

THE FASHION ISSUE

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BETWEEN REAL AND IDEAL

Dior's artistic director Maria Grazia Chiuri
on femininity and feminism

By Marion Hume

Australians shooting for space / Green glamour in Monaco / The Rich Lister who bought Oronot

EMERALD CITY

Concerned about your carbon footprint? Then make for Monaco, where the elusive Albert II is changing how the ultra-wealthy live – although he's still waiting on the electric helicopters.

Story • TONY DAVIS





Monaco is on track to be carbon neutral by 2050.

“Try this,” suggests Jessica Sbaraglia, a thirtysomething ex-model who single-handedly controls a wealthy European nation’s entire agricultural sector. I tentatively put the bright purple flower to my lips. It’s from a plant from South Africa and tastes like garlic. Sbaraglia points to several rows of other edible flowers. Around us there are also 30 types of tomato and an array of vegetables, neatly arranged in 50 centimetres of soil – on the roof of the Monte-Carlo Bay Casino.

Sbaraglia controls all of Monaco’s farming because until she set to work with her bucket and trowel two years ago, no one thought it worth growing food on the world’s most expensive land. She studied Google Maps’ satellite view to locate the few flat spaces in the tiny principality that were not in use, and then set about changing that situation. This site is 400 square metres; other plots on private land cover a further 1100 square metres.

The overall impact of this hyper-local, all-organic approach is minuscule. “We take five months to grow tomatoes. In the commercial sector, they take six weeks,” says Sbaraglia, yet her Terre de Monaco company is part of something much bigger. This tiny tax haven on the Mediterranean, the world’s second-smallest country (behind Vatican City) and probably the richest city-state in history, wants to be the greenest place on earth.

Monaco’s carbon dioxide emissions are more than a quarter below 1990 levels and the country is on track to be carbon neutral by 2050. It has trialled a road with built-in solar panels, installed saltwater pumps that convert changes in water temperature to renewable thermal energy and bought up wind power from France. Residents get paid up to €9000 (about

\$14,000) when they buy an electric vehicle. In April, Visit Monaco began trumpeting its enviro credentials to tourists, with a campaign called “Green is the New Glam”.

And yes, this is happening in Monaco, where conspicuous consumption abounds and per capita wealth clocks in at a world-beating \$US2 million (\$2.7 million), three times as high as second-placed Liechtenstein. Sunny streets are lined with Lamborghinis and Aston Martins (which need to cross the border into France should their drivers want to exceed the national speed limit of 50km/h). The harbour is filled with private yachts of near ocean-liner length and nearby Nice Airport resembles a parking lot for private jets. And then there’s the festival of petrol burning, the Monaco Grand Prix.

Of course, it’s easier to punch through carbon policy when there’s one man in charge, and word is Monaco’s greening is all being driven directly by His Serene Highness Albert II, the billionaire who springs from both European and Hollywood royalty, the environmentalist formally known as prince.

To determine whether carbon-neutral Monaco is a right royal greenwash, *The Australian Financial Review Magazine* sets out that we’ll need to speak to the man at the top. Told we have no chance, we’re then told an interview might be possible, and then, suddenly, it’s on. I’m advised to pack a business suit and appropriate shoes (“no sneakers”). Between instructions and arrival, however, something has subtly shifted. The interview is merely a possibility, I’m told, not a done deal.

According to the “Green is the New Glam” pitch, neither the country’s wealth nor lifestyle – it has 200 restaurants but

just one supermarket – is a barrier to leading the world on cleanness and greenness. The “Green” is as real as the “Glam”, assures His Excellency Bernard Fautrier, who has been a confidant of the royal family for decades.

“When he came into the throne in 2006,” Fautrier says of Albert II, “he said very quickly, ‘I want to act personally to do something in the field of the environment’.” A few years ago not one of Monaco’s restaurants would serve bluefin tuna, because the prince was concerned about its (then) endangered status. It was all voluntary, apparently.

“I don’t know if it is true,” says Fautrier – though one suspects he does – “but he came to a restaurant, he saw on the menu that there it was, and he stood up and left.”

Fautrier explains Monaco’s carbon dioxide baseline is 1990, and that by 2016 carbon emissions were 22 per cent below that baseline. “Our target is minus 30 in 2020, then minus 50 in 2030 and carbon neutral by 2050.” (By way of comparison, Australia is targeting carbon emissions 26 per cent below the much-higher baseline of 2005 levels by 2030. And according to Anna Skarbek, chief executive of ClimateWorks Australia, we are not currently on target to even reach that).

The vast majority of political deciders know there is a reason to move away from a “carbonated economy”, says Fautrier, who is chief executive of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which supports hundreds of environmental projects (and has Australia’s Tim Flannery on the board). The task is especially difficult in Monaco, he adds, because it has no heavy industry and hence no easy wins from, say, shutting

down an aluminium smelter or coal-fired power station.

Which is evident when one peers down upon Monaco, all winding streets and thousands upon thousands of balconies looking out to the Mediterranean. I arrive by Monacair helicopter, as do many visitors (strangely it is not dramatically dearer than dealing with the Nice Airport taxi cartel). Later I squeeze into a “Mobee”, a tiny tandem-seating Renault Twizy electric car, a fleet of which serves as the local car-sharing system. There’s e-bike sharing too. I pass through tunnels and along the waterfront, stop at traffic lights next to Rolls-Royces and Bentleys painted in colours that show resale value is of no concern whatsoever. The architecture represents every style the crazy, crazy rich have, at one time or another, thought supreme, from belle époque to art deco, modernism to slab-sided ’60s, brutalism to Haussmann, Spanish villas to glass towers. The Prince’s Palace of Monaco, home to the Grimaldi family since the 13th century, sits on “the rock” high above the city-state.

Moored just offshore is what could be mistaken for a vast, state-of-the-art military sailing ship. Called simply “A” and designed by Philippe Starck, it has three masts that rise 100 metres above the waterline and a bedroom lined with white sting-ray hides. Russian businessman Andrey Melnichenko paid in the order of \$US300 million for it, according to best speculation, and insisted on a partly glass keel so he could have an underwater observation post.

When I park the Mobee nose-to-curb outside my next meeting, I ask again if I am going to speak to the prince. “They haven’t said no ... yet,” I am told. Someone in the communications team mentions he hasn’t done a one-on-one interview all year.

Monaco has about 38,500 residents, of which about a quarter are citizens, crammed into just over two square kilometres. Apartments are worth a world-record average of \$US62,500 per square metre, according to property consultancy Knight Frank. Land that is very close to vertical is being covered with bracing and concrete so that new buildings can rise. A \$2.5 billion land-reclamation project has started and will add six hectares of new land, enlarging Monaco’s total land mass by 3 per cent.

Bernard Fautrier says with no industry to clean up, Monaco needs to concentrate on things such as traffic as well as heating and cooling of buildings plus garbage treatment, each of which accounts for about 30 per cent of the state’s carbon emissions. A lot of the unglamorous tasks fall on people such as Dimitri Andolenko, of the Société des Bains de Mer de Monaco [SBM], the mostly state-owned company that controls the principality’s four casinos and many of its hotels and restaurants. Andolenko is in charge of improving SBM’s environment performance and he is passionate; the type of passionate where one can talk for 40 minutes without pause.

He explains the gains that can be made by rationalising the 100,000 deliveries a year made to its properties and then unpacks the complexity of lightening the carbon footprint of the €600 million renovation of the Hôtel de Paris and its surrounds. It’s not sexy stuff – the measuring at least – and Andolenko brings up the question of accounting for visitors’ superyachts and private jets. Surveys have shown many visitors generate up to five times as much carbon getting to Monaco as they emit while they’re there.

Flying guests in by helicopter doesn’t help, says Andolenko with a shrug, but that’s the way they want to arrive, and there is no viable electric helicopter yet. “As soon as there is one, we will have it,” he says. Likewise the Monte-Carlo Beach’s watercraft, such as jet skis, produce more carbon dioxide than all the hotel’s limousines combined. Yet, as one of the world’s

dearest beach clubs (the average room price in summer exceeds €1000 per night), they must offer them. It hopes to have electric jet skis on its beach as early as next year.

“Our small principality is a world of paradoxes,” says the Monte-Carlo Beach’s deputy director, Emmanuel Taillandier, sitting in Elsa Restaurant, looking out across the Med. “But at our level we try to do our best, to take our part of responsibility.”

The menu at Elsa (wild sea bass is €72, lamb loin €74) touts itself as “the only restaurant in the world to be Michelin starred with a third-level organic certification”. Taillandier says his hotel recently informed guests they would default to changing bedsheets every second night, unless a guest requested otherwise. And how many guests took up the option to stick with the five-star standard of nightly? He moves his right thumb and forefinger to make a circle. Zero.

Bedsheets won’t change the world, yet constant incremental improvements have put Monaco almost uniquely on target among the many countries that set ambitious carbon dioxide targets in the early 21st century. It has done so without buying carbon credits, or “doing a Norway” by funding its green programs with the proceeds of exported oil. That said, Monaco has its own deal

with the devil. It is the proceeds of gambling, and the VAT on all those outrageous cars, helicopters, boats and handbags, that is footing the bill.

Monaco’s Oceanographic Institute is in an extraordinary baroque-influenced building that emerges from a sheer rock face, with sea creatures built into the architectural façade, ceilings, staircases and floors. It was set up in 1910 and headed for 30 years by Jacques Cousteau, the French adventurer, marine conservationist, documentarian and co-inventor of scuba technology.

Cousteau’s former role now falls to Robert Calcagno, a thin, deeply tanned former palace economics adviser. He says he “assists and supports the prince and his government with every ocean-related matter”. One might ask how many ocean-related matters there can be with less than four kilometres of coastline, but there has been a close link with the sea since Albert I, the “Explorer Prince”, began a series of voyages of discovery in 1885.

Calcagno says it is “really important for the sovereignty of Monaco that the prince has some involvement in international affairs, in diplomacy. This involvement cannot be useful in economics, in currency, in defence, in the fight against terrorism [so] for more than 100 years, the prince of Monaco ... by personal commitment and conviction ... involves himself with the global protection of the ocean.”

This is particularly important today, says Calcagno with growing tourism, sea transport, fishing, oil drilling and mining threatening to turn the open sea into “a type of Far West”. So is the current prince really on board, or just following tradition? Calcagno says he has joined Albert II in some of the most remote places on earth, and has watched him personally pulling out ghost nets – or abandoned fishing lines – from sensitive marine areas.

“He always collects the plastic rubbish everywhere he is going. That is not something done for the media,” he says. “He considers if he is doing that, perhaps other people will do that and it will have an impact on ocean protection.” I make a mental note to ask the prince about that, should the interview ever happen.

The Monaco waterfront isn’t exactly egalitarian. Like many Mediterranean cities, it is dominated by private beaches. A huge hoarding runs along part of the coast, decorated with photos of the sea. It’s to hide the reclamation work. This

RESIDENTS GET PAID ABOUT \$14,000 WHEN THEY BUY AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE.

project has allocated millions of euros to protect Mediterranean sea-grasses and the noble pen shell, an endangered mollusc that can grow to more than a metre long.

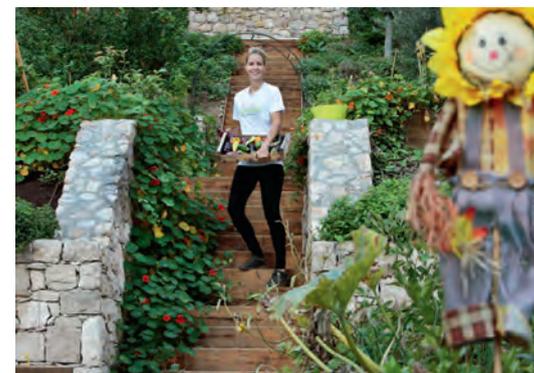
Three days after my arrival, the monstrous yacht *A* is still floating offshore. I wonder if the reputed 54 crew members are cooling their heels while Melnichenko plays the tables or does a deal in the Princess Grace Suite at the Hôtel de Paris (yours for up to €40,000 a night). On the edge of Port Hercules, I visit the impressive Scientific Centre of Monaco, where coral research is underway to help save the world’s struggling reefs. I continue to use a Mobee, activated with an electronic card and ideal for zipping through traffic. I speak to various officials, many of whom answer questions by saying not what they think but what the prince thinks. I get the feeling that as well as interviewing them, they might be subtly interviewing me.

Then suddenly, the poison-tasting apparently completed, I’m waiting in a royal antechamber of the Prince’s Palace on the Rock of Monaco. Then I’m in a meeting room known as the Bureau d’Apparat, on the floor below Albert II’s private office. It looks out over cannons and ramparts and, beyond that, almost all of Monaco. Its walls are lined with paintings including a huge Warhol of Albert II’s mother, film star-turned-princess and one time châtelaine of this very palace, Grace Kelly. Only downside: the prince is running late and has to leave early, so it might be a very short meeting.

I pass the time looking at Monets and Picassos, portraits of Monaco’s first family, and photographs of Albert II with American Presidents (though not the current one), and other world leaders. Then here he is, smiling, besuited (no sneakers) and, perhaps, just a little awkward in his movements and demeanour. I have already been instructed exactly where I will be sitting, and where he will be sitting.

“Let’s break away from formality,” says the prince, “sit here.” He points away from the long table and towards the two chairs that have already been earmarked. He asks if I’d like a glass of water and produces it, not with a royal click of the fingers, but by pouring it from a jug on a sideboard.

And my other meetings? I explain there have been a lot of them. “I’m sorry I put you through that,” he says. He has a soft voice, a gentle American accent and speaks slowly and



From top: Jessica Sbaraglia of Terre de Monaco with organic produce; A Renault Twizy from the electric car-share pool.



Prince Albert of Monaco outlines his environmental mission with the writer in the royal palace. "Maybe we can contribute, in a small way, to make a change."

very precisely. The beginning seems a good place to start: we discuss his great-great-grandfather, the Explorer Prince, and his campaigning for national parks, marine and terrestrial.

"My father did a lot for the Mediterranean too," Albert says. "My mother loved not only the sea, but loved walking, and she took us on some great walks in the back country here. [They] gave all three of us children a poster from National Geographic. This was from 1970, and ... the title of the poster, which I still have, is called *How Man Pollutes His World*. And so it showed different major pollution sources, by air, water, and land."

That poster stayed on Albert's bedroom wall for most of his teenage years, and he resolved that, if things didn't improve, he'd do something about it. Things didn't improve. "We haven't really made any progress on any of these air, land, or sea pollution sources. So that's one thing, but then of course I already had an idea of setting a foundation up. What really accelerated things was my trip to the Arctic, not only in the summer of 2005, but then the following year, when I did my trek to the North Pole."

That trip, by the way, was by dog sled. He later made it to the South Pole too. The prince has stayed in a wooden hut in the middle of the New Guinean jungle, searching for undiscovered species, and this November will be in the Torres Strait at the invitation of Badu Island artist Alick Tipoti. According to Robert Calcagno, the prince will spend four or five days with the community, "living with them, sleeping in their dwellings, eating with them and discussing, and going diving with them. Not scuba, but with the snorkel, and using the pirogue to see the dugong, turtles."

Afterward, he will also briefly visit Townsville as part of Monaco's new role co-chairing the International Coral Reef Initiative, with Australia and Indonesia.

For Albert II, it's important to see things with your own eyes. "I didn't want to be just another environmental foundation that only appears to do something on the surface. I really wanted to address different issues of protection of

biodiversity, water management issues that I knew were pretty severe in most countries, and then of course climate change."

Can tiny Monaco really make a difference? "We have made a commitment, even before the Paris Agreement, not only to reduce emissions, but to move toward a more sustainable society and toward a better use of our, I can't say natural resources, we don't have any. But [in] the way we use transportation, the way we heat our buildings, the way we consume or we recycle, the way we live. And even if we are a small country, maybe what we can do on our scale can be replicated elsewhere ... maybe we can contribute, in a small way, to make that change possible."

He points to the work Monaco has done on clean mobility, including liaising with the French rail system – and even buying it extra trains – to encourage the daily influx of workers from France and Italy to take the train rather than drive. It doesn't help that the French train drivers keep going on strike.

As we talk, Prince Albert II appears to relax more. Some of what he is saying he has obviously said before, but it sounds fresh and filled with conviction. As the nearby photos show, he has used his position to spend time with the world's most powerful leaders, and has presumably made a similar pitch for

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Prince Albert II of Monaco

the planet. It's when we discuss what happens underwater, how a healthy coral ecosystem teems with life, that his surprisingly young face – he is 60 – really comes alive.

A lot of people don't believe there's a problem, I suggest to the prince. "Yes. I can't see why they would not believe the scientific evidence," he replies. "What advantage do scientists have in not telling the truth? It's to me just unbelievable that intelligent and reasonable people cannot understand this."

So what about that Grand Prix? He smiles. "The funny thing is, and this is true ... the days where we have the best air quality in Monaco are the days of the Grand Prix, because there's very few other cars on our roads."

He doesn't want to ban petrol cars in Monaco, he wants to make people excited about the alternatives (when he married South African swimmer Charlene Wittstock in 2011 the wedding car was a hybrid Lexus). Monaco now hosts an all-electric Formula E Grand Prix, which some hope will one day take over from the petrol one. But Albert believes that even in a green world, there is room for luxury, there is room for folly, such as the traditional Monaco Grand Prix. "In a reasonable way, yes."

The conversation drifts, but usually returns to its core. I ask if having the twins (Gabriella and Jacques, born 2014) has affected his outlook. "I already was thinking in those terms, but of course, when you are a father, you have a family, it does put things into a different perspective ... I'm worried that they're not going to have as bright a future as we might think, if things continue the way they are."

He wants to give them the love of the natural environment that his parents gave him, though admits he doesn't spend as much time with them as he'd like to because of his travels. More than an hour has disappeared. So, apparently, has that other all-important meeting. The prince now pulls from his pocket some notes about the Coral Reef Life Declaration his foundation has sponsored (12 countries including Australia have signed it).

He hopes to take his Monaco Explorations' research vessel *Yersin* and a team of scientists to the Great Barrier Reef next year. And he remains determined to stay optimistic, despite troubling developments. "If other countries like the United States start changing their emission standards and start lessening their commitments, of course we're heading toward disastrous results, and the Paris Agreement won't mean anything anymore. If there was one example of finally a successful result in an international agreement, it was that agreement, and to have it put in jeopardy and almost ridiculed by one country is unacceptable. We have to redouble our efforts, but it is extremely disheartening, and disappointing. Every adjective you want me to use, I'll use."

"And of course, it hasn't cut into my resolve, but it's going to be a very difficult and bumpy road. I am not discouraged yet, but if it keeps going this way, I and many others will find it hard to keep on fighting."

At this point we stand and walk around the Bureau d'Apparat, discussing the sculptures, the antiques, a Cezanne, a Renoir and the newest addition to the room, a Kees van Dongen reclining nude. The Monet directly above our chairs, explains the prince, is a view of the principality from France. The Warhol was produced in 1984, two years after the death of the princess, based on a 1950s photograph of the then-Grace Kelly. Is it Albert II's favourite depiction of his mother?

"No. I think it's very interesting, and in Warhol's style, but there are other pictures I prefer. There's one taken by a photographer who became a friend of hers and a friend of the family's. His name was Howell Conant. He did a beautiful portrait of her, I think it was originally for *Vogue* magazine, and she's between two white curtains. It is wonderful."

He looks again around the room and smiles. "I'm very lucky," he says, and not for the first time. And then he is off, into his principality of paradoxes. ●

The author stayed in Monaco as a guest of Visit Monaco.