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INTERVIEW...

minotticucinelondon

David and Achala Knights have created a new showroom in London's West End as a haven of calm and a striking showcase for some of the world's finest kitchen designs

Can you tell us about the history of the company, your own careers and how the London showroom came about?

AK minotticucine was founded in Italy in 1949 by Adriano Minotti. His son, Alberto Minotti, took over the company in 1998. He introduced his philosophy of 'Mediterranean essentialism', drawing inspiration from the natural stone quarries in the local area. His design ideals led to a period of innovation. Every element in the kitchen was outwardly simplified. This resulted in a purity of form, which at that time didn't exist as a concept for kitchen design. Everything you see now – no handles, worktops with mitred edges, pocket door systems to hide appliances – were first introduced by minotticucine! It was the first company to manufacture kitchens cabinets in solid stone back in 2002. Alberto remains the creative force behind the brand. The Venturini and Zardini families bought minotticucine in 2014 and added their experience and business acumen, taking it from strength to strength. minotticucine now has 20 showrooms worldwide.

DK Achala & I started with our first showroom on the Kings Road in Chelsea. We moved to Wigmore Street in 1998, under the banner Tsunami UK, selling mid to high-end German kitchens. We quickly realised that the industry was crying out for something different and we set about searching for an innovative and inspirational brand. A kitchen dealer in the Netherlands suggested we travel to Verona where they had heard of minotticucine. We

first saw the product at a small fair in Verona. The stand had the most beautiful product we had seen – it was all white, no handles, no plinths and worktop edge – everything about it was way ahead of its time. We met Alberto and learnt about his idea of the future of kitchen design. We knew this is what we wanted and re-fitted our showroom to create a mono-brand minotticucine flagship showroom. The new kitchen designs were so futuristic and unique in their design concept. Architects and interior designers visited the showroom continually to experience the designs but couldn't convince their clients to buy. It took a whole year before we sold our first minotticucine kitchen, then it all seemed to explode and we became the leading go-to brand for innovative design.

What were you trying to achieve with the design of the new showroom?

AK The ethos for the showroom was to demonstrate our design philosophy – visual silence. To show we can create environments where we feel calm, away from the continuous connectivity and chaos of modern life – a sanctuary for the family. We wanted to create an environment where the mind is set free to flourish. We also wanted to show that all of the furniture combines design and practicality. It is a unique environment where we can show the beauty of natural materials and innovative design ideas, where each piece of furniture can stand alone in its own right yet be combined successfully with any other piece in the showroom.

Finer details flourish such as appliances that are made bespoke to order for architects and designers to fit the exact kitchen design and dimensions





"OFTEN THESE ARE A RADICAL RE-IMAGINING OF HOW TO BEST USE THEIR SPACE TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS"





Created especially for the new London showroom, they brainstormed a kitchen island cast in poured bronze. The finished item is an extremely robust piece of art designed for a lifetime's wear and enjoyment

"MINIMAL IS NOT ABOUT DEPRIVING, BUT RATHER ABOUT SIMPLIFYING. WE ALL WANT THIS DON'T WE?"

DK Every single material used in the showroom – the lavastone floor, the Arabescato marble, the veneers, the paint colour of the walls down to the carefully curated playlists are all thought out to create an atmosphere which inspires but doesn't intimidate.

What is at the heart of what you do?

DK Our aim is to use natural stone in a way that shows off the beauty of the material. This makes it timeless.

What goes into the design process?

AK We take a lot of time understanding what the client hopes to achieve from their space during a design brief meeting. The next step is to sketch and space plan, keeping functionality in mind. Finally, we eliminate the ideas that don't work and present the client with a couple of options. Often these are a radical re-imagining of how to best use their space to achieve their goals.

DK A big part of the process is to demonstrate that being minimal is not about depriving, but rather about simplifying. We all want this don't we?

What are your favourite materials?

AK My personal favourite is natural stone – it is full of life, movement and makes me realise how insignificant we are in this universe. Having said that, I also love the raw beauty of cast liquid bronze.

DK Marble, marble, marble – every time. It is timeless, classic and alive! minotticucine has now developed a sealant which stops marble from staining.

How have you achieved the balance between style and function?

AK The credit for achieving that goes largely to the genius of Alberto Minotti who revolutionised kitchen design in 1998, with a very minimalist style which

looked beautiful but was also functional. He introduced the concept of hiding appliances – which can date a kitchen – behind pocket doors, so that they would be accessible when you are cooking but be hidden when not in use. The handles were eliminated but shadow profiles and grooves which serve as handles were added. We introduced the concept of making sinks in the same material as the worktops, to create a seamless design but also be functional because they could be made to any size.

What inspired the impressive island made of poured bronze?

AK It came about over a brainstorming evening with Giovanni Venturini, the owner of minotticucine, Monica the marketing director, Alberto Minotti, Claudio Silvestrin who is the master of contemporary minimalism, plus David and I. We wanted to showcase something unique at the launch of the London showroom and liked the idea of making something in metal.

DK I had seen products made in liquid metal. With all the great creative minds together, Claudio Silvestrin designed the new Terra model in cast poured bronze. It is definitely a statement in materiality, design and showcases our capability as a manufacturer. The process of turning the bronze ingots into liquid at 5000 degrees, then pouring into moulds to cast as you would with a sculpture, then using these to create a kitchen. This process is so complicated no other kitchen manufacturer would attempt it. It is like creating a sculpture but with all the functionality you need in a kitchen.

AK It is a combination of art and technology. As Claudio said at the launch: "We had the stone age," (referring to 2002 when he designed the terra kitchen for minotticucine in natural stone) "and now we have the bronze age!"

COMPANY PROFILE

FAMILY-RUN BUSINESS

minotticuccine London is run by husband and wife team David and Achala Knights. Achala has a long history in design and was the driving force behind the layout and design of the new showroom, just off Oxford Street in the heart of London. They stand by the design philosophy of the Minotti brand, of the finest quality and kitchens that will last and be appreciated for decades. minotticucinelondon.com