



Pietro Galimberti
Flexform

oversee EVERYTHING

‘Habits change as people do’

amsterdam

On the corner of Beethovenstraat, at number 400, the new Flexform mono-brand store is a bright beacon in Amsterdam Zuidas, clearly standing out among the high-rise buildings. Giuliano Galimberti, the third generation of his family to head the Italian high-end furniture brand, gives us a tour of the impressive 500-m² showroom that houses the latest collection. Then we sit down for a conversation with the amiable Pietro Galimberti, design director. Pietro links the most recent developments to the evolution of the Milan family business.

blend

‘Nowadays I swoosh along the production lines on a small scooter. The factory has grown so large, but I’m still expected to oversee everything and be present everywhere: and preferably all at the same time! In that respect nothing seems to have changed over the years,’ Pietro smiles. ‘But of course, my job has developed as the company evolved. Decades ago, before I joined the company, the family business began like many small crafts workshops that work with wood, metal and upholstery have since the early 1900s. Galimberti Brothers made cupboards, chairs, tables and sofas in a blend of classical and artisanal styles, catering to the taste of the Italian middle and upper class. During the post-war era (and that was two decades before my time) factories in the Brianza area shifted towards machinery, still later to hi-tech and now they reflect the growing awareness

of sustainability we see and work with today.

salone

During the 1970s and 1980s, mechanization definitely took over, pushing the need for things like monitoring quality and setting industrial standards. In my department product designers became more and more involved in research and tooling on the factory floors. This evolved into a joint venture between the practical know-how we had in our workshop and the expertise we invited in from the architecture department of Milan Polytechnic. It was while this was going on 40 years ago that Antonio Citterio was commissioned by Flexform as an external advisor to the design department, much to my satisfaction.

optimisme

The self-confidence of work labelled ‘Made in Italy’ grew in the slipstream of the Compasso D’Oro Awards and the promotional efforts of the Salone del Mobile. The Salone was originally co-founded and supported by most of the manufacturers from the Brianza area, near Milan, where we’re still located. The whole concept of design as a driving force towards the future, for modernity, wellbeing and progress, came about in a highly optimistic and inspirational culture. It was embraced everywhere: architecture, furniture and interior magazines. The spirit was evident in graphic design from the Milanese School. You probably remember the Italian Dutch-

men Bob Noorda who worked for Pirelli. To our firm, an important name was Pino Tovaglia. Among many other things, he modernized the Alfa Romeo symbol and created the Flexform logo you still find on all our products. Today it is proudly displayed on the Flexform sign on the façade of the new brand store in the Amsterdam Zuidas. The effect is good. It draws the attention of passers-by and spurs the question: ‘What’s happening there?’

modulair

The layout of the logo coincided with the advent of the concept of modular furniture that Joe Colombo designed for our company years ago, introducing plastic, tubular steel, polyurethane and synthetic knit upholstery. Tovaglia was followed by Paola Navone, John Hutton and many others we regularly work with, illustrating the flexibility of form we express in our earliest and newest collections assembled here. Because habits change as people do. Likewise, the interior of our homes has to adapt and change along with them. Flexform accommodates individual purposes in a wide range. Different sized pieces can be pinned together in various configurations and models, forming sofas and complete living landscapes. Once formulated as a guideline, it still holds ground today.

interview Toon Lauwen
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