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15 MINUTES WITH BOFFI'S ROBERTO GAVAZZI

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Roberto Gavazzi, CEO of Boffi. Portrait by Tommaso Sartori

In the past decade, Boffi has become a global leader in the kitchen and bathroom arena, setting the bar for innovative kitchen design. During this month's Maison&Objet, we sat down with Boffi's CEO, Roberto Gavazzi, to discuss the brand's recent acquisition of Italian furniture brand De Padova and how Boffi transitioned from a local kitchen manufacturer to the international powerhouse it is today.

Tell me a little about yourself. Did you come to Boffi from a background in design?

I started with a very different type of activity and background. I studied economics and took an MBA at Columbia in New York, and worked for ten years in companies involved in telecommunications and computers. In 1989, I happened to meet Paolo Boffi, who at the time, was the owner of Boffi. He did not have a son or daughter to transfer his company, and he was already in his 50s; he was already thinking about the next generation. So I think he saw in me the next generation. Our idea was to turn Boffi into a much more international brand. At the time, it was a mostly a domestic brand, and so 85% of the sales were in Italy and only 15% abroad. Today, it is the exact opposite, with 85% abroad and only 15% domestic.



Boffi's showroom in the Miami Design District

What has your plan been with Boffi?

The story of Boffi is simple. The company started with kitchens, and then expanded to bathrooms in the 90s. About 5 years ago, we introduced a line of wardrobes and sliding doors so we could offer a complete solution of modular systems (meaning systems involving multiple units—for instance, kitchens, bathrooms, wardrobes). The next idea was to expand with a series of mono-brand stores, such as this one in Miami.

The final stage of our strategy abroad was the acquisition of another company, De Padova. The goal was to complete our range of offer by adding all of the rest of interior design—such as tables, chairs, libraries, what have you—with one prestigious brand.



A set of living room furniture, designed by De Padova

Why was De Padova the first choice for Boffi?

De Padova was the perfect target for us for a number of reasons. It's not just because they make everything else that we don't make, but also the style and history of their company. We are very similar in what we do, how we feel about design, how we see the future of interiors, and how we like to mix different styles. Both companies don't have a precise style, but they lean towards a cleaner, more Nordic type of style. Even though the differences between various models might be quite strong, they are similar enough that when you combine our offerings and De Padova's in a home, you feel that there is a common language between the pieces. Even though they might be designed by different designers or with different personalities or in different ages, there is always a line that keeps them together in a coordinated solution. I don't think that many companies offer this. And so De Padova seemed the perfect match in supplying a total solution for interiors—it's not just putting brands and products together and saying, "Ok, we can offer everything you will need in a house."



Boffi's "Galinas" kitchen, designed by Patricia Urquiola

Who are some of the designers you've collaborated with recently?

The strongest experience I've had recently in Boffi is with Patricia Urquiola; she helped to develop our "Salinas" kitchen. At Art Basel last year, we had an amazing event with her where she presented the product. She is such a strong and contagious type of personality, and working with her has been an enriching experience. Not only does she have this incredible creativity, but even rarer, she has a clear sense of a path and process towards developing a product.



Piero Lissoni. Portrait by Giovanni Gastel

Another great recent experience was working with Piero Lissoni. His work has been more about redefining pieces for De Padova, and readapting them to new technologies and tendencies. In particular, there is a wooden chair, the *Donzella*, created four years ago by Michele de Lucchi, an Italian designer with a great passion for wood. Piero Lissoni wanted to build a second version of this chair, cooperating with de Lucchi. In front of us and de Lucchi, using just a pencil, Piero drew lines *on the chair*, reducing the size of the legs and reinterpreting the shape. And he did this without 3-D modeling or renderings. Many designers come to you with renderings, and while renderings make objects beautiful, you are never really sure if they are something you can produce and if they are technically viable. It came out as a fantastic new product; it is not yet on the market but will be soon.

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