

Design Made in Italy @ the ICFF

Mila Tenaglia (May 22, 2014)



One of the most anticipated home furnishing and interior design events, the 26th Edition of the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, has just closed its doors at the Javits Convention Center. The Made in Italy excellence was present with numerous stands and quality brands: a dive into a world to be sensed, touched, listened to... A date with the latest trends and ideas, surrounded by art, design and craftsmanship.

It was a weekend dense with events for New York. Not only the [Design Week](#) [2] with events in the most prestigious show rooms of Soho, but also the [International Contemporary Furniture Fair](#) [3] in the immense Javits Center , located in the Hell's Kitchen neighbourhood.

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May 17-20 were four days fully dedicated to the world of home furnishing, in a setting where it was easy to lose yourself and daydream around lamps, ceramics, fabulous bath tubs, design objects, white and soft textiles... ICFF is an industry fair, for the home furnishing business personnel, but nonetheless a destination for whoever loves design. A place where you can touch, browse, listen to stories of success, let your thoughts slip away carelessly lost in the midst of colors and lights. And maybe fantasize about the home of your dreams.

Over six hundred stands, from every corner of the globe, fascinated professionals, students, aficionados and buyers.

We went looking for the Italian presence and we found a number of companies.

Metals, lighting, elegant bathrooms, ceramics as smooth as silk... we immersed ourselves in the products and the stories of the various Italian representatives present at the Fair.

These stories seemed to have more than one common denominator.

Family tradition, innovation and the pursuit of aesthetic research. Harmony and functionality, but above all love and passion. These are the pillars of the Made in Italy.

They all told us of how they became a showcase that unites, not only figuratively, Italy and US.

"We are the fourth generation of a family that works with metal: brass, copper, iron and steel" Albino Celato, CEO of [De Castelli](#) [4] brand tells us.

" In 2003 De Castelli decided to focus on a very peculiar market niche. A deep craftsmanship knowledge in the area of metalwork, coupled with vigorous technological innovation."

" One of the foundations on which our work is built - Albino continues - is the quality of the product manufacturing. We strive to achieve pioneering solutions."

"Amongst the lighting companies a not to be missed presence, [Contardi](#) [5].

Massimo Briganti welcomes us and describes his experience.

" Contardi is a lighting company that has been on the market for ten years. It's considered a point of reference for luxury décor.

We work with some of the most prestigious Hotel chains like Intercontinental, Hotel Group, Mandarin Oriental. We divide our efforts between Hospitality and the distribution of the Contardi collection, which is seven years old. We've opened our New York branch just a month ago: it's thrilling and extremely exciting."

Next we move onto [Gessi](#) [6], an Italian company that makes elegant and sophisticated kitchen and bathroom items. Our attention is immediately drawn to opaque white materials and the neat presentation of the objects. We meet Luca Poletto, managing director, and Leslie Hart PR and New York based. Leslie has some understanding of Italian, enough to laugh at our jokes.

Our conversation unfolds in two directions, talking about the history of the Company in Italy, with Luca Poletti, and about the characteristics of the New York market, explained by Leslie Hart.

"The group has eleven branches outside of Italy. In the US we started in 2007 because we foresaw future in this market. Our philosophy is based on three principles: people, planet and products. The site of our Italian factory is near Vercelli, in a village not far from the mountains where everybody knows each other. We always recommend to our customers to visit the surroundings. They love coming to see us and getting to know this little village."



Apart from the minimalist and elegant style we focus on the concept of wellbeing. Especially in a city as hectic as New York it is important to offer products that can also be synonymous of relax. Our customers expect quality from us, but they also want to ensure that our products are made in a place where there is respect for the workers and for the environment.”

Intrigued by the recent opening of [Natuzzi Usa](#) [7] on Madison Avenue, we stop by their stand as well. We meet the Marketing Director Giacomo Ventolone. “We already have a presence in Soho with our store, but in the new one we introduce a concept of space that enables the consumer to coordinate both day and night areas: with sofas, lamps and accessories.”

“Our innovation stems from historical values and from the pursuit of beauty. Pasquale Natuzzi, president and CEO of this company, turned up in the ‘80s in New York almost by chance, during one of his trips. He made contact with Macy’s to present the collection of sofas that he was designing and producing in Italy. That was the stepping stone for further developments and success.”

We finish off the tour of the Italian craftsmanship at the [Ceramics Of Italy](#) [8] stand.

‘Ceramics of Italy’ represents and promotes 23 businesses of Italian Ceramics around the world : Bardelli, Tagina, MIPA, Cotto D’Este are some of those names.

Also thanks to the support of the Italian Trade Commission, together with ‘Confindustria Ceramica’, they’ve been the leaders of the sector for more than six years.

According to [Vittorio Borrelli](#) [9], president of ‘Confindustria Ceramica’, the pavilion of “Ceramics of Italy” is a true design inspiration, thanks to the exhibition of the latest Italian novelty tiles for the bathroom”. There are various collections, all full of personality and history.” These companies open up to new horizons of design with products that, while maintaining intact all the ceramics specific qualities, also devote care and attention to the aesthetics , both natural and artificial - using wood, marble and even concrete - utilizing advanced technologies and environmentally friendly production processes”.

Amongst the many offerings we found Cottoveneto, particularly interesting for its decorative details made of travertine treated with the same products used for historical restoration.

The magazine ‘Metropolis’ awarded Ceramics of Italy the ‘Editors Award’ for the variety and the refinement of the materials used. A great source of satisfaction for all the businesses involved. Even more so, considering the objective difficulties caused by the devastating earthquake that hit the Emilia region two years ago.

Satisfaction is in the air in this pavilion: one out of three ceramic tiles used in the American homes is Made in Italy. America represents the number one market and is still growing.

What’s the Italian secret? A mix of tradition, creativity and cutting edge technology. Businesses, often family based, that hand down competencies from one generation to another. Young people that are taking charge investing in the latest technologies.

Pier Paolo Celeste, Director of the [Italian Trade Commission](#) [10] for North America, asserts with evident gratification: “The large participation of Italian exhibitors at the ICFF confirms the importance of the long lasting support and assistance offered to the Italian businesses in their effort to gain the leadership of the American market of ceramic tiles”.

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