use we give to it.

Conceiving the “Terra“ kitchen, I imagined an object that is useful and functional and present itself with the same strength as nature: solid, timeless and abstract.

**Pizza, paella...? Which do you prefer spanish, italian or french food?**

CS. Italian!

**What do you try to transmit to the users of Terra?**

CS. I expressed the immense value of the earth with a rigorous geometrical shape and natural materials –stone and cedar.

Cooking on a porphyry worktop, which is twenty-eight million years old, makes me feel reverent and fortunate at the same time.

**Which kind of user is going to enjoy more than others this kitchen?**

CS. I hope all.

**Hadid, Foster, Dordoni, yourself,... Why are the architects interested on kitchens?**

CS. A kitchen is part of our life, therefore it should be an architect’s task.

**You are back from the Salone del Mobile; what did you have to show there?**

CS: I've made the installation Beyond Architecture: a sequence of rooms dedicated to contemplation, action, work and dreams. The emotional path that constitutes the viewing experience helped a deeper understanding of the thinking and creativity behind the rigorous, monastic style.

Description of the rooms:

The room of contemplation:

A warning: 'Let us make sure that purity does not die!'

54 crosses stand in a white room of abstract dimensions in which 54 'words' slowly move in the space. A speechless act that signifies an awareness of society's shifting values.

The room of action:

There are seven cabins in which to view the video of the project for the Aquapura Villas eco resort (40,000 sqm), on the seafront of Cearà in Brazil.

The room of work:

The first showcasing of Eye Claudio, Silvestrin's new book, which gathers together his work and thought in a single sculptural volume.

The room of dreams:

Grass, trees, water, mirrored glass, gold leaf, earth, rice and sulphur – the primary, natural elements of Milan. Eight imaginary streets, conceived as a gift to the city of Milan – a memory of Filarete's utopian vision.

**Did you see anything else interesting; by whom?**

CS: I was too busy to go and look around

**What fundamental laws and rules do you start a project with?**

CS: I always try to create a sense of calm. To create a feeling of time standing still and designing of an architecture that makes silent, even if for a while us.

These are "a guiding principle ", inspired by ancient spiritual architecture.

**Where and who do you get your inspiration from?**

C.S: Ancient and pre-baroc religious architecture.

**What are your projects for the near [and longer!] future?**

CS: The office is working on large size projects. In particular, the Aquapura villas-resort in Cearà, Brazil (due 2009), which is a 40000sqm new construction of hotel, spa and villas resort. The estate development is to be built on a deserted site facing the ocean. The design intends to move away from the cliché image of typical holiday resort by building an assertive contemporary eco-friendly architecture that harmoniously interweaves with nature.

**What would you have liked to have designed?**

CS: A cathedral with monastery.

**What would like designing/creating and if you're not an architect, what would you be?**

CS: I would be a movie director.

**What was the inspiration behind this surface design?**

CS. I never liked the conventional arrangement of ceramic tiles because, through the implication of the join, they communicate the idea of separation, the impossibility of unity. Seeing the join as a unity between two parts is an illusion. What I find interesting is the immaterial flow of space, energy and water.

**I understand the tile can be used in the home and outside, where do you see consumers using this surface material indoors?**

CS. I believe this material will be used mostly for interior projects.

**Is this the first time you have designed a surface tile?**

CS. Yes

**How is I Frammenti like your architecture?**

CS. Ceramics with no design, no graphic, no drawings to express the material in its purity and essence.

**How did the collaboration with BRIX come about?**

CS. Brix came to me asking for an idea.

**In an architectural and functional way, what kind of kitchen and/or bathroom do you like ? And what about their style ?**

CS: The kitchen is, I believe, the heart of the living space, a real "living room". At the same time all the fittings and the technology have to be concealed/hidden in cupboards in order to have a visual order and make the living space more contemplative.

**In which manner does your experience as an architect influence your bathroom and kitchen projects ? Like the use you make of stone for example...**

CS: Bathroom and kitchen aren't separated by my vision of architecture.

**In a technical way, how do you manage to make a kitchen all in stone as you made for Minotticucine ?**

CS: It was a very long process. It took more than four years to define the final project.

**What kind of stone did you use for Minotti and Boffi (fiumi collection), and why ?**

CS: I used different kinds of stones...For Boffi, it's a limestone; for Minotticucine, porphyry in two different colours (white and violet) and the unusual labradorite stone.

**For how long do you use stones for these kinds of projects ?**

CS: Since ever...

**What's for you a kitchen and/or a bathroom in 2008 ?  
How do you imagine them tomorrow ?**

CS: The Terra kitchen is a timeless design, therefore will be fine for 2008, 2009 and 2050!

**What projects are you working on right now?**

CS: I'm currently working on a new 40.000 m<sup>2</sup> construction resort in Cearà, Brazil, comprising of a hotel, spa and villas. I'm also working on two new 3 l villas development of 20.000 m<sup>2</sup> in Singapore, a 5000 m<sup>2</sup> wellness centre in South Korea, and a 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> Hotel Resort in St Tropez.

**How would you describe your personal style?**

CS: The architecture I do reflects my style: austere but not extreme, contemporary yet timeless, calming but not ascetic, strong but not intimidating, elegant but not ostentatious, simple but not soulless.

**What labels (designer or otherwise) are in your wardrobe?**

CS: Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Giorgio Armani.

**Who are your favourite fashion designers and why?**

CS: Please see answer 03.

**Do you think that Italian men are more fashion conscious those from other countries?**

CS: yes, genarally.

**Where do you shop for clothes when you're in Milan?**

CS: Around Via Montenapoleane area.

**Is there a gym/ personal trainer you'd recommend in Milan?**

CS: I don't have any. I find gym boring.

**Where would you go for a haircut in Milan?**

CS: Dolce Gabbana barber in Corso Venezia.

**What are your favourite restaurants/ bars in Milan?**

CS: Coffee at Princi Speronari and Princi Piazza XXV Aprile - which i designed – and also at Radetzky cafe'. I like traditional restaurant like the Latteria di S. Marco or L'antica trattoria della Pesa...or with a romantic atmosphere like the Fioraio Bianchi.

**Favourite way to relax when you're in Milan?**

CS: Sorry...no time for relax!

**What are the unmissable things for visitors to see/do in Milan?**

CS: "The Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci (1495 –1498) in Santa Maria delle Grazie church.

**Which furniture designers/shops would you recommend in Milan?**

CS: The already famous boutiques but also Lorenzi in Via Montenapoleone.

**What do you think is the most visually outstanding building in Milan and why?**

CS: Mentioning the historic ones: the Piazza dei Mercanti, the basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, the castello Sforzesco, the Duomo and particularly its roof. Of those built after the Second World War, the most elegant is the "Pirellone" by Gio' Ponti.

**What do you think of the overall architecture in Milan?**

CS: Something intelligent are the inner courts which protect you from the traffic noise. My favourite areas in Milan are Brera and Sant'Ambrogio.

**Are there any particular clients you'd love to work with or architectural projects on your wish list?**

CS: Clients must be exceptionally brave yet with a sensitive heart. It is a rare species.  
Projects? The world and beyond.

**You talk about simplicity and how it's the plethora of available choices that creates confusion and chaos. How have you simplified your own life?**

CS: My life does not seem simple at all, in fact very complex and frenetic, jet-setting here and there. However my loft apartment has a tranquil atmosphere, simple geometry, natural materials and plenty of space and natural light. My offices have the same atmosphere and energy. This architecture of elegant simplicity is a huge positive contribution to my very busy life.

**Away from work, can you separate self from architecture? How do you spend your leisure time?**

CS: Family is a blessing - it removes the tension that comes from the business life. My leisure is spending time with my family. It makes no difference whether it is a skiing holiday or going to a movie

**We understand you enjoy interacting with young people (your children, students, younger architects). Tell us about this.**

CS: Most young people have the tendency to be curious, hungry for knowledge, they are open to learn and listen. Their positive energy has no comparison with the less young who often are full of preconceptions and they know it all.

**The breadth of your work is wide, and you've designed spaces for some of the most creative names. Is there someone that you would want to design for, or a structure or space that you have yet to design, that you would look forward to doing?**

CS: I'd like to design for powerful and enlighten people who may have an influence on humanity and happy to share the knowledge and feeling of an architecture which is timeless, that is - a spirit that is at the same time modern and ancient

**Your approach to design is philosophical and the spaces you create are meditative. Is this rooted in Asian culture too, and do you think we will be able to fully appreciate what you intend?**

CS: Perhaps not fully because Sandy Island design and architecture has a number of inevitable compromises mainly due to severe and strict building regulations

**For Sandy Island you have said that you were inspired by water and nature. Apart from the land, is there anything else that you've gained from Singapore or South East Asia that is reflected in the project?**

CS: The South East Asia landscape and greenery

**What are your own thoughts about working on your first residential project in Asia?**

CS: Building regulations are exceptionally rigid.

**Are there any memories from your Singapore visits that come to mind?**

CS: I met very lovely people. I am also impressed with the speed and efficiency with which projects are undertaken.

**What are you fighting for in your works? For minimalism, for holy simplicity and elegancy or for metaphysic essence of natural materials?**

CS: I fight for elegant simplicity, natural materials and perfection.

**What do you prefer designing most? Private or public interiors like galleries and museums?**

CS: I do not have preferences. However, I have more satisfaction with those projects without compromises.

**“the minimalness of the I” –what does it mean- minimal of you as an author or anything else?**

CS: The creative thinking of a form should not be arbitrary.

When designing buildings and interiors, do you exist in the field of art or create practical (pragmatic) objects?

CS: I search for balance between making a work of art and practicality.

**What is your purpose of leaving space thin? Is it an attempt to free yourself and other people from a lot of unnecessary things and give an opportunity to feel the power of emptiness and space? Or maybe you follow one of the principles of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe- “The less means more”?**

CS: Space in my projects is not thin- it has a thickness

With less materiality, waste and superfluosness we make the invisible energy be present.

**In press you are considered a master and the main ideologist of minimalism. What do you love minimalism for?**

CS: I don't love any 'ism' nor ideology.

**What do you mean by saying “A new architecture- honest, austere, clear, and calm”?**

CS: The contrary of most buildings today.

**What aims do you try to archive while working on private houses and interiors? Do such categories as comfort, cosines and conveniences mean much to you?**

CS: I intend to create a sense of calm, the desire to create a feeling of time standing still, an architecture that leaves us silent and gives us emotions; Yet with a strong presence of originality.

**Do you think you've found your own language and built your own style in architecture and design? How would you call your style?**

CS: Claudio Silvestrin.

**Modernism esthetics seems to have influenced a lot your manner in design and architecture. If it is so, could you name your authorities in design or architecture of the past and the present?**

CS: Renaissance masters and modern masters such as Fontana Morandi, Giorgio de Chirico, Mies Van der Rohe and Barragan.

**Which of today's popular tendencies in design and architecture seem close, clear and interesting to you? Is it meta-rationalism and architecture of Toyo Ito or Rem Koolhass or deconstructivism and architecture of Frank Gehry or Zaha Hadid? Perhaps, Norman Foster's ecologism and architecture?**

CS: God saves me from Media- glamour tendencies.

**You have chosen pure forms and selected materials (wood, stone, glass), what were the reasons? Is there special poetry in simplicity and naturalness?**

CS: Purity of forms and material reveals the spiritual energy of life.

**What do you think of traditional building technologies in architecture and classical court styles in interiors? There is no hint at rococo and baroque in your works. Is this categorical and principal aversion of the past?**

CS: Rococo, Baroque, new decoratism and deconstruction are decadent

**How did the concept Giorgio Armani boutiques appear? How much architectural and interior aesthetics is conformable to aesthetics of Armani brand? Or is this design of boutiques a background for Armani's design first of all?**

CS: Giorgio Armani approached to me, giving me carte blanche for a new boutique concept, he loved it and we did 25 stores around the world together.

**What is more important to you? To appeal to senses or emotions of the inhabitants and visitors of spaces?**

CS: Architecture ought to give emotions a sense of calmness and stability.

**Who plays the leading role in the dialog between you as an author and your consumer?**

CS: Sensibility, reason and intelligence

**The furniture of many interiors you created consists of the objects of your own design. Is it your position of principle? If you allow other designers objects, who do you prefer?**

CS: Modern Classics. Mies Van der Rohe, Le corbusier, A.G. Fronzoni etc.

**Could you name your favorite projects? What qualities do you value them for?**

CS: Neuendorf Villa in Majorca, it is a project without compromise.

**Why was London chosen a city to live and work in?**

CS: I completed my studies in London and my children are born in London.

**Why did you decide to start working in field of design? What or who influenced your decision?**

CS: I was born for it. I think it is in my DNA and it is also my mission in life.

**What is your credo in your life and work?**

CS: I come, I see, I win.

## INTERVIEW (NO FURTHER DETAILS)

### **What was the design approach in this project?**

CS: I intended to express the presence of modernity is unquestionable, but the ages of time have not been abandoned; time and space are manifested as a continuous flow.

### **What is minimalism for you?**

CS: It is not a style; it is an attitude of life. Life of love for the materials as well as the spiritual side of existence. Therefore with less materiality, waste and superfluosity we make the invisible be present.

### **What modern architects or designers impress you more?**

CS: From the recent past, I respect Mies Van Der Rohe and Luis Barragan. Of the pre-baroc time Brunelleschi, Cistercian monk-builders, Palladio.

### **Please indicate your main creative principles.**

CS: My principle of work can be resumed in creation of a sense of calm, the desire to create a feeling of time standing still, an architecture that leaves us emotions; Yet with a strong presence of originality.

### **How do you understand the word 'emptiness' regarding your creative activity?**

CS: I see it as a material, the solidity of air and space, the flow of energy, maybe invisible yet present.

INTERVIEW (NO FURTHER DETAILS)

**Mr. Silvestrin, what are you guided by in your choice of style and design of the furniture you create? Why?**

**What materials are mostly used by You in furniture manufacture? Are there materials, which you give preference to, or You constantly experiment?**

CS: I am guided by my design and architectural criteria or philosophical principles which aim to make the 'absolute' - beautiful things without reference to fashions or styles.

Beauty beyond opinions is what I am after.

Why? It is my mission.

**Working at a new project, whether You are aimed to create something extremely new, extraordinary, to inverse general vision of a furniture item, or maybe your goal is the evolution of recent trends?**

CS: See above.

**What kind of furniture is fashionable in UK now? Does it correspond to the global fashion to the furniture?**

CS: All is fashion today - furniture has been absorbed by fashion, something that previously belonged only to clothes or make up. It is not UK fashion but global fashion.

**How could you range Englishman' demands basing on their income and age?**

CS: I am not an economist. I cannot give a serious answer.

**Can You say, what kind of furniture You choose for your house?**

CS: For my house I've prototypes of my designs for Cappellini (Millenium Hope table) and Dema (Le Foglie seatings) and Via Bizzuno lights (La Notte)

**What style of furniture You consider to be unfashionable?**

CS: Furniture that will be of value even in 300 years time (or more)

**You are familiar with furniture design trends and tendencies in many countries all over the world., what parallel can You draw?**

CS: We are going global, there are hardly any difference.

**What is your opinion, what country is the trendsetter in furniture design today?**

CS: The city of Milan

**What does the expression "Furniture of 21th century mean personally for You? What is Your opinion, what style of furniture will be famous in 2005?**

CS: It is premature to establish what is the furniture of 21st century.

In 2000s all will be famous and nothing will be famous.

Claudio Silvestrin strives with scrupulous coherence to develop a signature style which, based on interpretation of light and space and on a classical sense of proportion, appears to have a distinctly emotive nature. Yet, the emotive character of Silvestrin's buildings should not be taken in the trivial sense in which this word is most frequently used today: it has a deeper meaning, connected with the capacity of his work to convey a sense of restraint and balance intimately connected with human perceptive capacity. Operating partly in London, where he opened his architectural practice at the end of the 1980's, and partly in Milan, where he opened a second practice in 2007, Silvestrin works all over the world and his projects range from design of objects, to domestic and retail interiors, art galleries and homes, and his clients include the likes of Giorgio Armani, Illycaffé, Anish Kapoor, Calvin Klein, Kanye West, Cappellini, Poltrona Frau, and the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation for which he designed and built their museum venue in Turin.

**How did you begin? Who were your teachers?**

CS: My first true teacher was AG Fronzoni. He did not just teach me the basic techniques of my work, but he had a huge influence on my life. It was he who introduced me to minimalist philosophy.

**What does minimalism mean to you?**

CS: For me it originated from a necessity, from a psychological need to react to the waste of the 1980s, to a certain tendency towards kitsch, to ornament for ornament's sake, to ostentation. Then this tendency started to fade in the 1990s, and minimalism gained greater popularity until it too became a fashion.

**And now?**

CS: Once again a certain fashion for excess, lack of restraint and of proportion, has become popular. Nevertheless there are strong trends in the opposite direction, above all towards eco-friendly design which, necessarily, is against waste.

**Does this apply to design too?**

CS: Yes: design has been, and often still is, subjected to the influence of disposable consumerism, like architecture moreover.

**Restraint and sense of proportion, therefore....**

CS: And ability to communicate through architecture that is not ostentatious but which has strong emotive components.

**And yet this would seem to be a very rational, if not rationalist approach....**

CS: Well the two aspects are not in conflict, in my opinion. Minimalism is, above all, rational. I always try to avoid work for which there is no reason. What is irrational is love of excess, superfluity, for a certain exaggeration of numbers, quantity, which is exactly the opposite of patient pursuit of quality.

**How have you used these principles in designing retail premises?**

CS: By striving to give a new dignity merchandising principles which, of necessity, must be obeyed. Retail premises must be able to convey emotions. In this case too, pursuing quality is extremely important. If you try to reduce quality to quantity, in reality you debase the product that is displayed there too. On the contrary, you need to purify to seek essential forms that can enhance the products of display too, so that together they give added emotions to customers. It is a principle that in any case effectively works. And, after all, a paradoxical aspect of my work.

**That is?**

CS: My projects, which ultimately are intended as reactions to consumer tendencies merely quantitative, work very well in the consumer market. That's the paradox.

**And in your opinion, why do they work?**

CS: I think that it's because there's still a positive attitude, and it's widespread, towards what is simple and pure. The bathtub that I designed for Boffi has revolutionized the world of bathrooms over the past few years: it has become an icon. And this happened because I looked for an archaic shape, destined to last. It was no accident that I designed it in the 1900s and it went into production almost a decade later. Archaic, essential shapes do not go out of fashion.

**A sign of coherence....**

CS: Yes, but it has to be said that coherence is always challenging. It isn't easy to scrupulously pursue a personal life of conduct: you have to be able to resist temptation! And I'm not just talking about financial temptation.

**What effect does this desire for coherence have on your projects?**

CS: A constant tendency towards purification, almost dematerialization, as if there were a soul or a spirit in the material that has to be revealed. That's it, I think that material has to be transformed from material that can be perceived as an end in itself into one that has its own spirit, its own soul, its own being, and that arouses emotions that are not those of mundane and coarse use of materialism. You need to enhance the essence of the material, not to suffocate it with useless additions. I believe that this is also a formula for elegance: a word that is very important for me, but which people have stopped using today.

**Essence of material and essence of form.....**

CS: These are two principles that I have always pursued when designing residential buildings. Or museums, like the one for the Sandretto Foundation in Turin. It is a project that is simple, unobtrusive, which strives towards its own language, but which blends in with the surrounding district. In English, you would call it "discreet", which I think is a good definition for my projects: it isn't easy to translate this term to Italian, because its equivalents "discreto" or worse, "sottotono" both have negative connotations. What it means, in all senses, is rejection of excess and vulgarity.

## YOUR FAVOURITE CHAIR: THE CHAIR - HANS J. WEGNER

CS: I like this chair because is the right balance between aesthetic and functionality.

It's not trendy and it's a classic now and it's going to be the same in the next 300 years. By the way, it was John Fitzgerald Kennedy's favourite chair.

