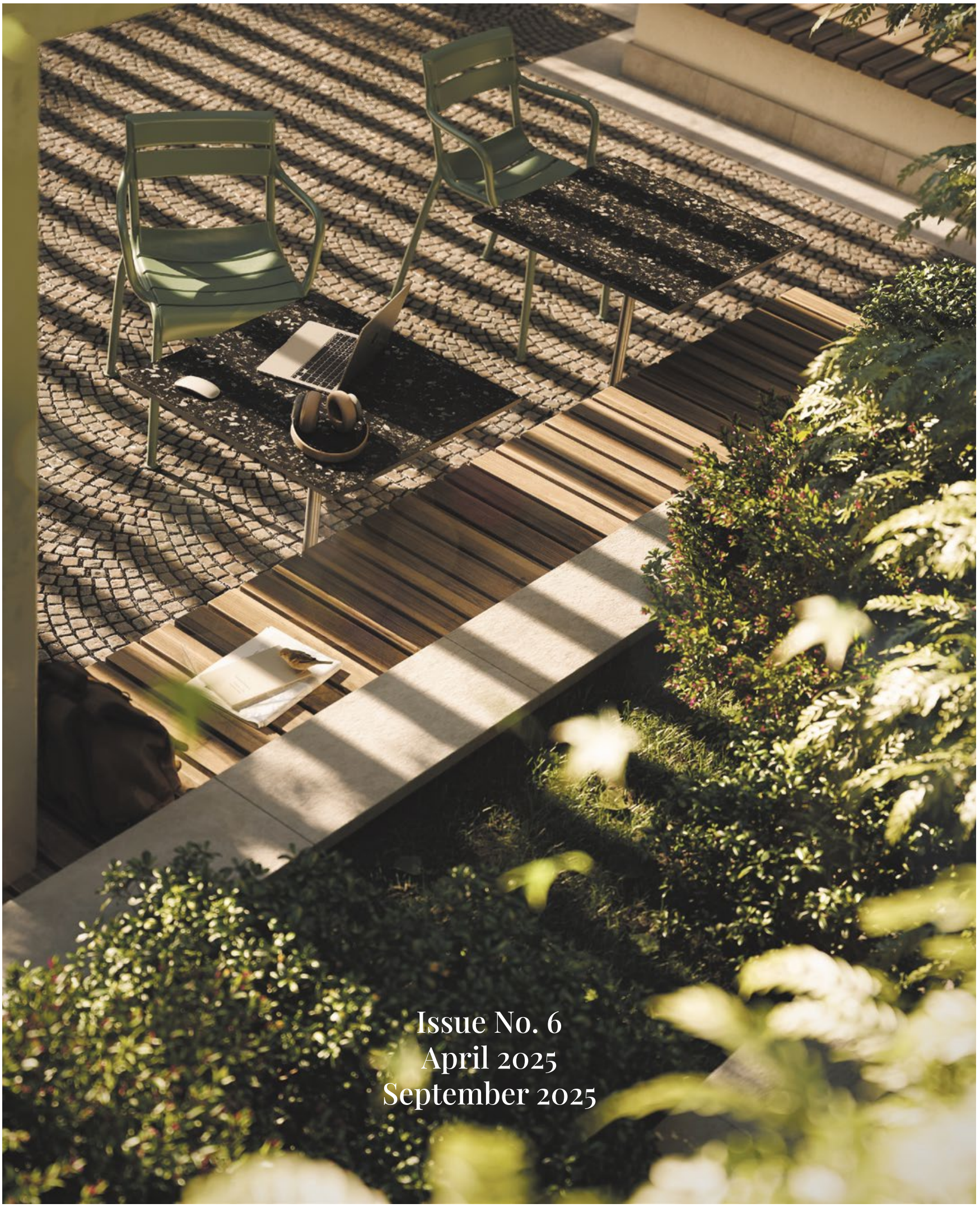
des.mag.

HOMA DESIGN MAGAZINE



Issue No. 6
April 2025
September 2025

9#

Homa

Editor in chief:
Federico Rebaudo

Coordination:
Studio Volpi srl

Contributing writers:
Elena Inversetti, Pierre Ley
Patrizio Cionfoli - Studio Volpi Design Director

Design & Layout:
Studio Volpi srl
Project Coordination: Federico Gallina
Graphic Design: Rodrigo Nasta,
Giorgia Simioni, Jacopo Porro

INDEX

DOMESTIC SHIFT

The hybrid home is a new design paradigm and a flexible, intelligent response to evolving lifestyles and spatial needs.

The ongoing social transformation has given rise to domestic environments shaped by multiple, personalised needs. Homes now call for modular, multifunctional furnishings that allow a bedroom to become an office, a living room to turn into a gym, then back again. All seamlessly integrated with smart technology.

Even though the idea has been discussed and developed for at least two decades, it was only after the 2020 pandemic that interior design began engaging daily with a new anthropological and socio-cultural category: the hybrid home. This is a response to a shared, global need, a democratic shift that has become far more than a trend. It is now a genuine paradigm, playing a disruptive and central role in the social transformation happening at all latitudes.

Today's domestic walls are more fluid, modular and open, not only outward but also internally, creating seamless transitions within the home itself. In fact, it is precisely the domestic space that reveals how shifting habits and daily needs are shaping market responses. Design gives form to this shift, translating it into spaces we can live in. Its adaptive, flexible and multifunctional nature, unconstrained by rigid conventions, makes it uniquely suited to meet the needs of today while anticipating those of tomorrow.

Hybrid spaces have been defined as mobile environments shaped by the constant motion of those who inhabit them. Ongoing social change, demographic growth, the breakdown of the traditional family structure, tighter budgets and longer life expectancy have led to spaces with multiple needs. Rooms now require modular, multifunctional furniture that can turn a bedroom into an office, or a living room into a gym and back again. All with furnishings that adapt quickly and comfortably to the varying demands of a day, with smartworking and home fitness now key structuring activities.

Homes and furnishings that speak different languages at different times of day. Conscious furniture. Optimised spaces. Personalised environments.

The new hybrid design, in its adaptive and flexible nature, shapes domestic life in the present while envisioning how we will live in the future.

Hybrid spaces have become the new normal, incorporating ergonomic and technological workstations into domestic design without compromising the aesthetics or functionality of shared areas. Folding tables, movable walls and smart storage solutions allow a living room to transform within minutes from a productive office into a relaxing retreat. The key is to design environments that support both productivity and wellbeing, through suitable lighting, acoustically protected areas and decorative elements that foster relaxation and focus. Optimisation is also crucial, with shelving and storage designed to maximise ceiling height, and intelligent lighting and climate systems that respond in real time to how the space is used.

Practicality, aesthetics and multipurpose technology are the pillars of increasingly hybrid homes, designed for people who live between work and leisure. A smart home for smart inhabitants. This new paradigm addresses practical needs, improves comfort, simplifies life and even helps save time. Interior design is now called to rewrite the language of modernity, integrating the many identities a person may embody over 24 hours, and interpreting spaces that reflect a society constantly on the move. Life outside the home now inspires and contaminates life within it, always tending to daily needs.

At the same time, we must remember that today's consumer is also the co-designer of the home, a space of living, working, relaxing and fitness, all linked by mobility. Hybrid homes are best equipped to interpret this cultural shift. Those living a mobile lifestyle require versatile, modular and multifunctional environments. Designing hybrid domestic spaces is the most useful form of dialogue between intuition and necessity, between creativity and a marketplace increasingly shaped by the consumers themselves. Today, those who inhabit a home also inhabit the market.

Adaptive, flexible design understands this well, helping to infuse the home with inclusivity, meaning the ability to serve the people who live in it and their individual needs. These are homes and furnishings that speak different languages at different times of day. Conscious furniture. Optimised spaces. Personalised environments. Because today, it is the home that adapts to its inhabitants, not the other way around.

Home Decor 2025: The Keyword is Technology Sync

In 2025, functionality and aesthetics of interior design cannot exist without smart technology to fulfil the promise of hybrid living. The smart home is increasingly integrated into décor, not only through connected appliances, but also via interactive finishes and technological tops. Meanwhile, furniture continues to evolve, becoming ever more multifunctional, with integrated lighting, security and climate systems controlled via app, and beyond. Even smart fabrics that respond to heat or light, and humanoid elements, no longer belong solely to dystopian futures.

OE1 Workspace Collection by Herman Miller

In a landscape where flexibility defines the modern workspace, Herman Miller's OE1 Workspace Collection reimagines office design with a fluid, modular and highly responsive approach. Created for an era of continuous change, OE1 allows individuals and organisations to experiment, reconfigure and transform their spaces according to present needs and future perspectives.
Agility stands at the heart of OE1. With multifunctional elements and mobile units, the collection easily integrates into existing environments or helps generate entirely new ones. Whether for individual workstations, collaborative zones or informal lounge areas, OE1 turns underused spaces into dynamic, high-performing hubs. A broad range of configurations and colour options makes the collection visually versatile, adapting to diverse aesthetics while maintaining functionality and coherence.
Its clean, expressive design language balances minimalism with everyday performance, responding directly to the demands of contemporary work: mobility, modularity and immediacy. With OE1, Herman Miller is not just furnishing spaces, but shaping how we inhabit and interact with them.

Mobility is not just a means of getting around, but an existential condition that redefines identity, relationships and space, both inside and outside the home.

The new paradigm for a sustainable home is usability.

Aava 02 Design by Antti Kotilainen

An example of classic minimalism that looks confidently to the future, Aava 02 reinterprets a timeless silhouette through the use of sustainable, next-generation materials. The chair is crafted from post-consumer recycled plastic blended with virgin polypropylene, offering exceptional durability without compromising its refined aesthetic. The material, reinforced with glass fibre, ensures long-term strength and consistent colour quality.
The full range of chairs and stools can be finished in recycled plastic, FSC-certified wood or a wide variety of fabrics. Upholstered versions are entirely glue-free, making them easy to disassemble for full recyclability or reuse. Aava 02 is a manifesto for conscious design, where essential form meets material innovation.

Interior designers are now called to rewrite the language of modernity, interpreting spaces that reflect a constantly evolving society.

Mobility is no longer merely a way to move. It is an existential state, shaped by both choice and necessity, and it redefines identity, relationships and space. This was argued more than a decade ago by sociologists Anthony Elliott and John Urry, who explored the concept of mobility as the movement of people, objects, information and capital in contemporary society. They demonstrated how mobility reshapes identity, social relations and economic structures.
Today, mobility is both physical and virtual, or rather, phygital. It is fluid, evolving, even fragmented. Work is increasingly a network of mobile connections where location matters less than the ability to remain constantly connected. True connection now transcends physical space.

The concept of the "mobile office" and "digital nomadism" are by-products of this transformation, but so are "domestic mobility" and the "modular home", or hybrid home, which at first glance may seem contradictory. Within this context, the sustainability paradigm also shifts, or rather, expands in meaning.

A sustainable home is one that does not harm the environment, strain finances, or fall short of the occupant's needs. Usability thus becomes a foundational element of the hybrid paradigm, directly impacting long-term sustainability.
A multipurpose space is, by nature, more sustainable over time because it can easily adapt to changing needs. What's more, by bringing together more aspects of daily life, especially work and fitness, hybrid spaces reduce the need for travel and therefore lower environmental impact.

SLIDING ROOMS

How hybrid living reshapes domestic spaces in Milan

In the heart of Milan, three historic buildings have been transformed into a new model of urban housing. Spazio Trivulzio, a build-to-rent project developed by Hines, explores a flexible way of living for modern city dwellers. The interiors, furnished by LAGO, reflect a new approach to design that merges modularity with emotion and redefines how space is experienced, shared and lived in.

A new kind of domestic space is emerging in Milan, one that blends private comfort with shared living, functionality with emotion. Spazio Trivulzio offers a fresh take on the home, shaped around the changing needs of those who live on-the-move. Developed by investment group Hines, the residential complex introduces a build-to-rent model centred on community, flexibility and contemporary design. Housed in three traditional Milanese buildings, the project features 78 apartments and more than 1,000 square metres of common areas.
Residents have access to co-working spaces, a gym, lounge, bike storage and even a dedicated repair workshop. The design encourages a sense of belonging without compromising on individual privacy.

Each apartment is fully furnished with designer modular interiors developed by LAGO to support multiple ways of living. Two mood-based finishes are available. The first, Intense, is bold and expressive, designed for those who want their space to reflect a strong personality. The second, Nature, offers a soothing environment rooted in simplicity and clarity, ideal for those seeking balance and serenity. Both are conceived to help residents transition easily between home, work and leisure.
The interiors combine warm surfaces and transparent elements to create rooms that feel open yet personal. It is a setting conceived not just for function, but also for daily rituals, connection and presence.

«We are responding to a cultural shift in housing. Today's homes are no longer static places but spaces of flow, exchange and transformation.»
Gilberto Negrini, LAGO's CEO

Air Table - Design: Daniele Lago

A design icon that challenges traditional ideas of volume. Two sleek, nearly invisible tempered glass legs support a wide, solid tabletop, creating the striking impression of suspension in mid-air. The result is a dining table that brings lightness and transparency to the room. The legs are available in extra-clear or smoked glass, while the tabletop comes in a wide range of finishes, from the warmth of Wildwood oak to the refined look of glass and XGlass. The thermally treated Wildwood surface offers excellent resistance to wear and is impermeable to liquids, while the tempered glass legs ensure maximum durability against impacts and thermal shifts. An adjustable support system and transparent rubber feet guarantee perfect stability on any surface. Available in lengths up to three metres, Air is a table designed for social living and shared spaces.

Air Nightstand - Design: Daniele Lago

Minimalist volumes rest on tempered glass supports, bringing lightness and elegance to the bedroom. This freestanding bedside table requires no wall anchoring and can also be placed at the centre of the room. Thanks to its modular design, it adapts effortlessly to different spatial needs. Made from precision-cut aluminium with 45° joints, it combines structural integrity with clean aesthetics. Available in a wide variety of materials, including wood, glass, marble, metal and XGlass, it offers numerous compositional possibilities, each with strong visual presence.

Air Coffee Table - Design: Daniele Lago

With clean lines, refined materials and a sense of suspension, the Air Coffee Table is supported by solid legs in extra-clear tempered glass, giving the top a floating appearance. Fully customisable in size and finish, it adapts with ease to both spacious and compact settings. It is available in Wildwood oak, lacquered glass, or the full range of XGlass finishes, including marble, metal, wood and textile effects, creating a unique and sophisticated focal point in the living area.

THE HUMAN SOUL OF *Next-Gen smart home design*

AN INTERVIEW WITH MILKA ESKOLA

Join us in a compelling conversation with Milka Eskola, Vice President Art & Design at Legrand-BTicino, who leads a global team shaping the future of smart home solutions. Speaking to DM, she reflects on the importance of flexibility in design leadership, the challenges of merging business and innovation, and how her philosophy, rooted in everyday life, guides her vision. From her Finnish origins to her experiences in Italy, France, and beyond, Eskola shares her unique perspective on how design can improve lives.

Your role places you at the intersection of design, technology, and business. How do you integrate design thinking with business growth, and what are the biggest challenges in innovating within such a fast-evolving industry?

Design is at the core of what we do, but it doesn't exist in isolation. It has to serve a purpose, align with market needs, and push boundaries without becoming disconnected from reality. The challenge here is keeping that balance between aesthetics and usability, between innovation and feasibility, so we work in multidisciplinary teams from the start. When a project introduces a new feature, we don't just think about form, we involve marketing, engineers, and external experts: architects, electricians, end users. The goal is to adopt a shared vision that ensures smoother execution. Good design isn't about isolated creativity for its own sake, it's about creating solutions that make sense from every angle.

One of the biggest challenges in innovation is the pace at which technology evolves. We are designing products for homes that will last for decades, yet the technology inside them can change within a few years. How do you future-proof design? How do you ensure that something remains relevant in an industry where everything moves so fast? That's where human-centred design thinking becomes crucial. It's not just about what technology can do, but about how people actually want to live with that technology over time.

In search for new circular materials that match with modern trends.

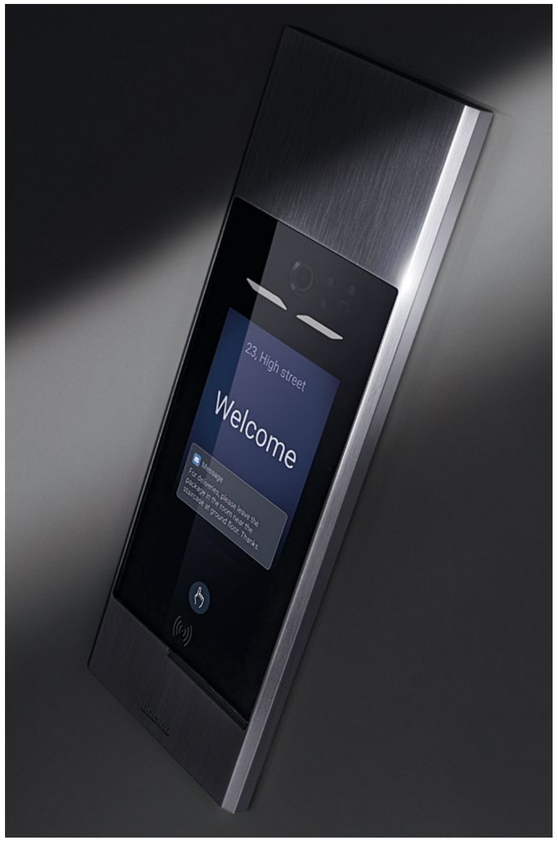
Living Now smart controls transform traditional light switches into an interface for the home.

"It's about enabling [designers] to bring their best ideas to the table."

You lead a global design team within a large and diverse organisation. How would you define your strategic approach to design leadership?

Flexibility is the key. In a company like ours, change is constant: business grows, acquisitions happen, and new challenges emerge. I don't believe in rigid guidelines or imposing a one-size-fits-all design language. Instead, I focus on defining a vision, a clear purpose that serves as a guide but allows room for interpretation.

With teams in France, Italy, the US, India, and China, leadership isn't about dictating how things should be done, it's about enabling people to bring their best ideas to the table. We don't all think or work the same way, and that's a strength. The goal is to embrace different perspectives and turn diversity into a competitive advantage. Building a culture of trust and autonomy is fundamental. My role is not to micromanage but to create the conditions in which people can thrive. That means ensuring alignment on overall objectives while allowing enough creative freedom for teams to explore their own approaches. I believe in empowering designers to make decisions. When people feel a sense of ownership, the results are always stronger.



Linea5000, a digital door-entry panel with traditional wiring. A perfect combination of tradition meeting modern needs.

"Balance between innovation and familiarity is crucial."

In a modern home, technology does not need to stand out and shout its presence. It is perfectly integrated with interior elements.

Projects like Living Now have redefined the relationship between aesthetics and technology in smart homes. What were the key elements behind its success, and how do these principles shape future developments?

Timing, commitment, and execution. Living Now challenged conventions, making home automation accessible without needing complex rewiring. At the same time, it maintained a human-centred design approach, blending into interiors rather than overwhelming them with visible technology.

The balance between innovation and familiarity was crucial. Whether it's an architect designing a modern space or a homeowner looking for ease of use, they both need to feel comfortable with the product. Smart design isn't about forcing new behaviours, it's about making innovation feel natural and intuitive.

A major success factor was understanding how people interact with their living spaces. The best design solutions are not just about technology but about daily habits. Light switches are a perfect example. We take them for granted, yet they shape how we interact with our homes daily. A design like Living Now introduces new functionalities while respecting established behaviours. It's about enhancing, not disrupting, the way people live.

"AI lacks the emotional intelligence needed for truly great design"

What is your vision for AI in this space, and how can design improve its integration?

Right now, AI is a powerful support tool, but it's not a substitute for human intuition. It's fantastic for processing data, suggesting ideas, and automating repetitive tasks. But it lacks the emotional intelligence needed for truly great design.

We don't use AI for the sake of it. It has to add value. Currently, it's useful for ideation and problem-solving, but final execution still requires human expertise. AI can help us design smarter, but it's human creativity that makes a product truly resonate.

There's potential for AI to play a role in predictive behaviour, learning user preferences over time and simplifying their routines. But that only works if users trust it. And trust comes from transparency and consistency. People need to feel that they are still in control of their environment, even as technology adapts to them. That's a delicate balance which design must carefully manage.

"The industry needs to prioritise interoperability and focus on creating experiences that just work."

With Living Now Digital Controls, the interface wakes up when approached.

Security is a growing concern in smart homes, from physical protection to cybersecurity. How does this influence your design strategy, and what innovations are emerging in this area?

Security should never be an afterthought. We design with privacy and protection in mind, ensuring users feel in control of their environment. That means intuitive interfaces, clear settings, and encrypted communications.

We're also seeing innovations in biometric access, smart surveillance, and automated threat detection, all designed to make security seamless, and not stressful.

When users understand the system and feel empowered to manage their own settings, their experience is more positive. It's about creating confidence through design, reassurance through simplicity. A secure experience shouldn't feel like a compromise or an inconvenience.

Integration with interior design elements is part of the success of Living Now

Interoperability is a major challenge. What are your thoughts on the "Matter" standard, and do you think it will be a turning point for smart home integration?

Matter is a step in the right direction. It's designed to break barriers between brands and allow devices to communicate. That's essential, but it's only the beginning. The real challenge is making smart home technology so intuitive and effortless that people don't even think about compatibility anymore. That's when we'll see mass adoption.

It's not just about getting devices to talk to each other; it's about getting them to cooperate in a meaningful way. Interoperability should feel invisible to the user. Matter gives us the infrastructure, but it's design that will shape the experience.

Sustainable design does not stop at the product level, it is about the whole experience including manufacturing processes and packaging

Smart home adoption varies globally. From your perspective, what are the biggest barriers to wider adoption, and how can design help overcome them?

Complexity. Too many smart home systems require technical knowledge, making adoption slower. The key is intuitive design and seamless integration. People don't want ten different apps to control their home. The industry needs to prioritise interoperability and focus on creating experiences that just work.

Design has the power to lower the entry barrier. Simplicity in interaction, coherence in ecosystem, and visibility of function all play a role. When a smart home feels approachable, even to someone who's never used one before, adoption increases. Familiarity breeds confidence.

Looking ahead, what are the key trends that will redefine smart living in the coming years?

We're shifting from smart devices to smart experiences. Users want effortless interaction, where technology adapts to their routines rather than forcing them to learn new behaviours. I also see a return to tactility, blending digital and physical interfaces for a more natural interaction.

There's growing interest in sustainability-driven design choices, not just in materials but in energy use and lifecycle impact. People want technology that aligns with their values, and they want it to be beautiful. We'll see more and more of this convergence between ethics, aesthetics, and utility.

"I see a return to tactility, blending digital and physical interfaces for a more natural interaction."

What are the biggest challenges ahead in making smart homes truly integrated, intuitive, and sustainable? What aspects of design and innovation are you focusing on to take the industry to the next level?

The challenge is making smart homes feel like home, not a collection of disconnected gadgets. We're focusing on seamless user experiences, meaningful automation, and sustainable design choices.

We want to move beyond control panels and apps into ambient, context-aware systems that respond to behaviour and emotion, not just commands. But we have to get the basics right first: reliability, safety, ease of use. These are non-negotiable.

Also, a shift in mindset is happening. We're not just designing for individuals, we're designing for communities, for different generations, for dynamic households. This changing mindset opens up new possibilities, but also new responsibilities. Our goal is to design a future where technology truly serves people, not the other way around.

Collaborative workshops are at the heart of our design processes and guarantee success for all users.

MatixGo introduced a 100% bio-based material, reflecting on the need for continuous innovation on materials.

"We're designing for communities, for different generations, and dynamic households."

bio

An internationally recognised Finnish designer, **Milka Eskola** is Vice President of Art & Design at Legrand, where she leads global teams in shaping inclusive, sustainable smart home experiences. A graduate of the Lahti Institute of Design in Finland and the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, she brings over 20 years of international experience across companies like Nokia, IKEA and Whirlpool. Her work has earned prestigious honours, including an Honourable Mention at the Compasso d'Oro ADI Award and multiple iF Design Awards. In 2025, she also served as a juror for the iF Design Award, underlining her standing in the global design community. At Legrand, she champions inclusive, sustainable design that quietly integrates technology into everyday life, combining Nordic clarity with global sensitivity.

legrandgroup.com

Technogym Kinesis Personal

DESIGNING FITNESS INTO THE EVERYDAY HOME

As hybrid living redefines domestic space, fitness is no longer a separate function. From single pieces of equipment to fully integrated systems, wellness is becoming part of the home's identity. It is flexible, modular and perfectly in sync with the individual pace of its inhabitants.

In a society that is constantly on the move, and indeed accelerating, even the home must keep pace. It is not just a matter of necessity but the result of a deeper paradigm shift that is redefining how we see and live in our homes. Home fitness responds to increasingly tailored choices, designed to match the personal pace and needs of the individual.
Integrating different activities into a single space no longer applies only to those tasks we now see as natural companions in our daily lives. It also applies to needs that bring entirely different environments into the home, such as the gym. There are many reasons why people choose to work out at home, and just as many reasons for choosing home fitness in particular.

Whether it is a matter of privacy, distance from the nearest fitness centre, limited time during the day, a desire to save money in the long term, specific conditions such as disability, or specialised needs like having a personal trainer at home, all of these are driving the growing popularity of at-home fitness.

Integrating different needs into one adaptable space means responding with flexible design solutions. From compact tools to large-scale equipment and fully equipped training walls, the range of modular solutions available on the market is expanding. Leading design-focused fitness brands are now creating equipment that not only functions well but also fits beautifully into living spaces. These products offer adaptability, silence, elegance and efficiency.

As a result, home fitness is no longer an afterthought or a temporary workaround. It is a central part of the hybrid home and a driver of wellness-centred design. It is not simply a necessity, but part of a new identity for how we inhabit space.
Home fitness today is a reflection of lifestyle and intention, designed to follow the personal pace of the people who live there.


Technogym Run

TECHNOGYM – Technogym Run
The quietest, most energy-efficient treadmill ever, Technogym Run brings professional-grade training home. Designed for every fitness level -from casual runners to elite athletes- it combines immersive on-demand workouts, bootcamp programs, and strength training in one sleek machine. With slat-belt technology for a responsive, track-like running feel and a 27" console offering entertainment and guided sessions, it's an all-in-one platform for cardio, strength, and performance.

TECHNOGYM – Kinesis Personal
Elegance in motion. Kinesis Personal brings the philosophy of "gentle gymnastics" into the home with over 200 possible exercises in less than ten square feet. Built around Technogym's patented FullGravity™ technology, it enables fluid, multidimensional movement with collapsible arms and a one-touch resistance dial. Precision-crafted finishes and soft-touch controls make it as pleasing to the eye as it is to the body. Suitable for homes, offices or boutique hotels, it redefines what a multifunctional fitness object can be.


Technogym Kinesis Personal and Bike Personal

NOHRD – StepBox
A seamless blend of design and functionality, the NOHRD StepBox integrates effortlessly into the home while elevating your fitness routine. When not in use, it becomes a discreet storage unit for essential training tools: a set of NOHRD SwingBells (2 kg, 4 kg, and 6 kg), tubular resistance bands of varying tension, a jump rope with tubular handles, and a cork yoga mat (180 cm x 60 cm x 0.4 cm). During workouts, the padded top serves as a bench or seat, while the detachable wooden side panels act as sturdy supports for a wide range of exercises. Made of black-dyed real wood veneer over chipboard, the StepBox is finished with NOHRD's exclusive hardwax oil, enhancing both the natural beauty and longevity of the wood. High-grade stainless steel pins and sleeves offer secure anchor points for a safe and stable training experience. Its minimal, curved lines allow it to inhabit the home with quiet elegance.

NOHRD – Walls
Five modules, one holistic concept. NOHRD Walls is a space-saving, all-in-one fitness station that reimagines home training through sleek design and digital functionality. Made from sustainable hardwood and equipped with cutting-edge technology, it includes a built-in touchscreen offering full-body workouts and daily "Workout-of-the-Day" streaming. Bluetooth compatibility allows users to connect heart rate monitors, enabling a personalised training experience that matches both physical and aesthetic demands.

SHUA - R5 Water Rower
A masterpiece of fluid resistance and natural design. The SHUA R5 WaterRower recreates the smooth, immersive sensation of rowing on water without using electricity. Originally developed with Yale University in 1988, it became a global icon after appearing in the TV series House of Cards. Its red oak frame enhances both durability and aesthetic appeal, while the transparent ABS tank holds up to 11 litres for dynamic resistance. An ergonomic seat, non-slip aluminium handle and shock-absorbing rails ensure comfort and safety. Compact and foldable, it occupies just 0.28 m² when stored upright, the perfect solution for hybrid homes.

SHUA - Mounted Cable Trainer
Minimal footprint, maximal function. This wall-mounted trainer is engineered for full-body workouts in under 0.2 m² of space. Its robust frame features large rectangular steel tubing with electrostatic coating, corrosion-resistant aluminium pulleys, and thermoplastic rubber grips. The stainless-steel mirrored panel adds a premium reflective finish, while the ash wood veneer offers natural warmth. Combining elegance, strength and efficiency, it is designed for homes where aesthetics and performance must coexist..

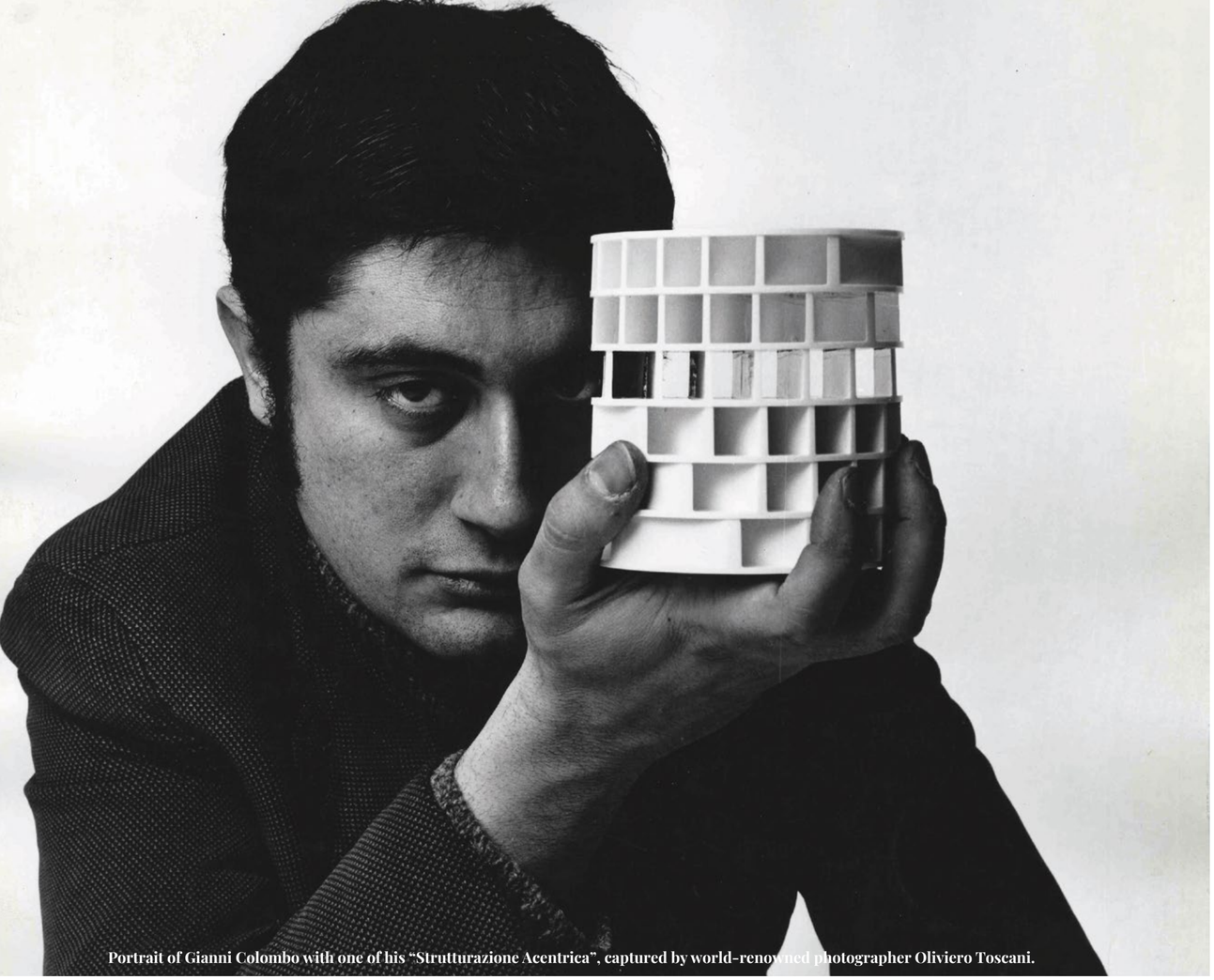
The future of fitness: how remote training is redefining wellbeing

In an age where technology and well-being are increasingly intertwined, remote fitness is reshaping the very concept of personal training. According to PureGym's 2025 report, interest in remote personal training has grown by a staggering 414 percent, reflecting a broader shift in preferences toward more flexible, tech-enabled solutions. But what is behind this explosion in demand, and how is it changing the way we care for our bodies in the era of the hybrid home?

The primary advantage of remote training is flexibility, making better use of time. On-demand access to pre-recorded sessions, combined with the option to schedule live, personalised workouts, makes fitness more accessible than ever. Technological innovation has also made remote training increasingly effective. The most advanced solutions now include wearables, virtual training platforms and VR tools, all integrated with AI software for full personalisation.
A wide range of users benefit from remote fitness, from professionals with irregular hours to parents who struggle to find time to commute, as well as frequent travellers who want to maintain their routine wherever they are. It also appeals to those with specific privacy needs.
Remote training represents a remarkable opportunity for personal trainers and businesses in the fitness sector. Global accessibility allows them to reach clients anywhere in the world, while significantly reducing costs related to physical premises. It also opens up new revenue streams, from subscription-based services to bespoke plans.

According to industry experts, the future of digital fitness will include increasingly advanced platforms, immersive and interactive training experiences, and deeper integration between AI and exercise. This means real-time personalised workouts, more precise wearables offering detailed feedback, and a growing emphasis on community engagement to keep motivation high through user interaction.

Remote fitness is not just a passing trend. It is a genuine revolution that will redefine how we train and care for our physical well-being. Thanks to ongoing technological innovation and the rising demand for flexibility, digital training is set to become a new standard, including in design.



Portrait of Gianni Colombo with one of his "Strutturazione Acentrica", captured by world-renowned photographer Oliviero Toscani.

Strutturazione Acentrica is a cylindrical structure encasing a beehive-like core made of parallel diaphragms aligned on a horizontal axis, layered vertically with varying angles of inclination. When the cylinder spins at high speed, light filters through the layers, producing the illusion of a rhythmic, vertical motion—an optical oscillation that evokes both ascent and descent.

BENDING THE RULES:

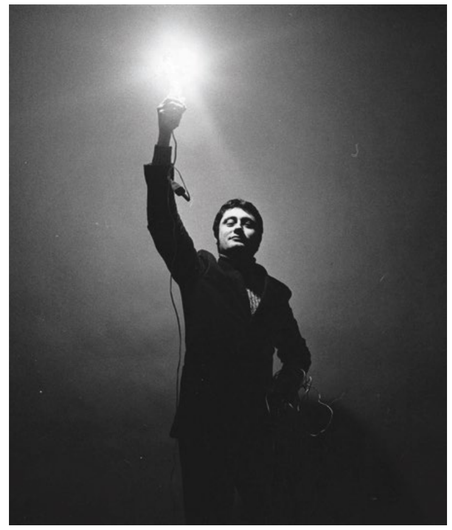
A perceptive portrait of GIANNI COLOMBO, *the artist who stretched geometry and rewired the senses.*

A pioneer of kinetic art and a master at redefining space through its interaction with the body, Gianni Colombo created immersive environments in constant transformation, foreshadowing the language of the Metaverse long before its time. His installations changed as the viewer moved, transforming spectators into active participants in a new, fluid sensory experience.

While Joe Colombo entered the history of Italian design as one of the most creative and experimental designers of the 1960s, his brother Gianni was no less revolutionary in redefining artistic paradigms and anticipating new conceptual territories. At a time when 3D and interaction were exclusively physical, and virtual reality was still confined to science fiction, Gianni Colombo explored space in depth, leaving us with movement as a symbol of change, against standards, conventions and routine.
The two brothers worked in adjacent studios for nearly a decade until Joe's death in 1971. Together they created a single design object: the Acrilica lamp, designed in 1962 for O-luce and awarded at the XIII Triennale di Milano, where the light literally bends into a "C", standing for "the Colombo brothers".

The role of the observer, transformed from passive viewer to co-creator of the artistic experience, redefines aesthetics through new sensory and participatory dimensions.

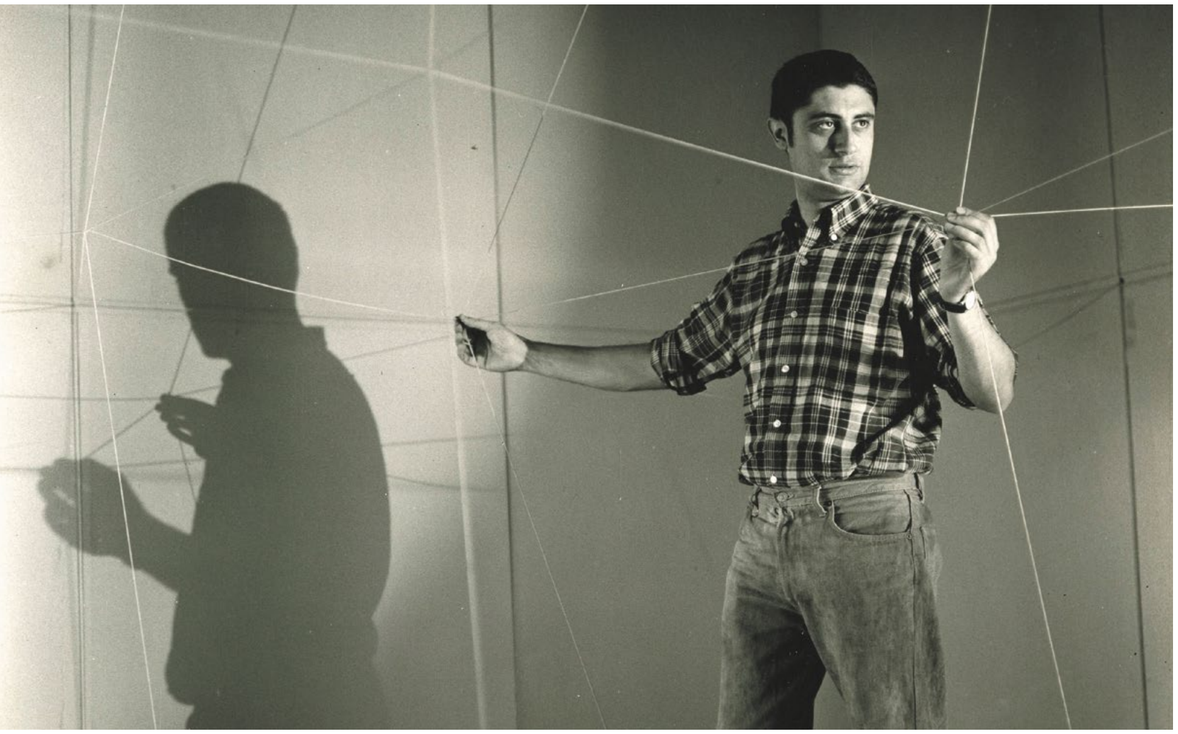
Gianni Colombo envisioned environments capable of triggering and stimulating both sensory and behavioural responses. These were spaces of total immersion, where the visitor was no longer a passive viewer, but an active participant within unfamiliar settings. His signature was transformation: his installations shifted based on the viewer's position, the audience's direct interaction, or internal mechanisms that generated movement. The aim was to break with the tradition of static, two-dimensional art and create immersive experiences that altered spatial perception, long before VR headsets even existed. Colombo rejected the fixed perspective of Renaissance



Emblematic image of **Gianni Colombo**: visionary innovator of light and perception.

tradition in favour of dynamic and mutable spatial configurations that could not be grasped from a single point of view. His works fall within kinetic art, a movement focused on motion, perception and the relationship between the work and the viewer.
As a leading figure of the Italian collective Gruppo T, active during the 1960s, Colombo experimented with light, space and motion. The "T" stood for "time", understood as an element evolving in relation to the environment. Colombo's artistic language questioned the security of habit, revealing just how fragile our sense of stability can be. Through geometric forms, bursts of light, reflective surfaces and modular structures, his installations disrupted everyday reference points, drawing viewers into environments that challenged perception and subverted expectations.

Bariesthesia: by disrupting the repetitive order and constant slope of the steps, evokes a form of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic response that unfolds through the sequential act of walking up or down the staircase.



Gianni Colombo interacts with the installation, revealing how its elements respond and relate to one another.

SPAZIO ELASTICO

The illusion in motion that challenges perception

Spazio elastico is one of the most iconic works of Italian kinetic art. First presented in 1967 at Trigon 67 in Graz, Austria, the installation earned widespread acclaim, including a showing at the 1968 Venice Biennale, where it won the First Prize for Painting, and later at Documenta 4 in Kassel the same year.
The work consists of a completely dark cubic room crossed by fluorescent elastic cords arranged in an orthogonal grid. The immersive effect is powered by black elastic wires lit by Wood lights and moved by electromechanical motors. The result is an unstable, ever-changing space in which the grids continuously distort. Spatial coordinates appear to float, and anyone inside loses fixed reference points, confusing vertical with horizontal.
Gianni Colombo employed industrial materials and cutting-edge technology for the time, integrating scientific and technical elements into his artistic practice with a clarity that anticipated many future developments in interactive artistic installations.

Spazio Elastico
The work is composed of just a few essential elements: light—or its absence—and crossing lines. The true subject of the installation is the experience itself: how we process it psychologically, and how it shapes our behavior within the space.

Gianni Colombo at work in his studio, 1977

Spazio elastico marked a turning point in contemporary art, anticipating themes of interactivity and perception that would become central to later artistic practices.

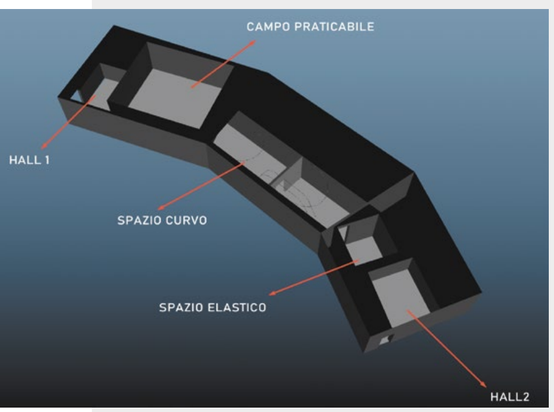
Cacogoniometric architecture installation
An immersive spatial experiment in which architectural elements—walls, staircases, and openings—are intentionally distorted, tilted, or displaced. The result is a state of disorientation, a breakdown of spatial logic, and a destabilized perceptual experience. These are not functional architectural spaces, but rather conceptual environments designed to engage the visitor both physically and psychologically.

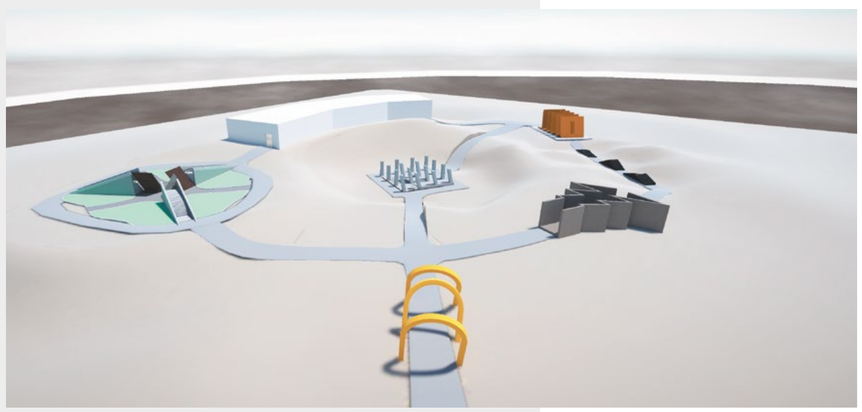
Colombo's metaverse

Colombo's work can be seen as an analogue anticipation of the virtual world. Today, as his original installations face the inevitable wear of time, Colombo's Metaverse has been developed to make these visionary works accessible to a wider public. These immersive environments were so ahead of their time that they still feel contemporary.
The project offers a way to experience his kinetic art even when the physical installations are no longer fully reconstructable. Many of his works now exist only as sketches, historical photographs or fragments that cannot be rebuilt. Colombo's Metaverse is conceived as the natural continuation of his artistic journey, a body of work that explored the relationship between body and space in increasingly radical ways.
Colombo's creations remain objects of study and admiration, bearing witness to his foresight and originality as one of the most visionary artists of the twentieth century. But his relevance does not end there. Colombo still speaks to us today, in a world where the relationship between body and space is constantly being redefined.
Supported by the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) through the Innovacultura grant, Colombo's Metaverse reimagines his artistic legacy through innovation. It uses virtual reality to digitally reconstruct some of his most important works including Spazio Elastico, Spazio Curvo and Campo Praticabile, as well as key urban installations, allowing visitors to explore them in fully interactive three-dimensional environments.
Users can navigate this virtual landscape via computer or VR headset, encountering Colombo's reconstructed works in a series of digital outdoor spaces. Several environments including Spazio Curvo, Spazio Elastico and Campo Praticabile are housed within virtual rooms that visitors can enter to experience the same perceptual distortions originally conceived in analogue form. The project also includes the digital reconstruction of site-specific and architectural installations.
This ambitious initiative is carried out in collaboration with the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, which is leading the analysis of how users perceive and respond to Colombo's work in digital form. The goal is to collect data on user engagement, emotional impact and levels of understanding, to better grasp how kinetic art continues to move us, even in the virtual realm.

COESIONE ITALIA 21-27 LOMBARDIA | Cofinanziato dall'Unione europea | Regione Lombardia

An initiative carried out with the contribution of the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) Programme of the Lombardy Region





A glimpse into the forthcoming VR experience: project screenshots ahead of the April 2025 release.

Spaces are rendered hybrid by shifts in perspective, and bodies remain balanced only when integrated with their environment.

bio

Gianni Colombo

Gianni Colombo (Milan, 1 January 1937 - Melzo, 3 February 1993) was a leading figure in the field of kinetic art. Born in Milan, he was the younger brother of renowned designer Joe Colombo.
His father Giuseppe ran a successful electrical manufacturing business, while his mother Tina played the piano, an instrument Gianni studied as well.
In 1959, together with Giovanni Anceschi, Davide Boriani and Gabriele De Vecchi, he founded Gruppo T, later joined by Grazia Varisco. The group sought to overcome traditional divisions between painting, sculpture and architecture, focusing instead on space, time and active viewer engagement.
In 1964, Colombo created his first immersive environment, Strutturazione cinevisuale abitabile, shown at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs of the Louvre in Paris. This marked the beginning of his exploration of environmental installations designed to stimulate the viewer's sensory and behavioural responses.
In 1985, he became director of the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan, where he had taught Spatial Structuring since 1967. His career was marked by constant experimentation, culminating in works such as the Architetture Cacogoniometriche of the 1980s, in which architectural elements were digitally distorted through early computer modelling.
Gianni Colombo died suddenly on February 3 1993 in Melzo's hospital. His legacy continues through the work of the Gianni Colombo Archive, which promotes and preserves his artistic contributions.

archiviogiannicolombo.org

Making complexity feel natural

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIKA AAKESSON

DM caught up with Marika Aakesson, Copenhagen-born and Rome-based member of the multidisciplinary design collective Kromosoma, to talk about the intersections of foodtech, sustainability, healthcare and innovation. In this conversation, she shares how design can improve quality of life, what it means to communicate circularity, and why designers must embrace empathy when working with advanced technologies.

Your work bridges very different domains, from *neuroscience to foodtech*. What is the driving force behind all these projects, and how do they influence your approach to design?

The goal is always the same: to enhance people's well-being and that of the planet. That is the common thread. Every project, no matter the field, starts from that intention. Whether we are talking about health, food, materials or interaction, the process begins by asking what kind of future we want to enable, and how design can contribute to that. I have worked in different countries and sectors, from industry to education to consultancy. These experiences have shaped the way I understand design. Context matters. You have to observe, listen, and adapt. The design process may be similar, but the way it's applied depends on the people and environment. What remains constant is the human being at the centre.

"Context matters: you have to observe, listen and adapt"

***Circular design* is often discussed in theory. What is missing in practice?**

Few people realise it, but designers are the first link in the circular economy chain. If we don't enter the process early, including the design of the product's end-of-life, the system just won't work. That's why it's crucial we take responsibility from the very beginning. We must consider how something is made, how it will be used, and what will happen to it after that. But there's another key element: communication. If users are unaware that a product is recyclable or designed to be reused, then the whole idea of circularity fails. The message has to be clear. It's not just about sustainable design, but also about helping people make informed choices. As designers, we're not just creating objects. We're also shaping awareness.

Spectrum C23 fNIRS system for Cortivision

Take away bag for the healthy street food format by DeaMadre

Do designers have an *ethical duty*?
How do you personally address this in your work?

Designers carry a big responsibility. I believe design has the possibility, and the duty, to influence how we live, beyond simply shaping the objects we use. I often go back to Viktor Papanek, who wrote Design for the Real World in the 1970s. Many of its ideas are still relevant today, and we're still not applying them enough. As designers, we have tools, methods, and knowledge to contribute to more equitable societies. We need to be involved in public discourse, and in policymaking. That's what I try to do through my work with ADI and BEDA, speaking with local and European institutions to make the role of design visible, not just in industry, but also in the social domain. We can design not only products, but also services for citizens, helping create systems that support wellbeing and fairness.

4Expo - pop up corner in 100% recycled cardboard designed for Legambiente. The complete set fits into one box that can be carried by hand.

"We wanted people to reconnect with food, not as a chore, but as a moment of wellbeing."

DeaMadre - polpette piatto unico healthy eating plate.

DeaMadre is a project that explores the *future of food*. What did you learn from it?

DeaMadre was a truly multidisciplinary experience. We collaborated with chef Stefano Polato, who designed and prepared meals for Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti's mission aboard the International Space Station. He brought his knowledge of nutrition and cutting-edge preservation technologies, which we applied to food designed for everyday life on Earth. The aim was to create meals that are healthy, balanced and sustainable. We used seasonal fruits and vegetables that were immediately deep-frozen and then regenerated through a controlled process that preserves nutrients and taste. This made it possible to reduce food waste from the start: you prepare only what you need, when you need it.
The dishes we created were based on the Mediterranean diet, using the "single-dish-meal" approach: a single, complete plate that meets your nutritional needs. It was the first time I worked with someone so deeply involved in food transformation technology. With Kromosoma and Francesco Subioli, we also looked at the cultural and emotional aspects of cooking: it is not just nutrition, but memory, ritual, pleasure. We wanted people to reconnect with food, not as a chore, but as a moment of wellbeing and reflection.

You also worked on MindTooth, a *neurotech wearable*. What was your approach to such a technical subject?

MindTooth was a very special project for me. It was developed with BrainSigns, a spin-off of La Sapienza University in Rome. Everyone involved, from neuroscientists to marketing experts and flight trainers, brought a unique perspective. Our goal was to create a headset for pilot training that would be functional but also pleasant to wear. Before our design intervention, the equipment looked like a swimming cap with wires sticking out everywhere. It was uncomfortable and distracting, which negatively affected users' performance. So we redesigned it to be ergonomic, wearable and, why not, even a bit "cool". The pilots said it made them feel like superheroes. We worked carefully on shape, materials, and wearability: how it touches the scalp, how it feels after hours of use.
What I loved most about the project was the collaboration. I got to work with people from very different worlds: engineers, scientists, flight

Mindtooth Touch for BrainSigns - The system provides real time indicators of cognitive or emotional states by processing cerebral signals used in eduction and training.

A per Atipico! - a IED students project for young people on the autism spectrum. One of the projects: a nose plug to keep all smells out.

instructors. We laughed and learned together. The headset itself was later used in surgical settings too, for the same reasons, to monitor performance in high-pressure environments. One of the most interesting features is its ability to measure the level of collaboration between users. In aviation, for instance, it helps instructors detect at what point communication between two pilots might be breaking down. That allows them to refine the training. And yes, the device received an Honourable Mention at the Compasso d'Oro. That kind of recognition means a lot when you work with empathy and rigour, even in highly technical fields.

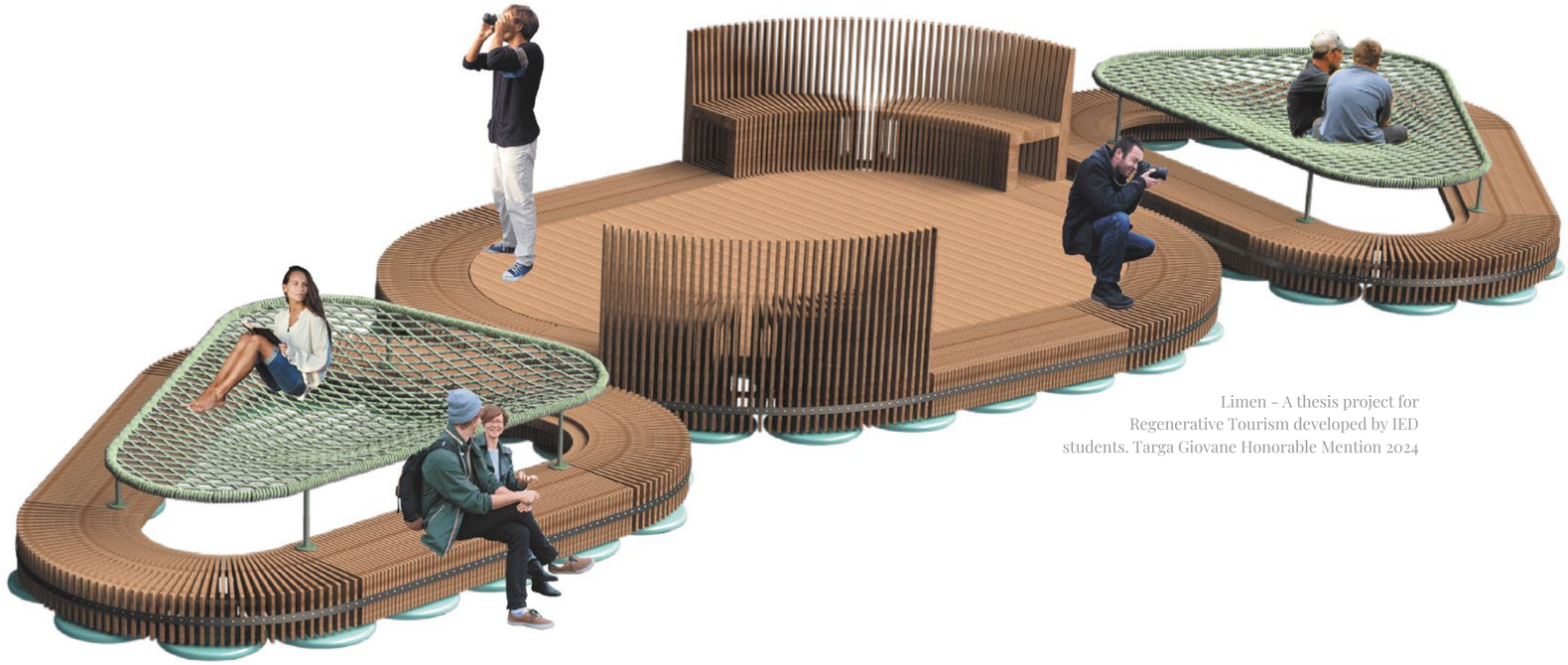
Another neuroscience project I worked on was Cortivision, in collaboration with a Polish company that develops cognitive technologies. This also involved a headset, designed to measure attention, and currently used by Polish astronauts in space testing. Our work focused on improving the ergonomics and wearability of the device.

BluDev® - a device that exploits the power of AI and is able to recognize the certain origin of the product and its quality, making the product its own label.

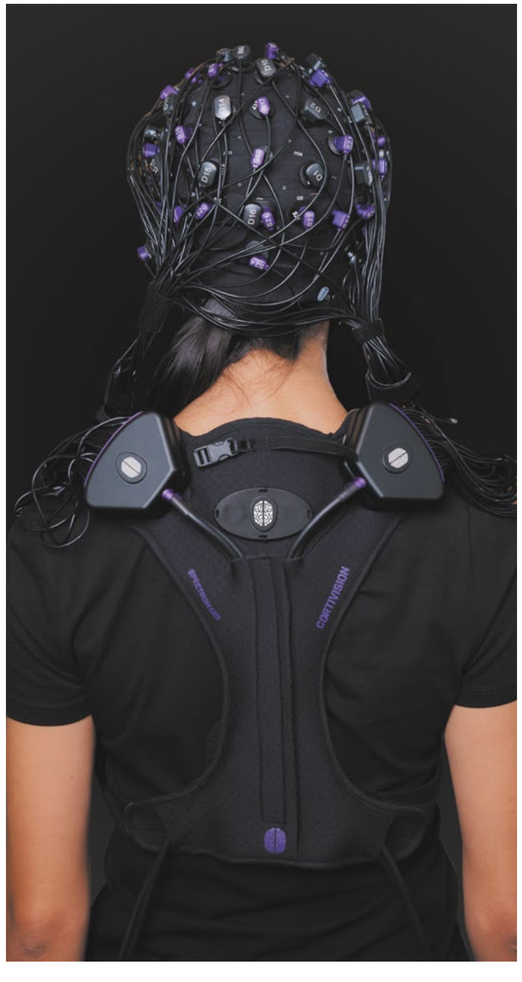
You teach and mentor *young designers*. What do you try to pass on to them?

First of all, empathy. I always tell my students that as designers, we need to truly understand who we are designing for. We have to step into their shoes, see the world from their perspective. This is not optional, it is the foundation of our work. I also insist that sustainability is no longer a plus, it is a duty. Every project must take environmental impact into account. That's something I try to instil from day one. Our goal must always be to do good for people and for the planet.

At IED, where I coordinate the Product Design course, we often work on social projects. For instance, we developed design solutions to help young people with autism live better daily lives. These collaborations with local institutions and associations are incredibly enriching. But I often say that the biggest challenge is getting these good ideas out of the "micro" dimension, where it's just us and the NGOs, and into broader adoption by public authorities. If local governments embraced these solutions and invested in scaling them, the impact could be enormous. That's why I believe that designers must also engage with public discourse, advocating for systemic change.



Limen - A thesis project for Regenerative Tourism developed by IED students. Targa Giovane Honorable Mention 2024



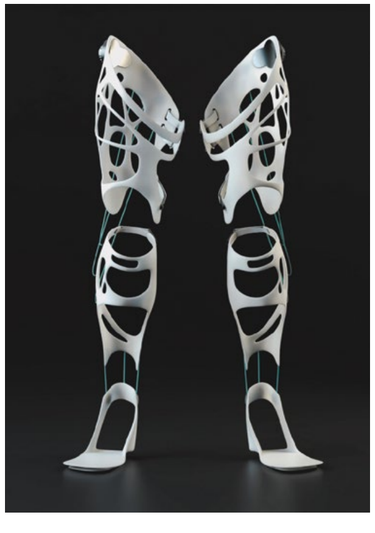
Spectrum C23 fNIRS system for Cortivision - headset for fNIRS Functional Near-Infrared Spectroscopy, a non-invasive neuroimaging technology that measures changes in oxygenation levels in the brain. Design of the optodes, breakoutboards and of the harness making the technology wearable and comfortable for full portability and comfort of use both in a stationary setup or in non-laboratory conditions.

***AI* is becoming more common in design. How do you see its role?**

I see AI as a tool. It can help in research, analysis, rapid prototyping. But it does not replace design. It does not have empathy. It does not know how to ask questions. Even data is not neutral. So the designer has to be aware of that and decide how to use it consciously. We must always ask ourselves who is behind the algorithm, what are the criteria, what kind of future it promotes. That is part of our job.

"AI is a tool: it can help but it does not replace design."

GalactyGym - A device designed to train astronauts' leg muscles on the upcoming lunar basedeveloped by IED students.



BIO

Marika Aakesson is a Danish-born designer and educator based in Rome, where she coordinates the Product Design course at IED. She is part of the design collective Kromosoma and serves on the boards of ADI and BEDA, promoting design's role in public policy and social innovation. Her work spans foodtech, health, sustainability and neuroscience, including the award-winning neurotechnology project Mindtooth, which received an Honourable Mention at the Compasso d'Oro.

www.kromosoma.com

TECH ON A PLATE:

Integrating design into the production, distribution and consumption of food for those living on the move.

The food-tech sector is revolutionising the way we store and consume food outside the home, thanks to the integration of innovative design and advanced technologies. This transformation not only enhances the culinary experience, but also promotes sustainable practices and reduces food waste.

The adoption of advanced technologies and design-led solutions is profoundly transforming the food industry, making food production and distribution more efficient and sustainable. Automation, artificial intelligence and Big Data analysis are being used to optimise production processes, reduce waste and improve product quality. For instance, automated systems allow for more precise and faster food preparation, while AI analyses consumer preferences to personalise offerings. A key focus remains on people who live on-the-move, both inside and outside the home, to whom design increasingly provides useful and customisable solutions.

Sustainability remains at the heart of food-tech innovations. The use of biodegradable materials and plastic-free solutions in food packaging is growing, helping to reduce environmental impact. Moreover, technologies such as RFID and IoT sensors improve food traceability, contributing to more efficient stock management and reducing waste.

The future of food-tech will see a growing role for design and innovation in creating solutions for food preservation and transportation. Emerging trends include vertical farming and the use of blockchain to trace food products. These innovations aim to make food production more sustainable and transparent, meeting the demands of consumers who are increasingly attentive to environmental issues and product quality.

One of the key emerging trends is food on the go, reflecting how eating outside the home is evolving in response to shifting notions of mobility, convenience and sustainability, all without ever compromising on aesthetics.

Moley Robotics

Moley Robotics' modular robotic platform for kitchens designed for contemporary, flexible and multifunctional spaces is easy to use; no particular skills are needed. The design integrates perfectly with modern interiors and was conceived to save 1–2 hours per day, enabling up to 10 servings per hour for pre-programmed recipes. Moley Robotics promises a family of four (two adults and two children) savings of up to £43,000 per year (around $55,000). These savings could also scale for mass production.

Moley Robotics is a cooking technology that ensures every dish is prepared just before serving. It also prepares meals tailored to individual needs, ensuring a healthier and more personalised culinary experience.

There are several models of robotic kitchens available:

Chef's Table
autonomous modular platform

X-AiR:
robotic kitchen unit that can be installed as an island or integrated into an existing kitchen

B-AiR:
a more compact kitchen layout installed against a wall

Shelfy and the smart hygiene system that may extend food’s shelf life twofold

Shelfy is a smart solution to manage your fridge and save on energy costs. It is a purifier designed to improve the hygiene of stored food. Thanks to its innovative photocatalytic technology, Shelfy significantly extends the freshness of food, effectively doubling its shelf life, while reducing bacterial and fungal presence by 99 percent and eliminating unpleasant odours.
The washable filter provides savings not only environmentally but economically. Equipped with temperature and door-opening sensors, it helps users monitor and become aware of their consumption habits.
The Vitesy Hub app allows users to monitor fridge conditions, control Shelfy's behaviour, and receive useful maintenance updates. It also provides exclusive info on food storage.
Fully recyclable and repairable, each part of Shelfy is assembled using interlocking joints, avoiding the use of glues. Its battery lasts up to three weeks and is rechargeable.

vitesy.com/shelfy

1. Ceramic Filter
2. Energy-efficient fan
3. LED lights
4. Battery
5. Button
6. Door opening sensor

Healthy, Smart, Ready: Foorban Reinvents the Office Lunch

Foorban is one of the most innovative players in the corporate welfare and food-tech sector. At the core of its offering are 600 smart fridges connected to an app that allows employees of client companies to choose each day from 10 different healthy, balanced meals developed by nutritionists, ready to be eaten directly at the office.

Foorban is the ideal solution for a convenient, healthy lunch break for those who prioritise conscious eating, sustainability, and physical and mental well-being. Today, Foorban offers companies a complete portfolio of services, aiming to become the go-to partner for those seeking a smart and healthy approach to workplace life.

Complementary services include premium coffee machines, fresh fruit and water dispensers. Foorban’s corporate wellbeing programmes range from nutritional workshops in the office to team engagement events and food corners set up in large companies.

Foorban’s main clients include: EY, Fineco, ITA Airways, Hewlett-Packard, Italgas, Red Bull, Coima, Amplifon, SAP and Decathlon.

foorban.com

Food on the Go

Out-of-home food consumption is changing to reflect today's mobile, practical and sustainability-driven lifestyles. "Food on the go" has become a defining trend, where convenience meets aesthetics. Products are now designed to be carried, used and enjoyed anywhere, whether at work, outdoors or while travelling, combining function, personalisation and style for users who are always on the move.

Alessi - Food à Porter

With its sleek form, Food à Porter looks more like a fashion accessory than a lunchbox. Designed for those who view mobility as part of their identity, it features three containers and two lids, adapting to different meals. Ideal for the office, outdoors or on the move, it balances taste, health and savings while remaining spacious, compact and elegant.

Black + Blum Stainless Steel Lunchbox

Inspired by the timeless design of soldiers' ration tins, this is the ultimate product for outdoor enthusiasts and commuters alike. Exceptionally robust, made of stainless steel, it withstands drops and dents. It is also designed with a vacuum-sealed silicone valve lid. The result: 100 percent leakproof. Not only is it resistant to spills and impacts.

BlimPlus - Bauletto

Bauletto, designed by Raffaello Galiotto, is a Red Dot Award-winning lunchbox with the elegance of a jewellery case. It includes two spacious containers, integrated cutlery and a leakproof lid that doubles as a phone stand. With a microwave vent, soft rubber strap and six matte colours, it is a refined and practical solution for stylish meals on the go.

LARQ - Bottle PureVis™ 2

This smart bottle purifies water using chemical-free UV-C LED, eliminating 99.999% of Salmonella and 99.99% of E. coli. It also improves taste by removing chlorine and contaminants. With app connectivity for hydration tracking and auto-cleaning PureVis™ technology, it keeps both water and bottle fresh while encouraging healthier habits and reducing bio-contamination risk.

Frank Green - Ceramic Reusable Bottle

Designed with performance and durability in mind, this triple-insulated bottle retains heat or cold and features a ceramic lining to enhance taste. It includes a built-in slot for Apple AirTag® or Tile® tracking. BPA-free and made from FDA- and EU-approved materials, it is a stylish, long-lasting and practical hydration solution.

Chilly's - Series 2 Flip

Chilly's aims to reduce single-use plastic with smart, reusable bottles. The Series 2 Flip is ideal for active users, offering 24-hour cold retention and an antimicrobial mouthpiece. Compatible with all Series 2 bottles, it enhances performance with added features, helping to drive the shift toward reusable and sustainable habits in everyday life.

ph: Francesco Dolfo

Crafting Emotions

The design journey of Antonio Aricò

Design Magazine meets Antonio Aricò, an Italian designer renowned for merging traditional craftsmanship with modern design sensibilities. In this conversation, Aricò reflects on his educational background, the emotional narratives embedded in his creations, and the profound influence of his Calabrian roots. He discusses collaborations with world-known brands, his perspective on sustainability as a cultural concept, and his role in directing the Materia Independent Design Festival. Aricò emphasises the importance of storytelling, human connection, and the balance between heritage and innovation in his work.

Your work merges *traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design*. What drew you to this hybrid space, and how do you maintain the balance between the two worlds?

I studied industrial design at the Politecnico di Milano, where functionality and a modern, rational approach were central. We were taught to focus on the user, on ergonomics, on solving problems through clarity and precision. But as I continued my studies, I began to realise that true innovation sometimes requires a reversal of these teachings, a rethinking of what you know, turning things upside down. I think that's the oldest form of innovation. It's not about discarding knowledge but about transforming it with a different lens.

You've often spoken about the *poetic and emotional* dimension of design. Can a chair really tell a story or hold a memory?

Emotion is the heart of what I call "humanist" design, a vision of design as a cultural, emotional, even psychological act. We often think of objects as cold or inert, but I see them as companions. A chair can hold a memory, yes. It can evoke comfort, sadness, joy, irony. Maybe, someone sits down on a chair and feels something, even if they don't know how to describe it. That moment, that feeling, is what interests me most. In my view, the chair is not just a functional item. It's a character that inhabits the room with us, sharing our space and perhaps even our mood.

Luisa Via Roma: Nuvola Cushion
ph: Alfredo Muscatello

"It's not about discarding knowledge but about *transforming* it with a different lens: that's the oldest form of innovation"

Barilla Group:
La mattutina
Collection

Your *"Back Home"* collection marked a turning point in your journey. What did returning to your roots in Calabria teach you, as a designer and as a person?

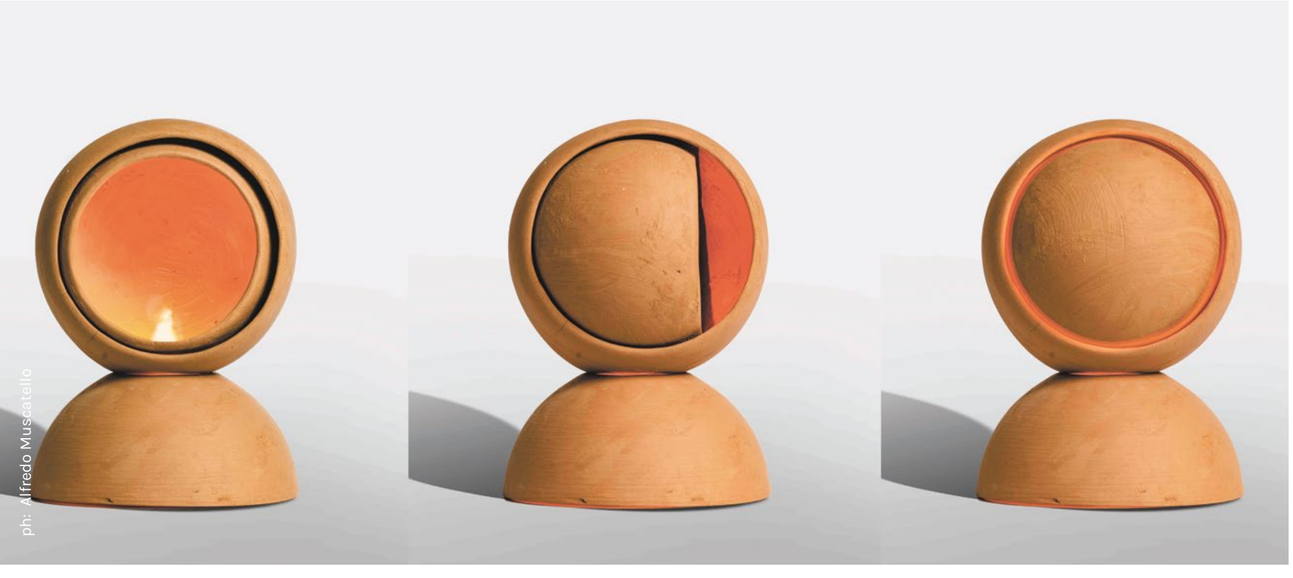
Back Home was a very important project for me, because it wasn't just about going back to a physical place. It was about reconnecting with values, with a way of thinking, of living, of being in the world. Going back to Calabria taught me to preserve a certain spontaneity in my work, the same spontaneity I admired in the great design masters I studied in school. That genuine, unfiltered approach is what I try to keep alive in everything I do.

Design today is often closely linked to trends, to rapid changes, to the pressure of being current. But I've come to believe that the strongest ideas come from deeper, more primal needs. Calabria is a place where nature is still dominant, where life moves at a different pace. It's a land of contradictions, but also of freedom. And for a designer, that freedom, the freedom to dream, to experiment, to fail, is essential.

Back Home was the purest, most personal moment of my career. It showed me that even if you can't truly "go back," you can carry your roots with you, your family, your upbringing, your identity, and let them guide you, without fear of contradiction.

Seletti: Magna Graecia Man Bust
ph: Alfredo Muscatello

Materia Design Festival: interpretation of the Eclisse lamp by Vico Magistretti, which becomes a terracotta candle holder.
ph: Alfredo Muscatello



Dolce & Gabbana:
Jewel baskets in wicker

"The most important thing when working across generations is to *create curiosity*."

Many of your projects involve your grandfather and other artisans from your region. How does the creative process change when working *across generations*?

My grandfather played a fundamental role in my journey. He was a carpenter and model maker, someone who worked with his hands his entire life. When I started out, I instinctively brought him into my projects. He became the bridge between the designer and the artisan, between the idea and the object. The same happened with other artisans in my region. At the beginning, they stood at the back. I was the young designer who brought ideas, and they were the ones who made them come to life.

I soon understood that their role wasn't just technical. It was creative. Their knowledge, their pace, their sensitivity, all of it shaped the result. So I decided to make them visible, to tell their story, to show that the artisan is not just a pair of hands, but a mind, a presence. Today, the figure of the craftsman is more central, and people are finally starting to recognise their value.

Dolce & Gabbana: Limonaia collection
ph: Mattia Aquila

From teapots to terracotta busts, your objects always seem to evoke *myths, archetypes and domestic rituals*. Where does the story begin, and how does it take form?

It might start with a memory, a gesture, a scene from a film, or something I've seen in real life. I almost never begin by thinking about the object as a fixed form. I think of it as something that moves, that acts, that tells a story. My objects are like characters, and like all characters they have a posture, a presence, a personality.

For example, in many of my pieces you can find elements that resemble a leg, an arm, a hand, a nose. These aren't literal, they're subtle. But they give a sense of familiarity, as if the object were alive. I like to create things that feel as though they've always existed, like something ancient or archetypal. Yet I also want people to look at them and feel that they're seeing something new.

That tension between recognition and surprise is very important to me. I work with archetypes not because I want to imitate the past, but because I want to connect with something deeper. The rituals, the myths, the gestures we all repeat without being fully aware. Those are the things I want to bring into my work.

You've worked with brands like Seletti, Alessi and Dolce & Gabbana. How do you navigate the shift *from self-production to industry* without losing your voice and identity?

The companies I've worked with, whether large or small, usually have a strong identity, a story behind them. These stories are important to me, because they remind me that behind the brand there are people. And I work well with people.

I always try to keep my approach the same. I don't change who I am. I come in as a small, independent designer, with my own language, my own pace, my own way of doing things. I think that's why they hire me. Not to make me fit into their system, but to bring a different energy into it. I believe in dialogue. I don't see industry and craftsmanship as opposites. I think they can mutually enrich each other. And I think the human, emotional aspect of design is something that even big companies need. Maybe today more than ever.

Luisa Via Roma: Aragona Basket
ph: Alfredo Muscatello

Materia Design Festival:
Enzo Mari's 16 Animals in the "Mostaccioli" version.
ph: Alfredo Muscatello

Alessi: Rosalia - la più bella che ci sia
Hand-decorated porcelain figurine
Rendering: Antonio Aricò

"Brands hire me not to make me fit into their system, but to bring a *different energy* into it."

Antonio Aricò

Antonio Aricò is an Italian designer known for blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design language. Born in Calabria in 1983, he studied industrial design at Politecnico di Milano and continued his training at the Alta Scuola Politecnica and Edinburgh Napier University. His work, often rooted in Mediterranean culture and personal memory, bridges the poetic and the functional. Aricò has collaborated with brands like Seletti, Alessi and Barilla, and served as artistic director of the Materia Independent Design Festival. Through collections such as Back Home and Magna Graecia, he explores emotional design as a form of storytelling, where objects become characters and heritage meets innovation.

www.antonioarico.com

WALK, WORK, WEAR
The next frontier in design isn’t in our pocket, it’s on our body.

Wearable devices are redefining the concept of personal and professional space, adapting to the increasingly hybrid environments in which we move. This is because people experience mobility both outside and inside the home, and need daily life tools that are as flexible and connected as possible.

We are used to thinking of smartphones as an extension of our arms, but how long will it take us to get used to wearing devices that perform our smartphone’s functions in an even more integrated and comfortable way... almost as if they were an extension of our brains too? Hold on... that integration has already happened! Integration is, in fact, the key word for understanding the central role wearables now play in contemporary habits. They are the result of increasingly powerful hardware being built into ever smaller devices. Smartwatches, smartbands, fitness trackers, smart glasses, hearables and smart rings, all synchronised with smartphones via Bluetooth or Wi-FI, offer an extraordinary range of on-body tech versatility. We even now have garments with integrated sensors to monitor biometric and environmental data.

Wearable devices are therefore redefining the idea of personal and professional space, adapting to the environments in which we live and move. The blending of hybrid spaces and mobility is fuelling the adoption of this technology, making the boundary between work, home and leisure ever more fluid. Wearables are the response for those who live mobility as the hallmark of their everyday life, both inside and outside the home, because design is delivering devices that are ever less visible and ever more personalised. In a word: integrated with our body, our habits and our needs.

Minimalist standard

The evolution of wearables has followed the minimalist trend, where discretion becomes a guiding principle. First, miniature components make devices less bulky and more comfortable to wear, while collaboration between engineers and designers ensures that advanced functionality pairs with refined aesthetics.

Some now speak of a “technology of beauty,” where the surface of the body becomes an interactive platform, enabling interaction with the digital world without interfering with daily activities. Designers are aiming to develop more intuitive interfaces that enable seamless and natural interaction with technology, always highly personalised. Environmental sustainability is also a key focus, with eco-friendly materials and ethical production processes.

Artificial intelligence on your skin

That AI is no longer just a tool but an active agent is demonstrated by the new devices that already hit the market, where design and aesthetics are now inseparable. AI is transforming wearable devices into increasingly smart systems that can analyse data in real time, learn from user behaviour and provide personalised feedback.

For instance, Bee Pioneer by Bee AI is designed to act exactly like a personal assistant. Worn like a bracelet, it uses microphones to continuously listen to the user’s conversations, turning them into transcriptions, summaries and personalised reminders, available in 40 languages.

Devices like these represent current trends:

• Predictive analysis and advanced monitoring, as wearables now go beyond simply collecting biometric data (like heart rate, blood oxygen or steps) by using advanced algorithms to predict potential health issues.

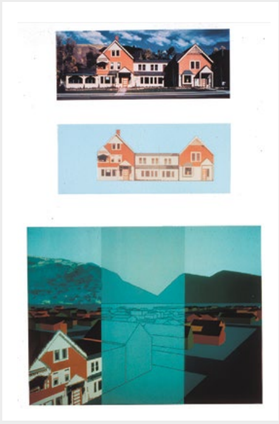
• Voice assistants and human-machine interaction, with smartwatches, glasses and earbuds incorporating increasingly sophisticated voice assistants like Siri, Alexa and Google Assistant.

• AI-powered wearables for fitness and rehabilitation, able to analyse recovery and suggest optimal training plans.

• Advanced sensors and deep learning, using machine learning to process biological signals in real time.

Before Wearables: Aspen Movie Map and the Birth of Spatial Experience

Long before wearable tech wrapped the body in sensors and screens, a team at MIT imagined a different kind of immersion, one that allowed users to “wear” a city. In 1977, the Aspen Movie Map became one of the earliest experiments in simulating movement through a real-world environment. Developed at MIT, the interface digitally recreated the entire town of Aspen, Colorado, allowing users to navigate it freely, street by street and season by season.



At the time, there were no headsets, no GPS, no cloud rendering. Yet the experience was remarkably physical. Movement occurred in ten-foot increments, controlled via a touchscreen that let users adjust both speed and viewing angle. A city became an interface, and the interface became a kind of wearable shell.

Aspen wasn’t just a precursor to Google Street View. It was the first public prototype of what wearable designers now call “embodied computing”, digital experiences that respond to a body’s presence, orientation and intention as it moves through space. What we now wrap around our wrists, faces or chests was, back then, embedded in the fabric of a city.

The logic has not changed, only the scale.

www.bee.computer

Integrated health and wellbeing

Wearables today offer multiple functions that contribute to physical wellness. Sleep monitoring is one such function: tracking sleep phases and quality can help detect disorders and improve rest habits. Physical activity tracking is becoming more detailed: from calories burned to distance covered and heart rate. Smart rings that monitor heart rate are even active at rest.

Some wearables also measure blood oxygen levels, useful for monitoring saturation during sleep or for respiratory conditions. Another essential function is stress detection via the analysis of heart rate variability.

And for women, new wearables are emerging that help track the menstrual cycle, providing predictions and fertile window alerts, and more. Set to launch in mid-2025, Peri is a wearable designed to monitor and manage menopause early symptoms. Created by the startup identifyHer, it is worn on the torso, where hot flashes and night sweats are strongest. Its mission is to bring clarity to women's reproductive health, an area long underrepresented in medical research.

New research is opening interesting possibilities for the future of wearables, including devices that may function without batteries. A new system called Power-over-Skin uses the body's natural radiofrequency energy, meaning it does not require direct skin contact. The human body is efficient at producing radio waves at 40 MHz, which can be captured by a receiver and used to power devices without invasive methods.

Early experiments have shown that this method works with Bluetooth rings, suggesting that the best smart rings could adopt this technology sooner than expected.

Meanwhile, the Boston-based company Neurable has announced the European launch of its smart headphones, MW75 Neuro. The device uses electroencephalography and artificial intelligence to track concentration levels by reading brain waves. Data is sent to a mobile app designed to help users manage workload, reduce burnout and improve daily performance, offering insights into cognitive health and suggesting breaks when needed.

www.myperi.co

A worldwide boom in sales

In 2024, the global market for wearable devices saw a significant growth. According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), global shipments of wearables increased by 8.8 percent in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the previous year, reaching 113.1 million units. On a yearly basis, global sales of wearable devices in 2024 were estimated at around 538 million units, a 6.1 percent increase from the previous year.

However, not all wearable categories followed the same trend. The smartwatch market in particular shrank by 7 percent in 2024 compared to the previous year, the first decline in the history of this sector. Despite this drop, Apple maintained its leadership in the smartwatch market, accounting for 22 percent of global shipments in 2024, although it saw a 19 percent decrease in shipments compared to 2023.

Conversely, other segments of the wearables market showed positive growth. For example, hearables represented over 60 percent of the market in 2024, with a projected increase of 10.2 percent, reaching 342 million units sold. Additionally, devices such as screenless smart rings and smart glasses recorded significant growth in 2024, with projected sales of 1.7 million and 1.8 million units respectively, representing increases of 88.4 percent and 73.1 percent.

OMI

OMI is a wearable device designed to support personal productivity and wellbeing through AI. It can be worn in two ways: like a pendant around the neck or applied to the side of the head, near the temple. Thanks to a built-in EEG (electroencephalogram) sensor, OMI can detect the user's brain activity and analyse their mental state. This information is used by the app to suggest helpful actions, such as creating a to-do list, interacting with a virtual persona or summarising a conversation.
The device is designed to function without direct input. It listens passively, collects contextual data and activates when it senses the user's attention or need. It aims to reduce cognitive load and offer discreet support in daily life, without interrupting it.

omi.me

Neurable
Listening to the Mind

Developed in collaboration with Master & Dynamic, the MW75 Neuro is the first consumer-grade brain–computer interface (BCI) headphone. Featuring twelve integrated EEG sensors, it monitors brain activity in real time to track focus and detect signs of mental fatigue, prompting timely breaks before burnout sets in.

Despite its advanced neurotechnology, the design remains elegant and understated. Anodized aluminium, tempered glass and lambskin leather reflect Master & Dynamic's signature craftsmanship.

Set to launch in Fall 2024, the MW75 Neuro blends neuroscience with high-fidelity audio, redefining wearable design as both intelligent and introspective.

neurable.com

Whoop 4.0

WHOOP 4.0 is a screenless wearable designed for biometric monitoring. It can be worn 24 hours a day and tracks vital signs including heart rate, blood oxygen levels, skin temperature and heart rate variability. Thanks to continuous wireless charging, the device never needs to be removed, ensuring an uninterrupted stream of data.
The WHOOP app then uses this data to provide personalised feedback on recovery, sleep and physical strain. With its minimalist design and medical-grade precision, WHOOP 4.0 is widely used by athletes and professionals seeking to optimise performance and recovery.

whoop.com

Neural Sleeve

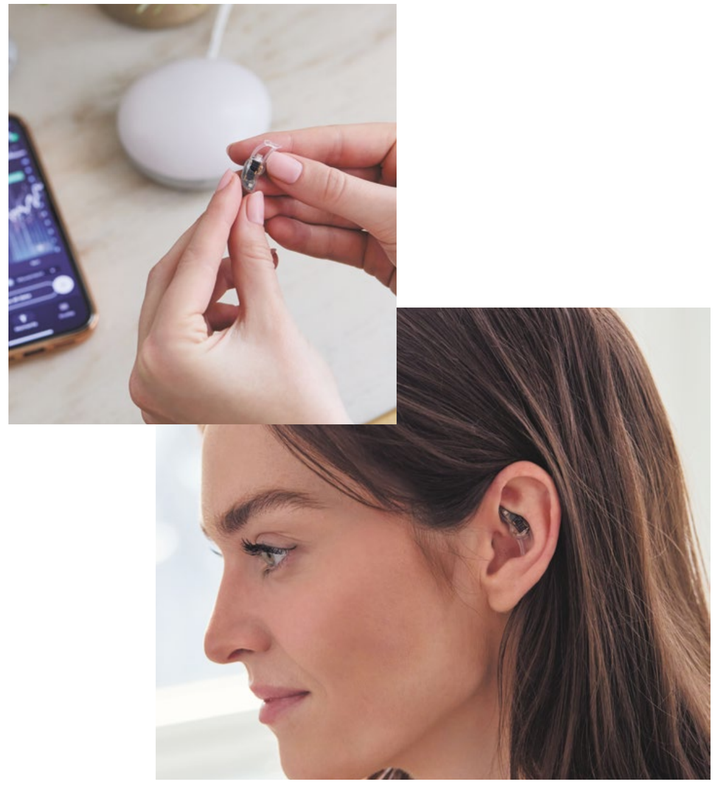
Neural Sleeve is a wearable device created by the startup Cionic in collaboration with designer Yves Béhar. It is worn on the leg like a soft sleeve and is designed to assist people with neurological or mobility conditions. The sleeve combines motion sensors and Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) to support walking and movement in real time.
The device analyses the user's gait, identifies where support is needed and stimulates specific muscle groups accordingly. Its goal is to enhance stability, strength and coordination without hindering natural movement, providing an unobtrusive, wearable rehabilitation system.

cionic.com/neuralsleeve

Lumia Health

Lumia is a wearable earpiece designed to monitor cerebral blood flow. Developed to support people living with dysautonomia (a condition affecting involuntary bodily functions), long COVID and other chronic conditions, it provides data that helps users understand their symptoms and patterns.
The device is linked to an app that visualises this data and provides insights into physiological responses, particularly during episodes of brain fog or fatigue. Lumia offers a non-invasive way to gain greater awareness of one's cognitive health, helping users manage their condition more effectively.

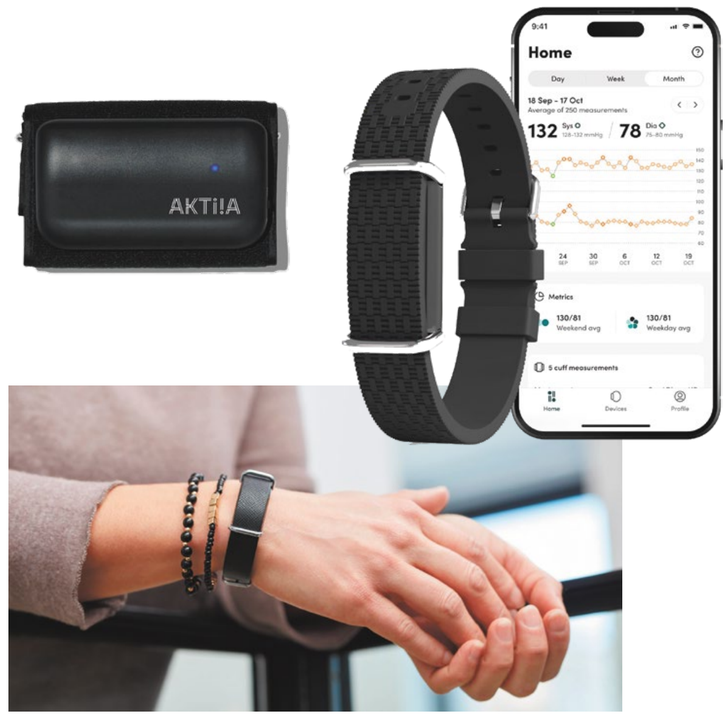
lumiahealth.com

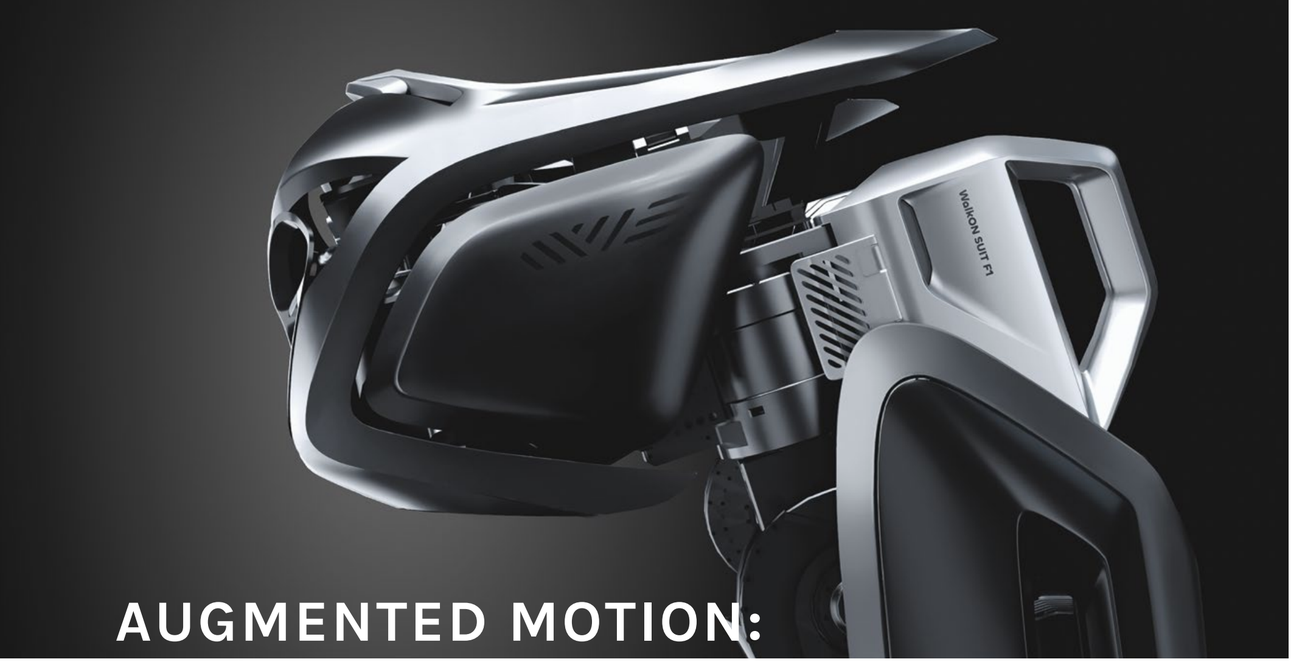


Aktiia

Aktiia is a wrist-worn device for continuous blood pressure monitoring. Unlike traditional systems, it does not require inflatable cuffs or active measurement by the user. It works passively, day and night, providing accurate data that can be shared with healthcare providers.
It is CE-certified and already used by more than 100,000 people in Europe. The Aktiia system is composed of a bracelet and a connected app that displays trends and alerts the user when readings are outside normal ranges, combining medical reliability with comfort and discretion.

aktiia.com





AUGMENTED MOTION: FROM MOTION TO COGNITION, WEARABLE DESIGN PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF THE HUMAN BODY.

From smart helmets to exoskeletons, fitness trackers to AR glasses: wearable devices are redefining the way we live and work. This selection of iF Design Award winners explores the frontier where technology goes beyond tracking, extending the body's natural limits and empowering it in motion, control and awareness.

Continuing our exploration of wearable design, we turn to a new generation of technologies that are becoming ever more intimately woven into the body, reshaping not just what we do, but how we move, sense and respond to the world around us. No longer limited to tracking bodily data, these devices actively enhance physical capabilities and cognitive awareness. Also, forget static, impersonal spaces. Design is undergoing a radical shift thanks to wearable technology. Not only domestic settings but also workspaces are evolving to adapt in real time to the needs of the people within them. Devices now monitor, analyse and respond to human behaviour. With the rise of hybrid and remote work, wearables help overcome physical limitations and improve productivity. And much more.
Workspaces themselves are changing. Think of smart safety helmets or wearable devices linked to office systems that adjust lighting, temperature and even desk positions based on user preferences. Wearable design is not just a tech upgrade, but a revolution in how we interact with space, thanks to devices that increasingly sync with our natural pace.
In the workplace, wearable technology is enhancing both safety and performance. Exoskeletons reduce muscle fatigue in physically demanding jobs, while smart helmets monitor workers' levels of alertness and issue warnings in the event of drowsiness or improper movement. Wearable suits and gloves can track vitals, while motion sensors help improve posture in desk-based jobs.

The boundary between home and office is becoming increasingly blurred. Some devices monitor stress and sleep, prompting users to pause and recharge. Others use electronic stimulation to help remote workers stay fit and active.
Thanks to wearables, space is no longer static. It is a dynamic environment that evolves with the person living and working within it.

Safety and productivity: the wearables transforming work

Sky Guard vacuum suction system anchors.

DESIGN AWARD 2025

SkyGuard
Working at elevated heights has never been safer or more comfortable. SkyGuard is an advanced solution that combines cutting-edge technology with ergonomic design to offer both protection and ease of movement for professionals. Its vacuum suction system anchors securely to glass surfaces, protecting against short-distance falls. The ergonomic seat with airbag padding provides lasting comfort during extended use. Shoulder straps and breathable mesh at the back ease pressure on the back, neck and shoulders. The result is better weight distribution and total freedom of movement.

Safety and visibility are priorities too. Reflective strips ensure high visibility in any lighting. Built-in environmental sensors constantly monitor temperature, wind and altitude. All critical data is shown on an E-Ink display, chosen to avoid glare in strong sunlight and guarantee visibility in any conditions.

SkyGuard is more than a safety tool. It is a perfect blend of technology and comfort, engineered for those who work above ground without compromise.

In the world of work, wearable technology enhances safety and efficiency. Exoskeletons are no longer props in science fiction films. They are tools for everyday life.

Walkon Suit F1
Winner of the gold medal at Cybathlon 2024, Walkon Suit F1 is much more than an exoskeleton. It is a symbol of innovation, performance and design. Created to give people with paraplegia greater freedom, independence and style, this wearable robot sets a new benchmark in assistive technology.

Originally designed for international competition, Walkon Suit F1 brings together a set of exceptional innovations. It approaches the user autonomously. It features a front-entry system that allows users to put it on without assistance. It uses 12 powerful actuators to deliver highly responsive, naturally balanced movement. Yet technology is only part of the story. The suit's design is bold and dynamic, athletic yet functional. It not only boosts performance but elevates user experience. Walkon Suit F1 is not just a mobility aid. It is a symbol of progress and freedom, where power meets elegance to redefine movement.

Walkon Suit F1 exoskeleton for people with paraplegia.

DESIGN AWARD 2025

Angel SUIT
Angel SUIT combines elegance and innovation in a wearable robot designed to support walking and encourage physical activity. With an ageing population and a rise in mobility challenges, there is a growing demand for discreet, effective solutions that can be part of everyday life. Angel SUIT was created to meet that demand. Its sleek design offers support without drawing attention. It is more of a style accessory than a medical device. Slim and lightweight, it allows full freedom of movement and can be worn comfortably while sitting or leaning.

The use of standardised smart motor systems - actuators - and a separate control module gives Angel SUIT exceptional flexibility and customisation options. It can be configured to suit different needs and levels of support. Balancing advanced technology with a clean, modern aesthetic, Angel SUIT redefines the idea of mobility support. It proves that design and function can truly go hand in hand.

Angel SUIT wearable robot designed to support walking and encourage physical activity.

Design detail of **HUEY** eye-tracking smart glasses.

HUEY
HUEY reinvents the idea of smart glasses with a design that blends innovation and discretion in a beautifully crafted frame. Powered by advanced eye-tracking, it can follow the user's gaze to activate commands, making control as simple as looking. Its strength lies in its adaptability. With interchangeable lenses, adjustable nose pads and universal-fit side arms, it offers a perfect fit and consistent tracking accuracy, whatever the wearer's face shape or mobility needs.

What truly sets HUEY apart is aesthetics. Free from the bulky, tech-heavy look typical of similar devices, it appears just like a classic pair of glasses until you use it. HUEY delivers powerful, intelligent functionality in a form that feels natural and familiar. It shows that the most disruptive technologies are often the ones you hardly notice at all.

HUEY eye-tracking smart glasses used at the supermarket.

HUEY eye-tracking smart glasses use navigation systems.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WEARABLES

From gambling gadgets to cyborg vision: how the body became a tech platform.

From Renaissance watches to hacked shoes designed to beat the casino, the history of wearable technology is a tale of ingenuity, mischief and vision. What we now call wearable computing began centuries ago, because the future has long been written on the surface of our skin.

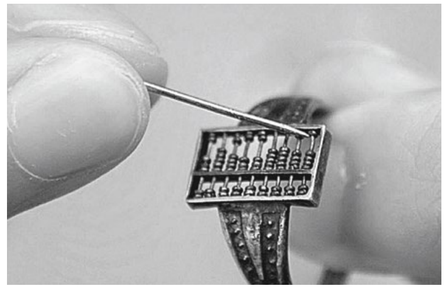
It was the beginning of the 16th century when, thanks to an idea by the German inventor Peter Henlein, people in the streets of Nuremberg began wearing small watches as necklaces. These were the first wearables in history. A century would pass, however, before pocket watches became fashionable, eventually evolving into bracelets for women.

In the meantime, we know that in 1571 Queen Elizabeth I of England received from Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, what is considered the first wristwatch on record. It was probably worn on the forearm and referred to as a "clocke" or "arm watch". It is also said that the queen owned a "ring watch", set into a ring and equipped with an alarm that pricked her finger when needed. However, there are no reliable historical sources to support this story, which remains a charming but likely fictional tale.

Another story takes us to China in the 7th century, under the Qing dynasty, which is said to have introduced a functioning abacus built into a ring that could be used while worn. What is certain, instead, is that by the end of the 1800s the first wearable hearing aids were introduced.

top: Clock, Peter Henlein, 1510 – Karl Gebhardt Horological Collection – Gewerbemuseum – Nuremberg, Germany

left: Monument to Peter Henlein, manufacturer of the first pocket watches, Nuremberg, Germany



Abacus ring from Qing Dynasty in the Abacus Museum in Huizhou

These can be considered among the earliest forms of wearable technology developed for medical use. They were trumpet-like devices designed to collect and amplify sound for people with hearing loss.

AI Illustration of a pair of miniature brass 'bugle' ear trumpets invented by Jean Pierre Bonnafont (1805–1891)

It was with the arrival of electricity, towards the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, that the first electronic hearing aids were developed, based on microphones and amplifiers.

Still, the true story of wearables designed to minimise technology by integrating it into the human body begins at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1960s. Nothing surprising there. What better place than MIT? The surprising part is that the wearables invented by professor of mathematics Edward Thorp and his colleague Claude Shannon between 1960 and 1961 were not intended to make life easier or to improve physical wellbeing, but rather to cheat at roulette.

These were computerised timing devices. As Thorp would later write in Beat the Dealer, the device gave the wearer an advantage over the house. Eleven years later came George, a mini-computer hidden in the heel of a shoe, created to gain an edge in blackjack. It was invented by Keith Taft, who ended up losing $4,000 in a single evening. George was soon retired, although between the 1960s and 1970s, various versions of the device were developed, to the delight of computer enthusiasts passionate about miniature integrated circuits.

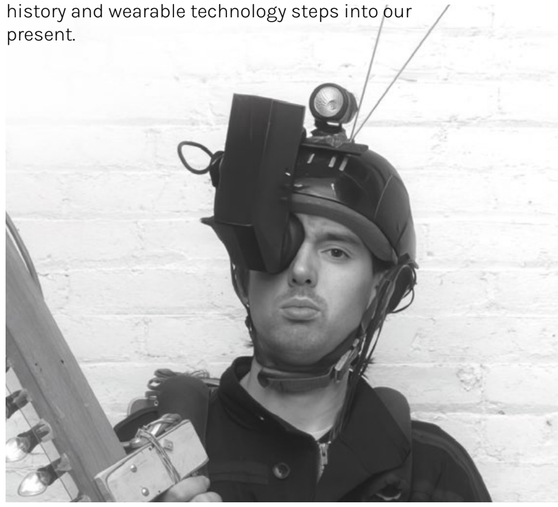
Pulsar Time Computer, 1972

The result was Pulsar, a calculator-watch advertised as "for the man who has everything". The limited-edition price was around $4,000. It became one of the first examples of wearable technology available to the public, although certainly not affordable to all.

For several decades, at least in terms of what was commercially available, the rest was left to the imagination of cinema, while scientists, inventors and computer engineers continued working quietly in their laboratories. If the Google Glass, presented in 2017, bring to mind the visors worn by Arnold Schwarzenegger in RoboCop, released in 1984, already in 1981 American student Steve Mann had connected a head-mounted camera to a 6502 computer, the same processor used in the Apple I and Commodore 64.

The camera captured images that were processed in real time by the computer and sent to the visor, which could overlay them on reality. This anticipated the basic concepts of augmented reality. It was one of the earliest examples of wearable computing, and one of the first experiments in cyborg vision, that is, the enhancement of visual perception through technology.

From that moment on, the story stops being history and wearable technology steps into our present.



Steve Mann: 1970s lightspacer with 1981 wearcomp. This 1981 wearable computer system combined a 1970s lightspacer apparatus for wearable computational photography.

A strike of colour in the kitchen

Cristina Bowerman on process, responsibility, and why design is not just about the plate.

DM talked to Cristina Bowerman about creativity, ethics, and what it really means to run a restaurant. For the Michelin-starred chef of Glass Hostaria, being a chef today means much more than cooking. It means structure, responsibility, and values. She designs every dish herself, down to the last detail, but no longer sees herself as just a cook. Her latest projects, from a seasonal restaurant in Turkey to food trucks, reflect a broader vision where aesthetics, sustainability and process go hand in hand. She also questions the uniformity of current food trends, which she sees as limiting true creativity and freedom of expression.

You create every dish served in your restaurants. What does your creative process look like?

It usually starts with a sketch. I realised this years ago during an interview for a book. I always begin by drawing what I want to cook. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night with an idea and I jot it down. I have notebooks full of drawings and folders full of ideas. Sometimes it's a technique, sometimes it's an ingredient. Other times, it's a design object or even just a plate I see in a shop.

I test recipes at home, then I bring them in and present them to my team without saying anything, so they can taste it without being influenced. If the flavours work, we fine-tune the recipe. Only then do we decide the plating. For me, taste comes first. The aesthetic part is extremely important, though. I focus a lot on balance, symmetry, weight. That probably comes from my background in graphic design.

If you were to open a new restaurant in a completely different setting, what would it look like?

I like the idea of immersive dinners. I have been experimenting with them already eight years ago, when it still seemed absurd to people. I'd love to create a space where people could walk barefoot on warm sand in a cold room. Or the opposite. Like ice bars.

This is the same reasoning I used with Glass Hostaria. It's an ultramodern place in the middle of traditional trattorias. Back then Trastevere [one of the most traditional and central neighbourhoods in Rome, ed.] was full of classic restaurants. It was a gamble. People would say: "I'd rather have a carbonara." They didn't always appreciate pink-cooked pigeon. But that's normal. You're working within a context that's deeply rooted in tradition.

So if I were to open another place, I would keep working with contrast and context. I recently reinterpreted a classic French pâté en croûte using only Italian ingredients, like coppa di testa and puntarelle, to make it feel more Roman. I like this kind of dialogue.

Right now I have a seasonal restaurant in Turkey. It's a new challenge and a different context, and I'm really enjoying the experience.

How important is organisation and process in your work?

It's fundamental. A restaurant is not just a kitchen. It's a business. If you're a chef-entrepreneur, and not just an employee-chef, you have to know everything. you have to think about costs, margins, when to micromanage and when not to.

I've studied law, graphic design, and culinary arts. When I was at school in the US, we also took courses in psychology, public speaking, and restaurant management. I've worked with big companies as a motivational speaker. That kind of training helped me a lot.

Beef tartare, capers, watermelon, anchovies and Wagyu bresaola

Amatriciana stuffed ravioli, crispy cured pork cheek

Glass Hostaria Restaurant

I have no turnover in key roles at Glass. Creating a structured, trusting environment is what makes your team stay. Every evening I check the takings, and I gifted company shares to my sous-chefs and director. They behave like it's their own place, and it is.That happens when people feel involved, appreciated and responsible.

The dishwasher is a key figure in the kitchen, right? They also handle your special plates that you pick up around the world...

Yes, if someone breaks a plate I bought in Chile, that's it. I can't just go back there to get another one. It's a job I really respect. My dishwasher has been with me for 16 years (!), taking care of the most delicate things: he's the king of the kitchen!

What is your idea of the physical plate for serving? Should it be a kind of white canvas that enhances the dish?

It should make the food stand out without overpowering it. Every dish has its specific plate. I learned a lot in the United States, where each preparation had its designated plate, and I was struck by how thoughtful that approach was.

If I'm working with an ingredient that has a distinctive colour, I look for a plate that brings it out. For me, the plate is complementary and must be in balance. That's also why I often buy plates abroad, even inexpensive ones, as long as they're unique, rather than follow current fine-dining trends.

Mise en Place - Glass Hostaria

60 months aged Parmigiano Reggiano Malandrone liquid ravioli, butter by Fratelli Brazzale and seasonal truffle

Inclusion and ethics also seem central to your work. When did you realise food could be a cultural and social tool?

Since school. My maths teacher used to call me "the champion of lost causes". I've always spoken up for others. For one, gender equality is something I've always felt strong about.

Now that Glass has a solid team, I can travel, give talks, and be involved in charity projects. A restaurant cannot depend on one person. A chef gets tired, they get older. You need a system that works without you. That's why I built a strong team.

When I was president of the "Ambasciatori del Gusto" [the Italian association promoting quality food, ethical practices and culinary heritage through its network of chefs, producers and professionals, ed.], I started a project called "Adopt a Producer". The idea is to support small producers by buying from them regularly. It helps them plan and survive. To give an example, Carlo Magliarecchia [knowing producers personally is important to Cristina, ed.] grows black corn, and I include it on the menu whenever possible. I also like to work with the less glamorous cuts, such as offals. It's a way to avoid waste at all levels, and they make fantastic dishes, like the honeycomb tripe I currently have on the menu.

So what about sustainability?

It matters a lot. I'm an ambassador for Waste Watchers and I'm part of the Chef's Manifesto, aligned with UN goals. Waste should be avoided at all levels, that's why I like to work with offals. We try to work with small producers. I've even had a go at hydroponic farming.

Sustainability is not just a trend. It's a duty. I've talked about this in Davos and other places. For example, in Sicily they're now growing avocado and finger lime. These are exotic fruits that use a lot of water in an area already struggling with drought. Meanwhile, local varieties are being abandoned. It's a serious issue.

Glass Hostaria Team: Davide Grieco (Sous Chef), Chef Bowerman, Riccardo Nocera (Restaurant manager), Edoardo Fortunato (Sous Chef)
ph: struttura films

We chefs can't solve everything, but we can raise awareness. We can choose what to buy and who to support.

How do you address the issue of agriculture, even of quality or niche produce, often relying on exploited labour?

It's a question of responsibility. If something is very cheap, someone is not being paid properly. It's the same with clothes. You can't expect a T-shirt to cost three euros and be ethically made. I know not everyone can afford expensive products, but that doesn't make the system right.

Talking about technology, what's the tool you wouldn't do without?

The barbecue, especially Texas style. I like to smoke my food "low & slow" with various woods. It's something I brought with me from Austin. I used it in Turkey, too, where I have a giant Kamado oven.

Honeycomb tripe
ph: Brambilla Serrani

Bio

Cristina Bowerman is an award-winning chef and entrepreneur born in Puglia in 1966. After studying law and graphic design, she graduated from the Texas Culinary Academy in Austin and worked in fine dining across the United States before returning to Italy. In 2006 she took over the kitchen at Glass Hostaria in Trastevere, earning a Michelin star in 2010 , the only woman chef in Italy to receive one that year. Today she oversees several restaurants and projects, including a seasonal opening in Turkey. A strong advocate for sustainability, meritocracy and inclusion, she supports small-scale producers, speaks at global conferences, and sees food as both a creative practice and a tool for change.

cristinabowerman.com
glasshostaria.it

IN THE MAKING OF THE ART OF MAKING

How design thinking and automation converge to deliver scalable, precision-led manufacturing at Homa's newest factory

Innovation is no longer a bonus in industrial manufacturing. It is a baseline requirement for global competitiveness. At its factory in southern China, Homa is redefining efficiency through a fully automated production ecosystem, where advanced robotics and industrial design work together to deliver precision, scalability and continuous optimisation. Homa is writing a new chapter in the industrial history of refrigeration, powered by intelligent robotics, predictive algorithms and new efficiency processes.

The shift is both structural and cultural. Human labour plays a supervisory role, while manual operations are increasingly performed by high-performance autonomous machines. Take, for example, the Carrying Robot. This advanced automated system handles the movement of side panels into the pre-assembly zone, where they are joined to the cabinet. The outcome is a seamless, multi-directional flow that eliminates the risk of damage and maintains an uninterrupted line.

The sorting and delivery of the correct cabinet at the right time is also fully automated. Auto Cabinet Sorting, a digital line controlled by the MES system, ensures near-zero error and maximum traceability. At the same time, Automated Guided Vehicles (AGVs) mark a turning point in internal logistics. Driverless, sensor-guided and entirely autonomous for over eight hours, they carry materials from warehouse to production line efficiently and without human intervention.

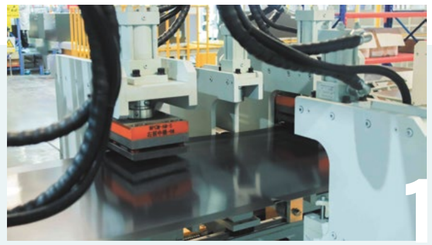
A bold production model, where AI, automation and smart logistics form a highly accurate and sustainable industrial ecosystem.

This intelligent choreography reaches all the way to quality control. The Dynamic Cooling Performance Inspection line is fully computerised and able to verify the functionality of each refrigerator's cooling system in just 45 minutes. Anomalies are identified in real time, combining speed and reliability at a level not seen before in large-scale appliance testing.

The adoption of these technologies is a true manifesto for the future of manufacturing design.

Far from eliminating the role of people, this model enhances it. With lower training demands and reduced physical strain, Homa's smart production lines allow for high output with low risk, helping clients across the private label and OEM sectors meet increasingly tight market windows and quality standards.

If design is the visible shape of innovation, this is what it looks like on the factory floor.



First step in producing the refrigerator side panel: punching and cutting the edges & corners of the metal sheet.

Final step in the side panel production process: attaching the condenser pipes to the formed panel.

Fully automated production line for door shells, including cutting, folding and punching of metal sheets.

Robots in action are always fascinating to watch. Their precise, ultra-efficient movements reduce heavy manual labour while enhancing safety and handling efficiency.

Vacuum-formed cabinet liners production process ensures speed and efficiency, supported by auxiliary hydraulic punching and shearing.

Automatic cabinet sorting identifies and directs the correct cabinets onto the final assembly line.

Smart, sensor-guided vehicles can move around without the need for an onboard operator.

Once doors complete the pre-assembly and foaming stage, they are directed to the end of the cabinet assembly line.

Airtightness inspection with powerful 8L/min vacuum pump.

The dynamic cooling performance inspection line tests and ensures high cooling efficiency, allowing quick detection of any abnormalities.

Glossary

A quick reference guide to some of the key concepts inspiring this issue of Homa's Design Magazine. They define some of the current and most interesting trends in the way we conceive our lifestyle today

Dishwasher
/dɪʃwɒʃər/

More than a kitchen role, a symbol of respect for the overlooked and the essential. In design, as in life, it reminds us that value often lies where few are looking.

Mobility
/məʊˈbɪlɪtɪ/

The new marker of freedom in design, encompassing physical movement, technological access and social adaptability.

Domotic
/doʾmɔtika/

The science (and art) of home automation, connecting appliances, comfort and control through intelligent systems.

Neurotech
/ˈnjʊə.rəʊ-/tek/

The interface between mind and machine; devices that monitor brain activity to improve focus, performance and human connection.

Exoskeleton
/ˌɛksəʊˈskɛlɪtən/

A wearable support system designed to amplify human strength, reduce fatigue, and make hard work a little less hard.

On-the-move
/ɒn ðə muːv/

Adj. Describes products, people or meals designed for seamless transition between locations, tasks or time zones.

Fluid Spaces
/fluːɪd speɪsɪs/

Interiors and environments that adapt in real time to shifting human needs. Open, responsive and never fixed.

Technology Sync
/teknɒlədʒi sɪŋk/

A design principle that focuses on creating systems or products made up of interchangeable components or modules. It allows for flexibility, efficiency, and customisation in design, supporting reconfigurable and adaptable solutions.

Food-Tech
/fuːd tɛkˈ/

Where culinary tradition meets innovation, from astronaut meals to sustainable packaging, and AI-assisted nutrition.

Traceability
/treˈəbɪlɪti/

A transparent journey from source to plate (or product), proving that sustainability starts with knowing where things come from.

Kinetic Art
/kɪnetɪk ɑːrt/

An artistic movement born in the 20th century that made motion part of the artwork itself, today reimagined in immersive installations that challenge perception, space and balance.

Wearable
/weərəbəl/

Adj./Noun. Describes technology that lives on the body, extending its capabilities, enhancing data feedback and redefining personal space.

Homa

des.mag.

Issue No. 6
April 2025
September 2025

homa.cn
homaeurope.eu