



*Front bench*  
**portrait, left** Milanese furniture and kitchen designer Piero Lissoni.

**main picture** Lissoni's Case 2.3 kitchen system for Boffi is available in Australia through Space Furniture.



## head space

Boffi designer *Piero Lissoni* injects some much-needed glamour with his designs for kitchens and bathrooms.

Text **Julia Nekich**

"It's easy to design beautiful pieces. To design a style, you need to provide the sensation. You have to design pieces of life. At Boffi, we sell a way of life," says Piero Lissoni. The celebrated Milanese architect and designer is seated beside his sleek Case 2.3 kitchen system, designed for Boffi, at the Space Furniture showroom in Sydney's Alexandria. Lissoni has been creative director since 1986 of Boffi, producer of sophisticated kitchens and bathrooms.

In the past 20 years, Lissoni has played a central role in the development of Boffi's image and has overseen every design. With CEO Roberto Gavazzi and co-founder Paolo Boffi, he has pushed the concept of kitchens as sleek, customised designs that merge seamlessly with living spaces. Clients can

build their own kitchens by choosing a combination of different parts made to order.

"Clients feel they are buying something special, not the standard," Gavazzi says. "Mixing everything isn't easy – it's easier to treat kitchens as separate programs. But this flexibility sets us apart."

The catalyst was Lissoni's 1992 Latina modular kitchen – pieces in warm timber, sleek stainless steel and a high-tech polymeric material. He's moved into bathrooms, too.

In 1986, Lissoni, a multidisciplinary designer with a creative vision, was just what Boffi needed. At the time, the company was perceived as unexciting and needed a new direction. Lissoni had just gained his degree in architecture and had set up Studio Lissoni,

covering architecture, interior design, industrial and graphic design. He began work as a consultant.

"Boffi was very different back then," Lissoni says. "It was a founder of the Italian design movement, but it was like an old-fashioned factory. It was a bit 'closed' and had old ideas about design. The company took a big risk in working with me – I was just a student. By the time Roberto [Gavazzi] came in, two years after me, I had already destroyed the Boffi business – I destroyed everything! Then Roberto and I built up the company."

The first thing that Lissoni and Gavazzi tackled together was the idea of creating kitchens that are completely customised – a new concept then. Their combined vision changed the look and function of >



## *Tbrill of the Case*

**above** Well-designed storage makes the Case 2.3 kitchen a winner for Boffi.

**right** Lissoni has also designed the Zone kitchen for Boffi, featuring integrated storage for appliances.

**below** This year Lissoni releases the Table kitchen for Boffi.



*"First we design the feeling, then the colour and finish," says Piero Lissoni.*

kitchens and cemented Boffi as a leading name. This quality is reflected in the rigorous research and development behind each design, which can take two years to reach the finished product. Artisan carpenters make the components at the Lentate sul Seveso factory, 25 km from Milan. Every element, apart from appliances and its exclusive tapware, is produced using high-tech finishes such as Corian. "The material is a concept," says Lissoni. "First we design the feeling, then the colour and finish."

Today, about 15 well-known designers work for Boffi – all of them externally – and each project is directed by Lissoni. With designers including Marcel Wanders, Antonio Citterio, Jeffrey Bennett, Marc Sadler and Paolo Nava, it's no wonder Boffi's designs

are exhibited in museums such as New York's MoMa, the Louvre, and Triennale of Milan. Lissoni's own designs for the company carry his signature style – practical, understated, warm and perfectly proportioned, with careful attention to detail.

Designing "pieces of life" is something that Lissoni now feels the company can offer.

"Boffi has gone through different evolutions. We started to design a mood for Boffi 20 years ago and this has slowly evolved. Now, in 2005, we feel we've arrived. Our products feel nice, comfortable, special, unique. They provide quality of life." □

For further details, visit [www.boffi.com](http://www.boffi.com) In Australia, Boffi is available from Space Furniture, tel (02) 8339 7588, (03) 9426 3000, (07) 3253 6000, [www.spacefurniture.com](http://www.spacefurniture.com).

## *Boffi – boffins & breakthroughs...*

**About Piero Lissoni** Piero Lissoni graduated from the Polytechnic of Milan in 1985 with a degree in architecture. In 1986, with partner Nicoletta Canesi, he established Studio Lissoni, an architecture, industrial design, graphic design and interior design company. "The multidisciplinary designer, like me, is a very Milanese tradition," Lissoni says. Today, the company employs around 50 designers, more than half of which are non-Italian. His company has designed for manufacturers such as Artemide, Cappellini, Cassina, Alessi, Living Divani, Porro and Kartell. Lissoni's architectural projects include the Monaco & Grand Hotel in Venice, the Al Porto hotel in Zurich and the Bentley design hotel in Istanbul.

**Boffi – the beginnings** The Boffi family began a small furniture workshop in Lentate sul Seveso, 25 km from Milan, in 1934. The workshop ran until 1947, when brothers Dino, Pier Ugo and Paolo Boffi established their first Boffi factory on the site. Almost immediately, the brothers launched into design research and experimental production methods. In 1954, Boffi produced its first line of coordinated kitchen components – the C kitchen – with polyester cabinet doors in bright shades. Other design milestones include Gian Casè's T12 and E15 kitchens for low-cost housing, Luigi Massoni's Xila modular system without handles, which became part of the MoMa collection in New York, and Joe Colombo's revolutionary 1963 one-piece kitchen on castors. Boffi's innovative path for kitchens (production diversified into bathrooms in the early 1980s) has continued well into the new millennium. Today, Boffi has showrooms in 40 countries, and was the first kitchen and bathroom manufacturer to be awarded the prestigious Compasso d'Oro Italian design award in 1995.

**Design and technical innovations** Boffi has not only created sophisticated and luxurious kitchens and bathrooms (just run your hand over one of its Corian baths), it's a pioneer in technical and design solutions. The Lissoni-designed Works and Case 2.3 kitchen systems feature a 'ledge' solution, where a benchtop rests on a unit perpendicularly, which is unique to Boffi. Systems such as Case 2.3 (2.3 refers to the thickness of the cabinetry doors) also feature integrated, "invisible" handles; a silent sealing mechanism; and aluminium frames. "Aluminium is easy to mould, it's more resistant, less expensive and doesn't scratch like stainless steel," says Boffi's communications manager, Bice Marceca.

**New releases – 2005** This year Boffi releases the Lissoni-designed Table system and Zone kitchen and storage systems. Table is a single timber table (choose from various oak finishes) with a flush-mounted top in stainless steel, marble or stone, and adjustable feet. It can be integrated with an island or as a top to traditional units. Zone is a modular kitchen or storage system designed to contain every kitchen element, including appliances. In its bathroom range, look out for the Lissoni-designed Cathino and 200cl. washbasins.