

“100% business as usual. To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Arclinea brand, in September we are launching Thea.”

Gianni Fortuna interview by Silvia Nani, Corriere della Sera

Gianni Fortuna: Board Member at Arclinea, the high-end kitchen brand that started life as an artisan carpentry business in 1925, became Arclinea in 1960 and today is part of Design Holding. Ongoing family management and collaboration with a benchmark designer, Antonio Citterio, since 1986. Let's talk about reopening and plans for the future. How did starting over after the lockdown go? Which were the very first activities to be relaunched and, especially, which markets did you start working with again first?

We reopened very quickly, in the sense that after shutting down so unexpectedly, when we were allowed to open up again on 3 May, we had an excellent portfolio and it was therefore 100% business as usual. Many markets never actually closed down: Europe in particular. Now the United States and Italy are still suffering, while Asia is slowly reopening.

Eurocucina - the biennial International Kitchen Furniture Exhibition - should have been held this year, but it has been postponed until 2021. What will happen in its place?

Despite the absence of this biennial event, we are managing to stay in close contact with our clients, increasing our communication and dialogue with them via the digital channel, which has proven to be fundamental. We are now planning important presentations for the autumn in Paris, London, and Milan, and in our showroom and training centre at our Caldogno headquarters.

Can you give us a taster?

Our new project is called “Thea”, in honour of the first kitchen produced in 1958. Then, as now, it was a sort of starting over and so this presentation holds great sentimental value. Thea targets both the contract and the retail markets and we have high expectations for this product.

This year also marks another important milestone: Arclinea's 60th anniversary. What will you be doing to celebrate it? I know there will be a new catalogue, but in general, what events do you have in mind from now until the end of the year?

The brand's 60th anniversary is a huge achievement and the new catalogue totally celebrates this. But, more than a catalogue, what we are publishing is a monograph, a book that talks about our history, our exclusive relationship with Antonio Citterio and, naturally, our Collection, illustrated by 7 kitchens in real homes and a section dedicated to exclusive Arclinea elements that enable exclusive, unique kitchen designs.

So you still believe that, in the midst of this proliferation of digital media, it is important to support the product with a paper medium.

It might have something to do with my age (but I don't think that's the only reason...), but I think that being able to actually touch the photos on paper is still a highly emotive sensation. A bit like when you see people in our shops touching the surfaces of the materials. We all know that we can no longer work without digital media, but this does not mean that this physical relationship with the product is not essential, even if when mediated through paper. I personally can't wait to get my hands on it as we have been working on it for so long!

What are your hopes as you look ahead to the next few months and the run up to Eurocucina 2021?

I hope that everything continues as it is doing right now: we have a highly motivated team who are working towards achieving important goals. This will also be made possible thanks to support from Design Holding, which we are part of, obviously. If we continue in this frame of mind, I think we will manage to achieve excellent results even this year, despite the forced downtime and uncertainties that we have suffered, like everyone else.