

A photograph of Giulio Cappellini, an Italian designer, sitting on a highly ornate and colorful chair. The chair features intricate carvings and is painted in vibrant colors including yellow, green, blue, and red. Cappellini is wearing a light grey suit jacket over a white shirt and dark trousers. He is sitting with his legs crossed, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a solid, deep red wall. The overall aesthetic is bold and artistic.

# CAPPELLINI: A FORCE MAJEURE

In Conversation with Design  
Doyen Giulio Cappellini

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THERE ARE SO MANY SEMINAL FIGURES IN THE DESIGN WORLD TODAY. GIULIO CAPPELLINI IS NOT ONE OF THEM – HE IS MORE LIKE TENS OF THEM ROLLED INTO ONE. THE MILANESE ARCHITECT, WHO HAS STEERED HIS EPPONYMOUS DESIGN FIRM TO GREATNESS SINCE TAKING THE HELM IN 1979, IS A SCHOOL OF DESIGN. HE HAS PROPOSED HIS PERSONAL READING OF CONTEMPORARY DESIGN, TRANSFORMING CAPPELLINI INTO ONE OF THE GLOBE'S BIGGEST TRENDSETTING DESIGN FORCES.



MELTDOWN LAMP BY LINDSTÉN FORM STUDIO



S-CHAIR LIMITED EDITION BY TOM DIXON

A feted talent scout, he has spotted some of the most distinguished big shots of contemporary design before they catapulted to the limelight. Names include Jasper Morrison, Marcel Wanders, Marc Newson and Nendo, to cite a few. A man on an unyielding quest for the innovative and inimitable, he has forged collaborations with designers of all ilk and of different temperaments. The 67-year-old brand is resultantly in a state of constant renewal, firmly rooted in Italian design traditions while completely in tune with today's market needs.

The brand has lent its name to some of the most iconic contemporary design objects, which have graced prominent museums and some of the world's finest homes. Cappellini, the label, is bent on producing additional new "contemporary classics", for Cappellini, the man, is not of the widespread opinion that the originality game is over – that what we see today is a rehashing of old and classic designs. "There is still much to discover and create in the design world. Surely, we must look to the future without erasing our history. But



EYE SHADOW BY MARCEL WANDERS



DALIA BY MARCEL WANDERS

seeking refuge in the past alone is an involution and does not create new interesting posts for contemporary living," Cappellini asserts.

**Cappellini's range of products and its collaboration with a wide scope of designers make it difficult to pigeonhole the brand within a specific style. Was that a premeditated effort from the start or is there a broad "Cappellini style"?**

From the beginning, Cappellini wanted to collaborate with different designers for the history, culture and tradition elements, navigating with total freedom. Obviously, there is a "common thread" that connects the different products of this eclectic project – that is Cappellini – which is the synthesis of the most contemporary trends.

**While holding onto Italian design "tradition", Cappellini has not been afraid to embrace "contemporary" design in the broadest sense. What are the factors that dictate Cappellini's design credo?**

The Cappellini thought process has always been to experiment and try to anticipate trends, carving with

every single product a "Cappellini style", which represents the evolution of design as well as create new "contemporary classics".

**What are the guidelines that have defined Cappellini's work ethics?**

Freedom and irony of projects; continuous research of new materials, textures, production systems...; and creating useful products that are beautiful enough to make the customer dream beyond the fashions and trends of the moment.

**What of the key dynamics, which have shaped Cappellini's notable evolution?**

The development of Cappellini is linked to the fact that I have always dared to take on new challenges and to think up new ways of living by studying people's behavior.

**What has led Cappellini to take part in the debut "Downtown Design" in Dubai this fall?**

We believed in "Downtown Design", because the Middle East is ready to accommodate innovative design

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WOODEN CHAIR BY MARC NEWSON

and luxury furniture. Therefore, it was important for Cappellini to be present at the exhibition and showcase its products to a wider audience.

**What are the emerging design fairs that Cappellini is keeping an eye on?**

In addition to "Downtown Design", we are interested in exhibitions and presentations in emerging markets such as India, China and the Far East in general, not to mention the U.S. and Europe. We also participated in May in "Wanted Design" in New York, which was a great success.

**An issue you frequently raise in your lectures is...**

The dream that we have to create timeless, beautiful objects with a strong emotional impact on the user.

**During a recent talk, you intimately discussed the "Cappellini Dream". Having hit such a high note, what does Cappellini still dream to accomplish?**

I have endless dreams. However, the main dream is to continue to meet interesting people with whom I have the opportunity to collaborate and create products that make people smile.

**In your view, a designer's worst enemy is...**

Thinking that there is nothing more to create, that everything has already been done. That's not true – creativity has no limits.

**Being such a celebrated talent scout with a nose for gifted designers, who are the talents you're currently watching?**

I like to look at designers who come from various parts of the world, such as Central and Eastern Europe and Japan as well as South America – for instance, Zanini

De Zanine from South America and Jan Plechac from Central Europe. There are more and more creative, young and enthusiastic people in every part of the world.

**In a cut-throat industry where so many young and emerging designers are trying to make it, what are the qualities of those who make the cut?**

The qualities of a fine young designer are creativity, curiosity, passion, professionalism and determination, and above all, they must possess the patience to do few but beautiful projects that meet the real needs of the public.

**Cappellini is among the rare design brands that celebrate their "design heroes" so profoundly, so much that it even dedicates an annual exhibition to its star designers and their products. Why does Cappellini attach so much importance to valuing the names behind the designs?**

Cappellini scouted many designers such as Jasper Morrison, Tom Dixon, Marcel Wanders, Nendo, among others. This led to reciprocated success. It seems, therefore, appropriate to celebrate these figures, because their names are hidden behind great professionalism and passion for the designated projects, and these are essential qualities to become great designers.

**Earlier this year, Cappellini unveiled in the Philippines its first showroom in Asia. What are the markets that Cappellini is looking to tap into?**

Cappellini is watching with great interest new markets such as the Far East and South America. Soon, there will be an interest in opening new showrooms in those areas.



REVOLVING CABINET BY SHIRO KURAMATA



MELTDOWN LAMP BY LINDSTÉN FORM STUDIO

**What are the challenges that the design industry is confronting today?**

Today, the design industry must increasingly take into account the real needs of a changing market by creating products that are not only beautiful and interesting, but also ones that can easily enter homes around the world.

**Sustainable design and design for social change are among the big design waves currently hitting the design world. What is Cappellini's take on that?**

Sustainable design is definitely an issue of great relevance and responsibility. For Cappellini, it should not just be a marketing tool, but a project that involves the entire production process – thus, working in a serene environment by using recycled and non-toxic materials and creating a better future for the next generations.

**The Italians are the undisputed masters of craftsmanship and quality design across the board. What makes Cappellini a cut above other Italian brands?**

Cappellini tries to create products that have the right mix of technology and craftsmanship. We believe that craftsmanship is the element that can create the true quality and excellence of products made in Italy.

**If stranded on a deserted island, what are the five Cappellini items you'd want with you?**

The five products that I always have around are: "Thinking Man's Chair" by Jasper Morrison, Marc Newson's "Wooden Chair", "Revolving Cabinet" by Shiro Kuramata, "Thin Black Table" by Nendo and "S-Chair" by Tom Dixon.

**If you were bestowed with a magical power to bring together under one roof eight designers/architects, dead or alive, and engage them all in a single conversation, who would you pick?**

It would have to be Gio Ponti, Jasper Morrison, Achille Castiglioni, Charles and Ray Eames, Shiro Kuramata, Ettore Sottsass, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, and Ingo Maurer.

**The year 2013 was a superb one for Cappellini because...**

We created products like the Meltdown Lamp, which was well received worldwide. We also introduced new, young designers, such as Matthew Zorzenoni, and we strengthened our presence in the market with the opening of new showrooms in San Francisco and New Delhi, thus consistently improving our brand image.