



CIE

A Nobia Group Company

The Art of the Craft for a Sustainable Future

CIE Salone del Mobile Trend Report, Milano 2022

Salone del Mobile, Milano

The exhibition never fails to inspire and this year's offering was no exception, however it is noticeable how the top high end kitchen brands appear to be distancing themselves from exhibiting directly at the fair. They instead capitalize on its attendance and reputation to establish their own premises in Milan, aligning more with Milan Design Week making the most of on the creative buzz in and around the Brera district.

This was an interesting observation – many premium kitchen and appliance brands choosing to stay away, instead aligning themselves with the major luxury design showrooms and Italian Fashion houses within the creative centre of Milan, putting on their own ostentatious displays with a loyal more discerning Client base. It was a masterstroke from some of the premium Italian brands, with their showrooms clearly oozing with style, class and finishing akin to a catwalk fashion show. Seeing the brands in this environment, within a home context gives a fresh appreciation of the product.

The top end brands that decided to stay at the exhibition took their own approach, occupying vast square meterage for their installations and opting for an 'invite only' approach. One can imagine that this gives the impression of exclusivity, but it will be no surprise if they opt for the same approach as their competitors next year.

The show had glimpses of brilliance, but also was struggling for some inspiration. This is to be expected coming from a 3-year hiatus. This was evident from creative perspective, with some reinvention of old concepts or just playing it safe, as was the case with some of the established German manufacturers.

Emerging Trends

Vertical Grooved detailing

We are already aware of the popularity of the Scandinavian door and how well this has been received, however we saw a dramatic increase in the use of this door as a feature. Pretty much all Italian brands had included this in their displays, although the German brands were pretty slow on this trend. It was utilised as panelling, feature wall units, feature islands. Several manufacturers have jumped on the trend, and there were some excellent examples, and also some poorly thought-out variants. The groove detail needs consideration on corners, and it was evident that some manufacturers have not thought about how this works in this scenario.

The trend wasn't solely reserved for wood either. There were examples of metal and lacquer used in a similar application

It was fascinating to see how this detail has exploded on the scene. Previous trends such as this have been very quick to disappear as quickly as they emerged, and the challenge for all would be whether this detail has the longevity to remain at the forefront of Manufacturers ranges this time next year.

The more sceptical amongst us would observe that it was so prevalent at Milan it almost feels as if it is passé already.



Vertical Grooved detailing



Feature Woods – Exotic Timbers – Heavily textured Wood

A good barometer for Trend analysis is to see what the board manufacturers are offering, as ultimately this is where the Kitchen companies will be buying from. There were a couple of surprises here – Teak from Alpi curated by Piero Lissoni taking on some very vivid forms and colours. Olive and Ebony Woods which re-appeared in several Italian manufactured feature tall units. This was also evident in Tabu SPA with a collection of Burls and Graffiti / Industrial inlays using Oak/Eucalyptus/Sycamore – a very 70's style reproduction that was witnessed on feature walls within Kitchen Manufacturer displays



ALPI Teak
curated by
Piero Lissoni

Scandi Wood – Aged Wood – Wood in its Natural State

Wood in its unfinished state with a natural clear lacquer with low sheen was a reoccurring theme on many stands. This was often used in conjunction with a vertical grooved detailing. This gave a very clean and contemporary styling, appealing to the senses (you could smell the wood in some of the better examples) This was also apparent in the furniture halls with finished tables and chairs, sanded to organic forms rather than straight rectangular blocks, to give a more tactile finish.

An interesting offshoot of this was the introduction of aged wood which had worm holes/distressed timber and sunbleached finishes on a standard quarter sawn veneer backdrop. This was used in an ultra-contemporary styling rather than a 'Country House' style kitchen. Particularly good examples of this in the furniture hall, but also some examples had filtered into the Kitchen offerings. Was very effective, and a nod to sustainability in utilising every piece of timber for maximum visual impact.



Sustainability and Nature – Natural Forms

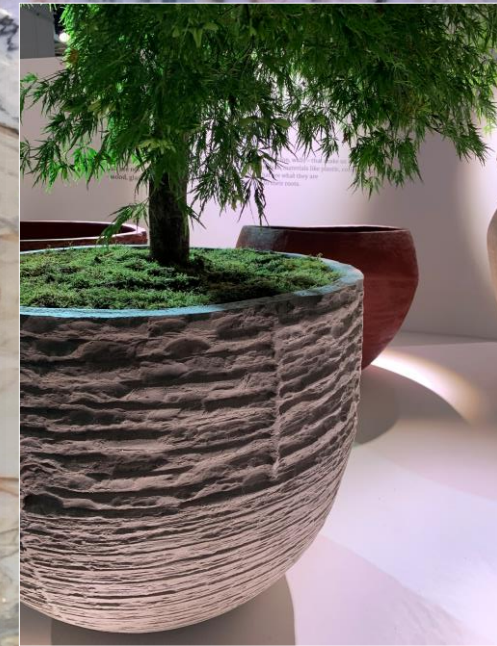
There was reference to sustainability on many of the furniture stands, but noticeably absent from the Eurocucina hall. Where it was mentioned, the term was used as a nod to the timeless and classical styling to create kitchen furniture that stands the test of time. This is an important observation, and at CIE we can feel comfortable with our partners, bulthaup, who still maintain superiority over many of the brands on offer at the exhibition. They were not present at the Fair, however a visit to their showroom in central Milan illustrated beyond any doubt that the furniture is timeless, and beautifully finished.

Appreciation of the natural form was clearly evident at Milan. Natural organic forms were impressively displayed in marble, taking on fluid 'ripple effect' forms. There was an appreciation of the natural, with a move away from 'fake' materials such as plastic, composite and a move towards the authentic – the thinking behind this is that people feel comfortable with the familiar, and that ultimately the materials that make us feel happy are the ones we connect with – wood, glass, metal, clay.

Design for wellbeing was a big theme. Some stands made big gestures of human interaction with the planet, with constant water features entwined with real trees and organic forms. It demonstrated that human wellbeing can be enhanced if we appreciate the natural environment around us – a clear trend as we emerge from the pandemic.



“Timeless design for a sustainable future”



Marble and Terrazzo

The use of marble is clearly a trend that is here to stay – the rarer the better. Its use is a nod to the natural, and that nature can do it better than man made. Marble was used as an impact statement on many kitchens, with bold colours and striking veining a popular theme. Some manufacturers were showing Terrazzo as a high impact statement, which working particularly well – this potentially will be an emerging trend with Architects, and we should expect to see this on some specifications soon.

The grooved theme appeared in a different guise, with some examples of bespoke marble detailing to accentuate the natural grain of the marble. This gave a unique and particularly effective interpretation of this trend.



Marble and Terrazzo



Marble and Terrazzo



Feature Tall Units in Veneer / Foldaway or Sliding Concealed Doors

You must admire the kitchen industry with their insistence that the foldaway door is a good idea. There were many examples, but the overriding emphasis on this approach is whether the mechanism used in the display examples is up to the job. Clearly with most examples, it still has a long way to go with shakey, stuttering mechanisms still commonplace. The better examples were either electrically operated (but often slow) or gliding smooth large panels that could slide along a pre-determined track.



Feature Tall Units in Veneer / Foldaway or Sliding Concealed Doors



Feature Tall Units in Veneer / Foldaway or Sliding Concealed Doors



Thin Shelving 5mm or Less within a feature wall

This was a strong trend amongst all brands visited, with different variations of fixing or clamping into position. Materials varied, but the better examples were in a metal finish which increased stability and strength. The premium Italian Kitchen companies had a neatly finished metal edged products, similar to those already on offer within bulthaup's b3 range.

The application of this was often used as feature walls to make a dramatic statement, often complemented with vertical edged grooved panels.



Thin Shelving 5mm or Less within a feature wall



Metallic & Industrial Finishes

Our Italian Suppliers showed to great effect bespoke copper finishing with a unique sliding wall unit mechanism. This was a variation of a reoccurring theme, with strong industrial styling a theme to many displays. Some finishing was achieved with lacquer, although some of the more successful displays were distressed stainless steel. This reinforced the recycled/reusability theme with a strong emphasis on these ranges being built to last.



Metallic & Industrial Finishes



Coloured Sinks and Marble detailing

A small detail that was appearing on many stands was the treatment of the sink area. Sometimes the sink was finished in a vivid colour to complement the furniture and exotic marble. The worktop treatment was lipped to the edge on many stands, which contained the water within the sink and food preparation areas – an extension of the recessed drainer so that it spanned the whole area. This was also demonstrated at Gaggenau's art installation. This was a simple detail, but was effective and well-conceived.



Coloured Sinks and Marble detailing



No Plinth / Different Plinth Applications

A number of manufacturers were playing with the idea of full height doors – 10/20mm shadow gap from the floor. This gives a seamless and clean look. The plinth was always located behind the extended door to ensure existing carcass ranges can be used, along with adhering to appliance ventilation requirements. CIE have done this on many occasions, but it was interesting to note manufacturers now offering this.

The removal of plinth from the kitchen to a curved fascia was a unique concept and made a refreshing change from the formulaic approach of clip-on plinth to legs used by everybody else.



Outdoor Kitchens



This is a massive Trend and more luxurious offerings were prominent. This will be a huge growth area with many established kitchen manufacturers showcasing newly released Outdoor Kitchens to their ranges to capitalising on high-end apartment/villa living. There were plenty of good examples of smaller furniture companies offering set size components, similar to the bulthaup workbench of the 1980's. Units are made from stainless steel with a variety of different finishes to worksurfaces – Terrazzo, Concrete and Marble. Very Industrial looking built around lavish BBQ set ups and Big Green Egg/Kamado Joe ceramic ovens. There were clever injections of colour with some examples.



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Feature Wine Storage / Hidden Drinks Areas

Lavish wine storage larders and drinks cabinets were a re-emerging trend. Rather than utilizing a built-in wine fridge, the furniture was utilised to make a showpiece, highly personalised piece of furniture, tailormade for the individual. Sometimes these were behind large expanses of humidity-controlled environments, or they were high crafted pieces of furniture. Either way, they created extraordinary kitchen focal points which gave incredible impact and are an excellent alternative to costly wine fridges.



Feature Wine Storage / Hidden Drinks Areas

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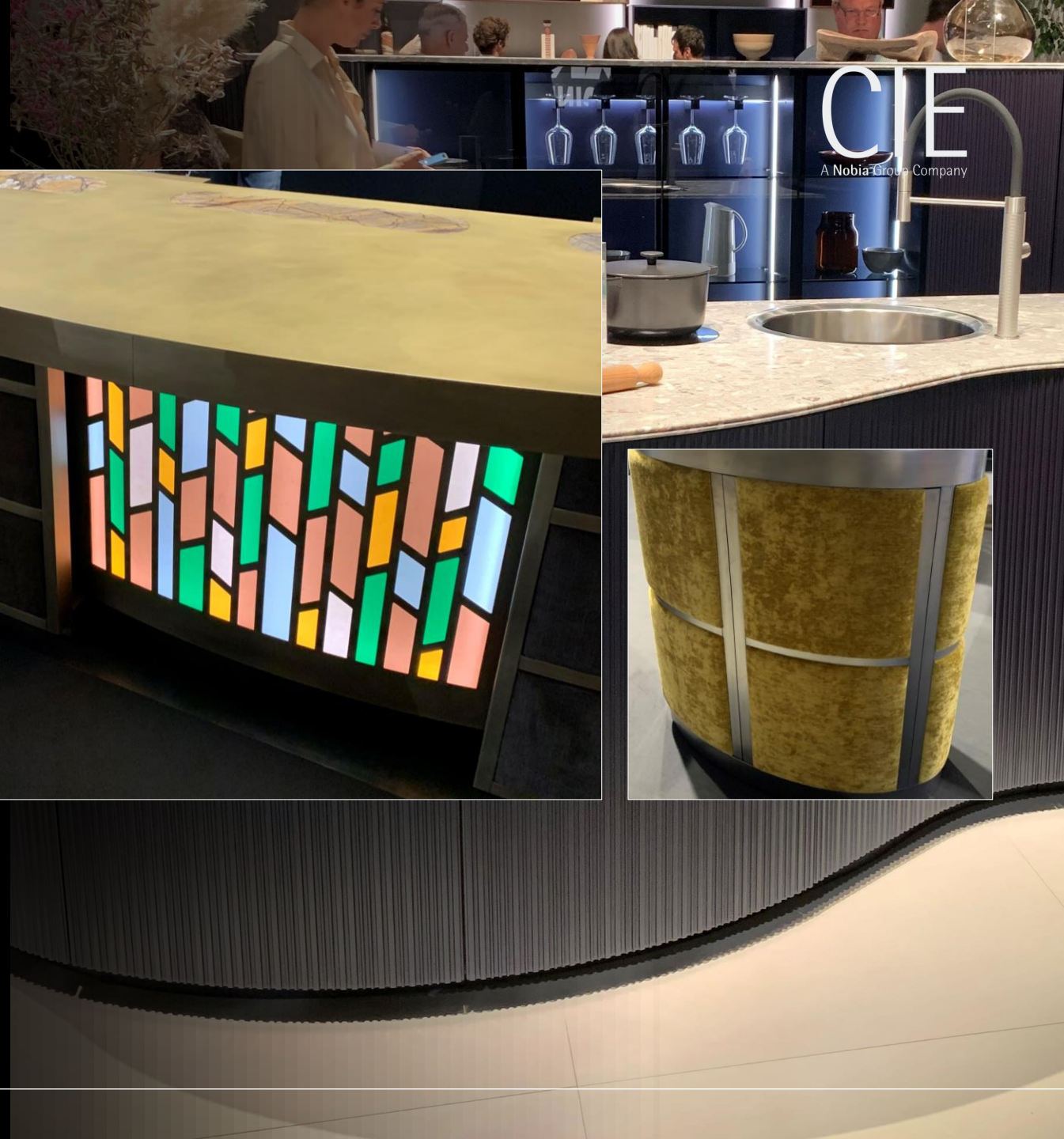


Curves

Are Back! Plenty of examples of islands and peninsular seating areas to give an organic flow to the kitchen. 70's style retro theming, a small re-emergence of Teak (Alpi had big displays showcasing their latest Teak Veneer) Curves were used primarily to maximise visual impact, to give soft sleek lines as opposed to rectangular, sharp forms.



Curves

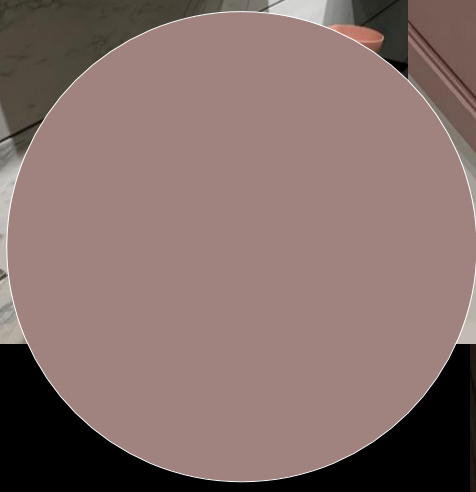


Colours

Dusky Oranges, Pinks, Yellows, Sky Blue. Re-emergence of muted palettes and warm neutrals to give a calming serenity, used with more exotic and vibrant wood patters. Lots of examples of colour for the backdrop for the choice of a more exotic material.



Colours



A return to traditional Italian Craftsmanship

A real highlight was within the furniture hall. An Italian furniture collection finished to the highest quality in solid wood. This was a refreshing change to mass produced chipboard. Finishes varied from Walnut and Oak, to Maple and Cherry – craftsmanship was of the highest calibre, but also mindful of sustainability and ecological impact. The argument is that this furniture is built to last, entirely made in Italy, with timeless creations that do not follow short term trends.



“We are proud to preserve the craftsmanship in the age of technology, with timeless creations which don't follow short-term trends ”

CIE

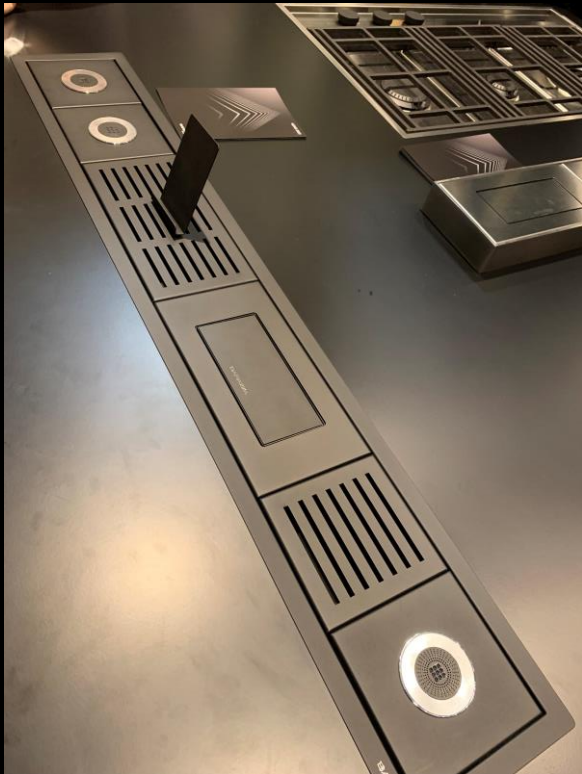
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Appliance Manufacturers

Barazza impressed with their soft touch matt black finish ovens. Hobs looked and felt impressive, with innovative accessories and docking stations. Barazza were another manufacturer who introduced an 'Outdoor Appliance' range on what is undoubtedly a growth area. Bertazzoni & Fhiaba also impressed with some excellent built-in fridges.

SMEG showing a collaboration with both Dolce and Gabbana was a head turner and a nod to the Design Week. A clever introduction to the outdoor range was the Fiat 500 outdoor fridge.



Appliance Manufacturers



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Smeg
DOLCE & GABBANA

smeg
DOLCE & GABBANA

Gaggenau

Gaggenau's 'A Statement of Form' was nestled in the grounds of the stunning Vila Necchi Campiglio in the centre of Milan. This intriguing Art installation was a tribute to Gaggenau's dedication to craftsmanship, heritage and performance.

The impressive exhibition formed part of Milan's Design Week, and featured incredible contributions from Marble specialists Salvatori and ceramics by Kaufmann.

A longstanding partner of CIE, this installation was deliberately placed within Milan's Design heartland, sitting neatly with prestigious and luxurious brands such as Gucci , Rolex et al, and feeding directly from the creative buzz of the Brera district. This approach was both innovative and groundbreaking, using the distinctly unique appliances as a backdrop to form part of a grand architectural statement. It further reinforced Gaggenau's reputation as the Professional's choice.



Gaggenau



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crafts·man·ship

NOUN

skill in a particular craft:

Craftsmanship is the skill that someone uses when they make beautiful things with their hands.

“It is easy to appreciate the craftsmanship of Armani”

synonyms:

workmanship · artistry · craft · art · artisanship · handiwork · work · skill ·
skilfulness · technique · expertise · mastery

the quality of design and work shown in something made by hand; artistry:
"a piece of fine craftsmanship”

COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers

Conclusions

The exhibition demonstrated some clear emerging trends from human wellbeing as we emerge from the pandemic, that will start to filter into specifications. At CIE we can remain to align ourselves with this way of thinking from a sustainability stance, through our product offering. This will be a real focus of Architects and Construction with developments over the coming years.

It was comforting to witness that quality remains as king, and that despite many efforts of reproduction within Eurocucina, a visit to bulthaup in Milan reinforced that the b2 kitchen tool cabinet is far superior in craftsmanship and design. This timeless creation is a barometer for this way of thinking – our Clientele will acknowledge quality, over short term trends. Timeless design for a sustainable future.

The Brera District, and the opulence of the Piazza Duomo and Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II was impactful as it was insightful. Housed within one of Italy's oldest shopping parades are the brands of Prada, Gucci and Louis Vuitton as well as other high-end boutiques. CIE brands fit within this territory – bulthaup, Gaggenau – timeless designs, incredible craftsmanship over mass manufactured fast fashion. People are willing to pay for products that have a lower environmental impact. We should embrace this way of thinking – we will be expensive, but long term we are providing the best product over a cheaper reproduction. This is key moving forward.

“Companies today are focusing on the use of certified wood, recycled materials, low impact treatments and finishes, repairability and disassembly to help extend a products life cycle”

Professors Mauro Ceconello and Carlo Proserpio from the Design Department at the university Politecnico di Milano, Salone del Mobile. Milano show guide 2022

The show remains influential within our industry, and there were some real flashes of brilliance. It was reassuring to witness a resurgence of true Italian Craftmanship through the use of traditional methods and high quality materials. The true winners of the exhibition were able to adopt this philosophy with a clear commitment to sustainability. The longevity of the product being key to the focus – the longer the life of the product, the lower its environmental impact.

Who knew that our taxi to the airport in a brand new Electric vehicle would set up the underlying theme to the exhibition we were about to visit!

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One Common Aim since 1959

CIE
237 Queenstown Road
Battersea
London
SW8 3NP

For all enquiries call us on: +44 (0) 207 7204 219

Or email us at: info@cie.plc.uk

For more information visit us at: www.cie.plc.uk