
How B&B Italia Reached The Forefront of Modern Design

Words by TATLER PHILIPPINES | September 16, 2021

Under the artistic leadership of Piero Lissoni, B&B Italia continues to produce imaginative yet functional pieces of practical art.

Italy has long been known as a trailblazer when it comes to design. From the fabulous fashions coming down the catwalks of Milan, to technologically advanced sports cars roaring down the autostrada, to impeccable furniture made by the hands of master artisans, Italy captures the world's acclaim with its attention to detail and quality.

Such is the case of B&B Italia, one of the country's most prominent furniture producers. Crafting pieces that are creative, aesthetically appealing and functional, the company has gone well ahead of the pack to become one of the world leaders in its field.

When furniture maker Piero Ambrogio Busnelli founded B&B Italia in 1966, traditional methods were the norm, with each piece tediously crafted by hand through time-consuming processes.

Busnelli wondered if there was a better, more efficient and modern way by which furniture could be made. He serendipitously found the answer when he encountered a toymaker who used machines to mass-produce little ducks out of cold polyurethane foam—and the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, many of B&B Italia's award-winning pieces are made from cold polyurethane foam, a material that is both malleable and durable, a perfect way to create furniture in uniquely contemporary forms.

Over the course of nearly six decades, the company has produced over 1,200 products using the material, all of which have won fans among interior designers and homeowners across the globe.

Technological innovation is just one reason why B&B Italia continues to be at the forefront of the global design sector. The collective imagination of the numerous designers who have created stellar pieces of furniture for the company is another.

Since the 1960s, B&B Italia has helped bring the creative visions of numerous designers to life.



Le Mamma Up 5 & Up 6 by Gaetano Pesce



Piero Lissoni, artistic director of B&B Italia, seated on the Eda-mame armchair. (Photo: Valentina Sommariva)



Camaleonda Sofa by Mario Bellini (Image: B&B Italia)

Consider the intriguing curves of the Eda-Mame armchair by Piero Lissoni which was inspired by one of the renowned architect and designer's trips to Japan; or, in contrast, the strong lines and minimalist elegance of his Dock sectionals. Both have become iconic pieces that are sought after by decorators and collectors.

B&B Italia designs have also run to the whimsical and somewhat avant-garde side as seen in the unabashedly plush and sensual look of Gaetano Pesce's Serie Up 2000 armchair which many know today as the curvaceous Mama chair – a work of functional art and a standalone conversation piece.

Then, there is the play on organic forms that can be seen in the intriguing appearance of Patricia Urquiola's Husk armchair. Likewise, the modular construction of Mario Bellini's Camaleonda sofa allows for maximum flexibility, letting owners arrange these versatile seating pieces to suit their personal aesthetic.

Indeed, this considered interplay between art and function has won B&B Italia numerous awards throughout the decades, including Italy's most coveted Compasso d'Oro (Golden Compass) for furniture design which it has won four times, both for individual product design and in recognition of its innovative endeavours.

Today, B&B Italia continues to raise the bar when it comes to both creative and technological innovations in the field of furniture design.

Lissoni took over as the company's artistic director in December 2020 and he aims to take it further as a truly global brand that will continue to shape the history of the design industry. For Lissoni, B&B Italia is a hub that brings together both innovative and enterprising minds who work towards the creation of exceptional pieces.

As he puts it, "B&B Italia is one of the pillars of the model that the world longs for: a unique system made up of entrepreneurs with a vision capable of bringing together craftsmanship and industry, tradition and innovation, connections and collaborations."



Dock Sofa by Piero Lissoni (Image: B&B Italia)



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